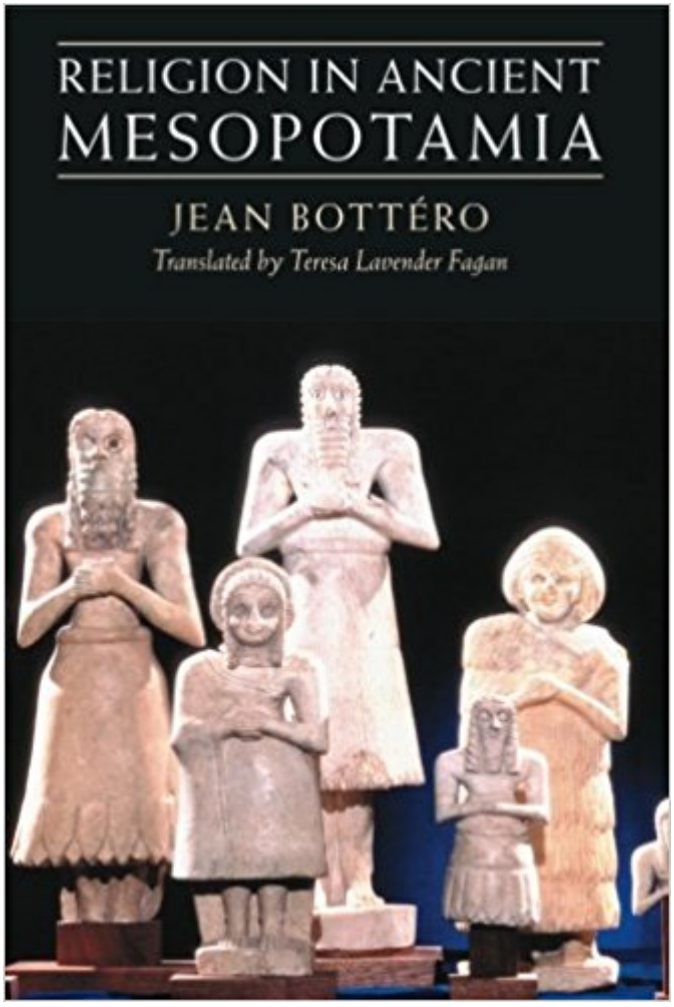
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Religion In Ancient Mesopotamia



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Synopsis

One of the world’s foremost experts on Assyriology, Jean BottÃƒÂ©ro has studied the religion of ancient Mesopotamia for more than fifty years. Building on these many years of research, BottÃƒÂ©ro here presents the definitive account of one of the world’s oldest known religions. He shows how ancient Mesopotamian religion was practiced both in the public and private spheres, how it developed over the three millennia of its active existence, and how it profoundly influenced Western civilization, including the Hebrew Bible.

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Customer Reviews

One of the world’s foremost experts on Assyriology, Jean BottÃƒÂ©ro has studied the religion of ancient Mesopotamia for more than fifty years. Building on these many years of research, BottÃƒÂ©ro here presents the definitive account of one of the world’s oldest known religions. He shows how ancient Mesopotamian religion was practiced both in the public and private spheres, how it developed over the three millennia of its active existence, and how it profoundly influenced Western civilization, including the Hebrew Bible.

Jean BottÃƒÂ©ro is the emeritus director of l’Ãƒâ cole Pratique des Hautes Ãƒâ tudes, quatriÃƒÂ¨me section, Paris. He is the author of The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia; Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods, and coauthor of Ancestor of the West: Writing, Reasoning, and Religion in the Ancient Near East, all published by the University of Chicago Press. Teresa Lavender Fagan has translated more than a dozen books for the University

of Chicago Press.

