

LETTERE AL DIRETTORE

Valcamonica  
Symposium  
1972

Cher Monsieur Anati

je ne veux pas attendre davantage pour vous exprimer, tous mes remerciements pour la tenue du symposium qui vient de se dérouler à Boario et Capo di Ponte. Vous savez l'intérêt qu'ont présenté pour moi les contacts établis, les conférences de nos collègues, les visites de lieux préhistoriques; je vous l'ai déjà dit de vive voix. Mais je veux y ajouter le sentiment éprouvé par l'accueil qui nous a été fait: on ne pouvait trouver à la fois plus de sollicitude pour notre confort, de soins pour que tout l'intérêt des exposés et des visites nous soit aisément accessible, d'atmosphère plus cordiale.

Germaine Dieterlen  
Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes  
Sorbonne, Paris (France).

Dear Professor Anati,

I would just like to tell you how successful your symposium has been in all respects, and how very fertile your personal idea of a dialogue between the scholars of history of religion and of archeology has proved to be. I know from personal experience how difficult it is to obtain any sort of scientific intercourse between these two disciplines and I must express my most sincere admiration for your initiative as well as for your ability to organize the symposium in a quite outstanding way, and — this being perhaps the most important — to create a climate of extremely serious scientific discussions. I am quite convinced that this symposium must be followed by many of the same kind; this can be said of very few symposia and congresses indeed.

Yours sincerely

Professor Bertil Almgren  
Head of the department of Nordic Archaeology,  
University of Uppsala (Sweden).

Dear Professor Anati,

During the symposium and especially then during the post-symposium excursion, I pictured an impression-like view how the Valcamonica religion was like, according to the materials at hand,

keeping in mind, how the crossing of the Alpine region only could make it possible to link Middle Europe with the Mediterranean cultures. I am quite convinced that for future postulations all the admirable results you already gained are of the greatest importance. Seldom an international scientific congress can lead to so important results as this one. I am very happy that the new international society of archaeological and ethnological study of religions was established during this symposium, and you are to be thanked for the excellent idea.

If I put my impressions together, I have now the view that the Valcamonica religion manifested in the rock art was martial by character, and emphasized the importance of weapons in many respects. The fact that the rocks where incisions are found look almost as natural fortresses seems to strengthen this aspect. On the other hand, the richness of the motifs refers to the many-sided life in surrounding areas, also to the probable trade connections along the natural route of the valley.

Personally, I am able only to compare the material at hand with the views of the ways of thinking, I consider characteristic of primitive mind. My analogy is based on very distant cultures, but somehow I think it possible that some features of Valcamonica could be interpreted on their basis. When thinking about the possible motivation of work on rocks, I could not avoid the explanation that somehow the early Camunians considered it magically useful to picture the objects and beings. I have the basic view that very often *mana* or spiritual power of an object is keenly manifested by form: this perhaps is one of the reasons why some objects are much alike. In fact, much of the art was not very realistic, but simplified so as to mark some features which were considered characteristic of the magic form.

Another probable aspect of motivation is connected to the idea of a link between an object and a kind of soul characteristic of it. When the artist pictured human beings and animals, he perhaps had in mind a kind of control through the connection between image and object. Pictured animals were more easily hunted because their souls were bound to the pictures; similarly the possible enemies were weakened.

Pictures which in my mind referred to ritual dance probably helped to strengthen the positive influence the dancers had in respect to superhuman powers attending the dances and looking at the pictures.

The special belt or loin-cloth characteristic of many stelae seen during the excursion, reminded me of the importance of such a cloth in primitive thinking of ancient Polynesians. Sacred chieftainship was markedly symbolised by such paraphernalia. Very often, chiefs were termed by words referring to the sacred loin-cloth. In many Polynesian languages, *mata-siapo*, «first in a sacred loin-cloth» refers to the first-born of a ruler who inherited all the divine *mana* of his ancestors. Accordingly, the cloth is referred to human fertility as such. The importance of cloth is somehow kept to modern times: when I was made a Samoan chief, a loin-cloth of barcloth was handed to me. Chiefs and deities were considered alike in this respect. It could be quite natural that the deities probably described by stelae had to be marked with holy belts and this cloth, with its folds so often marked, somehow must be referred to the deities in question.

These initial impressions are a proof of the immense interest I got in Valcamonica.

Sincerely yours,

Aarne A. Koskinen  
University of Helsinki (Finland).

