

SUMMARY REVIEW

"Shamanism and Altered States of Consciousness"

edited by Marlene Dobkin de Rios and Michael Winkelman.
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A recent volume of the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* served as a multidisciplinary forum for addressing the issue of shamanism and altered states of consciousness (ASC). The volume includes fourteen original articles by individuals in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, psychology, psychiatry, folklore, botany, and philosophy. This review is not a critical review; rather, it constitutes a summary review, largely based on the editors' abstracts of the articles, which has been compiled and edited by one of the editors of this special issue.

In the opening article, "Shamanism and Altered States of Consciousness: An Introduction", Marlene Dobkin de Rios and Winkelman place the study of shamanism and altered states of consciousness (ASC) in a cross-cultural and historical context and relate the other papers of the issue to these main themes. It is suggested that in spite of considerable theoretical and terminological differences among scholars in this area, there are conceptual and empirical grounds for distinctions among different types of trance practitioners and ASCs. It is argued that shamanism is a cultural adaptation of hunting and gathering societies to the universal biological potential for ASCs, and that the specific nature of the ASC and healing practitioners changes as societies become more complex. The role of ASCs in understanding shamanic phenomena, the roots of religious experience, and modern manifestations of trance experiences are examined. It is argued that Western cultural avoidance of ASCs has inhibited our ability to understand these phenomena, and has prevented an integration of shamanistic and trance perspectives in understanding human psychology, consciousness, and knowledge of the world.

In "'Trance' and 'Shamanism' What's in a Name?" Erika Bourguignon considers the implications of the definitions and typologies of "trance" and "shamanism" for the development and testing of cross-cultural hypotheses through a review of definitions, typologies and uses of the terms and related concepts in anthropology. A review of current literature in the field shows that authors vary widely in their definitions and applications of terms: some uses are based upon reasoned criteria, others on traditional practice; some establish typologies, others prefer continua. Classifications range from narrow and highly specific to a broad and inclusive coverage. This review of diverse approaches to the study of trance and shamanism illustrates differences in the various approaches, the central importance of the concept of "control" and the meaning assigned

to it, and the importance of studying these phenomena in relation to the particular cultural context.

"A Cross-Cultural Study of Shamanistic Healers" by Michael Winkelman provides a summary of a cross-cultural study on the similarities and differences in trance practitioners engaged in healing. The practitioner types and their characteristics were based upon a formal quantitative analysis of coded data. The findings suggest distinct types of healers, labeled Shaman, Shaman/Healers, Healers and Mediums. The data illustrates not only some universals of healers, but more importantly, finds systematic differences between the Shamans of hunting and gathering societies, the Shaman/Healers of agricultural societies, and the possessed Mediums of politically-stratified societies. These different types of trance healers are characterized and compared in order to illustrate the importance of terminological clarification and clarity, as well as examining the characteristics and functions of shamanistic healers with respect to the social and cultural context of their activities.

"The Nature of the Shamanic State of Consciousness: A Review" by Peggy Ann Wright shows that while a common psychobiological process is associated with the various ASCs utilized by shamans, meditators, mediums and others, that nonetheless the shamanic state of consciousness (SSC) can be differentiated physiologically from those trance states referred to as "possession". Psychophysiological literature on different types of trances, and with seizure conditions associated with the temporal lobe discharge syndrome is reviewed. On this basis it is hypothesized that while both the SSC and "possession" trances involve hippocampal-septal stimulation, the difference between the SSC and the "possession" states includes the amygdala involvement associated with the latter. This criterion and others establish a basis for differentiating between the terms shamanic, shamanistic and mediumistic. The physiological concomitants of the SSC make it appear to be both physiologically and psychologically beneficial, as well as indicating that it is most likely that there is a genetic component affecting one's ability to enter the SSC and other ASC.

"A Philosophical Inquiry to Include Trance in Epistemology" by Helmut Wautischer examines the relationship of ASC-based perceptions to traditional concerns about validity and reliability. He argues that in an ASC, the perception of reality extends beyond the usual spatial and temporal boundaries normally perceived by the sense organs. It is argued that the scientific problems of validity and reliability of trance experiences are in principle no different than the problems associated with ordinary perception. The shift in early Greek philosophy from myth to an emphasis on reason (logos) has led to a neglect of those subtle qualities of reason that were considered to be gateways for divine revelation. Scientific methodologies cannot account for such revelation, and there are no criteria known to science that would enable people to utilize these phenomena. Shamanic experiences are intersubjectively accessible and provide data that is suitable for the construction of rational theories if

appropriate methodologies are developed. However, science has tended to treat shamanic experiences as psychological ones, and consequently without value for empirical research. This article examines the possibility of reevaluating the terms "rational" and "consciousness" in order to expand scientific methodologies in such a way that volitionally altered perceptions of reality can be integrated into scientific research.

