



Puca, A. (2019). 'Witch' and 'shaman': discourse analysis of the use of indigenizing terms in Italy. *International journal for the study of new religions*, 9(2), 271-284. <https://doi.org/10.1558/ijsnr.37624>

#### **Document version**

Peer reviewed version

#### **Copyright information**

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above.

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

#### **Takedown policy**

Any individual, whether within or external to the University, has the right to request the removal of content from the Leeds Trinity University Repository, on the grounds that it breaches copyright, is in any other way unlawful, or represents research misconduct.

Complaints can be submitted via the Repository Complaints Form at <https://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/media/site-assets/documents/key-documents/pdfs/repository-complaints-form.pdf>

'Witch' and 'shaman': Discourse analysis of the use of indigenizing terms in Italy.

Angela Puca

## **Abstract**

From the very birth of the term, *Strega* ('Witch') has been used with a negative connotation to describe women with powers aimed at harming people. *Strega* has its etymological origin in the Latin *Strix*, the owl believed to feed on human blood. Pop culture, books and media alike, also portrayed the witch as an evil character to the point where it became common parlance to address a person deemed evil as a witch.

In the last three decades, with the popularisation of paganism and Wicca, the term has been reclaimed and somehow sanitised by Pagans who neutrally describe this figure as someone who has the ability to change reality in accordance with the will. In more recent years, with the spread of shamanism, more practitioners start to either renounce the term 'witch' in favour of *Sciamano/sciamana* ('Shaman') or use them both to define themselves.

By analysing the discourses that practitioners create around the terms 'witch' and 'shaman' by means of Paul Johnson's categories, I will illustrate how both terms manifest a form of indigenization and extending. In conclusion, I will argue that indigenizing and extending may be seen as two aspects of the same phenomenon entailing the opening of cultural borders to the outside, reshaping both the imported and exported cultural elements.

## **1.1 Introduction**

In studying Brazilian Candomblé and the Garifuna of the Caribbean, Paul C. Johnson (2002) highlights two aspects emerging from the contemporary development of their religious practices, 'indigenizing' and 'extending'. By indigenizing, Johnson refers to the inclusion of outsider elements to a local tradition in a way that the outer inclusion is reshaped and ingrained as part of the local tradition. On the other hand, there is an openness on the part of the locals to export their local traditions and make them available to outsiders, 'When priests of Candomblé (*pais*, or *maes de santo*) appear on Brazilian national television advising how anyone regardless of African descent, can practise the religion of the African gods (*orixas*) in the privacy of their own home, with or without initiation and a community of practice, this is an example of an extending move' (Johnson, 2002, p.313).

Drawing on Johnson's categories, I will argue that discourses surrounding the terms Witch (*Strega*) and Shaman (*Sciamano*, *Sciamana*) in the Italian context show two examples of how indigenization and extension manifest and can be seen as aspects of the same process. Also, alongside some degree of universalisation, the two show a significant

contribution to the cultural integration of these identities within paganism and shamanism. Witchcraft and shamanism are two somewhat different movements that can entail overlaps since often those who describe themselves as witches are also shamanic practitioners. The terms 'witch' and 'shaman' appear the most significant to understand how the mechanism of indigenizing and extending can manifest through language and the discursive understanding of certain categories. The adoption of a new term (shaman) or a revised term (witch) seems able to reconsider and shed a positive light on practices once considered malicious, unacceptable and hence kept hidden. This may suggest that a change in the discursive understanding of religiously related identifiers can lead to a change in the development of the tradition itself.

The corpus investigated is comprised of data collected on fieldwork conducted between September 2016 and September 2018, attending gatherings of Pagans and Shamans across the Italian territory through the lens of the participant observer. I also conducted several interviews, used questionnaires and created a Facebook group called 'Practitioners of shamanism in Italy'<sup>1</sup> with the declared purpose of studying the content and dynamics arising from social interactions and discussions among members. Other significant material derived from casual conversations, texts, books, articles used as reference within the community will be included.

