



The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction

Fiona Bowie

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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. It will inspire students to explore the field further and encourage them to see that anthropology is not just about reading or doing fieldwork, but offers an enriching way of looking at the world. There is a development of ideas throughout the book, but each of the eight chapters is also self-contained, with its own extensive bibliography, so that they can be approached in any order. Each chapter introduces the central theoretical ideas in the anthropology of religion and illustrates them with specific case studies. For example: witchcraft in America is illustrated with Evans-Pritchard's famous study of the Azande and witchcraft in Cameroon; shamanism is discussed with reference to 'classical' shamanism in the Arctic, and to contemporary 'neo-shamanism'; and the ways in which anthropologists approach ritual are examined, particularly in relation to women's initiation ceremonies. Throughout, links are made between the work of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars, and contemporary ideas and practices. The appendix comprises a list of ethnographic films and videos that can also be used to illustrate and extend the issues raised in the various chapters.

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