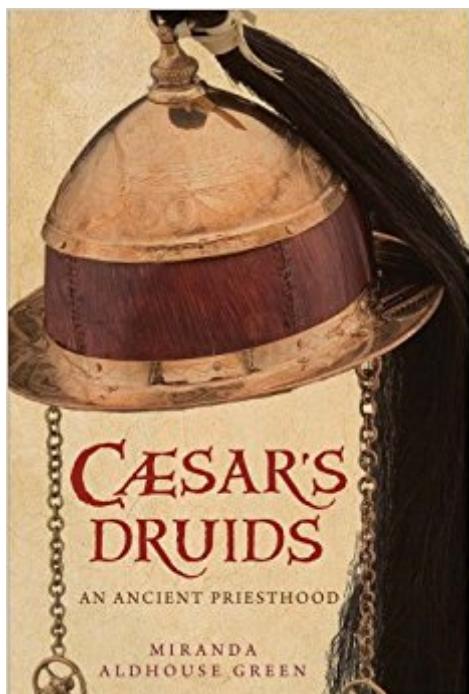


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Caesar's Druids: An Ancient Priesthood



Synopsis

Ancient chroniclers, including Julius Caesar himself, made the Druids and their sacred rituals infamous throughout the Western world. But in fact, as Miranda Aldhouse-Green shows in this fascinating book, the Druids' day-to-day lives were far less lurid and much more significant. Exploring the various roles that Druids played in British and Gallic society during the first centuries B.C. and A.D.—not just as priests but as judges, healers, scientists, and power brokers—Aldhouse-Green argues that they were a highly complex, intellectual, and sophisticated group whose influence transcended religion and reached into the realms of secular power and politics. With deep analysis, fresh interpretations, and critical discussions, she gives the Druids a voice that resonates in our own time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"With Caesar's Druids, Miranda Aldhouse-Green supersedes every other volume on this elusive and nettlesome subject" James MacKillop, author of *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*"

Miranda Aldhouse-Green is professor of archaeology, Cardiff University. A world expert on Druids, her publications include *Exploring the World of the Druids*, *Dying for the Gods*, *The Celtic World*, and *Boudica Britannia*.

With a bibliography of several hundred learned journal articles and books, many in French, German, etc., and well over 1000 end notes to these sources, this is a book for the serious

student. The 13 chapters, divided and sub-headed into maybe 200 sections, include major topics such as the question of barbarism or savagery, priests and power, sacrifice, oracles and shamans, calendars, sacred grounds, the tool kit, doctrine, gender, rebellion against Rome, and the rather nebulous, even dubious, survival of these various ancient and early medieval ways into our own times. The author is Professor of Archaeology at Cardiff University, Wales. I would have liked to have seen more speculation as to the mental world, such as comparisons with Greco-Roman or Germanic ideas about nature. It was nice to read about the very sacred Tara site in Ireland; and to read all the various Roman source quotes, which actually show how little has come down to us in writing. Caesar's writings about his wars in Gaul [= "France"] are central among the Roman sources. However, archaeology alone just can't animate a corpse's world view except in a very materialistic fashion. So I miss the poetry. Even a brief on proto-Indo-European [linguistic] "culture" would have been welcome. Also unconsidered were the recent genetic findings about, for example, the ancientness of the British genealogy: The dominance of Celtic & "pre-Celtic [Iberian]" ancestry. No serious student of ancient and early medieval west European Druidism should overlook this book. The discussions of regional and temporal variations in "Druidness" are particularly educational, as are the arguments against scholars who doubt the religiousness of the druids -- e.g. Nora Chadwick who considers them to be "philosophers". However, if you want much "religion" / philosophy this is not the place to find it -- admitting that such information is actually largely unavailable.

I have many (read: many, many) books on druids and Green delivers again in her own, unique readable and intellectual style. There was no downtime with this book. It reads as easily as a novel, yet delivers accurate and detailed information regarding the subject. There is limited speculation in this book and for that reason alone, anyone interested in druids should purchase a copy. Well worth the price!

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