Atrahasis

Atrahasis the wise man, who built an ark and saved mankind from destruction, is a figure of immense prestige and antiquity to whom various literary and religious traditions were attached. He was known by a variety of names and epithets which were translated into different languages, sometimes with reinterpreted meanings, sometimes abbreviated, and in this way his fame spread over huge distances through a span of some five thousand years. In Mesopotamian literature he was the survivor of the Flood, together with his wife, and was granted a form of immortality by the great gods. The story of the Flood was one of the most popular tales of ancient times, and is found in several ancient languages, reworked to suit different areas and cultures so that different settings and details are found in each version. The specific information which follows helps to illustrate how widely diffused the man and the story became in the ancient world.

ATRAHASIS IN HISTORY

According to one version of the Sumerian king list, in the years just before the Flood swept over the earth, Ubara-Tutu (who is named as the father of Atrahasis in *Gilgamesh*) was king of Shuruppak, modern Tell Fara in central southern Mesopotamia, where some of the earliest writings known in the whole world have been unearthed. According to a different version of the Sumerian king list, Atrahasis, called there by his Sumerian name Ziusudra, himself ruled the city Shuruppak, preceded by his father who was named like the city, Shuruppak and who was presumably regarded as the eponymous ancestor of the citizens there.[1] A wisdom composition known as *The Instructions of Shuruppak* is now attested on clay tablets from the Early Dynastic period in the early third millennium BC, and contains

[1] He is preceded in that list by Ubara-Tutu, and so was not the first king of Shuruppak.

sage advice given by Shuruppak to his son Ziusudra. Thus Atrahasis was a notable figure at the dawn of history, and literary tradition was attached to him at an extremely early period.

THE NAMES OF ATRAHASIS

'Extra-wise' is the meaning of his name in *Atrahasis*; he is Ut-napishtim and Uta-na'ishtim in *Gilgamesh*, a name which can mean 'He found life'. Sumerian Ziusudra is an approximate translation of Akkadian Ut-napishtim together with his epithet, in which the element *sudra* corresponds to Atrahasis' epithet *rūqu*, 'the far-distant'. The name used by Berossus[2] for the survivor of the Flood is Xisuthros, probably a phonetic rendering of Ziusudra. Prometheus, Deucalion's father, may possibly be an approximate Greek translation of Atrahasis, and it is just possible that an abbreviation of (Uta)-na'ish(tim) was pronounced 'Noah' in Palestine from very early times. Atrahasis is also found as the name or epithet of a man who features in a Hittite story about Kumarbi. It has been suggested that the name Ulysses, used by the Romans for Odysseus, comes from the Hittite *ullu(ya)š*, as a translation of Atrahasis' epithet 'the far-distant', and that the names Odysseus and Outis may be based on a pronunciation of the logogram for Ut-napishtim, which is UD.ZI.[3] The name or epithet Atrahasis is used for the skilful god of craftsmanship Kothar-wa-hasis in Ugaritic mythology, and is abbreviated to Chousor in the Greek account of Syrian origins related by Philo of Byblos. A similar abbreviation is used in the name of the Islamic sage Al-khiḍr (also called al-Khaḍir), who guarded the Fountain of Life, and gave water from it to King Sakhr (meaning 'rock') who thus became immortal. This episode is related, in one of the *Arabian Nights*, to the Gilgamesh of Islamic narrative, Buluqiya, who, having travelled through many lands, lost his faithful adviser Affan in a fruitless attempt to obtain the ring of Suleiman, with which he might travel to the

[2] Berossus was a Babylonian priest who wrote a book called *Babyloniaca* in the third century BC to make the culture and history of his country known to the Greeks.

[3] Schretter 1974, 13. There is no evidence, however, that UD.ZI was ever pronounced phonetically.

Fountain of Life and drink the water of immortality. The name Al-Khiḍr here bears a new etymology, 'the green one'. Al-khiḍr as a holy man of Islam is buried at Baniyas on the Golan Heights, where a tributary of the Jordan river gushes out of a rock. In all these appellations it is impossible to distinguish a 'real' name from an epithet.

THE TEXT

Clay tablets inscribed with the Old Babylonian version of the epic can be dated around 1700 BC. Each tablet is divided into eight columns, four on the obverse and four on the reverse. Some passages in Late Assyrian versions, discovered in the palace library of the great king Assurbanipal, appear to follow the Old Babylonian version fairly closely, but with additions and considerable alteration in phrasing and vocabulary, as far as can be ascertained from the small quantity of text that survives.

THE AUTHOR, IPIQ-AYA[4]

Rarely is an author named for such an early text. Ipiq-Aya was writing during the reign of Ammi-ṣaduqa, king of Babylon (1702–1682 BC), on eight-column tablets, each column comprising about fifty-five lines, and he probably lived in Sippar, where the tablets almost certainly originated. Ipiq-Aya was presumably the compiler and arranger of traditional material, and the extent of his personal contribution to it cannot be assessed. To understand his role, we may look to Enheduana, daughter of Sargon of Agade (2390–2335 BC), holder of the most prestigious temple office at Ur, and traditionally the authoress of the Sumerian Collection of Temple Hymns. We now know much of that work existed long before her lifetime, and was revised and augmented after her death; this did not undermine her credibility as an author in antiquity, but rather enhanced it.

At Sippar the temple of the sun-god Shamash was particularly famous, in Old Babylonian times when Ipiq-Aya lived there, for

[4] Previously misread Ku-Aya, Nur-Aya, and Kasap-Aya.

its cloister of blue-blooded priestesses who were not allowed to bear children. This version of *Atrahasis* may have been composed in order to justify their enforced infertility since it presents the myth as justifying a social phenomenon which was prevalent at that period.

CREATION OF MAN

According to *Atrahasis*, the mother goddess Mami, with the help of the wise god Ea, created men out of clay mixed with the blood of a slain god called Ilawela:[1] man's purpose in life was to relieve the gods of hard labour. This account of man's creation may be compared with that in the *Epic of Creation*, in which Marduk used the blood of Qingu, the evil leader of the enemy gods whom he had slain, to create mankind with the help of Ea; clay is not mentioned, and no birth-goddess takes part, but the purpose of man's creation is again to toil on the gods' behalf. Neither account mentions the creation of animals, which is an important preliminary to man's creation in Genesis (Priestly source).

The account in Genesis describes God using earth (adamah) to create the first man (Adam), animating him with the breath of life. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, written in Boeotia in Greek around the late eighth century BC, the gods incite the smith-god Hephaistos to make Pandora out of clay and water; both in Greece and Mesopotamia deities associated with birth and fertility are also patrons of mining, smelting, and coppersmith's craft, because they create new forms from basic materials.

