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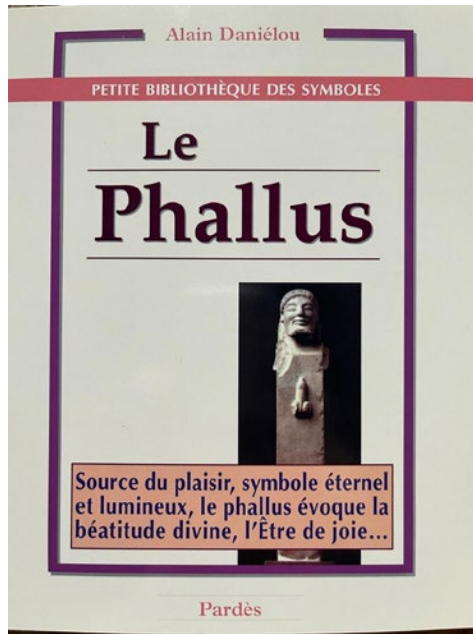


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PHALLIC REMNANTS A NOTE ON DIVINE EROS AND THE (NON-)PLACE OF MASCULINITY

Alain Daniélou's *The Phallus* is a book that seems foredoomed to oblivion. It was written in the same period as his highest achievement, the complete translation of Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*, and it was also contemporary to a paradigm shift in Western culture as a result of the great impact of gender studies and deconstruction theory, both of which implied a revision (and also a reversal) of phallocentrism and logocentrism as oppressive instances of male dominance. In this essay, Adrián Navigante attempts a new reading of this seemingly insignificant book (in the light of *Kāmasūtra*) containing an outdated world-vision (in the light of the new cultural paradigm), an interpretation that seeks to do justice to the singular aspects of Daniélou's quest, among others the distinction between male archetypal power and patriarchal ideology, but above all his elaboration of a chthonic philosophy related to the figures of Shiva and Dionysos, mirrored in the last developments of Jungian psychology.



French edition of Alain Daniélou's book *The Phallus* (Puisseaux 1993).

The In-Significance of *The Phallus*

Alain Daniélou's *Le Phallus* was published one year before his death, in 1993, as part of an editorial series called "Small Library of Symbols [*petite bibliothèque des symboles*]" by the French publishing house Pardès¹. The purpose of that series was to select several cultural key-terms whose "symbolic pregnancy"² calls for special treatment (the tree, the Celtic cross, the heart, the bull, etc.) and publish a short study about each of them. Daniélou chose a subject dear to him, which he had been dealing with mainly within the Hindu context – focusing on Shiva theology and liturgy – i.e. the term *liṅga*. He broadened the scope of this term not only geographically (beyond India) but also historically (extending his reflection to rock engravings of the late Paleolithic and early Neolithic), thus compelling him to summarize a colossal amount of archeological, anthropological, so-

ciological, and psychological material in a short essay. It was too ambitious an idea for such a meager book. Apart from that, his attention at that time was almost exclusively drawn to his translation of Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*, the first version of which appeared in 1992. For most people, the highest achievement of Daniélou's later phase was without any doubt his first complete translation of the *Kāmasūtra*. In the light of that achievement, *Le Phallus* appears as an insignificant byproduct.

The progressive changes that took place in the second part of the XX century concerning male power and female submission³ as well as the deconstruction of the logocentric mainstream in Western culture⁴ do not facilitate any restitution of value in a book that seems to celebrate problematic aspects of patriarchal ideology such as vigor, power and heroic courage⁵, combined with a good dose of homoerotic-

ic hedonism. To complicate things even more, the book contains misquotations and deviant translations rendering the argumentation obscure. Just three examples will suffice to make my point clear: one of Daniélou's quotations about *liṅga* worship is falsely ascribed to the Puruṣa Hymn [*puruṣasūkta*] of the *Ṛgveda*⁶, whereas in fact the term *liṅga* does not occur at all; a passage of Claude Conté's book *Le réel et le sexuel* (1992) dealing mainly with Lacanian psychoanalysis is confusedly related to Sigmund Freud⁷; and some quotations from the *Śiva Purāṇa* dealing with metaphysical and soteriological questions are reinterpreted in the framework of erotic ritual and divine pleasure⁸. So, in talking about *Le Phallus*, its problematic character and especially its insignificance – both within Daniélou's written production and in the light of history – assert themselves as a kind of hermeneutical verdict.

There are, of course, weak and strong hermeneutical attempts. Weakness usually goes hand in hand with a tendency to take shortcuts and give easy answers, to consider oneself more intelligent than the author in question to the point of denying the possibility of a reverse-side, to block every transversal opening, every subversive or digressive split, every possible loop or turn. Strong attempts, on the contrary, are those that insist on disclosing unthought-of aspects even if there seems to be no ground for them. This essay is about the *in-significance* of Daniélou's *Le Phallus*, which means the inner, inherent, or particular significance that the book's main line of argument has for his own understanding of Shaivism and, by extension, for a possible and extended dialogue with Western sources. Some of those sources are (rightly or wrongly) quoted in the book, others must be inferred, most probably because Daniélou was unaware of their existence, but they are closely related to his problematic. The *in-significance* of *Le Phallus* is not only what remains from that book today, but

mainly what re-defines a very particular position – that of Daniélou – with regard to the place of masculinity and the question of desire and pleasure beyond the organic substrate and the psychodynamic structure of human sexuality. At a time when phallic reference is mainly associated with patriarchy and the tyranny of logos, its *in-significance* would be a reversal of perspective capable of introducing another dimension of interpretation and understanding. This dimension is almost invisible in Daniélou's *Le Phallus*, but not inexistent. His attempt points in that direction, so it is worth gathering the phallic remnants and assigning them a proper place in today's context. It is a risky attempt, but it is worth taking that risk.

Archeological Contortions and Vacant Places

To begin with, I will leave aside false debates surrounding Daniélou's apparent (mis-)use of the term *liṅga* to mean exclusively the male sexual organ. Daniélou was well aware that the Sanskrit term also denotes a mark or a sign (that of Shiva in the order of manifestation) and subsequently a cult object (the embodied and energy-laden presence of the god)⁹. Suffice it to name two relatively clear examples of this awareness in his book *Shivaïsme et tradition primordiale*: “the deity can be perceived only through its creation, its sign, its *liṅga* [...] it is not the phallus itself that is venerated, but that of which the phallus is the sign. Why is the *liṅga* venerated? Because it is the symbol of something permanent, the archetypes that reveal the nature of the universal person”¹⁰. Such statements are far from a naturalized view of Eros. However, the layer of meaning related to sexuality is present and must be considered in its entire scope, which is that of erotic transcendence. Shiva is for Daniélou the expression of desire in its most intensive form, desire *without lack* or in other words *sensuous plenitude* (which Daniélou relates to the San-

skrit term *ānanda*), hence his ithyphallic character (codified in the expression *ūrdhva-medhra* = erect penis). It is a symbol of the most powerful self-affirmation of Life: “It is only when the penis [*upastha*] stands up straight that it discharges the semen, source of Life. It is then called ‘phallus’ [*liṅgam*]”¹¹. Self-affirming Life is life *at large*, life at its peak. It permeates human existence and can fulfill the destiny of an individual if a change of perception is achieved concerning one’s own vital forces as well as those of the environment. In our normal (i.e. impoverished or alienated) state, such intensity escapes perception and seems to be abstract or unachievable. Daniélou’s *Le Phallus* is an effort to pierce that veil and realize the concrete character of symbols as well as their living source. The particularity of Daniélou’s attempt consists in his operating not only with Indian references, but also with a combination of archeology and psychoanalysis. This procedure proves to be much more revealing and central than it seems at first sight, since his combination of archeology and psychoanalysis enables him to introduce a specific referent, masculinity, within a much broader question: that of the primordial source of Life.

Every question of origin implies a contortion, since human experience is shaped within limits – and limitations –, whereas reaching the origin is like disclosing the *unlimited*. A contortion consists therefore in forcing or twisting something *out of shape* to make room for something incommensurably other. The passage from the first to the second chapter in the first part of *Le*

Phallus, that is from the historical perspective to the symbolic one, accounts for that contortion. At the beginning of the first chapter, we find a quotation from Alexander Marshack’s book *The Roots of Civilization* (1991); at the end of the second chapter, we find a reference to Claude Conté’s *Le réel et le sexuel* (1992). In a way, Daniélou contorts the meaning of both passages in order to arrive at the question of origin – in this case the origin of both biological life and spiritual pleasure – without falling back on worn-out formulations of the type found in Perennialist metaphysics or Neo-Vedantic doctrines. His contortion forces an opening through which he reconfigures – and subverts – the ‘validity’ of the Western sources he uses in the light of what he calls “Shaivite mysticism” and “Dionysian orgasm”¹². Alexander Marshack locates the phallus cult in the context of early modern humans, that is within *homo sapiens*’ representational art and notation. The symbol of the phallus is, in the context of his book, an earlier – but certainly not the earliest¹³ – form of reference or cultural model to express important processes structuring the life of male humans, after humanoid tool-making and Neanderthal rites and ceremonies. Within Lacanian psychoanalysis, referred to rather cryptically in Daniélou’s quotation of Claude Conté, the phallic phase is seen as a structuring function of human subjectivity, something that constitutes and shapes desire – as opposed to any biological or instinctual need. There is something primordial in the phallic phase. Its main constituent is not in space and time, but

Daniélou does not reduce the question of the phallus to the sexual organ but rather amplifies its scope beyond biology, psychology, and history, driven by his profound conviction that the other – and complementary – side of human sexuality is divine Eros.

at the same time the phallus symbolizes the irreplaceable loss of the primordial object – the mother –, inaugurating the possibility of all vacant places for her multiple substitutes. In *Le Phallus*, Daniélou tries to go beyond both the historical limitation of archeology and the structural reduction of psychology by means of his Shaivite-Dionysian reconfiguration of the vacant place left by the phallus in Western culture. This movement of thinking constitutes the most interesting aspect of Daniélou's book – a book otherwise condemned to be a forgotten by-product of his monumental *Kāmasūtra*.

Daniélou's reconfiguration is worth analyzing in some detail. Partly because it implies a significant distinction between archetypal masculinity and the patriarchal social order so vehemently criticized in post-modern culture, but also because it opens another kind of interrogation concerning the status of desire and pleasure in human experience. In *The Roots of Civilization*, Aleksander Marshack does not lend much importance to the vocabulary of sexual impregnation related to the phallus. This may seem contrary to what Daniélou does, but in fact the aspect disclosed by such a shift in attention turns out to be decisive for Daniélou's treatment of the phallus as archetypal symbol. Marshack defines the phallus as a symbol of the masculine process that is at the origins of ancient rituals and myths¹⁴. Phallus is in this sense process and relation susceptible of being integrated into a narrative scheme – foundational stories that set the parameters of human culture in a very general sense, but at the same time reveal something special about masculinity: "None of these stories concerning masculine processes [...] need involve the female"¹⁵. Even if Daniélou seems to accept the XIX conviction – stemming from Johann Jakob Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht* (1861) – that the cult of the Mother is primordial and the phallus may have been introduced after the rise of patriarchy (that is, in the Neolithic)¹⁶, he pleads nonetheless for

the recognition of a masculine dimension transcending historical determinants as well as biological markers¹⁷. His support in this sense is the mythology of Shiva: As creator of the world, Shiva is the giver of seed [*bīja*], and he is also giver of pleasure [*bhogadātr*]¹⁸. The seed is not only the primal spurt of life in its manifested form but also the creative power of the god¹⁹. This creative power is not primarily 'cosmic', as Daniélou says, but rather *chthonic*. It comes from the depths, not from the heavens. It is a stream of Life unbound, not a mere pneumatic image, and it should therefore not surprise us that Daniélou considers the highest pleasure [*jouissance*] a "sensation of the divine"²⁰, rejecting thus the usual split between the finitude of human existence and the plenitude of divine ecstasy. But that plenitude is prior to *logos*, prior to patriarchy, prior to any form of rationality defining the parameters of any male-dominated society.

If Daniélou recurs to mythology, it means that the axis of chronology is not sufficient to account for the phallus. Still more: mythology is verticalization, translation into narrative devoid of objectivity and imagery unaffected by epistemic formalization. It is the access to the symbolic dimension of relations, inasmuch as symbols are *experienced* (not merely learned and deciphered) as real processes – or as embodiment. When Daniélou says that man is "the phallus-bearer [*liṅga-dhāra*], the servant of his sex"²¹, he does not reduce the question of the phallus to the sexual organ but rather amplifies its scope beyond biology, psychology, and history, driven by his profound conviction that the other – and complementary – side of human sexuality is divine Eros.

Faces (and veils) of Eros: anatomy, formal structure, symbol

The path toward divine Eros is not straight but – as Daniélou said elsewhere of knowledge – twisted²². In the case of *Le Phallus*, it contains

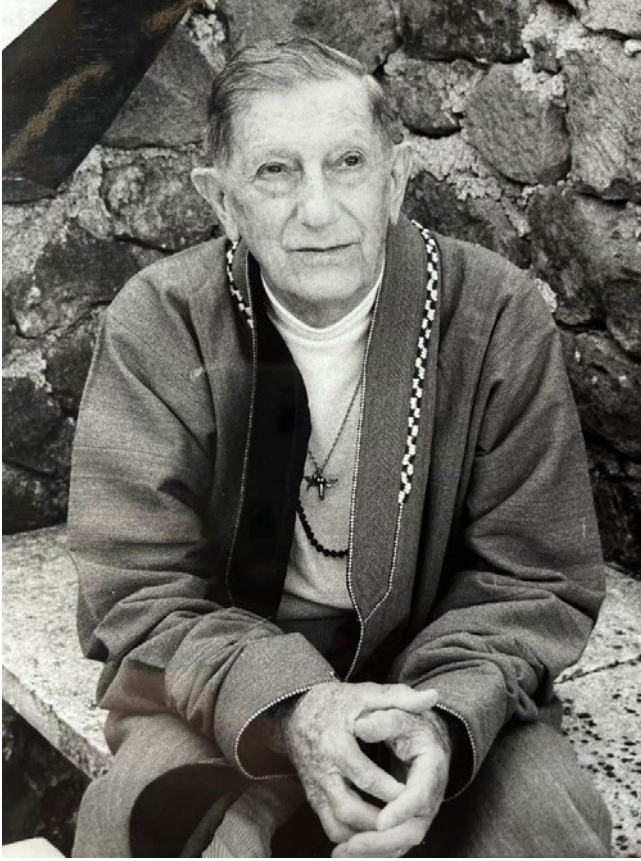
a psychoanalytical detour that should not be overlooked. As opposed to authors like René Guénon and Julius Evola, Daniélou does not reject psychoanalysis from an external point of view²³ but rather operates with transversal distortion leading to a reversal of its categories. In this sense, his reference to Freud through the means of Claude Conté's book *Le réel et le sexuel* is – I daresay – *symptomatic*: “sexual reproduction makes the individual a contingent bearer or appendage of the genetic code. The discovery of the phallic phase means the recognition of the supremacy of the symbolic order in relation to the real and the imaginary... the anteriority of the signifier with regard to the signified”²⁴. As I pointed before, Daniélou makes an indirect quotation of Freud out of this passage, when in fact it is about the Lacanian version of the phallic phase. This aspect shows us how little Daniélou knew of psychoanalytic theory, but at the same time how sharp his intuition was as to the central aspect of the problem, which I intend to summarize in what follows.

In Freud's *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (1905), the role and function of the phallus in the context of infantile sexuality is amalgamated with anatomical and genital aspects as well as phantasmatic projections about sexual difference, the starting point of which is the concrete situation of a *male* infant. Freud says that the existence of the penis is presupposed (by the infant) in all people: “the infant vehemently insists on this conviction in spite of the contradictions he very quickly observes [in seeing female infants]”²⁵. The passage from denial to acceptance of that difference he calls the ‘castration complex’, the acceptance of the absence of the penis being gained through the conviction that, in the case of a female child, there *was* once a penis – but it was severed at some point. The difference between ‘penis’ and ‘phallus’ becomes clear: the penis is a specific organ; the phallus a universal premise. However, in Freudian theory, the penis plays a cen-

tral role in the identification of both sexes. For Jacques Lacan this emphasis on the organ reveals that the premise (phallus) lacks a more consistent formulation and risks being reduced to the organ (penis). Part of his ‘return to Freud’ therefore consists in formalizing – for the sake of universal validity – some aspects of the castration complex that in Freud appear too close to biology and anatomy²⁶.

Lacan's essay about the signification of the phallus, written in 1958 as a lecture for the Max Planck Society in Munich²⁷, intends to correct such asymmetry. His verdict is the following: “The phallus in the Freudian doctrine is not a phantasm, if by phantasm we understand an imaginary effect. It is not an object, either, whether partial, internal, good, bad, etc. [...], nor is it a symbolized organ like penis or clitoris [...] The phallus is a *signifier* [...] whose function in the intrasubjective economy of the analysis drops off the veil of the function it had in the ancient mysteries”²⁸. This paragraph anticipates, apart from his reformulation of the castration complex, Lacan's theory of desire and his notion of subjectivity. The phallus as universal premise must be irreducible to the sexual difference. As a result of this, it must be cut off from anatomy and biology and turned into a kind of primordial law structuring human desire. The term ‘signifier’, taken from Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory, meets the purpose. The phallic phase is the first instance of genital maturity, long before the biological attributes (so-called external genitalia) become operative in the life of the individual. This instance is therefore under imaginary dominance and constitutes the separation of drive-related desire from instinctual needs. In the space where human subjectivity is inscribed as being discontinuous with nature, Lacan situates the emergence of meaning – or symbolic content – for the libidinal economy of the individual.

Within the context of Lacan's reformulation,



Alain Daniélou at Zagarolo, Italy, in 1987, photo by Sophie Bassouls.

phallus means the interruption of the coupling ‘mother-child’ in which the body of the mother (the hole of the Real) reappears under phantasmatic mediation (the flux of the Imaginary) and the resulting veil tends to draw a net of references or a plurality of meanings in the world (the Symbolic order). The Lacanian phallus transcends anatomic, biological, and instinctual particularities; however, it is drastically distinguished from the transcendent – or transpersonal – status of symbols found in C. G. Jung’s Analytical Psychology. In his homage to Ernest Jones, Lacan points to the pitfalls of the Jungian figurations of the libido, in which the soul, “blind and lucid, reads her own nature in the archetypes that the world reveals to her”²⁹.

