Mircea Eliade's 1964 *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* is undoubtedly one of the most influential publications about shamanism ever. Eliade (1907-1986) published his book as a professor in the history of religions at the University of Chicago, a position from which he played a pivotal role in promoting the study of religion at American universities. This position also enabled him to establish his interpretation of shamanism as the most authoritative. There were only three such significant professorships in the United States when he came to Chicago in the 1950s. Twenty years later there were thirty and Eliade's students occupied half of these positions. As the leading intellectual of the academic school of thought that he had established, Eliade had become the ultimate scientific authority on shamanism.¹

*Time* was right to identify Eliade as 'probably the world's foremost living interpreter of spiritual myths and symbolism' in 1966. It acknowledged his humanistic perspectives and wrote:

Eliade also believes that an awareness of mythology and legend is vital to understanding the history of nonreligious modern man. Only within the last few centuries has man emerged from a cosmos controlled by God and godlets into a desacralized universe. And even while consciously rejecting mythology, man is still subject to it: modern psychology has amply proved that the subconscious mind of man is an uncharted inner universe of symbols.²


² *Time*, 11 Feb. 1966 [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,842489,00.html].
Not all scholars were convinced by Eliade’s approach, to say the least. For instance, in his notorious 1966 review of Eliade’s scholarly work the British social anthropologist Edmund Leach (1910-1989) condemned Eliade’s work and called it ‘bad history’, ‘bad method’, ‘bad ethnography’ and ‘bad psychology’. Likewise, the American anthropologist Thomas Beidelman assessed Eliade’s work as ‘ramshackle, misconceived and superannuated’ and even as ‘pathetic and ludicrous’. The eminent Dutch anthropologist Jan van Baal (1909-1992) insisted that Eliade’s work was ‘a philosophy of life (that) doesn’t make a science, even not science of religion’ [sic]. Notwithstanding these critical opinions, Eliade’s fame rose, and not only among scholars.

Indeed, Eliade’s lectures on yoga, myth, mysticism, shamanism and other religious themes enchanted many enthusiastic students with esoteric leanings. For instance, Eliade once had a ‘hippie’ student who identified himself as a ‘shaman mystic’ and who wrote a term paper on his drug-induced ‘initiatic experiences’. For this student and for other admirers Eliade was more than just a scholar of religion, he was also an authoritative spiritual celebrity. Definitely, Eliade’s interpretation of shamanism found fertile soil in academia as well as in American fields of esotericism.

Yet his interpretation of shamanism was the product of an environment that differed considerably from the American setting in which his career flourished. Therefore, to interpret his constructions I first have to shed light on the different fields in which he operated before he came to Chicago. One of these fields deserves extra attention as it was the field from which some other highly significant interpretations of shamanism sprang. I call this field the Bollingen connection. Named after the so-called Bollingen Tower, which was a building that Carl Gustav Jung built next to his house in Switzerland, the Bollingen connection was an international and loosely constructed network of academic and other scholars who surrounded Carl Gustav Jung. Mircea Eliade was the most prominent authority on shamanism in this configuration, but he was not the only one. For instance, the anthropologist Paul Radin and the mythologist Joseph Campbell were also highly influential shamanologists who participated in this network. Consequently, they will also feature in this chapter.

The chapter starts with an outline of Eliade’s steps towards his shamanology. It goes on to review the Eranos network, which was the part of the Bollingen connection that consisted of the scholars participating in the so-called Eranos meet-

ings that were organised by Carl Jung. Joseph Campbell and other interpreters of shamanism who were subsidised by the Bollingen foundation are the subject of part three. The chapter concludes with the scholarly field of the history of religion. It was a field that Eliade established as a professor in Chicago, and from this field Eliade established himself as the main authority on shamanism.7

Archaic techniques of shamans

A momentous interpretation of shamanism entered the English-speaking world with the publication of the 1950 volume Forgotten Religions (including some living primitive religions). The upcoming Romanian scholar of religion Mircea Eliade, who wrote the chapter on shamanism, argued that the shaman should not be confused with the medicine man or the sorcerer:

the shaman is distinguished from them by a magico-religious technique which is in a way exclusive to him and which may be called: the ecstatic trip to Heaven, to the Lower World, or to the depths of the ocean.8

According to Eliade, shamanism, ‘although its most complete expression is found in the Arctic and North-Asiatic tribes, must not be considered as limited to those countries’. Notwithstanding the abundance of publications on shamanism, Eliade argued that the ‘morphological and historical study’ of shamanism had scarcely

7 Here, my approach and interpretation distinctly differs from those of Hutton, Von Stuckrad and Znamenski. While Hutton rightly acknowledges that Eliade manipulated ethnographic information to arrive at the main thesis of his Shamanism, he does not relate his scholarly manoeuvring to the religious and political context in which Eliade came to his conclusions, see R. Hutton, Shamanism: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination (London, 2001) 120-7. Likewise, Von Stuckrad highlights Eliade as ‘Drehscheibe der Religionsgeschichte’ and thus, he pays ample attention to Eliade’s philosophical starting points. Yet, the contexts in which Eliade came to develop them and the contexts in which his interpretation of shamanism became so authoritative for many other interpreters remains less clear, see K. von Stuckrad, Schamanismus und Esoterik. Kultur- und wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Betrachtungen (Leuven, 2003) 123-35. Znamenski, on his turn, considers Eliade’s perspectives in the American context of the 1960s and interprets Eliade’s Shamanism as the product of an anti-modern ‘phenomenologist’ who ‘rehabilitated spiritual practitioners in nature religions’ which is a rather inapt depiction of Eliade, as we will see in this chapter. Similar to Hutton and Von Stuckrad, Znamenski does not sufficiently focus on the construction and authorisation of Eliade’s viewpoints on shamanism within the fields in which they acquired their authority, see Znamenski, The Beauty of the Primitive. Shamanism and the Western Imagination (Oxford, 2007) 165-202.

begun, echoing Chadwick, whose work is greeted in his bibliography. Eliade acknowledged that ‘the majority of shamans are (or have been) psychopaths’, but he thought it was wrong to explain shamanism by psychopathology, as Ohlmarks had done, as

the shaman, although generally a former psychopath, has succeeded in curing himself. In spite of his “trances”, the shaman presents a reintegrated conscience.9

Eliade’s bibliography contained a remarkable range of different studies on shamanism, such as those by Chadwick, Harva, Jochelson, Lauffer, Ohlmarks, Radloff and Wilken. In the same vein as other comparative armchair scholars, Eliade imported interpretations of shamanism from their specific cultural domains into his own without reflecting on the context in which they had been produced. He reinterpreted and censored the various concepts of ‘shamans’ and ‘shamanism’ according to the imperatives of his own field and habitually ignored the original field of production. Through what Bourdieu would have called his ‘heretical import of texts’, Eliade authorized the idea that the essence of shamanism was, ‘the ecstatic technique which permits the shaman to fly up to the Heavens or to descend to Hell’.10

Before I turn to Eliade’s field of production and the dispositions that guided his interpretations, I shall focus on his interpretations in some more detail. In a 1950 German translation of a paper on shamanism that he had presented at the University of Rome, Eliade used ethnographic examples from Indonesia, North America, Siberia, Sudan and other parts of the world to characterise shamanism by the ecstatic techniques that the shaman used to journey to the heaven and the underworld. Shamanic diseases were often misinterpreted by other scholars as psycho-pathological phenomena, he argued. He claimed, instead, that they were part of the ecstatic initiation. Shamans were in dialogue with the deities and not possessed by them, as some other scholars presumed. The bibliography referred to, inter alia, Chadwick, Harva, Jochelson and Radloff. He also referred to the works of Nadel and Shirokogoroff, but he only selected those aspects of their interpretations that suited his conclusions and he omitted their fault-finding remarks.11

A year later, in 1951, Eliade published Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l’extase, a scholarly tour de force that he even improved on in the 1964 English rendition, which was a revised and enlarged version. At that time, he had already acquired such a prominent position as a scholar that he was asked to write the entry on ‘Shamanism’ for the fourteenth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britan-