In "What Has Really Been Learned About Shamanism?" Richard Noll argues that the investigations of shamanism and their ASCs within anthropology have followed some of the "prescriptive" problems inherited from the discipline of psychology, coloring the assumptions and perspectives of their work. These inherited problems include: conscious/volitional versus unconscious/involuntary mentalisms; contentual objectivism versus contentual subjectivism; environmentalism versus nativism; monopsychism versus polypsychism; mechanism versus vitalism; and quantitativism versus qualitativism. Although the polemics of anthropological studies of shamanism have reflected these prescriptive perspectives, this has not inhibited the acquisition of new knowledge about shamanism. Nevertheless, their resolution is lacking due to insufficient data.

In the article on "Psychoactive Properties of !Kung Bushmen Medicine Plants," Winkelman and De Rios address some of the recent controversy over the role of psychoactive substances in the !Kung Bushmen healing ceremonies and trance induction. Although some contemporary works on the !Kung and their healing ceremonies give no evidence of the use of psychoactive plants, an examination of the available biochemical and pharmacological literature on the properties of the previously reported !Kung medicine plants indicates that most contain psychoactive or toxic substances likely to have trance-inducing properties. Almost half of the !Kung medicine plants contain psychoactive substances or have toxic properties, and a similarly large group of these plants have psychoactive or toxic properties in related species. Although recent reports have little concern with the use of psychoactive substances, the earlier literature illustrates a major concern with the use of psychoactive substances in !Kung Bushmen trance and healing. This contrast with more recent research suggests a decline in the use of psychoactive plants in the recent past. This decline is examined with respect to changes in the !Kung Bushmen society, and with respect to how attitudes in the U.S. regarding drug use may have influenced investigators and their reporting.

"The Sacred Journey in Dynastic Egypt: Shamanistic Trance in the Context of the Narcotic Water Lily and the Mandrake" by William Emboden reexamines the role of water lilies and mandrakes (*Nymphaea* and *Mandragora* respectively) in ancient Egyptian healing, suggesting the possible importance of these plants as adjuncts to shamanistic healing in dynastic Egypt. Although the usual interpretation of the water lily and mandrake has been that of a part of ritual mourning, this paper revises this thinking. Based upon an extensive review of these two powerful

narcotic plants in iconography and ritual, it is argued that the dynastic Egyptians had developed a form of shamanistic trance induced by these two plants and used in medicine and healing ritual. Analysis of the ritual and sacred iconography of dynastic Egypt as seen on stelae, in magical papyri, and on vessels, indicates these people possessed a profound knowledge with respect to plant lore and altered states of consciousness. The abundant data left to us indicates that the shamanistic priest, who was highly placed in the stratified society, guided the souls of the living and dead, provided for the transmutation of souls into other bodies and the personification of plants as possessed by humans, as well as other shamanistic activities. The inclusion of five full-page pictures illustrates the central role of these plants in royal and religious artistic representations.

Walter Andritsky's article on "Sociopsychotherapeutic Functions of Ayahuasca Healing in Amazonia" examines the social and psychotherapeutic functions of healing rituals with ayahuasca among Amazonia groups, and analyzes their healing effectiveness in terms of Western scientific and sociopsychotherapeutic perspectives. The paper gives an overview of the preparation and application of ayahuasca, the symbolic adaptations to the process of social change, the role of singing, the perceptive mode during the visionary state, and the structure of the visions. It is noted that the healing activities provide the whole community access to the transcendental experiences which clearly have integrative and cohesive social functions. Ethnopsychology provides important insights into the functions of archaic healing rituals, and can be used to illustrate the transcendental experiences and pathological use of drugs in modern societies.

"A Modern Day Shaman in the Peruvian Amazon: Pharmacopoeia and Trance" by Dobkin de Rios addresses the functions and successes of shamanistic healers in the context of psychoneuroimmunology. This illustrates how therapeutic success is achieved via the symbolic manipulation of biological processes. This perspective reinforces the continued importance of shamanistic healers in the contemporary world. This point is illustrated by the activities of a Peruvian healer who utilizes both psychoactive plant substances and a syncretic combination of modern and traditional symbolic therapies. The use of a wide range of psychoactive plants, both psychedelic and nonhallucinogenic, is shown to be effective in the treatment of disease. This demonstrates the pragmatic and adaptive approaches of these traditional healers and their positive functions in treating a variety of illnesses in today's world.

