

THE (PRE)HISTORY AND PROTO-MEANING OF HITTITE *NINK-* AND *NINI(N)K-*

JAAN PUHVEL

A PERUSAL of the relevant entries in *CHD* (1989) and *HEG* (1991) highlights shortfalls in understanding the verbs *nink-* and *nini(n)k-*. One earlier, particularly confused treatment ("Die Sprache" 18 [1972], p. 43) even allowed how the author was "fed up" with the whole mess. Rather than acquiesce in such sad satiety, a new approach seems in order.

Starting with the simpler verb *nink-*, "saturation" of a sort does happen to be at its semantic core, more specifically satiation by ingesting liquids, contrastively combined with *(-za) ispai-* 'be sated' with regard to solid victuals (*wetenit ispiya-* 'sate with water' is found only in unidiomatic foreign-based hippological jargon): e.g. *KUB xxxiii 62 iii 10-11 sumes ezrastin nu-za ispittin ekuten-ma nu-za nikten* 'eat and be sated, drink and get your fill!'. But *(-za) nink-* never combines with more generic *-za has-sik-* 'be sat(ia)ted' (which latter in turn relates to liquids when contrasted with *[-za] ispai-*). The causative *ninganu-* means 'soak, ply with liquid', as when a bloodied sacrificial pit (*ASRU*) is drenched inside with assorted brews (*KBo xiii 101 i 28-29*). I have found no example of the Hittites (unlike some contemporary regimes) practicing water torture, but plying with intoxicants is well documented, so that most attested cases of *ninganu-* come under the heading of 'make drunk, besot, inebriate', and *ninkant-* tends to match in meaning *akuwant-* 'drunken', as in *KUB lvi 17 Vs. 8-9 n-as ninkanza LU-as man arpiyat[tari] nu tekan KAR-zi* 'he like a drunkard is down on his luck and hits the ground'. This tinge tends to get the better semantically of *(-za) nink-* at large (e.g. *KUB xvii 5 i 11-12 n-asta^{DUG} palhan humandan ek[uir] n-e-za ninker* 'they drank the entire vat and they were besotted'), but the base-meaning is that of soaking up a full measure of liquid, in the case of living beings notably by ingestion, and irrespective of inebriation (cf. Lat. *quom tu satura atque ebria eris* 'when you [fem.] have had enough to eat and drink' [Terence, *Hecyra* 5.2.3]; also the compound noun *ispi-ningatar* 'fill of food and drink' [*KBo xxxix 66 + xxiv 85, 8; HED 6:204*]). There is consequently no alcoholic "high" involved, as E. H. Sturtevant (e.g. *Comparative Grammar*² [1951], p. 127) and acolytes notoriously postulated. The basic sense is one of

soaking, sloshing, and smashing with liquid, at some point with slangy extension to drunkenness (similar to English 'sloshed, smashed, stoned, plastered').

A similar sense can still be observed in *nini(n)k-*, notably *KBo* VIII 47 Vs. 10 *karittiyas nininkanta* 'floods will soak in', which in omen literature matches Akk. *mīlū ina nagbi illakūni* 'floods will seep into groundwater'. Similarly *KBo* xxxi 12, 6 ^D*SUR-as ninikzi* means 'rainstorm soaks' (*SUR* = *Adad ša zunni* 'raingod'), and *KUB* xxx 55 Rs. 6 reads ^D*SUR-gas nininku* [was 'of rainstorm soaking']. This example leads to a comparison with *KUB* VIII 28 Vs. 14 ^D*Ni-in-ga-as nini[kzi]*, with a likely equation ^D*SUR-ga-* = ^D*Ninga-*. There is also *KBo* xviii 11 Vs. 7 ^D*Ni-in-ga[-]* and *HFAC* 84, 3, 7, 9 *ni-in-ga-as* ("JCS" 37 [1985], p. 49), seemingly a thematic noun of the type *harka-*, *harpa-*, *kuera-*, *parsa-*, thus a 'soak(ing)'. Yet *KUB* VIII 28 Vs. 14 ^D*Ningas nini[kzi]* matches *KUB* xxxvii 163 (Akk.) *passim ri-i-bu i-ru-ub* 'quake quakes' or 'shake shakes' (*rābu* 'quake, shake'), seemingly making ^D*Ninga-* = ^D*SUR(-ga-)* both 'Soak(er)', 'Drench(er)' and 'Shake(r)', 'Quake(r)'. Thus ambiguously in *KUB* v 4 ii 6 ^D*SUR-za UL kuitki HUŠ-ue-ni* (= *nāhuweni*) 'we have no fear' of either flood or quake.

