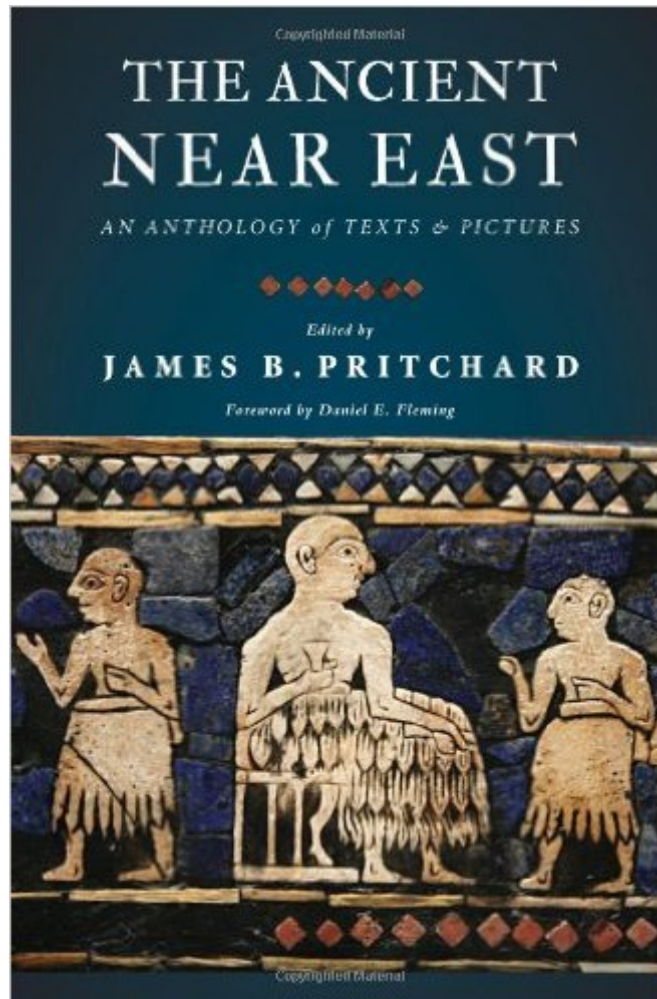


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The Ancient Near East: An Anthology Of Texts And Pictures



Synopsis

James Pritchard's classic anthologies of the ancient Near East have introduced generations of readers to texts essential for understanding the peoples and cultures of this important region. Now these two enduring works have been combined and integrated into one convenient and richly illustrated volume, with a new foreword that puts the translations in context. With more than 130 reading selections and 300 photographs of ancient art, architecture, and artifacts, this volume provides a stimulating introduction to some of the most significant and widely studied texts of the ancient Near East, including the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Creation Epic (Enuma elish), the Code of Hammurabi, and the Baal Cycle. For students of history, religion, the Bible, archaeology, and anthropology, this anthology provides a wealth of material for understanding the ancient Near East. Represents the diverse cultures and languages of the ancient Near East--Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Canaanite, and Aramaic--in a wide range of genres: Historical texts
Legal texts and treaties
Inscriptions
Hymns
Didactic and wisdom literature
Oracles and prophecies
Love poetry and other literary texts
Letters
New foreword puts the classic translations in context
More than 300 photographs document ancient art, architecture, and artifacts related to the texts
Fully indexed

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Customer Reviews

"The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures" (2011) is a terrific book for the purposes for which it is intended -- as a textbook, or for supplementary readings. In any case, as a companion to other sources of information. It could also serve as an introduction (but only that) to

several ancient literatures. With the current (January 2013) discount, the paperback edition is a bargain. Putting together a collection of more recent translations to replace it would be far more expensive. However, it can't be considered as a stand-alone introduction to the world of the Hebrew Bible ("Old Testament"), as was the case with the full edition, back when it first appeared, sixty-some years ago. The volume is an abridged edition of the now-classic collection "Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament" (1950, corrected 1955; supplement / expanded edition 1969; commonly ANET) and its companion volume of "The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament" (1954; supplement / expanded edition 1969; commonly ANEP). A library reserve copy of ANET was essential reading for a seminar course on Mesopotamian mythology I took in the 1970s. Competent scholars have quoted its often felicitous translations for decades; some as recently as 2012 (albeit in a revision of work published in the 1980s). However, the present volume has been stripped of most headnotes, footnotes, and bibliographic information; which may leave a reader at a loss for where else to turn. This could have been handled better; several pages of new bibliography, put together by a few graduate students, could have enhanced the volume significantly.

This book delivers exactly what it promises - primary textual material from the Ancient Near East. The book covers a broad front ranging from Egypt, Akkad, Ugarit, Canaan and the other parts of the Ancient Near East ("ANE"). The texts that are provided include wisdom literature, letters, myths, and legal documents. This book is great for someone curious about the literature of the ANE and wants direct exposure to ANE literature itself. Although very brief introductions to some of the texts are provided as orientation, the book does not provide a great deal of interpretative material explaining the meaning or context of the texts. The reader is therefore left to interact directly with the ANE texts. This interaction is often tough sledding. A lot of the texts are formulaic or stilted or presume a cultural context that a modern reader can't understand. The texts are not something that a reader is likely to dip into for a casual read. In my experience, a certain motivation is required to generate the interest and determination necessary to complete the various texts. On the other hand, sometimes the stories can make for ripping good yarns. As part of some research I was doing after reading Mark Smith's *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, I read the section on the Ugaritic Ba'al cycle. In that section I read how Ba'al fought and beat the Leviathan, and then fought Mat (death). Initially, Ba'al loses to Mat, and, apparently dies, but after his consort Anath beats up Mat, Ba'al re-appears and this time wins.

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