



The International Society for Academic Research on Shamanism (ISARS) and the Program of Anthropology, Institute of Sociology, UC, invites you to attend the 3rd international conference of ISARS which will be held at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile in **November 27-30, 2019**.

The Official Theme of the Conference will be the following:

Relations, connections, cosmologies: shamanism and spirit possession under the ethnographic lens

The question of what shamanistic practices “do” in any given society has always been a central one in anthropology, and much analysis has understood ritual and spiritual experience as connected to other spheres of society, especially to political and ideological dimensions. This has been emphasized by anthropological literature on cultures that have experienced radical changes of political structure. For instance, Piers Vitebsky reminds us that shamans do not work in a political vacuum (2002); in possession or shamanic cults throughout Asia, he argues, spirit helpers are often kings, policemen, generals, clerks, as well as “wild” spirits; i.e. reflective of worldly difficulties brought about by the onset of a particular state or bureaucratic system. Possession or shamanic trance in these cases can often embody a form of resisting or mocking authority, as Paul Stoller shows in his classic analysis of spirit possession among the Songhay people of Niger (1993). In a contemporary setting, we are interested in looking at the intersections of possession/shamanic cosmologies with globalization and neoliberal policies, as well as concerns with ecology, climate change and indigenous rights.

However, we don’t want to simply observe that intersection. Following a host of more recent scholars, we want to go back to more primary questions – about what shamanism and spirit possession *are* in particular cultural places, rather than about how they dialogue with, or resist, their particular context. In Mongolia or Amazonia, for instance, shamanism has been described as defined by its intersubjectivity (Humphrey, 1996; Viveiros de Castro, 2007): a shaman is a highly relational being that mediates between past and present, and between different ontological statuses, with possession belonging to the whole community. Equally, Morten Pedersen argues that in the ontological chaos of post-socialist Mongolia, with many new spirit forms emerging, shamanism in some sense *was* the transformation or change itself (2011). Shamanism can be defined here as a transitional cosmology, rather than as a fixed set of ideas or practices. In Cuba, on the other hand, spirits take a number of forms, as do practices of possession. Aisha Beliso-De Jesús has understood spirits in non-substantial terms (2015): as electric currents, electronic “co-presences” transmitted through media technologies such as DVDs as practitioners travel between countries.

In Mozambique, a radical distinction between physical and spiritual realities is untenable (Nielsen, 2015), as ancestors live inside people's bodies, empowering and guiding them.

In this conference we wish to go back to ontological basics in relation to spirit cosmologies, and practices of possession and shamanism. We will ask what possibilities or worlds shamanism and spirit possession create and enable in these environments through their practice by experts and laypersons. We will ask, in a pragmatic sense, what the *effects* of shamanism and spirit possession are: what kinds of entities are made possible via the manipulation of things in the world, for instance, or of the training of bodies to receive them? We will similarly explore questions of materials, media and technologies in relation to shamanism and spirit possession, and ask: can we look at these technologies and corresponding techniques as *generative* or *expansive* of, rather than just *mediatory* or *reflective* of, particular cosmologies? We can further ask, what is the fundamental role of the senses in spirit ceremonies? In what ways are emotions and affects central to the very existence of spirits and other entities, and how are people themselves constituted as *persons* through these encounters?

Call for Papers/Session Proposals

Call for Papers/Sessions has been extended until February 15th, 2019

Please send your paper title and abstract (max.250 words) and/or your session proposal (max 300 words) *on the main theme of the conference* in a word document by **February 15th, 2019** ~~January 15th, 2019~~ to: isarsconference2019@gmail.com

Session organizer(s) are requested to indicate the general title of the session, a brief description of the main topic (max. 300 words), number, names and affiliation of participants. Sessions should include a minimum of 4 participants and a maximum of 6.

Although the official language of the conference will be English, proposals for panel sessions in Spanish are welcome.

Please note that the Scientific Committee will review and select the papers and session proposals. The selected papers and sessions will be announced in February 2019.

Visa and Letter of Invitation

Please inform us if you need a formal letter of invitation for visa or for other purposes, such as travel grant applications. Please send your request to: diana.espirito@uc.cl

Conference Registration

Registration fee is 130 euros (early-bird, 21 February 2019 - 30 June 2019). After that date, the fee will raise to 160 euros. All the details about modalities of payment of the fee and options regarding accommodation will be announced soon in the ISARS website (www.isars.org).

Please note that all regular delegates and non-delegates in the conference are required to additionally pay their ISARS 2019 membership fee either online via Paypal or bank transfer (through the ISARS website: <http://www.isars.org/membership/>), or on the spot, during their registration in Santiago, Chile. Accompanying family members of regular delegates may participate in the conference without becoming member of ISARS. The membership fee includes a printed copy of the journal SHAMAN. Regular members: 60,00 euros, Student/Unemployed Members: 35,00 euros. For further details, please contact the ISARS secretary at info@isars.org

We look forward to welcoming you to Santiago, Chile in November 2019.

The ISARS 2019 Conference Scientific and Organizing Committee:

Diana Espirito Santo, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
Anastasios Panagiotopoulos, CRIA Universidade Nova de Lisboa
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