

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt  
but intended for use  
September 17, 1927

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed September 10, 1927

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman  
Authority on Meteorology

ASSYRIAN WEATHER PROPHECIES

Was there ever a time when man did not attempt to predict the weather? In the cuneiform library of Ashurbanipal, now preserved in the British Museum, there are several tablets showing that weather forecasting was practiced on an extensive scale - and as a government enterprise! - as early as the seventh century B.C. The Assyrian astrologers and magicians, who were public officials, were charged with the task of predicting a great variety of mundane events, including droughts and floods. Their predictions were based on "omens" of many kinds, among which were certain atmospheric phenomena, such as the luminous circles around the sun and moon known to modern science as halos and coronas. The observations of these phenomena served, however, for predicting many things besides weather, and a drought or a flood was as likely to be foretold from the appearance of the liver of a sacrificial animal as from the aspect of the sky.

A good many formal rules for weather predictions have been found on Assyrian and Babylonian tablets. Here are some of them:

"If lightning flashes from south to east there will be rain and floods."

"If there is lightning in the west the weather god will inundate the land of Amurru (Palestine)."

"If the voice of the weather god (thunder) is heard in the month of Tammuz the crops will prosper."

"If the sun is surrounded by a ring there will be rain and a change of weather."

"If it rains eight days in the month of Nisan, this means riches for the people."

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

-----  
SCIENCE SERVICE,  
21st and B Sts.,  
Washington, D.C.