



Lost Discoveries: The Ancient Roots of Modern Science--from the Babylonians to the Maya

By Dick Teresi

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Boldly challenging conventional wisdom, acclaimed science writer and Omni magazine cofounder Dick Teresi traces the origins of contemporary science back to their ancient roots in an eye-opening account and landmark work.

This innovative history proves once and for all that the roots of modern science were established centuries, and in some instances millennia, before the births of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton. In this enlightening, entertaining, and important book, Teresi describes many discoveries from all over the non-Western world -- Sumeria, Babylon, Egypt, India, China, Africa, Arab nations, the Americas, and the Pacific islands -- that equaled and often surpassed Greek and European learning in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, cosmology, physics, geology, chemistry, and technology.

The first extensive and authoritative multicultural history of science written for a popular audience, *Lost Discoveries* fills a critical void in our scientific, cultural, and intellectual history and is destined to become a classic in its field.

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Editorial Review

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Did Nicolas Copernicus steal his notion that the earth orbited the sun from an Islamic astronomer who lived three centuries earlier? "The jury is still out," writes Dick Teresi, whose intriguing survey of the non-Western roots of modern science offers several worthy arguments that Copernicus in fact ripped off Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. Common belief is that Westerners have been the mainspring of most scientific and technical achievement, but in *Lost Discoveries* Teresi shows that other cultures had arrived at much of the same knowledge at earlier dates. The Babylonians were using the Pythagorean theorem at least 15 centuries before Pythagoras drew his first triangle, and in A.D. 200 a Chinese mathematician calculated an incredibly accurate value for pi. The Mayans and other Mesoamericans were outstanding sky watchers and stargazers. The greatest advances occurred in math and astronomy, though Teresi also devotes chapters to physics, geology, chemistry, technology, and even cosmology. Sometimes he is a bit overeager to ascribe great thoughts to long-dead people (he casually suggests that "many ancient cultures had inklings of quantum theory"), but on the whole his book is a reliable and fascinating guide to the unexplored field of multicultural science. --*John J. Miller*

From Publishers Weekly

Science journalist Teresi (coauthor of *The God Particle*) has combed the literature to catalogue the scientific advances made by early non-Western societies and to determine their impact on Western science. His work spans millennia and encompasses the full extent of the globe. He points out, for example, that five millennia ago the Sumerians concluded that the earth was round. He also provides information on cultures of the Middle East, India, China, Africa and Oceania, as well as a host of New World cultures, predominately those of Mesoamerica. Throughout, readers learn that scientific knowledge of various sorts in diverse forms has been a part of all cultures. In chapters on mathematics, astronomy, cosmology, physics, geology, chemistry and technology, Teresi makes a convincing argument that Western science has often been indebted to advances made elsewhere (mineralogy was studied in Africa as early as 5000 B.C.). Teresi is at his strongest in the section on mathematics, where he discusses the evolution of Arabic numerals from the ancient Indians and the earliest conceptualizations of zero and infinity. Much less compelling are his assertions that early societies foreshadowed the ideas of quantum mechanics. Although a bit uneven, Teresi offers a great deal of fascinating material largely ignored by many histories of science.

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From Library Journal

What a terrific read! Teresi, a reviewer, essayist, and cofounder of *Omni* magazine, brings to light the many fascinating advances made by ancient, non-Western cultures. If you think that modern science is rooted in the golden age of Greece, you owe it to yourself to read his book. Supported by exhaustive research and a board of expert advisers, the author details the rich intellectual gifts from peoples whose histories are often neglected by our Eurocentric culture. He explores important contributions in the areas of mathematics, astronomy, cosmology, physics, geology, chemistry, and technology made by Pacific Islanders, Africans, Chinese, Indians, Arabs, and others. While it is an excellent multidisciplinary text for college-level classes, Teresi's work will also appeal to readers interested in science and intrigued by cultural histories. Extensive notes and a selected bibliography are organized by discipline. A wonderful addition to both academic and public libraries. Denise Hamilton, Franklin Pierce Coll. Lib., Rindge, NH

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