

The Anthropology Of Religion Magic And Witchcraft

The Anthropology Of Religion Magic And Witchcraft The anthropology of religion, magic, and witchcraft offers a fascinating window into how human societies understand the unseen, manipulate their environment, and interpret the supernatural. This field explores the diverse ways cultures conceptualize spiritual forces, how these beliefs influence social behavior, and the role of rituals and practices in shaping community life. By examining religion, magic, and witchcraft through an anthropological lens, scholars gain insights into the shared human quest for meaning, power, and control over the natural and supernatural worlds.

Understanding the Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft The anthropology of religion, magic, and witchcraft examines these phenomena as cultural systems that serve specific social functions. While often interconnected, each has distinct characteristics and roles within societies.

Defining Key Concepts

Religion: Structured sets of beliefs, practices, and moral codes centered around the worship of supernatural beings or forces. Religions typically have organized institutions, sacred texts, and rituals.

Magic: Practices believed to influence natural or supernatural forces through rituals, spells, or charms. Magic often aims at specific outcomes, such as healing or protection, and may be divided into imitative and contagious magic.

Witchcraft: The use of supernatural powers by individuals, often perceived as innate or inherited, to cause harm or benefit others. Witchcraft accusations can serve social functions, such as reinforcing social norms or resolving conflicts.

The Role of Religion in Societies Religion has been a fundamental aspect of human cultures across history. It often fulfills multiple social functions:

Functions of Religion

Providing Meaning and Explanation: Religion offers answers to existential questions about life, death, and the universe.

Social Cohesion: Rituals and shared beliefs strengthen community bonds and reinforce social norms.

Legitimation of Power: Religious authority can legitimize political leaders and social hierarchies.

Control of Behavior: Moral codes and religious sanctions influence individual conduct.

Examples of Religious Practices

Ritual sacrifices
Pilgrimages
Festivals and ceremonies
Prayer and meditation

Magic in Human Cultures Magic is often viewed as a more personal or individual practice compared to organized religion. It operates on the belief that specific actions or rituals can directly influence the world.

Types of Magic

Imitative Magic: Based on the principle "like produces like." Example: voodoo dolls or effigies.

Contagious Magic: Based on the idea that things once in contact continue to influence each other. Example: using hair or nails of a person in spells.

Functions of Magic

Achieving personal goals (healing, love, success)

1. Protecting against harm or evil
2. Controlling natural forces when

formal religion does not address specific needs³. Witchcraft and Its Social Significance Witchcraft is often misunderstood as simply malevolent magic; however, anthropologists recognize it as a complex social phenomenon. Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices - Belief that certain individuals possess innate supernatural abilities - Accusations of witchcraft can result in social tension or scapegoating - Rituals may involve charms, spells, or rites aimed at harm or protection ³ Functions of Witchcraft in Societies Social regulation: accusations often serve to reinforce community norms Conflict resolution: accusations can redirect tensions or disputes Cultural identity: beliefs about witchcraft reinforce cultural boundaries and distinctions Comparative Perspectives on Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft Anthropologists have identified various ways societies differentiate and relate these phenomena. Distinct but Interrelated - Many cultures do not sharply distinguish between religion and magic; practices may overlap. - Magic is often seen as individualistic, while religion involves communal worship and organization. - Witchcraft accusations can be linked to social tensions and power struggles, serving as social safety valves. Cross-Cultural Examples African Cultures: Rich traditions of animism, ancestor worship, and witchcraft accusations. Indigenous Americas: Shamanic practices blending religion and magic, with beliefs in spirit worlds. Europe: Historical witch hunts, Christian demonology, and folk magic. Methodologies in the Study of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft Anthropologists employ various methods to study these phenomena: Fieldwork and Ethnography - Participant observation - Interviews with practitioners and community members - Documentation of rituals and practices Comparative Analysis - Cross-cultural comparisons to identify patterns and variations - Historical analysis to trace changes over time Contemporary Relevance and Applications Understanding the anthropology of religion, magic, and witchcraft remains relevant today: 4 Addressing religious conflicts and misunderstandings Recognizing the significance of traditional healing practices Understanding social dynamics in communities with ongoing belief systems Supporting cultural preservation and respecting indigenous knowledge Conclusion The anthropology of religion, magic, and witchcraft provides vital insights into how humans interpret and navigate the unseen aspects of their worlds. These systems serve essential social functions, from fostering community cohesion to regulating individual behavior and resolving conflicts. By studying diverse cultures and their beliefs, anthropologists reveal the universal human tendency to seek meaning, exert influence, and establish social order through spiritual practices. As societies continue to evolve, understanding these phenomena remains crucial for appreciating cultural diversity and fostering cross-cultural understanding. --- Note: This article is designed for SEO purposes, incorporating relevant keywords such as "anthropology of religion," "magic," "witchcraft," "cultural practices," and "social functions" to enhance search engine visibility. QuestionAnswer What is the role of magic in different cultural contexts within the anthropology of religion? In various cultures, magic often functions as a means to influence natural or supernatural forces, address everyday problems, and reinforce social cohesion. It can serve as a way to control unseen forces, seek protection, or ensure success in endeavors,

