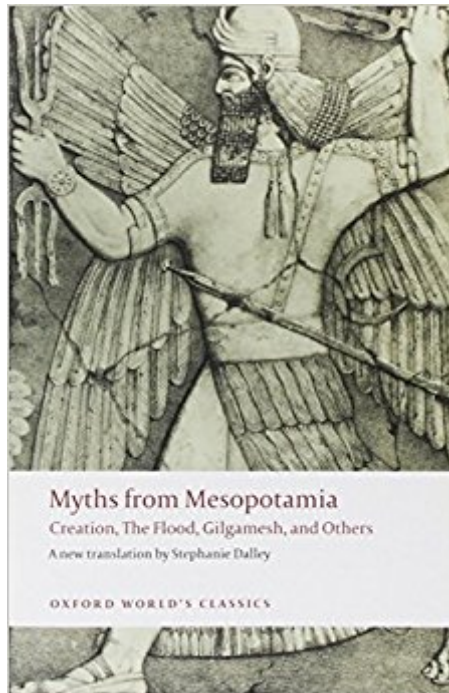


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Myths From Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, And Others



Synopsis

This pathbreaking work uncovers new translations of the main myths and epics written in Akkadian, including the Creation myths and the epic of Gilgamesh. The deities and heroes which figure in these stories are all of ancient Mesopotamia, and many of the original clay tablets, on which the stories were first inscribed, were discovered there. A striking collection of accurate and up-to-date renderings of the best-preserved cuneiform texts in current, readable English and discoveries of both new tablets and points of grammar and lexicography during the last twenty-five years, these translations will inevitably replace all previous versions. The book provides introductions to each item--giving insight into the sources and datings of the texts; notes to guide the reader through difficulties; an up-to-date glossary of deities, place-names and key terms; a chronological chart and map; and illustrations of some of the mythical monsters that are mentioned in the stories.

Book Information

Hardcover: 360 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; First Edition, First Printing edition (December 28, 1989)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0198143974

ISBN-13: 978-0198143970

Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 1 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars 27 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #860,847 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #197 in [Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Mesopotamia](#) #198 in [Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Assyria, Babylonia & Sumer](#) #213 in [Books > History > World > Religious > New Age, Mythology & Occult](#)

Customer Reviews

'has the great merit of including not only the obvious Gilgamesh and Creation texts but also the Atrahasis, Adapa, Etana, Anzu, and Erra stories and even the slight but highly suggestive "Theogony of Dunnu"' Greece and Rome'handsomely produced book' A.R. George, SOAS BULletin'her enterprise is to be warmly welcomed' John Dillon, Trinity College, Dublin, Hermathera --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Text: English (translation)

You want to learn about the roots of Hebrew Bible stories then you have to read these stories. Many Mesopotamian Myths in one book; it is a great collection. Gilgamesh, Ishtar, Adapa, Creation myth all of them are in this book. The stories are poetic and very touching. It is a must read book.

There is evidence of older civilizations than the Sumerian but we are given a more complete picture of life as it was then, thanks these records and one who has been able to translate them..

MYTHS FROM MESOPOTAMIA : Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others. Edited and translated with an Introduction and Notes by STEPHANIE DALLEY. 337 pp. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford University Press, 1998 (1989). ISBN 0-19-283589-0 (pbk.) Today we have the movies. It seems perfectly natural to us that time, energy, skills, and enormous resources should be devoted to the manufacture of an endless flood of 'stories,' stories which bear little if any relation to reality, and most of which are mere entertainment and utterly without any sort of meaning or significance. Think, for example, 007 or Indiana Jones. Think rubbish. What we fail to realize is that ancient peoples would have viewed us and our art with absolute horror. Having far more limited resources than us, and being fundamentally much more serious and in closer contact with reality, an art such as ours that lacked significance would have immediately been seen as the degenerate thing it is. True art for the ancients, in other words, meant deep significance. Look now at the title of the present book. What effect does the use of the word "Myths" have on your thoughts before you even open the book? One of the senses of this word today is "lies" or "falsehoods." The word is also commonly used of the stories that were told and cherished and handed down by ancient peoples. These were serious people, and their 'stories' held deep meaning and significance for them, though we no longer require our own to have much meaning. But the title of Dalley's book flicks a switch in our mind and readies us for a bunch of mere stories, tales dreamed up out of thin air in idle moments. Personally, I remain unconvinced. I don't think that the ancients were as ready to waste their time and resources on mere entertainment as we are. Neither do I think that their stories were pure products of imagination about an imagined class of beings that (since it's safer) our scholars have agreed to call "gods." I think these stories are distant echoes of actual historical events involving real persons, and so does scholar and linguist Zechariah Sitchin, whose books on Ancient Mesopotamia you ought to read as they will help rescue you from the paradigm paralysis of the Official World. The story of Ancient Mesopotamia, of its various peoples and languages, its amazing civilization, its fantastic cuneiform writing system, and of the exciting discovery of hundreds of