I will interpret my data through Discourse Analysis, a methodology which is becoming increasingly popular in Religious Studies and represents a suitable approach to the academic inquiry of paganism and shamanism (Taira, 2013). Traditions devoid of a centralised dogma or leadership, such as paganism and shamanism, make it challenging to discern the theoretical and epistemological components upon which their practices are based. For this reason, analysing the discourses (verbal and non-verbal) and the narratives created by practitioners can be a meaningful light shed on the background assumptions and underlying beliefs that are socially constructed within the community (Blain and Wallis, 2007, pp.11–17).

## 1.2 The evolution of the 'Witch'

For the majority of its history, the term *Strega* ('Witch') has been used with a negative connotation to describe women with powers aimed at harming people. *Strega* has still a debated etymological origin, though the most agreed root comes from the Latin *Strix-Strigis*, the owl believed to feed on human blood and associated with the Autumn Equinox which heralds the death of the year (Fusco di Ravello, 2009, p.98). Around the Sixth century CE,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Praticanti di Sciamanesimo in Italia*.

the term probably began to be applied to certain individuals who lived in the countryside and refused to embrace the Christian religion (Malossini, 2011).

The view of the witch as a malicious worker dealing with dark forces survived throughout the Middle Ages and the Inquisition, which lasted in Italy until the eighteenth century (Romeo, 2011). During the Renaissance, magic was re-evaluated as the practical fulfilment of Natural Philosophy (*naturalis philosophiae consummatio*), which at the time referred to natural science (Della Porta, 1677). Nonetheless, a distinction was still made between the witches, who were communing with demons and other spirits, and the Mages who were interested in practices of Natural Magic, such as herbalism, healing and alchemy.

Throughout the Enlightenment and the establishment of a Positivist paradigm, the witch slowly moved from being an evil worker of dark forces to a delusional charlatan who either believed in non-existent powers or deceives others for a personal gain. Despite the negative connotation that the *Strega* has always had in Italian history, the practices kept existing in a hidden way. The only major consequence was that the term *Strega* became unused, devoid of identifiers and yet existent in practice. Those who practised magic became label-less, for there was no term to adopt which implied a positive connotation and hence they renounced any label to identify themselves. This still appears to be true in current times for older generations of vernacular witches. Michela explained to me, 'According to the women with whom I grew up, the term *Strega* was heavily offensive, even worse than "whore". It was an unimaginable offence, the worst you can imagine'<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, none of them would dare to call themselves witches and would certainly be offended if somebody were to address them as such.

As multiple interviews and encounters with Celeste B. highlighted, there is a silent unspoken agreement according to which you are allowed to talk about the performed rituals, such as the Evil eye removal or healings, but not identify them as forms of witchcraft. The 'witch' was therefore obliterated from the lives of individuals and set aside as a character in tales and folklore stories. Yet the use of *Strega* saw a new beginning and a reclamation thanks to the younger generations of folk witches.

When talking about vernacular magic in Italy, it is important to distinguish between older generation and younger generation of practitioners. By older generation I refer to practitioners usually over the age of 60 who are not prone to share their practice with people other than family or community members. They are very secretive and avoid talking about their rituals to outsiders. On the other hand, younger generations are those who are

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Secondo le donne con cui sono cresciuta, l'appellativo *Strega* era fortemente offensivo, peggio di puttana. Era un'offesa incredibile, la peggiore tu possa immaginare'. (All English translations are mine.)

generally under the age of 60 and keen on sharing their practices and syncretizing them with other, usually Neo-pagan, methodologies that have slowly permeated the Italian scene.

In the last three decades, in fact, with the popularisation of paganism and Wicca, *Strega* has been reclaimed and somehow sanitised by Pagans who neutrally describe this figure as someone who has the ability to change reality in accordance with will thanks to her or his connection to Nature. Also, the way witches were portrayed by media started to change: books like the 'Harry Potter' series and TV shows like 'Charmed' depicted witches with a positive outlook, portraying them as persons who use their rituals to help other people and the community (Dimitri, 2005).