9  Eliade, ‘Shamanism’, 306.
nica. Illustrative of his self-esteem was the bibliography he provided. He ignored most important interpretations and, besides Czaplicka’s 1914 *Aboriginal Siberia*, only mentioned his own 1951 *Le Chamanisme*. As we will see, he regarded his own interpretation as the comprehensive study of shamanism that surpassed all other, in his view more limited, studies of shamanism.12

I will not describe all Eliade’s texts on shamanism extensively here as, on the whole, his basic views on shamanism remained unchanged. His most pronounced article on shamanism was his 1953 ‘The Yearning for Paradise in Primitive Tradition’, in which he argued that the universal ‘paradise myth’ revealed the ‘paradisial quality’ of the ‘primordial situation’. These myths showed the blessedness, spontaneity and liberty of ‘primitive man’ before heaven and earth came apart. In this *illo tempore*, the *axis mundi* connected earth with heaven. After a ‘cosmic rupture’ the shaman became essential as he could ‘reconstitute the state of primordial man’ through the exercise of special techniques of ecstasy. By ‘recovering animal spontaneity (imitating animal behavior) and speaking animal language (imitation of animal sounds)’ the shaman advanced beyond the ‘general situation’ of ‘fallen humanity’ and returned to *illud tempus* of the ‘paradisial’ myths. Shamans, therefore, signified ‘a mystic journey on the Cosmic Tree’ and restored the ‘paradisial’ state, establishing the ‘easy communication as in *illu tempore* between Heaven and Earth.’13

‘In other words’, Eliade argued, ‘the ecstasy restores, though only provisionally and for a restricted number of persons – the “mystics” – the initial state of all humanity’. Eliade also argued that ‘it is mysticism, then, that best reveals the restoration of the paradisial life’ and thus, analogous to Christian mysticism, which was ‘the most recent and most elaborate mysticism in existence’, the focal point of shamanism was the ‘yearning for paradise’. Even though Eliade claimed that ‘we do not pretend to make value judgments on the content of the various mystical experiences’, he argued that ‘all the strange behaviour of the shaman reveals the highest form of spirituality; it is actually part of a coherent ideology, possessing great nobility’.14

---

**Young Eliade**

For a proper interpretation of Eliade’s ‘yearning for paradise’ and his design of an archaic shamanic substratum, his manoeuvrings in and between fields should be taken into account. Eliade was a strikingly erudite and ambitious individual with great intellectual talents as well as an impressive talent for networking. Even before he studied at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the University of Bucharest from 1925 until 1928, he indulged in esotericism, philosophy, literature, history, religion and magic. He corresponded with internationally acclaimed scholars of religion and published fiction as well as popular scientific articles. His interest in comparative religion was stirred by James Frazer’s *Golden Bough* and a range of theosophical, anthroposophical and other esoteric literature.15

Eliade became one of the principal intellectual leaders of a ‘new generation’ of cultural nationalists who struggled for a Romanian identity with a new élan vital. As ‘mystical revolutionaries’ they wanted to dethrone the older generation that had created Great Romania and they considered that it was time for a new aristocracy to create a great Romanian culture. Eliade wrote polemic articles arguing for the revitalisation of individual experiences and the meaning and value of religion in particular, the essence of which was, he suggested, formed by occult practices and mystical experiences.16 Although the young Eliade’s ‘secret megalomania’ was vital for his career, the recognition of others was the most important. They acknowledged his authority, also because he published abundantly and was profusely well read.17

Eliade defended his 1933 doctoral thesis on ‘The Psychology of Indian Meditation’ after he had spent three years in India from 1928 until 1931. Revised versions of his thesis were published in French in 1936 as *Yoga: essai sur les origines de la mystique indienne* and in English in 1954 and 1956 as *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. This impressive book was well-received in the academic field as well as in artistic fields. Unmistakably, however, his sympathetic and ahistorical interpretation of yoga as a ‘modality of archaic spirituality’ was rather speculative. It was clearly guided by the same ‘nostalgic theology’ that directed his nationalism. He positioned yoga within the pre-Aryan culture that he also perceived as the original Eurasian Romanian culture. Eliade argued that traces of it could still be found among the Romanian rural population. In *Yoga*, he argued that shamanism was a form of ‘primitive mysticism’ that involved ‘techniques of ecstasy’, whereas yoga was ‘an archaic form of mystical experience’ that could be found only in India as it had disappeared everywhere else. Like shamanism, yoga consisted of techniques

---


16 Idem, 43-79.

aimed at transcending the human condition. The goal of yoga was to be reborn ‘to a transcendent modality’ and ‘to realize absolute concentration in order to attain enstasis’.18 It is hardly remarkable that Eliade, whose literary works were controversial in Romania for their eroticism, praised Tantra yoga as the much-needed affirmation of the powers of the human body and sexuality, and, moreover, as the highest form of yoga.19

**Traditionalism**

Eliade’s turn to the so-called traditionalists was vital for his fascination for and appraisal of what he considered archaic religious practices. From the 1930s onwards Eliade maintained long-term contact with the French occult scholar of religion Rene Guénon (1886-1951), the Italian philosopher Julius Evola (1898-1974) and the Ceylonese-English art historian Ananda Coomaraswami (1877-1947), who were all traditionalists. That is, they detested the optimistic evolutionary philosophy of theosophists and emphasized, instead, the loss of transmission of primordial and universal traditions. In line with others in the international network of traditionalists, Eliade supposed that the modern world was in a state of spiritual crisis. Against what they considered the superstitious cult of reason, progress and change, the traditionalists emphasised the ahistorical, essential and eternal truths that shaped the so-called perennial philosophy. They aspired to overcome the *conditio humana* or, in Eliade’s terms, the ‘terror of history’ by discovering essential truths in tradition, universals and orthodoxy. Their esoteric views habitually coincided with völkisch right-wing political opinions.20

---


19 Evola, for instance, bestowed ‘the State’ with transcendent meaning, and in his most famous elucidation of his metaphysical mysticism, his 1934 *Revolt Against the Modern World*, he interpreted the essence of human existence as a means of arriving at a spiritual, transcendent reality. Even though the Fascists condemned his traditionalist proposals for a return to Roman paganism, Evola sympathized with Mussolini, see T. Sheehan, ‘Myth and Violence: The Fascism of Julius Evola and Alain de Benoîs’, *Social Research* 48 (1981) 45-73. For Eliade’s traditionalism, see W.W. Quinn, ‘Mircea Eliade and the Sacred Tradition (A Personal Account)’, *Nova Religio. The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*
Eliade became one of the foremost scholars among the traditionalists. Yet he rarely cited other traditionalists and did not openly acknowledge their influence, much to the chagrin of Evola. Eliade, however, never made a great effort to advance his position as a traditionalist per se. He aimed at an academic career and he knew that most prominent scholars in the academic world were not taken in by traditionalist views and even less by their speculative approach. In his defence, Eliade declared to Evola that he wrote for a general public and that overtly traditionalist publications would lose him readers. Furthermore, he argued that in this way he could be a ‘Trojan horse’ that would introduce traditionalist views on the perennial philosophy into the academic milieu. In other words, Eliade translated and rearranged traditionalist views so that these would be accepted in the academic field.21

When Eliade became associate professor at the Faculty of Letters at Bucharest in 1933 he also became involved in the political upheaval of Romania. Democracy and Communism were anathema to Eliade. They crushed the ‘state instinct of our leaders’ and ‘prevented all attempts at a national awakening’. On the other hand, the struggle of Romanian Fascists to establish their version of orthodox religion as the basis for Romanian spirituality and the Romanian nation did appeal to him. Like many others of his generation, Eliade was charmed by the ‘sacralised politics’ of the Iron Guard or Legionary movement, a violent and radical anti-Semitic Fascist movement that aimed at totalitarian spiritual wholeness in Romania. Eliade would later argue that he considered the Iron Guard a ‘mystical sect’ and not a political movement.22 Indeed, in a 1938 issue of the Legionary journal Buna Vestire (Good News) he wrote:


\[\text{21 Turcanu, Mircea Eliade, 323-4; Sedgwick, Against the Modern World, 110-1.} \]