If the phallus is given a transcendent status as symbol, it ceases to be a *signifier* and becomes a *signified*, and as such it cannot assume its structuring function. An ultimate (mystical or magical) signification is re-introduced beyond the structural distribution enabled by the phallus as primordial signifier.

In this sense, signifier means “generic idea”³⁰ and has nothing primordial in the ‘sacred’ sense of the term. Generic ideas must be empty of meaning in order to provide a plurality and distribution of meanings for the subject, but the subject must accept the consequences of phallic mediation. In Lacan’s theory, each relation of the object (of desire) entails an imaginary or intra-subjective tension which makes

satisfaction impossible and throws the subject into a chain of permanent (and fragmentary) compensations for something forever lost – the Mother as object of desire. The phallus regulates this complex dynamic in taking the vacant place of the (already and forever) lost object, i.e. the Mother at the root of the Real, but this place is everywhere and nowhere. One could say that the phallus is like the unreachable center in the Labyrinth of human desire³¹. When Claude Conté writes “The discovery of the phallic phase means the recognition of the supremacy of the symbolic order in relation to the real and the imaginary”, he presupposes a recognition of the phallic instance as a law structuring the desire of the subject, that is its accessible reality, at a ‘healthy’ distance from any phantasmatic retrieval (in the sense of imaginary compensation) of an absolute object (or subtracted *punctum saliens* of the Real).

In *Le Phallus*, Daniélou semantically inverts the key terms of Claude Conté’s sentence. In Daniélou’s appropriation, the real is not the unrepresentable beyond all systems of reference, but reality as articulated in the social life of individuals. The imaginary is not the narcissistic stage of human fantasies, but the capacity to anthropomorphically represent a power that ultimately transgresses social order and human interaction, a power that can only be retrieved (at least partially) if one realizes a symbol on the level of embodiment, ritual performance or change in perception. In other words, the supremacy of the symbolic is for Daniélou the possibility of establishing a link with the trans-

gressive agent of power that renders desire an instance of plenitude and a door to the experience of something more-than-human. In the ancient religion of Shiva, which Daniélou retraces to the civilization of the Indus Valley, the ithyphallic character of the deity, called ‘Lord of Animals’ [*Paśupati*], reveals not only a religion of Nature, but also the immediate reverse-side of what we conceive as ‘nature’. The erect phallus may as well be taken as a symbol of the power of fertility, but that is not the key to its more-than-human character: “Erotic ecstasy is only secondarily a means of reproduction [...]. The union of Shiva and his lovers [...] is not procreative”³². Daniélou affirms a transcendent character in Nature which nevertheless cannot be defined as strictly *metaphysical*, since its concrete power is no spiritualized principle detached from the natural setting, but something susceptible of being grasped on every level – especially that of human sensation. In this respect Daniélou quotes the following line of a very significant text for the construction of his Shaivite-Dionysian philosophy, the *Līṅga Purāṇa*: “The fundamental nature is called phallus. The one bearing this distinctive sign is the Supreme Being”³³. This sentence does not affirm that the god, in this case Shiva as Parameśvara, is furnished with a male organ as specific gender-distinction. Phallus, as we have already seen, implies an excess of vital force in a vertical logic joining the subtlest element of manifestation with the most concrete instance of physicality³⁴. The god’s phallus is the presence of what surpasses all forms in the world

In the ancient religion of Shiva, which Daniélou retraces to the civilization of the Indus Valley, the ithyphallic character of the deity, called ‘Lord of Animals’ [*Paśupati*], reveals not only a religion of Nature, but also the immediate reverse-side of what we conceive as ‘nature’.

of forms, or more precisely: the totality of creation as *erotic texture*. Daniélou's reference to the god Pan in the second part of *Le Phallus* is in this sense very instructive: "Pan means 'all'. He incarnates the totality of the genetic energy, the whole of the gods and the whole of Life"³⁵. For Daniélou, the underlying force of creation is Eros, and this force dominates the world before individuals are distributed in situations where finitude, frustration and unfulfilled desire gain the upper hand. It is from the background of that life-affirming conception that one should understand Daniélou's definition of man as *liṅga-dhāra* [bearer of phallus]. The image is not that of a man with a male genital organ, but that of an open door in the realm of sexuality leading to what no human being can assume (the effects of a trans-personal force in his body) unless he discovers *and realizes* the correspondence of the erotic texture of creation and its inscription in individual existence³⁶.

Masculinity re-placed: a Jungian appendix

There are two symptomatic instances in Daniélou's *Le Phallus*. The first one – already mentioned and partially treated – is the displaced presence of Sigmund Freud; the second one – still to be dealt with in what follows – is an emplaced absence of C. G. Jung. There is no single mention of Jung in Daniélou's book, but there is an indirect reference that transforms that absence into a hidden presence. Daniélou uses the term 'archetype' related to the notion of phallus³⁷. The numerous quotations from Mircea Eliade's books that we find in *Le Phallus* lead the reader to the conviction that he took the term 'archetype' from Eliade³⁸. Despite the latter's efforts to delimit his notion of archetype from that of Jung³⁹, it is difficult to accept that Eliade's concept is – as he affirms – qualitatively different from the Jungian concept. He knew Jung's Eranos lectures of the 1930s – where the notion of archetype is formulated for the first

time –, and it didn't escape him that, in Jungian psychology, the collective psyche is not merely psychological but transgresses⁴⁰ by far the domain of mental processes⁴¹. Apart from that aspect, Daniélou relates the perfection of the soul with *liṅga* worship⁴². This means much more than a mere reference to *śivaliṅga-pūjā*; it implies a consideration on human behavior and its transformation by means of re-gaining the soul – which is a central motive in Jung's early writings⁴³. Daniélou's remark about ritualized sexual union in Hindu tantra [*maithuna*] adds a qualitative element in this respect: "The form of the organs carrying out this ritual is the most important of symbols"⁴⁴. The sexual organ becomes, in a proper ritual context and with the full awareness of the divine dimension disclosing itself, the physical condensation of an archetypal register of energy. It implies at the same time a transformation of the soul. The awareness is not to be focused on the sexual intercourse of two different beings but on the meaningful fluidity invading the body-soul complex to transform its existential parameters. The archetypal (or transpersonal) dimension is not regarded as independent from the sphere of finite beings and actions – despite Daniélou's giving this impression in some passages of his book. It is an opening to a mode of relation that exceeds the worldly sphere of separated individuals, narcissistic veils and phantasmatic totalities. The significance of the phallus must be measured within the framework of an archetypal transgression instead of through the fixation of the transpersonal in an eternal realm detached from every concrete situation.

What is the meaning of this transgression? I have already shown that, in the context of psychoanalysis, the phallic function implies the exclusion of mystical fusion in the sexual act⁴⁵. The only instance of unity is individual separation, that is, the consistency guaranteed by the phallic function – which is essentially linked with the linguistic notion of discrete units.

Magical and mystical instances of 'the One' are for Lacan nothing but phantasmatic attempts to regain something lost from the very beginning. In this sense, any imaginary transgression of the symbolic order is regressive and therefore pathological – as Lacan said, the speaking-being [*parlêtre*] splutters in the Real. For C. G. Jung, archetypes are autonomous factors of the psyche and at the same time living entities of a non-objectifiable dimension of Nature – entities embedded in the instinctual structure of (human and non-human) beings. In the case of humans, consciousness plays a relational function in the face of that otherwise uncontrollable source of power. It can build a bridge and partially assimilate what comes from 'the other side'. The transgressive character of archetypal energy (usually vehiculated in images) consists in dismantling the ego complex as main orientation factor through the intensity of its emotional effect. This effect blurs the discrete limits of individuality both in the subject and in the outer world, revealing thus a kind of experiential junction. In *Symbole der Wandlung*, the first version of which marked his irreconcilable break with Freud, C. G. Jung defines the phallus as a symbolic instrument of the libido⁴⁶. In this case, the term 'instrument' does not mean something mechanical, and its subordination to the libido is not strictly sexual, either. The expression 'instrument of the libido' refers to a subjective formation or a self-regulating manifestation of a quantity of Life-energy. Libido is for Jung Life-energy in a transpersonal sense. It must not be reduced to psychosexuality (as in Freud) but redefines the sexual energy as part of a broader – not only collective but also cosmic – process. As such, it has a numinous and transformative character: it precedes and determines ego-consciousness before the latter can do anything to reverse the process and normalize the effects according to the best adaptation strategy to the immediate socio-cultural environment.

There is much more than a definition of phallus in C. G. Jung. In his autobiography *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken* (1961), Jung relates a childhood dream that played an essential role in the type of relationship he established with the sacred and religion throughout his life. The dream was triggered by a prayer Jung's mother recited to give him comfort when he went to bed, in which Jesus takes the children to him at night lest Satan should devour them. Jung's association was that Jesus, regardless of his status as savior, was a devourer like Satan. In his dream, Jung discovers a dark, stone-lined hole in the ground near a vicarage, and he descends a stairway until he sees a chamber in which there is a throne with something standing on it: "it was a huge thing, reaching almost to the ceiling [...]. It was made of skin and living flesh, with a rounded head on top with no face and no hair, and on the very top was a single eye, gazing motionless upward"⁴⁷. In the dream, Jung remains paralyzed with terror and hears his mother's voice: "Yes, just look at him, that is the man-eater"⁴⁸. Jesus appears as a dark, chthonic presence, "a subterranean god" in the form of a "ritual phallus"⁴⁹. The image breaks with the dogmatic conception of Jesus Christ as a heavenly figure full of love and kindness, son and father at the same time, the transfigured law of God that realizes the *summum bonum*. By contrast, the only hint of light in Jung's childhood-dream – which stands for the bridge to 'the surface world' – is the eye at the top of the phallus. All the rest, the massive, fleshly and underworldly glans is the concrete and living revelation of the mystery of the earth in a *numinous masculine image*. Jung's conclusion can be summarized thus: "Through this childhood dream I was initiated into the secrets of the earth. [...] Today I know that it happened in order to bring the greatest possible amount of light into the darkness. It was a kind of initiation into the realm of darkness"⁵⁰.

If one reads Jung's account of his childhood

dream with attention, the parallels with some of Daniélou's descriptions in *Le Phallus* are significant. The chamber to which he descends recalls the *garbhagrha* or 'womb-chamber' of the Hindus, where the ritual *linga* is placed, as well as the Dionysian chapels in ancient Greece containing metal or stone phalli. Both constructions are mentioned in Daniélou's book⁵¹. The setting of Jung's dream is a meadow close to a castle, a rural place detached from city life. Speaking of the installation of the ritual phallus, Daniélou says that the ceremony takes place "in secluded places or in the mountains [...]. The ancient sanctuaries of Shiva, like those of Dionysus, were usually located away from cities"⁵². For Jung the subterranean god is "not to be named"⁵³; he associated the dream-image with Jesus for many years when somebody else spoke of the latter, without being able to pronounce the name. In speaking of the phallic significance of certain objects, Daniélou points to the principle behind the allegoric bond, "according to which the pronunciation of the name of the god is forbidden"⁵⁴. Indirect representation and interdiction of the proper name are aspects which, in relation to the numinous aspect of the phallus, should be taken and understood in a very concrete sense. One could say that such interdictions point to the fact that the energy always exceeds the form trying to encapsulate it. In other words, human limits (or human contours) are not only incapable of holding that energy but are also endangered – or traumatically affected – in receiving it. Instead of insisting on metaphysical theories about the transpersonal component of the phallus, I think it important to consider the experience of numinosity related to the sexual aspect and the passage from a physical or bodily sensation to another form of (embodied) consciousness, since that aspect shows quite another register of experience than the one established by the psychoanalytic theory in relation to human desire.

A very telling account – which explicitly includes references to Daniélou – is that of the Jungian analyst Eugene Monick in his book *Phallos: Sacred Image of the Masculine* (1987). Monick's account is important because it brings the Jungian reflection on the phallus to a point that was not developed in Jung's work (probably because of Jung's lack of conviction about such a thesis). Phallos stands for an archetypal god-image correlating sexuality and numinosity, the chthonic character of which is not derived from the Great Mother but proves to be independently masculine. In this sense, Monick opposes not only Freud but also Jung: "Psychanalytic theory, whether Freudian or Jungian, gives singular primacy to the mother as the basis of life. This is an error. The lack of phallic participation in theories of origin forces phallos into distorting compensations to make itself felt and realized within therapy"⁵⁵. It is because of this specific combination of archetypal numinosity and masculinity that the spelling of the word is modified to fit that of ancient Greek: Monick writes *phallos* instead of *phallus* – the latter being a Latinized spelling used by psychotherapists and historians of religion. The most important part of his essay is the personal account of an incident which may be termed 'his encounter with phallos'. Only based on that account can he elaborate his own theoretical reflections on the relationship between archetypal phallic numinosity and the roots of male psychology: "As a child of about seven, in the early days of the psychosexual period which Freud called latency, I crawled into my parent's bed one summer morning. [...] Mother had left the bed to prepare breakfast. Father lay there asleep, naked. I went under the covers to explore. I may have had a flashing light with me, which would indicate an intention to investigate. [...] I crouched in the darkness next to my father's body, I came upon his genitalia. I focused the light and gazed upon a mystery. [...]. What I do remember is the pow-



Greece Clay satyr. National Archeological Museum of Athens (in: Alain Daniélou, *The Phallus: Sacred Symbol of Man's Creative Power*, Rochester: Vermont 1995, p. 97).

erful effect the incident had upon me. I think now that I looked upon my father's maleness as a revelation"⁵⁶.

Monick's encounter is not with his father's erect penis, but with 'phallos' (the word is written without definite article to emphasize the personification). The evidence of the numinous character of the encounter is the impression that image made on the seven-year-old child and the consequences of that episode in his later life. Contrary to what many readers may think, Monick's book is neither about homosexuality nor about incest⁵⁷. It is about the link between overwhelming experience (where traumatic impressions are not to be ruled out) and transpersonal meaning (which adds a spiritual dimension to psychology). His childhood

episode triggered a life-long reflection on psychohistory and the Jungian conception of the archetype. In the XIX century, the beginnings of psychohistory were identified with the maternal domain. As J. Bachofen writes in *Das Mutterrecht*, the primacy of the feminine is a truth of nature [*Naturwahrheit*]: birth belongs to the mother, as well as the primal life-stuff related to the sphere of becoming. In the light of that chthonic femininity, masculine mediation (however creative it may be) implies a process of spiritual untying or detachment [*Losmachung*] from the powers of Nature⁵⁸. Despite his broad reflection on ancient cultures and the undeniable value he ascribed to natural powers, C. G. Jung followed Bachofen's line of argument, as a result of which, in the context of Analytical Psy-

chology, the masculine element in the psyche ended up being identified with consciousness, reason and discernment rather than with the telluric powers of origins. In separating solar masculinity (related to logos and the heavens) from chthonic masculinity (connected with instinct and the earth) and making the latter independent from the domain of the *Magna Mater*⁵⁹, Monick postulates a primal ground for archetypal masculinity in the psyche: “Phallos is more than the constant companion of the Mother, her plaything in Bachofen’s terms”⁶⁰. In this way, he fully detaches male archetypal power from every aspect related to patriarchy, not only from the point of view of contents, but also because patriarchy is a historical fact out of which social complexes are organized, whereas archetypal masculinity belongs to the sphere of primal experience, mainly codified in ritual and myth.

Monick’s own encounter with phallos is a necessary support for his further reflections, but it is not sufficient to prove the transcendent significance of phallos. He therefore seeks in non-Western cultures confirmation of his own intuitions and speculations, and it is at this point that he resorts to Daniélou. Monick’s book was written in 1987, six years before the publication of Daniélou’s *Le Phallus*, but he found convincing elements to support his thesis in *Shiva and Dionysus* (1979): “Collective, explicit phallic worship is virtually nonexistent among Western people. It is not a present reality anywhere in the world save among certain Hindu believers in India, where Shiva as *lingam* (phallos) is outwardly acknowledged as an image of divinity. Shivaism, today a cult within modern Hinduism, is, according to Alain Daniélou, the oldest religion, having originated during the Neolithic age (10,000-8,000 B.C.) among the Dravidian peoples of what is now India, and carried by them to the Mediterranean. There it became the basis of Greek Dionysianism”⁶¹. It is not surprising that a similar formulation can

be found in *Le Phallus*, for example: “India is the only region where the cult of the lingam, or the phallus, as well as its rituals and legendary narratives have been transmitted without interruption”⁶². Incidentally, Daniélou mentions similar manifestations to those of the Hindu context not only in ancient Europe but also in present-day Africa⁶³. From Monick’s perspective, Daniélou proves with external sources something that needs to be added in Analytical Psychology if one intends to do justice to an essential dimension of numinosity. Of course one should remember Daniélou’s reference to the myth of Skanda, the Hindu god of war, “who was born from the sperm of Shiva when the latter fell into the mouth of the sacrificial fire and then into the waters of the Ganges”⁶⁴. This emphasis on masculine reproduction without the intervention of the feminine element would be, in Jungian terms, a sign of the attention Hindu religion grants to the masculine archetypal dimension at root-level, that is, before the constitution of individual consciousness, rationality and symbolic structure as conceived by modern linguistics and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Masculinity Re-Placed

Daniélou’s *Le Phallus* contains references to metaphysics and cosmology, sexuality and reproduction, liturgy and human desire, pleasure and spiritual realization. The device is very complex, and the guiding thread is not easy to follow since these levels appear intertwined with each other and some formulations sound contradictory. The phallus is fundamental nature, that is, it belongs to the chthonic realm, but at the same time it is related to the sun (as the progenitor of the earthly world). It is the manifest root of reality, but it has its roots in non-manifested reality⁶⁵. It is at the same time a distinctive mark in the male body and a cultic object in the temple. It refers to a force permeating the totality of the manifested world, but

at the same time it encompasses the world as a whole, inasmuch as the latter is – in its totality – the distinctive sign of Shiva's power. This problem was referred to by Mircea Eliade in his book *Méphystophélès et l'androgynie* (1962): "An essential characteristic of religious symbolism is its *multivalence*, that is, its capacity to express many meanings at the same time, the connection of which is not evident on the level of immediate experience"⁶⁶.

