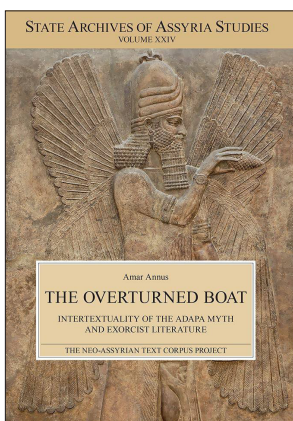


# BOOK REVIEW

## ADAPA – MYTHICAL SAGE FROM ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA



**Amar Annus. *The Overturned Boat: Intertextuality of the Adapa Myth and Exorcist Literature*. State Archives of Assyria Studies, Volume XXIV. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016. 148 pp.**

The book titled *The Overturned Boat: Intertextuality of the Adapa Myth and Exorcist Literature* by Amar Annus belongs to the field of Assyriological studies and has 148 pages containing an introduction, three parts (each part has several chapters), a conclusion, three appendices (including analyses and translation of the Adapa myth from the Sumerian language and a critical essay on the comparative method used in the study, etc.), a bibliography, and indices.

The book begins with an in-depth introduction in which Amar Annus explains the methodological bases and aims of his study. Amar Annus writes about the purpose of his study as follows (p. 5):

*In this book I intend to investigate not only the forms of intertextuality in cuneiform sources, but also how people felt about these texts. Therefore my approach is much affiliated to the cognitive science of religion, especially to its brand new subdivision of cognitive historiography. The comparisons that my intertextual research will develop are considered as interrelated visual patterns, having a complex pictorial and metaphoric imagery. In order to find out which elements symbolic meaning was connected in the ancient texts, I will compare the motifs in a wide range of texts to discern interconnections and recurring patterns.*

The introductory part of this book is very well elaborated and the methodology is also well explained and successfully justified.

The first part of the book called “Beginning of the Cosmos” (pp. 9–38), which consists of seven chapters (1. Adapa – the Sage Before or After the Flood?; 2. The Adapa Myth in Sumerian; 3. The Adapa Myth as Exorcistic Flood Story; 4. The Seasonal Placement of the Adapa Myth; 5. The First Creatures: Adapa, Kulla and Alulu; 6. Adapa and Enmerkar; 7. Inanna and the Heavenly Boat), focuses on the Sumerian Adapa myth and the Akkadian version thereof. It also deals with the seasonal placement of the Adapa myth and discusses the issues of Adapa and Enmerkar (legendary King of the 1st dynasty of Uruk) as well as the important text *Inanna and the Heavenly Boat*, and many other important Mesopotamian mythological and literary issues.

In the chapter “The Adapa Myth in Sumerian” Annus makes some very interesting observations about Sumerian kingship (p. 14), writing about the royal ideology of Ur III kings and their strong connection with Gilgamesh of the 1st Uruk dynasty, concluding:

“Ideologically, the Ur III kings effectively effaced any distinction between themselves and the kings of the first Uruk dynasty, rendering the two dynasties into a single line of kingship extending from the time when kingship descended to earth to the present ruler.” Here, however, I would prefer to see some reference to the very important work of Sebastian Fink about Gilgamesh and his genealogy, in which Fink also focuses on the role of Gilgamesh in Ur III period (Fink 2013: 81–107). We know that the most famous among the kings of the first Uruk Dynasty was, of course, the hero Gilgamesh (ca. 2750 BC), about whom we do not have firm evidence that he was even a real historical person, but who was given divine status posthumously. Undoubtedly, the figure of Gilgamesh played a very important role in Sumerian-Akkadian civilization during its history, especially in cults, in royal ideology, but also in the literary legacy of Mesopotamia. Sumerian epic songs about Gilgamesh, such as *Gilgamesh and Akka* and others, written ca 2100–2000 BC, were the most popular literary works in the Mesopotamian cultural space from the late 3rd to the 1st millennium BC. In the second millennium BC, based on several of these short Sumerian epic songs, the famous *Epic of Gilgamesh* was written in Akkadian (George 2003). According to the *Sumerian King List*, other heroic kings of the first Dynasty of Uruk (predecessors of Gilgamesh), similar to Gilgamesh, were also deified: Meskiagašer, Dumuzi, Lugalbanda (*Sumerian King List*, lines 95–98, ETCSL: transliteration c.2.1.1; see also Sazonov 2016: 36–37).