The Legionary movement has a spiritual and Christian meaning. If all the contemporary revolutions have as their goal the conquest of power by a social class or by a man, the Legionary revolution aims, on the contrary, at the supreme redemption of the nation, the reconciliation of the Romanian nation with God, as the Captain said. That is why the Legionary movement has a different meaning with regard to everything that has been done up till now in history; and the victory of the Legion will lead not only to the restoration of virtues of our nation, of a hardworking Romania, worthy and powerful, but also to the birth of a man who is in harmony with the new kind of European life.\textsuperscript{23}

It is not my intention here to portray Eliade as a Fascist scholar. The radical and vile anti-Semitic and patriotic articles in which he promoted the sacrificial discourse of the Iron Guard and glorified the ‘fruitful death’ of their ‘martyrs’ should not be ignored, but do not make his publications on shamanism Fascist literature. Moreover, he was probably a ‘nice man’, as Martin Marty observed shortly after his death in 1986. However, the political-religious dispositions that Eliade shared with the traditionalists and the Romanian Fascists clearly shaped his interpretation of shamanism. But his amiability is not the issue here, and nor are his ‘happy guilt’ and his supposed ‘political naïveté’; what is is the genesis and logic of Eliade’s shamanology.\textsuperscript{24}

It is not easy to identify Eliade’s involvement in the Iron Guard, as he later worked for the Romanian regime that destroyed the Iron Guard. Conversely, Eliade clearly remained faithful to traditionalist causes after his exile from Romania and he continued to invest in milieus with concerns analogous to his ‘mystical revolutionaries’. To begin with, Eliade became a Cultural Secretary in the Romanian Embassy in London in 1940, and later, in 1942, Press Secretary at the Romanian Embassy in Lisbon, where he became an admirer of the Salazar regime. During the war he befriended the German political philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), who was a member of the Nazi party at that time. Schmitt set himself up to become the crown jurist of the ‘Third Reich with his doctrine of powerful leadership, the \textit{Gleichartigkeit} of the \textit{Volk} and notions of the political as an intense, existential

phenomenon. Significantly, Schmitt presented his critique of liberalism and modern political culture as *Political Theology*.25

**In exile**

After the Communist regime established itself in Romania, Eliade became an exile and moved to Paris in 1945. Here he engaged in the field of esotericism as well as in the academic field. In some cases these fields overlapped, as in the case of Eliade’s acquaintance with and enthusiasm for the anthropologist, colonial commandant and ‘ethnosophist’ Marcel Griaule (1898-1956) who, in his infamous Dogon ethnographies, had purportedly revealed the esoteric Dogon knowledge into which he was supposedly initiated during fieldwork.26 Eliade provisionally taught at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris – as a result of the recommendations of his friend Georges Dumézil (1898-1986), who held the chair in Comparative Religion of Indo-European Peoples there. Although a secure academic career was obstructed by scholars who pointed to his Fascist past, Dumézil, on the other hand, recognized in Eliade a fellow *homme de la droite* and became Eliade’s invaluable *parrain* in the French academic field. Dumézil’s erudite and influential interpretation of Aryan and Indo-European society as uniquely integrated, hierarchical and consisting of workers, soldiers and leaders was highly appreciated by Eliade. Conversely, many other scholars have argued that Dumézil’s ideas stemmed as much from his admiration of the politics of Fascist Italy as from the Vedas or the Eddas.27


Notwithstanding his Parisian opponents, Eliade steadily positioned himself within an international network of scholars of religion, amongst whom were the Italian historian of religion Raffaele Pettazzoni (1883-1959), the Dutch proponent of phenomenology of religion Gerardus van der Leeuw and the German Religionswissenschaftler Joachim Wach (1898-1955). Eliade participated in several international congresses and was involved in the establishment of the International Association of the History of Religion (IAHR) in 1950. His participation in the Eranos meetings in Switzerland, from the same year onwards, was also decisive for his career. Before I return to Eliade’s transformation into the world’s leading authority on shamanism, I shall focus on the Eranos network, which partly overlapped the Bollingen connection.

The Eranos network

The Eranos conferences were held annually in Ascona, Switzerland. Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881-1962), who initiated the meetings, was a widow whose wealthy Dutch parents had left her enough money to buy Casa Gabrielle on Monte Verità, where she lived from 1920 onwards. The so-called Mountain of Truth was well known as the location where a range of artists, writers, dancers, political radicals and other cultural rebels had established communes from the late nineteenth century onwards. Fröbe-Kapteyn acquired a position amongst the nudists, feminists, pacifists, freethinkers, theosophists, Naturmenschen, vegetarians and other alternative Lebensreformer who had settled there. The colonies of idealists, vegetarians and artists especially have often been cited as examples of the anti-Modernity of the Lebensreform movement, but, as the Dutch historical anthropologist Yme Kuiper has convincingly argued, the validity of such sweeping interpretations should be questioned. A too great an emphasis placed on cultural pessimism and anti-Modernity has obscured the dynamic agenda of the Lebensreform movement in terms of its attitude towards the future. In their own publications, namely, the life reformists did not see their ideas and ideals as anti-modern. Instead, they were convinced that a particular attitude towards life would change the world as it would bring about a more vigorous personality.

At first, Fröbe-Kapteyn set up the School of Spiritual Research at her estate in 1930, with former theosophist Alice Bailey (1880-1949). This project did not fare well. Subsequently, she instigated the Eranos Conferences, after she had approached the eminent German theologian Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) for advice. Although Carl Gustav Jung, invited to the first Eranos conference in 1933, turned into the mastermind of the meetings, Fröbe-Kapteyn provided the funds and the site. It must be noted that from the start of his career, Carl Jung had been involved in esotericism. His 1902 doctoral dissertation, for instance, Zur Psychologie und Pathologie sogenannter okkulter Phänomene, was a study of his cousin, the medium Helene Preiswerk (1880-1911). His personal library contained at least eighteen different studies written by the leading theosophist G.R.S. Mead (see Chapter 2). Many of these works were concerned with ‘gnosis’, a theme that would become of key importance in Jung’s career. Jung was also substantially influenced by parapsychology. His important work on the supposed ‘acausal connection of meaning between inner psychological states and outer events’ that he called ‘synchronicity’ was inspired by the work of the famous American ‘father of parapsychology’ J. B. Rhine (1895-1980).

Jung focused on the unconscious, which he interpreted as a creative force that pushed the world towards an awakening of consciousness. He suggested that religion could be best understood by relating it to the ‘collective unconscious’, a psychic reality, shared by all humans, that could be discovered with the help of myths, dreams, visions, religious symbolism and the creative use of the imagination. He also reasoned that through these practices the collective unconscious expressed itself, bringing unconscious aspects of the mind to the surface. Jung interpreted myths as archaic stories that were saturated with archetypical essentials. They could enrich the lives of individuals with spiritual and psychological insights. While Jung claimed scholarly authority as a psychiatrist, he also claimed a privileged position as an initiate in secret knowledge by asserting that he possessed experiential knowledge of the healing and wholesome process of ‘individuation’, that is, the process by which the different parts of one’s inner reality became integrated. After Jung set up his own field of analytical psychology, he alternatively attracted and appealed to esoteric and scholarly fields to position himself as the supreme authority on a rather broad range of subjects.