As I said at the beginning of this essay, Daniélou's book is too short and too quickly written, one may say, to account for its own intent. It is rather insignificant if compared to his *Kāmasūtra*, and – already because of its own substance – it seems very difficult to detach it from the ideological shadow of phallocentrism and male dominance that is so criticized by contemporary feminism. However, there is another possible approach to the 'insignificance' of the book, which consists in changing the parameter of the comparison. The task would be to focus on the *in-significance*, that is, the *inner significance* of the content – the main aspect, the guiding thread, the *punctum saliens* to be distilled – which in many ways goes beyond ideological fixations. I daresay that Daniélou's *Le Phallus* has an archetypal *in-significance*, and it is precisely that aspect that renders it not only readable but also interesting – even today. If Daniélou uses the term archetype, as I pointed out earlier, it is because there is the possibility of a structural synthesis in this term with regard to all the referents mentioned in the book. Or more precisely: the proliferation of symbols related to the phallus can be ordered around the question of "transcendent virility as the immanent cause of creation"⁶⁷. One needs to be careful about not transforming that question into a dogmatic affirmation. Daniélou opens a horizon in which the remnants of a phallocentric ideology become pieces of a much deeper and more complex puzzle in which the phallus can be re-placed (or better situated) to fulfill

other purposes.

I have used Jungian psychology as a missing link to account for that question in a consistent way. Paradoxically enough, the Jungian amplification must work through the Freudian territory of sexuality to properly introduce and do justice to the Shaivite-Dionysian reformulation. For Daniélou, sexual intercourse is not only a mechanism to release tensions or the frustrated search for a totality forever lost, but an act of creation re-enacting the coming to being of the world on the microcosmic level of one's own body and soul. The bridge from individual act to cosmic significance is the phallus. Its power can only be dealt with ritually and liturgically, for the capacity of human beings in their constitutive limitations is not enough to assimilate it. The corollary is something very different from unbridled sexual activity. I would call it an erotic discipline involving sensation, perception, and attention in order to render the power of masculinity susceptible of surpassing the role to which it has been reduced in the course of so-called 'human evolution': patriarchy, rational power and alienation from (the sacred dimension of) Nature. The chthonic character of the phallus may seem too dark, irrational, uncontrollable or demonic, and together with possible representation of male dominance, it is susceptible of becoming a notorious symbol in the collective consciousness of many cultures. However, if we really understand Daniélou's message, it is a power that needs to be acknowledged *in its whole dimension* in order to avoid such deviated and distorted compensations: "For the man filled with a love of Nature and driven by the quest of the divine, who succeeds in liberating himself from the taboos, superstitions, prohibitions and myths of modern religion, the phallus – image of the creative principle – will re-appear as luminous and unaltered principle, source of joy and prosperity"⁶⁸. •

1 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, Puiseaux 1993. The book was translated into English (1996), Japanese (1996) and German (1998). All the quotations in this essay stem from the French original version.

2 I take this term in the sense given to it by Ernst Cassirer, which emphasizes the passage from sensible lived-experience to a non-intuitive “meaning” that is not detached from its sensible basis but constitutes the very perceptive articulation of it. Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, Band III, p. 235.

3 The shining example of that change is embodied in Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990), which was defined as the most influential theoretical text of the 1990s.

4 See for example Jacques Derrida’s critique of logocentrism, among others in *De la Grammatologie*, Paris 1972, pp. 20-23 (his “subversion of logocentrism” and his distance with regard to “the Father Logos”).

5 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 15.

6 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 24.

7 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, pp. 36-37.

8 One clear example is the following passage from *Śiva Purāṇa* I.16.108: *ciḥnakāryaṃ tu janmādi janmādyam vinvartate* [“the sign is the act of birth, but it also reverses birth”]. The sentence refers to the transition from non-manifestation to manifestation and to the minimal degree of appearance or limit-point, *ciḥna* (sign), which in the context has the same semantic value as *liṅga*. Daniélou translates: “The function [of an erotic ritual] is to give birth, but giving birth is excluded”, displacing the focus from the problem of manifestation to the question of pleasure beyond biological reproduction.

9 In this respect, see Richard Davis, *The Origin of Liṅga Worship*, in: Donald Lopez Jr. (ed.), *Religions of Asia in Practice: An*

Anthology, Princeton and Oxford 2022, pp. 150-161, especially p. 152.

10 Alain Daniélou, *Shivaïsme et tradition primordiale*, Paris 2003, pp. 69 and 78, respectively.

11 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 11.

12 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 28.

13 “This book [...] did not involve an attempt to find the origins of the ‘first’ of anything, It was an analytical attempt to describe the way in which early modern humans, in one time and space, saw, abstracted, symbolized and imagined their world in time and space” (Alexander Marshack, *The Roots of Civilization*, New York 1991, p. 8).

14 Cf. Aleksander Marshack, *The Roots of Civilization*, p. 320.

15 Cf. Aleksander Marshack, *Ibidem*, p. 330.

16 For example, in the following remark: “In his latest book *Au nom du père*, Jacques Dupuis has suggested that the passage from the worship of the vulva to that of the phallus could be linked to the discovery of paternity – something that is not evident in primitive civilizations” (Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 16).

17 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 16. His quotations from Marshack are not quite precise, sometimes gathering bits from different paragraphs, but this has a specific purpose, since it is functional to his own divinization of Eros and his valorization of a masculine particularity inherited (not founded) by (male-)gendered beings.

18 Cf. Śiva Purāṇa I.16.103: *bhagavānbhogadātā hi nānyo bhogapradākayaḥ* [*Bhagavān* is the one bringing pleasure into being; there is no other who can bestow pleasure].

19 “Originally it was the golden seed of Brahmā (Prajāpati), who is called *Hiraṇyagarbha* (‘The Golden Womb’) in the *Ṛgveda* to denote his creative powers. The cosmogonic myth then postulated a golden egg instead of a golden womb, and this

symbol was replaced in turn by the image of the god of the golden seed, an epithet of Agni and of Śiva” (Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, *Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic*, London: New York 1981 [first edition 1973], p. 107.

20 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 29.

21 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 36.

22 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Shiva et Dionysos*, p. 155 : “The path of knowledge is twisted [vakra]”.

23 René Guénon’s critique of psychoanalysis in *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps* (Paris 2005, first edition 1945) is no ‘critique’ but rather a demonization of the discipline, based on a shallow criterion – to say the least. Apart from expressions like “deviant nomadism” (p. 222 note 1, applied to Jewish authors who lost their religion: Einstein, Bergson and Freud), “malefic influences” (p. 223, related to the ‘lower astral plane’ psychoanalysis deals with) and “Satanic character” (p. 224, due to Freud’s materialistic bent), the main point in Guénon’s attack lies in the identification of the unconscious with a ‘lower realm’ – as opposed to the ‘higher’ realm of spiritual realization. This rigid division does not bear in mind the paradoxical character of unconscious processes, that is, not only the fact that regression opens the way to primordial processes – whose energy proves to be necessary for the cure, but also the consideration of the unconscious as the inscription of something that is not subject to time and space (and therefore impossible to place in a simplistic cartography of the high and low) within the very existence of an individual and its field of (real, imaginary and symbolic) relations. In his essay *Superamenti della psicanalisi* (1934), Julius Evola acknowledges a positive aspect of psychoanalysis, that of “having dissipated the rationalist myths of shallow psychology” (Julius Evola, *Superamenti: critiche al*

mondo moderno: 1921-1933, p. 101), but soon he falls back on a Manichean opposition between the irrational, instinctive and atavistic on the one hand and the (supra-) rational, virile and heroic on the other.

This one-sided rejection proves to be even more problematic if one bears in mind that Jung’s Depth Psychology is also included within the Perennialists’ demonology of the psyche.

24 Claude Conté, *Le réel et le sexuel : de Freud à Lacan*, Paris 1992, quoted by Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, pp. 36-37.

25 Sigmund Freud, *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, in: *Gesammelte Werke V: Werke aus den Jahren 1904-1905*, Frankfurt 1999, pp. 95-96.

26 In the case of the phallic presupposition of the male penis, it suffices to ask what the point of view of the female infant may be in noticing the problematic character of Freud’s conception. In fact, his answer to the question of the female is not “fear of castration”, but “envy of the penis” (Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke V*, p. 96). This formulation contradicts to a certain extent Freud’s ambition to formulate a universally valid theory of castration, since biological factors break into his theoretical field producing an unsurpassable asymmetry between the sexes.

27 Jacques Lacan, La signification du phallus, in: *Écrits*, Paris 1966, pp. 685-695.

28 Jacques Lacan, *Ibidem*, p. 690.

29 Jacques Lacan, À la mémoire d’Ernest Jones : Sur la théorie du symbolisme, in *Écrits*, pp. 697-717, quotation p. 701.

30 Jacques Lacan, La signification du phallus, in: *Écrits*, p. 703.

31 For the metaphor of the Labyrinth in Lacan, see Lacan’s comments on the phallic phase in *Le séminaire, livre VI: Le désir et son interprétation*, Paris 2013, p. 151: “An impressively rich phenomenology renders

the prerequisites visible that the subject needs to fully display his desire. We could reconstruct that in detail to the point of finding what I would call labyrinthine pathways into which the subject slides". Lacan's labyrinth is related to the manifold positions that the subject of desire will assume on the way to an impossible satisfaction, that is, "in the structural relation between desire and demand" (*Ibidem*).

32 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, pp. 28-29.

33 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 25.

The Sanskrit text reads: *pradānam liṅgamākhyātaṃ liṅgī ca paramēśvaraḥ* ["the primary germ is said to be liṅga, and the Supreme Being has the distinctive character of it"].

34 This is how Daniélou understands the term *ānanda* [bliss], which he translates as "sensual pleasure" (Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 96).

35 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 60.

36 Daniélou also refers to the expression *liṅga-dhāra* when he speaks of the genetic code that is transmitted by reproduction (cf. Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, pp. 93-94), but that aspect is only analogically important to establish a parallel between the semen issuing from the human phallus and the universe issuing from Shiva's liṅga – a parallel reinforced by Daniélou's reference, by means of a quotation from the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 2.13.1, to the sexual act as re-creation (cf. Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 34). It is only in the erotic experience *stricto sensu*, i.e. detached from its reproductive function and even from personalistic attachments, that this parallel can become concrete and pervading in the individual's existence.

37 "Why is the liṅga worshipped? Because it is the symbol of the permanent, of the archetypes disclosing the nature of the universal man, Purusha" (Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 112).

38 Expressions like "the transfer to a new being of the ancestral heritage containing the archetypes that stem from the divine thought" (Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 34) seem to leave no doubt of Eliade's influence on Jung, since for Eliade symbolic thought is not related to discursive reason but to an ontologically effective realm showing a drastic discontinuity in relation to history.

39 For example, in the preface to the Torchbook edition of *Le mythe de l'éternel retour* (1946), where Eliade writes the following: "For professor Jung, the archetypes are structures of the collective unconscious. But in my book, in nowhere [do I] touch upon the problems of depth psychology nor do I use the concept of collective unconscious. As I have said, I use the term archetype, just as Eugenio d'Ors does, as a synonym for exemplary model or paradigm, that is, in the last analysis, in the Augustinian sense" (Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, New York 1959, p. ix).

40 I use the verb 'transgress' in a specific (i.e. not at all negative) sense, which comes closer to Erich Neumann's conception of the transgressive character of the archetypal field. 'Transgressive' is in fact a type of 'extraneous knowledge' that challenges the absolutist logic of the world created by the system of ego-consciousness. Cf. Erich Neumann, *Die Psyche und die Wandlung der Wirklichkeitsebene*, in: *Die Psyche als Ort der Gestaltung*, pp. 52-92, especially pp. 54, 56 and 66.

41 In this respect cf. Jung's first approach to the question of archetypes in *Über die Archetypen des kollektiven Unbewussten* (*Gesammelte Werke IX/1: die Archetypen und das kollektive Unbewusste*, Olten 1985, § 5, pp. 14-15), which is a re-elaboration of the homonymous text published in 1934 in the *Eranos-Jahrbuch*. Ultimately Eliade does

not add a metaphysical dimension to a psychological theory but rather objectifies the transdisciplinary implications of the Jungian conception.

42 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 25.

43 I refer mainly to the so-called 'visionary notebooks', *Liber Novus* and *The Black Books*, published in 2009 and 2020, respectively.

44 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 110.

45 That is the sense of Lacan's phrase "there is no sexual relationship [*il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*]" (Jacques Lacan, *L'étourdit* (1973), in: *Autres Écrits*, Paris 2001, pp. 449-495, quotation p. 455).

46 Cf. C. G. Jung, *Gesammelte Werke 5: Symbole der Wandlung*, § 146, p. 128.

47 C. G. Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, Zürich: Düsseldorf 2003 [first edition 1971], p. 18.

48 C. G. Jung, *Ibidem*.

49 C. G. Jung, *Ibidem*, pp. 18-19.

50 C. G. Jung, *Ibidem*, p. 21.

51 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 41.

52 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 43.

53 C. G. Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, p.

54 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 53.

55 Eugene Monick, *Phallos: Sacred Image of the Masculine*, Toronto 1987, p. 10. The specific and problematic character of this theory would deserve to be discussed at length, but such a discussion would exceed

by far the framework of this essay.

56 Eugene Monick, *Ibidem*, p. 13.

57 In fact, there is neither of them in Monick's life, since he grew up heterosexual and there was, in the context of that childhood episode, no reaction whatsoever on the part of his father.

58 Cf. Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht*, Frankfurt 1978, pp. 47-48.

59 The theory of the double phallus (solar and chthonic) can be found in Erich Neumann's *Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins* (1949), but Neumann declares chthonic masculinity to be under the rule of the Great Mother (cf. Monick's remarks on that aspect in *Phallos*, p. 59).

60 Eugene Monick, *Ibidem*, p. 53.

61 Eugene Monick, *Ibidem*, p. 29.

62 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 16. This thesis was expressed in previous essays, for example in *Relations entre les cultures dravidiennes et négro-africaines*, written in 1978 for a meeting at the UNESCO in Dakar (cf. Alain Daniélou, *La civilisation des différences*, Paris 2003, pp. 151-165, especially pp. 157-159).

63 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 67.

64 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 29.

65 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 25.

66 Mircea Eliade, *Méhistophélès et l'androgyne*, Paris 1962, p. 298.

67 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 34.

68 Alain Daniélou, *Le Phallus*, p. 112.



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EARLY TANTRIC MAGIC AND ALAIN DANIÉLOU'S *THE CATTLE OF THE GODS*

In this essay, Aleksandra Wenta deals with early tantric magic and Alain Daniélou's novella *The Cattle of the Gods*¹, which forefronts the theme of local tradition centered on the worship of the Goddess in a small Himalayan village. The majority of the village population perceives this local cult as primitive, archaic, and dangerous. In certain sections of Daniélou's novella, the reader is struck by the similarities of motifs, concepts and themes representing the local archaic tradition and topics related to current research on tantric magic. Aleksandra Wenta attempts to contextualize Daniélou's within a broader theoretical and practical framework of early tantric magic.



A local woman and a tawny cow in Himachal Pradesh.
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Magical Recipes and Animism

“But we, whom you are amused to think of as savages, we know that the world we see is only a small part of the world surrounding us. And since we believe that certain beings, certain trees, certain species of animal have connexions with the invisible, that they represent a tangible aspect of the universal energy so necessary to the balance of life, we are nearer reality than you, who deny whatever is beyond your comprehension” (Alain Daniélou, *The Cattle of the Gods*)².

The magical recipes of the early tantras rest on the ‘animistic’ principle, the understanding that plants and animals have personalities, so to speak. Many plants and trees, as well as animals, are believed to have special powers: suffice it to mention the ‘royal tree’ [*rājavr̥kṣa*], the ‘golden shower tree’, the *apāmārga* (‘chaff-flower’ or ‘devil’s horsewhip’), the *sephalikā* (‘night-flowering jasmine’), or the

tawny *kapilā*-cow among animals. In general, the magical recipes possess their own kind of rationality. In this regard, one may quote a passage from anthropologist Hildred Geertz, who stated that magical practices

are comprehensible within the framework of a historically particular view of the nature of reality, a culturally unique image of the way in which the universe works, that provides a hidden conceptual foundation for all of the specific diagnoses, prescriptions, and recipes [...]. The common linking element is not a psychological attitude but an ontology.³

The last word ‘ontology’ is important because it stresses the fact that magic has its own implicit theory about the nature of being that is universal and can be applied to different religious systems. The list of ingredients needed in magical rituals did not only require some kind of botanical knowledge and access to nature, but also entailed a belief that certain animals

and plants possess a personality—a feature shared by animism. Generally speaking, animism is a characteristic of pre-modern, illiterate, folk traditions, and as such it stands in opposition to organized religions representing ‘high cultures’ and literate traditions. Animism is prevalent among indigenous and small-scale societies to this day. There are many examples of folk animism that have been integrated into organized religions, as epitomized, for example, by the encounter of Buddhism with the indigenous animism of Bon in Tibet⁴ or by the Japanese Shinto entrenched in autochthonous animism, which has developed in connection with the more sophisticated tradition of Buddhism⁵.

The function of animism in magical recipes operated on the understanding that certain animals had special properties or powers. Among the vast array of “magical” animals employed in the recipes of early tantras, we find recurrent references to a tawny cow [*kapilā*]. Both the early Śaiva tantra, the *Guhyasūtra* of the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* and the early Buddhist tantra, the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* (described by Goodall and Isaacson⁶ as sharing the same early “ritual syntax” that disappears in later tantras) attest to the importance of using ghee produced from milk obtained from a [*kapilā*] cow in order to attain various magical accomplishments [*siddhis*].