When Wicca began to take root in the country in the early 2000s, Pagans were using 'Witch' and 'Wiccan' almost interchangeably and often described what being a witch meant by employing the etymology of the English 'Witch' or 'Wicca', as explained by Gerald Gardner, the father of the Wiccan tradition, and consequently adopted by other Wiccan-derived traditions around the world (Husain, 1999, p.154). As Gardner explains in his famous *Witchcraft for today*, 'They are the people who call themselves the Wica, the "wise people", who practise the age-old rites and who have, along with much superstition and herbal knowledge, preserved an occult teaching and working processes which they themselves think to be magic or witchcraft' (Gardner, 1982, p.102).

This process of assimilation of the two terms, Witch and *Strega*, was facilitated by the limited sources found in the late 1990s and early 2000s. At the time, the only books regarding magic that a potential practitioner could have accessed were those written by Wiccans, especially from America. Scott Cunningham, Silver RavenWolf, Phyllis Currot and other authors from the United States became increasingly popular within the Italian Pagan community. As a consequence, it was frequent in the early 2000s to have practitioners during Pagan gatherings explaining what *Strega* meant by referencing its English translation and hence the Gardnerian etymological explanation.

As more sources on different forms of witchcraft and Pagan traditions became available to the readers, a starker difference between witch and Wiccan developed. Nonetheless, the more positive connotation that Wicca brought to the practice of Witchcraft kept on influencing the understanding of magical practices within the Pagan community and helped them to be reclaimed as non-malicious. This act of importing a new term from the outside and integrating it by merging the new label with an existing one, can be seen as a form of indigenizing. This specific act of indigenizing deals with the identity formation of a community and how the contours of that identity are able to fit into the wider context of what is deemed acceptable to the social framework.

As a result of indigenizing Neo-pagan terminology, the younger generation of vernacular healers and witches are coming out and more openly defining themselves as

*Streghe*. This openness is also reflected onto the new syncretism they are operating. Whilst the older generation employed rituals with an inner syncretism with Catholicism, the younger generation is syncretising their rituals with Neo-paganism and contemporary shamanism. For instance, Francesca C. who practises Core Shamanism and was initiated into the Tradition of *Segnatori*<sup>3</sup> explained to me that according to the tradition, only family members should be initiated on Christmas Eve's night. However, not being a Catholic, she deemed more appropriate to perform the Initiations on the Winter Solstice's night and to open the transmission of the *Segnature* to people outside the circle of blood relatives. Francesca's viewpoint appeared to be shared by the majority of interviewees. There are also online communities on Facebook that gather folk magic practitioners in Italy, the most popular of which counts more than five thousand members, people with various forms of physical or mental health issues who seek help from the *Segnatori* in the group. Liliana is one of these healers who help people at a distance as well as in person. She is mostly a healer but also performs other forms of rituals for prosperity or love and, during an interview, she defined herself as a witch, alongside being a *Segnatrice*<sup>4</sup>. Thus, a new indigenized understanding of the meaning of 'witch' helped old folk traditions to re-surface. The shift in the understanding of what *Strega* means and what being a witch entails contributed to a significant change in the spreading and openness of the vernacular tradition as well as its practitioners' self-perception.

### **1.2.1. The extending of 'Strega'**

While the Italian Pagan scene has been massively affected by the Wiccan tradition, the United States saw the birth of a tradition called 'Stregheria' or 'La vecchia religione' (Grimassi, 1995). The term Stregheria has its roots in the works of the folklorist and author of the nineteenth century, Charles Godfrey Leland, who claimed he had discovered an ancient unbroken witch cult in the north of Italy that survived the advent of Christianity. Leland's most popular books are *Aradia: the Gospel of the Witches* (Leland, 2017) and *Etruscan Roman Remains* (Leland, 2007), both first published in 1899 and drawing on to the alleged Italian "old religion", whose magical practices are claimed to have survived without syncretism with Catholicism.