The second part of the book, “Descent and Ascent”, with its eight chapters, and the final third part of the book, “Adapa and Exorcism”, with its nine chapters, go more deeply into the topic of Mesopotamian exorcism (incantations, etc.) and witchcraft.

In the second part of the book, “Descent and Ascent”, Amar Annus (pp. 39–69) focuses on important issues related to the Mesopotamian netherworld and the idea of descent into *Apsû* and ‘kur’ (the Sumerian ‘netherworld’). He looks critically at descent myths and royal texts (e.g., Ur-Nammu A, ETCSL: transliteration c.2.4.1.1) as well as the idea of ascent into heaven (e.g., the concept of dead Mesopotamian kings “becoming a star”; mythological accounts of the deities like the story of how the Sumerian love-goddess Innana (Akkadian Ištar) travelled over the upper and lower skies in a Heavenly Boat, and other literary works). He also discusses the interesting topic of the netherworld river and analyses the Adapa myth as an ordeal text along with several other important issues related to the abovementioned topics.

The third and last part of the book, “Adapa and Exorcism” (pp. 71–99), concentrates on issues related to Mesopotamian exorcism and Adapa. Here, Amar Annus (p. 72) very correctly points out that the Sumerian Adapa myth “has a structure that is very similar to the Marduk-Ea type of exorcistic narrative”.

In conclusion, Amar Annus (p. 101) sums up his research and makes several important and crucial conclusions about Adapa, saying: “The narratives that have been examined in this study relate to the identity of the exorcist priest in ancient Mesopotamia. In these narratives one can find many interconnections that are specific to ancient Mesopotamian culture.” Annus also concludes (p. 101) that “almost all of these narratives follow the universal structure of religious experience” and the narratives that he has examined in his research about Adapa (p. 101) “do not form one coherent story, but rather several ones with a wide spectrum of variations, deletions and developments”. Amar Annus (pp. 101–102) successfully summarises how the narrative elements of the Adapa myth were related “to the activities and identity of the exorcist priest”.

The book is accompanied by an annotated translation of Sumerian versions of the Adapa myth (Appendix 1. The Adapa Myth Translated from Sumerian, pp. 105–110), which have been translated very well and do not contain any mistakes. The translation seems to be excellent, I would even say scrupulous.

However, in the book there are a few inaccuracies in the use of Sumerian and Akkadian transliterations, such as on page 62 and 74. For example, on page 62, footnote 97, Amar Annus uses the Sumerian word *hur-sag*, which should have been correctly written as *hur-sag*.

On page 86, where the author discusses Ur-šanabi and Gilgamesh in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and their relationship (Gilgamesh epic, XI 207–230), Annus does not take into account a very interesting observation about Gilgamesh and Ur-šanabi made by Sebastian Fink (Fink 2014: 67–69), who proposes interesting readings and interpretations of the name Ur-šanabi and, more generally, about Ur-šanabi's role in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Luckily, Amar Annus (p. 86) does point out that Adapa and Gilgamesh both “experience rebirth instead of achieving of immortality”, and shows in his book several other important similarities and parallels between these two important mythological figures.

So, to conclude, it has to be said that it was extremely necessary, very important and useful to carry out a new critical analysis of the Adapa myth with this kind of interesting and innovative approach. I am therefore convinced that the book by Amar Annus, *The Overturned Boat: Intertextuality of the Adapa Myth and Exorcist Literature*, is a necessary, solid, and original contribution to the field of Ancient Near Eastern studies.

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