One should obtain some ghee from a tawny cow that has given birth to a calf of the same color, place it in a copper bowl stuffed with seven pipal leaves, and recite the mantra until the triple effect occurs [of the ghee becoming hot, emitting smoke, and bursting into flames]. After drinking it, one will be able to, [respectively], retain in one’s memory everything that one has heard, become invisible, and walk on air (MMK 29.13, trans. W. Mical).⁷

He should take lampblack in two halves of a human skull together with the ghee of the tawny cow, which has a calf of the same kind, and he should empower the mixture by reciting the mantra ten thousand times. With this lampblack he should then anoint his eyes and he will always disappear (NTGS 3.81, trans. A. Wenta).⁸

But, the tantric texts were not the first to use the *kapilā* cow for magic purposes. An example in case is the *Arthaśāstra* (14.3.79), better known as the manual on ancient Indian statecraft, where the following recipe for inflicting the enemy with blindness is given:

On the 14th day of a dark fortnight, he should anoint the statue of his enemy carved from the royal tree [*rājavarṣa*] wood with bile taken from a tawny-colored cow (*kapilā*) killed by a weapon. It causes blindness (trans. Olivelle).⁹

The larger question posed here concerns the reasons behind the *kapilā* cow’s special status among animals. Geertz, quoted above, says that the rationality behind magic has to agree with “a historically particular view of the nature of reality, a culturally unique image of the way in which the universe works”. In this view, one may ask whether the *kapilā*-cow’s special properties could have been, at least partially, derived from a prominent place she occupied in the Brahmanical worldview? Was the early tantric magic merely drawing upon the established Brahmanical categories that operated within the hierarchical and structural dichotomies of pure and impure? The answer appears to be ‘yes’ if we consider the high status held by the *kapilā* cow in the orthodox Brahmanical scriptures, such as the Dharmaśāstras and the Purāṇas. In these texts, she is uniformly regarded as a special type of an “auspicious” cow, reserved for the highest caste of Indian society, i.e., the Brahmins. The *Varāha-Purāṇa*



Chamba Valley, Himachal Pradesh, India. Source @2009MunishChandel.flickr.com

(112.31)¹⁰ says that a gift of a *kapilā* cow made to a Vedic Brahmin is of such great value that it guarantees the donor's coveted place in the abode of Brahmā [*brahmāloka*]. Congruent with the belief in the *kapilā*'s special property are dietary restrictions for those who do not belong to the Brahmin caste. For example, the Āpastamba *Dharmasūtra* (Parāśaramādhava, p. 712)¹¹ says that “the well-behaved *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, or *śūdra*, should not drink the milk of the *kapilā* cow”. The most stringent rules concern the lowest caste, the *śūdras*. In this regard, the *Parāśara* (Ācāra, p.65)¹² says that a *śūdra* who drinks the milk of the *kapilā* cow “falls immediately”; the same outcome is expected from committing such offenses as approaching a Brāhmaṇa woman or recitation of the Vedas. Similarly, the *Garuḍa-Purāṇa* (IV.18-24)¹³ mentions drinking the milk from a *kapilā* cow in a list of sins performed by a *śūdra*, which also includes wearing a sacred thread, reading sacred scriptures, or having a Brāhmaṇa wife. The *Varāha-Purāṇa* (112.19-21) warns about the retributive punishments of *śūdras* who

consume the milk of the *kapilā* cow, ranging from descent into the terrible Raurava hell, to rebirth as dogs and feces-eating worms.¹⁴

One can discern from the above passages that drinking the milk of a *kapilā* cow was included in the scheme of prohibited actions operating within the framework of a social hierarchy. One can also easily imagine that these prohibitions reinforced the status of the *kapilā* cow as a high ‘commodity’, in which she stood in peculiar symbiosis with the Brahmanical religious orthodoxy and authority that underlined its meaning of exclusiveness. Consequently, since access to the *kapilā* cow was restricted to a highest social caste, her appeal as an animal possessing special properties was fostered. Thus the employment of the *kapilā* cow for magic purposes would make sense, especially in the case of those magical practitioners who were outside the Brahmin community. To repeat Dickie's argument “magic becomes meaningless if it does not exist in opposition to the authority that forbids it”; “once magic loses the

aura of being something illicit that can unlock powerful hidden forces, it no longer attracts those who hope to bypass the natural order of things”.¹⁵

Daniélou's concept of “magic threads”

“‘Have you ever seen’, he said, ‘a dog following his master’s track by sniffing wherever he had passed, perhaps even several hours before. You people think that the dog smells a scent. That is stupid. No scent can linger in the air without moving and dissolving rapidly. What the dog follows is something else. It is a trace of subtle substance that all living beings leave behind them when they move in space. It is a kind of bond, binding them to the places where they have passed. We call it ‘Atharva Sutra’, the ‘magic thread’. These magic threads are not only a trace, but they also have a certain persistence or solidity, by means of which it is possible to act upon the persons from which they issue, rather like drawing a spider by its thread. Have you seen a snake devour an animal? Although he swallows the head first, he always approaches it from behind, seizing its magic thread without which he could not mesmerise it. The animal stops as though held back by a bond. It turns round and, drawn slowly, travels back along its own magic thread that the snake seems to swallow like a spider re-swallowing its thread. Whenever we move, we thus leave behind us a trace that someone

can take hold of.” *The Cattle of the Gods* (trans. K. Hurry)

The above passage refers to a subtle trace that we leave behind when we move in space, as well as a trace that can be taken hold of as if it were a magic thread. What is important is the ontological status of this magic thread. Daniélou says it is a certain persistence or solidity by means of which it is possible to act upon the persons from which they issue, rather like drawing a spider by its thread. The concept of traces and some kind of bond through which we can affect the targets even though they are no longer present in the same time and space, resembles the laws, universally found in magic, namely the laws of contagion, sympathy, and antipathy, with the only difference that in magical recipes you need to have a material object to act upon, it is not an invisible thread. What is similar to Daniélou’s idea is that both concepts, whether that of the invisible thread or a material object left by the target, still seem to possess the essence of a person that becomes the target of magical procedure. Moreover, they are also both governed by the cause-effect principle. In tantric magic specifically, one can see the first ‘law’ at work in the procurement of a footprint of victim or the earth from where the target has urinated. In other words, things that have been in contact with each other continue to have an effect on each other through some sort of transfer of the essence or property. An example in this case is the early Buddhist tantra,

A magical recipe is often described to ‘bind’ the target or ‘hold him captive’, as expressed by the action noun *bandhana*. Sometimes the target is released from the magical recipe, as indicated by the use of the noun *mokṣaḥ* or the verb *muñcati/mocayati* (“freeing or releasing [the target from the *karma*]”).

the *Vajrabhairavatantra* (2.17), where the skin of a musk-shrew is used in a procedure that is intended to effectuate the paralysis of a targeted victim. The beginning of the recipes given in the root-text is as follows:

Next, I shall explain the procedure of paralysis. He [the mantra-master], having smeared the shrew-skin with the substances, beginning with poison, etc. and having written the ten-letter mantra on that skin, takes the dust from the footprint of the target and the earth from the place where he has urinated, then fills that [skin] with it and binds it with [the target's] hair (trans. A. Wenta).¹⁶

As the details of these prescriptions make clear, the purpose of making a pouch from an animal skin filled specifically with toilet soil was meant to cause the stoppage of fluids, to block the mouth, etc., or to effectuate a wide range of paralysis. This indicates that the hollow skin of an animal was perhaps a simulacrum believed to represent the orifices of the corresponding body-part of the human, i.e., mouth, nostril, or the entire body, while the toilet soil was regarded as the “blocker” capable of stopping the flow of bodily fluids. The recipe implements the ‘law’ of contagion, where the footprint, the toilet soil or a hair of a victim somehow transfers the essence to the intended target of magic.

The magical ‘law’ of sympathy, as reported in Frazer’s classic definition, is based on the principle of correspondence, ‘similar produces similar’, just as in the case of making a powder from the eyes of animals that typically wander at night in order to obtain night-vision. In contrast, antipathy operates from the understanding of antagonistic forces present in the natural world. Since a mongoose is the archenemy of a snake, manipulation of items collected from those two animals will cause fighting among people.

The use of bodily substances and excrement in the ‘black magic’ of the early tantras and Daniélou’s *The Cattle of the Gods*

“On the other hand, if a substance belonging to our body is removed, a magic thread ties it to us until it decomposes. Hence the importance in black magic of excrement and, especially, nail parings and hair, which can be preserved for a very long time.” *The Cattle of the Gods* (trans. K. Hurry)

Collecting human hair and nails is very common in early tantric magic. Here I can point out the rite of killing performed in the early Buddhist tantra, the *Vajrabhairavatantra* (6.54) where human bone, ass dung, hair and nail clippings and mustard seed are collected and sacrificed in the fire taken from an outcaste or from the cremation ground. In the early Śaiva tantra, the *Vīṇasikhātantra* (165-167), human hair appears together with other items in the rite of driving away. The text says: “Then, the rite of eradication of enemies conceived with power [is taught]: any relatives and friends will be forced to move away, [having collected] dry leaves of the *neem* tree [*nimbapatrāṇi*] and also tips of banners, human hairs, and ashes from a cremation pyre [*citibhasma*], feathers and tail plumes of crows, having smeared them with white mustard [*kaṭutaila*], poison [*viṣa*] and blood [*rakta*], he should sacrifice them”.¹⁷ In another recipe from the two Buddhist tantras, the *Vajrabhairavatantra* (2.24) and the *Samputatantra* (7.327)¹⁸, a person who wants to cause a fight between two people has to collect a hair from a Brahmin and a hair from a monk (or an outcaste), and bury them. Mary Douglas¹⁹ writes that a human body is most vulnerable at its margins and the specific body parts, especially the bodily parings, skin, nail, hair clippings and sweat are viewed as dangerous and typically surrounded by taboos, for which reason they are most suitable for magical rituals.



Devil's apple, popular in tantric magic. Source @2009IanSutton.flickr.com

The use of excrement, especially applied on the body of the tantric practitioner during the ritual performance, is also attested in early tantric scriptures. The reasons for this odd practice can perhaps partially be explained by looking at the general typology of smells in South Asian religion and culture, recently researched by McHugh²⁰. McHugh's discussion highlights the existence of foul-smelling substances, such as urine and feces, which are considered impure and inauspicious; these substances are located at the opposite end of sweet-smelling substances, like milk, honey or lotus that are considered pure and auspicious. Of course, in tantric ritual, inauspicious energies need to be harnessed in order to make black magic [*abhicāra*] magically potent. Anointing oneself with foul-smelling substances attracts negative, demonic energies through the law of sympathetic magic, "similar attracts similar". Moreover, the use of foul-smelling substances seems also directly connected to the efficacy of the magical procedure. The *Guhyasamājatantra* (14.51) provides a case in point, when it says:

Having worn a garment, which is soaked in urine and faeces, which is disgusting because of its appalling odour, he should then repeat the mantra until it dries up; as soon as it has dried up, the victim will die immediately (trans. A. Wenta).²¹

How does magical procedure work? The concept of 'binding' in the early tantras and Daniélou's *The Cattle of the Gods*

"But there exists a procedure, known as 'binding' in black magic, by means of which, when one holds the end of a magic thread, it can be fixed to a given point and knotted in such a way as to increase its strength considerably. Even then, some magic threads are incapable of strong action. But if their number is increased a hundredfold, or a thousandfold? The victim becomes like a man whose every hair has been attached separately to a wall, absolutely incapable of moving. This is how magicians 'bind' their victims in an invisible prison from which they can never

escape. The greater the number of threads, the less the victim can move from the centre of the web. The prisoner first begins to feel ill if he goes further than a few miles, then a few hundred yards, and finally only a few paces. Any effort to go away becomes painful and, finally, intolerable. It is as though your soul were snatched away, as though all your nerves were being pulled. Whole families have been imprisoned in this manner. No one has ever been able to escape from one of these invisible prisons.” *The Cattle of the Gods* (trans. K. Hurry).

The question of how magical recipes operate and in what way the mechanics of magical procedures affects the targeted subjects is important to further our understanding of the main principles at work in tantric magic. Even though the scarcity of evidence does not allow me to discuss this topic at length, nevertheless, it is still possible to delineate its basic features. The magical recipe is often described to ‘bind’ the target or ‘hold him captive’, as expressed by the action noun *bandhana*. Similarly, sometimes the target is released from the magical recipe, as indicated by the use of the noun *mokṣaḥ* or the verb *muñcati/mocayati* (“freeing or releasing [the target from the *karma*]”). Thus, the antonymous words *bandhana* and *muñcati/mocayati* are used complementarily to indicate the two-directional way in which the *karma* operates. This is best exemplified in the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* 55:

If he sacrifices into the fire the new branches of *dūrvā* grass smeared with milk, honey and ghee 8000 times, he will cause [the target] to be released from the binding [of the *karma*]²² (trans. A. Wenta).

There are different ways of countering the effect of the *karma*, but the most frequent is countering with the use of water. The MMK refers to the procedure of countering the result

of the magical recipe through the use of water, as follows:

By sacrificing into the fire *khadira* sticks 800 times, all the seizers will be let go. By reciting the supreme mantra seven times with [the use of] ash, the mantra-master will make them bound. By reciting [the mantra] with [the use of] water, there will be release at once²³ (trans. A. Wenta).

Who were the Magical/Early Tantric Practitioners?

“There is a race of men, both ancient and strange. Formerly, in an almost forgotten time, these mountains were outside the ‘Aryan circle’. Their inhabitants were considered barbarians, low-caste beings, by the plain-dwellers. Nevertheless, they had their own culture, remarkable social institutions, laws, nobles, sovereigns. However, when the Brahmanic civilisation widened its circle and its empire to include these areas, Aryan kings and priests were imported into the land, and the entire autochthonous population was reduced to slavery. The ancient temples were ‘purified’, Brahman priests took charge of them and, in some cases, even forbade those who had built them to enter. The result was the development of a double religion; two cultures which ignored each other and have survived parallel to each other down to our own times. In the higher social spheres, you can see the Hindu civilisation everywhere predominant, with its priests, its rajahs and its sacred texts. But below this level, ignored and despised, in the lost mountain valleys there survives a prodigiously ancient culture, with its language, legends, magic rites, and customs. The ancient inhabitants of the land can only perform the humblest of jobs. Very few people know that, amongst them, certain families are considered as families of princes, or priests, whose genealogy reaches

In *The Cattle of the Gods*, Daniélou provides an important insight into the origins of tantric magical practitioners, which he links with the non-Aryan, low-caste, non-elite, semi-literate, and tribal communities.

back to the very first 'ages of the world.'

"They are the ones that practice magic?"
 'Yes. Their priests, whom no one knows, wear an amethyst ring as a sign of their rank.'" *The Cattle of the Gods* (trans. K. Hurry).

In the above passage Daniélou provides an important insight into the origins of tantric magical practitioners, which he links with the non-Aryan, low-caste, non-elite, semi-literate, and tribal communities. In this regard Daniélou seems to be in line with modern scholarship, which considers Tantra as selective elite appropriation and codifications of exogenous cults and practices, including non-Vedic, non-Sanskritic, autochthonous gods and goddesses. Focusing on the agents of such spells and magical recipes, Ronald Davidson²⁴ has investigated possible non-tantric or pre-tantric prototypes of tantric magical practitioners, arguing that 'some of the dynamics and ritual practices of Indian magicians were appropriated by tantric groups, so that later forms still exhibit analogous attributes'. In a recent article, Wenta and Aciri²⁵ make an attempt to identify the prototypical agents of magical recipes as the cremation ground specialists [*śmāśānikas*] already in existence prior to the emergence of tantric sects. These specialists could have belonged to what Weber²⁶ called a 'scorned substratum of disreputable magicians preoccupied with the problem of folk religiosity' existing (mainly) outside of the Brahmanical order. *Śmāśānikas* (within both the Hindu and Buddhist fold)

seem to have positioned themselves in, and developed out of, the territory between the margins (e.g., of the Buddhist monastic order or of Brahmanical social order) and the lay mainstream, coupling individual asceticism with the meeting of the ritual demands of the community. Hindu communities needed to transition their dead from ghosts, or 'problematic recent dead' [*bhūta* or *preta*], to 'harmless long-term ancestral dead' [*pitr*]²⁷, and 'Buddhist analogues for these rituals such as merit-making for the dead through offerings to the *saṅgha* developed as Buddhists sought to supplant Brahmanical ritual expertise'²⁸. One may hypothesize that *śmāśānika* specialists might have been gradually absorbed into the ranks of organized Śaivism and Buddhism, and that tantric milieus were the most productive loci of exchange since they were populated by liminal and low-status social agents who did not have to abide to the strict rules of purity upheld by Brahmanism and monastic Buddhism. These agents came to be regarded as 'specialists of the dead', qualified to handle impure substances and serving the needs of lay communities not only in terms of funerary rites, but also of spirit-related practices, including possession and exorcism, necromancy, and perhaps black magic too. •

1 First published in French in 1962 as the *Le Bétail des Dieux*, Editions Buchet-Chastel, Paris. For the overview of the contents, see Adrián Navigante, “Alain Daniélou’s Tribute to the Goddess: A note on the Gangetic Tale The Cattle of the Gods.” *Transcultural Dialogues* 2021 (7): 3–15.

2 All quotations from the English version of *The Cattle of the Gods* are taken from an unpublished translation by Kenneth Hurry.

3 Geertz, Hildred. 1975. ‘An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, I’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6/1, p.83.

4 Samuel, Geoffrey. 1993. *Civilized Shamans*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

5 Earhart, H. Byron. 1982. *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

6 Goodall, Dominic, and Harunaga Isaacson. 2016. ‘On the Shared ‘Ritual Syntax’ of the Early Tantric Traditions’, in Dominic Goodall and Harunaga Isaacson (eds.), *Tantric Studies. Fruits of a Franco-German Project on Early Tantra*, pp. 1–76. Pondicherry: EFEO/IFP/Asien-Afrika Institut Universität Hamburg.

7 *kapilāyāḥ samānavatsāyāḥ gṛhṭam gṛhya tāmrahājane śhāpya saptabhir aśvatthapattrair avasṭabhya tāvaj japed yāvat trividhā siddhir iti / tam pītva śrutidhara-m-antardhānākāśagamanam iti // Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa/Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (29.13), <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh543.html>

8 *kapilā tulya vatsāyā gṛhṭe gṛhṇeta kajjalām/ narakapālasamṇuṭe ayutena tu mantrayet/ tena vāñjitanetras tu antarhitah sadā bhavet/ Guhyasūtra of the Nīśvāsattvasaṃhitā* 3.81

Guhyasūtra of the Nīśvāsattvasaṃhitā (NTGS). NAK Ms. 1-227, NGMPP Reel No. A 41/14. Palm-leaf ms. Devanāgarī transcript by D. Goodall. The chapter and verse nu-

meration used in this paper is based on D. Goodall’s transcript.