As Sabina Magliocco points out, for Italian American Neopagans the location of an ancient goddess worshipping religion in Italy drawn from Italian folkloric traditions was the most relevant contribution of Leland's *Aradia*. All the rituals Leland described allowed Italian

---

<sup>3</sup> I adopt the definition 'Tradition of *Segnatori*' to systemitize the various forms of folk magic found throughout Italy, since they all employ in their rituals the *Segnature*, magical gestures accompanied by words of power believed to have the ability to manifest an intended change.

<sup>4</sup> Female singular of *Segnatori*, a female practitioner of the Tradition of *Segnatori*.

Americans to reclaim a Pagan tradition they could feel as part of their heritage, which was also a way to disassociate themselves from perceived Church or State oppression.

(Magliocco, 2006, pp.58–60).

Claims on the 'purity' of this tradition and its lack of involvement with the Catholic Church is particularly evident when followers highlight the difference between *Stregheria* and *Stregoneria*. Paolo Giordano explains,

Stregoneria contrasts sharply with the tradition of Stregheria. The former is now a quasi-Catholic oriented sorcery found in common Italian folk traditions, and the latter is a pagan oriented religious system with a magical structure for rituals and spells. The word "stregheria" is an archaic word for witchcraft that is now applied in place of the word "stregoneria." Those wishing to differentiate themselves from Christian stregoneria, (which usurped and distorted the pre-existing tradition of witchcraft) now use the term stregheria. The use of the word stregheria is now reclaimed by those who are not ashamed or fearful of their Italian pagan roots'(Giordano, 2006).

Raven Grimassi is the creator of what is now defined as Stregheria (Magliocco, 2006, pp.61–62). He leads a website, a Facebook group where practitioners share their experiences and doubts, and has published two main books on the topic: *Italian Witchcraft: the Old Religion of southern Europe* (2000), previously entitled *The Ways of the Strega* (1995), and *Hereditary Witchcraft* (1971).

*Stregheria* appears therefore to its practitioners as inspired by and a reinterpretation of Italian folk magic traditions and intends to make them available to people outside of Italy and outside the usual community-family context whereby these traditions are traditionally taught and practised. The very existence of this tradition appears to be an example of an extending move. Thanks to *Stregheria*, alleged Italian rituals can be now performed in a different country, widening the field of action to include people from a geographically and culturally distant country.

This example shows once again that extending and indigenizing are two sides of the same coin, for the practice of *Stregheria* represents an extension from the Italian point of view and an indigenization for those living in the United States. Interestingly, American followers of *Stregheria* claim to follow the most authentic and untainted form of Italian witchcraft, more genuine even of what is found in Italy itself. Instances of this attitude are shown in conversations which occurred within the online community and on Grimassi's website page, where it is explained that,

Unfortunately, at this time, we have not found websites in Italy that we feel portray authentic Italian Witchcraft traditions as they appear to lack accurate historical or cultural material related to the Old Religion of Italy. Instead they appear to contain reconstructions of Egyptian and Hermetic traditions reworked into a newly constructed

system that is passed off as Witchcraft. Other sites feature a modified form of *Stregoneria* that is Catholic-rooted in nature and conflated with folk magic traditions having little if anything to do with authentic forms of Italian Witchcraft (Grimassi, 2011).

### **1.3 The term 'shaman' and the understanding of shamanism**

The process of indigenizing-extending in the Italian use of the word 'Shaman' has a particular relevance to the process of identity formation initiated by a new imported label. The birth and development of shamanism in Italy will only be addressed here in regards to the use of the label among practitioners as evidenced by the data collected in two years of fieldwork.

Within Pagan communities and other New Age movements, the term 'Shaman' began to have a shared and loosely understood meaning thanks to Mircea Eliade and Carlos Castaneda. It is hard to trace back to when exactly this process started but I can cautiously assume that, since Mircea Eliade was first published in Italian in 1974 (Eliade, 1974) and Carlos Castaneda in 1999 (Castaneda, 1999), the spreading of shamanism began no more than four decades ago. Its diffusion escalated in the early 2000s thanks to the internet and the popularisation of Michael Harner's Core Shamanism (Harner, 1995).

