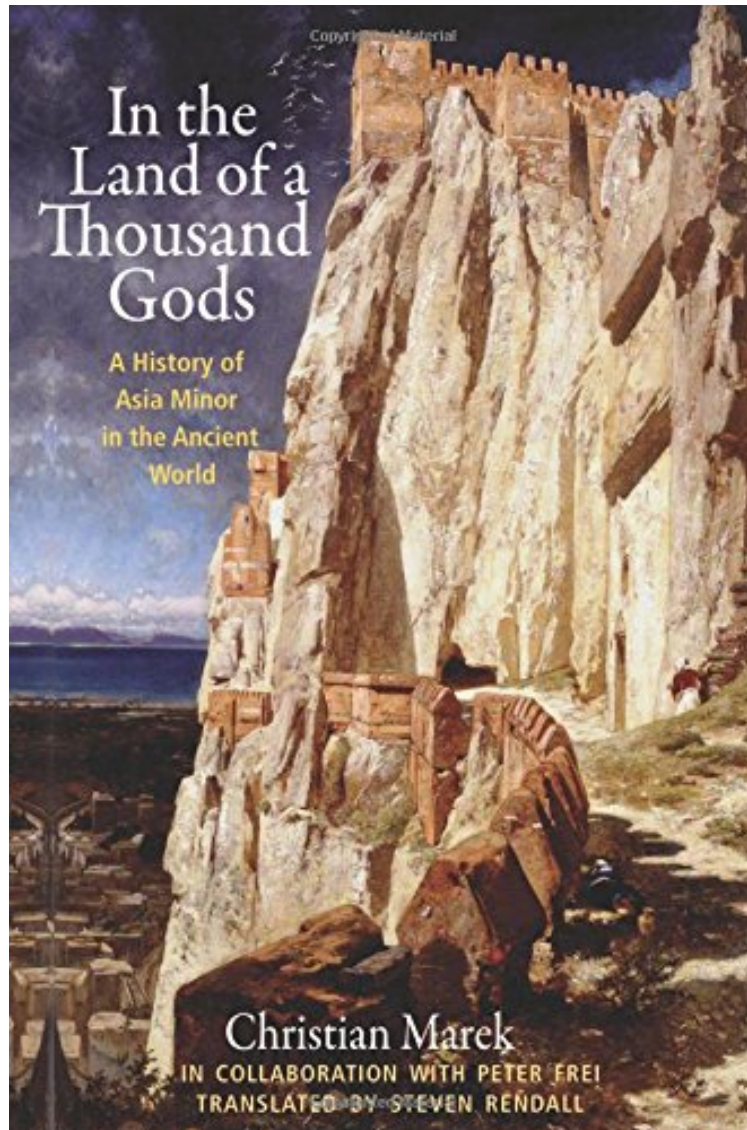


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# In the Land of a Thousand Gods: A History of Asia Minor in the Ancient World

*Christian Marek*

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**Christian Marek : In the Land of a Thousand Gods: A History of Asia Minor in the Ancient World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In the Land of a Thousand Gods: A History of Asia Minor in the Ancient World:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Definitive Reference Book for the History of Ancient Asia MinorBy Stan PragerAs a rule, I never review a book that I have not read to completion; I feel an obligation to the