Peter Stahl's article on "Identification of Hallucinatory Themes in the Late Neolithic Art of Hungary" shows that a number of features coalesced in the Venus figurines of the Late Neolithic culture of Hungary have been identified with dominant hallucinatory themes. This suggests the crucial role of ecstatic religion in this culture. The article provides a review of the nature and role of hallucinogens in ecstatic religion of contemporary and historical cultures in order to establish a

background for analysis. Themes identified in these Late Neolithic artifacts which are associated with hallucinogen use include: the presence of iconographic elements similar to eidetic forms; the use of red color; anthropo- and theriopo-morphic figurines in seated postures; and specific patterns of breakage with disposal. The discussion illuminates the crucial features as well as the role and significance of these factors in ecstatic cults.

"Jungian Shamanism" by Harry Senn examines Carl Jung as a shamanic practitioner. The literature on shamanism generally describes a specially-gifted individual who is able to contact and communicate with a realm where spirit beings offer wisdom and help, and who actively transmits this knowledge to others. There seem to be approximately five features which define shamanism: the necessity of a "call"—an illness or incident which signifies the necessity of the individual to work with the spirits; the method used to achieve communion with the altered state of reality; the quality of the altered state of consciousness; the process of healing which is utilized; and the psychic feats which distinguish the abilities of the shaman. Carl G. Jung displayed all five of these features in his life and psychotherapy, including: dreams and waking fantasies in childhood; the use of active imagination in the induction of an altered state of consciousness; his contact with forces, knowledge and power of the unconsciousness; his dual "personality" and the dialogue with the inner world—the unconscious, the realm of the archetypes; the use of these discoveries to counsel, advise and heal; and his psychic abilities, including clairvoyance and out-of-the-body experiences.

"Shamans, Sacraments and Psychiatry" by Gary Bravo and Charles Grob reviews the role of psychedelic drugs as potential tools for psychiatric research and practice. The decline in the utilization of these substances is linked to the social reactions, which led to psychedelics being scheduled as controlled substances and consequently unavailable for human research. Three different paradigms for the use of psychedelics in psychiatry are reviewed: the psychotomimetic, the psycholytic, and the psychedelic approaches. The psychotomimetic paradigm, which viewed hallucinogens as agents for temporarily inducing psychoses, proved to be of limited value to the understanding and treatment of mental illness. The psycholytic approach, which was derived from the psychoanalytic paradigm, is a technique employing low dosages of psychedelic drugs to reduce psychological defenses and to release unconscious information. The high dose psychedelic paradigm frequently produced reports of mystical or spiritual experiences, thus recasting the psychiatrist as a modern-day shaman. This paradigm has alienated many of the psychiatric profession and has led to a reaction against the use of psychedelics in psychotherapy. Future opportunities to pursue sanctioned clinical research with psychoactive substances must learn from the traditional modes of shamanistic healers in order to optimally assess true clinical efficacy and safety.

"LSD and Artistic Creativity" by Oscar Janiger and Marlene Dobkin de Rios examines some unique studies in the later 1950's on the effects of LSD upon artistic creativity. In this project, artists were asked to draw and paint a Kachina doll both prior to and one hour after the ingestion of LSD. Evaluations of the artistic productions were analyzed by a professor of art history in order to investigate the impact of LSD on artistic creativity. Certain representative changes were found in the artist's dominant style category. The most significant change was noted in those artists whose intrinsically representational or abstract styles shifted to expressionistic, "non-objective" abstract styles. Other changes noted included: relative size expansion, involution, alteration of figure/ground, alteration of boundaries, movement, greater intensity of color and light; oversimplification; symbolic and abstract depiction of objects; and fragmentation, disorganization and distortion. Many artists judged their LSD productions to be more interesting and aesthetically superior to their usual mode of expression. The above mentioned changes contributed to the artists' conviction that they were fashioning new meanings to an emergent world.

Although the works presented here by no means exhaust the relevant information on shamanism, the combined articles do bring together diverse perspectives on the nature of shamanism and altered states of consciousness, spanning contemporary and historical manifestations. A central theme is a recognition of the commonality and importance of shamanic experiences across time and cultures. As the editors point out, "The complex prehistorical and historical use of mind-altering plants to achieve ASCs, improve health, and engender religiosity must be understood and appreciated...includ[ing] a recognition of the relationship of these substances to the perennial philosophies...and to the realms of transpersonal experiences...[T]he intellectual heritage of shamanism [must] be recast to serve humankind in health and tranquility."

The theme issue of the Journal of Psychoactive Drugs (volume 21) on "Shamanism and Altered States of Consciousness" may be ordered for \$25 from the Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, 409 Clayton Street, San Francisco, California 94117, (415) 626-2810.

BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW

Readers interested in reviewing the following book should contact book review editor Michael Winkelman at Department of Anthropology, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-2402, (602) 965-6213.

Open Mind, Discriminating Mind: Reflections on Human Possibilities, by Charles T. Tart, (San Francisco: Harper & Row), 1990.