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. 19:37 = Isa. 37:38) 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 ניניב, which he thinks recall the ideographic writing NIN. ŠAX 'lord of swine,' and he accordingly connects this god-name with the biblical Nisroch, supposing that the נ and ו were transposed, in order to facilitate the pronunciation. Both Hilprecht and Clay are agreed that the first two consonants of this Aramaic name are נ. 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 ו (so Hilprecht). It should be added that Hilprecht's reading takes no account of the נ. The fourth letter is of course ו. There remains then only the third character in doubt, which may be read נ, נ, or נ. Thus in No. 29, it seems more like a נ or נ, while in No. 87 it may be either נ or נ. 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 מָרֻ אֹּלֹס 'the chief son,' as a characteristic title. This has led me to believe that the third character of this name is not נ, as Clay thinks, but rather נ. 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 ניניב = ēnu אֹּלֹס 'the chief lord.' ēnu is the well-known Sumerian loanword in Semitic for בֵּלְו 'lord,' which in this age represented the character NIN. This character could mean בֵּלְו 'lord,' though more commonly used for בֵּלְו 'lady.' Of course, the regular Sumerian reading of NIN was נ, ניניב

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 ניניב cited by Hilprecht (Clay, op. cit. p. xvi) in support of his identification of this Aramaic Babylonian god-name with NIN. IB must be ניניב, cf. Hrozny, Ninrig, p. 83. Professor Hilprecht evidently mistook the Syriac ניניב for ניניב.

For Semitic ēnu 'lord' = בֵּלְו, cf. Delitzsch, Assy. HWB, p. 96 b. The feminine form is אֹּלֹס 'lady'; אֹּלֹס 'government' also occurs. אֹּלֹס is a synonym of אֹּלֹס 'chief, leading one.'

Cf. Brünnow'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 enu would be a natural Semitic translation for NIN. This form enu rēṣīd 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 艿 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 Murashū texts the Aramaic dockets gave the Semitic Babylonian pronunciation of the god-names and not the ancient Sumerian pronunciation, concerning which we get no light from these readings. Thus, the god MAR. TU is called bēl iadī 'lord of the mountains' (p. 8), while KUR. GAL is translated by נורו, 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. IB which can have

6 In K. 4829, Rev. 16 ff. (Hrozny, 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. tāb-tūg = KU; tāb-tāg, etc. This Nin-ib, Nin-ig probably represents the later Mandaean יֶנ, Syriac יֶנ, which, as Hrozny has correctly pointed out (op. cit. p. 88), is not Nergal (so Jensen, Koem. pp. 135, 476), but really Nin-ib, Nin-ig, the name of the tutelary deity of the planet Mars. Hrozny (op. cit. pp. 82-83) thinks he finds here a confirmation of his rather fanciful reading Nin-rog for Nin-ib, but the r in חֹרֶנ may merely be a later alteration of the earlier n, thus Nin-ig = Mandaean-Syriac נורו.

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-eritti, 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) הָרַע 'lord of decision,' a most unlikely interpretation of the consonants. 3) En-eritti '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 šan rēšu, owing to the use of the word rēšu as a characteristic epithet of NIN. IB. 4) Urašat, fam. of Uraš. See above on 1). 5) NINIB = Ninib and Nimrod, both being equivalent to šamasu: a light,' 'early light.' This is too absurd to require comment.