Dying For The Gods: Human Sacrifice In Iron Age & Roman Europe

by Miranda J Aldhouse-Green


The evidence for human sacrifice in this period of the Iron Age is most prolific in Denmark, Germany and Holland, where many bodies have been found completely preserved in peat bogs. Some were hanged or strangled, the noose still around their neck, and others were bludgeoned on the head or had their throat slit. The Romans reserved their comments about sacrifice to the Celts and Germans, with no reference to such practices in the British Isles. Bog bodies have been found in Britain, however, which indicates that human lives were sacrificed to the gods in these islands too. Dying for the Gods by Miranda Green (Sutton, 2001). The Archaeology of Death and Burial by Mike Parker Pearson (Sutton, 1999). Dying for the Gods book. Read 3 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. Sacrifice, like death, is one of the great taboos of modern societies... After holding posts at Worthing and Peterborough Museums, she took up posts as Tutor in Roman Studies and full-time administrator at the Open University in Wales. Until recently professor of archaeology at Newport University, Miranda's teaching experience ranges from leading undergraduate courses on Roman Britain and Iron Age Europe to managing and contributing to Newport's MA in Celto-Roman Studies. She has supervised more than twenty PhD and MPhil students to successful completion.
The ancient Greeks practiced human sacrifice as well - a virgin daughter deemed the best candidate. Also, favorite slaves were slain when someone important, such a king, died. Herodotus speaks of how people would find “fifty of the best of the king’s remaining servants, strangle and gut them, stuff the bodies with chaff, and sew them up again” (p 163) to leave in the tomb. Evidence of cannibalism in South America is especially abundant. In India in the context of rituals associated with the god Shiva, in which the ground-up remains of a sacrificed pregnant Brahmin woman are... consumed by the presiding priest” (p 61). Nor was Rome itself completely free of such practices, although various Roman authors castigated them. The Iron Age was a period in human history that started between 1200 B.C. and 600 B.C., depending on the region, and followed the Stone Age and Bronze Age. Life in Iron Age Europe was primarily rural and agricultural. Iron tools made farming easier. Celts lived across most of Europe during the Iron Age. The Celts were a collection of tribes with origins in central Europe. They lived in small communities or clans and shared a similar language, religious beliefs, traditions and culture. It’s believed that Celtic culture started to evolve as early as 1200 B.C. These too may have served as offerings to pagan gods in religious ceremonies led by Druid priests. Sources: Greek Dark Age; Ancient History Encyclopedia. Dying for the Gods book. Read 3 reviews from the world’s largest community for readers. Sacrifice, like death, is one of the great taboos of modern socie... After holding posts at Worthing and Peterborough Museums, she took up posts as Tutor in Roman Studies and full-time administrator at the Open University in Wales. Until recently professor of archaeology at Newport University, Miranda’s teaching experience ranges from leading undergraduate courses on Roman Britain and Iron Age Europe to managing and contributing to Newport’s MA in Celto-Roman Studies. She has supervised more than twenty PhD and MPhil students to successful completion.