---


Ultimately, Jung would not acquire a place in mainstream academic fields. People taking action in the fields of esotericism, on the other hand, habitually embraced his concepts and often even idolised him. This is not surprising, in light of the debunking yet convincing reassessment of Jung by the American psychologist Richard Noll, who interpreted Jung’s inner circle as *The Jung Cult*. According to Noll, it was a charismatic movement, based on the cult of his own personality. As the *Aryan Christ*, as Noll labelled him, rather sensationally, Jung not only competed with academic psychologists, but also with esoteric authorities such as Gurdjieff, who has already been mentioned in Chapter 3. Jung and Gurdjieff functioned as gurus for their followers, but while Gurdjieff presented himself as an occult master, Jung primarily presented himself as an intellectual scholar. It is telling, however, that some followers of Jung switched to Gurdjieff and vice versa.33

Jung’s elitist dispositions are illustrated by the remarkable network of wealthy patients surrounding him, amongst whom were members of the Rockefeller family. For instance, Edith Rockefeller McCormick (1872–1932) went to Zurich to be analysed by Jung in 1913. She was the daughter of John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937), the founder of Standard Oil Trust, and wife of Harold Fowler McCormick (1872–1941), the heir to the International Harvester Company. Consequently, she could afford to become an ostentatious socialite (she presided over Chicago high society and was patroness of several artists, amongst whom was James Joyce) and to endow the Analytical Psychology Club in Zurich in 1916. The Club was organised around the analysands who had come to Jung in increasing numbers. It was designed to provide a social outlet during their stay in Zurich, which sometimes lasted several years. Around the club other gatherings formed, made up of his inner circle, with whom he discussed his ideas.34

Jung did not visit the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man that Gurdjieff had established in Fontainebleau in 1922, as he kept aloof from most other esoteric teachers. On the other hand, he did go to the gatherings of the *School of Wisdom* in Darmstadt, Germany. The *School of Wisdom* was established by the *Modephilosoph* Count Hermann Keyserling (1880–1947) to train a new ar-

---


istocracy. Keyserling wanted his pupils to experience a spiritual awakening via the teaching of yoga and other esoteric practices and ideas. He objected to what he perceived as the one-sided intellectualism that would cause Europe's downfall and wanted to counter it with a *Geisteskirche*. He positioned it vis-à-vis the theosophists – he knew Annie Besant personally – as a movement with historical consequences. Theosophy, in contrast, was a religious movement that would not change the world. Still, stuck between esotericism and academia, the *School* was too exotic for most intellectuals and too rationalistic and scholarly for many persons with esoteric inclinations.35

Jung knew Keyserling well and even interpreted his dreams for him. At the tenth anniversary gathering of the school in 1930, Jung met Fröbe-Kapteyn for the first time. This is significant, as when the Eranos conferences started in 1933, many of the lecturers of Keyserling's school transferred to the new setting, taking with them their specific mixture of scholarly and esoteric dispositions.36 From the start, Carl Gustav Jung advised Fröbe-Kapteyn which themes to chose and which speakers to invite. Furthermore, his idea of the archetypes occupied a central position in the Eranos meetings. The setting represented the scholastic view of the participants well: high up in the mountains, overseeing the world, not restrained by academic restrictions, the interdisciplinary team of philologists, anthropologists, scholars of religion and other intellectuals discussed the timeless structures at the


basis of yoga, myths, gnosis, alchemy, rituals and symbols.\textsuperscript{37}

The genesis of the Eranos conferences is noteworthy as it confirms that the meetings took place in a combination of fields, namely the field of esotericism and the academic field. Eliade, who was enchanted by what he later called ‘the spirit of Eranos’, also noticed this, as he thought the atmosphere was ‘partly secular, partly theosophical’. He considered it as ‘one of the most creative cultural experiences of the modern Western world’. In fact, he became one of the most faithful Eranos scholars, attending the meetings almost every year until 1963. He was a confidant of Fröbe-Kapteyn, whom he considered the ‘high-priest of a new religion’. Jung’s ideas on archetypes and the collective unconscious encouraged Eliade’s essentialist and religionist notions, but he never became a Jungian, to the disappointment and even frustration of Jung.\textsuperscript{38}

Unmistakably, Eliade was committed to the intellectual habitus that guided most scholars at the Eranos meetings: the privileging of the hidden and mystical side of religion. Most participants focused on the so-called \textit{coincidentia oppositorum}, that is, the paradoxical coincidence of opposites that makes the transcendent reality comprehensible through symbols. Driven by their search for the transcendent unity of all religions and the universal primordial tradition (the so-called perennial philosophy), the study of religions became a kind of mystical vocation. Their philosophy of self-knowledge and cultural psychology conceived modern man as sick in soul and, moreover, they supposed that the culture needed Eranos. As a kind of \textit{Laien-Priester} they could reawaken the necessary spiritual capacities. From the same privileged disposition, they supposed that they come to grips with the generic, essential mythic and mystical core of religion, whereas ordinary empirical and historical-analytic science could not.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} Turcanu, \textit{Mircea Eliade}, 329.
\textsuperscript{38} Eliade, \textit{No Souvenirs}, xiii; Turcanu, \textit{Mircea Eliade}, 331-3.
Scholars from different academic fields were invited to lecture at the Eranos meetings. Not all were committed to Jung's conceptual framework, but they all shared elements of his intellectual habitus. Some of them took an interest in shamanism. Gerardus van der Leeuw, for instance, who attended the Eranos meetings from 1948 until his death in 1950, used the term 'shaman' in his lecture on 'Urzeit und Endzeit' in which he focused on the 'Kreisgang der Zeit' or 'zyklischen Bewußtsein' of 'primitiver Menschen' who, through their rites, actualize their mythical past or their 'Urzeit'. The function of shamanic activities, Van der Leeuw argued, was to make these myths work. Equating artists, poets and primitive people, he claimed that the only contemporary Westerners 'die ihre Seele aus den ewigen quellen des Mythos tränken' were 'Der Dichter und Neurotiker'. In his lecture on 'Unsterblichkeit', Van der Leeuw referred to a Winnebago 'shaman' who remembered that he had died twice. Van der Leeuw refused to interpret this as merely fantasy. On the contrary, the shaman had experienced the 'It' that stood outside death and living. People die, of course, but 'völlig abhängig von Tod oder Leben ist das “Es”, das wahrnimmt, die Existenz auch über die Tod hinaus statuiert'.

Jung himself did not regularly mention the concepts 'shaman' or 'shamanism' but in the rare cases that he did, he referred primarily to Eliade's study of shamanism. Jung depicted shamanism as 'philosophical alchemy' and argued that the practice of shamanism could lead to individuation, which was, in essence, a transformative process. Shamanic accounts thus revealed an underlying archetypical structure. In his analysis, the 'cosmic tree' that was planted 'with the creation of the first shaman' was a 'symbol of wholeness'. Jung also claimed that some of his patients had spontaneously drawn pictures of this 'philosophical tree' to express their inner feelings, without any previous knowledge of alchemy or of shamanism. When Jung recommended Eliade's work in a letter to his friend Willi Bremi, in 1953, he wrote:

All mythological ascents and descents derive from primitive psychic phenomena, i.e., from the trance states of sorcerers as found in the universal dissemination of shamanism.


Jung’s recommendation illustrates Eliade’s authority on shamanism in the Bollingen connection. His erudite and supposedly all-encompassing scholarly tour de force towered over all other studies of shamanism.

The Eranos network had a preference for the universal knowledge attained through the bird’s-eye view of Eliade and other armchair scholars, but Eranos also attracted anthropologists. Among Van der Leeuw’s audience, for instance, was Paul Radin, the Polish-American anthropologist who was the scholarly authority on Winnebago culture and Winnebago shamans. Radin was never a full-fledged Jungian, but he supported the use of Jung’s doctrine of the collective unconscious in anthropology and he played a prominent part in the Bollingen connection. For instance, he lectured at Eranos in 1949 and 1950 and at Jung’s Institute in Zurich from 1952 until 1957. Radin’s 1956 *The Trickster*, which was one of his most famous and influential works, was co-authored by Jung.

Born in a part of the Russian Empire that is nowadays Polish, Radin studied zoology at Columbia and returned to Europe in 1905 to study anthropology in Munich and Berlin. He returned to Columbia in 1907, where he received his doctorate under Boas in 1911. Gradually, he wandered off in a more philosophical direction, focusing on religion, mythology and the worldviews of ‘primitives’ who, he thought, differed in degree but not in kind from their civilised counterparts. Among ‘primitive man,’ Radin argued, religion had not become divorced from ‘the corporate life of the community,’ which was essential, as religion was ‘one of the most important and distinctive means of maintaining life values.’ Exemplary for Radin’s elitism was that he supposed that to understand religion, anthropologists had to study ‘those individuals who possess religious feeling in a marked degree,’ for the reason that these individuals thought about the questions the anthropologists wanted to ask. In one of his most notable books, the 1927 *Primitive Man as Philosopher*, he focused exclusively on ‘the thinker.’