THE FLOOD

Atrahasis, the hero of the Flood story, was a citizen of Shuruppak in lower Mesopotamia. An extensive flood as a natural event sometimes took place in that region, where the Euphrates in spate can overflow and spill across the intervening land into the lower-lying Tigris, which itself often breaks its own banks in sudden spate, but a flood would be impossible on a similar scale in Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, or Greece. Such floods occur quite

[1] Formerly read We-ila or Geshtu-e.

commonly in Iraq, and strata of silt deposits on Early Dynastic sites of the fourth millennium BC, found there by archaeologists, can be interpreted as recording various different floods in remote antiquity. That evidence does not, however, disclose whether one particular flood was more catastrophic than others; it only shows that no unusual break in cultural continuity was caused by such a deposit, and that the layer of flood silt found in excavations at Ur is certainly much earlier in date than the flood deposit found at Shuruppak. No flood deposits are found in third millennium strata, and Archbishop Usher's date for the Flood of 2349 BC, which was calculated by using numbers in Genesis at face value and which did not recognize how highly schematic Biblical chronology is for such early times, is now out of the question.

In *Atrahasis* the Flood was sent by the gods in order to reduce overpopulation, a situation which has been compared with an early Greek poem, the *Cypria* (loosely attributed to Homer in antiquity and known mainly from allusions and quotations), in which Zeus planned to reduce overpopulation by war. In *Atrahasis*, war is not used for this purpose. In the Priestly account of the Flood in Genesis, and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, man's wickedness is the cause of divine anger which results in the Flood. In *Gilgamesh* the Flood story is reused out of its original context, to mark the time in history after which it was no longer possible for a mortal to win immortality. The Flood is also important for Mesopotamian tradition because it marks the end of the period when true sages lived on earth and brought to mankind the arts of civilization from the gods. Later post-diluvian sages were sometimes authors or literary figures who worked for known kings of historical times, but they were not regarded as immortal, and were additional to the original seven. In *Erra and Ishum*, the god Marduk claims responsibility for sending the Flood and the Seven Sages, thus adapting two traditional themes which were closely connected.

There are indications that the story of the Flood as related in the Old Babylonian *Atrahasis*, and with considerable variation in the Ninevite recension of *Gilgamesh*, was not the only one in circulation in Babylonia. Berossus, writing from Babylonia for the Greeks in the third century BC, includes some details which are not known elsewhere except in the Priestly account in

Genesis. The latter may have been composed or finalized in the early Persian period (late sixth to early fifth centuries BC). Notable items are that the survivor of the Flood (Xisuthros, Noah) is the tenth antediluvian king in both Berossus and Genesis (Priestly source), that the month in which the Flood happened is named, and that the ten antediluvian kings whom Berossus cites ruled for 432,000 'years' (i.e. 86,400 × 5, five years being sixty months) and in Genesis (Priestly source) for 1,656 'years' (i.e. 86,400 weeks), so the two accounts may originally have shared a common chronological scheme.[5]

Berossus' account of the Flood story must be derived from a Sumerian version of the story, since he names the hero as Xisuthros (Ziusudra) rather than Atrahasis or Ut-napishtim, and this version connects the Flood with genealogical information. The Sumerian king list, compiled in the early second millennium, includes a brief note about the Flood, which in that text divides dynasties with enormous lengths of reign from more realistic numbers. A Sumerian story of Ziusudra and the Flood, still largely incomplete, appears to be a relatively late composition based on an Akkadian version of the story, and it lists the antediluvian cities in the same way as the Sumerian king list does. An Akkadian account of the Flood has also been found at Ugarit, a Late Bronze Age city on the Syrian coast.

It is probable that these ancient Near Eastern flood stories are versions of a tale which originated in lower Mesopotamia, though not necessarily in a single devastation. The variety of detail found in them illustrates the kaleidoscopic character of the folk tale, in which certain basic elements are widely used in new combinations and are adapted to national interests and different literary settings. For instance, in Genesis the dove brings back to Noah an olive leaf, which belongs to the flora of Palestine; olive trees do not grow in Mesopotamia.

Although *Atrahasis* emphasizes the catastrophic nature of the Flood, the ancient Babylonians were well aware that not everything was destroyed; *Erra and Ishum* makes it clear that the city of Sippar survived, a belief echoed by Berossus, who says that ancient writings were buried there before the Flood and later retrieved.

[5] Oppert 1903.

Various stories relating a catastrophic flood are told by Classical authors, focusing upon cities which lie far beyond Mesopotamia, and featuring Ogyges or Deucalion as the hero who survived. Lucian of Samosata (Assyrian Samsat) who wrote *The Syrian Goddess* in the second century AD describes a tradition popular in Hierapolis (modern Membidj) in central Syria, in which Deucalion was the hero, and it was claimed locally that the flood waters vanished down a natural cleft in the bedrock directly beneath the temple of the great goddess. This claim gave the city a focal role in formative cosmic events, and enhanced its prestige and authority. Apollodorus in the first century BC relates the tale of Deucalion, son of Prometheus, who survived a flood that began in Thessaly, in a floating chest or ark, and after nine days and nights drifted on to Mount Parnassus; the account links the flood, as does Genesis and the Sumerian king list, to early genealogies. Ovid in *Metamorphoses*, VIII alluded to an account of the Flood from Phrygia, which can be traced through scattered allusions and a motif on coins to two cities: Apamea Kibotos and Iconium (Konya), two major caravan centres of extreme antiquity. At Apamea the local hill claimed to be Mount Ararat, where the ark came to rest.

All these flood stories may be explained as deriving from the one Mesopotamian original, used in travellers' tales for over two thousand years, along the great caravan routes of Western Asia: translated, embroidered, and adapted according to local tastes to give a myriad of divergent versions, a few of which have come down to us. However, the possibility of several independent origins cannot be dismissed, for the idea of a universal flood may well have arisen to explain observations in different places of marine fossils in rocks high above sea level. At a time when there was no conception of how geological change took place, nor of how vast was the time-scale of evolution, moreover when the creation of man was generally supposed to have accompanied the creation of the earth in its present form, an enormous flood which man by chance survived would be the only way to account for the presence of such marine fossils, and may have been thought up by more than one inquiring mind.

Although the Flood story was known at Ugarit in Syria and Bogazköy in central Anatolia in the Late Bronze Age, it may not have survived the Dark Ages in that area, and so may be a late-

comer into Greek mythology, for it is not mentioned by Homer or Hesiod. In Phrygia, where the hero is named on coins as Noah, the tale may have become popular when Jews settled there, and may have been attached at a later date to heroes of much greater antiquity. Where Flood stories are found in other parts of the world, missionaries and early Christian travellers may have disseminated them; there is no reason to suppose that they are indigenous.

