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R. PETTAZZONI, I Misteri. Saggio di una teoria storico religiosa

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plus vaste, par exemple les livres de R.L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans saw Them* (New Haven-London, 1984) et de N. Zeegers-Vander Vorst, *Les citations des poètes grecs chez les apologistes chrétiens du II^e siècle* (Louvain, 1972).

Dans une prochaine édition du volume, on pourra facilement corriger les coquilles qui gênent la lecture (par exemple Rufin d'Alexandrie au lieu de Rufin d'Aquilée à la page 281 !). Malheureusement, même l'auteur de ce compte rendu a été victime d'une faute typographique regrettable à la page 208, note 17 : P. Franeo, au lieu de Pier Franco Beatrice ! Mais cela, évidemment, n'enlève rien à la valeur du livre qui trouve sa place à juste titre parmi les meilleurs travaux publiés au cours de cette décennie sur l'histoire sociale et religieuse de l'Antiquité Tardive.

Pier Franco Beatrice
(Università di Padova)

Gérard FREYBURGER et Laurent PERNOT (éds), *Du héros païen au saint chrétien*. Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre d'Analyse des Rhétoriques Religieuses de l'Antiquité (C.A.R.R.A.), Strasbourg, 1-2 décembre 1995, Paris, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997. 1 vol. 16 × 24,5 cm, 231 p. (*Série Antiquité*, 154). ISBN : 2-85121-159-5.

Le sujet n'est pas neuf, mais il est d'une richesse inépuisable, et la perspective ici adoptée, celle de la rhétorique religieuse, contribue à en renouveler l'étude. Dans leur avant-propos, les deux éditeurs indiquent clairement les buts assignés au colloque, – l'enquête se veut « fondée sur les textes et conduite au plus près des textes », – et ils en synthétisent les apports. La plupart des 18 communications présentées sont centrées sur l'évocation d'un personnage singulier, historique ou mythique, dont on s'applique, le cas échéant, à faire voir les vicissitudes qu'a connues son exemplarité; d'Aristide le Juste à saint Séverin du Norique, au temps des invasions barbares, défilent successivement héros grecs et romains, saints et saintes chrétiennes, avec une section intermédiaire où sont examinés plusieurs cas intéressants de contamination des deux modèles; trois contributions examinent certains traitements du thème à l'époque moderne. Dans une remarquable conférence d'ouverture : « Le héros et le saint », J.-Cl. Fredouille esquisse la problématique du sujet, s'attachant à montrer les variations que subissent les modèles au gré des évolutions historiques, les continuités possibles entre les figures du héros et du saint, mais aussi leur irréductibilité, due essentiellement au caractère théocentrique de la conception chrétienne de la destinée. Trois index soignés (auteurs anciens cités, noms de personnes et de lieu) facilitent la consultation de l'ouvrage.

Cet intéressant colloque inaugurerait les activités du C.A.R.R.A., lequel annonce aussi, pour bientôt, la publication d'une bibliographie relative à la prière dans l'Antiquité.

André Motte
(Université de Liège)

Raffaella PETTAZZONI, *I Misteri. Saggio di una teoria storico religiosa*, Presentazione di Dario Sabbatucci, Cosenza, L. Giordano Editore, 1997. 1 vol. 15 × 21,5 cm, 245 p. (*Biblioteca di Studi Religiosi*). ISBN : 88-86919-05-0.

Seventy-five years after the first publication, this welcome re-issue provides an opportunity to assess an important text of the history of religions: *I Misteri* by Raffaele Pettazzoni, the indisputable father of Italian historico-religious studies and founder of a school which numbers among its most prestigious exponents

Angelo Brelich and Ernesto De Martino. This new edition is prefaced by Dario Sabbatucci, one of P.'s last students, and includes a *résumé* and a bibliography on the mystery religions of classical antiquity written by P. himself thirty years afterwards (published in the *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, 2, 1955, p. 303-312 and 661-667). A bibliography updated through 1997 concludes the volume.

In approaching a classic there are at least two possible readings: to set it against the background of its times, relegating it to the imperial gallery of Madame Tussaud's, or to examine it in the light of contemporary questions. It is perhaps to ensure more justice to the text and to the intentions of the editors that I have tried to give more space to the latter perspective.

In 1924, when *I Misteri* first appeared, British evolutionism was already in decline while in France the sociological school founded by Émile Durkheim (dead in 1917) was in full stride. Instead Italy was dominated by the cultural style of Croce, genetically incompatible with Durkheimian sociology, but in some way congenial to British evolutionism which conceded ample space to the historical dimension. Thus if in England, during the same years, the Cambridge Ritualists (Harrison, Cornford, Murray) were able to correct the most glaring errors of comparativism through a proto-structuralist interpretation influenced by French sociology, in Italy P. achieved an analogous operation paradoxically through that very Crocean historicism which retarded Italian ethnological studies.