Within the ‘religion of North American Indians,’ the ‘intellectual class of thinkers’ consisted of shamans. According to Radin, they arranged and synthesized the general folkloristic material to hand and interpreted and theorized ‘the religious complex.’ ‘Lay Indians’ also transmitted ‘the religious complex,’ but they lacked the intense religious feelings of the shamans. As a result, in their hands prayers

became mere formulas. Radin thus interpreted shamans as positive figures in the creation of culture. With their performances and theorizing they created symbols and provided the lives of lay people with meaning.\(^{47}\) The shaman represented the ‘unenacted portion of our consciousness’ or, in words that would gain popularity half a century later, human cultural potential.\(^{48}\)

It is noteworthy that while he was considered a sceptic, a rationalist and a rare bird in the field surrounding Jung, some of his American colleagues criticized Radin for his too romantic and poetic anthropology.\(^{49}\) Some boldly positioned Radin outside the scientific field as they accused him of losing ‘critical objectivity’ by picturing ‘primitive society and preliterate man (…) startlingly idyllic and endearing’.\(^{50}\) Moreover, he had derived his ideas on the supposed primitives ‘from his imagination, from his literary and poetic feeling, rather than from any data that he could bring to bear’. As a matter of fact, although Radin spoke many languages, the book in which he expressed his most elaborate view on ‘primitive man’ was based on poetic translations by other people, in languages he was completely unfamiliar with.\(^{51}\) Some American colleagues also criticized him for his too close identification with ‘his’ Winnebago.\(^{52}\)

The ‘autobiographies’ of American Indians that Radin published from 1913 onwards contain the same myopic quality that characterizes Boas’s work with George Hunt. In his attempt to situate the individual experience at the centre of ethnographic enquiry, he let his main source of information, a native American Indian called Sam Blowsnake, also known as Crashing Thunder, tell stories about a shaman, or ‘holy man’.\(^{53}\) Radin used the Crashing Thunder stories for his own description of social reality, without placing them in a social context. Moreover, he repeatedly stressed the authenticity and truthfulness of these accounts, for example by saying that he had not guided his informants, who, for their part, ‘did


very little arranging.' Nevertheless, Sam Blowsnake confessed that he had ‘lied all the time’ and that he had always been ‘telling falsehoods’ to his family members. Radin acknowledged this as a fact and wrote that

he passes through life, or, better, life passes through him – lying, boasting, swaggering, stealing, murdering, fornicating, interpreting dreams in the most approved Jungian fashion, and finally philosophizing and adding a new proof of the truth of Trinity – consistently lying to the world about him and never lying to himself. 

It is, of course, noteworthy that Radin claimed that Sam Blowsnake’s analysis of his dreams was Jungian: it illustrated the timeless qualities he credited the ‘Jungian fashion’ with. It was even more striking that he did not acknowledge the self-defeating paradox of considering the accounts of his ‘consistently lying’ informant as authentic and truthful. Even though his informant had previously exploited his ‘Indianness’ for money, acting in a Wild West show, Radin claimed that Sam Blowsnake was ‘free from all outside influence’. Clearly, Radin disregarded the fact that Blowsnake had grown up and lived in the boundary culture, located on the zone of contact between Amerindians and Anglo-Americans. In other words, Sam Blowsnake knew how to achieve authentic ‘Indianness’ for white Americans.

Although Radin never associated himself for any length of time with a particular university or college, he was influential in different scholarly fields. This becomes clear from the 1960 Festschrift that was dedicated to him. The list of contributors to the Festschrift contains notable anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard, Lévi-Strauss, Lowie, Kroeber, Redfield and White. Not surprisingly, the list also contains two significant scholars from the Bollingen connection: Mircea Eliade and an intriguing man who will appear later in this chapter, Joseph Campbell.

Another ‘rare bird’ at Eranos, but much less influential, was the anthropologist John Willoughby Layard (1891-1974), who attended the meetings in 1937, 1938, 1947, 1954 and in 1958. He was educated as a social anthropologist in Britain but his ideas differed radically from those of his British colleagues. His Jungian interpretations of shamanism are noteworthy particularly because he, long before others, interpreted shamans as the ‘primitive’ predecessors of Jungian analysts. He took Jungian analysts to be ‘modern’ shamans who travelled into the depths of the human psyche. Layard’s interpretations, however, did not gain undisputed accept-

56 Radin, Crashing Thunder, xxxiv.
ance. He never acquired an authoritative position in any field, and consequently he could not persuade others to accept his interpretations. It is telling that he called parts of the autobiographical papers left behind at his death 'History of a Failure'.

Layard could not attain a prominent academic position despite having done intensive fieldwork even before Malinowski arrived at the Trobriands. He had no anthropological following, was considered ‘mad’ by his friend Evans-Pritchard, and leading figures in social anthropology strongly opposed his way of philosophizing about human nature. Even in the field surrounding Jung he was not a great success. His disagreements with Jung resulted in conflicts, and eventually, in 1969, Layard would openly criticize him for his ‘falsification of data in support of the collective unconscious being independent of personal relationships’.

Layard was an unconventional character, whose psychic difficulties led him to a series of therapists. The first, his mentor and teacher W.H.R. Rivers (1864-1922), focused on the problem-solving effects of dreams. Later, in 1924-1925, Layard consulted the unorthodox and controversial American psychologist Homer Lane (1875-1925), who combined Freud's and Jung's ideas and interpreted all disease as psychosomatic and in itself a cure. According to him, people could restore their health by releasing their natural impulses and fulfilling their creativity. In the late 1920s and the early 1930s, Layard promoted Lane's ideas in the bohemian and homosexual scene of Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973) and Christopher Isherwood (1904-1986) in London and Berlin, portrayed by the latter as the ‘poshocracy’. Layard made a great impression on Auden, who called him ‘loony Layard’ in his Orators.

In 1936, after another emotional breakdown, Layard sought out the psychiatrist Helton Godwin ‘Peter’ Baynes for therapy. Baynes, who as we have seen in Chapter Three was married to Jaime de Angulo’s ex-wife, was a supporter of Lane, but above all, Baynes was closely associated with Jung and had established his psychology in Great Britain, for example by translating Jung’s works into English. In his

Baynes produced a remarkable Jungian interpretation of shamanism to interpret the rise of National Socialism and the role of Hitler in the process. Like a shaman, ‘whose prestige among his savage tribesman rests upon his capacity for surrendering himself to, and becoming possessed by, the unconscious’, Hitler was ‘a medium’ and his ‘power over the German people rests upon the same primitive foundation as that of the shaman’. According to Baynes, Hitler was a ‘God Criminal’ who, ‘demonically possessed’ by the ‘archaic content of the unconscious’, betrayed and murdered the ‘messianic possibility’ as he ‘seduced’ German ‘energy’ towards collective destruction, away from ‘wholeness’ and the ‘fuller flame of individual consciousness’.

Through Baynes, Layard became initiated into Jungian knowledge and he became part of the field surrounding Jung. His interpretations of shamanism changed accordingly. In 1930 Layard still focused primarily on the ‘nervous condition’ of shamans and their ‘fits of unconsciousness’. He argued that shamans had turned their affliction into an asset and had acquired the power to induce these fits themselves. Eventually, shamans could induce ‘epileptoid symptoms, and even (…) the desired state of unconsciousness’ with the help of drums and dancing. Layard concluded that shamans attained supernatural powers due to their supposed death and resurrection, their ‘animal-metamorphic powers’ and their ‘power of flight’. One of the most remarkable features of shamans was what Layard called their tendency to ‘ritual homosexuality’. He also pointed to ‘a certain type of epileptic who experience before their fits a period of religious ecstasy’. In these experiences, the shaman felt ‘the presence of the eternal harmony perfectly attained; in other words, ‘it’s as though you apprehend all nature and suddenly say: “Yes, that’s right”’.