OVERPOPULATION AND MORTALITY

When the gods created the first, primeval male and female human beings, they did not allot a life-span for them. This meant that everyone remained alive for centuries, continuing to reproduce until the earth was overcrowded. People died only when the gods were forced to relieve the pressure by sending, intermittently, plague, famine, or flood. Scholars now agree that damaged text near the end of the Epic refers to the gods' decision to institute death as a normal end to human life; the restoration is supported by a newly discovered piece of Sumerian text. This late decision rectified the mistake the gods made in the initial creation of man. In OBV *Gilgamesh* Siduri refers to this decision. The gods also decided to prevent some people breeding, and to institute infant and child mortality.

ATRAHASIS

TABLET I

OBV i When the gods instead of man[1]
Did the work, bore the loads,
The gods' load was too great,
The work too hard, the trouble too much,[2]
The great Anunnaki made the Igigi
Carry the workload sevenfold.[3]
Anu their father was king,
Their counsellor warrior Ellil,
Their chamberlain was Ninurta,
Their canal-controller Ennugi.
They took the box (of lots) . . . ,
Cast the lots; the gods made the division.[4]
Anu went up to the sky,
[And Ellil (?)] took the earth for his people (?).
The bolt which bars the sea
Was assigned to far-sighted Enki.[5]
When Anu had gone up to the sky,
[And the gods of] the Apsu had gone below,
The Anunnaki of the sky
Made the Igigi bear the workload.
The gods had to dig out canals,
Had to clear channels, the lifelines of the land,
The Igigi had to dig out canals,
Had to clear channels, the lifelines of the land.
The gods dug out the Tigris river (bed)
And then dug out the Euphrates.
[ ] in the deep
[ ] they set up
[ ] the Apsu
[ ] of the land
[ ] inside it
[ ] raised its top
[ ] of all the mountains
They were counting the years of loads;

[ ] the great marsh,
They were counting the years of loads.
For 3,600 years they bore the excess,
Hard work, night and day.
They groaned and blamed each other,
Grumbled over the masses of excavated soil:[6]
'Let us confront our [ ] the chamberlain,
And get him to relieve us of our hard work!
Come, let us carry [the Lord (?)],
The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his dwelling.
Come, let us carry [Ellil],
The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his dwelling.'
Then Alla made his voice heard[7]
And spoke to the gods his brothers, (*gap of about 8 lines*)
ii 'Come! Let us carry
The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his dwelling.
Come! Let us carry Ellil,
The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his dwelling.
Now, cry battle!
Let us mix fight with battle!'
The gods listened to his speech,
Set fire to their tools,
Put aside their spades for fire,
Their loads for the fire-god,
They flared up. When they reached
The gate of warrior Ellil's dwelling,
It was night, the middle watch,
The house was surrounded, the god had not realized.
It was night, the middle watch,
Ekur was surrounded, Ellil had not realized.
Yet Kalkal was attentive, and had it closed,
He held the lock and watched [the gate].
Kalkal roused [Nusku].
They listened to the noise of [the Igigi].
Then Nusku roused his master,

Made him get out of bed:
'My lord, your house is surrounded,
A rabble is running around your door!
Ellil, your house is surrounded,
A rabble is running around your door!'
Ellil had weapons brought to his dwelling.
Ellil made his voice heard
And spoke to the vizier Nusku,
'Nusku, bar your door,
Take up your weapons and stand in front of me.'
Nusku barred his door,
Took up his weapons and stood in front of Ellil.
Nusku made his voice heard
And spoke to the warrior Ellil,
'O my lord, your face is (sallow as) tamarisk![8]
Why do you fear your own sons?
O Ellil, your face is (sallow as) tamarisk!
Why do you fear your own sons?
Send for Anu to be brought down to you,
Have Enki fetched into your presence.'
He sent for Anu to be brought down to him,
Enki was fetched into his presence,
Anu king of the sky was present,
Enki king of the Apsu attended.
The great Anunnaki were present.
Ellil got up and the case was put.
Ellil made his voice heard
And spoke to the great gods,
'Is it against me that they have risen?
Shall I do battle . . . ?
What did I see with my own eyes?
A rabble was running around my door!'
Anu made his voice heard
And spoke to the warrior Ellil,
iii 'Let Nusku go out
And [find out] word of the Igigi
Who have surrounded your door.
A command . . .
To . . . '
Ellil made his voice heard

And spoke to the vizier Nusku,
'Nusku, open your door,
Take up your weapons [and stand before me!]
In the assembly of all the gods,
Bow, then stand [and tell them],
"Your father Anu,
Your counsellor warrior Ellil,
Your chamberlain Ninurta
And your canal-controller Ennugi[9]
Have sent me to say,
Who is in charge of the rabble?
Who is in charge of the fighting?
Who declared war?
Who ran to the door of Ellil?"'
[Nusku opened] his door,
[Took up his weapons,] went [before (?)] Ellil
In the assembly of all the gods
[He bowed], then stood and told the message.
'Your father Anu,
Your counsellor warrior Ellil,
Your chamberlain Ninurta
And your canal-controller Ennugi
Have sent me to say,
"Who is in charge of the rabble?
Who is in charge of the fighting?
Who declared war?
Who ran to the door of Ellil?"'
[ ]
Ellil [ ]
'Every single one of us gods declared war!
We have put [a stop] to the digging.
The load is excessive, it is killing us!
Our work is too hard, the trouble too much!
So every single one of us gods
Has agreed to complain to Ellil.'
Nusku took his weapons,
Went [and returned to Ellil]
'My lord, you sent me to [ ].
I went [ ]
I explained [ ]

[ ]
Saying, "Every single one of us gods
Declared war.
We have put [a stop] to the digging.
The load is excessive, it is killing us,
Our work is too hard, the trouble too much,
So every single one of us gods
Has agreed to complain to Ellil!"'
Ellil listened to that speech.
His tears flowed.
Ellil spoke guardedly (?),
Addressed the warrior Anu,
'Noble one, take a decree
iv With you to the sky, show your strength—
While the Anunnaki are sitting before you
Call up one god and let them cast him for destruction!'
Anu made his voice heard
And spoke to the gods his brothers,
'What are we complaining of?
Their work was indeed too hard, their trouble was too much.
Every day the earth (?) [resounded (?)].
The warning signal was loud enough, we kept hearing the noise.
[ ] do
[ ] tasks (?)

(gap partly filled, partly overlapped by the following two SBV fragments)

SBV '(While) the Anunnaki are sitting before you,
And (while) Belet-ili the womb-goddess is present,
Call up one and cast him for destruction!'
Anu made his voice heard and spoke to [Nusku],
'Nusku, open your door, take up your weapons,
Bow in the assembly of the great gods, [then stand]
And tell them [ ],
"Your father Anu, your counsellor warrior Ellil,

Your chamberlain Ninurta and your canal-controller Ennugi
Have sent me to say,
Who is in charge of the rabble? Who will be in charge of battle?
Which god started the war?
A rabble was running around my door!'''
When Nusku heard this,
He took up his weapons,
Bowed in the assembly of the great gods, [then stood]
And told them [ ],
'Your father Anu, your counsellor warrior Ellil,
Your chamberlain Ninurta and your canal-controller Ennugi
Have sent me to say,
"Who is in charge of the rabble? Who is in charge of the fighting?
Which god started the war?
A rabble was running around Ellil's door.'''