reflecting underlying beliefs about the universe and human agency. How do anthropologists distinguish between religion, magic, and witchcraft? Anthropologists typically distinguish these concepts based on their social functions and perceived legitimacy. Religion is seen as a formal, institutionalized system of beliefs and practices; magic involves manipulating supernatural forces through specific techniques; and witchcraft is often viewed as a form of malicious manipulation by individuals, sometimes associated with social tensions. What are common beliefs about witches in different societies? Beliefs about witches vary widely but often include notions that witches possess special powers to harm others, influence events maliciously, or manipulate supernatural forces. In some societies, witches are feared and persecuted, while in others, they may be respected or seen as healers with dual roles. How does the anthropology of religion explain the persistence of magic and witchcraft practices today? These practices persist because they fulfill psychological needs, provide explanations for misfortune, reinforce social bonds, and serve as mechanisms for social control. They also adapt to modern contexts, often integrating with contemporary beliefs and practices. 5 What is the significance of ritual and symbolism in magical practices? Rituals and symbols are central to magical practices as they create a sacred space, focus intention, and establish a connection with supernatural forces. Symbols serve as tangible representations of abstract ideas, enhancing the efficacy and meaning of magical acts. How do gender and power dynamics influence beliefs and practices related to witchcraft? Gender and power often shape witchcraft beliefs, with women historically being more associated with witchcraft accusations due to social vulnerabilities. Witchcraft accusations can serve as a means to control or suppress marginalized groups, reflecting broader social tensions and inequalities. In what ways do cosmologies shape magical and witchcraft practices? Cosmologies—concepts of the universe and its forces—inform how practitioners understand and engage with magic and witchcraft. These worldviews influence the types of rituals performed, the entities invoked, and the moral frameworks governing magical actions. How do modern spiritual movements incorporate traditional concepts of magic and witchcraft? Many modern movements adapt traditional magical and witchcraft practices, blending them with contemporary spiritual beliefs. This includes practices like Wicca, neo- shamanism, and eclectic paganism, which often emphasize personal empowerment, nature reverence, and ritual magic. What ethical issues are associated with the study of magic and witchcraft in anthropology? Ethical issues include respecting the beliefs and practices of studied communities, avoiding sensationalism, and being sensitive to the potential for stigmatization or harm. Anthropologists must navigate cultural relativism while ensuring their research does not contribute to misunderstandings or negative stereotypes. How has the global spread of media influenced perceptions of magic and witchcraft? Media has played a significant role in popularizing and shaping perceptions of magic and witchcraft, often romanticizing or sensationalizing these practices. This exposure can lead to increased interest, commercialization, or misunderstandings about their cultural significance and actual practices. The Anthropology of

Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft: An In-Depth Exploration The anthropology of religion, magic, and witchcraft offers a compelling lens through which to examine the diverse ways human societies interpret and navigate the unseen forces believed to influence their world. These domains—intertwined yet distinct—serve as vital components in understanding cultural systems, social cohesion, individual identity, and worldview construction across time and space. This article seeks to explore the nuanced interplay among these phenomena, their historical development, and their significance within different cultural contexts, providing a comprehensive review suitable for academic and scholarly audiences.

