

The wild goose chase that culminates in *Pillars of the Past*, Charles Ginenthal's most recent foray into ancient chronology, can be laid squarely at the doorstep of Immanuel Velikovsky. Thus it is only fitting that the first two words of *Pillars of the Past* are "Immanuel Velikovsky," for it was that very author who, in the *Ages in Chaos* series, claimed to find evidence that conventional chronology was falsely inflated by some five centuries, thereby inspiring several generations of readers to cast aside the Cambridge view of ancient history and become amateur chronologists. Alas, Velikovsky's bold attempt at historical reconstruction has not fared well and it has long since been evident that he made a number of fundamental errors in reasoning that undermined his goal of bringing order to ancient chronology (more below).¹

The stated purpose of *Pillars of the Past* is to eliminate some 1500 years from ancient Near Eastern history as conventionally understood. Ginenthal did not derive this number from Velikovsky—such a reduction would make a shambles of Velikovsky's ancient chronology despite repeated protestations to the contrary.² Rather, the 1500 years derives from Gunnar Heinsohn, whose radical reconstruction of ancient history was also inspired by Velikovsky. Heinsohn argued that the Sumerian civilization never existed as such, and should properly be identified with the Chaldean empire of the first millennium BC. Among other sensational claims advanced by Heinsohn are that Sargon I of Akkad is to be identified with Sargon II of Assyria; that Hammurabi is to be identified with Darius; and that the Mitanni and Median empires are one and the same. Heinsohn's reconstruction has recently been endorsed by Emmet Sweeney, a British researcher otherwise known for arguing that Abraham brought the first instruments of civilization to Egypt and that the pyramids were constructed in the first millennium BCE.³

With this brief introduction before us, we turn to the specific arguments of the book in question. Since I have neither the training nor expertise necessary to address each and every issue raised in this 550-page tome, I will focus here on the two chapters devoted to the Mesopotamian chronology.

A cornerstone of Ginenthal's general thesis holds that the Mitanni Empire is to be identified with the Median kingdom of first millennium BC Iran (c. 700-550 BCE).

¹ David Rohl, *Pharaoh's and Kings* (New York, 1995), p. 402, otherwise sympathetic to Velikovsky's cause, had this to say of the latter's habit of making one or another ruler the alter ego of another: "So, Velikovsky turned Seti I of the 19th Dynasty into Psamtek I of the 26th Dynasty and likewise Ramses II into Neko II. Even the most accommodating scholars found this methodology totally unacceptable and the archaeological evidence was wholly against such equations. Getting himself deeper and deeper into trouble he then equated Ramses III of the 20th Dynasty with Nectanebo I of the 30th Dynasty. In the end his whole thesis degenerated into farce with dynasties leapfrogging over each other in their undignified clamour towards the Hellenistic Age."

² On page 191, Ginenthal writes: "If Rose's, Heinsohn's, Sweeney's, and to a degree Velikovsky's great shortening of Egyptian chronology is correct..."

³ E. Sweeney, "The Genesis of Israel and Egypt," *Chronology and Catastrophism Review* (1996:2), pp. 23-25.

Insofar as Mitanni played a prominent role in the history of the ancient Near East during the middle of the second millennium BCE, this hypothesis is sweeping in its implications if true. Writing in defense of Heinsohn and Sweeney's radical reconstruction, Ginenthal begins—where else?—by quoting Velikovsky:

“What then of the strata of the Medes and Mitanni? What do they tell us with regard to Velikovsky, Heinsohn, and Sweeney's hypothesis? It must be stated that in terms of priority, Velikovsky was the first of the revisionists to equate the Medes with the Mitanni: ‘We assume that the Mitanni was the original name of the Medes...’”⁴

Sadly, Ginenthal can't even accurately transcribe a quote from his hero Velikovsky (Ginenthal has inserted the word “the” before Mitanni, thereby making Velikovsky's statement grammatical gibberish). Ordinarily I would be inclined to overlook this error as insignificant, especially in light of Ginenthal's longstanding pattern of mis-transcribing and misunderstanding the quotes from other authors. However, in the present instance it would appear to reflect a more significant confusion on Ginenthal's part—namely, his repeated misuse of the phrase “the Mitanni” as if it refers to a particular ethnic group or people rather than a geo-political entity with a mixed culture. In fact, Mitanni properly refers to a kingdom from Northern Syria comprised mainly of Hurrians but also showing traces of Indo-Iranian and other elements.

