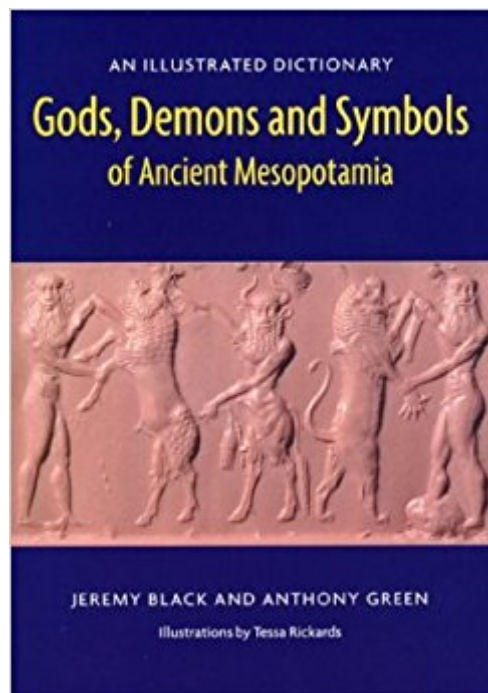




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Gods, Demons And Symbols Of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary



Synopsis

Ancient Mesopotamia was a rich, varied and highly complex culture whose achievements included the invention of writing and the development of sophisticated urban society. This book offers an introductory guide to the beliefs and customs of the ancient Mesopotamians, as revealed in their art and their writings between about 3000 B.C. and the advent of the Christian era. Gods, goddesses, demons, monsters, magic, myths, religious symbolism, ritual, and the spiritual world are all discussed in alphabetical entries ranging from short accounts to extended essays. Names are given in both their Sumerian and Akkadian forms, and all entries are fully cross-referenced. A useful introduction provides historical and geographical background and describes the sources of our knowledge about the religion, mythology and magic of "the cradle of civilisation".

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The authors know their material inside out . . . The choice of illustrations, both half-tone and line-drawings, and the careful, cross-referencing of entries make this book a compelling compendium of ideas and images." (History Today)

I absolutely loved this book, but there are some major flaws that may be deemed insurmountable by some readers. First, there's no index (enough said). Second everything is organized alphabetically which will almost certainly cause problems for readers hoping to use this book as a reference. Many of the gods, demons, and practices listed go by multiple names, and titles; which will make looking

up specific entries difficult. If you're new to the subject matter, or a student, I highly recommend this text; however, I caution those with a lack of patience. If you're not willing to read some off subject entries on the way to the one you're really looking for then you may want to consider looking elsewhere.

The reason it has one less star than it should is because of black and white pictures and something mentioned in my below review: This book is very resourceful. It even talks about magic circles and the Tower of Babel. One can use the magic it talks about in this book, it goes fairly in depth. The thing on magic is long and can be utilized. If you're just learning about Mesopotamia this book is very good. If you're a Christian or Abrahamic in some way this can also help you in studying the bible. But it's better outside of that. One can see the similarities and where Greece got many concepts including griffins, mermaids, and centaurs. As far as studying people is concerned you start seeing that many ancient conceptions, and this likewise relates to the bible too, have been around much longer than people previously thought. This book is helpful to those with Greek, Egyptian, and biblical backgrounds. The book is written in a manner which is very easy to read. So, you don't have to be someone who constantly reads academic books to understand it. It is not dry and the descriptions are done in a way which most people should find understandable. My only problem with this book is THERE IS NO INDEX. Do you know just how bad it is to have a dictionary with out an index? It's a travesty against mankind! I feel like the authors were trying to troll people excluding an index. I mean, really.

Great resource book on Mesopotamian religion. It is user friendly, the articles are clear and concise and accessible. This a work that every budding Assyriologist should have. It really helps to clear up some of the thorny contradictions in the ancient religions of the area, especially Sumer.

I love books like this. Throughout the 190 pages of entries, covering everything from "animal sacrifice" to zodiac, cross-references are printed in bold text, prompting a butterfly style of reading that can be very illuminating (provided you do not lose track of your mental stack of things to look up). This "analog hypertext" presentation adds a new dimension of usefulness to the book. This book is closer to a brief encyclopedia than just an illustrated dictionary, as many of the articles go into considerable depth and contain editorial remarks on the validity of certain interpretations, e.g., "Although the all-embracing 'fertility cult' aspects of Mesopotamian myth and religion have certainly been exaggerated as a result of the anthropological climate of the 1950s and 1960s ...", (from the

entry on "fertility"). The authors are prominent working scholars in the field, and the quality of articles upholds a very high standard. The book can be used as an introduction to the subject, or even more productively in conjunction with any of the more detailed references available, a few of which are listed in a very abbreviated bibliography in the present book. This brings me to my one disappointment with this book: the authors are not consistent in identifying sources. Scholars and religious reconstructors need to see things in context. As an amelioration, Dr. Black does run the online archive of Sumerian Literature ([...]), which provides a great and searchable source of original texts in both translation and phonetic original forms. Still, this is a "grab with gusto" title. You might want to buy two, in case you wear one out.

This is quite a book. If, for whatever reason, you are interested in ancient Gods and Demons, then this book is a Must Read. Fascinating and academic look at religion at the dawn of man.

I would rate this 5 stars if only it had just a little bit more of artwork and more elaborate explanations to the ones already in there. A lot of times while i was reading there was quite a few allusions to some important artwork and figurines in Mesopotamia which stops there, not even a source reference.

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