(*gap of uncertain length*)

SBV Ea made his voice heard
And spoke to the gods his brothers,
'Why are we blaming them?
Their work was too hard, their trouble was too much.
Every day the earth (?) [resounded (?)].
The warning signal was loud enough, [we kept hearing the noise.]
There is [ ]
Belet-ili the womb-goddess is present—
Let her create primeval man
So that he may bear the yoke [( )],
So that he may bear the yoke, [the work of Ellil],
Let man bear the load of the gods!'

(*gap*)

OBV 'Belet-ili the womb-goddess is present,
Let the womb-goddess create offspring,

And let man bear the load of the gods!'
They called up the goddess, asked
The midwife of the gods, wise Mami,
'You are the womb-goddess (to be the) creator of mankind!
Create primeval man, that he may bear the yoke!
Let him bear the yoke, the work of Ellil,
Let man bear the load of the gods!'
Nintu made her voice heard
And spoke to the great gods,
'It is not proper for me to make him.
The work is Enki's;
He makes everything pure!
If he gives me clay, then I will do it.'
Enki made his voice heard
And spoke to the great gods,
'On the first, seventh, and fifteenth of the month
I shall make a purification by washing.
Then one god should be slaughtered.
And the gods can be purified by immersion.
Nintu shall mix clay
With his flesh and his blood.
Then a god and a man
Will be mixed together in clay.
Let us hear the drumbeat forever after,[10]
Let a ghost come into existence from the god's flesh,[11]
Let her proclaim it as his living sign,[12]
And let the ghost exist so as not to forget (the slain god).'
They answered 'Yes!' in the assembly,
The great Anunnaki who assign the fates.

On the first, seventh, and fifteenth of the month
He made a purification by washing.
Ilawela who had intelligence,[11]
They slaughtered in their assembly.
Nintu mixed clay
With his flesh and blood.
They heard the drumbeat forever after.

A ghost came into existence from the god's flesh,
And she (Nintu) proclaimed it as his living sign.
v The ghost existed so as not to forget (the slain god).
After she had mixed that clay,
She called up the Anunnaki, the great gods.
The Igigi, the great gods,
Spat spittle upon the clay.
Mami made her voice heard
And spoke to the great gods,
'I have carried out perfectly
The work that you ordered of me.
You have slaughtered a god together with his intelligence.
I have relieved you of your hard work,
I have imposed your load on man.
You have bestowed noise on mankind.
I have undone the fetter and granted freedom.'
They listened to this speech of hers,[13]
And were freed (from anxiety), and kissed her feet:
'We used to call you Mami
But now your name shall be Mistress of All Gods.'
Far-sighted Enki and wise Mami
Went into the room of fate.
The womb-goddesses were assembled.
He trod the clay in her presence;[14]
SBV She kept reciting an incantation,
For Enki, staying in her presence, made her recite it.
When she had finished her incantation,
She pinched off fourteen pieces (of clay),
(And set) seven pieces on the right,
Seven on the left.
Between them she put down a mud brick.[15]
She made use of (?) a reed, opened it (?) to cut the umbilical cord,[16]
Called up the wise and knowledgeable
Womb-goddesses, seven and seven.
Seven created males,
Seven created females,

For the womb-goddess (is) creator of fate.
He . . .-ed them two by two,[17]
. . .-ed them two by two in her presence.
Mami made (these) rules for people:[18]
'In the house of a woman who is giving birth
The mud brick shall be put down for seven days.
Belet-ili, wise Mami shall be honoured.
The midwife shall rejoice in the house of the woman who gives birth
And when the woman gives birth to the baby,
The mother of the baby shall sever herself.
A man to a girl [ ]
OBV [ ] her bosom[19]
A beard can be seen (?)
On a young man's cheek.
In gardens and waysides
A wife and her husband choose each other.'
The womb-goddesses were assembled
And Nintu was present. They counted the months,
Called up the tenth month as the term of fates.
vi When the tenth month came,
She slipped in (?) a staff and opened the womb.[20]
Her face was glad and joyful.
She covered her head,
Performed the midwifery,
Put on her belt, said a blessing.
She made a drawing in flour and put down a mud brick:
'I myself created (it), my hands made (it).
The midwife shall rejoice in the house of the *qadištu*-priestess.
Wherever a woman gives birth
And the baby's mother severs herself,
The mud brick shall be put down for nine days.
Nintu the womb-goddess shall be honoured.
She shall call their . . . "Mami".[21]
She shall [ ] the womb-goddess,
Lay down the linen cloth (?).
When the bed is laid out in their house,
A wife and her husband shall choose each other.

Ishtar shall rejoice in the wife-husband relationship
In the father-in-law's house.
Celebration shall last for nine days,
And they shall call Ishtar "Ishhara".
[On the fifteenth day (?)], the fixed time of fate
She shall call [ ].

(*gap of about 23 lines*)

A man [ ]
Clean the home [ ]
The son to his father [ ]
[ ]
They sat and [ ]
He was carrying [ ]
vii He saw [ ]
Ellil [ ]
They took hold of . . .,
Made new picks and spades,
Made big canals
To feed people and sustain the gods.

(*gap of about 13 lines*)

600 years, less than 600, passed,[22]
And the country became too wide, the people too numerous.
The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.
The God grew restless at their racket,
Ellil had to listen to their noise.
He addressed the great gods,
'The noise of mankind has become too much,
I am losing sleep over their racket.
Give the order that *šuruppu*-disease shall break out,

(*gap of about 3 lines*)

Now there was one Atrahasis
Whose ear was open (to) his god Enki.
He would speak with his god
And his god would speak with him.

Atrahasis made his voice heard
And spoke to his lord,
'How long (?) [will the gods make us suffer]?
Will they make us suffer illness forever?'
Enki made his voice heard
And spoke to his servant:
'Call the elders, the senior men![23]
Start [an uprising] in your own house,
Let heralds proclaim . . .
Let them make a loud noise in the land:
Do not revere your gods,[24]
Do not pray to your goddesses,
But search out the door of Namtara.
Bring a baked loaf into his presence.
May the flour offering reach him,
May he be shamed by the presents
And wipe away his "hand".'[25]
Atrahasis took the order,
Gathered the elders to his door.
Atrahasis made his voice heard
And spoke to the elders,
'I have called the elders, the senior men!
viii Start [an uprising] in your own house,
Let heralds proclaim . . .
Let them make a loud noise in the land:
Do not revere your gods!
Do not pray to your goddesses!
Search out the door of Namtara.
Bring a baked loaf into his presence.
May the flour offering reach him;
May he be shamed by the presents
And wipe away his "hand".'
The elders listened to his speech;
They built a temple for Namtara in the city.
Heralds proclaimed . . .
They made a loud noise in the land.
They did not revere their god,
Did not pray to their goddess,
But searched out the door of Namtara,
Brought a baked loaf into his presence.