All told Ginenthal spends a grand total of three pages attempting to document this claim, one which, if substantiated, would completely revolutionize ancient history as we know it. He begins by calling attention to the relative paucity of the Median archaeological finds, citing the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: “Few identifiable ‘Median’ objects have been found...since no Median written documents of any kind have ever been uncovered, their spiritual and economic life is also a matter of conjecture.”⁵

After quoting several other authorities to the same effect, Ginenthal offers the following conclusion:

“Yet the so-called Mitanni, unknown to history, have left archaeological evidence in the ground while the well-known Medes have left almost nothing in the strata to tell us of their existence. Heinsohn and Sweeney explain this highly improbable stratigraphical evidence by stating that the Mitanni *are* the Medes, and all the archeological relics attributed to the Mitanni belong to the Medes.”⁶

[* Thrice repeated in this paragraph is the aforementioned phrase “the Mitanni,” a confusion of empire and race unique to Ginenthal, it would appear.]

Ginenthal then goes on to cite Emmet Sweeney as his primary authority on all matters Mitannian and Median:

⁴ C. Ginenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

“From the personal names of the Mitanni kings we know that they were of a race who spoke a language closely related to Persian...virtually identical in fact to the Indo-Iranian language of the Medes. The text of a treaty between Mitanni and the Hittite land shows that Mitra, Varuna, and Indra, deities of Indo-Iranian origin, comprised the Mitanni pantheon. Indo-Iranian technical terms appear with great frequency in the Mitanni vocabulary...True, another racial and linguistic group, designated Hurrian, is evinced in Mitannian documents and personal names. The exact relationship between the Hurrian and Iranian elements is unclear, though it would appear that the Iranian group was dominant, for all the Mitanni kings clearly had Iranian names. Hurrian is non-Indo-European, and is closely related to the language of Urartu, the region of eastern Anatolia immediately south of the Caucasus...One thing is clear: the original Mitanni kingdom occupied almost exactly the same position as historical Media. Even the name Mitanni, or more correctly Mita, is indistinguishable from that of the Medes, the Madai...The capital of Mitanni is generally given as Washukanni, or Washuganni; though, since cuneiform vowels are conjectural, the name could equally be reconstructed as Awshakanna, or Ebshakanna. Furthermore, since in many languages the sounds ‘sh’ and ‘t’ are frequently confused...the name could even be reconstructed as Ebtakanna. The capital of the Medes, rendered Ecbatana by the Hellenic authors, is apparently little more than a hypocoriston [diminutive] of this word.

But the parallels between the Mitanni and the Medes go far beyond mere similarities in homelands and names...For the Median-speaking Mitanni were conquerors of Assyria, as were the Medes themselves, supposedly eight centuries earlier.”⁷

At this point, with nary a sentence of critical analysis with regards to the mountain of evidence contradicting the thesis of Sweeney/Heinsohn/Velikovsky, Ginenthal jumps to the following extraordinary conclusion:

“Is it reasonable to accept that a nation—the Mitanni—that ruled eight hundred years before the Medes, in virtually the same region, should worship the same gods, have the same technical terms, have kings with the same names, and a capital that could clearly be similarly named, all by coincidence? This could be argued against by those in support of the established chronology. However, what takes precedence over this is again scientific and technological facts that corroborate a much shorter chronology; these cannot be dismissed, and they corroborate the Mitanni as being the Medes.”⁸

It would be difficult to find a statement more at odds with the facts than the foregoing. Virtually every claim advanced by Ginenthal is blatantly false. Ginenthal proclaims that the Medes and Mitanni occupied “virtually the same region.” Yet the traditional homeland of the Medes was in the Zagros mountains of western Iran hundreds of miles to the east of Baghdad, while Mitanni was centered on the Khabur triangle in northern Syria, hundreds of miles to the west of Baghdad (see figure one). I dare say that few

⁷ C. Ginenthal, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-265.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 265.

scholars would accept that such disparately located homelands constituted “virtually the same region.”

