

The God-name Ninib

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IN *JBL*, 1904, pp. 68-75, I endeavored to show that the biblical name Nisroch applied to an Assyrian deity (2 K. 19³⁷ = Isa. 37³⁶) is probably a corrupt form arising from a late combination of the two Assyro-Babylonian god-names Nusku and Ašur (see especially p. 74). Since this paper has appeared, I note that Professor Hilprecht, in the introduction to Professor Clay's work, *The Business Documents of Murashû Sons*, p. xvii, connects the biblical Nisroch with an equivalent form for NIN. IB, written in Aramaic characters, which appears in four instances reproduced by Clay, *viz.* Nos. 29, 87, 5508, 5514 (cf. *op. cit.* p. xviii).

These documents of Murashû Sons are all dated in the reign of Darius II. (424-404 B.C.), and many of them are docketed in Aramaic script by the scribe with the name of the person who was disposing of his property (*op. cit.* p. 9). Among the most interesting of the proper names thus recorded are the four instances cited, which undoubtedly give the then current pronunciation of the much-disputed god-name NIN. IB. Unfortunately for Assyriology, the Aramaic reproduction leaves us almost as much in the dark about the true pronunciation as does the Sumerian ideogram NIN. IB. It appears in four forms as follows: ¹



¹ Reproduced from Clay, *op. cit.* p. xviii.

Hilprecht (p. xvi) suggests that these readings represent the Hebrew characters נשׁרמ , which he thinks recall the ideographic writing NIN. ŠAX 'lord of swine,' and he accordingly connects this god-name³ with the biblical Nis-roch, supposing that the ר and שׁ were transposed, in order to facilitate the pronunciation. Both Hilprecht and Clay are agreed that the first two consonants of this Aramaic name are מ . Of this I think there can be no doubt, and it is equally clear, as Clay has definitely proved (*op. cit.* p. 8), that the last character is a perfect נ and not ן (so Hilprecht). It should be added that Hilprecht's reading takes no account of the מ . The fourth letter is of course שׁ . There remains then only the third character in doubt, which may be read ר , ל , or י . Thus in No. 29, it seems more like a ר or ל , while in No. 87 it may be either י or ר . The orthographic uncertainty is not cleared up by No. 5508 or No. 5514.

In searching for Semitic epithets of NIN. IB, I find that in Ašurn. I. 1, this god is designated by *māru rēšū* 'the chief son,' as a characteristic title. This has led me to believe that the third character of this name is not י , as Clay thinks, but rather ר . As I have already suggested in a note in the *Independent* for Dec. 22, 1904, p. 1450, I read the Aramaic Babylonian name of NIN. IB as $\text{נשׁרמ} = \text{ēnu rēšū}$ 'the chief lord.' *Enu*⁴ is the well-known Sumerian loanword in Semitic for *bēlu* 'lord,' which in this age represented the character NIN. This character could mean *bēlu* 'lord,' though more commonly used for *bēltu* 'lady.' Of course, the regular Sumerian reading of NIN was *ni, nin*⁴

³ NIN. ŠAX 'lord of swine' may have been, as Jastrow suggests (*Religion*, p. 93), a swine-deity, i.e. a god whose symbol was the wild boar, just as Nergal's symbol was the lion. There can be no doubt that the god NIN. ŠAX was occasionally identified with NIN. IB. The Syriac נשׁרמ cited by Hilprecht (Clay, *op. cit.* p. xvi) in support of his identification of this Aramaic Babylonian god-name with NIN. IB must be נרמ , cf. Hrozný, *Ninrag*, p. 83. Professor Hilprecht evidently mistook the Syriac ר for שׁ .

⁴ For Semitic *ēnu* 'lord' = *bēlu*, cf. Delitzsch, *Ass. HWB*, p. 96 b. The feminine form is *ēntu* 'lady'; *ēntu* 'government' also occurs. *Rēnū* is a synonym of *ašrīdu* 'chief, leading one.'

⁴ Cf. Brūnnow's List, 10982-10983.

and not *en*, but *en* was the regular Sumerian word for lord (*en* = EN), and in the case of the god NIN. IB represented a male and not a female deity; hence *énu* would be a natural Semitic translation for NIN. This form *énu réstá* I must regard as the conventional Semitic reading of the name of NIN. IB in the reign of Darius. The only objection to my opinion is perhaps the fact that the final *á* is not indicated in the Aramaic text, but this is not a serious defect, because Hebrew and Aramaic scribes were not very particular in indicating their vowels, whether long or short. There can be no doubt that in these Murashû texts the Aramaic dockets gave the *Semitic Babylonian* pronunciation of the god-names and *not* the ancient Sumerian pronunciation,⁵ concerning which we get no light from these readings. Thus, the god MAR. TU is called *bél šadi* 'lord of the mountains' (p. 8), while KUR. GAL is translated by 𐤎𐤍, the pronunciation of which is doubtful, although I believe that these characters represent the form *Amurru*, as Clay hints.

In short, I think there can be no doubt that in this Aramaic combination denoting the god NIN. IB, we have neither of the Sumerian elements NIN., or ŠAX., as Hilprecht suggests, but a Semitic equivalent of NIN. IB⁶ which can have

⁵ In K. 4829, Rev. 15 ff. (Hrozy, *op. cit.* pp. 14 ff.), the god-name NIN. IB is written NIN. IB -*ga*, i.e. with the guttural -*ga* as complement. This shows probably that the final syllable *ib* could be pronounced -*ig*, i.e. *Nin-ig*. The close affinity between *b* and *g* in Sumerian is well known; cf. *tub-tug* = KU; *Jab-Jag*, etc. This *Nin-ib*, *Nin-ig* probably represents the later Mandaean 𐤍𐤁, Syriac ܢܝܒ, which, as Hrozy has correctly pointed out (*op. cit.* p. 88), is not Nergal (so Jensen, *Kosm.* pp. 135, 476), but really *Nin-ib*, *Nin-ig*, the name of the tutelary deity of the planet Mars. Hrozy (*op. cit.* pp. 82-88) thinks he finds here a confirmation of his rather fanciful reading *Nin-rag* for *Nin-ib*, but the *r* in 𐤍𐤁𐤓𐤍 may merely be a later alteration of the earlier *n*, thus *Nin-ig* = Mandaean-Syriac *Nērtgh*.

⁶ Professor Clay writes me that, with regard to the interpretation of this god-name, he has received the following additional opinions as to the way the respective consonants are to be read: 1) *In-aristi*, the Semitic equivalent of *Nin-urash*. This "equivalent" is of course invented for the occasion. It is highly probable that *urash* is merely the inversion of *šarru* 'king,' and it is not likely that the word *urash* would have a Semitic feminine form. 2) בלמ־רשת 'lord of decision,' a most unlikely interpretation of the consonants. 3) *En-eristi* 'lord of decision.' This, while possible, is not as

no connection whatever with the biblical Nisroch. I see no reason therefore, on account of this evidence, to depart from my original opinion regarding the name Nisroch.

acceptable as my reading *šau rēšū*, owing to the use of the word *rēšū* as a characteristic epithet of NIN. IB. 4) *Urašat*, fem. of *Uraš*. See above on 1). 5) *רֶשֶׁת* = Ninib and Nimrod, both being equivalent to *namurta* 'light,' 'early light.' This is too absurd to require comment.