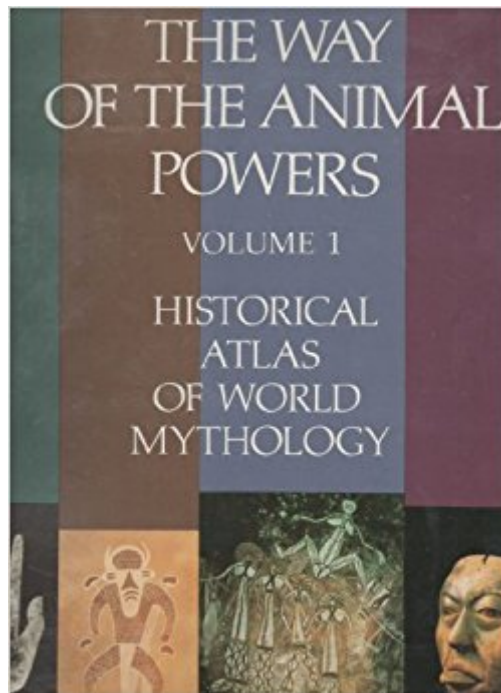


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The Way Of The Animal Powers (The Historical Atlas Of World Mythology, Vol. 1)



Synopsis

The volume itself is a consummate example of the art of bookmaking. Campbell's scholarly and readable text is integrated throughout with a profusion of color plates, specially-commissioned full-color maps, outstanding black and white photographs, unique drawings, and numerous illuminating charts. Drawing on cultural and art history, as well as on anthropology, ethnology, archaeology, paleontology, and linguistics, THE WAY OF THE ANIMAL POWERS will be indispensable to all those interested in mythology, comparative religion, history, and the study of man.

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Customer Reviews

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Had read it years ago and replaced the paperback version with a hard copy for greater longevity. The only negative about these books is the size; these are basically coffee table books; however, I see the reasoning is that the maps and such are much easier to read when in large

format.

The most detailed collection out there

[Review written May 2004] Series Review: Historical Atlas of World Mythology Where to begin ? Joseph Campbell, without exaggeration, is probably one of the 100 greatest scholars of the 20th century. He was a genius, a polymath, a world-travelling polygot, a brilliant teacher and a master storyteller - all in one. On top of that, he was also one of those exceedingly rare individuals who was able to stand astride the disparate realms of both academia and mainstream culture with equal aplomb ... and be warmly embraced by both. Take a brief glance at the list of his works (at the Joseph Campbell Foundation, or my own site) and you can't help but be amazed that a lone human being could cover such breadth, and such depth, in such a broad field in a single lifetime. His influences have been far reaching and profound - George Lucas considers himself to be a student of Campbell, and openly credits him as the source inspiration for the whole Jedi Knight / Force motif in Star Wars. Campbell's two most well known works (amongst the general public anyway) are "Hero with a Thousand Faces" and "The Power of Myth". However, among academics, his magnum opus is considered to be The Historical Atlas of World Mythology (henceforth 'HAoWM'). It is the crowning achievement of a long and incredibly prolific career - much of it published posthumously, shortly after his death. It's a 4 volume book (actually it's 2 volumes, each with 2 parts) published in a single-spaced tri-column oversize 11" x 16+" softcover format, and it's packed to the gills with hundreds of numbered footnotes, endnotes and numbered illustrative photos & art ... all of them meticulously and exhaustively enumerated in the bibliography. The HAoWM is stupendous in its breadth, depth, and ambition - it is nothing less than an exhaustive documentation and analytical discourse on the entire sweep of Human mythology, across ALL peoples, nations and times ... all the way back to the earliest known traces of humanity's very existence. It's very dense, toothsome reading, and I'll try to give you a feel for why. Campbell is a wonderfully patient and helpful mentor, but as I've already mentioned above, he's also very polymathic, and although he goes out of his way to help his students and readers to follow along by providing ample numbered endnotes and footnotes and explanatory digressions, the material is still VERY dense and far roaming ... and it requires a fairly decent amount of effort (and polymathy) on the part of the reader in order to keep up. Taking just half (1/2) of one (1) page at random, the writer, while elaborating on some subtle & profound point or observation that he's patiently trying to get across to the reader, roams freely & comfortably amongst a huge array of topics and references ... from hardcore archeology & oral

traditions (including his own persona travels to distant tribes in polynesia or northern japan), to philosophy (i.e., references to plato, aristotle, tribal elders like Black Elk, etc), to world history, to psychology (i.e., references to Freudian & Jungian archetypes), to art history (i.e., paintings and commentary by people like Cezanne, and people who research and comment on said artists, like James Joyce), to epistemology, to philology (ex: hindu and buddhist terms given in Indian & Japanese terminology, just for completeness) ... and all of THAT is squeezed into HALF of ONE PAGE. It's toothy stuff, and it requires frequent pauses and re-readings and skip-aheads & skip-backs to & from to the footnotes and bibliography ... and sometimes to a dictionary. However, don't let me scare you off from making the attempt, because the effort is very rewarding and highly recommended - but it takes effort and commitment, and Campbell's exhaustive references give you most of the waypoints you need to follow along. Like most of the more worthwhile endeavors in life & artistry, you get out what you invest in ... modest efforts are usually rewarded with modest results, and greater results usually require correspondingly greater effort. Reading Campbell is very similar. It's a rich, fulfilling, and deeply illuminating journey of discovery. The world would be a much better place if more people could spend the time to study works like this one.

This volume is a beautiful display of bookmaking rarely seen on the shelves of bookstores. Joseph Campbell used color plates, full-color maps, black-and-white photographs, creative drawings and magnificent charts in this scholarly book. He draws on his expertise in anthropology, paleontology, ethnology, archeology and linguistics to interests anyone concerned with mythology, comparative religion, history, and the study of man.

.com has asked for a "product review" of a book purchased there, Joseph Campbell's huge and amazing lifetime-work book, "The Way of Zen." I just had to crack up at the dazzling oxymoron of these two worlds ~ Joseph Campbell who spent an amazing lifetime studying and presenting to the rest of us the deepest spiritual and aesthetic aspects of the human psyche across all cultures, and the American "religion" which is of course, huckstering ~ selling soap. Thus it's hard with a straight face to put an "product review" and Dr. Campbell's work in the same sentence, thought or mind-space. Not that it doesn't do a great job at what it does. But a "consumer review" of this book somehow just cracks me up ~ as if one were reviewing a hairdryer or a blender. Oh well, this IS the country and goofily, utterly materialistic cardboard culture we're stuck with, apparently. Sigh.

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