To understand such duality it helps to live in earthquake country and apply the experience to Hittite seismic vocabulary. *KUB* xxix 9 i 26-28 describes an "upthrust" quake: *takku-kan UKÜ-an* ^{GIS}*NÁ-antes kattan sa-rā siyanzi n-as-san [...]* *lagāri* 'if the bed tosses a man up from below, and he is knocked [...]'. This type is distinct from lateral quaking (*ibid.* i 6 *É-ri anda katkattiya* 'it shakes inside the house'). The verb *katkattiya-* combines notions of shaking and soaking, describing both quaking and the shrugging of washed racehorses (cf. Arm. *kat'kat'el* 'drip'). Seismic convulsing and demonic dripping are matched in mythic traditions from the Caucasus to Iceland, from Amirani to Loki (cf. J. Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* [1987], p. 217). The underlying phenomenon may be that of soil liquefaction in earthquakes and the creation or exposure of underground watercourses. In Greece, "earthshaker" Poseidon was involved specifically with subterranean waters and seismically induced springs.

Apart from this residual meaning of 'soak, shake', *nini(n)k-* evolved a more generic and abstract range of 'shake, stir', be it hostility (*KUB* xxxi 141 Vs. 6 *kurur-ma nininkiskizzi*) or ghosts (*KBo* ii 6 ii 56 *nu* *GIDIM nininkiskanzi*), or simply disturbing the peace (*KUB* xiii 4 iii 37-39 *kuiski nikzi n-as-kan mān ŠĀ É.DINGIR-LIM niniktari nu hallūwain iyazi n-asta EZEN zahzi* ... '(if) someone is inebriated, if inside a shrine he acts up, starts a fight, and beats up an observance ...'). A further semantic atte-

nuation of 'shake, stir' yielded 'set in motion, move, engage', leading to a military technicalization as 'mobilize, levy, round up, rally', evidently abetted by the parallel Akk. *dekū* 'stir, rouse; levy' and *namāšu* 'start, move' (with *KBo* x 12 ii 29-30 [*nu mā*]n ... [*sakuw*]assarit *ZI-nit* [*ISTU ERÍN. M]EŠ ANŠU.KUR.RA.MEŠ UL neniktari* 'if thou dost not with true spirit move with troops and chariotry' cf. the parallel Akkadian *KBo* i 4 ii 17-18: *šumma ... ištu ERÍN.MEŠ-šu* ^{GIS}*GIGIR.MEŠ-šu ina ŠĀ-šu ul inamuš* 'if with his troops and chariots [he] does not wholeheartedly move'). The transitive sense 'engage' extends to 'go at, access', still with a forcible tinge, as in breaking (into) a seal(ed building), where *ninik-* (*KBo* xi 14 iv 19; *KBo* xxxix 8 iv 31, *KBo* xliv 17 iv 14, *KBo* ix 106 iii 45) matches *kinu-* 'break open' in duplicates (*KUB* xliii 57 iv 17; *KBo* ii 3 iv 13).

Such extended usages, in particular the military one, led early interpreters like Sturtevant toward a false sense of 'raise, rouse, rise', not just by the example of Akk. *dekū* but modern parallels like 'levying troops' or 'raising armies'. But metaphors are shaky stuff and can point in opposite directions: one can 'raise' revenue by 'shaking down' donors or 'soaking' the rich.

The two related verbs *ni(n)k-* (active intransitive, often *-za nink-*; causative *ninganu-*) and *nini(n)k-* (active transitive or intransitive, middle voice intransitive) are both based on a root **neyk-/nik-*, similar in shape to **leyg-/lig-* underlying Hitt. *lenk-/li(n)k-* 'swear' and Lat. *ligāre* 'bind', or to **kewk-/kuk-* in Hitt. *kunk-* 'sway, shake' and Gk. *κινάω* 'stir, quake'. An infixed verb **ni-n-ék-/ni-n-k-* evolved in twofold fashion. At some point a nonablauting paradigm *nink-* (similar to *link-*, *kunk-*) was back-formed from the weak grade. In such instances the basic ablauting paradigm may not survive (as in *link-*, *kunk-*, or Ved. *siñcāti*, Avest. *hinčaiti* [vs. Hitt. *hinik-* < **(s)Hiné-*], or Ved. *vindāti* [vs. Gathic *vīnasti*]), but can also linger on as a parallel formation (e.g. Ved. *unātti* beside *undāti* 'wet'). Hitt. *ninik-* survived by the support pattern of the type *harnik-*, *hinik-*, *hunik-*, *istarnik-*, *sarnik-*. The semantics of the two verbs *nink-* and *ninik-*, residually identical, came to diverge by assorted extensions and specializations, as discussed above.

Various past etymological tie-ins, notably with *nakki-* 'heavy', even *henk-* 'bestow' and 'bow', can safely be discarded. The only somewhat plausible connection is that made by E. Benveniste ("BSL" 50.1 [1954], pp. 40-41), who adduced some Baltic and Slavic verbs of indistinct meaning and integration, notably Lith. *(su-)ninkù (-nikti)* 'go at, assail' and OCS *niknpti* 'stir, surge'. Nominal isolates like Latv. *naīks* 'violent', Gk. *νεῖχος* 'strife' are weak *tertia comparationis* which also exhibit an "ag-

gressive" tinge. Perhaps most interesting with reference to the Hittite evolvments is OCS *vŭz-niknŭti* which translates the biblical Greek ἀνανήφειν 'sober up'; if it literally means 'stir up from drunkenness', some semantic nuances of the Slavic verb may resemble those of Hittite.