The flour offering reached him.
And he was shamed by the presents.
And wiped away his 'hand'.
The *šuruppu*-disease left them,
[The gods] went back to their [(regular) offerings]

(*2 lines missing to end of column*)

(*Catchline*)
600 years, less than 600 passed.

TABLET II

OBV i 600 years, less than 600, passed[26]
And the country became too wide, the people too numerous.
The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.
The God grew restless at their clamour,
Ellil had to listen to their noise.
He addressed the great gods,
'The noise of mankind has become too much.
I am losing sleep over their racket.
Cut off food supplies to the people!
Let the vegetation be too scant for their hunger![27]
Let Adad wipe away his rain.
Below (?) let no flood-water flow from the springs.
Let wind go, let it strip the ground bare,
Let clouds gather (but) not drop rain,
Let the field yield a diminished harvest,
Let Nissaba stop up her bosom.
No happiness shall come to them.
Let their [ ] be dejected.'

(*gap of about 34 lines to end of column*)

ii (*gap of about 12 lines at beginning of column*)

'Call the [elders, the senior men],
Start an uprising in your house,
Let heralds proclaim . . .

Let them make a loud noise in the land:
Do not revere your god(s)!
Do not pray to your goddess!
Search out the door of Adad,
Bring a baked loaf into his presence.
May the flour offering reach him,
May he be shamed by the presents
And wipe away his "hand".'
(Then) he will make a mist form in the morning
And in the night he will steal out and make dew drop,
Deliver (?) the field (of its produce) ninefold, like a thief.'[28]
They built a temple for Adad in the city,
Ordered heralds to proclaim
And make a loud noise in the land.
They did not revere their god(s),
Did not pray to their goddess,
But searched out the door of Adad,
Brought a baked (loaf) into his presence.
The flour offering reached him;
He was shamed by the presents
And wiped away his 'hand'.
He made mist form in the morning
And in the night he stole out and made dew drop,
Delivered (?) the field (of its produce) ninefold, like a thief.
[The drought] left them,
[The gods] went back [to their (regular) offerings].

SBV iii Not three epochs had passed.
The country became too wide, the people too numerous.
The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.
The gods grew restless at their noise.
Enlil organized his assembly again,
Addressed the gods his sons:
'The noise of mankind has become too much,
Sleep cannot overtake me because of their racket.
Command that Anu and Adad keep the (air) above (earth) locked,
Sin and Nergal keep the middle earth locked.

As for the bolt that bars the sea,
Ea with his *lahmu*-creatures shall keep it locked'
He ordered, and Anu and Adad kept the (air) above (earth) locked,
Sin and Nergal kept the middle earth locked.
As for the bolt that bars the sea,
Ea with his *lahmu*-creatures kept it locked.
Then the very wise man Atra-hasis
Wept daily.
He would carry a *maššakku*-offering along the riverside pasture,
Although the irrigation-water was silent.
Half-way through the night he offered a sacrifice.
As sleep began to overtake him (?)
He addressed the irrigation-water:
'May the irrigation-water take it, may the river carry it,
May the gift be placed in front of Ea my lord.
May Ea see it and think of me!
So may I see a dream in the night.'
When he had sent the message by water,
He sat facing the river, he wept (?),
The man wept (?) facing the river
As his plea went down to the Apsu.
Then Ea heard his voice.
[He summoned his *lahmu*-creatures] and addressed them.

(for the next 36 lines see Supplement 1 on pp. 338–9)

OBV iv Above, [rain did not fill the canals (?)]
Below, flood-water did not flow from the springs.
Earth's womb did not give birth,
No vegetation sprouted . . .
People did not look [ ]
The dark pastureland was bleached,
The broad countryside filled up with alkali.[30]
In the first year they ate old grain
In the second year they depleted the storehouse.[31]
When the third year came,
Their looks were changed by starvation,

Their faces covered with scabs (?) like malt.
They stayed alive by . . . . . life.
Their faces looked sallow.
They went out in public hunched,
Their well-set shoulders slouched,
Their upstanding bearing bowed.
They took a message [from Atrahasis to the gods].
In front of [the assembly of the great gods],
They stood [and]
The orders [of Atrahasis they repeated]
In front of [ ]

(*gap of about 32 lines to end of column*)

SBV

iv [600 years, less than 600 years, passed.
The country became too wide, the people too numerous.]
He grew restless at their noise.
Sleep could not overtake him because of their racket.
Ellil organized his assembly,
Addressed the gods his sons,
'The noise of mankind has become too much.
I have become restless at their noise.
Sleep cannot overtake me because of their racket.
Give the order that *šuruppu*-disease shall break out,
Let Namtar put an end to their noise straight away!
Let sickness: headache, *šuruppu, ašakku,*
Blow in to them like a storm.'
They gave the order, and *šuruppu*-disease did break out.
Namtar put an end to their noise straight away.
Sickness: headache, *šuruppu, ašakku,*
Blew into them like a storm.
The thoughtful man, Atrahasis[32]
Kept his ear open to his master Ea;
He would speak with his god,

[And his god (?)] Ea would speak with him.
Atrahasis made his voice heard and spoke,
Said to Ea his master,
'Oh Lord, people are grumbling!
Your [sickness] is consuming the country!
Oh Lord Ea, people are grumbling!
[Sickness] from the gods is consuming the country!
Since you created us
[You ought to] cut off sickness: headache, *šuruppu* and *ašakku*.'[33]
Ea made his voice heard and spoke,
Said to Atrahasis,
'Order the heralds to proclaim,
To make a loud noise in the land:
Do not revere your gods,
Do not pray to your goddesses!
[ ] withhold his rites!
[ ] the flour as an offering
[ ] to her presence
[ ] say a prayer
[ ] the presents [ ]
his "hand".'
Ellil organized his assembly,
Addressed the gods his sons,
'You are not to inflict disease on them again,
(Even though) the people have not diminished—they are more than before!
I have become restless at their noise,
Sleep cannot overtake me because of their racket!
Cut off food from the people,
Let vegetation be too scant for their stomachs!
Let Adad on high make his rain scarce,
Let him block below, and not raise flood-water from the springs!
Let the field decrease its yield,
Let Nissaba turn away her breast,
Let the dark fields become white,
Let the broad countryside breed alkali
Let earth clamp down her womb

So that no vegetation sprouts, no grain grows.
Let *ašakku* be inflicted on the people,
Let the womb be too tight to let a baby out!'
They cut off food for the people,
Vegetation . . . became too scant for their stomachs.
Adad on high made his rain scarce,
Blocked below, and did not raise flood-water from the springs.
The field decreased its yield,
Nissaba turned away her breast,
The dark fields became white,
The broad countryside bred alkali.
Earth clamped down her womb:
No vegetation sprouted, no grain grew.
Ašakku was inflicted on the people.
The womb was too tight to let a baby out.
v Ea kept guard over the bolt that bars the sea,
Together with his *lahmu*-heroes.
Above, Adad made his rain scarce,
Blocked below, and did not raise flood-water from the springs.
The field decreased its yield,
Nissaba turned away her breast,
The dark fields became white,
The broad countryside bred alkali.
Earth clamped down her womb:
No vegetation sprouted, no grain grew.
Ašakku was inflicted on the people,
The womb was too tight to let a baby out.

