



# Symbols (Routledge Revivals): Public and Private

*Raymond Firth*

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**Symbols (Routledge Revivals): Public and Private** Raymond Firth

This book first published in 1973 offers a broad survey of the study of symbolic ideas and behaviour.

The study of symbolism is popular nowadays and anthropologists have made substantial contributions to it. Raymond Firth has long been internationally known for his field research in the Solomons and Malaysia, and for his theoretical work on kinship, economics and religion. Here from a new angle, he has produced a broad survey of the study of symbolic ideas and behaviour.

Professor Firth examines definitions of symbol. He traces the history of scientific inquiry into the symbolism of religious cults, mythology and dreams back into the eighteenth century. He compares some modern approaches to symbolism in art, literature and philosophy with those in social anthropology. He then cites examples in anthropological treatment of symbolic material from cultures of varying sophistication. Finally he offers dispassionate analyses of symbols used in contemporary Western situations - from hair-styles to the use and abuse of national flags; from cults of Black Jesus to the Eucharistic rite. In all this Professor Firth combines social and political topicality with a scholarly and provocative theoretical inquiry.

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