I Misteri begins with a long excursus on the bull-roarer (ch. 1), the spinning-top that simulated the noise of thunder, which for ethnology at the turn of the century had been the access key to primitive initiation rites. The literature on this theme was vast and repetitive, but P. manages to develop it in an original way. In the development line of the bull-roarer (*rhombus*), from initiation instrument to toy, in a dynamic that cuts transversally space and time, the history of religions finds its object: "a superior order of facts", analogous to that represented by the similarity of form, use and development of the stone tools from the Neolithic age, where the term "facts" must be understood as processes, *genomena*, organisms in movement that, once formulated, are already given in their destiny.

Like the bull-roarer, the flint, the wheel, the mystery religions perhaps belong to the same sort of "facts". Crystallised in the rituals of classical antiquity and of prehistoric contemporaneity, it is possible to sketch an evolutionary line from the tribal initiations to the agrarian rituals, and from these to the mysteries in the literal sense. The agrarian rituals in the life-history of the vegetation god who dies and is reborn offer the first hope of salvation from death; the mystery religions develop it with the promise of a new identity. But here the typical genealogy of comparativist evolutionism is turned upside down. It is no longer a matter of proceeding backwards from the complex formations to the origin, ahistoric or indeed outside history, but to refine the phases of the hypothesized sequence in the complex formations in which they only acquire existence. And here again, where the philosophy of history fails, the web of the concrete social practices takes the place of the idea of perfection typical of a development model.

Thus we come to the heart of the book (ch. 2-6): a series of detailed monographs on feasts, salvation cults and mystery initiations of the whole Mediterranean area and the Near East (Greek, Thracian, Phrygian, Egyptian, Semitic, Persian), each investigated in their respective national contexts, each individuated in a determined phase of development according to specific historical events.

P. accepts the Olympian/chthonic, Apollinian/Dionysian opposition that had dominated studies on Greek religion at the turn of the century, but he remoulds it into a dynamic of interaction/collision between civic/national religions and chthonic mystery religions – pre-civic, pre-national or supra-national; the first ad-

dressed to their self-reproduction and to the affirmation of a strong identity of the *polis*, of motherland, of race; the second naturally directed towards the other-world and the reintegration of those who are excluded into a form of voluntary community. "To the religion of the civic community one belongs by right, to that of the mysteries one is admitted individually by a voluntary act of affiliation, aggregation, initiation" (p. 225).

To radicalise this dialectic into an individual/state opposition, as has been done at times, is perhaps too strict a connotation, even if present in P.'s discourse. Rather it might be more correctly understood in terms of inclusion/exclusion relationships – a determination of who belongs and who does not (marginals and outsiders) – consequently a dialectic of classes, of ranks, or of archaic strata, which, while remaining substantially extraneous to civic thinking, subsist, reinforce themselves or re-emerge in accordance with their resolving or colliding with the policy expressed by the official religions.

Thus, to cite an example from Greece, the Eleusinian mysteries, sacred seat of the initiations and the eschatological benedictions, drawn out from the shadow of their local origins by incorporation into the Athenian city-state, in virtue of this same adoption, remain fixed in their form, without evolving into a community organization. Dionysism, also centered around the event of the death and rebirth of vegetation, is in part attracted to the political sphere, in parallel to the rise of the popular classes, in part pushed back to a radical "outsiderhood" (Orphism). With the Persian Wars, the system of traditional forces gravitating around the *polis* having been consolidated, all the innovating currents are eclipsed, to survive in the displacements at the limits of the mainland (Magna Grecia, Black Sea). In the Hellenistic period, when both the great national states of the East and the lesser city-states of Greece are dissolved into the great empire inaugurated by Alexander and realised by the Romans, the mysteries reach their greatest diffusion, whose *floruit* culminates in the 3rd century A.D., when the supranational unity of the Roman Empire is sanctioned through the extension of Roman citizenship to all provinces alike (*cf.* p. 198).

In the light of present knowledge, it is obviously possible to single out the *défaillances* of this unitary plot, the omnivorous agrarian hypothesis, the too clear-cut public-private antithesis, the presumed archaicism of "Orphic" religion, in line with the time considered of Thracian origin, and entrusted to resolve every passage from exoterism to esoterism (*cf.* the interpretation of the Zeus Idaios cult, p. 46 f.), every refinement in an eschatological sense. But obviously it is only now possible to appreciate with the due clarity the novelty that the book represented, even outside of the Italian context, both overcoming the problem of the genetic descendance between Greek and oriental mysteries thanks to the theorisation of independent lines of development, and interrupting the continuity between mysteries and Christianity in spite of the formal analogies (p. 210-220). And yet, I think, the problem lies elsewhere. Before the proliferation of specialist studies, whose results are detailed in inverse proportion to their interest, the question is if it is still possible to elude the necessity of that global vision now offered to us only by "l'expérience de ces vieux livres qui continuent si puissamment de nous éclairer quand presque plus rien ne tient, en termes de savoir strict, de la lettre de leur propos..." (M. Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde*).

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