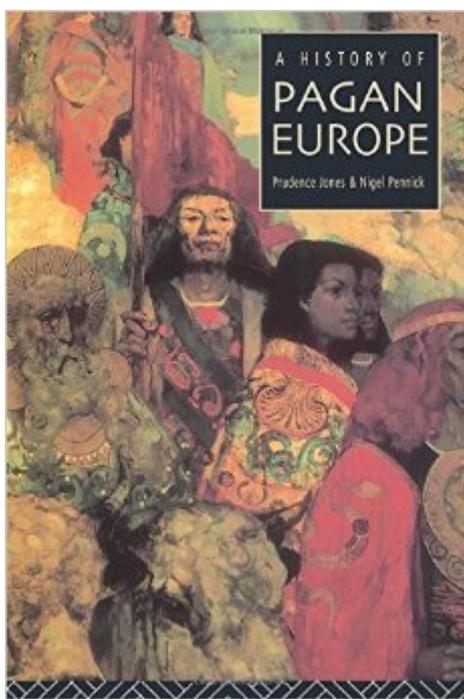


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A History Of Pagan Europe



Synopsis

The first comprehensive study of its kind, this fully illustrated book establishes Paganism as a persistent force in European history with a profound influence on modern thinking. From the serpent goddesses of ancient Crete to modern nature-worship and the restoration of the indigenous religions of eastern Europe, this wide-ranging book offers a rewarding new perspective of European history. In this definitive study, Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick draw together the fragmented sources of Europe's native religions and establish the coherence and continuity of the Pagan world vision. Exploring Paganism as it developed from the ancient world through the Celtic and Germanic periods, the authors finally appraise modern Paganism and its apparent causes as well as addressing feminist spirituality, the heritage movement, nature-worship and 'deep' ecology. This innovative and comprehensive history of European Paganism will provide a stimulating, reliable guide to this popular dimension of religious culture for the academic and the general reader alike.

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Customer Reviews

For a scholarly and historical approach to the history of European paganism (as opposed to the cr*p and nonsense offered by several Pagan and/or New Age authors), this book is extremely readable and well-researched. It's not perfect; I have a few doubts about some of its claims, like that the Vikings had a "trinity" of Freya, Odin and Thor, that maypoles are Pagan remnants in the British Isles or why a picture of a sheila-na-gig was included when nothing was said about sheila-na-gigs (and which, contrary to popular modern-day Pagan opinion, are *not* remnants of ancient Paganism), but the book also does not go off into fanciful and nonsensical flights about unbroken

lines back to the Neolithic, ancient matriarchies, worldwide ancient "Great Goddess" worship or alleged "peaceful" cultures with no implements of war. One of the consultants on this book was Dr. Ronald Hutton, a historian at the University of Bristol, whose opinion I trust a lot, although the authors mention in the introduction that he 'refrained' from commenting on their interpretations (I can see where he was probably biting his tongue since a few things they claimed were in contradiction with what he's claimed in his own books). I found the book hard to put down and was particularly interested in their honest summation of modern-day Paganism at the end and its more modern origins (some Pagans would like to think otherwise). (ObDisclaimer: I am a Pagan myself). For them's that wants historical accuracy rather than candy-coated New Age feminist revisionist histories, this book, in my opinion, is hard to beat.

This is hands down the best book on paganism that I've ever seen!-The first thing that drew me to it was the fact that it had information about pagan cultures from ALL of Europe, not just the Celtic lands. (I like the Celts a lot, but those of us who want to look into our Germanic or Slavic ancestry get the short end of the stick most of the time.)-Second, it presents a view that is very balanced: this is not one of those books about the mean 'ol Christians bullying peaceful fluffy pagans any more than it is about peaceful fluffy Christians converting barbaric pagans.-It is also very well researched. It was in agreement with most of what I've studied in college courses and other academic works and as an archaeology buff, this impressed me greatly. Others have mentioned this book's lack of revisionist history or conspiracy theory b.s. that make up a lot of pagan histories. This gives us much more mainstream credibility.-Finally, this book has a lot of useful, authentic(!!) stuff, such as photos, firsthand accounts, and folk prayers that will enrich your knowledge and worship (if you're a Pagan.)I also recommend this book to Christians interested in history and learning "the rest of the story" about medieval Europe.

I was afraid this book would be dogmatic and slanted towards New Age Paganism and Mother Goddess mumbo jumbo, but it turned out to be a solid, scholarly book. At points, it is difficult to follow the scores of references to different times and places, but working through the details is worth the effort. If you're interested in pre-Christian European history, this is an excellent piece of research. A good historiographic source, too.

I really was prepared to enjoy this book, but it does not live up to my expectations. The authors consistently over-generalize and sometimes indulge in romantic misinterpretation to further their

thesis. They start out on the wrong foot by characterizing Neopaganisms as conceiving of all deities as facets of a symbolic Goddess and God; in other words, not classically polytheistic. I certainly hope that anyone reading this book is well educated enough in the varieties of Neopagan thought to recognize how silly this is. It really only describes Feminist paganism well; it's not even close to correct for Wicca, Asatru, multiple Reconstructionist, and many Neopagan Druid faiths; those are only the first to cross my mind. By the time I read the authors describe the ancient Minoan religion in similar terms, I was already well aware of the book's revisionist agenda. There is plenty of decent research put into their crummy conclusions, so it's quite a waste. This is the kind of survey that, if it were attempted by a real historian, would be very interesting to read. Ronald Hutton's books do an excellent job of this in terms of British history specifically, but to my knowledge the same kind of historical survey, focusing on the continuity and transformation of Pagan theology over time, does not exist in a broader work that can be relied upon for accuracy. I suggest simply reading up on the individual cultures discussed, reading the myths themselves, and of course always verifying that your sources know what they're talking about. I am surprised to find this book on the ADF recommended reading list. It just doesn't hold up to scrutiny.

I knew nothing of the authors' bias when I picked up this book and knew no more when I put it down. Given the nature of the subject matter that says much about the authors. I have no reason to doubt the overall accuracy of the material. Given the span of time and geography, there must be some details that are incorrect, but if the reader is looking for a dispassionate history and evolution of paganism in the West, this book is a must. That is high praise in this day of revisionism where a good end justifies a lie. Christians should read this book for many reasons. Evangelical Christians must deal Wicca and other modern manifestations of the pagan religion and credible sources are difficult to find. All Christians should be aware of the syncretic background of their religious practices. Pagans should read this because it sets the record straight on the origins of their religion and its historical development. It is amply footnoted and the authors, as I have just learned, are Pagan themselves. I defer to Nicole Chardenet's earlier review for a better review from the Pagan view. For those whom it matters, I am a Sabbath observant Fundamentalist Evangelical Christian.

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