author to turn every page and absorb every paragraph. But some books are not designed as cover-to-cover reads, so I believe that Christian Marek will forgive me for only reading about a third of his magnificent reference work, *In the Land of a Thousand Gods: A History of Asia Minor in the Ancient World*, prior to reviewing it. Originally published in German, this first English edition (translated by Steven Rendall) was written in collaboration with the late scholar Peter Frei, who duly receives cover credit for his contributions. Marek, professor emeritus of ancient history at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, has spent a lifetime studying the ancient Mediterranean and specializing in ancient Asia Minor, and has been conducting epigraphical and archaeological fieldwork in Turkey for more than thirty years. The result is a superb work that is not only encyclopedic in scope but brilliant in depth and analysis. In modern times, except for the European sliver that hosts Istanbul, most of the huge geography of the Republic of Turkey is located within the giant landmass of the Anatolian peninsula in Western Asia. The population today is primarily a Muslim Turkic-speaking people descended from the nomad Turks that, like the Huns and other similar ethnicities, once roamed the vast northern steppes and later moved south to conquer and dominate settled agricultural communities. But students of Classical history know that it was an entirely different universe in the ancient world. There are traces of mysterious proto-cities from deep antiquity, and there is the impressive archaeological heritage in the celebrated atalyk Neolithic settlement that dates back to 7500 BCE. The original agriculturalists were most likely overrun and absorbed by Indo-Europeans from the Caucasus the horse, wheel and chariot folks resurrected elsewhere by David Anthony and native Hattians and Hurrians were to be supplanted by the Hittites, later to rise to prominence with their consequential Bronze Age empire that dominated Asia Minor but was lost to memory for millennia in the still unexplained cataclysmic collapse of that era of human history. Troy was part of that Anatolian peninsula on the strategic edge of the Hellespont (modern Dardanelles) that provided access to the Black Sea, and the legendary Trojan War if historic, as suspected (although Marek has his doubts) either preceded or was coterminous with that collapse, which in addition to the Hittites brought down the Mycenaean Greeks, the New Kingdom Egyptians and the Kassite Babylonians. The remnants of the Hittite Empire fragmented into various powers over the centuries to come, but most significant to history is that the remains of earlier Bronze Age Mycenaean cities on the Aegean Sea were vastly supplemented by numerous Greek settlements along the coast that came to be known as Ionia, which later along with the rest of Anatolia and the Near East came to be dominated by the Persian Empire. The efforts of those Ionian Greek poleis to liberate themselves from Persian control sparked a war led by Athens and Sparta that unpredictably resulted in Persian defeat, leading to independence for the Ionian poleis and Greek dominance of the Aegean. Athens-Sparta rivalry in subsequent decades led to the Peloponnesian War that devastated the Hellenic world and so divided it that Philip of Macedon was able to crush and contain it. After his assassination, his son and heir Alexander the Great unexpectedly routed the Persian Great King and soon dominated all of his possessions, including Asia Minor, but his sudden death on the cusp of world empire meant that Greece, Egypt, the Near East and Anatolia became the trophies of his surviving generals, the Diadochoi, as well as their descendants, the Epigoni, so Hellenistic rulers ran roughshod over those lands for centuries, jockeying for power, until Rome got interested. Much more blood of bystanders flowed but eventually it was Rome that absorbed all of that territory. As the huge Roman Empire grew unwieldy, a new eastern Roman capital was established at Constantinople (ancient Byzantium, modern Istanbul), ruling over all of Asia Minor and a good deal beyond it. When Rome and the western empire fell, this became the Roman Empire of the East, the Byzantine Empire, and a large chunk of it was Anatolia, although much of that was to fall away over time. And all of that fascinating history occurred long before the Seljuk Turks moved in circa the eleventh century to bring Islam and the Turkic language to Anatolia! If you judge that long paragraph which is only an abbreviated summary of Asia Minors ancient historical narrative as oversize, you can only imagine what a deep exploration would amount to. So then try to imagine the thick volume that is Christian Mareks *In the Land of a Thousand Gods*, which in its printed form makes oversize seem understated: there are in fact some 552 pages of type that can only be described as footnote size subscript, not including an appendix of 75 pages as well as a thick section of endnotes. The main narrative is equivalent to a normal text of approximately 1500 pages! In short, there is a lot of material. The good news is that every single sentence is welcome and substantial, as Marek applies fine historical inquiry and analysis to every paragraph, expertly guiding the reader from the Neolithic to the end of antiquity, meticulously and exhaustively. Do I recommend this as a book to take to the beach and devour over a long weekend? Of course not. But if you are seeking THE definitive ancient history of Asia Minor, look no further: this is clearly going to be the gold standard on the subject for a long time to come. Dont skip it!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Monumental indeed By John L Murphy After two millennia, the legacy of early Greece continues to fascinate scholars and tourists. Less appreciated may be its neighboring realm, which spawned both rivals to and recipients of Hellenic control. Asia Minor, its very name standing for the exotic beyond the ethnocentric Mediterranean, bridges the East and the West. As events from today's headlines verify, the tension between the Asian and European, the Middle East and the great sea over which so many powers have battled for power exerts itself upon this heartland, where from prehistory on, many forces emanate from an epicenter. *In the Land of a Thousand Gods* tells the story of this cultural and political hub, from the Stone Age to the Roman Empire. A massive work, it began with the research into cuneiform and hieroglyphics provided by Peter Frei, who taught ancient history at the University of Zurich. His student and successor, Christian

