

"Benson Saler is a master at intellectual history. Be prepared for a stimulating journey guided by a first-rate scholar who knows where the gems are hidden."

E. Thomas Lawson, Professor Emeritus, Western Michigan University, USA

"Benson Saler, an influential anthropologist of religion, shows convincingly why we can neither take the meaning of "supernatural" for granted nor use it as a proxy for religion. Saler's account of the diverse meanings of "supernatural" will have a lasting impact on numerous disciplines, especially anthropology, religious studies, and the cognitive science of religion."

Stewart E. Guthrie, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, Fordham University, USA

"Few scholars are as well prepared as Benson Saler was to undertake the sweeping inquiries of *The Construction of the Supernatural in Euro-American Cultures*. Saler conveys his erudition with a light touch, ranging across a dozen disciplines to defend a science of religions rooted in cognitive and evolutionary approaches as the best suited to manage perennial problems, including properly situating the supernatural. This book glistens with his wisdom and insights."

Robert N. McCauley, William Rand Kenan Jr. University Professor of Philosophy (Emeritus), Founding Director of the Center for Mind, Brain, and Culture, Emory University, USA, and author of *Philosophical Foundations of the Cognitive Science of Religion* (Bloomsbury, 2017)

This book describes aspects of the concept of the supernatural from the intellectual history of Euro-American cultures. These samplings shed light on issues in the study of religions and religion rather than attempting to provide either a lineally coherent or exhaustive account of a somewhat fraught and complicated notion. Observations include uses of the term among the ancient Greeks and medieval Christian theologians and 19th- and 20th-century social scientists. This book highlights more recent academics who draw on the cognitive and evolutionary sciences in attempting to make sense of recurrent features of the representations and meta-representations of different cultures. This includes such counter-intuitive notions as "the mysterious" among the Wayuu of Columbia and Venezuela and "vampires" in Europe and North America.

These observations are concluded in a final essay—"Toward a Realistic and Relevant Science of Religion"—which presents considered opinions on how we might draw on the cognitive and evolutionary sciences to establish the foundations for a genuinely scientific study of religions and religion.

Benson Saler sadly passed away shortly after writing this book. An appreciation of his work, written by Armin W. Geertz, is included in this volume.

Benson Saler was Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Brandeis University, USA