9 Olivelle, Patrick 2013. King, *Governance, and Law in Kauṭilya’s Arthaśāstra*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 432.

10 *The Varāha-Purāṇa*, Part 1, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1960, p. 252.

11 *The Manusmṛti with the Commentary of Medhātithi*, vol. 5, section 2: verse 5.8, trans. Ganganatha Jha, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1920.

12 *Manusmṛti with the Commentary of Medhātithi*, vol. 9, section 43: verse 9.333, trans. Ganganatha Jha, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1920.

13 *The Garuḍa-Purāṇa [Sāroddhāra]*, trans. E. Wood and S.V. Subrahmanyam, Bahadurganj: Bhuvaneśwari Āśrama, 1911, p.32.

14 *The Varāha-Purāṇa*, Part 1, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1960, p. 252.

15 Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, London/ New York: Routledge, p.38.

16 For an English translation of the *Vajrabhairavatantra* based on a critical edition of the Sanskrit manuscripts, see Aleksandra Wenta (forthcoming). *The Vajrabhairavatantra: A Study and Annotated Translation*. Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, Boston: Wisdom Publications. For a critical edition of the *Vajrabhairavatantra*, see Aleksandra Wenta (forthcoming). *A Critical Edition of the Vajrabhairavatantra (Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts) with Kumāracandra’s Commentary (Vajrabhairavatantrapañjikā)*. Peking: Research Institute of Sanskrit Manuscripts and Buddhist Literature, Peking University.

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18 *Samṇuṭatantra*, ed. and trans. W. Mical. <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh381>.

[html.](#)

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22. *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* 55: *Dūrvāp-ravālānāṃ dadhimadhughṛtāktānāṃ aṣṭa-sahasraṃ juhuyād, bandhanān mocayati*. Ed. P.L. Vaidya. Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 18. Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1964, 553.

23. *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* 55: *Khadīras-amidhānāṃ aṣṭasatahomena sarvagrahāṃ muñcāpayati. Bhasmanā saptajaptena paramantrāṃ mantrapatir bandhayati. Sakṛjjaptenodakena mokṣaḥ*. Ed. P.L. Vaidya. Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 18. Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1964, p. 547.

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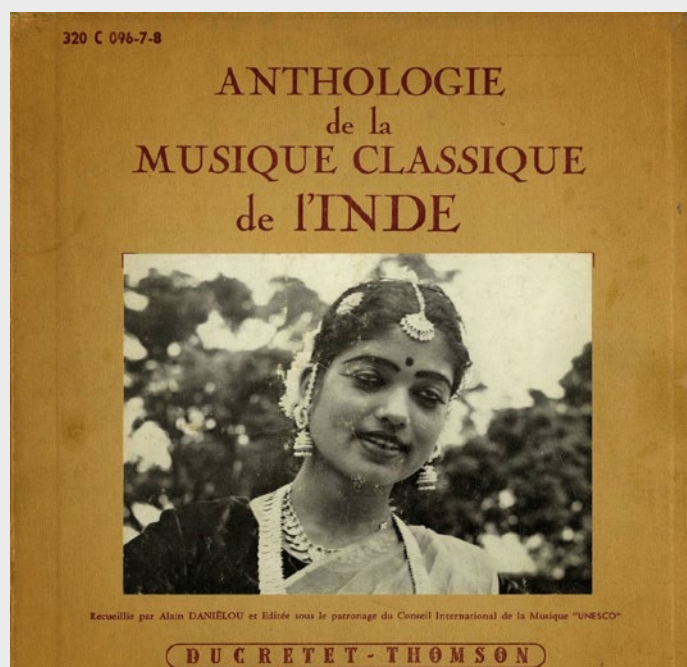
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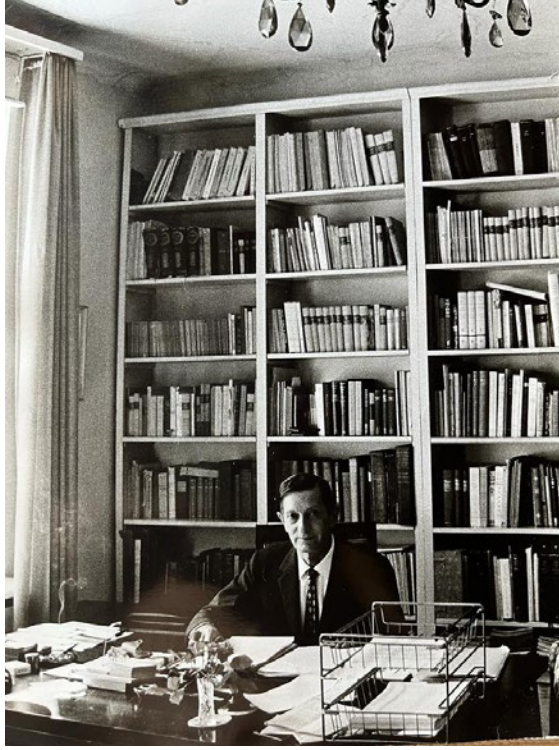
INTERVIEW

ALAIN DANIELÉLOU AND THE *UNESCO COLLECTION OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF THE WORLD*: AN INTERVIEW WITH JACQUES CLOAREC



Interview by **Amanda Viana**

Assistant Research and Intellectual Dialogue at Alain Daniélou Foundation



Alain Daniélou in his office at the *International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (IICMSD)* in Berlin, in the year 1966.

On the lowest shelves to the left side of the main bookcase of the Media Library at the Labyrinth, a country residence in the Italian township of Zagarolo, lies an almost invisible treasure: the *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World*. Visitors could easily overlook this cultural treasure if they were not made aware of the lengthy series of LPs on the bookshelves. This collection is more than a historical or archeological finding and certainly more than a piece of ethnomusicological research work. It is an invitation to experience other worlds through a singular encounter with music in its manifold styles.

That Alain Daniélou was the protagonist of such a special encounter is not due to the fact that he was searching – after the fashion of colonial

hunters – for a preconceived ‘thing’, but rather because he was able to experience both an aesthetic and an existential change within himself: he whirled from tonal and linear musical experience to modal and circular. He opened himself to the sacred rotation of other worlds.

In 1961 Daniélou was assigned a role - similar to that of a diplomatic agent - for the preservation of ancient musical traditions.¹ In this context, he created, in collaboration with UNESCO and the International Music Council (IMC; created by UNESCO in 1949) the world music record project *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World*.² Within this project, more than one hundred volumes have been published by different labels and companies. Daniélou

directed the series. He was in charge of recording, organizing and publishing the musical material until the end of the 1970s.

Jacques Cloarec, current president of the *Alain Daniélou Foundation (FAD, ex FIND)*, was Daniélou's main assistant. As such, he has also contributed to a musical project that has rendered the West much more sensitive to the value of other cultures. The following interview with Jacques Cloarec aims at rescuing memories of his participation in the project *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* together with Alain Daniélou, as well as reflecting with him on questions concerning music, traditional knowledge, Western legitimization strategies and the scope of a cultural heritage with universal ambitions.

Amanda Viana: Alain Daniélou loved Indian music in its different expressions. He had a very special connection with it from the point of view of an 'insider', since he spent 20 years of his life in India learning the theory and practice of Indian Classical Music – not only its philosophy, theology and cosmology under the instruction of pandits, but also the sacred Rudra Vina with the master Shivendranath Basu.³ Through that learning process, he gained some very important insights and developed an interesting reflection on the psychophysical influence of music, leading to the publishing of some ground-breaking books and articles such as *Sémantique musicale: essai de psychophysiologie auditive* (Paris, 1967), *Situation of Music and Musicians in Countries of the Orient* (Firenze, 1971)⁴, *Ragas of Northern Indian Music* (New Delhi, 1980), *Music and the Power of Sound: The Influence of Tuning and Interval on Consciousness* (Rochester, Vermont, 1995)⁵ and *Origines et pouvoirs de la musique*

(Paris, 2005). Indian music was the bridge to a much broader project: that of recording the music of different traditions throughout the whole world. In 1961, Daniélou's musical path took a turn when he created (with UNESCO and the International Music Council) the *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World*. You, Jacques Cloarec, entered Daniélou's life one year later. You became his assistant, and therefore you were involved not only in the *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* project, but also in the tasks of the *International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (IICMSD)* in West-Berlin between 1963 and 1979; and of the *Intercultural Institute of Comparative Music Studies (IISMC)* in Venice between 1969 and 1981. You also contributed to revitalizing, expanding, and safeguarding the traditional music of non-Western cultures. In *The Way to the Labyrinth*, Daniélou writes the following: "Jacques Cloarec, a wonderfully efficient young Breton who became my assistant in Berlin, took over all the technical aspects – selection, editing, texts, photographs, etc. – and made it possible for us to create a very large collection of records".⁶ Many questions follow from that engagement of yours: How was your first contact with Daniélou in the frame of *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* project? How did you end up carrying out that task? What kind of instruction or preparatory training did you have for this? Did you get any 'musical' education from Daniélou himself?

Jacques Cloarec: In my teenage years, I was very interested in the popular music and dance of my homeland, Brittany. Since I hadn't been raised as a catholic and therefore Christianity didn't play any role in my early education, the question of religion was not present. The

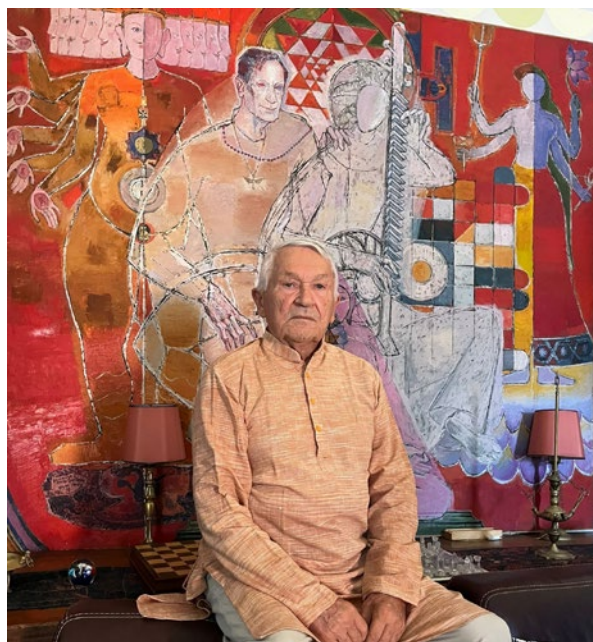
local folklore and the heritage of the Celts (as a pagan counterpart to Christianity in Europe) were things that began to interest me much later, in connection with Daniélou's interests in that field. When I entered the *Celtic Circle* in the city where I lived, the reason was my fascination with Celtic and ballroom dancing, and of course music played a role in that experience. One could say that merely because of those early interests I already had a bridge to Daniélou. With regard to the UNESCO project, I must say that at the very beginning it was not easy for me to work with Daniélou. He had his own prerogatives, and I didn't feel prepared for the musical aspect of the recordings. But this changed relatively soon: I listened to a lot of recordings, first of Indian music, afterwards of Chinese, Japanese and Iranian music. That was a kind of progressive music education at the side of Daniélou. Eastern music was different from what I knew of European classical music, and it struck me as very interesting. I realized that I could enjoy most of these non-European traditions, and that working with Daniélou would permit me to learn and experience more of that material.

Amanda Viana: In an interview with Peter Pannke, Daniélou declares the following: "*It was only just after the war that the first tape recordings came out. Then I flew to New York and bought one of the first professional devices which was a Magnecorder, an enormous gadget, and with it I did many recordings... the French recording house published my first album of recordings from India, which had very good things already*".⁷ The first recordings of Daniélou became possible only after he had acquired the best magnetic tape recorder at that time, the Magnecorder by Sonocraft and the first hand-crank Nagra (conceived by Stefan Kudelski).

The first recordings of Daniélou took place in Benares and were published in 1954 by two prestigious American recording companies: *Columbia* (focused on popular music) and *Folkways* (centered on religious music); but his first anthological volume of classical music of India, *Anthologie de la musique classique de l'Inde*, was published in 1955 by the French recording company Ducretet-Thomson.⁸ Did Daniélou use this anthology as a guide, a kind of model for the later *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* project?

Jacques Cloarec: The recordings at Ducretet-Thomson were a first publication with a pioneering significance. In a way it served as inspiration for the further development of Daniélou's musicological project. The collections that followed the Ducretet-Thomson series were different, but the most important aspect of the whole story is that Daniélou had developed his own method and produced exceptional work before it all passed on to the UNESCO. When it did, that is, when the collections were published under the aegis of UNESCO, a note was printed in each of the volumes acknowledging Daniélou's work: "Collected by Alain Daniélou and edited under the patronage of UNESCO and the International Music Council".

Amanda Viana: The *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* project is without any doubt a pioneering work in the history of ethnomusicology. In *The Way to the Labyrinth*, we read the following: "*Jack Bornoff, executive secretary of the International Music Council, persuaded UNESCO to ask me to create a series of records on the great music of the Orient, then Africa, and hired me as an adviser for his organization. For the first time since its creation, UNESCO, (...) became involved in non-Western*



Jacques Cloarec at the Labyrinth, Zagarolo, during the interview with Amanda Viana (2022).

music ...”.⁹ It was through British musicologist Jack Bornoff that Daniélou became acquainted with UNESCO¹⁰. Was it difficult for Daniélou to extend the horizon of UNESCO to the East?

Jacques Cloarec: Jack Bornoff worked as Executive Secretary of the International Music Council for quite some time. He was a friend of Alain Daniélou, and his interest in Eastern art and music was profound. In that sense, a door was opened for the work that was carried out later. For Daniélou, the problem was not that of including Eastern music in the UNESCO program – which, until that point, had focused on Western forms of art. The problem for him was rather to mix Western and Eastern music styles and to lose the specificity of each of them. By way of example: the American violinist Yehudi Menuhin was a close friend of Ravi Shankar and a member of the *International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (IICMSD)* in Berlin. Menuhin

became acquainted with classical Indian music in the 1950s, and in the 1960s he published a record together with Ravi Shankar, *West Meets East*. Daniélou was not very happy with such experiments.

Amanda Viana: What prizes were awarded to Daniélou in the context of the UNESCO project?

Jacques Cloarec: In the context of his musicological work, Daniélou received many awards, among others the UNESCO-CIM Prize for Music (1981), the UNESCO Kathmandu Medal (1987), and the Cervo Prize for new music (1991). He was also appointed officer of the Legion of Honour, the National Order of Merit, Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters (France) and Fellow of the National Indian Academy of Music and Dance.

Amanda Viana: In his interview with Peter Pannke, Daniélou says: “And then, after that, I was entrusted with that UNESCO project of

records – which, after all, I did practically on my own, because UNESCO never gave me any money. But I thought that having the UNESCO label was very very important for the musicians, so, in fact, I gave it all to UNESCO, the collection to which they never contributed. And then, afterwards, it could only be developed when I obtained more funds with the Berlin institute”.¹¹ It is surprising to learn that Daniélou didn’t receive any financial support from UNESCO, and that the further development of this project was financed by the *International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (IICMSD)* in Berlin¹². Can you tell us about the formal framework of that project – for example staff, positions, editorial functions and further bureaucratic issues?

Jacques Cloarec: I don’t know much about the financial conditions and bureaucratic procedures concerning the first recordings. One can deduce at least part of that framework from what can be read in the cover of the volumes published by the UNESCO Collection: “Edited for the *International Music Council* by the *International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation*, General Editor ALAIN DANIELLOU”. This means that Daniélou did the editorial work for an institution that served the purposes of UNESCO. The agreements were sometimes complicated because three different institutions were involved in the project (UNESCO, IMC¹³, IICMSD¹⁴). In addition to that, there was the editor, the musicians, or the owners of the recordings, which in some cases were other companies. I myself was also involved in the project on the level of translations, editing and other technical aspects carried out at the Institute in Berlin.

Amanda Viana: Could you tell us something about the *International Music Council* (IMC),

created in 1949 by UNESCO itself? Did Daniélou or you take part in this council? Before choosing a music group or publishing an LP, was it necessary to have the authorization of this council?

Jacques Cloarec: Daniélou had absolute freedom of decision concerning the choice of musicians as well as of their cultural background. There was one exception, which is understandable given the historical and political situation of those countries: China and Tibet. When the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO (1979) was created, a volume on Tibetan Music had already been planned and was supposed to appear in the same year. The Chinese protested because, for them, Tibet was a Chinese Province and they wanted to put that on the cover of the LP. Of course, Daniélou did not agree with that point of view, and he ended up winning the debate using two very good arguments: the first one was that the idea of the collection did not concern ‘modern states’ but ‘traditional cultures’, that is, cultures outside the modern Western social structure and worldview. As we know, the Maoist Revolution was a product of Marxism, hence a product of modern Western culture. The second argument was geopolitical: the recordings on Tibetan Music were made in Dehradun, which is not Tibet but India. Now, the Tibetans living in India were political refugees, so writing ‘Chinese Province of Tibet’ would have been an insult for them.

Amanda Viana: The *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* project implied working together with other companies, like Philips (*Musical Sources*), EMI/Odeon (*Musical Atlas*), Bärenreiter/Musicaphon (*A Musical Anthology of the Orient*, *An Anthology of African Music* and *An Anthology of North Indian Classical Music*), among others. How long did take for

one LP record to get published? Did you take part in the editorial and publication process?

Jacques Cloarec: The relationship between Daniélou and the music companies was good in general terms, although I must say that, right at the beginning, we had problems in convincing Bärenreiter to take part in the project. The project was ambitious and therefore took a long time, I would say about five years. The plan was to issue two thousand copies of each title. I was permanently involved in the editorial process during that time.

Aanda Viana: After Daniélou's death, recording companies like Auvidis/Naïve and Smithsonian Folkways followed the model he had created for their own research. Was that already stipulated in the contract between Daniélou and UNESCO?

