

Pozvánka

Česká asociace pro sociální antropologii
a
Česká sociologická společnost
ve spolupráci s
Etnologickým ústavem AV ČR
a
CEFRES

Vás srdečně zvou na

175. GELLNEROVSKÝ SEMINÁŘ

Gellnerovský seminář založen Jiřím Musilem a Petrem Skalníkem v roce 1998,

který se bude konat

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v knihovně CEFRES (Na Florenci 3, Praha 1).

Vystoupí

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na téma

A Religion of Nature? Anthropology of sacred artefacts and cyborg gods in Afro-Brazilian religions

K pozvánce přikládáme abstrakt přednášky a charakteristiku přednášejícího

Luděk BROŽ, v.r., Zdeněk UHEREK, v.r., Alena MILTOVÁ, v.r.

A Religion of Nature? Anthropology of sacred artefacts and cyborg gods in Afro-Brazilian religions

Afro-Brazilian Candomblé, the worship of the West African deities which spread around Brazil as a consequence of the Atlantic Slave Trade, is often described by its followers and by the anthropologists who studied it as a “religion of nature”. Indeed, Candomblé deities (called *orixás*) are closely associated with natural elements in the landscape; but they are also associated with human temperaments and with different stages of life and matter. In the attempt to problematize and understand what kind of “nature” is implied in this context, I will analyse the sacred artefacts that constitute a central part of the ritual practice, the so called *assentamentos*.

The rules of fabrication of these mysterious *factishes*, using Latour’s neologism, are often surrounded by secrecy and sacredness as they constitute the physical “bodies” and “mouths” of the *orixás* where sacrifices and offerings are performed. Involving animal blood, vegetable substances, and other materials like wood, iron or copper in the making, the *assentamentos* are made by humans as a means of condensing and manipulating *axé*, the sacred force that is infused in natural elements. Trying to escape the colonial narrative that long described these practices as “fetishism”, I would argue that these artefacts can be understood as powerful “technological” devices and channels of communication between the visible and the invisible world. Moreover, these receptacles mirror both the deity and the heads of the novices who undergo the initiation ritual, which starts a lifelong bond between the *orixá*, the artefact, and the human.

Using Haraway’s metaphor of the cyborg, I analyse how these artefacts transcend and challenge the dichotomies of Western thought. Being it at the same time alive and inert, natural and technological, human and animal, infused with life force and mere vessel, the *assentamento* subverts these categories and sheds a light on the ways in which humans, gods, animals and elements of the landscape are made and perceived.

Giovanna Capponi is trained as a social anthropologist with a particular interest in human-environment relation, human-animal studies, cultural and historical ecology and ‘natureculture’. During her PhD at the University of Roehampton (London), she conducted extensive multi-sited (Italy and Brazil) fieldwork looking at animal sacrificial practices and perception of the environment in Afro-Brazilian Candomblé, developing her own perspectives in the fields of anthropology of ritual, material culture and human-animal studies. She worked within the AHRC-funded “Cultural and Scientific Perception of Human-Chicken Interaction” interdisciplinary project, which brought together researchers in different fields to study the significance of fowls in human cultures through history and in the present days. In 2018, she passed her viva voce with no corrections. At CEFRES/Charles University (Prague) she is starting second fieldwork as a postdoctoral researcher within the TANDEM “Bewildering Boar” project, focusing on the management of wild boars in the Central Apennine in Italy.