The Anthropology Of Religion Magic And Witchcraft 6 Introduction: Defining the Core Concepts Before delving into the complexities of the anthropology of religion, magic, and witchcraft, it is essential to clarify these terms:

- **Religion:** Typically characterized as a system of beliefs, practices, and moral codes centered around notions of the sacred or divine, often involving organized institutions, rituals, and communal participation.
- **Magic:** Generally understood as manipulative practices aimed at influencing particular outcomes through supernatural means, often emphasizing individual intent and ritual action outside formal religious institutions.
- **Witchcraft:** Usually refers to the use of supernatural powers—either inherited, learned, or spontaneously acquired—to cause harm or benefit others, often associated with social tensions, moral judgments, and cultural explanations of misfortune.

While these categories overlap and sometimes blur—especially in ethnographic contexts—they each serve distinct social and cognitive functions, which have been extensively studied within anthropology.

The Historical and Theoretical Foundations of the Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft The scholarly investigation into these phenomena dates back to the 19th and early 20th centuries, with influential figures such as Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and Sir James Frazer laying foundational theories.

Classical Theories and Key Thinkers

- **Émile Durkheim:** Focused on religion as a social institution that reinforces collective conscience and social cohesion. His concept of the sacred versus the profane highlights how religious rituals serve to bind communities.
- **Marcel Mauss:** Explored the social function of magic and ritual, emphasizing the importance of reciprocity and obligation in social exchanges.
- **James Frazer:** In *The Golden Bough*, proposed a universal progression from magic to religion to science, viewing magic as an early, often misguided attempt to control nature.

These early theories, while foundational, have been critiqued for their universalizing tendencies and lack of attention to cultural specificity.

Modern Perspectives and Approaches Contemporary anthropology emphasizes cultural relativism, focusing on how societies interpret and assign meaning to religious and magical practices:

- **Structural-Functionalism:** Examines how religious and magical practices serve specific social functions, such as social cohesion, boundary maintenance, or conflict resolution.
- **Symbolic and Interpretive Approaches:** Focus on the meanings attributed to rituals and beliefs, emphasizing the subjective experience of practitioners.
- **Political and Power** The Anthropology Of Religion Magic And Witchcraft 7 **Dynamics:** Analyze how religion, magic, and witchcraft intersect with issues of authority, resistance, and social