Nor, for that matter, is it true that they “worshipped the same gods.” Certainly Ginenthal fails to present any evidence in *Pillars of the Past* that would lead us to believe that this was the case. Doubtless he is relying on Sweeney’s statement that Mithra, Varuna, and Indra “comprised the Mitanni pantheon,” a statement as false as his proclamation that the Mitanni empire was “Median-speaking.”⁹

As evidenced by the extant texts, Mitanni religion was distinguished by its eclectic nature. The vast majority of the population — the Hurrian element — worshipped such gods as Teshub, Shauska (a Hurrian Ishtar-like goddess) and Shimige. These gods are regularly invoked in the el-Amarna correspondence, for example (unlike Mithra, Varuna, and Indra, who are never mentioned).¹⁰ There is no evidence whatsoever that the Medes worshipped such gods.

What Ginenthal has in mind, needless to say, is that Mithra, Varuna, and Indra were invoked in a Mitanni treaty with the Hittites (conventionally dated to 1350 BCE), a point emphasized by Velikovsky as well as Sweeney. Insofar as this treaty constitutes the earliest evidence for these prominent Indo-European gods, it is an important bit of religious history. Yet there is no evidence that the Medes worshipped any of these gods either. On the contrary, it will be remembered that Ginenthal quoted the *Encyclopedia* to the effect that Median religion is a “matter of conjecture,” a situation resulting from the fact that no Median texts have thus far been found.¹¹ Nor have any archaeological artifacts yet come to light documenting Median worship of Mithra, Varuna, or Indra. Given the relative paucity of the archaeological evidence, the only conceivable way to gain a glimpse into the Median pantheon would be through a detailed analysis of personal names. Yet I am not aware of any such study attesting to the presence of these three gods in Median nomenclature.

Ginenthal states that the kings of the Medes and Mitanni shared “the same names.” Once again, Ginenthal presents no evidence in support of this claim and there is no reason to believe that it is true. The kings of Mitanni known from the extant texts include Kirta, Suttarna I, Parratarna, Parsatar, Saustatar, Artatama I, Suttarna II, Artasummara, Tusratta, Suttarna III, Sattiwaza, Sattuara I, Wasasatta, and Sattuara II. The most famous kings of the Medes are Cyaxares and Astyages. Now I ask: Is it possible to recognize an identity between these names?

⁹ Hurrian was the language spoken in Mitanni. See G. Wilhelm, “The Kingdom of Mitanni in Second-Millennium Upper Mesopotamia,” in J. Sasson ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East Vol. 2* (Peabody, 1995), p. 1247.

¹⁰ See letters 17, 19, 21 in W. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, 1992, hereafter EA).

¹¹ Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* (Winona Lake, 2002), p. 25, writes “The problem is that we know virtually nothing of Median, for the plain and simple reason that we do not have a single inscription in that language.”

Ginenthal writes that the Median kingdom and Mitanni shared “a capital that could clearly be similarly named.” Here, too, Ginenthal himself offers no evidence in support of this claim. Rather, he has simply accepted as gospel Sweeney’s absurd etymological analysis, one worthy of Norm Crosby.

The capital of the Medes was Ecbatana, located in Iran at modern Hamadan. The Mitanni capital was Wassukanni, yet to be discovered, but generally sought for in the Khabur valley in northern Syria in the general vicinity of Tell Brak.¹² These two sites not only don’t share a common name, they are separated by many hundreds of miles.

Among the most preposterous statements in a book notable for its numerous preposterous statements is Ginenthal’s claim that “the scientific and technological facts” corroborate the identification of Mitanni and the Medes. Yet in the chapter in question Ginenthal doesn’t cite a *single* scientific or technological fact, much less one that unequivocally supports the identification of the Medes and Mitanni.

Lost in the shuffle of empires that Ginenthal would have us believe in are the Hurrians themselves, the principal component of the population of Mitanni. Mitanni kings composed letters in Hurrian and refer to themselves as the rulers of the Hurrian land.¹³ Yet if Mitanni is to be identified with the Median empire of c. 600 BC it must be expected that a Hurrian element will figure prominently in the Median population and culture. Likewise, one must expect that the neighboring cultures that described the Medes—the Greeks, Persians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Hebrews—would mention Hurrian practices, gods, or names. Yet a Hurrian element is conspicuous by its absence in ancient descriptions of the Median empire.

Having now exposed the thoroughly baseless nature of the arguments advanced by Ginenthal and Sweeney, the reader is doubtless curious as to whether Heinsohn’s musings on the Medes and Mitanni fare any better. Amazingly, Heinsohn’s arguments are every bit as incompetent and contrived as those of Sweeney and Ginenthal.

