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THE ORIGIN AND REAL NAME OF NIMROD

BY E. G. H. KRAELING

Union Theological Seminary, New York

The figure of the biblical Nimrod has ever attracted the attention of Assyriologists and numerous have been the attempts to explain the origin and name of this builder of Babel. A number of years ago the writer became convinced that the name could not be separated from the city of Marad and that it was an epithet of LUGAL-MARAD-DA, a god worshiped at that place. The city of Marad was a center of great importance in early times; thus in the days of the kings of Ur the patesi of Marad follows in rank the patesis of Lagash, Um-ma, and Babylon.\(^1\) Its zikkurat or tower is mentioned II R, 50, col. 7, 17 (E-GAR-GÁ-UL-UL). The son of the great Naram-Sin was ishakku or governor of Marad—a fact implying that it was a very prominent post—and founded there the temple of the god LUGAL-MARAD-DA. Several thousand years later Nebuchadrezzar piously restored this edifice, and both the foundation and the restoration inscriptions of this “Nimrod” temple, as I would like to call it, have recently come to light.\(^2\)

LUGAL-MARAD-DA simply means “king (lugal) of Marad.” The title “king,” however, can be circumscribed by EN = “lord” (or NIN which in the older period also can mean “lord” and is basically the same word). The king of Marad could therefore be called EN-MARAD or NIN-MARAD, “lord of Marad.” Professor Prince cited my view that EN-MARAD is the biblical Nimrod in JAOS, XL (1920), 201 f. A recent discovery enables us to furnish definite proof that this is the case. It had long been known that a god LUGAL-BAN-DA was prominently worshiped at Marad. He was the patron deity of Gilgamesh to whom appeal is made by the hero in the epic. Poebel’s dynastic tablet from Nippur taught us that LUGAL-BAN-DA was really an old, semimythical king, the third ruler of the first kingdom of Erech. And now the newly

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\(^1\) Cf. Hommel, Geographie und Geschichte des Alten Orienta, I (1907), 307.

\(^2\) Clay, Miscellaneous Inscriptions (1915), Nos. 10 and 34.
published "God list for school use" proves that BAN, the second element in this name, must be read phonetically as -marad-, so that LUGAL-BAN-DA = Lugal-marad-da.¹ To cap the climax, we find in II R, 57:23cd the god EN-BAN-DA, who must now be read En-marad-da, and this supplies us with the exact by-form of Lugal-marad-da that we had postulated. The alternate form Nin-marad may have also been current, but it does not happen to occur in the inscriptions.² Philologically this explanation of the name certainly seems acceptable.

But can we show that historically or mythologically any affinity exists between Nimrod and the "lord of Marad"?

In the dynasty tablet from Nippur, already cited, the following names open the list of the kings of E-an-na (i.e., Erech).³

1. Meš-ki-in-qa-še-īr, son of Šamaš, high priest and king............. 325
2. En-me-ir-kār, son of the former.................................... 420
3. Lugal-marad-da, the shepherd.................................. 1200
4. Dumu-zi,⁴ the hunter from the city of KHA-A.................... 100
5. GISH-BIL-GA-MES,⁵ son of the goddess Nin-sun and the high priest of the city of Kullab........................................ 126

The mythically long reigns of these rulers at once remind one of the biblical antediluvinis; and above all, Lugal-marad-da is given the supreme reputation for longevity—which in terms of our language means that he is the greatest of them all. Now Albright has shown that En-me-ir-kār, predecessor of Lugal-marad-da, is identical with Euēchoros,⁶ the grandfather of Gilgamos in the legend recorded by Aelian, and that this legend originally referred to the birth of Lugal-marad-da. He was born in secret by the daughter of En-me-ir-kār,

¹ Schroeder, MVAG, XXI, 180 ff.
² Albright, JAOS, XL, 335, postscript, says, "Kraeling's suggestion En-marad-quoted by Prince, is nearly correct." He himself prefers Nin-marad (p. 314)—a form which naturally also occurred to me—and arrived at his conclusion without knowing of my views. On account of the occurrence of En-marad-da, however, I choose to abide by my original suggestion. The transition of -parse value in Nimrod is well explained by Albright's comparison of Babylonian Dagān with West Semitic Dagān.
⁴ As Tammuz-Adonis this ancient king of Erech received the worship of the Orientals for thousands of years. He is called "the hunter," but is more a tragic than a heroic figure in legend; cf. the material in Jeremias, Altorientalische Geisteskultur (1913), pp. 263 ff.
⁵ Otherwise written Gilgamesh, the famous hero of the epic.
⁶ The name has been handed down as Seuēchoros, but the initial S is merely ditography of the last letter of the preceding word; cf. Albright, op. cit., p. 311.
doubtless was in some way raised by a shepherd, and later came to the throne.¹ This accounts for the fact that he is called "the shepherd." His pastoral character must not mislead us to picture him as a flute-playing Anacreonite; the example of David shows that the wild, free life of the ancient shepherd was the best school for a warrior. The allusion "Shepherd" merely is to remind of the legend; just so Sargon might be called the "gardener," in remembrance of the legend about his youth.

