

# SHAMANS/ NEO-SHAMANS

Ecstasy, alternative archaeologies and  
contemporary Pagans

*Robert J. Wallis*

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

**Also available as a printed book  
see title verso for ISBN details**

## SHAMANS/NEO-SHAMANS

Shamans and shamanisms are in vogue at present. In popular culture, such diverse characters as occultist Aleister Crowley, Doors musician Jim Morrison and performance artist Joseph Beuys have been termed shamans. The anthropological construct 'shamanism', on the other hand, has associations with sorcery, witchcraft and healing, and archaeologists have suggested the meaning of prehistoric cave art lies with shamans and altered consciousness.

Robert J. Wallis explores the interface between 'new' (modern Western), indigenous and prehistoric shamans, and assesses the implications for archaeologists, anthropologists, indigenous communities, heritage managers, and neo-Shamanic practitioners. Identifying key figures in neo-Shamanisms, including Mircea Eliade, Carlos Castaneda and Michael Harner, Wallis assesses the way in which 'traditional' practices have been transformed into 'Western' ones, such as Castaneda's Don Juan teachings and Harner's core shamanism.

The book draws on interviews and self-reflective insider ethnography with a variety of practitioners, particularly contemporary Pagans in Britain and North America from Druid and Heathen traditions, to elucidate what neo-Shamans do. Wallis looks at historical and archaeological sources to elucidate whether 'Celtic' and 'Northern' shamanisms may have existed, he explores contemporary Pagan engagements with prehistoric sacred sites such as Stonehenge and Avebury, and discusses the controversial use by neo-Shamans of indigenous (particularly Native American) shamanisms.

Rather than discuss neo-Shamans as, simply, inauthentic, invalid culture-stealers, Wallis offers a more detailed and complex appraisal. He makes it clear that scholars must be prepared to give up some of their hold over knowledge, and not only be aware of these neo-Shamanic approaches but also engage in a serious dialogue with such 'alternative' histories.

**Robert J. Wallis** is Associate Director of the MA in Art History at Richmond, the American International University in London, and a Research Fellow in Archaeology at the University of Southampton. He has published extensively on the archaeology and anthropology of art, shamanisms and neo-Shamans.



# SHAMANS/ NEO-SHAMANS

Ecstasy, alternative archaeologies and  
contemporary Pagans

*Robert J. Wallis*

 Routledge  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2003  
by Routledge  
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group*

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003.

© 2003 Robert J. Wallis

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Wallis, Robert J.

Shamans/neo-Shamans: ecstasy, alternative archaeologies  
and contemporary Pagans/Robert J. Wallis.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Shamanism. 2. New Age movement. I. Title.

BF1611 .W33 2003  
291.1'44-dc21 2002068282

ISBN 0-203-41757-7 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-41907-3 (Adobe eReader Format)

ISBN 0-415-30202-1 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-30203-X (pbk)

FOR MY GRANDMOTHER  
GLADYS ROSA PRESS  
1912–2002  
*WAES THU HAEL*

[T]he Pagan renaissance is obvious. Bookstores are full of books on the ancient native religions. In Great Britain, you cannot avoid the Pagan network. They even have university professors who are openly Pagan. In Iceland, Paganism became an official religion in 1973. Everywhere in Europe ... [w]itness the return of the Druids, the shamans and the priests of the Gods.

(Christopher Gerard, Belgian neo-Shaman,  
cited by Henry 1999: 3)

[W]e moderns have nothing whatsoever of our own; only by replenishing and cramming ourselves with the ages, customs, arts, philosophies, religions, discoveries of others do we become anything worthy of notice.

(Nietzsche 1983 [1893]: 89)

[W]hy shamanism, why magic? We need them both.

(Drury 1982: 100)

# CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	ix
<i>Preface – autoarchaeology: what have neo-Shamanisms got to do with me?</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
Introduction: a native at home – producing ethnographic fragments of neo-Shamanisms	1
<i>Towards an ‘autoarchaeology’</i>	2
<i>Challenging the insider–outsider divide</i>	4
<i>‘Alternative’ archaeologies and anthropologies</i>	9
<i>Queering theory</i>	12
<i>Autoarchaeology and post-processualism</i>	14
<i>Post-colonial/neo-colonial concerns</i>	16
<i>Autoarchaeological ‘ethnographic fragments’</i>	18
<i>Multi-sited ethnography and neo-Shamanist pluralities</i>	22
1 ‘White shamans’: sources for neo-Shamanisms	24
<i>Mircea Eliade: ‘forefather’ of neo-Shamanisms</i>	35
<i>Carlos Castaneda: literal or literary shaman?</i>	39
<i>Michael Harner: disseminating ‘core-shamanism’</i>	45
2 Plastic medicine men? Appraising the ‘Great Pretenders’	49
<i>Decontextualising and universalising</i>	50
<i>Individualising and psychologising</i>	58
<i>Cultural primitivism and archaism</i>	61
<i>Romanticism</i>	64
<i>A ‘Humpty Dumpty word’: seeing to ‘extra pay’</i>	67
3 Taliesin’s trip, Wyrð Woden: Druid and Heathen neo-Shamans	79
<i>Celtic shamanism and Druidic shamans</i>	81
<i>Ethnographic fragments: Philip ‘Greywolf’ Shallcrass, a Druid shaman</i>	85