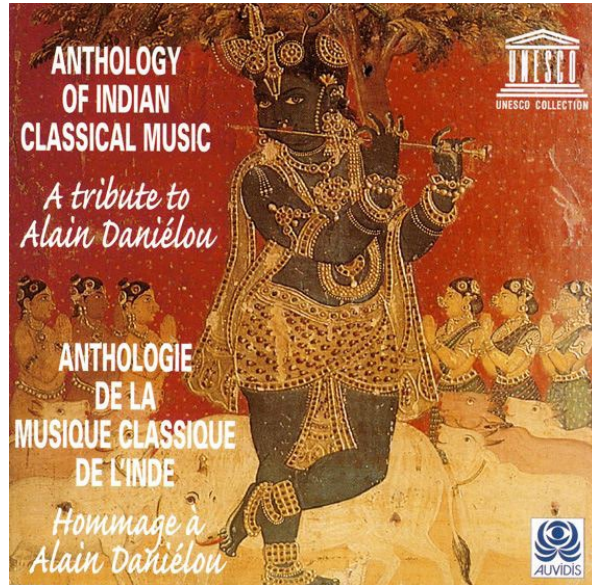
Jacques Cloarec: I think they were compelled to follow Daniélou's method, since it had already been established and for the sake of consistency it was convenient to do so. I don't know whether that specific aspect was stipulated in the contract. One should perhaps consult the archive material to find out more about the formal aspects of the activities of recording companies after Daniélou's decease.

Amanda Viana: The label created by Daniélou and UNESCO (with support from ICM) is called *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World*. This name triggers many questions related to the project: Was the decision about this label made by Daniélou himself? The concept of 'traditional music' is broad; it includes, for example, urban classical music and popular folk songs from rural areas. What do you think was the sense of that term for Daniélou? Can traditional music be labelled 'religious' or 'sacred' music? Is it related specifically or only tendentially to non-Western traditions?

Jacques Cloarec: Daniélou did not want the label 'Traditional Music of the World' to be officially related to himself, probably because the word 'traditional' in that context was too general and didn't mean much to him. The project was therefore ascribed to the *International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (IICMSD)*, at least initially. This was for example the case of the recordings of Tibetan, Japanese and Tunisian music. We need to bear in mind that each series was a special task, as it is shown in the leaflets that accompany each volume, and that Daniélou was not happy with every LP in the series. For example, he didn't want to promote the kind of music that is found in the series 'Musical Atlas' (he didn't have much interest in that), and even if he enjoyed the music of the Ba-Benzele-Pygmees, he was reluctant to edit that material because of his own lack of expertise. A friend of mine, Michel Bonnet, became the director of EMI in Italy and agreed to publish that series.

Amanda Viana: According to Daniélou, ethnomusicology is in a way based on Western prejudices and its claims of scientific authority.¹⁵ But if Daniélou declines his role as an ethnomusicologist, how would you characterise his work on the *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* project? Was he really a kind of 'ambassador' of traditional (non-Western) music in the West?

Jacques Cloarec: At that time, ethnomusicology was mainly related to the idea of the primitive and exotic, considered to be in opposition to classical or sophisticated music. That is the reason why he avoided the term ethnomusicology and was even against its frequent use to describe projects concerning non-European music, since what he wanted to emphasize was the classical music of the



Anthology of Indian Classical Music. A tribute to Alain Daniélou LP album of UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World.

East as an assemblage of very elaborate and complex music styles. Some of his texts clearly confirm that position, for example an article he wrote for an Italian dictionary of music. His idea was that the music styles recorded in the framework of the UNESCO Collection could easily equate the music of Mozart or Balakirev.

Amanda Viana: We know that Western civilization has developed a high level of technical excellence in relation to audio-visual recordings. As such, different kinds of intangible cultural heritage could be collected by Westerners and ‘safeguarded’.¹⁶ Beyond that, a special level of technical excellence could include the attempts of ‘quality improvements’ of musical works from other cultural settings. Do you think that Western technical excellence justifies the ‘necessity’ to safeguard the intangible contents of other cultures? What did Daniélou think about the attempts to improve the musical heritage of other cultures by means

of technology coming from the modern West?

Jacques Cloarec: If we limited ourselves to technical excellence and its use to preserve the treasures of other cultures, I don’t see any problem. ‘Improving’ the musical heritage of other cultures is somewhat different, because it has to be carried out in the countries where those music styles flourish and according to traditional methods. When Daniélou came back to Europe, he was shocked by the ignorance of Western culture concerning the musical heritage of the East. I think that one of Daniélou’s major achievements was to provide the most refined music styles of Asia at a time in which the highest heading for them coming from a Western audience was probably ‘folk music’.

Amanda Viana: It seems difficult to transcribe the traditional music of other cultures into the system of the West, precisely because it belongs to other world-configurations and therefore

requires another approach. Could you tell us about your experience with the recordings? How did you feel in dealing with them?

Jacques Cloarec: You mention an important point, since the question of the passage from one system to another was the reason why Daniélou didn't like the expression 'music of the world'. What he wanted to emphasize was the method, the discipline and the complexity inherent in each one of the cultural treasures he sought to make known or rescue from oblivion. This diversity cannot be mixed up and combined with Western variants, deformations or even different paradigms. For me it was a different experience with each of the traditions we dealt with: very enriching and instructive.

Amanda Viana: In a certain sense, Western civilization has a rather hypocritical role in the history of mankind: it has destroyed lots of tangible as well as intangible contents of other cultures and at the same time it attributes to itself the responsibility of safeguarding them.¹⁷ Do you think that the *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* project operated as a reservoir for local cultures? Was Daniélou aware of that role?

Jacques Cloarec: I think Western culture is not the only hypocritical form of culture in dealing with the patrimony of others, even if the colonialist project of the West was very specific and we still continue doing things related to that period. In any case, for me the UNESCO project was not a reservoir of local cultures. The idea was a kind of global patrimony of mankind. Daniélou, on the contrary, defended the particularity of each cultural group and the specific aspects of their tradition. He was convinced that if we pass from a local to a global project, such nuances inevitably get lost.

Amanda Viana: What was Daniélou's first

contact with the musicians he worked with? What kind of strategy did he apply to record their music? Did he offer money or any other benefit to traditional musicians? How was the recording process conceived? Was it spontaneous or planned beforehand? How were the research texts and images conceived for each album?

Jacques Cloarec: It is not easy to answer this question. Daniélou's relationship with musicians depended on the kind of artist he met or worked with. Professional musicians with international experience were different from musicians within a religious group or popular musicians. But he was always very spontaneous in dealing with them. My task was taking pictures and looking for potential collaborators to establish contact with. I was also in charge of certain technical aspects like editing. As to the images and texts of each album, it was Daniélou who wrote most of the texts, but other people were involved, for example in the general production of the LPs.

Amanda Viana: Did any musical group require Daniélou to perform a special ritual to record them? Did Daniélou record any sacred song that is not allowed to be made public in any context than the original one?

Jacques Cloarec: As far as I know, he was never asked to perform any ritual as a condition to record the music. With sacred songs in India there is a very effective and relatively easy way of protecting them: it suffices to alter a couple of sentences or even words and the text no longer has to be preserved secretly. I supposed that was done in some cases.

Amanda Viana: What kind of audience was foreseen for the *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* project? Was Daniélou's aim, apart from the preservation of

the tradition, to divulgate the material among a wider public?

Jacques Cloarec: I think we can say that Daniélou's purpose has always been to preserve the musical traditions still surviving in some non-European countries. In a certain way that has been done by the UNESCO project. The audience is of course a Western audience because it is they who should become more aware of the value of these other cultures.

Amanda Viana: Daniélou repeatedly said that listening to Indian Classical Music (which is not tonic but modal) requires, in the case of a Western audience, a re-education of one's senses, emotions and way of thinking. In your opinion, how is this re-education possible? Did you experience such a thing as re-education of the senses?

Jacques Cloarec: Without a doubt one can speak of re-education. It is not about merely listening to music. If one really pays attention, one inevitably embarks on an aesthetic transformation, a transformation of the way in which music is perceived. I think that many Westerners today are capable of re-educating

themselves in order to appreciate those music styles. That has been my own experience.

Amanda Viana: Is Western music ('tonal music') for you as annoying and boring as it seems to have been for Daniélou? Have you ever heard the whole *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World* project? How often do you hear extracts of it today?

Jacques Cloarec: No, Western music was not boring for Daniélou, who played Schubert on the piano and sang Fauré and Gounod; nor is it boring for me! Even if I do not listen to the radio and I barely watch TV, I think it good that France Culture or France Musique have programs in which our series are often played. That is also the case in Germany, and some of our ex-colleagues of the Institute in Berlin still play the music of the collection.

Amanda Viana: Which volume of the collection is the one you like best?

Jacques Cloarec: The volume on Dhrupad by the Dagar brothers - Mohinuddin and Aminudin Dagar - is the best music I have ever listened to in my whole life. •

1 “Today, “music from far afield” has become a reference for many specialists and connoisseurs. These treasures have inspired many contemporary composers. We owe all this to Alain Daniélou. Today the existence all over the world, and especially in the Orient, of music, which is as classical as Bach and Mozart, is universally acknowledged: we owe that fact too to Alain Daniélou’s farsightedness and unstinting efforts.” Noriko Aikawa. “Anthology of Indian Classical Music: A tribute to Alain Daniélou”. In: *Unesco Collection of Traditional Music of the World* (1977). 3 compact discs, This collection received the “Diapason d’Or” award and, in March 1998, the “Grand Prix du Disque”. (CD). See: <https://www.alaindanielou.org/discs/india-discs/anthology-of-indian-classical/>.

2 See UNESCO’s and the Alain Daniélou Foundation’s website concerning the *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music of the World*: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/collection-of-traditional-music-00123> and <https://www.alaindanielou.org/it/dischi/dischi-india/anthology-of-indian-classical/>.

3 Alain Daniélou. *The Way to the Labyrinth. Memories of East and West*. Translated by Marie-Clarie Cournand. New York: New Directions, 1987, p. 147.

4 First edition in French: *La musique et sa communication*. Florence: Leo Olschki, 1971.

5 First edition in French: *Traité de musicologie comparée*. Paris: Hermann, 1959.

6 Alain Daniélou. *The Way to the Labyrinth*, 1987, p. 238.

7 O.Ton 5: Interviewband Daniélou: Take 11: 1’50. In: Peter Pannke. “Alain Daniélous Weg ins Labyrinth. Zum Tode eines Pioniers der musikalischen Begegnung Asiens und Europas”. In: *Eine Sendung von Peter Pannke*. WDR 5/Redaktion Volksmusik. Sonntag, d. 10.09.1994 / 22.35 – 24.00. See also: Alain Daniélou. *The Way to the Labyrinth*, 1987, p. 237.

8 Cf. Alain Daniélou. *Fax direct to Le Monde*.

Service Culturel, Paris, 3 novembre 1992, p. 1 [Alain Daniélou Archive, Labyrinth, Zagarolo].

9 Alain Daniélou. *The Way to the Labyrinth*, 1987, p. 237-238.

10 Linda Cimardi. “One of the Richest and Most Refined Forms of Art in the World.” Alain Daniélou, the IICMSD Archive, and Indian Music. In: *The World of Music (New Series)*. A Journal of the Department of Musicology of the Georg August University Göttingen [Postcolonial Sound Archives: Challenges and Potentials]. Vol. 10 (2021) 1 p.71-92, p. 85: “Indian music was certainly the main field of Daniélou’s expertise, acknowledged by his role as director of the College of Indian Music at the Hindu University of Benares (Varanasi), as director of the Adyar Library of Sanskrit manuscripts and editions in Madras (Chennai), and then as a member of the École Française d’Extrême-Orient in Paris.”

11 O.Ton 5: Interviewband Daniélou: Take 11: 1’50. Peter Pannke. “Alain Daniélous Weg ins Labyrinth. Zum Tode eines Pioniers der musikalischen Begegnung Asiens und Europas”. In: *Eine Sendung von Peter Pannke*. WDR 5/Redaktion Volksmusik. Sonntag, d. 10.09.1994 / 22.35 – 24.00.

12 Cimardi, 2021, p. 74: “The IICMSD was indeed funded not only by the city’s Senate, but also by the Ford Foundation (...)”.

13 *International Music Council*.

14 *International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (IICMSD)*.

15 Cf. Alain Daniélou. *La Civilisation des différences*, Paris: Kailash, 2003, pp.148-149.

16 Francesco Pellizzi. “Chroniques : Ethnomusicologie et Radio-Télévision”. In: *Diogenes*; Paris Vol. 0, ISS. 61, (Jan 1, 1968): 91-123, here 91 and 94.

17 Francesco Pellizzi. “Chroniques : Ethnomusicologie et Radio-Télévision”. In: *Diogenes*; Paris Vol. 0, ISS. 61, (Jan 1, 1968): 91-123, here 92.



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ANTONIN ARTAUD AND HIS ANTONIN HÉLIOGABALE WITH INDO-EUROPEAN UCHRONIAS AND DOUBLES

Inspired by the singular essay *Héliogabale ou l'anarchiste couronné* [*Heliogabalus or the Crowned Anarchist*], Catherine Basset, who has already written about Artaud, Shiva and the Balinese theatre in an earlier issue (cf. *Transcultural Dialogues* N°5 Autumn Equinox 2020) brings out 'doubles' and 'resonances', introduces uchronias, and invites intruders absent from the book – providing thus another dimension of interpretation for the East-West dialogue displayed in Artaud's essay.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Antonin Artaud, self-portrait. Source: Gallica BnF/ Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Bali and the Poet [uchronia]

It could all have been different if, rather than to the Mexicans, Artaud had gone to transmit the strong message of his conferences on culture – defined as necessarily metaphysical – to the Balinese. The latter are largely accustomed to a tradition quite similar to the object of Artaud's quest and, invaded by something quite different since the XVI century, very worried about its conservation. In Bali, it is in response to his very 'madness', interpreted as an index of superior connection and compulsory vocation, that Artaud would have had a chance of being initiated, rather than among the Tarahumaras of Mexico. He would have been initiated by des-

tiny, vocation and therapy, he might have become a priest¹ and/or a *kawi* (Skt. *kavi*), that is, an initiated poet, learned in *akṣara* (characters derived from Sanskrit), meaning simultaneously knowledgeable (through contemplation rather than scholarship), author of treatises in various fields, and magician. Holism made man a real 'individual' (in the sense of 'undivided completeness'), to whom all tradition is attributed, whether in forge, literature, music, or dance. Because the human *kawi*, through tantric science, officiates as the fundamental Kawi / divine Kawiswara with related *śakti* energy (the Goddess Saraswati of Letters and Arts), just like the *dalang* (mage-narrator-pup-

peteer) becomes the fundamental Dalang (Dalang Sejati, Shiva), the *undagi*, the initiated architect, acts as Wiswakarma /Vishvakarma the fundamental Architecte and the *siwa* (Brahmin high priest or *pedanda siwa*) as Siwa/Shiva the ‘hermaphrodite’ Ardhanaresvari, the One as a fusion of female-male, Sakti-Shiva. Unlike the specialist (who continues to act as an ego) or the Western theatre actor, each of the Balinese initiates becomes divine, cosmicised with a view to operating as one of the principles or aspects of the undifferentiated Principle. Judging from different formulas and experiences, one can say that there is something of that Balinese element in Artaud, something of a cosmisation – even though badly experienced – which he transfers to his doubles, Heliogabalus, the theatre...

The gender-related ‘principles’: On Heliogabalus’ Monotheism and Tantric Shaivism

In Artaud’s *Héliogabale ou l’anarchiste couronné*², the question of the sexual gender of the Principle, the debate about unicity or dualism, or on the principle ONE and the principle TWO (Artaud’s capitals)³, a debate on the masculine and the feminine, on their hierarchy and the multiplicity of the gods, is simultaneously central (cf. the chapter “The war of principles”) and runs throughout the work, as though this centre spread out over the two chapters on either side, describing the origins, the life and the end of Heliogabalus. *Héliogabale ou l’anarchiste couronné* is elevated or doubled by Artaud to extract metaphysical resonances. It is the story of the very young ‘priest-king-god’, beautiful ‘man-woman’ Elagabalus / Heliogabalus (born at Emesa, Syria, in about 203 and died at Rome on 11 March 222), an adolescent emperor so irreverent in his (bi- but especially homo-) sexuality and in all his actions that, after being

assassinated together with his mother and cut into pieces by his Praetorian guard amongst the excrements of the army latrines, he was struck with a *damnatio memoriae* and officially eradicated from Roman history. In the meantime, Heliogabalus had brought from his temple at Emesa (Homs, in Syria) his only god, the sun-god Elagabalus, of whom he had been the priest since the age of five, whose cult he wanted to impose on Rome. In that city, he had subjugated to Elagabalus all other gods and cults, even the Christian one. He had moved all their effigies to the *Elagabalium* temple. He erected this temple by destroying an ancient one. If Heliogabalus who, Artaud says, ‘gave his life’ for an only god, had reigned longer, monotheism might have been pagan rather than Christian [uchronia].

Elagabalus – literally ‘god-mountain’, translated by Artaud as ‘Radiant Summit’, was a sun-god associated with the phallus at the temple of Emesa. He also dwelt in the Black Stone of Emesa, brought to Rome by Heliogabalus. Nonetheless, Artaud tells us that on this conical betyl (‘house of god’) fallen from heaven, there appeared the image of a *yoni* (vagina) belonging to the stone, which means that the virile god was at the same time a hierogamy. Once in Rome, Heliogabalus gave the god a spouse. Structurally, there was simultaneously ONE male, TWO in ONE bisexual and ONE and TWO as a heterosexual couple. The same structural trilogy exists in Javanese-Balinese tantric Shaivism: the solar Shiva (Aditya, Surya), Ardhaneshvara (Shiva and Sakti merged), and Shiva coupled with Sakti [*devi, dewi*]. The masculine name Ardhanaresvara or the feminine Ardhanaresvari are two designations for the same One, like the fusion of Shiva and Sakti viewed by the initiate, which is the same iconographic representation as the hermaphrodite (with two vertical halves: male and female).

In Bali, in the daily tantric service of the *siwas*, that is, the high priests Pedanda Brahmana Siwa, the identification of the priest — the double and vibrating body, the body of mantra and *akṣara* ('letters') that he fashions for himself — is Ardhanaeshvari, the feminine. The ritual is called Surya-Sevana but does not include the Sun Shiva-Surya (the One without duality). Michele Stephen⁴ remarks that instead of being, as in India, destined for the sacred Shiva linga, the Balinese ceremony serves to consecrate the water of a basin, the type of water that, eventually diluted with ordinary water, is distributed daily to the faithful.

