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978-0-521-37631-0 - Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality

Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah

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THE LEWIS HENRY MORGAN LECTURES 1984

*presented at
The University of Rochester
Rochester, New York*



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Lewis Henry Morgan Lecture Series

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1. Frontispiece A medieval man of many parts and pursuits: the revered and ingenious father Bertold Schwartz of the Franciscan Order, Doctor, Alchemist, and founder of the art of rifle shooting in the year 1380.

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Foreword

Since Lewis Henry Morgan's day, anthropology has become established as an international enterprise with trained anthropologists on every continent, participants in a generalizing discipline that both includes and transcends local concerns. Professor Tambiah, educated in Ceylon and the United States, taught in Ceylon and England before coming to the United States, where he is now on the faculty of Harvard University. His previous research, based on fieldwork in southeast Asia, has attracted widespread attention, and over the past twenty-five years has earned him an enviable list of honors and awards. The 1984 Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures were delivered by Professor Tambiah on March 13, 15, 20 and 22.

An outline sketch of Professor Tambiah's argument and conclusions could not do justice to the subtle clarity and elegance of his presentation; here it is possible to touch on only a few general points. In this expanded version of his Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures, Professor Tambiah examines several concepts that have been especially important in much anthropological work. "Magic," "science," "religion" and "rationality" are obviously not the exclusive concern of anthropology; the history of thinking about them can be traced very far back. In this book they are examined in a broadly conceived framework, so constructed that not only the use of the terms over the past hundred years or so is considered, they are also placed in the context of work in other disciplines.

It is apparent, on reading these lectures in relation to Professor Tambiah's other publications, that more than twenty years of research and critical thought lie behind them. The discussion goes beyond anthropology's boundaries, making it clear that anthropology has major contributions to offer regarding discussions and debates that have exercised philosophers, historians and others over the years. This work, then, can be read as a contribution to the history of ideas, and as a critical contextualizing of what has been written, in terms of Professor Tambiah's own theoretical scheme.

This way of proceeding permits the author to consider what such major contributors to our thinking as Tylor, Malinowski and Wittgenstein have

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said. But it is also necessary, in his view, to offer both careful evaluations of other authors and his own resolution of the problems their work raises. This set of conclusions, especially as developed in the final chapters, will undoubtedly stimulate controversy. It is just as certain, and perhaps more important, that Professor Tambiah's theory makes it possible to move on. He, together with others, can now make use of his conclusions in dealing with particular ethnographic cases.

Interested readers will find much to think about on every page, and will undoubtedly appreciate the stimulating impact Professor Tambiah's lectures and seminars had upon his audiences.

Alfred Harris

Editor

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I am very much in the debt of Kenneth Laine Ketner for permitting me to make lavish use of the translation prepared by him and James Eigsti entitled *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on Frazer's Philosophical Anthropology*.