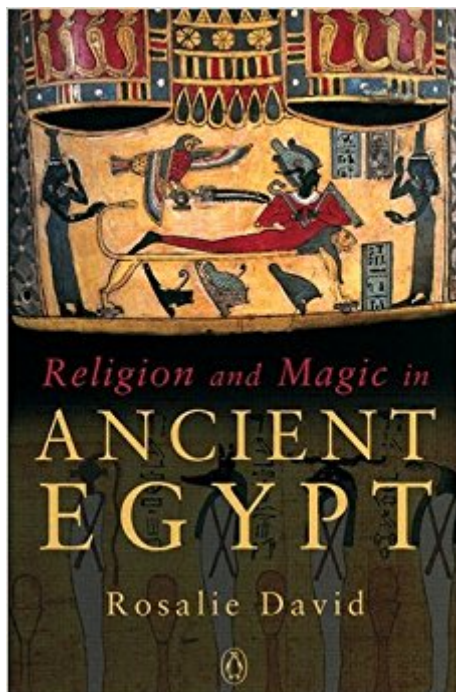


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Religion And Magic In Ancient Egypt



Synopsis

Every aspect of ancient Egyptian society—from education and law to medicine, birth, and death—was permeated by religion and magic, and dominated by divine life forces of the sun and the Nile. In this fascinating work, Rosalie David reveals the complex and intriguing world of gods and goddesses, tracing the history of Egyptian faith practices from the civilization's beginning through its growth into an empire and its later years as a Roman province. Concluding with a glossary and including new translations of Egyptian spells, this is an essential work for students, scholars, or anyone fascinated by the ancient world.

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Customer Reviews

Rosalie David is Professor and Keeper of Egyptology at the Manchester Museum, University of Manchester. She has taught university courses on ancient Egyptian religion and has edited or authored more than twenty books.

More needs to be written about ancient Kmt.

Although most reviewers are saying this book is a bit contradictory and at times confusing I found the book very interesting and finished it in 4 days. Although it is at times I think to someone who has at least a base knowledge of the Egyptian history and will find this book quite enjoyable. As a more in depth look in the the Egyptian culture. I bought this book at a book store along with another book entitled "Ancient Egypt: Thebes and the Nile Valley in the year 1200 BCE " which is written like a

tourist guide book set in Thebes around 1200bc the time of RamsesII of the New Kingdom. by Charlette Booth. This other book gives a nice introduction to Egyptian history and actually had some interesting statements about Egyptian daily life (Although all of this is historical scientific conjecture). Which leads me back to this book here which is also (historical conjecture) a "best guess" and was derived from several older sources and therefore some theories do contradict what we said earlier. But as far as the contradiction with the priest not able to wear animal skins into the temple and then a few pages later it saying that the priest wore a leopard skin cloak does not say that he entered the temple wearing a leopard skin cloak merely that possibly he wore it outside the temple in public festivals possibly (again conjecture). Also I don't believe that any of the Egyptian gods or deities took on the form shape or characteristic of a leopard so therefore it would not have insulted or injured the Egyptian deities for a priest to wear such garments in to their sanctuaries of the temple (but again only conjecture). For someone who has a basic knowledge and understanding of the history of Egypt and would like to learn more about why they seemed to be so interested in the afterlife and their progression of beliefs this is a good read. and reference of what time period what deities were in fashion to be worshipped and where and by what king or cult. The book chapters are broken into the basic kingdom periods starting with the Pre Dynastic going all the way up to the Roman's taking it over as a territory and somewhat beyond into modern times touched on. There is some jumping around of rulers and history but that is necessary in order to explain the progression of the religious history and peoples beliefs since most things in life do not happen one after the other. They overlap, ebb and flow in importance the same way water flows. This is not a chronological history of Egypt but a progression of beliefs not as whole. Although to someone who has a good grasp of the "King list" will be able to follow the story quite easily enough. For those who would like a lighter more general explanation the above Traveler's guide to Ancient Egypt is quite good place to start. Ancient Egypt: Thebes and the Nile Valley in the year 1200 BCE (Traveller's Guide to the Ancient World)

I own several other books by this distinguished, veteran Egyptologist; all of them quite wonderful. This volume seems to have been written with the intention of integrating old and new data about the subject in a more relevant and convenient manner. But, perhaps the desire to entertain won out. I was shocked to find a frequently dim, even cynical view of the Egyptians' sincerity, integrity, and religious sensitivity. The plan of the work seems to have been to produce a very informative overview, helping us to place developments along a clear time line. But, here we find mainly a history of the politics of Egyptian religion and magic, with little of the appreciative anthropological insight found in the work of numerous other authors. It appears to me that Dr. David has finally

become bored with Egypt, and wishes to share the feeling. Such a book, almost invidious at times, is unfortunate for a scholar who has produced such important, fair, and congenial work in the past. For many centuries, the contributions of the Egyptians were undervalued by scholarship, and I am happy to see that many authors have lately left the sneering behind in favor of a more sensitive and fair approach, instead of trying to bury an obelisk of achievement in a round hole of prejudice.

This book contains a huge volume of information about ancient Egypt, and I am assuming that this is the reason that other reviewers have awarded four and five stars. I would estimate that less than half of the information is in any way relevant to the topic of religion and magic, however. Instead of being a discussion of religion and magic, the book attempts to provide a sweeping history of the entire span of ancient Egyptian civilization. Unfortunately, this history is presented as an endless succession of often unrelated facts with no attempt to draw out interesting patterns and relationships and scant attempt at analysis and explanation. The lack of connection and analysis makes the writing at times almost incoherent. The style of writing can be seen in the following extract from the beginning of a paragraph 'Although weak or foreign dynasties tried to revive the myth of the god-king in order to support their own royal status, the political power of the king continued to decline, along with his influence on religion. However, there appears to have been an increased association between the temples and lay people.' After reading the first sentence of the paragraph, I expect it to be further developed with an explanation of the ways in which the power of the king and his influence on religion declined and some explanations of why this might have been so. Instead, the paragraph goes on to discuss some completely unrelated customs involving lay people in temples. Though the book does have some moments where interesting analysis takes place, for the most part it is not even attempted. The writing also contains a fair number of contradictions. At one point the author claims that priests were not allowed to wear animal skins and then two pages later she describes a priest wearing a panther skin. There must be a logical explanation for this contradiction, but the author offers none. The Pharaoh Akhenaten is described as revolutionary because he introduces monotheism to Egypt and allows no other gods to be worshipped. Within a few pages we suddenly find out that a second deity, the goddess Ma'at was supposedly retained. Once again, no explanation for this contradiction is offered. The lack of analysis also means that there are occasions when problematic or disputed information is offered up as fact. The author mentions the discovery of Minoan-style paintings in tombs in Egypt and claims this to be unusual since in Minoan civilization wall painting were reserved for palaces. In fact, many scholars would argue that the so-called Minoan palaces were actually mortuary complexes. In general, the dry,

repetitive, disconnected style makes the book a difficult read. History books do not need to be dry. The substance of history is fascinating, but only if the various pieces of information are connected through analysis and explanation into a coherent picture of the subject being portrayed. This book unfortunately does not succeed in achieving that.

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