(*gap of 2 lines*)

When the second year arrived
They had depleted the storehouse.
When the third year arrived
[The people's looks] were changed [by starvation].
When the fourth year arrived
Their upstanding bearing bowed,
Their well-set shoulders slouched,
People went out in public hunched over.
When the fifth year arrived,

A daughter would eye her mother coming in;
A mother would not even open her door to her daughter.
A daughter would watch the scales (at the sale of her) mother,
A mother would watch the scales (at the sale of her) daughter.
When the sixth year arrived
They served up a daughter for a meal,
Served up a son for food.
[ ]
Only one or two households were left.
Their faces were covered with scabs (?) like malt.
People stayed alive by . . . . . life.
The thoughtful man Atrahasis
Kept his ear open to his master Ea.
He would speak with his god,
And his god Ea would speak with him.
He left the door of his god,
Put his bed right beside the river,
(For even) the canals were quite silent.

(*gap of about 25 lines*)

vi When the second year arrived, they had depleted the storehouse.
When the third year arrived
The people's looks were changed by starvation.
When the fourth year arrived
Their upstanding bearing bowed,
Their well-set shoulders slouched,
People went out in public hunched over.
When the fifth year arrived,
A daughter would eye her mother coming in;
A mother would not even open her door to her daughter.
A daughter would watch the scales (at the sale) of her mother,
A mother would watch the scales (at the sale) of her daughter.
When the sixth year arrived,

They served up a daughter for a meal,
Served up a son for food.
[ ]
Only one or two households were left.
Their faces were covered with scabs (?) like malt,
The people stayed alive by . . . . . life.
They took a message [ ]
Entered and [ ]
The order of Atrahasis [ ]
Saying, 'How long [ ]

(*gap of about 36 lines to end of tablet*)

OBV

v He (Ellil) was furious [with the Igigi,]
'We, the great Anunna, all of us,
Agreed together on [a plan].
Anu and [Adad] were to guard [above],
I was to guard the earth [below].
Where Enki [went],
He was to undo the [chain and set (us) free],
He was to release [produce for the people].
He was to exercise [control (?) by holding the balance (?)].'[34]
Ellil made his voice heard
And [spoke] to the vizier Nusku,
'Have the fifty (?) *lahmu*-heroes (?) . . . fetched for me!
Have them brought in to my presence!'
The fifty (?) *lahmu*-heroes (?) were fetched for him.
The warrior [Ellil] addressed them,
'We, the great Anunna, [all of us],
Agreed together on a plan.
Anu and Adad were to guard above,
I was to guard the earth below.
Where you [went],
[You were to undo the chain and set (us) free],
[You were to release produce for the people],
[You were to exercise control (?) by holding the balance (?)].'
[ ].

The warrior Ellil [ ].

(*gap of about 34 lines*)

vi 'Adad made his rain pour down,
[ ] filled the pasture land
And clouds (?) veiled [ ]
Do not feed his people,
And do not give Nissaba's corn, luxury for people, to eat.'
Then [the god (?)] grew anxious as he sat,[35]
In the gods' assembly worry gnawed at him.
[Enki (?)] grew anxious as he sat,
In the gods' assembly worry gnawed at him.

(*3 lines fragmentary*)

[They were furious with each other], Enki and Ellil.
'We, the great Anunna, all of us,
Agreed together on a plan.
Anu and Adad were to guard above,
I was to guard the earth below.
Where you went,
You were to undo the chain and set (us) free!
You were to release produce for the people!
[You were to exercise control (?)] by holding the balance (?).'
[ ].
The warrior Ellil [ ]

(*gap of 30 lines*)

vii '[You] imposed your loads on man,
You bestowed noise on mankind,
You slaughtered a god together with his intelligence,
You must . . . and [create a flood].
It is indeed your power that shall be used against [your people!]
You agreed to [the wrong (?)] plan!
Have it reversed! (?)
Let us make far-sighted Enki swear . . . an oath.'
Enki made his voice heard

And spoke to his brother gods,
'Why should you make me swear an oath?
Why should I use my power against my people?
The flood that you mention to me—
What is it? I don't even know!
Could I give birth to a flood?
That is Ellil's kind of work!
Let him choose [ ]
Let Shullat and [Hanish] march [ahead]
[Let Erakal pull out] the mooring poles
Let [Ninurta] march, let him make [the weirs] overflow.

(*gap of 2 or 3 lines to end of column*)

viii (*gap of 31 lines*)

The assembly [ ]
Do not listen to [ ]
The gods gave an explicit command.
Ellil performed a bad deed to the people.'
(*Catchline*)
Atrahasis made his voice heard
And spoke to his master,

TABLET III

OBV i (*gap of about 10 lines*)

Atrahasis made his voice heard
And spoke to his master,
'Indicate to me the meaning of the dream,
[ ] let me find out its portent (?)'
Enki made his voice heard
And spoke to his servant,
'You say, "I should find out in bed (?)".[36]
Make sure you attend to the message I shall tell you!
Wall, listen constantly to me!
Reed hut, make sure you attend to all my words!
Dismantle the house, build a boat,

Reject possessions, and save living things.
The boat that you build
[ ]
[ ]
Roof it like the Apsu
So that the Sun cannot see inside it!
Make upper decks and lower decks.
The tackle must be very strong,
The bitumen strong, to give strength.
I shall make rain fall on you here,
A wealth of birds, a hamper (?) of fish.'
He opened the sand clock and filled it,
He told him the sand (needed) for the Flood was
Seven nights' worth.
Atrahasis received the message.
He gathered the elders at his door.
Atrahasis made his voice heard
And spoke to the elders,
'My god is out of favour with your god.
Enki and [Ellil (?)] have become angry with each other.
They have driven me out of [my house].
Since I always stand in awe of Enki,
He told (me) of this matter.
I can no longer stay in [ ]
I cannot set my foot on Ellil's territory (again).
[I must go down to the Apsu and stay] with (my) god (?).
This is what he told me.'

