

BALADAN, THE FATHER OF MERODACH-BALADAN

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In the name Merodach-Baladan has been recognized the Hebrew writing of the name of Marduk-apla-iddina, the Chaldaean claimant to the throne of Babylon in the late eighth century BC. (The identification seems to have been made independently by Edward Hincks and Sir Henry Rawlinson in their initial decipherments of Sennacherib's inscriptions.¹) As it happens, he is described simply as a member of the dynasty of Yakin from the south of the country in Akkadian sources; his father is not named. Only the Old Testament appears to give the father's name, 2 Kings 20:12 = Isaiah 39:1 having מְרֹאֲדִין בְּלֶאֱדָן בֶּן בְּלֶאֱדָן.² Commentators have adopted widely differing views on this name; at one extreme Baladan has been rejected as 'inaccurate', presumably merely a doublet from the son's name,³ while others have proposed that the father's name was formed exactly as the son's, which means 'Marduk has given an heir', but with another divine name in place of Marduk, and that the divine name has been omitted by Babylonian usage, shortening the name to Apla-iddina in a well-known fashion.⁴ It is unlikely that a pagan divine name has been suppressed by pious scribes in the light of the full

¹ See A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, John Murray, London (1853) 139ff. The story of Merodach-Baladan has been presented with full references by J. A. Brinkman in *Studies Presented to A. Leo Oppenheim*, Chicago University Press (1964). On p. 9, n. 15 the matter of his parentage is discussed.

² Ki. 20:12 has מְרֹאֲדִין בְּלֶאֱדָן which J. A. Montgomery explained as a current phonetic usage (ICC *I and II Kings*, ad loc.); cf. W. von Soden, *Ergänzungsheft zum Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik*, Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome (1969), § 27b.

³ J. Gray, *I and II Kings*, SCM Press, London (1964) 638; but note that the sentence has been omitted from the second edition (1970) 701.

⁴ E.g. A. H. Sayce in *HDB s.v.*; H. W. F. Saggs, *Iraq* 20 (1958) 207, n. 5; W. W. Hallo, *BA* 23 (1960) 56 (= *Biblical Archaeologist Reader* II, Doubleday, New York (1964) 182).

form of the son's name, and the retention of Nisroch, however deformed, just before (2 Ki. 19:27 =Is. 37:38).

Beside the possibility of a shortened form, this note offers an alternative explanation of the father's name.⁵ Among the Aramaic annotations scratched on cuneiform tablets to describe the document, to name some of the principals for ease of reference, or, in a few cases, to record a whole deed, are many including the divine name Bēl (West-Semitic Ba'al).⁶ This name is written simply בל as in Isaiah 46:1, so that we find בלאַדן for the Babylonian Bēl-iddina in a text of c. 420 BC.⁷ Although the Aramaic transcriptions of the eighth and seventh centuries BC spell the second element without the initial *aleph*, e.g. נבוסמדין 'Nabu-shum-iddina',⁸ its presence in the son's name leaves no doubt about the possibility of the interpretation—the spelling may reflect a stage in the history of the text's vocalization. The name of Merodach-Baladan's father, therefore, may be read בלאַדן for Bēl-iddin(a) equally as well as Baladan for Apla-iddin(a), the traditional pointing being influenced by the son's name.

⁵ My colleague K. A. Kitchen has already suggested reading Bēl-iddin in the *Theological Students' Fellowship Bulletin* 41 (1965) 21, without citing the Aramaic evidence.

⁶ These have recently been gathered together by F. Vattioni, *Augustinianum* 10 (1970) 493-532.

⁷ Vattioni no. 79 = L. Delaporte, *Epigraphes Araméens*, Geuthner, Paris (1912), no. 76.

⁸ Vattioni no.16 = Delaporte no. 16, 652 BC; cf. the Aramaic letter from Ashur which has שומדין for Shuma-iddina (H. Donner, W. Röllig, *Kanaandische und Aramäische Inschriften*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden (1964,1969), no. 233, line 21).