_Lugal-marad-da_ = "lord of Marad" is of course not a genuine personal name, but a title, and the fact that this title has caused the real name of its bearer to pass into oblivion shows that it was famous and much used. Like the "old man of the mountains," the lord of Marad was known far and wide. Originally a real hero of flesh and blood, he became a god as early as the days of Naram-Sin, the memory of his greatness being idolized by his people at Marad later in less glorious times. The rôle that he played as god clearly indicates that he was first of all a warrior, for he is regarded as a manifestation of the Babylonian war-god Urta (NIN-IB).² The passage already cited, II R, 57:23cd, explains _En-marad-da_ as _Urta šabit purussû ilâ_ ("who proclaims the decisions of the gods"), and elsewhere we have the group _dlugal-marad-da_ _dMash_, thus identifying _Mash_ (= _Urta_) with the lord of Marad. This fits very well the biblical statement about Nimrod that he began to be a hero (_gibbor_) upon earth (Gen. 10:8).

The militant hero of ancient times was usually a hunter; the chase of the lion or of the wild ox or of the boar was the next best excitement to war, and we therefore find the Assyrian kings deeply interested in the chase. Hundreds of representations on Babylonian seals show a heroic figure grappling with or slaughtering a lion. It has been customary to regard this figure as Gilgamesh; some scholars have observed, however, that the so-called Gilgamesh scenes on the seals do not illustrate the epic at all in the form in which it has been handed down to us.³ The lion-killing is certainly very incidental and even problematic in the epic (col. ii, 1). I would like to suggest

¹ The legend that has been immortalized by Sophocles in his Oedipus tragedy shows similar motives and may have been influenced by oriental stories.
² So expressly in Schroeder's god list, op. cit., text, II. 2, 15, 17.
³ Cf. O. Weber, _Altorientalische Siegelbilder_ (1920), I, 14 ff.
that these scenes really refer to our king of Marad. Since Gilgamesh
worships him as patron deity, he must have been a greater hero than
Gilgamesh. Only through such seal representations can the fame
of Nimrod as a great hunter have become current among the Hebrews.

From this point of view we may be able to determine the original
meaning of the proverb which already at an early date caused the
interpolation of verse 9 into the text of Genesis, chapter 10. An
inveterate and successful hunter in Israel is said to be “like Nimrod,
a mighty hunter before the face of Yahweh.” Remembering the fact
that the Assyrian Heracles was often portrayed as a giant,¹ we may
conclude that this expression originally is meant very literally as
“measuring up to divine size,” therefore superhuman, extraordinary.
(It must be recalled that the monuments always portray the gods
as much bigger than their human adorants.) Wherever the words
“before the face of Yahweh” occur in a like connection the meaning
“extraordinary” fits excellently (Jonah 3:3, an extraordinarily large
city; Gen. 6:11, extraordinarily wicked). The Old Testament
remembers that Nimrod was not one of the primeval gods, but
rather a mortal who reached the divine estate; this presupposes
that the legends about the king of Marad were well known.

It has seemed peculiar to many that J makes Nimrod a Cushite.
But let us not forget that J’s home was in Judea and that the southern
Judeans had much contact with South Arabia. The caravan road
from South Arabia to the Mediterranean Sea led to Gaza, and the
treasures of the East were shipped from thence to other lands. It is
not accidental that J knows about the gold of the land of Havila as
well as its bdellium and onyx stones. The name Cush in the Old
Testament often includes Arabia as well as Ethiopia and the region
of Chaldea can without difficulty be described as belonging to Cush.
The cultural rather than the physiographical standpoint was the
leading one for J; and it is quite clear that Chaldea, not only in
late days, but also in the earliest times, was in close touch with
central and southern Arabia. New groups of Arabian tribes were
constantly filtering into that region—the region of the city of Marad
—and maintaining intercourse with their relatives farther west.

¹ Cf. the illustration in Jeremias, Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients
(1916), p. 159.
What is more natural than that the news of the mighty king of
Marad, the patron for every bandit and herdsman, should have
passed into Arabia and through Arabia to southern Palestine?
Proudly the Arab would boast of him as “one of our own—a Cushite.”
And so the Hebrew huntsman on the Edomite frontier, the man of
the Esau type who was only found in the south, since in the north
lived the more effeminate husbandman of Jacob’s kind, heard and
passed on the story of that hunter of hunters of long ago.\footnote{1}
If the news had come by way of northern Syria, Nimrod would never have
been made a “Cushite.” As it is, the connection with Arabia is
plain.\footnote{2}

It seems surprising at the first glance that the Old Testament
claims to have knowledge of Nimrod’s kingdom, for two millennia
lie between the days of the king of Marad and the biblical narrator.
Under those circumstances it would be idle to expect historical
accuracy and to require of us to show that En-marad-da had done
all the things attributed to Nimrod. We must rather expect to
find that the mythical Nimrod has attracted to himself much that
is not of his own accomplishment.

