

Sergio Botta, *Dagli sciamani allo sciamanesimo. Discorsi, pratiche, credenze*, Roma, Carocci, 2018

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**Citer ce document / Cite this document :**

De Sanctis Gianluca. Sergio Botta, *Dagli sciamani allo sciamanesimo. Discorsi, pratiche, credenze*, Roma, Carocci, 2018. In: ASDIWAL. Revue genevoise d'anthropologie et d'histoire des religions, n°14, 2019. pp. 237-240;

[https://www.persee.fr/doc/asdi\\_1662-4653\\_2019\\_num\\_14\\_1\\_1168\\_t19\\_0237\\_0000\\_3](https://www.persee.fr/doc/asdi_1662-4653_2019_num_14_1_1168_t19_0237_0000_3)

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Fichier pdf généré le 08/06/2020

l'épisode du périple d'Hannon que rapporte Lafitau est commenté depuis 1550. Le fait que la gravure des *Mœurs* soit la seule où les danseurs portent un cache-sexe aurait en revanche mérité d'être souligné, d'autant plus que la représentation n'est guère appropriée avec le contexte canadien que décrit Lafitau.

Le montage qui préside à la représentation iconographique de « la sépulture des roitelets » chez Lafitau, montre que la démarche comparative est également à l'œuvre dans les illustrations. Tel est également le cas des planches qui représentent des objets archéologiques, comme celles qui illustrent le motif de la croix et qui visent à démontrer « *par l'image* que la croix chrétienne est un motif universel » (p. 77). L'enquête visant à identifier les « images sources » issues des textes de mythographes, et que les antiquaires se sont réappropriées est passionnante, même si elle est facilitée par le fait que, contrairement à Picart,

Lafitau, ou son graveur, cite le plus souvent ses sources. Le motif du serpent donne lui aussi lieu à des développements fort intéressants, tout comme les célèbres frontispices dus à Scotin (pp. 81 et 83) et à Picart (p. 103).

Les pages conclusives, magnifiquement écrites, composent une manière d'essai dans le livre. À travers l'exemple de la danse « sauvage », elles reviennent sur la spécificité des approches respectives de Bernard et de Lafitau, afin de mieux saisir ce qui préside au geste comparatif qui est le leur : des Sauvages quasi privés de parole qui se meuvent, d'un côté, des monuments antiques, morts, mais qui parlent, de l'autre (pp. 110-111)... Le lecteur, lorsqu'il referme ce très bel ouvrage, n'a donc pas seulement des images plein la tête, il a en core – et surtout – pleinement de quoi penser !

NICOLAS FORNEROD

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SERGIO BOTTA, *Dagli sciamani allo sciamanesimo. Discorsi, pratiche, credenze*, Roma, Carocci, 2018, 172 p., ISBN 978-88-430-9083-9.

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Sergio Botta's essay aims to reconstruct, through historical-epistemological research, the points of contact between the world of Siberian shamans and contemporary shamanic experiences. In order to understand the extraordinary success that shamanic discourses, beliefs, and practices enjoy today, the author reconstructs the long developmental trajectory of shamanism, from a local phenomenon having limited historical significance to a global category, eventually becoming a metaphor for a religiosity perceived as « other ». In his analysis, the author shows how the gaze of Western observers has progressively altered ethnographic data, domesticating them according to their conceptual framework. In other words, what today is commonly called shamanism is above all the result of a projection of modern perceptions upon distant cultures. Disregarding the obvious issues in

such a process, the modern approach has first assimilated local phenomena and then rejected them in a global dimension. In fact, the term « shamanism » does not exist in the lexicon of Siberian peoples, as « none of the local cultures needed to generalize their gaze on their ritual practices, to the extent that they thought them in terms of an -ism » (p. 21). On the contrary, most careful analyses have shown that there is a « multitude » of shamanisms. This fact alone shall prompt us to revise our terminology, adopting the plural form only (*i.e.* shamanisms as opposed to shamanism), as already proposed by David Holmberg, or to admit, with Caroline Humphrey, that shamanism « is not one, but many things ». In the light of such premises, Botta offers a stipulative definition of shamanism, which empirically gathers its multi-faceted semantics. Accordingly, he tries to identify the lowest common denominator

