Andrew GEORGE: Notes on Two Extremes of Weather.

1. Heavy Rain

In the description of the onset of the deluge in the late recension of the Gilgameš Epic occurs the following couplet:

ul im-mar a-ḫu a-ḫa-šu
ul û-la-ad-da-a nišāmeš ina šamē(ān)ē

XI 111-12.

Translators of the epic have traditionally rendered the second line of the couplet along the lines of "the people cannot be recognized from the heavens," so causing the couplet to anticipate the panicky reaction of the gods described in the following lines. But at this point we would compare the corresponding lines of the Old Babylonian version of the flood story:

[û-ul] i-mu-ur a-ḫu a-ḫa-šu

Atra-ḫasīs III iii 13-14

"One man could [not] see another, they could [not] recognize each other in the calamity."

The use of karâšu, "calamity", in the older couplet, at the point where the later version has šamû, suggests a semantic correspondence between the two words. This is hardly borne out by taking šamû as "heaven," and we are therefore prompted to translate it by "rain" (for šamû, "rain," see AHw, p. 1161, s.v. šamūtu, šamû II). If this is correct, the later couplet, that of the Gilgameš Epic, can be translated as follows:

"One man cannot see another: people cannot recognize each other in the rain."

The use of an as an ideogram for šamû, "rain," instead of the more common šamû, "heaven," is found elsewhere, for example in Borger, Esarhaddon, p. 105, ii 30 ("Gottesbrief"), and in TCL 6, 3, 14 =CT 30, 14, 2 (Omen apodosis).

To find mention of rain at this point in the flood story is wholly expected, for the flood in the myth was caused not by the rising and flooding of the rivers, as was of course normal in the Tigris-Euphrates basin, but by an overwhelmingly vast and catastrophic thunderstorm (brought by Adad, XI 96-106). It seems quite reasonable, therefore, to suppose that the downpour brought rain in such dense sheets, that it was well nigh impossible to see through it, and thus "people could not recognize each other." So interpreted, the couplet forms a unit of sense in itself, the second line complementing and expanding on the sense of the first. The obtrusive image of the gods viewing the havoc from the heavens, which has always introduced itself in previous translations, can thus be discarded.

Revue d'Assyriologie, 1/1985
2. Heatwave

A passage which describes weather of a nature very different to the catastrophic downpour of the flood story is to be found in the Šittî-Marduk boundary stone, King, *BBSi*, No. 6 = V R 55-56. Here Nebuchadnezzar I gives us a poetic narrative recounting his gruelling Summer campaign to Elam, in which he and his army encountered conditions of debilitating heatwave. Problematic are the first three signs of column i, line 17, which read *ta.kal.nu[n]*, and, to my knowledge, have never been adequately explained (a recent translation of this line, and those that follow, is that of Brinkman, *PHPKB =AnOr* 43, p. 107. King, in *BBSi*, p. 321, resists the possibility of *nu[n]* on the grounds that the horizontal is too long, and compares *nun* in i 1 and i 11; but while comparison of a damaged sign with other examples of the expected sign is the proper method of verifying its reading when dealing with a clay tablet, one is obliged to note that boundary stones are renowned for orthographic idiosyncrasies, and cannot therefore expect two signs of the same value to be identical, even when found in close proximity: cf. *zag* in ii 31 and ii 37, *ru* in ii 38 and ii 54 of this *kudurru*. Given the inconsistent nature of the script, then, it is impossible to rule out the reading *nu[n]* for the broken sign.

The Šittî-Marduk boundary stone, like many others, is not particularly well written. If we consider that the stone mason who engraved the boundary stone probably had no more than the barest working knowledge of the script, and perhaps copied from a clay original prepared by a scribe, it need come as no surprise that he was prone to errors of orthography rather more serious than those just pointed out. Thus there is dittography of *tti* in i 16, and of *ma* in i 36; and, more significant still, there is confusion between *ki* and *di* in i 57 and ii 57, and between *su* and *ku* in ii 31. With this in mind, our proposal is to emend the first of the three signs in i 17, *ta*, to not altogether dissimilar *du*, and so to read *du !-lan-nu[n]* (*danânu, II/3 stative*). The whole passage would then read:

\[i-na \{tti\} \text{\textsuperscript{lu}}du \text{\textsuperscript{zi}} (\text{\textsuperscript{s}u.numun.na}) \text{\textsuperscript{is-}}sa-bat \text{\textsuperscript{har-ra-a-na}}
\]
\[du \text{\textsuperscript{l}}-lan-nu[n] aq-qu-ul-tu i-kab-ba-bu ki-i \text{\textsuperscript{i}}-\text{\textsuperscript{s}a-li}
\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{utu-\text{\textsuperscript{s}a}}} ! \text{\textsuperscript{gir-re-e-li}} i-\text{\textsuperscript{Ha-am-ma-tu}} \text{\textsuperscript{ki nab-li}}
\]

*BBSi* 6, i 16-18

“(Nebuchadnezzar) set out on campaign in the month of Tammuz; the blistering heat became more and more intense: it was scorching like fire, and it was if the very roads were burning like a flame.”

For another example of *danânu* used in this way, see the Boğazköy version of the *Gilgameš Epic*, in which is found, in Gilgameš's relation of his second dream, the phrase *ša-lum-ma-tu ud-da-an-ni-in*, “the brilliance (of the light) became more intense” (*KUB* 4, 12, rev. 15).

The subject of *dulanunnun* in the boundary stone inscription is of course *aqqulu*, an atmospheric phenomenon traditionally conceived by the ancient scholars to be the “fire in the
sky" (see LTBA II, 1, iv 29-30: an-qu-lu = i-šá-lú = min šamê). It refers, apparently, to the scorching, fiery brilliance of the sun when it is high in the sky in the middle of the day (cf. the description of its effect in BWL, p. 136, Šamaš Hymn 178-79: mu-še-rid an-qul-lu ana erṣelim\textsuperscript{tim} qab-lu ū-me / mu-šaḫ-mit ki-ma nab-li erṣelim\textsuperscript{tim} ra-pa-āš-tum). So we can readily imagine the blistering heat of the aqqullu becoming increasingly intense as the sweltering Summer days of Nebuchadnezzar's Elamite campaign wore on into the afternoon.