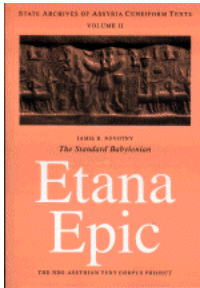


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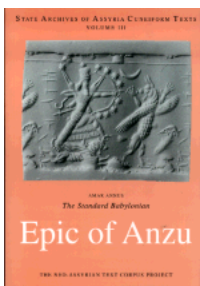


Novotny, Jamie R.

The Standard Babylonian Etana Epic

State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts 2

Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001.
Pp. xxviii + 66. Paper. \$25.00. ISBN 9514590473.



Annus, Amar

The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu

State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts 3

Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001.
Pp. xlii + 61. Paper. \$25.00. ISBN 9514590511.

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This series is one of a number of important contributions to the study of the state archives of Assyria that have come from the University of Helsinki and the influence of Simo Parpola and his colleagues and students. This particular series has the goal of publishing Assurbanipal's library in its entirety in the same format. Parpola himself published the first volume of the series in 1997; the text that was the subject of his treatment was appropriately that classic of Mesopotamian literature, the Gilgamesh Epic. The two volumes under review present the well-known but not always easily accessible epics of Etana and Anzu.

Each volume has the same structure. It opens with a lengthy introduction, which describes the cuneiform sources for the epic, previous editions, and translations; presents plot summary and the structure of the text; and deals with interpretive issues and controversies.

After the introduction, the authors present the cuneiform text. The cuneiform text is produced "from the composite transliteration using programs and fonts specially created by the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project" (Novotny, xviii). The text is a composite from the various ancient tablets, and restorations are indicated by white characters as opposed to black, which indicates their presence on the tablets themselves. The cuneiform text is

not a formal edition. The copies are not done from the tablets themselves; indeed, Novotny acknowledges never having seen them. This is fine, considering the primary purpose of the series, which is to provide a text and transliteration for teaching purposes. The cuneiform text is followed by a transliteration, a score (which indicates what different texts from different time periods contribute to our understanding of the epic), a glossary, and a sign list. The latter two parts are very convenient for teaching purposes in that the beginning student may not have to have present or know how to use the large research dictionaries (von Soden; *CAD*) or sign lists (Labat). However, it will be important that the beginning student get some experience with the other research tools as he or she progresses to intermediate and advanced status.

I question the decision of those who formulated the series not to include a translation. Perhaps the idea was not to allow too easy of access to students. Of course, students who do want to avoid work can just as easily get one of the recommended translations, such as Ben Foster's excellent rendition found in *Before the Muses* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 1993).

The material in the introduction provides helpful basic information on the texts, including its interpretation. For studies of such brief compass, Novotny and Annus provide a good amount of information, but the serious student will need to consult other, more technical studies as well. In their discussions, they cite many relevant articles and books. Annus's presentation of the composite text of the Anzu Epic is particularly helpful, since new sources that have provided more source material have been published only within the last twenty years.

On the other hand, both provide interesting analyses of their respective texts. Novotny, for instance, deals with the vexed issue of the order of the tablets that we have and provides a new interpretation of the evidence, particularly the end of the composition.

The usefulness of these volumes goes well beyond that of the beginning student. They make the source material accessible to scholars as well. Hebrew Bible scholars will find these volumes handy summaries of these important Near Eastern texts, but most would benefit more from having Hallo's larger collection (*The Context of Scripture*) in their personal library, unless they want to work on their Akkadian.