

Historical Dictionary of Shamanism



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Few religious traditions have generated such diversity and stirred imaginations as shamanism. In their engagements with other worlds, shamans have conversed with animals and ancestors and have been empowered with the knowledge to heal patients, advise hunters, and curse enemies. Still other shamans, aided by rhythmic music or powerful plant helpers, undertake journeys into different realities where their actions negotiate harmony between human and other than human communities. Once relegated to paintings on cave walls, today Shamanism can be seen in performances at rave clubs and psychotherapeutic clinics. The Historical Dictionary of Shamanism has the dual task of exploring the common ground of shamanic traditions and evaluating the diversity of both traditional indigenous communities and individual Western seekers. This is done in an introduction, a bibliography, a chronology, and hundreds of cross-referenced dictionary entries, which explore the consistent features of a variety of shamans, the purposes shamanism serves, the function and activities of the shaman, and the cultural contexts in which they make sense.

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目录:

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