



Sacred Origins of Profound Things: The Stories Behind the Rites and Rituals of the World's Religions (Compass)

By Charles Panati

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In this enlightening and entertaining work, **Charles Panati** explores the origins of hundreds of religious rituals, customs, and practices in many faiths, the reasons for religious holidays and sacred symbols, and the meanings of vestments, sacraments, devotions, and prayers. Its many revelations include:

- * Why the Star of David became the Jewish counterpart of the Christian cross
- * What mortal remains of the Buddha are venerated today
- * How the diamond engagement ring became a standard
- * That the first pope was a happily married man
- * How Hindu thinkers arrived at their concept of reincarnation
- * Why Jews don't eat pork, why some Muslims don't eat certain vegetables, and how some Christians came to observe meatless Fridays

Sacred Origins of Profound Things is an indispensable resource for all those interested in the history of religion and the history of ideas--and an inspiring guide to those seeking to understand their faith.

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- Sales Rank: #1073437 in Books
- Published on: 1996-12-01
- Released on: 1996-12-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.30" h x 1.30" w x 6.10" l, 1.50 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 608 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Sprightly, wry and irreverent, *Sacred Origins of Profound Things* attempts to explain the arcana of religious practice and dogma like prayer, celestial personae, moral codes, festivals, saints, evil, heaven, hell and miracles. Panati digs up fascinating curios while clearly explaining fundamental tenets of the world's religions. But his Religion 101 remains an awkward hybrid of brief journalistic entries (Panati is a former science writer at Newsweek) and short essays. Furthermore, not all "profound things" are covered equally or thoroughly. The religions of Asia are barely touched on, and aboriginal religions not at all. Of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, it is the last, and Catholicism in particular, that forms by far the largest part of the book. While readers looking for a quick answer will find useful the explanations of why religions affirm this or that belief, they will be frustrated by the lack of an index and the book's narrative rather than encyclopedic structure. Illustrations not seen by PW.

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From Library Journal

Few books in the theological literature are simply fun to read and this is one of them. Panati (*Panati's Parade of Fads, Follies, and Manias*, HarperCollins, 1991) has written an informative and entertaining book on the origins of religious ideas, sacred items, worship practices, holy symbols, and holidays. Although he discusses wonderful puzzlements such as why Jews don't eat pork, he also explores the origins and history of more pressing, controversial, present-day concerns such as the bans on homosexuality, married priests, and birth control. His book has a few shortcomings. Although it advertises itself as a book on world religions, the emphasis is mainly on Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, with only a smattering of other faiths. Also, there is a lack of footnoting, making the work unhelpful to serious scholars. But these minor complaints pale next to the wealth of information provided here. (Index not seen.) Recommended for public libraries. ?Glenn

Masuchika, Chaminade Univ. Lib., Honolulu

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Review

... eager to raise and then to answer ... a great many ... interesting questions about world religions and why their adherents believe and behave as they do ... -- *The New York Times Book Review*, Tom Ferrell

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Leslie Marcellus:

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Albertha Lemons:

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Theresa Kuykendall:

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