Marek, completes this survey. Steven Rendell translates the 2010 German edition and incorporates a few updates to a compilation encompassing classics, Oriental Studies, linguistics, archaeology, prehistory and anthropology. Supplemented by necessary genealogies, maps, documentation and black-and-white illustrations, these appendices total over 170 pages. The text itself, while densely printed and closely argued, nevertheless aims at the general, if diligent, reader. Details linger within the academic exploits recorded by Marek on every page, as excavators and discoverers vied to leave their mark upon the ruins opened up to acquisition by those in the vanguard of European colonial expansion. Inscriptions upon stone drove Philippe Le Bas, as the 19th century closed, to boast of his triumph. "I left Mylasa, having squeezed every drop of juice from the lemon. In future, travelers can dispense with going there. I have not left them the slightest kernel to find." This eagerness to claim and conquer spurred many in centuries previous, too. The region rests on its rubble. Buildings were often destroyed to excavate even older sites. Dams flood nowadays more and more of Anatolia, hastening current archaeological digs. In the past, of course, conquerors eradicated peoples and razed cities, only to have their inhabitants, returning or replacing those victims of war, raise up new edifices, streets rising to shove levels higher. These striated remnants challenge scholars who delve beneath the surfaces, over thousands of years of occupation. From coinage to economics, religion to poetry, science and strategy, Marek allows patient students a comprehensive guide to this evolution from the Bronze and Iron Ages to the incursions of the Persians and then their bitter enemies, the Greeks. The Hellenistic polity in the wake of Alexander the Great gives way to the enforced Pax Romana. Then, the Roman republic capitulating to the imperial imposition of order, the provinces of Asia Minor emerge. Administration and socio-political considerations are then covered. The results in this hefty volume will overwhelm any casual inquirer, but this book stands as a reference for anyone needing information about nearly any aspect of this period and this landmass. While in-depth as a whole, the chapters, needing to span so much, can race by. The reader will find that the sudden conclusion, as the Byzantine Christian establishment supplants and soon attempts to eliminate its pagan Roman forebears, comes as hastily as the onset of the new faith must have appeared to many who had long lived in Anatolia and its environs, worshipping a thousand gods. 0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Harold King Marek's book is well worth reading. It contains a wealth of information..

This monumental book provides the first comprehensive history of Asia Minor from prehistory to the Roman imperial period. In this English-language edition of the critically acclaimed German book, Christian Marek masterfully employs ancient sources to illuminate civic institutions, urban and rural society, agriculture, trade and money, the influential Greek writers of the Second Sophistic, the notoriously bloody exhibitions of the gladiatorial arena, and more. *In the Land of a Thousand Gods* is truly panoramic in scope. Blending rich narrative with in-depth analyses of political, social, and economic history, the book traces Asia Minor's shifting orientation between East and West and examines its role as both a melting pot of nations and a bridge for cultural transmission. Marek takes readers from the earliest known Stone Age settlements to the end of antiquity. He covers the emergence of early Greek poetry and science, the invention of coinage, Persian domination, the prosperity of cities under the Hellenistic kings, and the establishment of Roman provinces. Marek draws on the latest research in fields ranging from demography and economics to architecture and religion to describe how Asia Minor became a center of culture and wealth in the Roman Empire. He shows how the advancement of Hellenic culture and civic autonomy was the irreversible legacy of the Pax Romana. A breathtaking work of scholarship, *In the Land of a Thousand Gods* will become the standard reference book on the subject in English.

"An expansive, formidable work of scholarship that should prove indispensable to students of the Near East."-- Publishers Weekly "[W]ide-ranging, yet thoughtfully organized and amply illustrated. . . . [In the Land of a Thousand Gods] is an indispensable guide for anyone interested in Asia Minor and in the broader cultural exchange between East and West."--Foreword s "Marek's survey combines formidably erudite synthesis with high readability. . . . Marek's work deserves to become the leading handbook on its subject."--Tony Spawforth, Literary "This superbly researched work, named from a line in a Hittite oath and authored by an archaeologist and emeritus professor at the University of Zurich, is a political, military, social, and cultural history, illustrated in black and white, of pre-Byzantine Turkey, starting in the Paleolithic and ending in the early fourth century CE. . . . Translated beautifully into English from German."--Choice "[A] magnificent reference work. . . . If you are seeking THE definitive ancient history of Asia Minor, look no further: this is clearly going to be the gold standard on the subject for a long time to come. Don't skip it!"--Regarp From the Back Cover "Westernmost of eastern lands, easternmost of western lands, continental bridge, contact zone, melting pot--ancient Anatolia from prehistory to the Roman Empire relives in this learned, high-resolution, majestic book. All historically minded readers should embark on this journey in time and space, led by Marek's tour de force of learning and sensitivity."--John Ma, Columbia University "This lucid and richly illustrated book covers the cultural and political history of the entire Asia Minor peninsula from earliest prehistory to late antiquity. It is simply the most reliable, most comprehensive handbook on all aspects of the subject."--Peter Thonemann, author of *The Maeander Valley: A Historical Geography from Antiquity to Byzantium* About the

Author Christian Marek is professor emeritus of ancient history at the University of Zurich in Switzerland. His fields of research are the ancient cultures of the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, from Archaic Greece to early Byzantium, and Greek epigraphy. He specializes in Asia Minor and has been conducting epigraphical and archaeological fieldwork in Turkey for more than thirty years.