



# Ordered Universes: Approaches To The Anthropology Of Religion

*Morton Klass*

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# Ordered Universes: Approaches To The Anthropology Of Religion

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## **Ordered Universes: Approaches To The Anthropology Of Religion** Morton Klass

This innovative introduction to the anthropological study of religion challenges traditional categories and assumptions, arguing that too many of them reflect ethnocentric perspectives long discarded by contemporary anthropologists. The continued use of such terms as “supernatural” and “cult” inescapably communicates that what is under study is not as real or true as the beliefs of the observer. This conflict between the axioms of science and Western scholarship and those of the belief systems under study can be avoided with careful attention to terminology and underlying assumptions. *Ordered Universes* introduces and explores important anthropological issues, concerns, and findings about the institution of religion approached as a human cultural universal. Klass applies a non-ethnocentric perspective to each topic, relying on contemporary anthropological theories and using approaches deriving from other subdivisions of the discipline. Offering operational, non-judgmental definitions that avoid taking a position on whether the belief under study is “true” and providing examples from ethnographic (and other) literature on religion, Klass explores values, beliefs, witchcraft, shamans, sacrifice, ghosts, revitalization, and many other concepts. In the final chapters, he considers the emergence of new religious movements and leaders and evaluates the continuing ideological conflict between proponents of scientific, fundamentalist, and post-rationalist systems of thought.

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