of the observed phenomena, thus reaching consensus both in the academic and extra-academic world. Following Claude Lévi-Strauss's methodological approach toward totemism developed in the 60s, Botta is not satisfied with the de-construction of shamanism. Therefore, he frames different shamanisms within a broader self-critical discourse, focusing on the elaboration of conceptual categories for the study of religious phenomena. Although records of shamanic practices with descriptions of real sessions already appear in the accounts of medieval travelers, such as William of Rubruk, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine and Marco Polo, the term *shaman* appears in the European scientific literature only between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when early ethnologists, geographers, and naturalists explored the vast lands of Siberia. The word comes from the language of the Tungus – a native population in central-eastern Siberia – which used *šamān* to refer to a type of ritual specialists, who acted within their social group in order to ensure a good hunt or performing healing rituals. The term obtained an extraordinary success among the ethnologists of that time, who started the debate on the very nature of those exotic Siberian religious forms. Soon, the term was used to refer to all those ritual specialists of the Central Asian area, who performed similar functions to the shamans of the Tungus people, regardless of the diversity of the actual names used in the individual local languages. In other words, in the short turn of a few decades, an *emic* term was transformed into an ideologically determined *etic* category. This first generalization brought about not only a linguistic simplification, skewing semantic expressions adopted in native languages to describe shamanic practices, but also an anthropological simplification, reducing the extraordinary heterogeneity of the phenomenon, produced primarily by the different environmental and socio-economic contexts in which it was recorded.

The discovery phase of shamanism was dominated by an interpretative paradigm framing shamanic practices as demonic or magical, thus restating the alleged supremacy of European cultural and religious values. In addition, this evaluation served well in justifying colonial enterprises as well as the Christianization of Indigenous communities. The situation did not improve during the Enlightenment period, when shamanic practices were mostly interpreted as deception or mediocre quality scams, perpetrated by Siberian priests against naive local populations, and therefore judged as devoid of any scientific value. The Enlightenment approach intended to demystify the shamanic «comedy» – this is the actual term used in the *Encyclopédie's* entry devoted to the «shaman», ideologically stressing the alleged mental backwardness of the populations outside Europe. Later on, this «primitivism» attracted romantic intellectuals, who, starting with Herder, portrayed the shaman as a cultural hero – an individual capable of fully exhibiting the most authentic spirit of a social group. His harmonious attachment to nature was to remind the modern world how high the price of civilization was. The new romantic paradigm, considering shamanism as a symbol of authentic religion and a self-representative resource, inaugurated a new phase of ethnographic research: Banzarov and Radloff – the most authoritative scholar of their times – forcefully claimed its autonomy from other religious forms, first of all, Buddhism. At the end of the xix<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the work of generalization carried out by Franz Boas, American anthropology made use of the terms «shaman» and «shamanism» as convenient labels describing the beliefs and religious practices of Native Americans. The core of the Boasian project was the Jesup North Pacific Expedition – an ethnographic mission held between 1897 and 1902, that included, among others, Boas himself and his native informant, George Hunt, but also Bogoras, Jochelson and Dixon. The project

aimed to explore the affinities between the cultures of northeastern Siberia and those of the northwestern coast of the American continent. Boas, who had studied the figure of the *angakoq* among the Eskimos, believed in fact in the existence of prolonged contacts between the native cultures of a large area encompassing the two continents. The arctic hypothesis pursued by his school radically changed the perception of native cultures: « On the assumption that shamanism had originated in Mongolia, and from there it had spread to the Americas, the original peoples of the continent could no longer be considered bearers of a backward spirituality. On the contrary, they were the living heirs of an archaic, authentic and universal religiosity » (pp. 76-77). In the same years, Soviet anthropology recovered the evolutionist paradigm emphasizing not only the primitive and backward character of the original shamanism but also the actively antisocial behavior of its ritual specialists. Nevertheless, from the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, the first psychopathological interpretations of shamanism appeared, thanks to the contributions by Bogoras, Jochelson, and Czaplicka, later formalized by Novakovsky. In his view, shamans were suffering from mental discomfort due to the extreme environmental conditions of the Siberian regions. Between the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the thesis of « arctic hysteria » was accepted by US ethnographers, in order to explain North American shamanism. On the contrary, in Europe the psychopathological interpretation was rejected by Shirokogoroff, who proposed to see in shamanic rituals a regulation mechanism for the community balance, a sort of « safety valve » for social groups. This interpretation paved the way for a social re-reading of shamanic practices. For instance, De Martino considered the shaman as a specialist able to deal with cultural anxieties, a healer in the service of his social group. According to Lévi-Strauss, the shamanic