thousands of baked clay tablets, in various states of preservation, and their patient decipherment by dedicated scholars over the last hundred years or so, is a fascinating story but far too complex to go into here. All I can do is refer you to my Listmania List, 'Sumer for Beginners,' for some suggested reading. Assyriologist Stephanie Dalley, who has taught Akkadian (the Semitic language of the conquerors of Sumer), is one such scholar, and although I'm not a specialist myself but merely an enthusiastic Sumerophile, I think she would agree that knowledge of Sumerian and Akkadian is still in a highly imperfect state, and that 'definitions' of words in these languages should not be seen as fixed and more or less final, as they are in languages such as Latin or Greek, but rather as currently fashionable educated guesses by specialists, guesses which may turn out to be wrong. Personally I doubt very much that her use, for example, of the word "gods," accurately reflects what the ancients really meant. Once again, I think that we are dealing not with 'myth' but with history. Although Professor Dalley's book was designed for the general reader, it's quite a scholarly production nevertheless. After a brief Preface and Introduction, she gives us brisk, clear, vigorous and wonderfully readable translations of the following important texts : Atrahasis (the Flood Story); two versions of The Epic of Gilgamesh; The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld (The Journey of Ishtar to Africa ?); two versions of Nergal and Ereshkigal; Apapa; Etana; two versions of Anzu; The Epic of Creation; the Theogony (sic) of Dunnu; Era and Ishum. All of these texts have been provided with their own brief introductions, and all gaps and losses of text in the original tablets have been indicated in the translations. In addition, all texts have occasionally helpful endnotes which in most cases total a page or two, although Gilgamesh has over 10 pages. The book also includes a Chronological Chart (in a miniscule font); a Map of the Near East showing places named in the 'myths' (which would have been more useful if it hadn't been so tiny); a page of line drawings illustrating 'Mythical monsters (sic) referred to in the translations;' a detailed 14-page Glossary; and a 6-page Selected Bibliography which should prove useful to polyglots who have access to an excellent university library collection of Ancient Near Eastern materials. The book is clearly and excellently printed on strong paper in a smallish but readable font, and bound in a glossy wrapper, but sadly has one of those detestable glued spines that crack on opening. Here is an example of Dalley's vigorous style, chosen at random from Gilgamesh, with my obliques added to indicate line breaks: "He washed his filthy hair, he cleaned his gear, / Shook out his locks over his back, / Threw away his dirty clothes and put on fresh ones. / He clothed himself in robes and tied on a sash. / Gilgamesh put his crown on his head / And Ishtar the princess raised her eyes to the beauty of Gilgamesh. / 'Come to me, Gilgamesh, and be my lover! / Bestow on me the gift of your fruit!" (Page 77). Within its limits, Dalley's is an excellent scholarly compilation of her wonderfully readable and

vigorous translations, and should be of real interest to anyone who is seriously interested in these fascinating ancient stories. But instead of allowing Professor Dalley to decide in advance for you, it might be better if you were to make up your own mind as to whether they are merely "myths," or are instead a distant echo of our true history.

classic

Even though I bought this for one of my courses, it was still a really great read. I love reading about ancient cultures and their myths. It is really interesting the theories they came up with to explain the world around them.

I ordered this book based on the description of it as "Very good -- little to no damage." The book has underling and, when it arrived, some of the pages were bent and smashed in. As a result, some of the pages were slightly torn. While this may be due to how the package was handled, the condition of the book was not "very good."

Dalley presents many of the major myths of the Mesopotamian culture including "The Epic of Creation", "Atrahasis" (The Flood Myth), and "The Epic of Gilgamesh". Additionally, short essays are provided for most of the translations that help the modern reader to understand the stories. I thought Dalley's introduction did a good job of discussing structural markers and literary devices used in Mesopotamian poetry. Since this book was published in 1990, more recent translations have become available. For example, Benjamin Foster's "From Distant Days" was published in 1995 and provides more complete translations of many of the same myths presented in Dalley. For example, the "Etana" myth in Foster includes a major portion of Tablet IV, which is completely missing in Dalley. Andrew George's "The Epic of Gilgamesh", which was published in 2003, contains a more complete translation of this story, along with Old Babylonian and Sumerian predecessors. Despite these translation issues, general readers who want to sample a bit of Mesopotamian literature will most likely be pleased with Dalley's book. Dalley's translations are very accessible, despite the numerous gaps and omissions present in the texts. For the person who wants a more complete anthology of Mesopotamian literature, I would recommend Foster's book, since he presents other types of literary genre, such as king legends, prayers, and love charms, in addition to more current translations of the major myths.

Any one person without faith or with faith will gain something from the book. If you are simply looking for historical facts this book is gold mine. Incredibly conclusive, the structure of the material is, to me, very readable. It has been an invaluable resource for me spiritually and creatively. Reading this book has actually illuminated my path back to Christ because it is such an exceptional and invaluable contribution to academia.

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