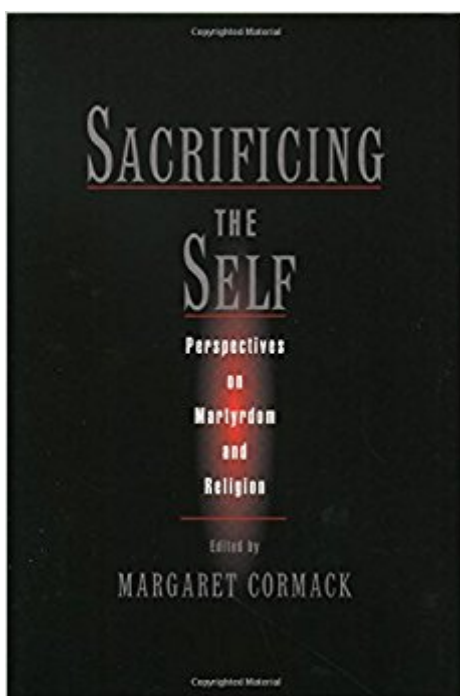


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Sacrificing The Self: Perspectives On Martyrdom And Religion (AAR The Religions) (AAR The Religions Series)



Synopsis

Acts of martyrdom have been found in nearly all the world's major religious traditions. Though considered by devotees to be perhaps the most potent expression of religious faith, dying for one's god is also one of the most difficult concepts for modern observers of religion to understand. This is especially true in the West, where martyrdom has all but disappeared and martyrs in other cultures are often viewed skeptically and dismissed as fanatics. This book seeks to foster a greater understanding of these acts of religious devotion by explaining how martyrdom has historically been viewed in the world's major religions. It provides the first sustained, cross-cultural examination of this fascinating aspect of religious life. Margaret Cormack begins with an introduction that sets out a definition of martyrdom that serves as the point of departure for the rest of the volume. Then, scholars of Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam examine martyrdom in specific religious cultures. Spanning 4000 years of history and ranging from Saul in the Hebrew Bible to Sati immolations in present-day India, this book provides a wealth of insight into an often noted but rarely understood cultural phenomenon.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"These essays reveal how martyrdom has served and continues to serve religions in a variety of ways, allowing for cultural accommodation and assimilation in the case of Christian martyrs in Rome while at the same time fomenting various forms of internal religious debate in both Hindu and Islamic

cultures."-- Comitatus

Margaret Cormack is at The College of Charleston.

I had originally purchased this book under the impression that it was a collection of articles discussing Sacrifice that was linked to atonement and redemption, much akin to the Christian understanding of Blood Atonement. However the book ended up discussing martyrdom from a rather different context. I was very impressed with the articles regarding Sacrificial figures of Martyrdom within the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), The Martyrs of Christianity during the Roman Period, as well as both the re-examination of Martyrdom from a Classical Sunni Islamic perspective and the perhaps now defunct Satti rituals found with Hindu Societies. The only thing I feel that book could have included was an understanding of Sacrifice from the Shia Islamic perspective, which can be found in books such as "Redemptive Suffering in Islam" as well "Witnesses to Faith" which are also great books on the subject. I would definitely recommend this book to any student of comparative religion, anthropology or sociology of religion. Often books discussing the concept of Martyrology within a Religious Framework are tainted by their extreme bias either towards or against (e.g a Neo-con discussing Islamic Martyrdom or a Christian discussing Catholicism's understanding and theology surrounding the early christian martyrs).

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