



Religion and Anthropology: A Critical Introduction

By Brian Morris

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This important 2006 textbook provides a critical introduction to the social anthropology of religion, focusing on more recent classical ethnographies. Comprehensive, free of scholastic jargon, engaging, and comparative in approach, it covers all the major religious traditions that have been studied concretely by anthropologists - Shamanism, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and its relation to African and Melanesian religions and contemporary Neopaganism. Eschewing a thematic approach and treating religion as a social institution and not simply as an ideology or symbolic system, the book follows the dual heritage of social anthropology in combining an interpretative understanding and sociological analysis. The book will appeal to all students of anthropology, whether established scholars or initiates to the discipline, as well as to students of the social sciences and religious studies, and for all those interested in comparative religion.

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Review

"As a sequel and complement to Morris's previous reader on theoretical approaches to religion this book of impressive scholarship is an admirable success and a thoroughly enjoyable read. The book is characterized by a refreshing, commonsense approach to religion that is eminently accessible due to the consistent avoidance of unnecessary jargon, psycho-babble or lyrical prose... The sympathetic and nonjudgmental ethnographic descriptions, the dynamism of the theoretical polemic, the clear use of English, and the elegance of the narrative structure made this book difficult to put down. A rare experience when reading much modern anthropological writing." Jerome Lewis, London School of Economics and Political Science

"Although the volume has obvious value as a general reference resource, it is designed for classroom use (specifically for courses that survey religious traditions). Highly recommended."

Choice

About the Author

Brian Morris is an Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, Goldsmiths College, at the University of London. His many publications include Chewa Medical Botany, Animals and Ancestors, Kropotkin: The Politics of Community, Insects and Human Life and Anthropological Studies of Religion: An Introductory Text (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

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