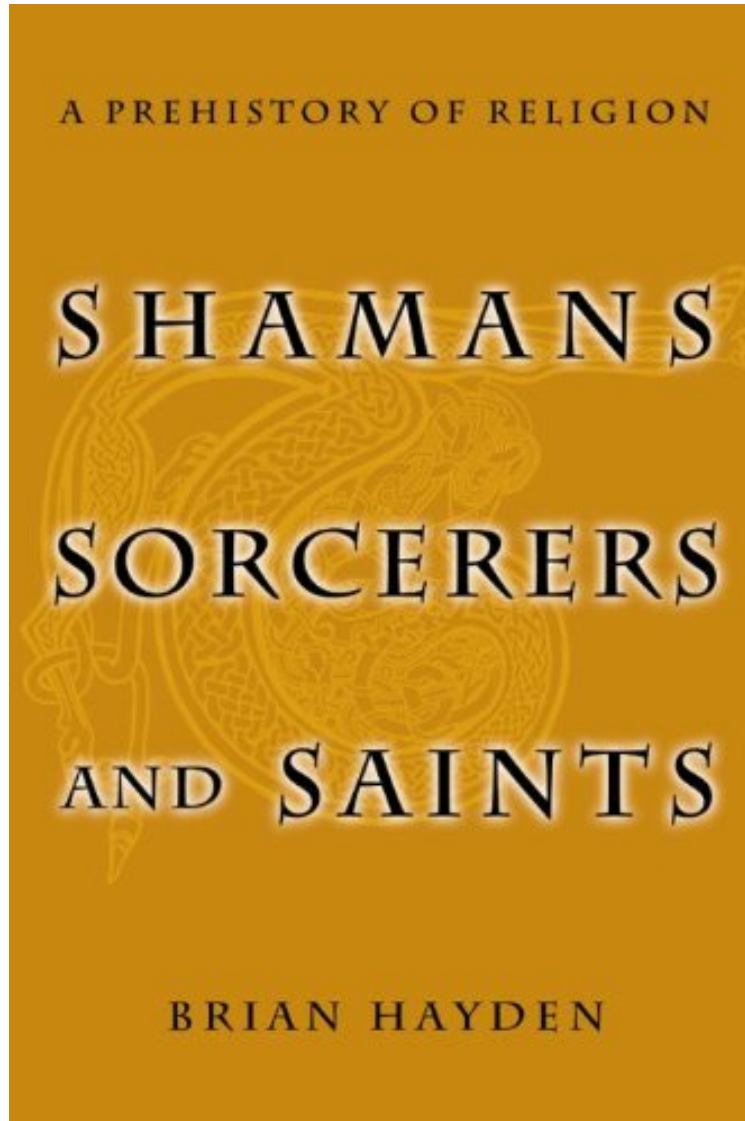


Shamans Sorcerers and Saints

Brian Hayden

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Brian Hayden : Shamans Sorcerers and Saints before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shamans Sorcerers and Saints:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy cynthia snowbankExcellent book with lots of informstion4 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Three Books in OneBy Paul CarletonThe previous reviewer complained about the price of Hayden's book yet said it's a `masterful work'. Indeed Hayden has packed his big book with information, both text and graphics. So think of it as `three books in one' and its price won't seem so `outrageous'.Hayden explores how the adoption of religions was propelled by `politics' not only among the early

egalitarian hunter-gatherers but especially the later hierarchical societies right on up to the present time. He's organized his book so the reader can sample as much or as little information as desired, by providing subject captions as well as summaries at the ends of the chapters. His descriptions are well written and personable, and fully referenced. What I didn't find adequately explained is why we humans are susceptible to belief in gods, which I explore in my book, "Concepts: A ProtoTheist Quest for Science-Minded Skeptics." 18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Masterful overview of religion origins and development By Csar Gonzlez Rouco In this masterful work, Hayden, by using ecological (i.e. materialistic) factors, tries to portray (and, as far as I am concerned, he achieves his goal) an engaging approach of how religion originated and developed from prehistoric times to the foundations of early civilizations (but including a final synthesis of religions' situation in our times). To put it in a nutshell, his basic belief is that social competition is the driving force of cultural change, and that also applies to religions. He also emphasizes the relevance of ecstatic experiences practiced all over the world, from shamanic cultures to predatory modern cults. It is to take into account that, although he lets aside book religions, his analysis of Christianity (past and present) is lucid and (because of that, perhaps unintentionally?) depicts an image that probably many will find rather negative, even sour. Besides, the book is not a difficult reading (content: 5 stars; pleasure of reading: 4 to 3). My only strong complaint about the book is its outrageous price. One hopes the publisher will issue a reasonably priced paperback edition soon, so that this timely and important work will get the wide circulation which it so clearly merits. Other books I would recommend to read are the following: "The Phenomenon of Religion", by Moojan Momen; "Ecstasies: Deciphering the witches' Sabbath", by Carlo Ginzburg; "The Magical Universe : Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe", by Stephen Wilson; and "Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come", by Norman Cohn.

Historians of art or religion and mythologists, such as Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade, have written extensively on prehistoric religion, but no one before has offered a comprehensive and uniquely archaeological perspective on the subject. Hayden opens his book with an examination of the difference between traditional religions, which are passed on through generations orally or experientially, and more modern book religions, which are based on some form of scripture that describes supernatural beings and a moral code, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He attempts to answer the question of why religion developed at all, arguing that basic religious behaviors of the past and present have been shaped by our innate emotional makeup, specifically our ability to enter into ecstatic states through a variety of techniques and to create binding relationships with other people, institutions, or ideals associated with those states.

An intensely scholarly work that is also eminently readable, this book is highly recommended for academic anthropology and religious studies collections. Library Journal About the Author BRIAN HAYDEN is an archaeologist and professor at Simon Fraser University.