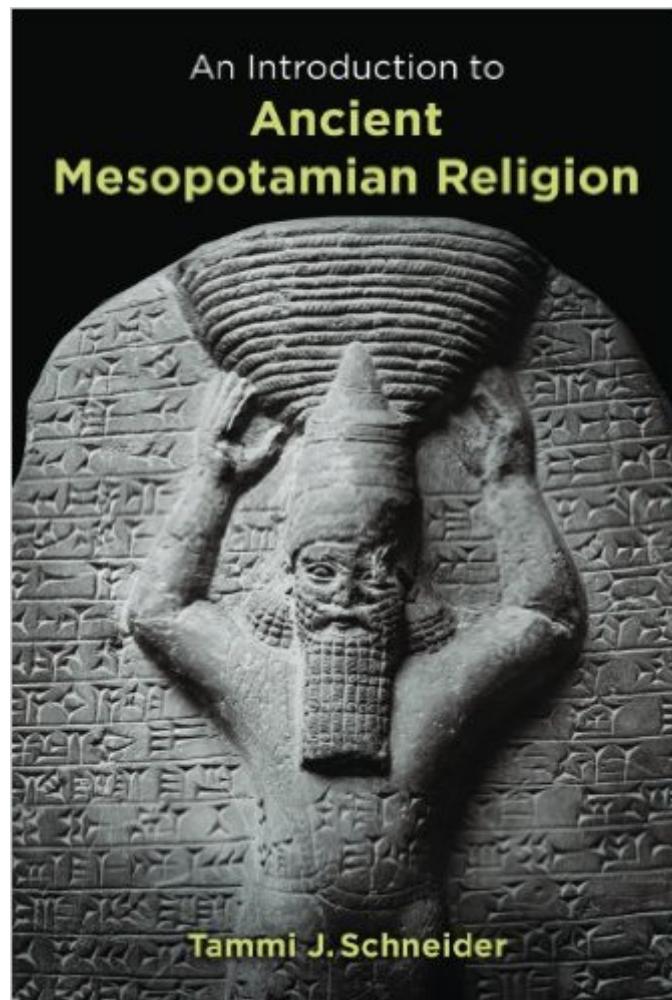


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An Introduction To Ancient Mesopotamian Religion



Synopsis

In *An Introduction to Mesopotamian Religion* Tammi J. Schneider offers readers a basic guide to the religion of the peoples living in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers from the beginning of the Bronze Age to the time of Alexander the Great and Darius III. Drawing from extant texts, artifacts, and architecture, Schneider reveals a complex, fluid, and highly ritualized polytheism and describes both its intriguing pantheon of deities and the religious experience of the people who spent their lives serving and appeasing them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Schneider's book is a fun read for folks interested in things ancient Mesopotamian. The book is brief but well organized. Helpful introductory material (tools for study and a summary of history) set the stage for a chapter by chapter discussion of significant areas related to the broad area of the ancient Mesopotamian religion. Key categories are dealt with in a concise and informative fashion that provides enough data to cover each area yet in a way that is easily grasped by those newer to the topic. The uneven assessment of some areas is a minor flaw of the book. In her discussion of the Sacred Marriage Schneider notes the information gap between the 3rd and 1st millennia and raises a note of caution about conclusions that are based upon a seamless treatment of the materials. Yet, in her discussion of prophecy, an area far inferior to divination in ancient Mesopotamia, she does not raise the same warning about the seamless use of prophecy texts from Mari (18th century) with the prophecy texts from Neo-Assyria (8th century). A strength of Schneider's book is her use of basic and accessible works, even for primary sources, that will allow readers to

investigate more fully her major points. The book is informative, well balanced and enjoyable so highly recommended as Schneider clearly achieves her goal.

Dr. Schneider presents ancient mesopotamian religion in a way that is clear and easy to read. This is, as the book admits, only an introduction, but it is a very good introduction.

I'm no expert on the subject and really not in a position to review this study. It seems to me though that the author, while certainly an expert, avoids to tackle the deeper issues of his material, remaining at a very introductory level and often repeating previously stated concepts. Which is fine if this is a text for students, and it certainly contains a wealth of information. I personally would have preferred a bolder attempt of interpretation in what is certainly a very fascinating subject.

Let me first say that this book's font and formatting were aesthetically perfect for me (which in all honesty is something that always matters more than it actually should...). As for the content, one who reads this book will rate it upon what he or she is expecting. If you are looking for an exhaustive treatment, look elsewhere. If you are relatively new to the field and you want something that will 'pace' you well, then this is the droid you are looking for. Schneider is a fantastic docent who gives you a concise tour of the scholarship done on ancient Mesopotamian religion; she shows you relevant points without overwhelming you. Also, she leaves an abundance of footnotes for you to trace her work (something that does not happen often in Introductory material). This allows you to see the most helpful sources for whatever topic she might be talking about. Make this study a framework around which you can continue your knowledge of ancient Mesopotamian religion.

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