## CONTENTS

<i>Heathenry and seidr</i>	90
<i>Ethnographic fragments: Hrafnar community</i>	
<i>(San Francisco) seidr and possession</i>	93
<i>Comments on the ethnographic fragments</i>	97
4 ‘Celtic’ and ‘Northern’ shamanisms? Contesting the past	107
<i>Celtic shamanisms</i>	107
<i>Academic approaches to Celtic shamanisms</i>	109
<i>Neo-Shamanic interpretations of Celtic shamanisms</i>	113
<i>Northern shamanisms</i>	124
<i>Did Celtic and Northern shamanisms exist?</i>	137
5 ‘Sacred’ sites? Neo-Shamans and prehistoric heritage	142
<i>Problematising the ‘sacred’</i>	143
<i>Neo-Shamanic engagements with ‘sacred’ sites</i>	146
<i>Neo-Shamanic interpretations of ‘sacred’ sites</i>	149
<i>‘The temple of the nation’ aka ‘that site’: Stonehenge</i>	153
6 Waking Neolithic ancestors: further controversies and ‘reburial’	168
<i>‘Desecration’ at Avebury</i>	168
<i>Hands-on resolutions</i>	172
<i>Unpacking the preservation ethic</i>	175
<i>Contests to the preservation ethic</i>	179
<i>Buster and bulldozers: ‘Seabenge’</i>	180
<i>A British reburial issue?</i>	188
7 Invading Anthros, thieving Archos, Wannabe Indians: academics, neo-Shamans and indigenous communities	195
<i>An ‘Anthros’ dilemma</i>	198
<i>The ‘Wannabes’</i>	200
<i>Neo-Shamans and the capitalist ethic</i>	206
<i>Native Americans, ‘Anthros’ and ‘Archos’</i>	208
<i>Ancient Pueblos and neo-Shamans</i>	214
<i>Neo-Shamanic neo-colonialism?</i>	218
8 Conclusion: neo-Shamanisms in post-modernity	227
<i>Appendix: Resolution of the 5th Annual meeting of the Tradition Elders Circle and AIM resolution</i>	235
<i>Notes</i>	239
<i>Bibliography</i>	253
<i>Index</i>	295

# ILLUSTRATIONS

i	Two Wiccans complete a ritual at Avebury's 1996 graffiti to elucidate who was responsible	xii
1.1	<i>The Self in Ecstasy</i> (1913) by occultist and trance artist Austin Osman Spare	26
1.2	<i>Nightmare</i> by Rosaleen Norton, 'a clear indication of the artist's trance technique' (Drury 1993: 27)	27
1.3	Leaflet advertising neo-Shamanic workshops in 1998 with Leslie Kenton and Sandra Ingerman	47
2.1	Flyer advertising neo-Shamanic workshops, illustrating how some neo-Shamanisms romanticise shamans	65
2.2	Leaflet advertising neo-Shamanic workshops for women	66
3.1	'Runic' John, Heathen neo-Shaman, completing a shamanic healing	91
3.2	'Runic' John is possessed by the shaman-god Woden in a public ritual, 1998	92
3.3	A ritual procession of Druids around Avebury henge at Beltane in 1998	104
3.4	Druid ceremony at Beltane, the Devil's Chair, Avebury	104
4.1	Basketry compass-work on the Latchmere Heath mirror compared with inset of the 'fortification' imagery often seen during migraine experiences	111
4.2	Leaflet advertising Caitlín Matthews's neo-Shamanic practice in Oxford	114
4.3	Base of the Gundestrup Cauldron	121
4.4	Silver 'cups' from a burial, Agighiol, Romania	122
4.5	Effigies of the Anglo-Saxon runes <i>Ing</i> and <i>Daeg</i> are burnt in a ceremony celebrating Beltane	136
5.1	Contemporary rock art on Ilkley Moor, Yorkshire	150
5.2	The mobile <i>Stonehenge Belongs to You and Me</i> exhibition, produced by Barbara Bender (UCL) and the <i>Stonehenge Campaign</i>	155
5.3	Flyer advertising a Summer Solstice 'party' at Stonehenge for the year 2000	162