



## Ancient Mystery Cults

*Walter Burkert*

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The foremost historian of Greek religion provides the first comprehensive, comparative study of a little-known aspect of ancient religious beliefs and practices. Secret mystery cults flourished within the larger culture of the public religion of Greece and Rome for roughly a thousand years. This book is neither a history nor a survey but a comparative phenomenology. Concentrating on five major cults. In defining the mysteries and describing their rituals, membership, organization, and dissemination, Walter Burkert displays the remarkable erudition we have come to expect of him; he also shows sensitivity and sympathy in interpreting the experiences and motivations of the devotees.

## Ancient Mystery Cults Details

Date : Published October 15th 1989 by Harvard University Press (first published 1987)

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Author : Walter Burkert

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## **From Reader Review Ancient Mystery Cults for online ebook**

### **Anna says**

Very bad..This is the worst book I have read so far about the ancient cults.

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### **Sean McCarrey says**

This book is not for the casual reader, but it does a really great job of addressing the imagistic nature of the mystery cults. It really enlightened my knowledge of what mystery cults were.

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### **Robyn says**

What a mess. At least it's useful for exams.

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### **Jackie ? says**

Read this for a class. Pretty simple explanations, although Chapter 3 felt less organized and developed than the others.

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### **Midori says**

Burkert's Mystery Cults scores low not because of its schematic treatment of the late antiquity mystery cults such as the mysteries of Meter, Isis or Mithra- the Eleusinian Mysteries are certainly the exception to the rule although the author scrupulously avoids treating them in their great classical era- but because of its disorganized structure. The reader has to reassemble the tips and bits of information dispersed all around to have a clear idea of each one of the mysteries cults described. Some insightful general observations mainly found in the first pages of the book save the project from the complete disaster.

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### **Chaney Bicknell says**

This book was great. Though it can be dense at times, this collection of talks by a very competent speaker contains an amazing amount of information on the much-alluded-to, little-understood subject of mystery cults. A realistic, scholarly picture of what these associations were and what their participants were like emerges, and it's refreshingly devoid of hype and romanticism.

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## **Art Killings says**

Great book on the various mystery religions that were flourishing in the Greco-Roman world before and during the time of Jesus.

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## **Morgan Lofting says**

burkert, detienne, vidal-naquet and company continue to feed my love of antiquity. good historians, compelling ideas.

years ago, reading mary renault began my fascination with how we humans make up the world around us.

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## **Matt says**

The best part of this book is that it gives you glimpses into the minds of people in Western civilization before Christianity. I still wish Burkert had organized it with a chapter for every religion discussed in the book, rather than switching back and forth between the different religions. On the other hand, this does bring home the point that there weren't firm barriers between the different Mystery religions and they overlapped quite a bit.

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## **Erik Graff says**

Having read a great number of books about ancient Greek religion, I appreciated one that went beyond being a general survey yet was delivered for a popular audience. I should read more about the pagan mystery cults in order to better understand the Christian ones.

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## **Daniel Lyons says**

Found this in my mother-in-law's library and pilfered it. Excellent discussion of the topic presented for non-experts like myself, but goes into some depth in this interesting topic. Really helped me understand the difference in mindset of pre-Christian pagan peoples.

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## **Sandy says**

Most are familiar with Greek and Egyptian Myth but few realize the secrecy around the myths that made them into a religion. One of my Religious Studies professors claimed that Christianity thrived while these religions became what we now call "myths" because early Christianity did not require a veil of secrecy around its beliefs and was open to all rather than a select few. He also claimed that the localization of "myths" led to their downfall when people began to travel more. The Christian god is a traveling god that can

be worshiped anywhere, not just in Eleusis (ie. Demeter and Kore). While most books only tell of the "myth" or story of gods and goddesses, this book explores what made them religions.

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### **Johanna Hilla says**

Despite being slightly disorganized in its structure, Burkert offers a phenomenal attempt to tie together the secrets of mysteries. He is a historian but not afraid to bring forth perspectives from psychology and anthropology. In addition to being vastly informative, his writing is light and flows nicely. A very important topic in the current discussion of altered states policies!

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### **Maan Kawas says**

An excellent book that provides information about the realm of ancient mystery cults, Ancient Greek and Roman, Ancient Egyptian, and Mesopotamian. Although I enjoyed this book and found it so informative and interesting, still I encountered some difficulties in understanding some of its (Greek) terms and words, due to lack of definition/explanation!

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