



Animal and Shaman: Ancient Religions of Central Asia

Julian Baldick

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What common features can be found in the native religions of the vast Eurasian landmass? Julian Baldick, in this comparative study of the indigenous pre-Christian and pre-Muslim religions of Central Asia, argues that there was a common inheritance to be found among the beliefs of the various peoples who have lived in Central Asia or have migrated from there; Scythians, Huns, Turks, Mongols, Manchus, Finns and Hungarians. Shamans - holy men healers among the pagan faiths - relied heavily on animal sacrifices to create spiritual purity and to nourish the soul. Animals and spirituality were thus locked in a mutually dependent embrace. In this survey of the ancient customs and religions of the larger inner Eurasian landmass, Baldick concludes that in pagan times there were remarkable common features in the forms of worship and spiritual expression among the different peoples of Central Asia, all largely based on the role of animals in their lives. These have survived not only in the myths and legends of the region but have also found their way into the mythologies of the West. This ground-breaking study will be of great importance to historians as well as cultural and social anthropologists.

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