The most common understanding that practitioners have is that shamanism is something that comes from elsewhere, Siberia, the Andean regions, the Amazonian forest or from the Native communities in North America. Even the most popular form of trans-cultural shamanism comes from the United States. Consequently, more and more people use the term to define their practice but avoid it as a self-identifier. A survey conducted in August 2018 showed that none of the hundred respondents call themselves a Shaman, preferring to self-identify as practitioners of shamanism. This happens mostly due to the respect towards the indigenous shamanisms and the related acknowledgement of their differences compared to the Western manifestations. Furthermore, as Vanth<sup>5</sup> pointed out, being a Shaman is like being beautiful, something that is yours only when acknowledged by others.

Many scholars have highlighted that a form of romanticising of the indigenous non-Western traditions occurs in Neo shamanism (Johnson, 1995; Wallis, 2003) and Italy is no exception to that. On an average, practitioners seem to understand the role of the shaman as solely beneficial towards other people and the community. Data collected from approximately 200 informants confirm this view. Definitions emerged of what the Shaman's role entails all gravitate around some key concepts. The Shaman accesses non-ordinary realities and communes with Spirits, being 'A man or a woman who cooperates with the

---

<sup>5</sup> Practitioner of Core Shamanism and president of Pagan Pride Italy.



Spirits of the Otherworld with the aim of healing, divining and helping their own group or those who seek help'.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of the Shamanic journey is therefore to help the community and people in need.

I have addressed how Neo-pagan traditions, especially Wicca, have contributed to cast the label 'witch' in a more positive light. As a consequence, a witch is not exclusively a harmful individual but also someone who uses the Craft to create beneficial changes to the life of others. This shift in perception appears predominantly limited to the Pagan community or those who are acquainted with Neo-pagan traditions. Similarly, both for Pagans and non-Pagans, the Shaman appears to be almost exclusively a benefactor and a healer. Commonly described as 'A person who is elected by the Spirits to be the link between the physical and the spiritual worlds to alleviate the suffering of human beings'<sup>7</sup>, the Shaman is believed by many to have power only as long as it is used to help and heal others. Differently, a witch might do harm or give help depending on the moral code of the individual. As a result, practitioners have often introduced themselves saying 'I practise shamanism, I'm a good witch' or described someone they know as 'She is a Shaman. Or rather a witch, one of the good ones' (Lioni, 2016) utilizing the term Shaman as a sign marking the goodwill of the witch, a way to guarantee his or her goodness.

In addition, 'Shaman' is perceived as more neutral and versatile than 'Witch' to the wider audience because it is not considered a religion and therefore has no contrast with the dominant religious system nor with any other religion. Rather, it is mostly deemed to be a set of techniques (Arcari and Saggiaro, 2015). Witchcraft has, instead, a long history of antagonism with the Catholic Church and tends to be related more to a religious system, which makes it more intimidating to those who have a religious affiliation (Malizia, 1992; Romanazzi, 2014).

During the last two decades, with the increasing interest towards shamanism, there has been a related change in the way practitioners perceived themselves. Although during the first diffusion of Neo-paganism practitioners were claiming back the renewed term 'witch', now more members of the community appear to favour or add the term 'shaman' to describe their practices. Consequently, the indigenization of the term shaman has resulted in two main outcomes. It birthed a new definition for the regional forms of folk magic on the territory, which might now be considered indigenous manifestations of Italian shamanism, and enriched the use of the term 'witch' by reshaping its meaning to include connotations

---

<sup>6</sup> *'Uomo/donna che collabora con gli Spiriti dell'Altromondo con lo scopo di guarire, divinare e aiutare il proprio gruppo di appartenenza o chi si rivolge a lui/lei'*. Anonymous answer to the Survey 'Lo Sciamanesimo in Italia' created in August 2018.

