



Dream and Culture: An Anthropological Study of the Western Intellectual Tradition

Susan Parman

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Parman contends that in order to understand dreams we must first of all understand the cultural context within which they are expressed. Certainly we cannot 'interpret' a dream without some preliminary grasp of indigenous notions of psychology, cosmology, and epistemology. Readers are therefore introduced to everything from classical notions of the self through the modern schools of rationalism and psychoanalysis. This book brilliantly shows the vast shifts in Western presuppositions regarding dreams. Parman's insistence on an anthropological approach to dreams constitutes a healthy antidote to the anachronistic tendency to foist the epistemology of contemporary psychoanalysis back onto earlier periods. *Choice*

In this vital contribution to the study of dream phenomena, Susan Parman investigates the Western cultural structures of knowledge and meaning that relate to dreams. She explores the history of dream phenomena conceptualization from Homeric Greece to the present day. Parman employs a unique anthropological perspective to interpret historical events and ideas, using the dream as a way of describing assumptions about the mind, what it means to be human, and what humanity's place is in the universe.

Parman synthesizes both scientific and humanistic approaches to the study of dreams and raises questions about the nature of scientific interpretations. By analyzing the cultural and historical context in which dreams are interpreted, she develops an anthropological approach to the study of dreams as cultural symbols. Parman's analysis is presented in terms of semiotic anthropology--the semantics (meanings), syntactics (linkages with other symbols), and pragmatics (uses) of the dream in different historical arenas in the Western intellectual tradition. Ultimately about epistemology, *Dream and Culture* will be an invaluable book for interdisciplinary courses on dreams and for classes in the humanities, as well as for interpreting the nature of scientific inquiry as an aspect of the Western intellectual tradition.

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