(*gap of 4 or 5 lines to end of column*)

ii (*gap of about 9 lines*)

The elders [ ]
The carpenter [brought his axe,]
The reed worker [brought his stone,]
[A child brought] bitumen.
The poor [fetched what was needed.]

(*9 lines very damaged*)

Everything there was [ ]
Everything there was [ ]
Pure ones [ ]
Fat ones [ ]
He selected [and put on board.]
[The birds] that fly in the sky,
Cattle [of Shak]kan,
Wild animals (?) [ ] of open country,
[he] put on board
[ ] . . .
He invited his people [ ]
[ ] to a feast.
[ ] he put his family on board.
They were eating, they were drinking.
But he went in and out,
Could not stay still or rest on his haunches,
His heart was breaking and he was vomiting bile.
The face of the weather changed.
Adad bellowed from the clouds.
When (?) he (Atrahasis) heard his noise,
Bitumen was brought and he sealed his door.
While he was closing up his door
Adad kept bellowing from the clouds.
The winds were raging even as he went up
(And) cut through the rope, he released the boat.

iii *(6 lines missing at beginning of column)*

Anzu was tearing at the sky with his talons,
[ ] the land,
He broke [ ]
[ ] the Flood [came out (?)].
The *kašūšu*-weapon went against the people like an army.
No one could see anyone else,
They could not be recognized in the catastrophe.
The Flood roared like a bull,
Like a wild ass screaming the winds [howled]
The darkness was total, there was no sun.
[ ] like white sheep.
[ ] of the Flood.

[ ]
[ ]
[ ] the noise of the Flood.
[ ]
[Anu (?)] went berserk,
[The gods (?)] . . . his sons . . . before him
As for Nintu the Great Mistress,
Her lips became encrusted with rime.[37]
The great gods, the Anunna,
Stayed parched and famished.
The goddess watched and wept,
Midwife of the gods, wise Mami:
'Let daylight (?) . . .
Let it return and . . . !
However could I, in the assembly of gods,
Have ordered such destruction with them?
Ellil was strong enough (?) to give a wicked order.[38]
Like Tiruru he ought to have cancelled that wicked order![39]
I heard their cry levelled at me,
Against myself, against my person.
Beyond my control (?) my offspring have become like white sheep.[40]
As for me, how am I to live (?) in a house of bereavement?
My noise has turned to silence.
Could I go away, up to the sky
And live as in a cloister(?)?
What was Anu's intention as decision-maker?
It was his command that the gods his sons obeyed,
He who did not deliberate, but sent the Flood,
He who gathered the people to catastrophe
[ ]

iv (*3 lines missing at beginning of column*)

Nintu was wailing [ ]
'Would a true father (?) have given birth to the [rolling (?)] sea

(So that) they could clog the river like dragonflies?[41]
They are washed up (?) like a raft on [a bank (?)],
They are washed up like a raft on a bank in open country!
I have seen, and wept over them!
Shall I (ever) finish weeping for them?'
She wept, she gave vent to her feelings,
Nintu wept and fuelled her passions.
The gods wept with her for the country.
She was sated with grief, she longed for beer (in vain).
Where she sat weeping, (there the great gods) sat too,
But, like sheep, could only fill their windpipes (with bleating).
Thirsty as they were, their lips
Discharged only the rime of famine.
For seven days and seven nights
The torrent, storm and flood came on.

(*gap of about 58 lines*)

v He put down [ ],
Provided food [ ]
[ ]
The gods smelt the fragrance,
Gathered like flies over the offering.
When they had eaten the offering,
Nintu got up and blamed them all,
'Whatever came over Anu who makes the decisions?
Did Ellil (dare to) come for the smoke offering?
(Those two) who did not deliberate, but sent the Flood,
Gathered the people to catastrophe—
You agreed the destruction.
(Now) their bright faces are dark (forever).'
Then she went up to the big flies[42]
Which Anu had made, and (declared) before the gods,

'His grief is mine! My destiny goes with his!
He must deliver me from evil, and appease me!
Let me go out in the morning (?) [ ]
[ ]
vi Let these flies be the lapis lazuli of my necklace
By which I may remember it (?) daily (?)
[forever (?)].'
The warrior Ellil spotted the boat[43]
And was furious with the Igigi.
'We, the great Anunna, all of us,
Agreed together on an oath!
No form of life should have escaped!
How did any man survive the catastrophe?'
Anu made his voice heard
And spoke to the warrior Ellil,
'Who but Enki would do this?
He made sure that the [reed hut] disclosed the order.'
Enki made his voice heard
And spoke to the great gods,
'I did it, in defiance of you!
I made sure life was preserved [ ]

(*5 lines missing*)

Exact your punishment from the sinner.
And whoever contradicts your order

(*12 lines missing*)

I have given vent to my feelings!'
Ellil made his voice heard
And spoke to far-sighted Enki,
'Come, summon Nintu the womb-goddess!
Confer with each other in the assembly.'
Enki made his voice heard
And spoke to the womb-goddess Nintu,
'You are the womb-goddess who decrees destinies.[44]
[ ] to the people.
[Let one-third of them be]
[ ]
[Let another third of them be]

vii In addition let there be one-third of the people,
Among the people the woman who gives birth yet does
Not give birth (successfully);
Let there be the *pašittu*-demon among the people,
To snatch the baby from its mother's lap.
Establish *ugbabtu, entu, egiṣītu*-women:[45]
They shall be taboo, and thus control childbirth.'

(*26 lines missing to end of column*)

viii (*8 lines missing at beginning of column*)

How we sent the Flood.
But a man survived the catastrophe.
You are the counsellor of the gods;
On your orders I created conflict.
Let the Igigi listen to this song
In order to praise you,
And let them record (?) your greatness.
I shall sing of the Flood to all people:[46]
Listen!
(*Colophon*)[47]
The End.
Third tablet,
'When the gods instead of man'
390 lines,
Total 1245
For the three tablets.
Hand of Ipiq-Aya, junior scribe.
Month Ayyar [x day],
Year Ammi-ṣaduqa was king.
A statue of himself [ ]
[ ]

NOTES TO *ATRAHASIS*

Text: Lambert and Millard 1969, Moran 1987.
When a speech in the translations breaks off because of a gap in the tablet, inverted commas are not closed so as not to imply the precise point at which the speech ends. Indentation shows, when the text resumes after a gap, whether the speech is thought to continue. The original texts have no punctuation, and since it is not always clear when a speech begins or ends even in a perfectly preserved text, the translator occasionally has to make an arbitrary decision. Words and phrases which require detailed philological argument have not been discussed: oversimplification from a scholarly point of view is inevitably the result. These remarks apply to all translations in this book. A summary of references to research on details of the text of *Atrahasis* is given by Moran 1987, to which add Wiggermann 1986 and Wilcke 1999.
OBV Enki is replaced by Ea, the later form of the name, in SBV.

