



The Sacred Paw: The Bear in Nature, Myth, and Literature

Paul Shepard, Barry Sanders

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The 'Sacred Paw' looks at the long and profound relationship between bears and humans. The bear is deeply embedded in the human psyche ... from the fearsomely grizzly, to the paternal Smokey, to the beloved Teddy. Bear images are as widespread in our culture as were the myths and legends about bears that formed a crucial part of early societies.

A symbol of harmony in nature, the bear was regarded by our ancestors with a mixture of awe, fear, and veneration. In many ways, the bear is like man, combining strength with dexterity and possessing skill in using tools as hunting weapons. Bears are attentive parents (at least the female are), and their natural curiosity, playfulness, and intelligence have endowed them with an almost human personality.

In delightful detail and fascinating variety, 'The Sacred Paw' examines all these special qualities and more, illuminating the bear's immemorial place in our language, religion, and consciousness.

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