



Encyclopedia of Gods: Over 2,500 Deities of the World

By Michael Jordan



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Since the beginning of time, the same mysteries have puzzled people on every continent; the same fears have beset them. They have attempted to explain the mysteries and allay the fears in the same way - through the worship of gods. Deities have been identified with the human psyche for at least 60,000 years. Encyclopedia of Gods offers concise information on more than 2,500 of these deities, from the most ancient gods of polytheistic societies - Hittite, Sumerian, Mesopotamian - to the most contemporary gods of the major monotheistic religions - Allah, God, Yahweh. Among the cultures included are African peoples, Albanian, Pre-Islamic Arabian, Aztec, Babylonian, Buddhist, Canaanite, Celtic, Egyptian, Native American, Etruscan, Germanic, Greek, Roman, Hindu, Persian, Polynesian, and Shinto. The Encyclopedia includes not only the most significant gods of each culture but minor deities as well. Here you will find information not only on Zeus, Thor and Astarte but also on Tozi, the Aztec goddess of healing, Annamurti, the Hindu patron deity of the kitchen, and Nyakaya, the Shilluk crocodile goddess. Each entry provides details on what culture worshiped the god, the role of the god, and the characteristics and symbols used in identification. In the case of the more important personalities, references in art and literature and known dates of worship are also provided. Indexes by civilization and role of the god enable the researcher to compare gods across cultures or to find information on specific topics of interest. Encyclopedia of Gods will be indispensable to students and researchers in religions, anthropology, history and archaeology. It will also provide endless information for thereader interested in mythology and legend.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Every culture has its gods involved with such concerns as weather, fertility, and safety. Although this reference represents the most comprehensive listing available of the deities of principal religions, it is not exhaustive. The gods of Haiti, for example, are described as being in excess of 10,000, and there are at least as many Japanese and Chinese gods. Many primitive societies are reluctant to speak the names of deities to outsiders for fear of divine punishment. As a result, this book has geographical gaps and other lapses that can be accounted for by cultural differences. Entries are arranged in alphabetical order, without being broken down into ethnic or cultural groups, and each entry is listed under the name by which the deity is most commonly known. Entries give a deity's culture, role, and principal characteristics. A subject index lists deities by religion and function, and a civilization index organizes them by region. A worthwhile addition to academic libraries.

- *Ravonne A. Green, Emmanuel Coll. Lib., Franklin Springs, Ga.*

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From [Booklist](#)

Coverage in this book is worldwide but not comprehensive. The compiler's aim is to include deities that someone with a serious interest in mythology would be most likely to want to identify. Since "gods are iconic figures whose 'pedigree' belongs exclusively in the heavens," demons, demigods, and heroes are omitted. A preface discusses the evolution of the concepts of gods and goddesses and traces major civilizations (later portrayed on a time line) in relation to their myths.

The dictionary-length entries generally note the culture source (e.g., West Africa, Jain), role (e.g., earth creator, river goddess), genealogy (parents, siblings), and attributes (conch, arrow). Occasionally, entries note art or literature references, period of worship, synonyms, and/or cult center(s). No pronunciations are given, apart from some generalities in the preface.

Cross-references are intentionally limited, so there is no reference from *Artemis* to *Diana*. The first index lists gods by civilization and, for those cultures with many gods, by role. The subject index lists deities by role; some lists are broken down by culture (e.g., "*guardian or tutelary--Arabic--Allat*").

There are several dictionaries of gods, most recently the far more inclusive and expensive *Guide to the Gods: A Dictionary of the Functions and Aspects of Deities* [RBB Mr 15 92]. Libraries needing a dictionary on this topic will find *Encyclopedia of Gods* more scholarly in coverage and style than most. It can be recommended for academic and public libraries, although the presence of a bibliography would have strengthened its credibility and usefulness.

About the Author

Michael Jordan is best known as a television journalist, but he has a lifelong passion for anthropology and the study of gods, witches and magic. His previous books for Kyle Cathie are *Myths of the World* and *Witches: an encyclopedia of Paganism and magic*. He is also the author of *Gods of the Earth*, a study of the Mother Goddess, and *Mary*, a controversial biography of the Virgin Mary.

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