Consider, for example, Heinsohn’s arguments with respect to the alter egos of Cyrus and Astyages. It was Cyrus the Great who laid the foundations for the far-reaching Persian Empire (see figure two) with his victory over the Medes and Astyages in 550 BCE. Since Heinsohn would identify the Median empire with Mitanni he is compelled to find a parallel for Cyrus’s conquest in the annals of Mitanni. Always one for catchy titles, Heinsohn summarized the situation as follows in “Cyrus the Mardian/Amardian Dethroner of the –6th Century Medes and Aziru the Martu/Amurru (Amorite) Dethroner of the –14th Century Mitanni”:

¹² A. Harrak, “Mitanni,” in E. Meyers ed., *Archaeology in the Near East* (New York, 1997), p. 36.

¹³ As in EA 24 in the El Amarna correspondence, for example.

“If my identification of Mitanni and Medes is to prove valid, Media’s last Great King, Astyages (Xenophon’s Cyaxares) must find his alter ego in the last Great King of the Mitanni, Tuisheratta (also Dushratta or Tushratta).”¹⁴

Heinsohn proceeds to offer a number of superficial parallels between the two kings, of which the following two are representative. Heinsohn’s first argument is as follows:

“Where Astyages is described as ‘god-besotted’ (*The History* 1:127), jealous (*Cyropaedia* IV, i, 13) and full of weening pride, ‘the Mitanni (Tuisheratta) had acted with arrogant presumptuousness’ (Goetze 1980a, 13).”¹⁵

No doubt Heinsohn would have us believe that Tushratta and Astyages are unique among ancient rulers of this period in being arrogant and full of weening pride.

Heinsohn’s second argument is equally persuasive:

“According to the cuneiform sources, Tuisheratta does not die in Washukanni. He can leave the city but later falls prey to a murder conspiracy in which one of his own sons plays a role [sources deleted]. The Greek accounts of the fate of Astyages also agree on his survival in and departure from Ecbatana, but differ in many details for the time thereafter. However, Ctesias knows of an intrigue against Astyages by which his death is caused through thirst in a desert [source deleted].”¹⁶

With this sleight-of-hand Heinsohn attempts to gloss over the striking differences between the respective fates of the two kings. Tushratta lost the throne when he was murdered by one of his sons; Astyages, in contrast, not only survived the loss of his kingdom, he was actually wined and dined by Cyrus (Herodotus wrote that “Cyrus kept him near him until his death and did him no other harm.”).¹⁷ Also noteworthy is the fact that Tushratta’s palace at Wassukanni was destroyed shortly after his death by Suttarna III, son of the Hittite vassal Artatama II.¹⁸ The palace of Astyages, in contrast, was retained as the capital of the Medes and continued to serve as the winter residence for the Persian kings (thus Strabo writes: “It continued to preserve much of its ancient dignity; and Ecbatana was winter residence for the Persian kings.”)¹⁹

¹⁴ G. Heinsohn, “Cyrus the Mardian/Amardian Dethroner of the –6th Century Medes and Aziru the Martu/Amurru (Amorite) Dethroner of the –14th Century Mitanni,” *The Velikovskian* 3:1 (1997), p. 23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁷ I:130. P. Briant, *op. cit.*, p. 882, writes “At the same time, Cyrus took care to conduct himself as Astyage’s successor. He spared his life and granted him a princely style of life.”

¹⁸ D. Oates et al., *Excavations at Tell Brak: Vol. I: The Mitanni and Old Babylonian periods* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 151.

¹⁹ XI.13.5. P. Briant, *op. cit.*, p. 882.

Amazingly enough, the fact that Tushratta's palace was destroyed while that of Astyages remained standing does not prevent Heinsohn from identifying the two capitals, separated by many hundreds of miles and, presumably, many hundreds of years. Witness the following statement:

“Because of my identification of Mitanni and Medes, I have suggested several times to end the desperate and costly race for the discovery of the Mitannian capital Washukanni in which so many of our finest archaeologists are wasting their time. The Median capital, Ecbatana, under modern Hamadan, is what they are looking for.”²⁰

