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Book note:

Pichot, Andre. *La naissance de la science. Vol. 1: Mesopotamie, Egypte. Vol. 2: Grece presocratique.* Gallimard, 1991.

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Religious Studies Review 20 (1994), 138.

The Russian-Armenian priest Pavel Florensky was one of the leading figures in the Russian "religious renaissance" of the turn of this century. Florensky was a polymath and original thinker who worked creatively in an astonishing variety of fields, from physics to theology. He was executed in a Soviet labor camp in 1937. Bychkov, a Russian historian of aesthetics, presents Florensky's views on art as the valid development of ideas implicit in the Orthodox conception of theosis, the deifying union of humans with God. According to Bychkov, Florensky's contribution lies in his thesis that when the creature partakes of the nature of the Creator, the love that unites them constitutes ultimate beauty, when it (the love) is made the object of contemplation by a third person. The subject begs for a more analytical treatment than we have here. But this book, which also summarizes Florensky's challenging speculation on style, creativity, symbolism, the function of icons, and related topics, is a welcome introduction.

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Ancient Near East

LA NAISSANCE DE LA SCIENCE. VOLUME 1: MÉSOPOTAMIE, ÉGYPTE. VOLUME 2: GRÈCE PRÉSOCRATIQUE. By André Pichot. Paris: Gallimard, 1991. Pp. 312, 474. N.p.

Today's students of science probably will be surprised to learn that the "Pythagorean Theorem" predates Pythagoras by nearly a millennium and that complex mathematical problem solving, astronomical calculations, and detailed surgical experiments have been practiced for over four thousand years. In his two wonderfully organized volumes devoted to ancient sciences, Pichot makes available the accumulated scientific erudition of the ancients. The two volumes provide concise synopses of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Aegean advancements in agriculture, transportation, metallurgy, writing, mathematics, metrology, cosmology, astronomy, and medicine. Their consistent format makes them handy reference tools as do their numerous maps, charts, and diagrams. Moreover, Pichot explains the often complex linguistic, mathematical, and astronomical concepts in tandem with translations of the ancient texts.

On a critical note, one wonders why musicology appears only in the second volume devoted to the Aegean world, when the discovery and translation of a Hurrian musical score at Ugarit demonstrates that musicology is far more ancient. Though admittedly Ugarit falls outside of Mesopotamia, the Hurrians do not, and therefore some mention could have been made in a footnote. One also questions why, given their pocket-size, the volumes were not published as one. The separation implies an Aegean independence

from Egyptian and Mesopotamian scientific thought that most scholars, especially in recent years, have come to question. Despite these minor criticisms, Pichot's work restores to the ancients of the Mediterranean world a scientific sophistication that all too often goes unrecognized today despite the modern academic emphasis on the sciences.

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THE SUMERIAN DICTIONARY VOLUME 1: A, PART I. Edited by Åke W. Sjöberg, et al. Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1992. Pp. xiv + 209. (ISBN: 0-924171-21-9) \$50.00.

Of the languages of the ancient Near East—Akkadian/Babylonian, Hebrew, Phoenician, Ugaritic, Hurrian, Hittite, Elamite—only Sumerian has no up-to-date dictionary or thesaurus. However, the past few decades have shown remarkable progress in our understanding of the Sumerian language, and the availability of numerous and reliable text editions of Sumerian literary, lexical, and economic texts has paved the way for the publication of such a long awaited dictionary. We now have the beginnings of a herculean attempt to fill this gap. *A/I* is the second volume of the *Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary Project* to be published (*B* appeared in 1983). It follows in the same format as the first volume, providing each lexeme with its lexical evidence along with meanings derived from internal contextual analysis. Like its predecessor and model, the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, this volume's entries vary from brief notations for words with limited documentation, to extended treatments that are highly interesting excursions into the literary and economic sources of ancient Mesopotamia. Entries are organized along chronological and genre lines. Extensive quotes from literary, religious, magical, and economic texts provide much food for thought to those interested in Mesopotamian civilization, particularly when searching for comparative data. Scholars and students in archaeology, Bible, religious studies, and Assyriology will seek this dictionary in the reference rooms of their respective libraries. This is a worthy successor to the first volume and promises a more frequent publication pace for the future.

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AKKADIAN GRAMMAR. By Arthur Ugnad. Revised by Lubor Matouš. Translated by Harry A. Hoffner. SBL Resources for Biblical Study, 30. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992. Pp. xix + 185. Cloth (ISBN: 1-55540-801-X), \$39.95; paper, \$24.95.

Some thirty years ago, when I studied Akkadian with Prof. Hoffner, we utilized a mimeographed translation of Ugnad-Matouš, *Grammatik des Akkadischen*, which Hoffner had prepared to facilitate the teaching of the language. In the

subsequent decades I continued to utilize it translation for my own students in Akkadian. Hoffner's decision to make his useful translation available to a wider audience is most welcome. The Ugnad-Matouš *Akkadian Grammar*, though not the latest word on the subject, retains its introductory value. Its succinct grammatical sketches, comprehensive paradigms, and otherwise concise introduction to the language have made it a successful tool for over a half century. Hoffner chose not to provide a sixth revised edition, but only to add a few notes and minor updates to the bibliography, thereby retaining the text of the fifth edition. Although there now exists a number of introductory Akkadian grammars in English (e.g., D. Marcus, *Manual of Akkadian*, [1978]; K. Riemschneider, *An Akkadian Grammar*, translated by J. F. Sheehan [1976]; R. Caplice, *Introduction to Akkadian* [1988]), this translation of Ugnad-Matouš should become the required text for most introductory courses in Akkadian, at least in North America. The reasonably priced paperback edition should add to its popularity.

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THE CULTIC CALENDARS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST. By Mark E. Cohen. Bethesda: CDL Press, 1993. Pp. xxiii + 504. \$37.50.

In 1915 Benno Landsberger published his *Der Kultische-Kalendar der Babylonier und Assyrier* and again in 1949 he continued his contribution with "Jahreszeiten im Sumerisch-Akkadischen" (*JNES* 8). These especially have been the major statements of Mesopotamian calendars, although supplemented by the work of Langdon and others. Cohen's contribution expands upon these pioneering studies to provide a masterful synthesis of the hitherto collected research while adding important new insights and information on the order of months in various cities and the associated festivals and cultic activities, under different cultures (Mesopotamia, Syria, Canaan, Israel) and over nearly three millennia. In addition, detailed data on the numerous religious festivals associated with the calendars are also provided. This fascinating publication provides a rich and detailed discussion based on an examination of bewildering variety of original and secondary sources. It will be of great interest to historians of religion and to those interested in calendrical matters and their associated cultural traditions. This beautifully produced volume is the most welcome publication that will surely find itself in most seminary, research, and personal libraries.

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DREHEM. By Marcel Sigrist. Bethesda: CDL Press, 1992. Pp. xii + 431. \$37.50.

The Ur III period lasted just over a century yet it produced the largest corpus of cuneiform