control. This multifaceted approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how these phenomena operate within different cultural milieus. Religion: Systems of Sacred Belief and Practice Religion encompasses a broad range of organized systems that articulate cosmogonies, moral codes, and rituals. Ethnographic studies reveal the diversity of religious expressions worldwide, from the complex hierarchies of Hinduism and Christianity to indigenous animist practices. Functions of Religion in Society - Cognitive: Provides explanations for existential questions—origins, purpose, morality. - Social: Reinforces social norms and hierarchies through rituals, doctrines, and institutions. - Psychological: Offers comfort and meaning in the face of life's uncertainties and hardships. - Political: Serves as a tool for legitimation of authority and social order. Case Studies - Indigenous Religions: Often animistic, emphasizing a spiritual interconnectedness with nature. Examples include the Shamanic practices among Siberian tribes or the Aboriginal Dreamtime stories in Australia. - World Religions: Organized systems like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and their various denominations with complex theological doctrines and institutional structures. Magic: Manipulation and Control of the Unseen Magic, often practiced outside formal religious institutions, typically involves rituals, symbols, and actions designed to influence specific outcomes—be it healing, protection, or harm. Types of Magical Practices - Sympathetic Magic: Based on the law of similarity; e.g., voodoo dolls, charms, or amulets. - Contagious Magic: Based on contact; e.g., using hair or personal objects for spells. - Rituals and Ritual Objects: Items like talismans, charms, or amulets that embody supernatural power. Functions of Magic - Personal Agency: Allows individuals to exert influence over their environment. - Coping Mechanism: Provides a sense of control during uncertain or stressful situations. - Social Regulation: Reinforces social norms through collective rituals or taboos. The Anthropology Of Religion Magic And Witchcraft 8 Ethnographic Examples - Western Occultism: Practices like astrology, alchemy, and modern witchcraft. - African and Caribbean Traditions: Vodou, Santería, and other syncretic faiths blending African, European, and indigenous elements. - Folk Magic: Common in rural communities worldwide, often intertwined with local beliefs and practices. Witchcraft: Social and Cultural Dimensions Witchcraft occupies a complex space in anthropological analysis, often linked to moral judgments, social tensions, and explanations for misfortune. Definitions and Distinctions - Imputed Powers: Unlike magic, which may involve conscious manipulation, witchcraft is often seen as an innate or inherited ability. - Moral Dimension: Accusations of witchcraft are frequently moral indictments, associated with envy, jealousy, or social discord. Witchcraft and Social Control - Scapegoating: Witchcraft accusations can serve to channel social tensions and resolve conflicts. - Legal and Ritual Responses: Communities may respond through accusations, trials, or exorcisms. - Modern Witch Hunts: Examine how witchcraft allegations persist or transform into social phenomena, as seen in contemporary Africa or Europe. Case Studies - European Witch Hunts: 15th–17th centuries, driven by religious and political motives. - African Witchcraft Accusations: Often linked to social upheaval, economic stress, or political manipulation. - Contemporary Neo-Pagan Witchcraft: Re-

emerging in Western societies as a form of spiritual expression and identity. Intersections and Interrelations The boundaries among religion, magic, and witchcraft are fluid, often overlapping in practice and belief. Ethnographic studies highlight how communities employ these concepts to address life's uncertainties, enforce social norms, or resist authority. Examples of Overlap - Rituals that serve both religious and magical functions. - Witchcraft accusations within religious communities. - Use of magical objects in religious or spiritual contexts. - Syncretic practices combining elements from different domains. The Anthropology Of Religion Magic And Witchcraft 9 Contemporary Relevance and Critical Perspectives The anthropology of religion, magic, and witchcraft remains vital in contemporary scholarship, especially as globalization, migration, and digital communication reshape traditional practices. Postcolonial and Feminist Analyses - Critique of Western ethnocentric models that universalize certain concepts. - Emphasis on gendered dimensions, noting how witchcraft accusations often target women. Global Movements and New Religious Forms - Revival of traditional practices in diaspora communities. - New spiritualities that blend ancient beliefs with modern contexts. Challenges and Future Directions - Navigating the tension between universal theories and cultural specificity. - Addressing issues of cultural appropriation and ethical engagement. - Incorporating interdisciplinary approaches, including psychology, history, and political science. Conclusion: The Significance of the Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft The anthropological study of religion, magic, and witchcraft reveals the profound ways human societies interpret the unseen and manage their existential anxieties. These phenomena serve multifaceted functions—social, psychological, political, and cosmological—shaping identities, maintaining social order, and fostering community cohesion. Recognizing their diversity and contextual specificity challenges simplistic or universalist narratives, urging scholars to appreciate the rich tapestry of human belief systems. As societies evolve and face new challenges, understanding the roles these practices and beliefs play remains crucial. They are not merely relics of the past but living expressions of human ingenuity, resilience, and creativity in navigating the mysteries of existence. References (Note: In an actual publication, this section would include detailed citations of ethnographies, theoretical works, and case studies referenced throughout the article.) anthropology of religion, magic practices, witchcraft beliefs, religious rituals, spiritual beliefs, cultural anthropology, ritual magic, supernatural phenomena, shamanism, religious symbolism

