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Amerindian Rebirth

REINCARNATION BELIEF AMONG
NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS AND INUIT



Edited by Antonia Mills and Richard Slobodin

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From University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division : Amerindian Rebirth: Reincarnation Belief Among North American Indians and Inuit before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Amerindian Rebirth: Reincarnation Belief Among North American Indians and Inuit:

33 of 34 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating anthology By Rabbi Yonassan Gershom This

academic anthology is, as far as I know, the first to focus entirely on reincarnation beliefs among Native American (Indian) and Inuit tribes. Gathered here are 16 research papers by anthropologists and one psychiatrist, which document Indian beliefs in reincarnation and other forms of rebirth. The conclusion? These beliefs were/are more widespread among Native Americans than is usually thought. Surprised? I certainly was. Although I had previously run across scattered references to reincarnation among Indians (such as a few short paragraphs in John Lame Deer's autobiography, "Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions"), I had no idea the belief in it was so widespread. Like so much else about native cultures, it appears we have been viewing this aspect through the eyes of "first contact" Europeans who, because their own belief system(s) did not allow for reincarnation, failed to recognize it in the Indian cultures they encountered. Now for the first time, we can read a fine collection of studies that clearly document these beliefs in fascinating detail. The material is rich in anecdotes about dreams, visions, legends, Creation myths, and the lives of heroes, healers, and shamans. The book includes older source material previously gathered -- and now being re-evaluated -- as well as modern cases where native individuals remember previous lives. However, New Ager or neo-shamans who want an inspiring "spirituality" read will probably be disappointed. And native Indians themselves might be put off by yet another round of Anglo anthropologists studying them. The approach here is quite scholarly, and the style is post-graduate level research paper -- think "early Ian Stevenson" (who did, in fact, write one of the articles in the book, about his research among the Tlingit tribes.) But for those who are willing to step into an anthropological mindset for a while, this book will be a real eye-opener, as well as a valuable source book. Highly recommended to any serious student of reincarnation teachings, as well as anyone interested in shamanism, comparative religion, etc.

Until now few people have been aware of the prevalence of belief in some form of rebirth or reincarnation among North American native peoples. This collection of essays by anthropologists and one psychiatrist examines this concept among native American societies, from near the time of contact until the present day. *Amerindian Rebirth* opens with a foreword by Gananath Obeyesekere that contrasts North American and Hindu/Buddhist/Jain beliefs. The introduction gives an overview, and the first chapter summarizes the context, distribution, and variety of recorded belief. All the papers chronicle some aspect of rebirth belief in a number of different cultures. Essays cover such topics as seventeenth-century Huron eschatology, Winnebago ideology, varying forms of Inuit belief, and concepts of rebirth found among subarctic natives and Northwest Coast peoples. The closing chapters address the genesis and anthropological study of Amerindian reincarnation. In addition, the possibility of evidence for the actuality of rebirth is addressed. *Amerindian Rebirth* will further our understanding of concepts of self-identity, kinship, religion, cosmology, resiliency, and change among native North American peoples.

From the Back Cover
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