1. The format of the opening line 'When . . .' may be compared with the *Epic of Creation* and with the *Theogony of Dunnu*. The meaning of this line is disputed. The translation in the original edition as 'When the gods like men' was justified by a supposed grammatical comparison with a line in II. ii, which is invalid; but it finds support in a recension of the text 1,000 years later (Lambert 1969a).
2. Play on words 'load' and 'trouble', *šupšik/šapšaqum*.
3. Or, 'The seven great Anunnaki made the Igigi . . .'
4. Land was divided for inheritance among sons in ancient Mesopotamia by casting lots. Burkert 1983, 53 has pointed out similarities with *Iliad*, XV. 187–193, Poseidon's speech to Iris telling how the earth was originally divided by lot into three domains.
5. The crucial part played by Enki's bolt and his *lahmu*-heroes is discussed in note 26.
6. For *kalakku* meaning 'excavated soil' see AHw *Nachträge*, s.v.
7. This common formulaic phrase says literally 'made/did his mouth', commonly translated 'opened his mouth'. However, it is clear from related phrases in the *Epic of Creation* and *Anzu* (see note 23 to *Anzu*) that the verb implies 'to utter', never 'to open', and 'mouth' has an extended meaning 'speech', attested in various contexts. The Akkadian phrase is alliterative, *pâšu ēpuš*.
8. The same metaphor occurs in the *Descent of Ishtar*.
9. Ennugi: a variant text has Annugal.
10. Perhaps means 'heartbeat, pulse'.
11. Perhaps a play on the words *eṭemmu* 'ghost' and *ṭēmu* 'intelligence'.
12. Moran 1970 translates: 'Let her inform him while alive of his token, And so that there be no forgetting, the ghost shall remain.' The meaning of the lines is ambiguous.
13. Wording identical to these four lines occurs in *Anzu*, I. iii.
14. Brick-making procedure is described. The brick god, Kulla, was created

by Enki who pinched off clay for the purpose, according to an incantation called 'When Anu created heaven'.

15. The brick may symbolize the prototype of man's creative ability. One of the names of the mother goddess Belet-ili is 'lapis lazuli brick', and it may be relevant that the bun-shaped 'plano-convex' brick used in early dynastic Mesopotamia resembles the bulge of pregnancy and was widely used for building despite its inappropriate shape. See Woolley/Moorey 1982, 45–6. There is no evidence to support the suggestion (Lambert and Millard 1969, 153) that a brick structure used as a birth stool is intended.
16. Verb translated 'made use of (?)' perhaps *bedû*; see AHw *Nachträge*, s.v.
17. Possibly 'crowned' or 'veiled'—the midwife covers her own head in the next episode, but the meaning is uncertain. The word occurs only in the singular.
18. The translation of the following lines largely follows Wilcke 1985a, 295 ff.
19. Possibly there is a small gap in the text here.
20. The word used for 'staff' here also means a term or recurrent period of time.
21. Or, 'She shall name Mami as their . . .'
22. Six hundred years is a round number in the sexagesimal system used by the ancient Mesopotamians. As a numerical unit, 600 was the simple noun *nēru* in Akkadian. Repetition of a number seems to occur as a literary device, e.g. in *Gilgamesh*, VI. ii. 'you dug seven and seven pits for him', or XI. 'arranged the jars seven and seven'.
23. See AHw *Nachträge*, s.v. *sillūnu*.
24. Probably refers to the concept which was prevalent in Mesopotamia of a personal god and goddess for each person.
25. 'Hand (of a god)' is a common Akkadian expression for a disease. For the verb, see AHw *Nachträge*, s.v. *šukkulu*.
26. The structure of Tablet II is difficult to see. OBV and SBV may diverge, and the point at which they overlap is uncertain. Particularly mystifying is the repeated description of six years of famine in SBV v. and vi. A fragmentary tablet from Babylon (Lambert and Millard 1969, 116 ff.) implies that Ea's *lahmu*-heroes, who were in charge of the bolt that guarded the sea, went out of control and let out fish which broke the bolt and nourished mankind (with F. Wiggermann 1986, 286, reading *làh-mi-ka/šu* instead of *šam-mi-ka/šu* 'his plants').
27. These lines were used in an incantation against drought according to a neo-Assyrian compilation (Lambert and Millard 1969, 28).
28. See AHw, s.v. *tušûm*. 'Ninefold' perhaps echoes the nine months of pregnancy and the nine days in which the brick was put down, in Tablet I. 'Thief' or, 'a benefactor', *šarrāqi* or *šarrāki*.
29. For this passage see Moran 1987, who shows why, in the flood episode, Ea/Enki had to communicate with Atrahasis by means of the reed hut, because he had been sworn to secrecy.
30. These lines refer to salination, the crystallization of salts on the topsoil when drainage of irrigation water is inadequate.

31. See Moran 1985.
32. Note the literary strategem which defies literal chronology by featuring Atrahasis as the same mortal in recurrent crises 600 years apart.
33. Or: '[Will you] cut off sickness?'
34. Literally: 'by weighing with (?) the *ašqulālu*', following AHw *Nachträge*, s.v. *ašqulālu*; and see Glossary, s.v.
35. See Veenhof 1975–6.
36. See von Soden 1979, 32.
37. The translation takes the noun as *pulhītu* 'scab' and the verb as *arāru* 'to rot, discharge putrid liquid'.
38. See Moran 1981.
39. This reference is not understood.
40. See AHw, s.v. *ṣuppu*. Presumably means, 'like sacrificial sheep'.
41. The drowning of masses of dragonflies is alluded to also in Utnapishtim's speech in *Gilgamesh*, X. vi.
42. The symbolism of the flies is not certain. According to Parpola 1983, 316, fly-shaped beads were used in self-flagellation by devotees of Ishtar to induce ecstasy, but he quotes no evidence. Kilmer 1987 takes them as symbolic of death and of bravery in battle. A text fragment included in Campbell Thompson 1930, plate 59, says that all the gods of Uruk turned into flies when they abandoned Uruk, so possibly there is an allusion in this passage to a previous event when the gods abandoned mankind. See also *Gilgamesh*, note 139.
43. The word used for 'boat' here, *makurru*, implies a large cargo vessel shaped like the gibbous moon.
44. At this juncture the gods replaced *lullû*, primeval man who had no natural life-span, with mortal man. Therefore the Flood marks the transition from primeval men who lived for centuries, to men whose lives decline in old age, as now. See Wilcke 1999 and George 1999.
45. These are classes of female devotees attached to temples who were not usually allowed to bear children.
46. This type of line is often found at the start of oral narrative: cf. *Gilgamesh*, *Anzu*, and *Erra and Ishum*.
47. Brief colophons also exist for the first and second tablets of *Atrahasis*. Elsewhere in this volume the translator has selected colophons arbitrarily, particularly if they are well preserved and interesting, in order to illustrate the kinds of information which they can provide.

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