Estimado colega:

Me es muy grato dirigirme a Vd. para transmitirle mis felicitaciones por el éxito alcanzado por el «Simposio Internazionale sulle Religioni della Preistoria» que acaba de finalizar en Boario Terme (Val Camonica). No es ninguna exageración decir que ha sido la más interesante y mejor organizada reunión científica a la que he asistido en los últimos años, destacable tanto por las importantes personalidades asistentes como por las comunicaciones presentadas, y también — como factor muy importante — por las visitas a diversos sitios en que se ubican las notables manifestaciones de arte rupestre de esta región. También debe destacarse la cordialidad que privó durante todo el transcurso del Simposio. Por otra parte, éste abre una fructífera perspectiva para una labor interdisciplinaria entre arqueólogos e historiadores de las religiones.

En este sentido, es muy importante la iniciativa tomada durante el Simposio, de fundar una «Association Internationale pour les Religions Préhistoriques et Ethnologiques», de la que fueron promotores los más distinguidos miembros del Simposio y de la que nos hemos constituido en Miembros Fundadores una gran parte de los asistentes. Creo que ello impulsará en forma firme una colaboración que se ha hecho indispensable, entre las disciplinas que tratan de hacer conocer mejor la esencia espiritual del hombre y sus manifestaciones a través del tiempo y del espacio.

Prof. Juan Schobinger  
Director del Instituto de Arqueología  
y Etnología de la Universidad Nacional  
de Cuyo, Mendoza (Argentina).

Dear Prof. Anati,

It is one of the greatest achievements in my life to have participated in the Symposium where I had ample opportunities for mutual discussion and exchange of ideas. This is really a Symposium, in the strictest sense of the term, where people from different disciplines assembled and gained a lot through discussions on problems of prime importance, universal in nature. In Prehistory, and especially in Prehistoric Religion, a pan-world context should be considered and you, very aptly, made this Symposium a platform for interdisciplinary scientists from different continents. You have convened the Symposium at the right time and I hope that this is the first of meetings which will be continued at regular intervals to evaluate the nature of work being carried on in different parts of the world.

I am very happy that you have set up an International Association on Religions in Prehistory and Ethnology. I am sure that this is the nucleus of interdisciplinary cooperation and coordination in the field of Prehistoric Religion. I congratulate you on behalf of my country, of the University of Calcutta and of the Anthropological Society of India. I hope that International Organizations for the development of Sciences will come forward to assist the Association which you have set up.

Yours sincerely,

Asok K. Ghosh  
Department of Anthropology,  
University of Calcutta (India).

Dear Colleague,

Back from the U.K. I wish to thank you for the way you made us feel at home at the Symposium; for everything you did together with your wife, Dr. & Mrs. Paul-Louis van Berg and the others who assisted you. You have put in a tremendous amount of work into this Symposium and one could feel that you are highly respected among the people in the valley who have received us so generously. Thank you very much indeed. I have received new insight into a new dimension with regard to the study of religion and this will be applied in my department at this university.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. G. C. Oosthuizen  
Universiteit van Durban-Westville (Natal).

Dispense di  
Paletnologia

Caro Anati,

Immagino il tuo stupore nel vedere il mio nome tra i compilatori delle dispense di Paletnologia in uso presso l'Università di Milano, anche nell'ultima edizione. Posso però assicurarti che in quello zibaldone non c'è nulla di mio, oltre al nome, nonostante a suo tempo e su espresso invito, affidai incautamente al responsabile di quella pubblicazione una quarantina di cartelle riguardanti la preistoria dell'Italia centromeridionale.

Potresti chiedermi anche perchè non ho finora preteso che il mio nome venisse cancellato. In verità è la cosa che ho sempre pensato di fare, ma l'idea di dovere eventualmente iniziare un'azione legale mi ha finora trattenuto, anche perchè mi sono sempre aspettato che ciò venisse fatto spontaneamente dai responsabili. Spero che questa sia l'occasione buona perchè avvenga questa necessaria cancellazione. Mi potrai accusare di leggerezza nel non avere in tempo dissociato il mio nome da quel « pasticciaccio », ma non di aver attivamente contribuito alla « strage degli . . . . studenti ».

Poichè è notorio che molti professori scrivono delle dispense per trarne profitto, ci tengo a chiarirti che non avevo accettato l'incarico in vista di guadagni. D'altra parte ignoro se qualcuno abbia tratto profitto da quelle dispense: io, da parte mia, posso assicurarti di no.

Se pensi che questa mia dichiarazione possa assolvermi, almeno in campo scientifico, potrai pubblicarla nel *Bollettino*.

Prof. Santo Tinè  
Istituto di Archeologia  
Università di Genova

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