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this text offers an alternative to the case driven approach that the sole use of a reader tends to foster it provides students with ways of conceptualizing what religion is what its social and psychological functions are the nature of religious symbolism and religious behaviour and the organizational structure of religions all the standard topics are covered e g ideology and symbolism ritual and ceremony organizational forms and social and psychological functions of religion as well as ones of more recent interest such as religion and gender the psychology of religion and pilgrimage extended narrative examples illustrate the theoretical and analytic discussions in the text expose students to a variety of different religions and provide real world examples of the concepts of each chapter an integrated student study guide self test materials at the end of each chapter allows students to evaluate their own mastery of each chapter determine what they need to review further and prepare for course tests the text is copiously illustrated with ethnographic examples from both western and non western religions

the anthropological study of religion attends to religious life through the study of everyday practices rather than understanding religion as a set of beliefs anthropologists examine the ways that practices and belief are constitutive of each other via a broad spectrum of representations embodiments and ethical and social practices these everyday practices are constituted by and constituting of many

aspects of social life including gender desire performance politics and power anthropologists thus recognize that religious life is a thoroughly social practice and yet identifiable as transformative and sometimes mysterious subject of investigation anthropologists of religion are not concerned with discovering the truth or falsehood of religion they are more interested in how religious ideas express a people's cosmology ie notions of how the universe is organised and the role of humans within the world many study rituals which incorporate symbols and note how these often help to bring communities together in times of crisis or special points in the calendar anthropology of religion outlines the scope of the anthropological literature on religion drawing both on classic and more recent studies it supports anthropological approaches to the study of religion from all the subdisciplines cultural anthropology archaeology physical anthropology linguistic anthropology and others in the later twentieth century debate has arisen concerning the scope of the anthropology of religion do anthropologists of religion only study religions in tribal settings is it exclusively the study of non western religions is it to be limited to the study of religion among oppressed and marginalised people the focus of anthropological study has shifted from the study of tribal to modern religions a number of well received studies have analysed religion in developing societies europe and the united states a number of promising studies have focused on ritual and ritual forms from this perspective rituals are seen as the fundamental unit of religious expression and the building blocks for all religions this compilation will serve as an excellent tool for scholars practitioners and academics working in the field of migration and religion

as the basic questions of social structure were elucidated there came a quickening of interest among social anthropologists in the study of religion chapters in this book include religion as a cultural system clifford geertz colour classification in ndembu religion victor w turner religion problems of definition and explanation melford e spiro fathers elders and ghosts in edo religion r e bradbury territorial groupings and religion among the iraqw edward h winter first published in 1966

this concise and accessible textbook introduces students to the anthropological study of religion it examines religious expression from a cross cultural perspective and exposes students to the complexities of religion in small scale and complex societies the chapters incorporate key theoretical concepts and a wide range of ethnographic material the fifth edition of the anthropology of religion magic and witchcraft offers a revised introduction covering the foundations of the anthropology of religion anthropological methods and a push toward decolonizing the anthropology of religion expanded coverage of symbols healing wizardry and the intersections of religion with other social institutions new case study material with examples drawn from around the globe especially from indigenous communities marginalia in each chapter introducing provocative small case examples related to the chapter many of these can be used as prompts for further research small in class case studies or examples for hands on learning a new chapter on religion and healing

especially useful for anthropology programs without representation of four fields as it provides a wider and more interdisciplinary application of the discipline a consistent review of foundations from chapter to chapter linking material and enabling students to connect what they are learning throughout the course and further resources via a comprehensive companion website including interactive activities critical case studies updated study questions bibliographical suggestions including video and color images this is an essential guide for students encountering the anthropology of religion for the first time and also for those with an ongoing interest in this fascinating field