His new intellectual habitus became evident in his 1940 review of Willard Park’s book on shamanism, as he argued that

any new light on shamanism is of the utmost importance, since shamans are the psychologists of primitive peoples, and, as such, are more closely in touch with the impersonal forces that regulate men’s lives, than are the representatives of more highly organized and stereotyped religions.

---


64 J.W. Layard, ‘Shamanism: An Analysis Based on Comparison with the Flying Tricksters of Malekula’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 60 (1930) 525-50.

Layard argued that the analytical psychologists could enhance their method by looking at the shaman’s use of collective symbols and concepts. Research could ‘gain some insights into the more universal laws on which shamanism is based’. In another review of the same book, Layard went even further, equating the shaman’s guardian spirits with Jung’s archetypes. He even claimed that shamans, like analytical psychologists, attuned their receptive powers to those of their patient ‘on the impersonal level’. Spirit ‘in its symbolic form’ came to shamans the way it did to ‘the prophets of old’ and ‘to modern man he opens his heart, in dreams’. According to Layard, Jungian analysts and shamans were healers with primordial knowledge:

Now in the twentieth century, after a rule of pure so-called “reason” that has devastated mankind, we are rediscovering the knowledge that Christ had, and that the Shamans had before him, namely, that healing is not a matter of drugs nor yet of the mere recovering of personal memories as Freud thinks, but of the reawakening of primordial knowledge that works independently of intellect and is as much more powerful than intellect as bombs are more powerful than unprotected human flesh.66

Layard thus clearly did not recognise the knowledge of analytical psychologists as the result of the workings of the social world. In Bourdieuan terminology, he used the idea of the charismatic shaman to uphold the ‘illusion of innateness’ of analytical psychology.67 Yet although his interpretations were in accordance with the intellectual dispositions of Jungians, he lacked the social power to authorize his interpretations of shamanism. Similar interpretations of shamanism, however, became legitimate interpretations, within the anthropological field as well as in the Jungian field, because they were produced by more powerful Jungians. The dean of American Jungian analysts, Joseph Henderson (1903-2007), who was nicknamed ‘the shaman from Elko’ in the Festschrift for his seventy-fifth birthday, is a case in point. In his 1963 ’personal evaluation’ of Jung he clearly demonstrated the charisma ideology in which a concept of shamanism was used to present analytical psychology as an ahistorical practice that offers access to perennial knowledge:

There was, however, another aspect of Jung’s character which refused to conform to European cultural patterns because it seemed to come totally from outside any culture. It seemed to burst upon him from an absolutely compelling primitive level of being. I think of it today (thanks to some of his own formulations) as the shaman which made Jung at times into a man of uncanny perception and frightening unpredictability of behavior.

The same shamanistic tendency, freed from any tricksterism, was an essential part of the psychological doctor who came to the rescue over and over again during analysis, placing the healing fingers of his intuition upon our symptoms. He diagnosed and cured them frequently before we ever had a chance to describe them or even to complain of them.68

The myth of the shaman

When, in 1940, Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn had spent nearly all of her inheritance on Eranos, the American Bollingen Foundation started to subsidize Eranos. The foundation was set up in 1940 by the wealthy American couple Paul Mellon (1907-1999) and Mary Conover Mellon (1904-1946), primarily to publish Jung’s writings and to propagate his ideas in the United States. It is noteworthy that Paul and Mary Mellon had been in Jungian-oriented analysis with Ann Moyer, who had attended Fröbe-Kapteyn’s School of Spiritual Research and whose wealthy Dutch husband Erlo van Waveren had been Alice Bailey’s business manager. It is another indication of the wider field of esotericism in which Jung and his Eranos circle operated. The Mellons travelled to Ascona after they had heard Jung lecture in New York in 1937. In Ascona they became friends with Fröbe-Kapteyn, Jung and other lecturers. It inspired them to become financial patrons of Eranos.69

Soon after its establishment the American Bollingen Foundation started to invest in the study of shamanism. The first Bollingen fellow, Maud Oakes (1903-1990), an artist who had previously been involved with Gurdjieff, was granted her stipend during a dinner party the Mellons gave in early 1941. During the party, Oakes exclaimed that she would ‘give anything to go out and work with Navaho shamans’.


69 McGuire, Bollingen, 3-41. Hakl, Eranos, 208. Nowadays, the Ann and Erlo van Waveren Foundation is located in New York where it ‘fosters the knowledge of Jungian and Jungian-related psychology. It encourages new developments within this field and will consider funding projects related to any area which interested Carl Gustav Jung – from psychology to myth, history, folklore, spirituality and other areas’, www.thevanwaverenfoundation.org/.
Paul Mellon was not inhibited by her lack of qualifications and, subsequently, Oakes would spend two years on a Navaho reservation. During her fieldwork she came to know Jeff King (1865?-1966), a Navaho ‘shaman-artist’, whose narratives formed the basis of Oakes’s first Bollingen publication. While she prepared replica paintings of King’s sand paintings, the mythologist Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) wrote the text and a commentary to place it in a comparative perspective.70

Years later, in her 1963 *The Wisdom of the Serpent. The Myths of Death, Rebirth, and Resurrection*, a joint publication with the aforementioned Joseph Henderson, Oakes interpreted the ‘shamanic initiation’ as an ‘experience of psychic liberation’. The book was one in a series called *Patterns of Myth* that was edited by Alan Watts (1915-1973) who, like Oakes, drew up his chair at the tables of Californian ‘countercultural’ heroes such as Henry Miller. Following his 1958 visit to the C.G. Jung Institute in Zürich, which had been established by Jung in 1948, Watts had started to organize seminars based on Jung’s model in the San Francisco Bay area, adding to the fertility of this ‘cultural seedbed’ of the ‘consciousness reformation’. Watts became a powerful opinion maker, also because his KPFA radio lectures on ‘Way Beyond the West’ provided him with cultural legitimacy. On air, he praised the ‘shaman state of religion’, which was, according to him, ‘away from the community interpretation of how one ought to think and feel’. In his 1972 autobiography, Watts claimed:

I am not so much a priest as a shaman. The difference is that whereas a priest is a duly ordained corporate officer and caste member in an agrarian culture, a shaman is a loner who gets his thing from the wilds, and is usually found in hunting cultures. Priests follow traditions but shamans originate them, though truly original traditions stem from the origins of nature and thus have much in common.72

---


By assuming the position of the shaman, Alan Watts self-confidently claimed a charismatic position. While suggesting that he was a truly original person who was liberated from social structures, at the same time he implicitly assumed an authoritative position for himself within a field that had come to value the shaman for his distinctive charisma. As we will see in the next chapters, he shared his quest for authenticity and perennial knowledge with many others who, from the 1960s onwards, structured the so-called ‘counterculture’. Watts and other prominent Bollingen fellows would take authoritative positions in the field of esotericism that blossomed in the same era. The interpretations of shamanism that they proposed would be crucial for the course of the genealogy of shamanism.

The most influential Bollingen fellow in the popularization of shamanism in the United States was Joseph Campbell. Not only was he responsible for propagating the Eranos messages to a wider American audience, for instance as the editor of the Eranos Yearbooks, even more importantly, his bestselling 1949 *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* presented shamans as mythical heroes and masters of spiritual principles. Campbell’s mythology focused on the ‘immediately apparent’ parallels and ‘the basic truths by which man has lived throughout the millennia of his residence on the planet’. Shamans were crucial figures in a remarkable range of stories from all over the world. Maori, Kwakiutl, Hindu, Arthurian and other folk stories were all versions of the ‘myth of the hero’ or the ‘monomyth’. In this myth, as Campbell argued, the hero journeys to an unknown land where he meets demons and undergoes great suffering. The hero triumphs, is reborn in the process, and when he returns home he is enriched by new insights that will benefit his people. Realising his own identity through these spiritual experiences, the hero experiences a kind of self-psychotherapy. He has confronted his own darker side and thus, Campbell supposed, come to a greater understanding of himself and his culture. Shamans were heroes; they also undertook perilous adventures for others, often to seek out and recover the lost or abducted souls of the sick.73

Campbell participated in the Eranos meeting of 1953. As was the case with Radin, Fröbe-Kapteyn considered him ‘too rational’ for the Eranos ambiance, but Campbell shared many of the intellectual dispositions of Jung, Eliade and others from the Eranos circle. In his introduction to the 1953 *Eranos Yearbook*, for instance, he argued that the Eranos scholars had the ‘common purpose of allowing the truth to reveal itself’, a clear indication that he identified the knowledge of Jung, Eliade and other Eranos scholars as primordial and not as structured according to the Eranos tenets.74

Progressive radio station, broadcasting to the San Francisco Bay Area. During the 1950s and 1960s it was well known for its controversial programming.