Heinsohn's attempt to find a reference to Cyrus the Great within the records describing the Mitanni Empire is every bit as farfetched as the attempt to identify Astyages and Tushratta. For evidence of the Persian ruler he turns to the el-Amarna correspondence, famous for its unique insights into the diplomatic relations between Tushratta's Mitanni and the Egypt of Amenophis III and Akhenaten (Tushratta's daughter would marry both kings):

“The man credited with the downfall of the Median Empire was Cyrus the Mardian/Amardian, later known as Cyrus the Great...My equation of the Indo-Aryan Mitanni—famous for breeding outstanding horses—with the Indo-Aryan Medes—no less famous for breeding outstanding horses—forced me to look for the equivalent of Cyrus in the Amarna correspondence which covers the final years of the Mitannian Empire. There was only one candidate for that role: Aziru the Martu/Amurru with whom that correspondence is virtually obsessed.”²¹

Heinsohn's claim that Cyrus stemmed from the Mardian clan is utterly without foundation, as I documented elsewhere.²² In fact, Cyrus stemmed from the Pasargadae (an Indo-European clan) while Aziru was of Semitic ancestry (the Amurru). But setting such facts aside for the moment, what do the el-Amarna texts reveal about Aziru?

Like his father 'Abdi-Asirtu, Aziru was a double-dealing leader of the vassal-state Amurru, which at the time was busy carrying out raids against the various cities along the Mediterranean coastline. Such nefarious activities had earned the wrath of one Rib-Hadda, the ruler of Byblos, who was constantly complaining about him to the Egyptian pharaoh. For his insubordination, Aziru's father had been called to Egypt and apparently executed.²³ Cyrus' father, in contrast, lived to see his son conquer the world.

In his quest to maintain his precarious hold on power and avoid the fate of his father, Aziru attempted to placate both the Egyptians and the Hittites, alternately pledging allegiance to one empire and then to the other. Aziru would eventually go over to the

²⁰ G. Heinsohn, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

²² E. Cochrane, “Heinsohn's Ancient ‘History,’” *Aeon* 5:4 (1999), pp. 61-65.

²³ R. Cohen & R. Westbrook, “Introduction: The Amarna System,” in *Amarna Diplomacy* (Baltimore, 2000), p. 8. See also EA 101 and 117.

Hittites, where he would remain a loyal vassal to the end of his life. If this fails to remind the reader of Cyrus the Great—he of the glorious military career—there’s a perfectly good reason: The two men have virtually nothing in common. Cyrus ruled over the greatest empire the world had ever seen as of 539 BCE. At the height of his power, Aziru was a governor of Amurru, a tiny vassal state just north of Tripoli on the Mediterranean coast, many hundreds of miles removed from Cyrus’s homeland.²⁴ Throughout his life Aziru remained subject to the whims of his Hittite and Egyptian overlords, hardly the same status enjoyed by the mighty Cyrus, ruler without peer.

To summarize: If Tushratta is to be identified with Astyages, and Cyrus with Aziru, one must expect to find that Mitanni was conquered by the rebel from Amurru. Yet there is no evidence whatsoever that Aziru had anything to do with the eclipse of the Mitanni empire. Where, then, is the alleged parallel Heinsohn would draw between the careers of Cyrus the Great and Aziru?

Heinsohn’s attempt to identify the Medes with Mitanni leads to more problems than it solves, hardly the mark of a sound chronology. For example, because he identifies Hammurabi with Darius, Heinsohn is forced to argue that the Old Babylonian period actually *followed* the downfall of the Medes and Mitanni, thereby reversing history as we know it:

“Hammurabi—to me a Babylonian term for Darius the great Achaemenid lawgiver—stratigraphically and, therefore, also historically lived after Aziru.”²⁵

This claim is testable and it is false. At Tell Brak, for example, the Old Babylonian strata (levels 8 through 10) lay well beneath the strata associated with the Mitanni period (levels 2 through 6), much as anyone would expect upon the conventional reading of history.²⁶

Nor is the situation at Tell Brak unique in this regard. At nearby Alalakh archaeologists found a continuous sequence of 17 architectural levels dating back to the third millennium BCE (the levels span from around 2400 to 1200 BC according to the conventional chronology).²⁷ The most important levels for our purposes here are IV and VII, notable for their royal archives. Texts describing the activities of various Mitanni kings were found in Level IV. Level VII contained texts synchronized with the Old Babylonian period associated with Hammurabi’s first Babylonian Dynasty.²⁸ Since level VII lies well below level IV this situation serves to refute Heinsohn’s claim that Hammurabi and the Old Babylonians lived *after* the Mitanni/Medes.

