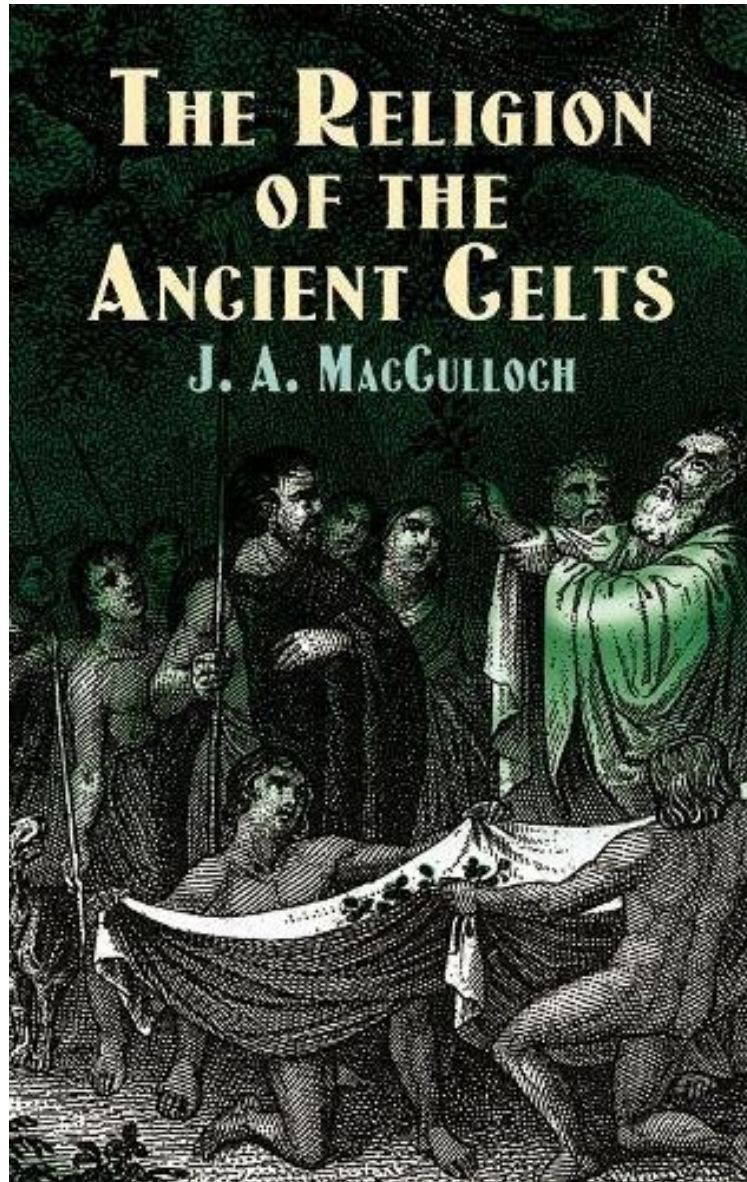


[FREE] The Religion of the Ancient Celts (Celtic, Irish)

The Religion of the Ancient Celts (Celtic, Irish)

John Arnott MacCulloch

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John Arnott MacCulloch : The Religion of the Ancient Celts (Celtic, Irish) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Religion of the Ancient Celts (Celtic, Irish):

128 of 129 people found the following review helpful. A Comprehensive Treasure Trove By Theodore Keer Originally published in 1911, and now available in Dover paperback, "Religion of the Ancient Celts," is a well written and engaging scholarly work. Well worth its price, the work is suitable to the general public, while still valuable to those

interested in the Celts from an historic, linguistic, mythological or ethnological standpoint. MacCulloch covers his subject matter clearly and thoroughly (referencing such things as parallels with Greek mythology and Sumerian religion) and writes in a style that will satisfy the expert without mystifying or losing the attention of the amateur. The main text is 390 pp, is fully referenced in footnotes, and is fully indexed. Chapter titles include: Gods of Gaul - The Irish Cycle - Tuatha De Danaan - Gods of the Brythons - Cuchulainn Cycle - Fionn Saga - Gods and Men - Cult of the Dead - Nature Worship - River and Well Worship - Tree and Plant Worship - Animal Worship - Cosmogony - Sacrifice, Prayer Divination - Taboo - Festivals - The Druids - Magic - Etc...Although the book may be "dated", it is not "outdated". Given the scholarly standards of its time, this may be more of a virtue than a drawback. More recent results in the area are naturally not addressed. But the work is consistent with comparative methods, and considers the consensus without neglecting competing accounts. There is neither neo-Druidic nonsense nor needless pedantry. While the study is generally limited to the culture of the British Isles, as opposed to that of the Continent, this is due to the lack of Continental oral tradition rather than to lack of attention on the author's part. MacCulloch is judicious. Yet he addresses issues such as the pre-Indo-European origins of the Mother-Goddess cult of Brigid, as the legends of the faerie-folk known as the "Sidhe,"* (as in banshee) and as the stories of "Isles to the West" now sunk below the sea. Fans of J.R.R. Tolkien will find this work enthralling and familiar, as it shows some of the sources for his magnificent "Middle-Earth." Avid youngsters, Celtophiles, students of Irish poet W.B. Yeats, followers of Marija Gimbutas (Civilization of the Goddess) and admirers of Robert Graves (The White Goddess) will likewise be pleased. (Consider a search for MacCulloch's 1918 "Celtic Mythology" at Google Books which will return the entire public domain text. It can be browsed or downloaded in lieu of a preview here of his style.) I can recommend this work unreservedly for readers of all persuasions.* ["Sidhe" shows curious parallels to the word "seidhr" - magic learned by the patriarchal Norse Aesir god Odin from the pre-Aryan matriarchal Vanir goddesses, and to "Sedna" - the Eskimo/Aleut "Mistress of Animals" who lives at the bottom of the ocean] 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Michael Silveus Well written book and enjoy having it in my library 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Great book By TechGeek Helped me understand the ancient Celts and the culture and religion of this ancient culture. I thoroughly enjoyed this book.

Scant records remain of the ancient Celtic religion, beyond some 11th- and 12th-century written material from the Irish Celts and the great Welsh document Mabinogion. This classic study by a distinguished scholar, first published in 1911, builds not only upon the valuable hints supplied by the surviving texts but also upon the still-extant folk customs derived from the rituals of the old cults. A masterly and extremely readable survey, it offers a reconstruction of the essentials of Celtic paganism. The Celt is portrayed as a seeker after God who links himself by strong ties to the unseen, eagerly attempting to conquer the unknown by religious rite and magic art. The earliest aspect of Celtic religion lies in the culture of nature spirits and of life manifested in nature, and this book offers fascinating glimpses into primitive forms of worship, depicting Celtic rites centered on rivers and wells, trees and plants, and animals. The Druids maintained an optimistic view of the afterlife, and the author presents the subject from the comparative point of view, drawing upon evidence from Celtic burial mounds to elaborate upon ancient beliefs and customs related to the culture of the dead, including rites of rebirth and transmigration.