This charisma ideology was also a crucial aspect of his strategy to empower his comparative mythology, as he argued that it uncovered 'some of the truths disguised for us under the figures of religion and mythology'. He supposed that, whereas 'primitives' unconsciously identified with the 'timeless vision' and 'dream-web' of myths, for modern man 'these mysteries have lost their force; their symbols no longer interest our psyche'. Campbell offered a solution, as the 'modern hero-task' was to 'discover the real cause for the disintegration of all of our inherited religious formula'. That was exactly what Campbell supposed he did. With what others dubbed his 'comparative esotericism', he offered mystical yet scholarly insight into the supposed perennial philosophy and offered these insights to a wider audience. As a 'modern' variant of the mythical hero, he contested what he considered 'religion'. It had, he argued, interpreted 'sacred writings' historically, literally and anti-mystically, thereby misconstruing its own myths. To a certain extent, his anti-religious disposition accounts for his venomous anti-Semitism: he interpreted Judaism as the chief 'religious' offender against the supposed wisdom of myths.

The dispositions that guided Campbell's mythology were formed by his romantic fascination for Native American Indians that was initiated by a trip with his father to Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in 1910. Although Campbell started to study anthropology under Boas, according to his biographers a meeting with the theosophical 'messiah' Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986) in 1924 was more influential. It stirred his romantic interpretation of Hinduism and he even considered himself 'almost a Hindu' when he wrote The Hero With a Thousand Faces. From the early 1950s on, Campbell would befriend Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), Alan Watts and others from the movement who brought 'the wisdom of the East' to the United States. But during his 1955 trip to India with members of the New York Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, he concluded that nothing 'was quite as good as the India I invented'. Disgusted by the real India, he returned home more patriotic than ever, hailing the progressive trend towards 'individualism'.


Campbell's popular fame as a mythologist rose with the publication of his subsequent four-volume series of collected and annotated mythologies The Masks of God. He focused on Primitive Mythology (1959), Oriental Mythology (1962), Occidental Mythology (1964) and Creative Mythology (1968) respectively. Following his standard esoteric and erudite 'rhetoric of authority', he adapted myths to his own purpose. Neglecting the social, political, historical, and economic aspects, he highlighted the supposed 'perennial knowledge' of myths. Shamans featured prominently in his Primitive Mythology, in which Campbell contrasted the priest, 'the socially initiated, ceremonially inducted member of a recognized religious organization', with the shaman, who, 'as a consequence of a personal psychological crisis, has gained a certain power of his own'. Campbell argued that the 'shamanistic, individualistic principle' had produced a 'mythological and ritual life' that was 'less richly developed'. It had, however, a 'lighter, more whimsical character', with great 'depths of insight'. Campbell made use of ethnographic material from a range of anthropologists and referred to Eliade to make a case for shamanism as a 'phenomenon sui generis': the shaman represented the 'non-historical' and 'mystical' principle on 'the primitive level', bringing 'sense and depth to whatever imagery may be cherished in the local tradition'. In 'the higher reaches of the culture scale', however, this was represented by 'the mystic, the poet, and the artist'.

Campbell worked from a relatively marginal academic position at Sarah Lawrence College, a position that corresponded to his stance vis-à-vis the academic field as he pitted his mythology against the 'tough-minded' anthropologists with their 'reductive interpretations' of mythological and religious metaphors. Instead of placing religious discourses and experiences within their social context, he made a plea for a science that would focus on the significance of the 'metaphysical insights' of 'dreamers, shamans, spiritual heroes, prophets and divine incarnations'. According to him, in a too rational and reductive scholarly approach religious phenomena 'lose their force, their magic, their charm for the tender minded and become mere archaeological curiosities, fit only for some sort of reductive classification'.

---


79 J. Campbell, 'Primitive Man as Metaphysician', in Diamond, Culture in History, 380-92 at 381, 388, 391.
The literate public as well as literary and drama critics approved of Campbell’s work, and, as we will see in the next chapters, Campbell would play a major role in the countercultural elite that structured the American field of esotericism from the 1960s onwards. In contrast, most academic anthropologists criticized him. More often, however, they merely ignored him.\textsuperscript{80} As we will see in the next sections, Eliade’s work on shamanism, on the other hand, could not be ignored as it had more academic weight.

\textit{Eliade’s History of Religions}

Bollingen funding helped Eliade to finish his 1951 \textit{Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l’extase} and to publish some articles on shamanism. Eventually, his 1964 \textit{Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy}, the book that ultimately established Eliade’s position in the academic field as the main authority on shamanism, was a Bollingen publication.\textsuperscript{81} Years before, in 1955, Joachim Wach, who held a chair at the University of Chicago Divinity School, had invited Eliade to deliver the Haskell Lectures. Eliade came to the United States as a relatively unknown scholar, but his status changed abruptly. When Eliade arrived in Chicago, in 1956, Wach had suddenly died. Subsequently, Eliade was asked to remain in Chicago and was even offered the vacant chair of professor in the History of Religion. From this influential academic position, Eliade was able to create his own academic field, structured by his own rules. He also launched two journals. He set up the German journal \textit{Antaios} in cooperation with Ernst Jünger (1895-1998), a controversial German writer with whom he had come into contact via their mutual friend Carl Schmitt. The journal lasted from 1960 until 1971 and contained texts by, \textit{inter alia}, Evola and Keyserling. In his first contribution, Eliade focused on the liberation and transcendence involved in the ‘archetypical’ magical and ecstatic flight of shamans.\textsuperscript{82}

In Chicago he set up the \textit{History of Religions} in 1961, even though the Divinity School already published the \textit{Journal of Religion}. It became the main platform for the field in which Eliade was the most important scholar.\textsuperscript{83} In the first issue of \textit{History of Religions}, Eliade positioned his field within the academic arena, arguing that the historian of religion would pass ‘beyond the stage of pure erudition’ when he, after collecting, describing and classifying religious data, made ‘an effort to un-


\textsuperscript{81} Turcanu, \textit{Mircea Eliade}, 336.

\textsuperscript{82} M. Eliade, ‘Der magische Flug’, \textit{Antaios} 1 (1960) 1-12.

derstand them on their own plane of reference. In other words, similar to analytical psychologists, who had to be initiated into the world of the transpersonal unconscious, the historian of religion had to enter this ‘plane of reference’. The historian of religion had to become a kind of esoteric scholar to understand the ahistorical, essential meanings of religious phenomena. According to Eliade, on the basis of this ‘deeper knowledge of man’, a ‘new humanism, on a world-wide scale, could develop’. Indeed, as Alice Kehoe remarked: ‘Eliade embodied the erudite Continental savant’. Yet, notwithstanding his erudition, ‘his pronouncements were more religious revelation than scholarly conclusion’.

In his foreword to *Shamanism* Eliade positioned his own academic territory on top of other academic fields even more boldly. He declared that his discipline went beyond others in the academic field that approached shamanism as it synthesized all the studies of particular aspects of shamanism (…) to present a comprehensive view which shall be at once a morphology and a history of this complex religious phenomenon. (…) Certainly, the psychologist, the sociologist, the ethnologist, and even the philosopher or the theologian will have their comment to make, each from the viewpoint and in the perspective that are properly his. But it is the historian of religion who will make the greatest number of valid statements on a religious phenomenon as a religious phenomenon – and not as a psychological, social, ethnic, philosophical, or even theological phenomenon.