²⁴ A. James, “Egypt and Her Vassals: The Geopolitical Dimension,” in *Amarna Diplomacy* (Baltimore, 2000), p. 116, describes Amurru as a “mini-state.”

²⁵ G. Heinsohn, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁶ See the discussion in D. Oates et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 35-37.

²⁷ D. Stein, “Alalakh,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East, Vol. I* (New York, 1997), p. 55.

²⁸ E. Greenstein, “Alalakh texts,” in *Ibid.*, p. 59.

In *Pillars of the Past* Ginenthal makes passing reference to my previous critique of Heinsohn's chronology. There he quotes me as follows (the capitalization is Ginenthal's handiwork):

"The relative chronology of the pivotal figures [from ancient history] can be reconstructed in great detail from COUNTLESS ANCIENT DOCUMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES...What, then, are we to make of a historical reconstruction [Heinsohn's] which attempts to turn this intimately intertwined and precisely constructed chronology upside down and topsy-turvy?"²⁹

True to form, Ginenthal mis-transcribes my quote and gives the wrong citation for the article in question.³⁰ Equally typically, he ignores the wealth of evidence cited showing Heinsohn's reconstruction to be impossible. Rather than contest any of my specific arguments, Ginenthal makes yet another appeal to the oft-mentioned "scientific" facts, still hidden from the reader. This leads him to offer the following pronouncement:

"And dutifully Cochrane does cite 'certain [documented] facts' from this 'Interlocking Web of History' to argue with Heinsohn. But this Interlocking Web of History was organized in defiance of many of the scientific and technological established facts that are a certainty and that were known even to the early historians like Petrie. Although their Interlocking Web of Historical Documentation was internally consistent with what they perceived as the proper chronology, it was not then, nor is it now, internally consistent with the known facts of science and technology. This indicates the conventional chronology is not intimately intertwined and precisely connected to the real facts.

This approach to Heinsohn's thesis rests on a basic assumption, namely that the documented historical record is fundamentally sound. The fact of the matter, as was pointed out in the last chapter, is that the historical records of Mesopotamia are highly fragmented and corrupted...Turning to the historical record as confirmation naturally leads to inconsistencies with Heinsohn's hypothesis...Cochrane's arguments face a critical problem: since the documented history is sparse, fragmented, kings were omitted, it was copied wrongly, etc., then turning for evidence to refute Heinsohn from that record is ignoring that that record has these massive problems. Using that record to refute Heinsohn is circular reasoning. How do we know which kings were omitted or which kings' records were distorted or copied wrongly, and so forth? Since we cannot know this with certainty, then that record cannot be called upon as clear evidence to argue against Heinsohn's revision."³¹

²⁹ C. Ginenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

³⁰ The proper citation is E. Cochrane, "Heinsohn's Ancient 'History,'" *Aeon* 5:4 (1999), p. 73.

³¹ C. Ginenthal, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-274.

Unfortunately, Ginenthal fails to inform his readers exactly which “scientific and technological established facts” will show that Hammurabi lived *after* Cyrus and the downfall of the Medes/Mitanni. The truth is, of course, that no such facts exist. Rather, what is well established is that Cyrus conquered Nabonidus in c. 539 BCE and that the latter king, while excavating at Sippar, uncovered royal inscriptions stating that Hammurabi lived many hundreds of years before his time.³² Doubtless Ginenthal believes it is circular reasoning to point out the difficulty this presents for Heinsohn’s hypothesis.

Ginenthal as Historian

How does one go about assessing the credibility of someone who, like Ginenthal, would completely rewrite the history of the ancient world? Certainly education and specialized training are usually important in forming such judgments. Yet Ginenthal has no formal training in the requisite fields of ancient history, archaeology, or linguistics. In the absence of such training, one might consider a writer’s contributions to scholarship in assessing his qualifications as a historian. Yet here, too, Ginenthal’s professional career has not been marked by major contributions to the field of ancient history.