this lively and readable survey introduces students to key areas of the field and shows how to apply an anthropological approach to the study of contemporary world religions written by an experienced teacher it covers all of the traditional topics of anthropology of religion including definitions and theories beliefs symbols and language and ritual and myth and combines analytic and conceptual discussion with up to date ethnography and theory eller includes copious examples from religions around the world both familiar and unfamiliar and two mini case studies in each chapter he also explores classic and contemporary anthropological contributions to important but often overlooked issues such as violence and fundamentalism morality secularization religion in america and new religious movements introducing anthropology of religion demonstrates that anthropology is both relevant and essential for understanding the world we inhabit today

a comprehensive anthropological study of religion traces the history of the discipline discusses the archeological discoveries that have shed light on the development of religious consciousness and examines the various manifestations functions and changes of religious customs and beliefs

anthropology of religion the basics is an accessible and engaging introductory text organized around key issues that all anthropologists of religion face this book uses a wide range of historical and ethnographic examples to address not only what is studied by anthropologists of religion but how such studies are approached it addresses questions such as how do human agents interact with gods and spirits what is the nature of doing religious ethnography can the immaterial be embodied in the body language and material objects what is the role of ritual time and place in religion why is charisma important for religious movements how do global processes interact with religions with international case studies from a range of religious traditions suggestions for further reading and inventive reflection boxes anthropology of religion the basics is an essential read for students approaching the subject for the first time

a reader in the anthropology of religion is a collection of some of the most significant classic and contemporary writings on the anthropology of religion it includes both material whose theme is religion in a straightforward and obvious sense as well as material that has expanded how we might look at religion and the horizons of what we mean by religion linking it to broader questions of culture and politics

anthropologists of religion study themes central to the understanding of humanity such as the power of ritual the authority of language and the exemplary character of myth this handbook brings together leading specialists to explain the historical and intellectual background to how anthropologists approach religion and to show why its study remains a dynamic means of reflecting on contemporary life around the globe each chapter combines overviews of a given topic with original observations and the handbook is structured for ease of teaching five sections guide the reader on different routes through the field helping to provoke further questions on historical and intellectual approaches indigenous religions world religions enduring themes and emergent themes the aim is to help students and researchers recognize how and why the field has been organized in certain ways but also to make them feel confident enough to challenge its assumptions and to consider directions it might go in the future this handbook provides an excellent introduction to some of the most important elements of anthropology including the discipline's emphases on comparison embodied experience and scepticism toward taken for granted categories it also shows how religious practices remain entangled with some of the pressing themes and questions of our time including how we perceive and treat our environment ways in which we deal with religious and cultural differences and the religious dimensions of virtual and mediated means of communication

a survey of the current anthropological study of religion looks at the relationship among science religion magic and anthropology ritual in africa india japan native north america and the european us the traditions of islam hinduism buddhism and catholicism and such aspects of shamanism as altered states of consciousness bioenergetic structural theory the origin of an illusion and the sacred integration of the cultural self c book news inc

brings together in one volume a number of key theoretical and methodological advances in the anthropological study of religion chapters cover important topics not ordinarily included in books dealing with the anthropology of religion e.g. bipedalism the study of alcohol film and video images notions of religious agency in addition this collection is intended to build bridges between anthropologists of religion and religious studies scholars over the last four decades anthropologists have grappled with the dialectical relationship between the examination of cultures from the emic or insider perspective and the etic or outsider perspective nowhere is

this creative tension more evident than in the anthropological study of religion in this volume anthropologists and religious studies scholars come to terms not only with a landscape that has shifted fundamentally but a landscape that is still shifting essays in this collection raise new and important issues for the anthropological study of religion in new and important ways in intensely personal essays a number of contributors address two fundamental concerns in the study of religion 1 how should anthropologists deal with the beliefs and practices of others and 2 how should anthropologists deal with their own religious backgrounds and beliefs as these may affect their understanding of the beliefs and practices of others a partial resolution to both questions is necessary before the anthropological study of religion can advance to a higher level