Heliogabalus will do his utmost — and according to Artaud this is a major aspect of his stubborn 'anarchy' — to combine male and female within himself, to seek this unity and, moreover, to impose it on religion. Homosexuality, cross-dressing and other practices going beyond gender duality⁵ actually demonstrate what his origin at Emesa already stated socially. In fact, in this sort of Eastern matriarchy, transmission to men came through their mothers, making males 'women-men', wives of their wife⁶, and making women the progenitor — "I said THE PROGENITOR"⁷ writes Artaud in capital letters.

It is thought that what most bothered Rome was that Heliogabalus left the reins of power to women who had already held them at Emesa — the Julias of his family, known as 'the Syrian princesses' — and in particular by imposing his mother on the Senate, the only woman in the whole of Roman history!

While the women looked after business, Heliogabalus fully engaged in his own excesses. He dared contravene one of the worst taboos, that of marrying a vestal vowed to virginity by her priesthood — which discloses another out-of-the-ordinary male-female association. According to ancient historians, this was done in addition to his many other extravagances:

spectacular public orgies, mass castrations, obscenities of all kinds to humiliate the great, and disinterest in the army. Not to speak of the murder, by his own hand, of his beloved eunuch preceptor Gannis (who had tried to moderate his depraved style of life and his squandering of the treasury on festivities and fabulous rituals) and his two attempts to assassinate the young Alexander Severus, his cousin, adopted son and rival. The list is still longer, but it must be stated that historians of the Christian era did all they could to saddle Heliogabalus with all the vices and to deck Alexander with all the virtues — Alexander, the one who became emperor on the assassination of Heliogabalus.

Heliogabalus the Emperor: Backwards is his Place

Heliogabalus or Elagabalus was the name linked to his priesthood, the homonym of the god Elagabal, of whom the solar *helios* was a modification made by the Greeks. As emperor, Heliogabalus added the dynastic name of Antoninus. As far as Antonin Artaud was concerned, Heliogabalus' first name *Varius* was highly significant: Varius Avitus Bassianus. It pointed to an instability of identity prior to his sexual traits, related to his very birth and his doubtful origin. Officially, Heliogabalus was the son of Bassianus, the husband of his mother Julia Soëmia and high-priest before him — Emesa was no longer a kingdom and had become merely a cult location. Bassianus was known as 'the parricide'. In this context of inversion, Artaud asks the question whether the assassinated 'father' was a man or a woman.

However, his mother and his preceptor later affirmed that Heliogabalus was actually the fruit of her adultery with the Emperor Caracalla, his grand-uncle who was much loved by the army. This was part of the intrigues of the Julias to hold onto power at Rome. Julia Dom-

na had been the wife of the Emperor Septimus Severus, after whom her sons Geta and Caracalla had reigned, the latter murdering Geta in the arms of his mother, who let herself die of starvation.

Such strategic accordance didn't imply any risk in a world "where everyone slept with everyone". It placed the little high-priest in the line of the Severus family, as a legitimate heir to the crown after Caracalla. Macrinus, the assassin of Caracalla and new emperor, remained to be got rid of. He was a colourless sort of official and a commoner. This task was accomplished by war. The Roman army was made to turn against Macrinus in favour of a 14-year-old Heliogabalus, 'son' of Caracalla and magnificently attired. Heliogabalus participated in the combat on horseback at the side of his kin – consisting of supercharged female warriors – and his eunuch preceptor Gannis. His beauty and courage seduced the soldiers. During his reign, he would not continue the war, but the seduction would go on.

The high-priest Heliogabalus became Emperor at the age of 14 and transported the betyl from Emesa to Rome on a year-long journey, walking backwards before the chariot so as not to turn his back to his god Elagabal. He entered Rome backwards, surrounded by eunuchs, accompanied by music and the ecstatic dance of the transgender Galli, showing the imperial city his buttocks – with which he would never cease to humiliate the empire. From his very arrival in Rome as emperor, Heliogabalus "dances backwards" and "this backwards was his true

place", to quote the words of Artaud's *Pour en finir avec le jugement de Dieu* (radio broadcast recorded – but not broadcast – on 28 November 1947).

At the time of Heliogabalus, the Senate had already acknowledged the priesthood of the Galli, despite having forbidden Roman citizens to become part of them. The Eastern Venus was associated with a cult of Cybele; her transvestite – or rather transgender – priests practised a public self-castration rite as well as ecstatic dances. Again, within his metaphysics of gender principles and the anarchic search for unity that runs through his *Héliogabale*, Artaud saw in the self-emasculation rite of the Galli dressed as women "the desire to make an end to a certain contradiction, to reunite at one blow man and woman, to combine them, to merge them into one in the male and through the male. The male being the initiator"⁸. In *Héliogabale*, the separation of the principles is an 'error' or a cosmic catastrophe which sets against each other the partisans of the male and the female aspect.

Artaud's Heliogabalus: necessary anarchy and cruelty

Heliogabalus' milieu was not lacking in cruelty in the modern meaning of the word: an excess of blameworthy blood and semen. What Heliogabalus added to it was for Artaud in some way related to his sacred vocation. In the reception literature, Heliogabalus is seen as a sign of Roman decadence (in this case, a decadence coming from the East). As a consequence, he ended

Heliogabalus or Elagabalus was the name linked to his priesthood, the homonym of the god Elagabal, of whom the solar helios was a modification made by the Greeks.

up being an icon of the decadent movement at the end of the XIX century. But what Antonin Artaud saw and made of him is quite different from these two versions⁹. There is a “juxtaposition of two levels, metaphysical and historical, and subordination of the latter to the former”¹⁰ in an arrangement of complex echoes that little by little build up a thesis. Artaud’s Heliogabalus is an anarchist with a precocious and superior intelligence, that is, conscious, determined, with the necessary ‘cruelty’ due to his passion for unity, *achieved by inversions and reversals*.

Artaud constantly returns to the idea of cruelty. It is not at all cruelty as a vice. He takes it from a gnostic point of view: cruelty is inherent in life. Metaphysically speaking, the fact of its being material renders Life susceptible to evil and whatever is inherent in evil, in space, in extension, and in matter. Life is necessary cruelty, otherwise it would not be life, and the quest for the unity that life cannot be is necessary cruelty in return. As a process, decadence is disaggregation, slow decomposition, whereas Heliogabalus ‘anarchy’, belonging neither to Rome nor to its decadence, is re-placed by Artaud out of time, out of space, and beyond the individual. It arises like an eruption and has centripetal character. It is the product of necessity. It was time to put an end to Rome, its first *bourgeoisie* and its inertia.

“The whole life of Heliogabalus is anarchy in action, since Elagabal, the unitary god, resembling man and woman, the hostile poles, the ONE and the TWO, is the end of contradictions, the elimination of war and anarchy, but through war, and is also, on this terrain of contradiction and disorder, the implementation of anarchy. And anarchy, to the extent that Heliogabalus pushes it, is the achievement of poetry.”¹¹

It is true that Heliogabalus was one of the rare Roman emperors (perhaps the only one?) who

did not make war. For what he did instead, while leaving state business to women, he was never forgiven: something spectacular, a kind of ‘theatre of cruelty’. Artaud theorises and attempts to achieve his own theatre of cruelty to shake society, contaminate the *bourgeoisie* like a bubonic plague and, by staging conflicts (as at Bali), avoid the possibility of real war. Since the West lacks any living magical tradition like that of Bali, it seemed like a good idea. But Artaud didn’t manage to give this theatre any other scene than his own body and became its sole actor and martyr in his own life of perpetual (and fundamental) war. Many things appear premonitory in *Héliogabale*, right to the faecal end, mirroring Artaud and Heliogabalus, the two Antonins¹², as a sign of uninterrupted coherence.

“This Cruelty was not a matter of sadism or blood, at least not exclusively. [...] From a spiritual point of view, cruelty signifies rigor, application and implacable decision, or irreversible and absolute determination. [...] In the exercised cruelty there is a kind of superior determinism to which the executioner-torturer himself is subjected”.¹³

Panji: fluidity of identities and mirror of levels [double doubles]

Artaud could have drawn (uchronia) another thread from India toward South-East Asia than that of King Rama towards Syria and the Rome of Heliogabalus, a thread that he extends out of the mythological construction of Fabre d’Olivet (which runs from the Hyperboreans to Phoenicia)¹⁴. In Bali, he might have been inspired by another equally royal hero, always young and beautiful, who was seen as a divine incarnation, solar, sexually active and ambivalent. This hero is Prince Panji (Panji Inu Kertapati), fully made of ‘doubles’. He was a historical figure (king for one year) who became a myth, the



Bust of Elagabalus, Palazzo Nuovo, Musei Capitolini, Rome.
Source: Wikimedia Commons. © José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro.

incarnation of Vishnu and Kamajaya (Eros). Panji is identified with the Sun and, as the archetype of the *kawi*, the great civiliser and unifier of Insulindia, a figure that later on stood for royal perfection in Indianised South-East Asia. His predestined lady-love, Candra Kirana (*candra* means the Moon) is an incarnation of the partner of Kamajaya/Semara: Ratih, the lunar goddess.

The structure of the texts and stage performances, with doubles between the metaphysical, astral, social and individual levels, is as follows: to begin with there is separation, since Shiva has banished on earth the fundamental couple, Kamajaya and Ratih; then comes the

mutual search, each seeking the other in various incarnations. This ends each time in their sexual union, an astral eclipse and mystical fusion, which restores Unity.

Panji is not Prince Rama, the *avatāra* of Vishnu who becomes King of kings in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and whom Fabre d'Olivet — an important source of Artaud's *Héliogabale* — transforms into a civilising pontiff reigning over all the known world for thousands of years — something that inspired many traditionalists. Panji's love-quest takes him far, even to Egypt, less far from Heliogabalus than from Java. Each text is packed with the conquest of kingdoms and sex partners (thus of *śakti* energy). In actual fact,

the great initiate, the man-universe, Panji “carries his kingdom with him” since – a historical truth – his brother has taken over his Javanese kingdom.

In the tantric initiation literature known as *The Cycle of Panji*¹⁵, sexual gender is very fluid, like names (the various names of Heliogabalus and the ‘interchangeable’ gods, emphasised by Artaud) and further instances of (human or animal) identity. This results in a diversity of attractions and sexual practices (multiple partners, homosexuality, bestiality...) in the case of Prince Panji-Sun and his partners. Panji becomes a small monkey; his lady-love Candra Kirana (Moon) changes her sexual gender; cross-dressed women have the same aptitudes as men for war and government. Furthermore, Panji and his ladylove are often – without recognising each other – adversaries in battle or at the head of enemy kingdoms. On a symbolic or initiatic level, this relativisation and annihilation of identity parameters (which are only appearances and conventions) leads the ego to the undifferentiated Self [*svah*]. On stage, the different-coloured masks of the couple are finally white with eyes almost closed – a sign of inwardness. It can even happen that one lover or another dies in their blind confrontation, only to come to life again when they recognise each other. All knowledge at fundamental level is experienced as reminiscence (Jav. *eling*), whether attributed to primordial tradition, universal consciousness, the brain alone, or something else. In Panji, separation and the ‘war of principles’ is projected on humanity... as in *Héliogabale* and in *The Schism of Irshu* of Fabre d’Olivet which Artaud added as an appendix to document his central chapter: “La guerre des principes”. Similarly, in Javanese tantric Shai-vite literature and Balinese theatre, Shiva and his *śakti* Durga (ruler of cementeries) are first adversaries under their terrible appearances

as Barong Ket ‘the Beast’ (Banaspati Raja) and Rangda ‘the Widow’. These figures are sacred masks but also appearances that certain formidable initiates are reputed to take on or project. However, they recognise each other, unite and become once more the Shiva-Sakti fusion. It is one of the procedures of *somya*, the rising in degree of all creatures, a process that reinitiates the universe and is deemed the principal goal of Balinese rituals.

This behaviour of the heroes, which has its dose of cruelty, is ‘anarchic’ in that it flouts social codes. But it obeys the necessity of (re) finding unity – in Panji a political and mystical unity *achieved by inversions and reversals*, as in Artaud’s Heliogabalus.

“Eros’ desire is cruelty, since it burns contingencies; [...] an ascension is a tearing, [...] each stronger life passes through the others, in a massacre that is a transfiguration and a good. [...]”¹⁶

Heliogabalus sent out to seek through the empire a wife for his sun-god Elagabalus. He ended up giving him Astarte, the Moon. If the reign of Heliogabalus had lasted, the *fluidity* of identities – diametrically opposed to the ideology of hierarchised *races* that tarnishes Fabre d’Olivet’s *Histoire philosophique du genre humain* and, thereafter, certain traditionalist ideas – would not have had to wait for the LGBT¹⁷ movement. Paradoxically, the latter hardens binary sexualisation (the obligatory feminisation of terms), while the fluidity of Heliogabalus’ reign fosters a unitary neuter, simultaneously multicolour and white synthesis. This could have been installed at the time of the Roman Empire [*uchronia*].

Ram/Rama and perennialism [doubles and spatio-temporal derivatives]

Artaud reproaches historians for not remarking that Heliogabalus, with his horned priestly

tiara, appeared as “the successor on Earth and respondent of Ram and his wonderful Mythological Odyssey”¹⁸.

This horned Ram is the same as that of Fabre d'Olivet's *Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, in which reference is made, amongst other matters, to the deeds of the Atlanteans. Fabre d'Olivet's is the Aryan Ram/Rama of the Indian epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, who reigned for 10,000 years in the era called Treta Yuga. But he is a Ram “whom Arrien calls Dionysos, meaning divine intelligence”¹⁹. Fabre d'Olivet translates *ram* as ‘ram (i. e. male sheep)’, giving the god a Celtic origin and making him the sovereign pontiff of the ‘race of the Whites’, at the summit of a mythological hierarchy of four human races named by colours. Some adepts of Druidism mention Ram even today as the great civiliser Druid, the unifier of nations, who re-establishes the socio-cosmic order. [*dharma*] by transmitting in India and the whole world what the Celts had preserved from the Hyperborean tradition. For Guénon's acolytes, this tradition becomes an elitist Indo-European ideology. Hindu nationalists²⁰ speak of *sanātana dharma* with its non-dualist Principle [*advaita*].

Artaud writes a capital T when he means the ‘primordial tradition’ – always referred to in the singular. It has been rather disconcerting to discover what this *Histoire philosophique du genre humain* by Fabre d'Olivet purports as well as Artaud's affirmation of it in the chapter “La Guerre des principes”. It is a ‘history’ that ranks peoples by races according to their closeness to the Hyperboreans – via the Celt and ancient India. This idea of Primordial Tradition transposed into History has served ideologies with dramatic impact. Suddenly, Artaud appears as the resonator of such rumours in his intellectual environment, falling back on an artificial-looking spatio-temporal linearity.

Artaud's *Héliogabale* reveals that its author

is effectively related to the traditionalists, of whom René Guénon was the guru²¹. Elements such as the idea of degradation through the ages, a growing socio-cosmic entropy, a progressive concealment of meaning, and an ever-larger separation from the *principles* — Artaud's equivalents of the divine – are clear examples of that connection. The West is accused of accelerating the fall, in the first place Europe and its inauguration of history, in the second place the materialistic modernization process with its expansive logic leading to globalization. Revival efforts are consequently needed (like the attempt to wrap up the cycle toward a golden – or ante-Hyperborean – age) by means of a metaphysical spirit, the exercise of transcendental intuition, and for many also by means of the aid of traditional teachings – vestiges of a lost Primordial Tradition. Of this Tradition, India is deemed to have preserved the most. However, Artaud's thought, a thought of resonance, radiation and geometric structures belonging to a metaphysical and poetic spirit, shifts it all onto quite a different level. Traditionalism or perennialism would never take Heliogabalus as a model!

The War of Principles: the Female Power Repulsed from India... to Emesa

What link is there between Ram in India and Heliogabalus in Syria?

At the end of the Treta Yuga, it is said that a long-standing war of principles broke out, the schism of Irshu²². According to Druidism, this occurred because the female nature of the druidesses had been taken over by a man. Fabre d'Olivet says that the reason of the schism was the discovery in Indian music of a duality of ontological principles calling into question the monism of Ram and the Whites. Defeated by the monist Whites, for whom the sole Principle was male, sectarians of the female or “eaters of menstrual blood”²³ were chased out of India



Balinese sacred image [*rajah*] drawn by a tantric high priest representing fusion in unity. Photo by Catherine Basset.

and increasingly repelled from ‘Pallistan’ towards the West. Little by little, their numbers were whittled down: in the Mediterranean all that remain of that group are the Phoenicians. History owes to this migration the purple of Tyre (worn by Heliogabalus) as well as the Babylonian and Phoenician cosmogonies referring to the principles of chaos. The latter interested Artaud very much, especially the story of chaos falling in love with his principles, the solar and lunar cults, gods and goddesses related to it, and of course the vestiges of matriarchy contained in such narrations.

Artaud stretches the spatio-temporal thread of Fabre d’Olivet to reach Syria: it is in this kind

of society that Heliogabalus was born, and he remained throughout his life under the control of women – the four Julias.

Rama dharma vs Rawana, raksasa, Heliogabalus adharmā, white and red

Heliogabalus is a monist priest-king, defender of monotheism, like the Ram of Fabre d’Olivet. If Rama the White is the figure of *dharma* and the law of socio-cosmic harmony a hierarchised order, the behaviour of Heliogabalus the Red has much more of his rival (and of the Pinkshas, or Redheads). The antagonist hero stands for *adharmā*, like Dasamuka *alias* Ravana of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, king of the *rākṣasas* (an-

thropophagic giants). In Indonesia, that figure brings to mind a formidable adept of tantrism, ritually indispensable to master matter and its decomposition, a figure of very sexual nature called the 'left-hand' or 'red way' — which is the colour of Heliogabalus and the Pinkshas. As *avatāra* of Vishnu, it is Rawana whom Rama is destined to fight and annihilate in the context of *Rāmāyaṇa*, so that *dharma* can be re-established. The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Indonesia is much more tantric than that of Valmiki, and Rawana appears as its true hero.

