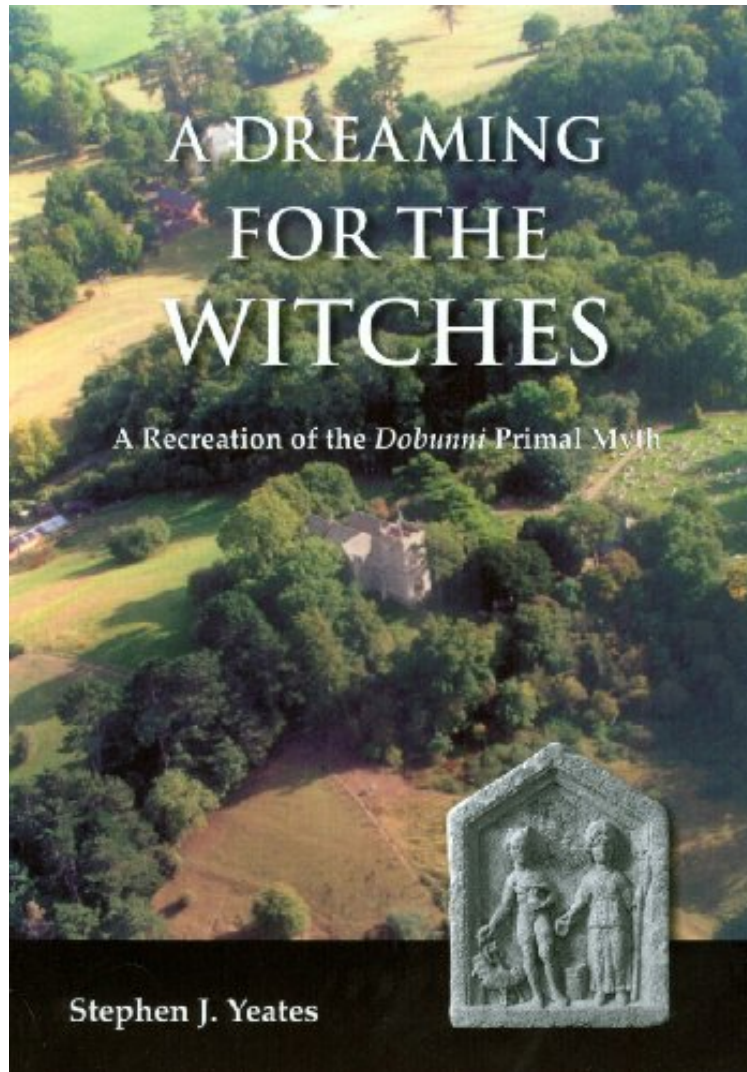


(Get free) A Dreaming for the Witches: The Reconstruction of the Dobunni Primal Myth

A Dreaming for the Witches: The Reconstruction of the Dobunni Primal Myth

Stephen James Yeates

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Stephen James Yeates : A Dreaming for the Witches: The Reconstruction of the Dobunni Primal Myth before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Dreaming for the Witches: The Reconstruction of the Dobunni Primal Myth:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Painstaking research, but a difficult readBy CustomerI liked this book, but I didn't enjoy reading it. Despite the friendly title, it was never intended for the general reader. If you aren't familiar with the many scholarly sources the author cites, you have to take a lot of his argument on faith -- and I was

more than willing to do that. I'm no archaeologist. The book makes a nice follow-up to Marija Gimbutas' *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*, just for getting a sense of what archaeologists have been up to these past 35-40 years. I also appreciate its overall thesis. I have long thought that it was just our own relatively modern distinction between "fiction" and "fact" that left us wondering if the Trojan War "really happened," while we assume that a "docudrama" about Flight 93 gives us a literal account. Why in the world would an ancient civilization, without benefit of a huge commercial publishing industry, let alone the printing press, go to the enormous effort to preserve, word-for-word in some cases, a story that they found merely "entertaining?" The Iliad preserves what the Argives themselves considered to be a defining moment in their history. It made them who they were. Why should we assume that the tales that gave rise to the Arthurian legend were any less compelling to those who preserved them? I also appreciated the author's attempt to draw some general conclusions about how ancient religions develop and interact with each other over the course of migrations and invasions. That, too, sounds perfectly plausible. (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a tale popular in the court of King Henry II, gives us a vivid illustration of just how thinly that last veil of Christianity covers a rich tradition of paganism.) My main criticism of the text concerns its writing style. Most every sentence is written in a tortuous and convoluted form of passive voice -- either that or an utterly glacial form that begins with "There is" and ends in a terminal moraine of last minute verbs and modifiers at the end. The author-date style of citation adds even more rubble, since citations often mention multiple sources, and (due to the passive voice constructions) come right in the middle of a sentence. More than once I found myself reading a sentence two or three times just to make a connection between the subject and the verb. I know this kind of technical analysis isn't going to make much sense to a general reader either -- at least until he or she tries to tackle a paragraph or two. (Just reading the book description itself ought to do it.) But really? Oxbow Books ought to be ashamed of itself for not getting some editor to teach this otherwise perfectly intelligent author to express himself in plain English. They have done a great disservice, not just to this book, but to the discipline it represents. Of course, the book, if properly edited, would not have come out to nearly as many pages. . . . And that is the only real substantive criticism I have: The last section -- the one you've been waiting for -- is far less detailed than, say, the painstaking accounts of every possible derivation and linguistic permutation of every single river or shrine or otherwise notable geographical feature in the vicinity of the Dobuni territory. On the one hand, the author seems to assume that we know more about the history of the various versions and translations of the Arthurian legends than we know about the archaeology -- so that if we get a sense of the landscape, the connection to Arthur ought to be obvious. But on the other hand, the citations that cram practically every sentence seem almost defensive, as though the author knows his reader is much more likely to be another archaeologist, and one who would pounce on any little chance to dismiss any part of the work as unsubstantiated. A dissertation committee, perhaps? Once again, an editor might have helped in finding a clearer sense of audience. But no editor could have made up for the lack of explicit detail tying specific plot points in the grail quest stories to specific locations. This problem makes the ending kind of a letdown.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful.
An Illuminating, Superior Work
By Randy P. Conner - David H. Sparks
I find this book extremely well researched and equally illuminating. Yeates painstakingly yet eloquently demonstrates the connections between an ancient people of Britain, the landscape they inhabited and revered, their divinities, and those who came to be called "witches." This book serves as an antidote, not by a practitioner but rather by a scholar, to those recent academic texts that claim that "witches" never existed and that pagan traditions and their deities died simply because they were, respectively, forbidden and demonized by Christian authorities. Very impressive! Blackthorn Krause, CA

In *The Tribe of Witches*, a wide-ranging theoretical framework for understanding the major cults worshipped amongst the Iron-Age tribal group called the Dobunni, later known as the Hwicce, was put forward. Towards the end of that volume, the mother goddess of the Dobunni was introduced. In *A Dreaming for the Witches*, the cults that worshipped the tribal deities are explored more fully. The surviving textual data and archaeological material are reviewed, and what we know of the Dobunni pantheon, using predominantly Welsh sources placed in a wider European context, is discussed. The Roman period process of interpretatio is explored, along with European traditions of mythical animals and plants which created our underlying cultural tales and traditions. The Tribe introduced the Matrona of the Dobunni; this work gets to grips with the tribal father. The sacred landscapes accounted for by Nennius are investigated, and the mythical landscape around Gloucester revealed. Finally, a discussion is put forward which places the cults of the Dobunni at the heart of the Christian grail myths.