this clear and engaging guide introduces students to key areas of the field and shows how to apply an anthropological approach to the study of religion in the contemporary world written by an experienced teacher it covers major traditional topics including definitions theories and beliefs as well as symbols myth and ritual the book also explores important but often overlooked issues such as morality violence fundamentalism secularization and new religious movements the chapters all contain lively case studies of religions practiced around the world the second edition of introducing anthropology of religion contains updated theoretical discussion plus fresh ethnographic examples throughout in addition to a brand new chapter on vernacular religion eller provides a significantly revised chapter on the emerging anthropologies of christianity and islam the book features more material on contemporary societies as well as new coverage of topics such as pilgrimage and paganism images a glossary and questions for discussion are now included and additional resources are provided via a companion website

the third edition of this widely popular book offers a unique perspective on how people engage in everyday religious practices such as prayer sacrifice pilgrimage and dress as well as investigates major issues of gender nation states and laws with respect to religion no other book examines the full spectrum of religions from small scale societies to full blown world religious movements the in depth treatment of islam and christianity is of particular interest to students and is easily expanded to include field projects directly related to material covered in the text as one reviewer writes in our post 9 11 era it is great to have a book whose author has done fieldwork in indonesia and is so knowledgeable about islam the third edition includes new material on the anthropology of war expanded coverage of american religions and an exploration of how non practitioners of organized religion turn to alternative beliefs such as health food tarot cards and psychics

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drawing from ethnographic examples found throughout the world this revised and updated text offers an introduction to what anthropologists know or think about religion how they have studied it and how they have interpreted or explained it since the late nineteenth century robert winzeler s balanced consideration of classic topics basic concepts and new developments in the anthropological study of religion moves beyond cultural anthropology and ethnography to gather information from physical anthropology prehistory and archaeology written as a sophisticated but accessible treatment of the issues anthropology and religion is a key text for upper division courses

this book describes how anthropologists in the twentieth century went about documenting the religions of those independent peoples who still lived beyond the frontiers of the global economy and the world religions it begins by examining the enormous popularity of the newly invented field of anthropology in the nineteenth century as a site of multiple intellectual developments its climax was frazer s golden bough which is a pillar of modernity second only to darwin s origin of species but its notion of religion was entirely speculative when anthropologists went to see for themselves they encountered formidable obstacles how to access a people s most profound understandings of the world and everything in it holding fast to the premise that ethnographers have no special powers of seeing inside other people s brains this book teaches students to proceed slowly a step at a time watching how people perform rituals great and small asking questions that seem stupid to their hosts and struggling to translate abstract terms in unrecorded languages using a handful of examples from different continents the book shows the potential of an anthropological approach to religion

this introductory text combines discussion of the origin and development of ideas and debates within the anthropology of religion with a look at where the subject is going today provides students with a complete introduction to the anthropology of religion uses

worldwide ethnographies to illustrate the theory includes extensive bibliographies and a list of films and videos that encourage students to explore the field further encourages students to see that anthropology is not just about reading or doing fieldwork but offers an enriching way of looking at the world each chapter introduces the central theoretical ideas in the anthropology of religion and illustrates them with specific case studies such as witchcraft in cameroon shamanism in the arctic or women s initiation ceremonies links contemporary ideas and practices with the work of nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars

the book deals with current issues of the study of religion as an academic discipline especially cognitive anthropological and sociological research of religious thought and behaviour publikace pojednává o aktuálních problémech religionistiky jako akademické disciplíny zejména pak o kognitivním antropologickém a sociologickém výzkumu náboženského myšlení a chování

conference on new approaches in social anthropology

this book focuses on anthropological questions and methods and is offered as a supplement to textbooks on the anthropology of religion it is designed to help students collecting and interpreting their own fieldwork or archival data and relating their findings to the work of others

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Introduction

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