



Notes on Two Extremes of Weather

Author(s): Andrew GEORGE

Source: *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (1985), pp. 69-71

Published by: Presses Universitaires de France

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23282345>

Accessed: 23-03-2016 19:54 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Presses Universitaires de France is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*

<http://www.jstor.org>

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 *Gilgamesh Epic* occurs the following couplet :

ul im-mar a-ḥu a-ḥa-šú
ul ú-la-ad-da-a nišū^{meš} ina šamê(an)^e
 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:

[ú-ul] *i-mu-ur a-ḥu a-ḥa-šu*
 [ú-ul] *ú-te-ed-du-ú i-na ka-ra-ši*
Atra-ḥasīs III iii 13-14

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

The use of *karāšu*, "calamity", in the older couplet, at the point where the later version has *šamú*, suggests a semantic correspondence between the two words. This is hardly borne out by taking *šamú* as "heaven," and we are therefore prompted to translate it by "rain" (for *šamú*, "rain," see *AHw*, p. 1161, s.v. *šamūlu*, *šamú* II). If this is correct, the later couplet, that of the *Gilgamesh 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 *šamú*, "rain," instead of the more common *šamú*, "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 down-pour 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 down-pour of the flood story is to be found in the Šittī-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 Šittī-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 𒌷 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 ŠU 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 !-tan-nu[n]* (*danānu*, II/3 stative). The whole passage would then read:

i-na {𒌷} ^{iti}du'ūzi (šu.numun.na) iṣ-ša-bat ḫar-ra-a-na
du !-tan-nu[n] aq-qu-ul-lu i-kab-ba-bu ki-i i-šá-ti
ù tu-šá ! gir-re-e-ti i-ḫa-am-ma-ṭu ki nab-lī

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 *danānu* 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-tū ud-da-an-ni-in*, “the brilliance (of the light) became more intense” (*KUB* 4, 12, rev. 15).

The subject of *dulannun* in the boundary stone inscription is of course *aqqullu*, 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-tú = MIN šamē^e*). 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-qu-lu ana eršetim^{tim} qab-lu u₄-me | mu-šaḥ-mit ki-ma nab-li eršetim^{tim} ra-pa-aš-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.