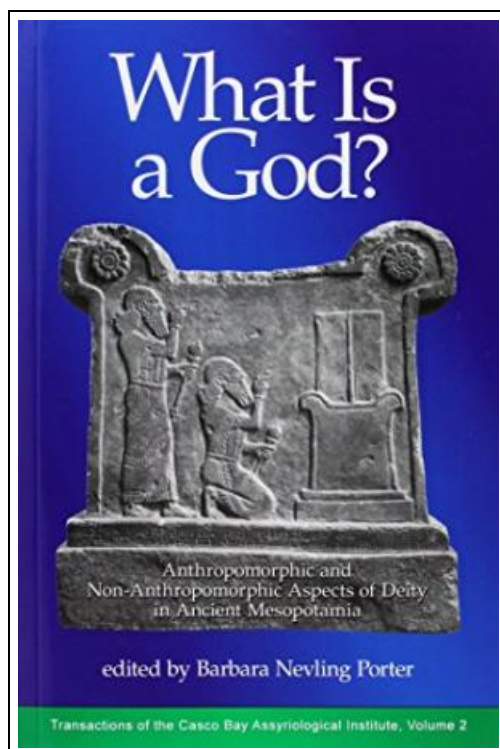


## What Is a God? Anthropomorphic and Non-Anthropomorphic Aspects of Deity in Ancient Mesopotamia



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## WHAT IS A GOD? ANTHROPOMORPHIC AND NON-ANTHROPOMORPHIC ASPECTS OF DEITY IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA



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Casco Bay Assyriological Institute. No binding. Book Condition: New. How did the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia imagine their gods? Did they think of them as impersonal forces of nature, as powerfully charged stones or animals, as lofty planets moving through the sky, as divine persons of tremendous power, or perhaps as a combination of these, divine entities of shifting forms or differing natures? How, in their opinion, did these divine powers or beings or entities behave? Could human beings interact with all gods, whatever their forms or natures? Since the early days of Assyriological studies, most scholars have argued that ancient Mesopotamians imagined their divinities primarily in anthropomorphic form, as great divine beings with personalities and active lives, much like humans in their form and behavior. To address these issues, the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute invited a small team of scholars, each expert in a different aspect of Mesopotamian studies, to collaborate in reassessing current ideas of how the Mesopotamians imagined their gods. The hope was to revise current models of Mesopotamia's gods to reflect better the full complexity of the ancient evidence. The four participants in the project were H. L. J. Vanstiphout, on the gods as they are represented in myths and literature; Francesca Rochberg, on how (and if) the stars and planets were understood to be gods; Tallay Ornan, on gods as represented in visual imagery; and Barbara N. Porter, on the documentary evidence for gods with no anthropomorphic form at all. Each was asked to prepare a substantial essay on the forms and nature of the gods of ancient Mesopotamia, based on how gods are represented in the particular ancient materials in which that scholar is an expert. After reading each other's papers, the participants met in September of 2004 in the quiet of Chebeague Island, Maine, for five...



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