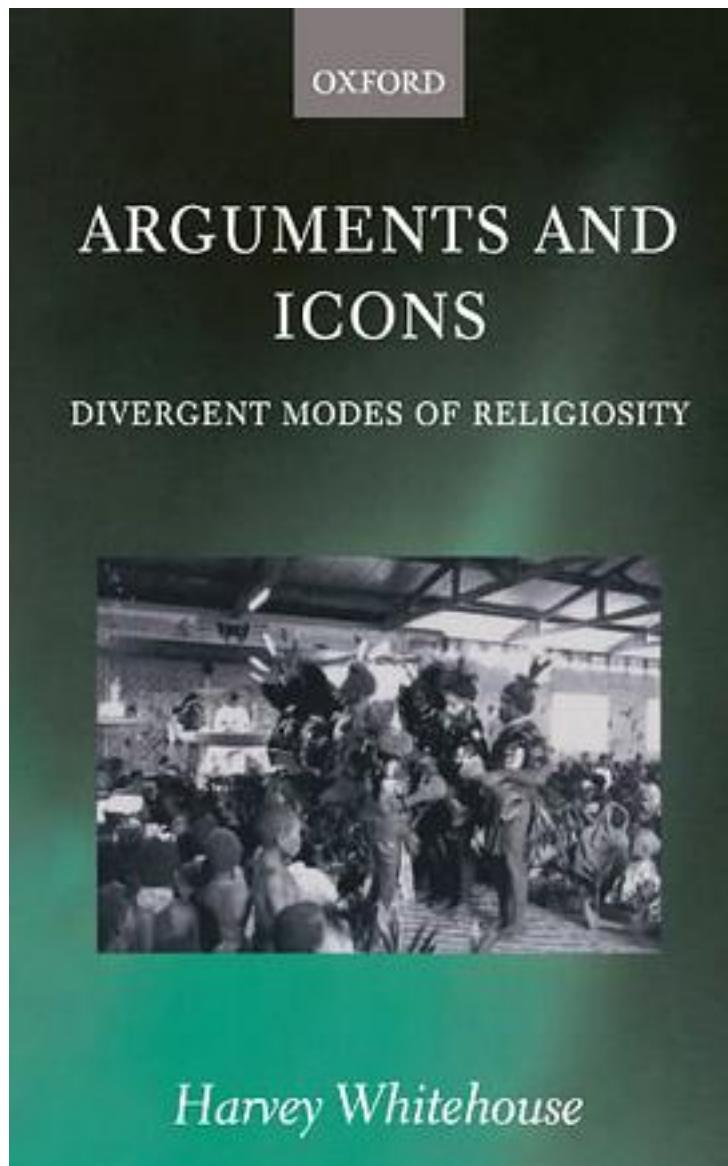


Arguments and Icons



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Why do initiations in Papua New Guinea often subject novices to violence and terror? Why do some cargo cults lead to regional unity and others to regional divisions? How have features of cognitive processing in missionary Christianity contributed to new forms of identity among Melanesians? The theory of 'modes of religiosity' which Whitehouse here develops answers these and a range of other questions about Melanesia with reference to a set of interconnections between styles of religious transmission, systems of memory, and patterns of political association. Although building his argument on detailed Melanesian ethnography, Whitehouse goes on to suggest that the theory of modes of religiosity may have wider applicability. Thus, in the final two chapters of this book, he explores such diverse topics as the spread of Reformed Christianity in sixteenth-century Europe, the interpretation of Upper Palaeolithic cave art, the genesis of tribal warfare, and the impact of literacy on social transmission and organization.

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