We can safely assert that “Nimrod the city-builder” has stolen
Hammurabi’s laurels. If we are told that the beginning of his
kingdom was Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh\footnote{3} in the land of
Shinar, we plainly have the rise of Babylon under Hammurabi pre-
supposed, for only through this king’s activity did the city of Marduk
come into the foreground. Very naturally he must have subjected
Erech, Akkad, and Nippur in the course of his empire-building, but
the fact that neither Larsa nor Nisin are mentioned shows that
there is no conscious attempt to describe Hammurabi’s history. J
merely mentions a few of the famous Babylonian cities that happen
to occur to him.

\footnote{1}{The stories of the lion-killing of Samson (Judges 14:6) and David (I Sam. 17:35)
may have been influenced or inspired by the representations on the Babylonian seals
that were passed about in Palestine.}

\footnote{2}{The suggestion that Cush is really the Babylonian city of Kish (Van Gelderen,
\textit{The Expositor} [1914], pp. 276 ff.; recently also Burkitt, \textit{Jour. Theol. Stud.}, 1920) is neither
necessary nor convincing.}

\footnote{3}{No explanation of Calneh has yet been offered that is preferable to Hilprecht’s
and Hommel’s \textit{Nippur (Ki-illina, spoken for Ki-enil, “the city of the god Enlil”)}; cf.
Landesdorfer, \textit{Sumerisches im Allen Testament} (1916), p. 28. The emendation to
\textit{Kullaba} (Jensen) is unlikely because this was merely a suburb of Erech.}
When we are told that Nimrod went forth from Shinar to Ashur (Gen. 10:11), we dare not expect to have before us any direct knowledge of an ancient conquest of Assyria by Hammurabi or Lugalmarad-da. The figure of Nimrod has here assumed an idealistic nature; it symbolizes the imperialism of the eastern Semites. The going forth from Babel to Ashur signifies merely that the star of empire passed westward. Therefore Ashur can be called "the land of Nimrod" (Mic. 5:4 f.) in later times, while a thousand years earlier this epithet only fitted Babel.

Some of the geographical detail of Gen. 10:11 f. is very puzzling. Shall we assume that a traveler who had visited Nineveh brought back and handed down an exact account of small towns in its immediate vicinity? Only such a supposition would permit us to adopt the view that Rehoboth Ir is a rēbit-Nina¹ and Resen a rish-ēni.² But if the westward trend of the star of empire is described in Nimrod's going out to Ashur, we would rather expect the names of great and famous cities, similar to those mentioned in Babylonia. It is unlikely that the writer should have known, or that the reader should have cared about, such minor sites as the above-mentioned identifications.

The name Rehoboth³ might be an appellation given to any great city that had a number of "public squares" and was an important center of commercial activity. The use of a secondary name or of an appellative often becomes predominant; thus Jerusalem became known as Ḳadōsh—"the holy one" (today still El-Ḳuds). Rehoboth possibly applied to Arbela, which ranks with Nineveh and Calah as one of the greatest of Assyrian cities; but Raṣappa (the biblical Rezeph) should also receive mention because its name, meaning "paved street," suggests affinity with "public squares,"⁴ and because it was an important outpost on the Aramean frontier. If Resen refers to a large city, then the localization "between Nineveh and Calah" must be a gloss, like the other statement following it, "that

¹ Cf. Delitzsch, Paradies, p. 216.
³ König, Die Genesis (1919), p. 402, rightly says that Ir is not a part of the name, but merely emphasizes the use of the common word Rehoboth as a proper name.
⁴ Cf. my Aram and Israel (1918), p. 63, and Herzdell and Sarre, Am Euphrat und Tigris, I (1911), p. 136. It is not quite clear, however, whether Raṣappa was an Assyrian possession as early as the time of the Jahwist.
is the great city.’’ Perhaps the time-honored caravanserai Resaina (Rās-el-ʾain) is the original Resen. But these suggestions must be taken as very hypothetical, since it is impossible to demonstrate them. The point to be emphasized is that it is the mention of really important cities that should be expected.

A city king of ancient Marad, whose true name remains forgotten, then a god of war and of the chase, and finally the symbol of the imperialism of the eastern Semites, such has been the career of En-marad = Nimrod. At Wannet-es-Sa ʿdūn, a mound on the Euphrates, west of Nippur, marking the site of Marad, his career was begun. There Naram-Sin’s son built E-igi-kalama, “the house of the eye of the lands,” as the place where Nimrod was to be worshiped, because the divine hero had been his father’s helper in battle. Thus reads the inscription on the door socket of the original Nimrod temple (Clay, Misc. Inscr., No. 10):

Naram-Sin, the mighty king of the four quarters, the conqueror of nine armies in one year, when those armies he overcame and their three kings he bound and before Enlil brought, in that day Libet-ili, his son, the ruler of Marad, the temple of Lugal-marad-da in Marad built. Whosoever alters this inscription may Shamash and Lugal-marad-da tear out his foundation and exterminate his seed.