There are several excellent reviews of this book (although one review posted here appears to be of Black and Green's "Illustrated Dictionary: Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia" - another excellent but very different book). Nevertheless, I thought I'd add my two cents worth. This book is very verbally descriptive and packed with facts by an expert. The facts are embedded in the text mostly, there isn't much "at-a-glance" information. However, when you get into the text, it is extremely worthwhile - clear, beautifully written, informative, packed with information, but factual. The author clearly has a deep empathy and understanding of the worldview of this most ancient of cultures (even though he obviously is himself from and assumes his reader is from a Judeo-Christian worldview), and through his elegant writing he is able to transport the reader into that world. In the final analysis, there aren't many academics who can do this. Many books either venture into the fantastic or too far into speculation on the one hand, or on the other hand refuse to enter into the experience the facts present leaving the reader with a dry summary. This book manages to remain with the factual while transporting the reader into the experience.For those who know either of the extremely ancient languages of Mesopotamia, throughout, both Sumerian and Akkadian names are given for various deities, priesthoods, religious elements etc. The book is not a compendium of myths or texts although the most important myths are explained and used to situate cosmology with relation to the religion. Also, quite a number of samplings of texts (in English) are given which enable the reader to experience firsthand through example the principle being illustrated by the author. Chapter 6 p152 gives the standardized Mesopotamian calendar from which the ancient but later Hebrew calendar is partially derived. A few of the most important festivals are described with explication of what is known, what can be guessed at, what is unknown.If you like reading text, then this is a very good book and you will come to a good feeling for Mesopotamian religion backed up by facts. There is a respectable bibliography at the end and notes.

After wading through a number of books on this topic that were rather rough and fragmented, this book was a delight. It begins with a nice thumbnail sketch of the history of the region. Unlike many books on the topic which seem to highlight the various myths and fragments of writings, this author creates an understandable framework within which the myths are hung. Having an overarching framework is key to understanding the myths, and hymns presented. It cleared up much confusion I had in reading other texts that presented the material in a fragmentary manner.

It seems a bit outdated now as today’s scholars are reticent about religion in ancient Mesopotamia. There is not enough evidence, but plenty of conjecture.

great book

Bottero offers a fairly concise review of Mesopotamian history and religion. The book is a good introduction to the topic for both students of religion, as well as general readers. My original interest in the book pertained to the correlations between Mesopotamian mythology and the stories found in the `Old Testament,’ i.e. my interests were more literary than historical. Bottero does discuss some of the myths, etc.; yet his main focus is on religious practices and/or behavior. It’s still an interesting read, and, overall, I enjoyed the book. But if you are, like I was, looking for an analysis of the Mesopotamian myths themselves and how said myths influenced the entire Mediterranean basin, I recommend the book "Slaying the Dragon" by Bernard F. Batto.

This is an excellent book. For a course I just completed on Mesopotamian religion, we frequently read small sections of this book as introductions to topics we studied each week, finishing all sections of the book by the end of the course. It is very well written and intelligent. I always looked forward to reading the sections from this book first, before tackling published essays and primary source material. The author has written many books on the subject. You would also never know that it had been translated from French.

Teachers and students have needed this book for a long time; previously, we had to depend on skimpy glossaries at the end of anthologies. Inevitably, for reasons of space and cost, those glossaries were very brief and not cross-referenced. This book, put together by two scholars in the field, solves this problem. In 192 illustrated pages, Black and Green have, in dictionary-style defined, explained, and cross-referenced to other items and illustrations, every god, demon, and symbol mentioned in the available Mesopotamian literature. Like good scholars, they are very careful when they speculate about meanings; they are factual and write clearly,linking, whenever possible, the item they’re defining to parallels in architecture, sculpture, and literature. This is a very valuable resource since it puts into one text the best, most up-to-date scholarly understanding of the many gods, demons, and symbols that the ancient Mesopotamians poured so many of their imaginative energies into creating.

This is a great summury of the subject, a great book if your wanting to learn the basics before you dive into more scholarly work. I strongly recommend it as a introductory read, though it can be complicated at times.

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