That said, valuable insight into Ginenthal’s credibility as a student of ancient history can be obtained by reviewing his article “Reflections of the Persian Wars,” published in the very first issue of *The Velikovskian*.³³ There, in a spirited defense of Heinsohn’s proposal that Hammurabi is to be identified with Darius, Ginenthal compares Darius’s campaigns against the Greeks with the campaigns of Hammurabi, claiming to find a dramatic similarity in the course of events and their timing. Ginenthal describes his purpose as follows:

“If the same battles were fought in the same chronological order by the same kings in the same chronological order, and the victories and defeats were correspondingly alike, I felt that Professor Heinsohn’s theory must have validity.”³⁴

Ginenthal begins by asking “Did the Babylonians of the First Dynasty engage in a long series of wars with a distant, sea-going people?”³⁵ The answer, according to Ginenthal, is yes, and he then proceeds to cite a source from 1919 claiming that Hammurabi fought a war against the “Sea Country or Sealand people.” Spurred on by this reference to the “Sea Country,” Ginenthal expresses doubts about its conventional placement in the immediate vicinity of Hammurabi’s Babylon (the marshes of southern Babylonia along the Persian Gulf) and then turns to Velikovsky to ferret out the identity of this mysterious “sealand” power. Citing Velikovsky’s *Peoples of the Sea*, Ginenthal writes:

³² G. Leick, *Mesopotamia* (London, 2001), p. 174.

³³ *The Velikovskian* I:1 (1993), pp. 16-26.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

“[Velikovsky] identified the Sea People as the Greeks. His identification is based on several lines of inquiry and seems very well documented. Thus, if the First Babylonian Dynasty is the Persian Dynasty, it is a reasonable assumption that the Sea Country people are also the Greeks.”³⁶

Remarkably, Ginenthal simply assumes what needs to be proved—i.e., that the Old Babylonians of Hammurabi’s time are to be identified with the Persians of Darius’ time! But this is not the only revelation that Ginenthal has in store for his readers. With reference to Heinsohn’s view that “Hammurabi’s mysterious [far away] provinces Hana [Eshunna] and Subartu [Subartum] are really Darius I’s [far away, northwestern] provinces Yauna and Sparda, i.e., Ionia and Lydia,” Ginenthal objects that by Subartu the Greek mainland of Sparta must be meant. Ginenthal writes: “What I suggest instead is that *Sparda* is a cognate of *Sparta*, and that all of the area beyond Ionia in the earliest period was identified by Persia as the largest and most powerful state on the Greek mainland—Sparta.”³⁷

In the pages that follow this conjecture, Ginenthal goes on to speculate that Hammurabi met his end fighting on the Greek mainland. Citing the *Cambridge Ancient History* to the effect that Hammurabi fought wars against Eshnunna, Elam, Gutium, and Subartum, Ginenthal writes:

“Hammurabi fought many battles during this period, as did Darius I. The battle at Marathon, fought in Greece, was merely one among many.”³⁸

Like Heinsohn before him, Ginenthal manages to misidentify the principle opponents of Hammarabi. Subartu is an ancient name for Assyria, a fact abundantly attested in the textual sources from the second and first millennia BCE.³⁹ Thus it is that an inscription from Eshnunna describes the army of Iasmakh-Adad as “the host of Shubartu and Khana.”⁴⁰ The Assyrian king Sargon the younger is described in analogous fashion. Eshnunna itself, far from being identifiable with Ionia, as per Ginenthal, is a well-known city state located 50 miles north of Baghdad (modern Tell Asmar), recognized to be a significant political force during the Old Babylonian period.

The not-so-mysterious “Sealand,” meanwhile, is an ancient Akkadian term referring to the marshes of southern Babylonia.⁴¹ A dynasty of the Sealand is mentioned in early King-lists. Among the Sealand’s most famous leaders was Nabopolassar who, in alliance with the Medes, conquered Nineveh in 612 BCE.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁹ H. Lewy, “Assyria c. 2600-1816 B.C.,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History I:2* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 732-733.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 733.

⁴¹ G. Leick, *op. cit.*, p. 282. See also C. Gadd, “Hammurabi and the End of His Dynasty,” *The Cambridge Ancient History II:1* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 222-224.

In short, by making Hammurabi's campaign against the Subartu into a campaign against the Spartans on the Greek mainland, Ginenthal has completely ignored the specific Mesopotamian context of the events in question and relocated them many hundreds of miles west of any point ever reached by the Babylonian king.

Ginenthal's various other arguments, alleging to draw a connection between the respective rulers who succeeded Hammurabi and Darius, are equally farfetched and fanciful and will not concern us here. The interested reader is directed to the article in question.