Indeed, there is a *dharma* for each one of us, and the *dharma* of Antoninus Heliogabalus is in fact an anti-*dharma* or anti-established order — a form of anarchism. If Heliogabalus had reigned in Asia, his name (susceptible to be translated in *kawi* as Suryagiri, or 'Sun-Mountain') would have been added to that of the mythical anti-hero-*rākṣasa* and of historical tantric kings-*rākṣasa*, usually portrayed with fangs, like some representations of Shiva. Cruelty is also a metaphysical necessity for Dasamuka / Rawana (the great yogi rival of the gods) and the *rākṣasas*, just as his existence is considered by some as essential, for *rwa bhineda*, duality. A dynamics quite in tune with Artaud's idea of the need for the cruelty and anarchy in Heliogabalus. Red and white is the duality of colours in Tantrism: *white* for the 'male waters' (semen) and *red* for the 'female waters' related to the *sakti* (menstruation blood). This resonates with the Sakti-Shiva duality and probably — not by chance — with the red and white flag of Indonesia.

Divine names and the terrifying temple of Emesa [structures]

Throughout the pages with a more esoteric tenor (where there is no reference to sources), Artaud creates echoes between the names of deities, colours, geometries and stars. He lets out a cascade of divine names starting from El-Gabal, and including Baal, Bel, various Apollos and European-Indian doubles with bizarre associations fully unknown to us. "Heliogabalus himself gathers in himself the power of all these names"²⁴. But one thing alone is not mentioned: the sun.

The esoteric passage of *Héliogabale* plays with consonances and makes analogies. That is in a way the beginning of esotericism and the magic of poetry. As in his texts on Balinese theatre, the verb 'respond' is recurrent in his description of the temple of Emesa, where Heliogabalus officiated as a child. The temple is depicted as a monument full of sounds and echoes from the depths.

Of the temple of Emesa, Artaud emphasises the male cone and phallus of Elagabal as well as its opposite symbol: the downward-pointing female cone, a vagina-*yoni* that formed, beneath the great phallus-*linga* erected on the surface and the divine presence in the Black Stone of Emesa, the network of subterranean halls and the spiral of dark sewers. The picture is terrifying, hallucinating, but staggering in its virtuosity, like a musical composition: each *responds* to each in a tissue of *ideas*, the motions of the sacrificial cult coil and uncoil, submerge and emerge from the architecture of superimposed

Throughout the pages with a more esoteric tenor in *Héliogabale*, Artaud creates echoes between the names of deities, colours, geometries and stars.

inverted cones and sounds circulating throughout the many rooms of the temple, which are literally echo-chambers.²⁵

The inverted cones recall the highly important Sri Yantra, in which the duality of male and female principles is represented by the complex superposition of upward-pointing white cones and downward-pointing red ones.

Did Artaud invent this temple and these rites, and if so, to what extent? The priest descended alone into the hole to receive the sacrificial blood on his head. Which priest? The five-year-old Heliogabalus? That is not stated, but such a trauma would have sufficed to make an out-of-the-ordinary adolescent like Heliogabalus.

Echoes in the Latium of Alain Daniélou: Paganism and Cruelty of the Quest for Unity

In any case, to conceive an encounter of Antonin Artaud with Alain Daniélou and his Labyrinth is a tempting *uchronia*, especially in the Latium, where Heliogabalus reigned. At Daniélou's Labyrinth, and not only in the vestiges of an Etruscan temple, Artaud would have found some essential elements reunited: Paganism – with a capital letter reasserting its value —, Tradition, Indo-European dialogue, Shiva (in his solar aspect remindful of Surya) and his *linga* (as an echo of that of Elagabal and the conical Black Stone), and some other echoes of Heliogabalus, though with a much softer and more refined hedonism.

“In its initiatic and higher sense, Paganism

means concern for those major principles, which still continues to flow and live in the blood of people. [...] In its rites and feasts, Paganism reproduces the Myth of Creation, first and entire [...] And the pederastic religion of Heliogabalus, which is the religion of separation of and from the principle, is only repugnant because it has lost that transcendent notion, sinking into eroticism of sexualised creation in action.”²⁶

In the chapter entitled “La guerre des principes”, which plays an important role in Artaud's theory, it seems that the latter tries to reconcile two movements: a centripetal and transcendental with a centrifugal and labyrinthine cutting across various ancient or living traditions that have become peripheral. This is a movement towards Paganism, because of its ability to connect with different forces or deities.

In the end, however, it seems that in his *Héliogabale* Artaud's main tendency is to profess the unity of All, or at least to affirm the cruelty of his quest. It is to that cruelty that his hero will have sacrificed himself by wreaking havoc – so that, on a *ground zero*, something can be reborn. The validity of the principles is not affected by the number of gods, “that is, of forces that only desire to precipitate”²⁷ (perhaps in the sense of physics, chemistry and even alchemy?), by the multiplicity of their names, by their male or female identities, or by the circulation of deities and other fluctuations produced by peoples in history.

“He who rails at the polytheism of the ancients,

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whom he calls for that reason Barbarians, he is himself a Barbarian, meaning a European.” [...] “If peoples, as time goes by, have remade their gods in their own image; if they have extinguished the phosphorescent idea of the gods and, starting from the names that compelled them, they have been seen as powerless to go back, through the concentric touching of forces, through the applied and concrete magnetisation of energies, to the revelation of the principle that these gods disclose, one must blame [...] these peoples and not the principles, and still less that higher and complete idea of the world that Paganism sought to return to us”.²⁸

Like a folklore performance compared to the “truly sacred gesture, the sequence of innumerable myths, [...] the sedimentary build-up of gods does not furnish the idea of the formidable cosmic tradition that lies at the origin of the pagan world.”²⁹

“From the very beginning, ancient religions aimed to examine the Great All. They never sought to separate heaven from man, man from creation in its entirety, since the creation of the elements. It can even be said that, in the beginning, they saw clearly about creation. Catholicism shut the door, as did Buddhism before it” [...] “We are in creation up to our necks: we’re in it through our organs, both solid and subtle”. [...] “it is hard to climb back to God using the graduated path of the organs, when these organs fix us in the world where we are and tend to make us believe in its exclusive reality. The absolute is an abstraction, and the abstraction is contrary to our status as degenerate men. After that, should we be amazed that the pagans ended up by becoming idolators [...] and that the power of attraction of the principles ended up escaping them.”³⁰

This is part of a copious and complex reasoning (which requires to be thoroughly read in order to be grasped) that Artaud evokes a primordial

Tradition and ascribes a reality to the ‘war of principles’ by virtue of the Hindu literature of the Puranas as well as of Fabre d’Olivet. Artaud then considers Heliogabalus as the heir – and a proof – of the *Schism of Irshu*, although he draws from it the idea of a quest for unity – a not truly polytheistic form of Paganism.

“All the principles join in, especially the two principles from which cosmic life hangs: the male and the female”. The war of principles then propagates among humans, who recognise the disorder of the principles that preside over their anarchy, and this war configures the culture into which Heliogabalus is born, prefigured and predestined to become himself: Heliogabalus. [...] It was to end this separation of principles, to reduce their essential antagonism, that they took up arms. [...] And this war is entirely in the religion of the sun; it is found to the bloody but magical degree in the religion of the sun, as it was practised at Emesa; and although for centuries it has ceased to make warriors clash with each other, Heliogabalus followed its tracks”³¹.

Alain Daniélou and the Musical Enigma

If he had been consulted about the problem, Alain Daniélou may perhaps have pierced through to the origin of this war of ideologies in the sense that Fabre d’Olivet understood the discovery – in the pre-history of India, in music and the origin of sounds – of a gendered duality of cosmic principles. In his *Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, Fabre d’Olivet went as far as indicating the page number of his other masterpiece on music, in which he provided the key to the acoustic enigma... Alas, there is no trace of it in his posthumous edition. So, from where did Artaud get what he says that fits so well with the question of monism vs dualism? As to the ‘the transcendent analysis of music’, should one understand by that the

conceptions of India?

“Impossible to doubt: the facts are there; the facts, meaning the transcendent analysis of music, or rather the origin of sounds. As far back as one can go in the generation of sound, one finds two principles that play in parallel and combine to produce vibration. And beyond that, there is nothing but pure essence, the unanalysable abstract, the indeterminate absolute, in short: ‘the Intelligible’, as Fabre d’Olivet calls it. And between ‘the Intelligible’ and the world, nature or creation, there is harmony, vibration, acoustics, which is the first passage, the most subtle and most malleable, that unites abstract and concrete”.³²

These two principles: male and female, were they Shiva and Sakti in unmanifested *bindu* and manifested *nāda*, the origin of sound and light and the rise of each creation, which nurtured several monist (non-dualist) and then several dualist Shaivite glosses?³³

Had he read Daniélou, Artaud would at least have learned about the Hindu tradition that allows one to become cosmicised and go back to the origin, that is, towards the principles and the Principle³⁴.

Tradition, the two Antonins, the Essay (Problematics)

“I dedicate this book to the manes of Apollonius of Tyana, a contemporary of Christ and to whatever may remain of true Visionaries in this world that is coming to an end. To emphasise its deep atemporality, its spiritualism and its uselessness, I dedicate it to anarchy and to the war for this world. I dedicate it lastly to the Ancestors, to the Heroes in the ancient sense and to the souls of the Great Dead.”³⁵

Apollonius of Tyana is known thanks to Julia Domna, great-aunt of Heliogabalus, wife of the emperor Septimius Severus Augustus. It is she, the woman philosopher, who commands

the sophist Philostratus to write the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. That was an ancient Indo-European dialogue: the neo-Pythagorean philosopher is said to have gone to India and to have attempted to reconcile the doctrine of Brahmins with that of his master. Artaud once planned to devote an essay to him.

The three dedications of *Héliogabale ou l’anarchiste couronné* thus place the work within the singular Tradition, as well as a good part of the documentation Artaud consulted, but his work is neither that of an historian, nor a traditionalist manifesto. The poet acted as a Western artist, he used a double to express himself: Heliogabalus. He claims it, and ultimately it is not he who says that his *Héliogabale* is an essay.

In a draft letter, Artaud writes the following: “I have just sent you *Héliogabale*. It is only a part of myself. Theatre writings are more important than this book, but vague.”³⁶ But this ‘part of him’ is also only ‘partly from him’. The publisher Robert Denoël compelled Artaud to plunge into scholarship, to consult a mass of scattered sources and to articulate his own thought on his borrowings, which he did not do particularly well. Above all, between the knowledge that is borrowed and accumulated [*prapañca*] and the Knowledge [*jñāna*] that rises and radiates there is a different as to levels of consciousness. When through *prajña*, or metaphysical intuition, one ascends from the *prapañca* to the *jñāna*, one returns transformed forever. It modifies one’s way of thinking and writing. The reality of History, mostly based on ordinary objective knowledge [*vijñāna*], i.e. the perception of separate entities), is difficult to reconcile with an a-historical, a-temporal, structural and fundamental inspiration. With certain traditionalists, it results in ideological fables; with Artaud, on the contrary, it leads to poetry – in the sense of the poetry of the *kawis*.

Artaud writes to Jean Paulhan: “The Supreme

Truth alone is what I seek, but when they speak to me about what is true, I always wonder what truth they speak of, and up to what point the notion one may have of a limited and objective truth conceals the other that obstinately escapes all discernment, all limits, all localisation and, in the end, escapes what is called the Real. [...] True or not, the character of Heliogabalus lives, I believe, down to his very depths, whether they are those of Heliogabalus as an historical character, or those of a character who is myself.”³⁷ [...] “It may be that this book is less true than my other books. But [...] my true nature appears nonetheless as well as my own self, as direct and burdensome as it can be. There is a matrix, certainly: but I manage however to catch up in the detail of many, many passages, and in the conception of the

central figure where I myself am described. It is doubtless unfair to see in it only eloquence and historical reconstruction: all that was only a pretext.”³⁸

Since the acoustic principle that is simultaneously ONE and TWO implies that only the ‘same’ resonate together, the author of this article has almost found herself in the same process as Antonin Artaud – without, however, identifying with the latter, or with Heliogabalus. Immersed in a sea of facts, she has vibrated with certain things rather than others, finding a response not in scholarship but in an experience and a personal history: the Indonesia of Shaivite tantrism. Hence the ‘intrusions’ that may at first appear superfluous or illegitimate in view of the inexhaustible richness of Artaud’s text and all that has not been rendered here. •

¹ Antonin Artaud once aspired to be a priest (in Christianity). In Bali, most *pemangku* temple-guardian priests are elect due to a sign of mental derangement, which is generally followed by initiation and duties concerning ritual service. This makes them whole citizens and cures them. On the other hand, rejection of the vocation aggravates the symptoms.

² Antonin ARTAUD, *Héliogabale ou l'anarchiste couronné*. Unless otherwise indicated, the page numbers given are those of the 1979 Gallimard edition of Artaud's *Œuvres Complètes*.

³ Cf. Antonin ARTAUD, *Héliogabale*, in: *Œuvres Complètes* VII, p. 82.

⁴ It is based on the text collected by C. Hoykaas, *Surya-Sevana. The Way to God of a Balinese Siva Priest*. Michele Stephen, "Sūrya-Sevana: A Balinese Tantric Practice", Archipel [Online], 89 | 2015, Online since connection on 21 September 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/archipel/492>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/archipel.492>. Printed version: 15 April 2015, p.95-124. Ed. Association Archipel, Etudes interdisciplinaires sur le monde insulindien, Paris.

⁵ Some authors have stated that Helio-gabalus castrated himself, or that he was a hermaphrodite (although a bust of the emperor shows a slight beard). Artaud says that his mother slept with him.

⁶ Men with the status of wife are a traditional practice at Bali, but questions of inheritance require a male heir. It remains a patriarchy.

⁷ Antonin ARTAUD, *Héliogabale*, in: *Œuvres Complètes* VII, p. 17.

⁸ Antonin ARTAUD, *Héliogabale*, in: *Œuvres Complètes* VII, p. 84.

⁹ Cf. Marie-France David-de Palacio, *Re-viviscences romaines la latinité au miroir de l'esprit fin de siècle*, ed. Peter Lang, 2005.

¹⁰ Olivier Penot-Lacassagne, "Artaud : l'invention de l'origine" in *Mythes des origines* | Gérard Peylet, Michel Prat, Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2002, p. 279-288.

¹¹ Antonin ARTAUD, *Héliogabale*, in: *Œuvres Complètes* VII, p. 84.

¹² In the last years of his life, affected by anal cancer, Artaud expectorated anathemas and threw oral and written curses full of 'poop', 'pus' and other excrements, especially at initiates, religions and esotericisms of all sorts (Balinese and Dalai-Lama included) which bewitched him as much as any 'succubus and incubus'.

¹³ Antonin Artaud, *Lettres sur la cruauté*, in: *Œuvres*, edited by Evelyne Grossman, Paris 2004, p. 566.

¹⁴ Antoine Fabre d'Olivet, *Histoire philosophique du genre humain, ou l'homme considéré sous ses rapports, religieux et politiques dans l'état social à toutes les époques et chez les différents peuples de la terre*, Tomes I et II, 1910 ; ebook Ed. l'Arbre d'Or, Suisse, 2009.

¹⁵ The separate texts under the generic name of *Cycle of Panji* were drafted at Java, then at Bali and in continental south-east Asia.

¹⁶ Antonin ARTAUD, *Troisième lettre sur la cruauté*, in: *Œuvres Complètes* VII, p. 568.

¹⁷ LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

¹⁸ Antonin Artaud, *Héliogabale*, in: *Œuvres Complètes* VII, p. 65.

¹⁹ It is Fabre d'Olivet who cites Arrien. Arrien is one of the Greek authors who have given us fragments of Megasthenes' *Indica*, the historian and geographer of Ancient Greece, whose work describes the India of the King Chandragupta Maurya, where he was sent as ambassador in about 303 BCE.

²⁰ Incidentally, Hindu nationalists are fighting against the mosque built at Ayodhya on

what they claim is the palace of Rama.

21 It was René Daumal, Sanskritise, co-author of the review and movement *Le Grand Jeu*, who introduced Guénon to Artaud.

René Daumal is also the author of the unfinished initiatic novel *Le Mont Analogue*.

22 For some present-day adepts of machist Druidism, the “schism of Irshu” is recounted in the Mahabharata, in which Krishna acts, the successive *avatara* of Vishnu after Rama. Irshu is the elder of the antagonists, the 100 Koravas.

23 The Pinkshas *alias* the Ginger, formerly called Pali (shepherds), and afterwards Yonis (vaginas).

24 Antonin Artaud, *Héliogabale*, in: *Œuvres Complètes* VII, p. 78.

25 Cf. Chapter 1, Le berceau de sperme, in : *Ibidem*, pp. 38-43.

26 Cf. Appendice II : La religion du soleil en Syrie, in : *Ibidem*, p. 131.

27 Antonin Artaud, *Ibidem*, p. 46.

28 Antonin Artaud, *Ibidem*, p. 47.

29 Antonin Artaud, *Ibidem*.

30 Antonin Artaud, *Ibidem*, pp. 50-51.

31 Antonin Artaud, *Ibidem*, pp. 58-59.

32 Antonin Artaud, Appendice I, Le schisme d’Irshu, in: *Ibidem*, p.130.

33 See also, Nirmala. V, “The concept of nada and bindu in Tirumantiram’ International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, Volume 2, Issue 5, May 2012 1 ISSN 2250-3153. https://www.ijsrp.org/research_paper_may2012/ijsrp-may-2012-96.pdf

34 Alain Daniélou, “Mantra, les principes du langage et de la musique selon la cosmologie hindoue”, Cahiers d’ethnomusicologie 4, 1991 [on-line], 4 | 1991, put on line 01 January 2012, consulted 25 October 2012. URL : <http://ethnomusicologie.revues.org/1575>. English translation in Trans-cultural Dialogues n°3, December 2019 – Winter Solstice.

35 First epigraph of Artaud’s *Héliogabale*, in: *Œuvres* p. 9.

36 Antonin Artaud, Lettres autour d’Héliogabale, in: *Œuvres* p. 475.

37 Antonin Artaud, *Ibidem*, p. 476.

38 Antonin Artaud, *Ibidem*, p. 477.

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