It is useful to concentrate on Eliade’s foreword to *Shamanism* further as it offers one of Eliade’s most transparent and informative introductions to his approach to shamanism. He argued, for instance, that the historian of religions studied ‘religious facts as such, on their specific plane of manifestation’. While this ‘specific plane of manifestations’ was always ‘historical, concrete, existential’, the so-called ‘hierophanies’ or ‘manifestations of the sacred’ always pointed to ‘an eternal return to an atemporal moment, a desire to abolish history, to blot out the past, to recreate the world. All this is “shown” in religious facts; it is not an invention of the historian of religions’.

Eliade argued that only the historian of religion knew how ‘to decipher the properly religious meaning of one or another fact’. Other approaches focused on temporal, phenomenal, historical, social or psychological aspects of religious phenomena, only the historian of religion recognised the ‘transhistorical’ meanings of these ‘religious facts’. The ‘sacred’ revealed itself in ‘a series of archetypes’, which

indicated that there was a ‘tendency on the part of the hierophanic process to repeat the same paradoxical sacralization of reality ad infinitum’. Paradoxically, while there were ‘archetypes’, the ‘process of sacralization reality is the same; the forms taken by the process in man’s religious consciousness differ’. Ultimately, Eliade thought that: ‘No religious form, however vitiated, is incapable of producing perfectly pure and coherent mysticism’.

Even though Eliade acknowledged a connection between ‘types of civilizations’ and ‘certain religious forms’, he claimed that this ‘in no sense excludes the spontaneity and, in the last analysis, the ahistoricity of religious life. For all history is in some measure a fall of the sacred, a limitation and diminution. But the sacred does not cease to manifest itself, and with each new manifestation it resumes its original tendency to reveal itself wholly’. History, therefore, ‘does not paralyze the spontaneity of hierophanies; at every moment a fuller revelation of the sacred remains possible’. And here, as Eliade’s foreword gradually turned to shamanism, it presented an outline of his basic stance that is so revealing that I quote it at length:

As we shall frequently show, particularly coherent mystical experiences are possible at any and every degree of civilization and of religious situation. (…) for certain religious consciousnesses in crisis, there is always the possibility of a historical leap that enables them to attain otherwise inaccessible spiritual positions. Certainly, “history”- the religious tradition of the tribe in question – finally intervenes to subject the ecstatic experiences of certain privileged persons to its own canons. But it is no less true that these experiences often have the same precision and nobility as the experiences of the great mystics of East and West.

Now, shamanism is precisely one of the archaic techniques of ecstasy – at once mysticism, magic, and “religion” in the broadest sense of the term. We have sought to present it in its various historical and cultural aspects, and we have even tried to outline a brief history of the development of shamanism in central and North Asia. But what we consider of greater importance is presenting the shamanic phenomenon itself, analyzing its ideology, discussing its techniques, its symbolism, its mythologies. We believe that such a study can be of interest not only to the specialist but also to the cultivated man, and it is to the latter that this book is primarily addressed. (…) We make bold to believe that a knowledge of it is a necessity for every true humanist; for it has been some time since humanism has ceased to be identified with the spiritual tradition of the West, great and fertile though that is.

It is quite clear that even as an established historian of religion, Eliade never abandoned his esoteric dispositions and political ambitions. In Chicago, however, he reinvented himself as a humanist, and reformulated his objectives for the new scholarly field that he had created in his new environment. Using the method by which he and his fellow historians of religion were supposed to unveil the hidden and ‘true’ meanings of religious symbols, he was still striving for religious revitalisation. This time, however, his goal was a ‘new humanism’. Revealing the essence of shamanism was part of it, as he thought that his ‘creative hermeneutics’ was ‘a spiritual technique that possessed the ability of modifying the quality of existence itself’. Indeed, ‘a good book ought to produce in the reader an action of awakening’. As a matter of fact, ‘the History of Religions envisages, in the end, cultural creation and the modification of man’.\textsuperscript{90} Indeed, as Armin Geertz and Russell McCutcheon argued, as a kind of ‘meta-psychoanalysis’, Eliade wanted his history of religions to awaken modern mankind and save it ‘from its cultural provincialism and its historical and existential relativism’.\textsuperscript{91}

Eliade remained ambiguous about what ‘creative hermeneutics’ entailed exactly, but for his interpretation of shamanism it involved writing fiction. As Von Stuckrad also noted, Eliade’s work was a mix of academic, literary and biographical work.\textsuperscript{92} To be precise, in the period when he was working on his interpretation of shamanism, he was also working on his most ambitious novel, the semi-autobiographical \textit{The Forbidden Forest}. This magical realistic tale was closely related to his personal quest for deliverance from history and it had been one of his ‘instruments of knowledge’, as Eliade argued in the preface to the English edition. The main character in the novel, Stefan, escaped from the terrors of Romanian history in the Second World War to a dream world that was connected to a secret room upstairs, where Stefan went beyond the ‘terror of history’ by discovering the lost time of myths. According to some commentators, Stefan’s secret room was the place

\textsuperscript{90} M. Eliade, ‘Crisis and Renewal in History of Religions’, \textit{History of Religions} 5 (1965) 1-17 at 8. In the article Eliade hails his creative hermeneutics as ‘the Royal Road of the History of Religions’, while he demonstrates his hostility towards anthropology in the following passage: ‘It is naïvely believed that six months of “field work” among a tribe whose language one can hardly speak haltingly constitutes “serious” work that can advantage knowledge of man – and one ignores all that surrealism or James Joyce, Henry Michaux, and Picasso have contributed to the knowledge of man’ (11).


\textsuperscript{92} Von Stuckrad, \textit{Schamanismus und Esoterik}, 124-6.
where Eliade imagined his shamanism or where his interpretation of shamanism was born.93

In contrast, I would suggest that Eliade constructed his supposed timeless wisdom of archaic shamanism in the midst of different scholarly and sociopolitical configurations. Yet as we will also see in the next chapter, the different groups of individuals that acknowledged Eliade’s authority, and who recognized shamanism as timeless techniques of ecstasy, all made efforts, each in their own way, to break out of supposed inhibiting structures. They habitually tried to authorise their own interpretations of shamanism by relating them to supposedly timeless and archaic knowledge.

Conclusion

Some of the most influential twentieth-century shamanologies were products of the Bollingen connection, which was a loose international configuration of artists and scholars. In general, members of the Bollingen network were guided by an esoteric quest for spiritual awakening. They considered their knowledge as a form of secret knowledge that could not be unearthed by regular scientific endeavours as these were, in their eyes, reductive academic practices. Their esoteric pursuit of secret universal truths was crucial for their perspectives on shamanism.

Jung, Eliade, Campbell and other members of the Bollingen network saw themselves as intellectual and spiritual aristocrats, whose erudite scholarly knowledge about shamanism surpassed other academic forms of knowledge about shamanism, as their scope was wider. They habitually misconstrued their social practices and constructions as timeless and intrinsic, and as products of what can be described as a scholarly pure gaze. Their elitism, essentialism, primitivism and religionism stand out as the main features of their interpretation of the world, which, they supposed, was endangered by disenchantment and, in Eliade’s terminology, the ‘terror of history’. Their shamanologies can be characterised by the same features, as their image of the shaman represented the thinker, the archaic mystic and the privileged guide of less significant individuals, who depended on the shaman’s capacities to introduce them to essential and universal truths. Without the shaman, people became lost in trivial historical configurations.

Some of the major scholars who participated in the Bollingen connection took steps in both the academic field and the field of esotericism. In other words, the Bollingen connection overlapped both fields. It is significant that Carl Gustav Jung’s analytical psychology competed with academic psychology as well as with esoteric practices such as those of Gurdjieff. More important for shamanology, however, was Joseph Campbell, as his mythology was crucial for the American genealogies of shamanism that will feature in the next chapters. Campbell constructed his shamanology from a marginal position in academia, but, at the same time, as a celebrated mythologist in the field of esotericism. Mircea Eliade, on the other hand, even though his perspectives remained authoritative in the field of esotericism, focused primarily on the academic field that he had established himself. His authoritative academic position enabled him to legitimize his own construction of shamanism as the ultimate and all-encompassing scholarly definition of shamanism.