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Keywords
religion, anthropology, ethics, sacred, research

Michael Angrosino, professor emeritus of the University of South Florida, has a wide and extensive teaching and research history, which includes cultural anthropology, magic and religion, organized religion, symbolic interactionism and psychological anthropology. Though not the latest in his long series of publications, The Culture of the Sacred continues to be worthy of serious consideration, both for undergraduate instruction and as a general resource tool for others interested in symbolic anthropology. Indeed, such a study follows Edith Turner’s suggestion that religion be openly apprehended and engaged, in order to be understood. Angrosino comments that the study of religion has been taken up by wide-ranging academic disciplines and, despite increasing secularism, the significance of religion in the modern world continues to endure. (xi)

The layout of this text is intended to teach systematically the key concepts included in each chapter. They are clearly identified with the opportunity to review and apply them in constructive study. For example, chapter one, Overview and Basic Concepts (1–23), begins with a discussion of the idea of culture and religion, before listing the pertinent concepts, such as sacred, symbol, holism, religion, culture and fieldwork, and before leading into suggested research explorations. After the text a case-study by another scholar (Sydney Nathans, Fortress without Walls: a black community after slavery) illustrates (13–21) how the concepts of the chapter are used in his research. Suggested readings and video resources, along with questions for discussion conclude the chapter. This pattern is repeated for each of the remaining seven chapters: Prehistoric Religion (25–61), The Ideological Component of the Sacred (63–90), The Ritual Component of the Sacred (91–119), The Mythological Component of the Sacred (121–144), The Ethical and Moral Components of the Sacred (145–172), The Environment of the Sacred (173–198), and Religion in an Age of Globalization (199–233). Contributions from Lisa J. LeCount (35–61), Edith Turner (75–89), Elizabeth Tooker (107–118), Miles Richardson
(133–143), Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton (155–171), Richard Humphrey (185–198), and Michael Angrosino himself (211–232), amply illustrate each chapter.

An interesting feature of this text is that the focus of study includes a cross-section of culture. Its aim is to guide the student or researcher through the meaning of symbols, beliefs and values in such a way that one's perspective may be sharpened, as one learns to enquire with openness into diverse community practices, each legitimated by an overarching communal concept of religion. Many concepts, including magic, spirituality, henotheism, sacrament, ethics, taboo, ritual, exorcism, laws, fetish, dharma, relative deprivation, civil religion and pluralistic societies, all lead to further study, as they are applied in the suggested research questions included in each chapter and appendix.