Citing Velikovsky about the poor odds of multiple coincidences, Ginenthal concludes his article on a confident note:

“The Babylonian wars against the Sea Country show a distinct parallel with the events of the Persian wars against the Greeks in that all the battles are fought in a parallel chronological order by the same kings, in a parallel chronological order; and all the defeats and victories correspond with each other. A series of events supposedly separated by a long period of time can never attain that degree of corresponding coincidence. Therefore, credit should be given to the view that the Persian wars against the Greeks are the same wars fought by the First Babylonian Dynasty against the Sealand.”⁴²

What are we to make of this bizarre exercise in “reconstructing” history? Ginenthal's reasoning in this article is so fallacious—and his handling of the ancient sources so inept and divorced from reality—that it serves to disqualify him as a credible interpreter of ancient history. Simply put: A fellow who would identify Subartu with Sparta, Eshnunna with Ionia, and Hammurabi with Darius is not to be believed. And when that same fellow assures his readers that “the astonishing fact is that evidence in support of Heinsohn and Sweeney's thesis is undeniable”⁴³ discerning readers will be well-advised to check the evidence—and the original sources—for themselves.

Conclusion

Looking to the likes of Ginenthal and Heinsohn for guidance on matters of ancient chronology is a bit like seeking out Clark Griswold for advice on the best route to Wally's World. I mean, these guys can't seem to get anything right. Witness Heinsohn's confusion over the original whereabouts of Hanigalbat, necessitated by his need to find an alter ego for Cyrus among the Assyrians, which he claimed to find in Adad-nirari (conventionally dated to 1305-1274 BCE):

“Adad-nirari, the empire founder, is known for his wars against an enigmatic nation, read as Chanigalbat, whose no less enigmatic capital, Taidu, he had to conquer two times and whose eventually defeated ruler joined his entourage. For many decades, Assyriology

⁴² C. Ginenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

has looked for Chanigalbat and the legendary riches of its merchant cities in Northern Mesopotamia. To this day, they could not verify a single site. The competition for the discovery of Taidu is still under way. I have identified Taidu as Hyde-Sardes, the capital of Lydia and its dependent Ionian cities (combined as Chanigalbat) which Cyrus has to conquer two times and whose king Croesus eventually joined his entourage as advisor and friend.”⁴⁴

Yet anigalbat is known to be the Assyrian name for Mitanni!⁴⁵ Thus, in one of the el-Amarna letters Tushratta writes the king of Egypt as follows on the eve of the wedding of one of his daughters with the pharaoh: “On that day (i.e., of the wedding) shall Hanigalbat and Egypt be one.”⁴⁶ In short, by looking for anigalbat in Asia Minor Heinsohn is looking for the wrong kingdom in the wrong time and place!

In conclusion, I think it is only fitting that Ginenthal have the last word:

“Based on the established chronology, the Mitanni are said to have ruled in northern Mesopotamia from around 1500 to 1360 B.C. The Old Akkadians or First Babylonians had to have ruled from about 700 to 800 years earlier which allows for the settlement gap. But since that settlement gap does not exist [a reference to the supposed situation at Tell Munbaqa, as portrayed by Heinsohn], the history of Mesopotamia organized over the last century or so, for that period of time, cannot exist. All the events presented in the history books for that time belong to some other time. All the cities said to have been built or inhabited during that time belong to some other time. All the pottery found in the strata for that 700 to 800 year period belong to, and must be assigned to, some other time...Because these immense negations of their established chronology are so damaging, instead of squarely facing up to the evidence from Tell Munbaqa, silence has descended over the field. Rather than accepting the cold hard fact that 700 to 800 years do not exist in Mesopotamian history, archaeologists and historians are engaged in perhaps one of the greatest deceptions in the history of history.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ G. Heinsohn, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴⁵ G. Wilhelm, “The Kingdom of Mitanni in Second-Millennium Upper Mesopotamia,” in J. Sasson ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (Peabody, 1995), p. 1252.

⁴⁶ EA 20. See also the discussion in P. Artzi, “The Diplomatic Service in Action: The Mittani file,” *Amarna Diplomacy* (Baltimore, 2000), p. 207.

⁴⁷ C. Ginenthal, *Pillars of the Past* (Forest Hills, 2003), p. 288.