system was founded on social consensus, whereby the shaman's power was based on the community's trust in its healing powers. Eliade, whose work constituted a fundamental step forward in shamanic studies, stressed instead that the core of the shamanic experiences was ecstasy. According to him, as ecstasy was a pre-constitutional archaic technique, the shaman could no longer be considered an exclusively Siberian phenomenon. On the contrary, it was to be understood as an an-historic and transcultural fact, preceding the institutionalization of religions. Despite some discordant voices, this romantic reinterpretation was borrowed by the American counterculture of the Sixties, which transformed the shaman into a modern cultural hero, able to respond to the social and spiritual needs of the America of those years. On the one side, the shamanic figure intercepted the interest of psychedelic culture (Gordon Wasson); on the other, it played a role in the archaeological sciences as well (Peter Furst), for instance in the shamanic interpretation of Mexican pre-Hispanic art. However, the strongest impulse to the birth of neo-shamanism was provided by the shaman-anthropologists Carlos Castaneda, Joan Halifax, and especially Michael Harner. Today his Foundation for Shamanic Studies not only promotes workshops and courses to learn, experience and teach shamanic techniques around the world, but also it has, among its objectives, the re-teaching to indigenous peoples of their ancient lost wisdom.

On closer inspection, this re-localization of shamanism constitutes the final stage of a long path of generalization, decontextualization, and universalization, which started soon after its discovery. However, according to Botta, neo-shamanism cannot be considered as a « betrayal » of the original shamanism, since the very category of « original » turns out to be more ideal than substantial when applied to shamanic practices. It is evident that shamanism « spread as an attractor of spiritual and religious instances of diverse nature – a

category capable of agglutinating individual and collective desires and needs, in very different contexts» (p. 149). Also because of the visibility recently gained by many indigenous cultures, which have begun to claim their rights in different areas of the planet, shamanism certainly appears as a symbolic resource of great economic importance, which will continue to play a role in the discursive productions of contemporary world. Botta's prose is both rich

in the specialist lexicon of the history of religion and bright on the expressive level. The author successfully assists the reader by illustrating the many intricate academic interpretations related to this difficult topic. In doing so, he manages an extensive bibliography, which he patiently discusses and unravels – just one among the many merits of this book.

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JAN-MATHIEU CARBON, SASKIA PEELS-MATTHEY éd.s., *Purity and Purification in the Ancient Greek World. Texts, Rituals, and Norms*, Liège, Presses universitaires de Liège, 2018, 372 p., ISBN 978-2-87562-159-7.

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Ce volume est issu d'un colloque tenu en 2013. Trente ans après la parution de l'ouvrage de Robert Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983), c'était là l'occasion d'en célébrer la parution. C'était également l'occasion de souligner l'importance du projet de recherche mené par Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge intitulé *Collection of Greek Ritual Norms* [<http://cgrrn.ulg.ac.be>]. Ce colloque n'avait pas seulement pour objectif de faire un état des lieux de la recherche sur le sujet, il s'agissait surtout et avant tout de se demander comment faire apparaître « *the ancient realities underlying norms of purity and impurity in Greek religion and ritual practice* » (p. 12). Le lecteur se confrontera donc à diverses méthodes et interprétations au fil des communications. L'ouvrage organise les treize contributions en quatre parties thématiques, pour lesquelles une introduction spécifique aurait été utile afin d'en dégager les enjeux et resserrer les problématiques.

La première section (« Concepts, Continuities, and Changes ») regroupe quatre interventions. Revenant sur son ouvrage, Robert Parker (« *Miasma: Old and New Problems* ») réévalue la définition heuristique de la souillure de Mary Douglas (est pollué tout ce qui, phénomène ou acte, ne correspond pas à la catégorie dans laquelle il est classé), définition qu'il propose de considérer comme métaphore.

La contribution d'Angelos Chaniotis (« Greek Purity in Context: The Long Life of a Ritual Concept, or Defining the Cs of Continuity and Change ») s'attache à montrer la continuité et les changements du concept de la souillure intérieure (« *inner purity* »), concept proposé par Ivana et Andrej Petrovic (*Inner Purity and Pollution in Greek Religion*, vol. I, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016). Pierre Bonnechere (« Pureté, justice, "piété" et leurs contraires: l'apport des sources oraculaires ») fait le relevé, pour les commenter, des occurrences de toute mention de souillure dans les sources oraculaires, épigraphiques ou dites littéraires. On pourra regretter le recours au couple sacré/profane, catégories d'une vieille anthropologie qui a fait l'objet d'approches critiques. Cette première section se clôt sur la communication de Saskia Peels-Matthey (« Moral Purity in the Athenian Theatre ») qui interroge la définition des adjectifs *hosios* et *hagios* dans la tragédie athénienne en les mettant en regard. Pour ce faire, l'A. adopte les outils théoriques de la linguistique cognitive.

La deuxième section (« Homicide, Morality, and Society ») contient trois contributions. Elle s'ouvre sur une lecture de l'*Euthyphro* de Platon par Hanna Willey (« Social-status, Legislation, and Pollution in Plato's *Euthyphro* ») qui s'appuie sur les propositions de Robert Parker