<sup>7</sup> *'Una persona che viene designata dagli Spiriti a essere il tramite tra mondo fisico e mondi spirituali per alleviare le sofferenze degli esseri umani'*. Anonymous answer to the Survey 'Lo Sciamanesimo in Italia'

attributed to Shamanic practices. Thus, 'witch' encompasses now the new positive associations provided by Wicca and inherits traits of the shaman, as explained by Michela in a representative account:

The witches are the daughters and the shamans are their mothers and grandmothers, for it is an evolution of the same technique. Considering that Gardner came to Italy and took from the women in Tuscany the basis for modern Wicca, there is basically no difference (between witch and shaman). There are differences on the practical level (in the types of rituals), but they have the same spirit, they come from the same tradition<sup>8</sup>.

Another distinctive way whereby the term shaman manifests a form of indigenizing is when it is used in reference to autochthonous folk magic traditions. Folk magic in Italy is widespread and concealed at the same time, discursively marginalised for it has no shared recognised label. Every region has a different name to refer to their healers and they also tend to use different prayers chanted in the local dialect (Bartolucci, 2016). Such practices have existed, especially in the countryside, for centuries but there was no concept nor a word to make sense of and systematise them (Ginzburg, 2013; Turchi, 2017). For ages, the closest category has been witchcraft, which has a history of antagonism with Catholicism and a negative connotation to many people. The label 'Shaman', with its — albeit romanticised — positive connotation and a-religious status, is potentially the perfect label to make folk healers visible again.

Michela Chiarelli and the way she portrays her tradition are good examples of that. Michela is originally from the South, specifically from Calabria, and her family has been practising shamanism for six generations. In every generation, a female Shaman is born, and she fears to be the last one of the lineage because she has two sons. Michela defines herself as an 'Italian shaman' coming from a hereditary tradition, her grandmother was a local healer and passed knowledge and power on to her through an initiation process. Despite the fact that her grandmother didn't use the word shaman because there was no knowledge at the time of such a label, she acknowledged that what is deemed to be shamanism was in fact not different from what her grandmother taught her. Consequently, she started to adopt the term and gave an understandable identity to her tradition (Chiarelli, 2017).

---

<sup>8</sup> *'Le streghe sono le figlie e le sciamane sono le mamme e le nonne, è un'evoluzione della stessa tecnica. Considerato che Gardner è venuto in Italia e ha preso dalle donne toscane le basi con le quali ha costruito la moderna Wicca, tendenzialmente non c'è differenza (tra Strega e sciamana). Delle differenze a livello pratico ci sono, ma hanno lo stesso spirito, vengono dalla stessa tradizione.'*

During an interview in May 2017, I asked her to elucidate the major traits of her tradition and Michela openly discussed a few interesting features. She explained that the main aim is to heal and help those in need as well as the community and the Earth and that the main deity is Uni, an Etruscan mother goddess, which represents everything that lives. Also, there seems to be a significant importance given to the 'worms' (*vermi*), which are parasitic spirits that bring illnesses, and to the magical gestures to remove them, that she referred to as *Segnature*. Following her explanations and my acknowledgement of striking similarities, I asked whether her tradition was yet another manifestation of Italian folk magic. At the time, Michela replied that the main difference was that her tradition was not syncretised with Catholicism whereas all the other forms of folk magic are. A year later, during a second interview, Michela declared she had thought a lot about that specific question and over time she had become increasingly more convinced that her Italian shamanism was in fact related to the folk magic practices found throughout Italy. The fact that Michela had never thought about the relation between the two shows how the process of indigenizing can be unintentional and manifests as an evolution in the understanding of a local tradition that was there before a new concept was introduced to foster a new perspective and hence a further development.

Michela also tends to use 'witch' and 'shaman' interchangeably in conversations and books, though showing a preference towards the label 'shaman'. Since I stayed at her house during my fieldtrip in May 2017, I found myself browsing through her published books, fourteen at the time, and noticed that she described the eight festivals of the year similarly to the Wiccan representation (Chiarelli, 2018). The book also listed both the Wiccan names (for instance, Yule) and the Italian-Etruscan ones (for example, Saturnalia or brumaia for the winter solstice). Thus, I asked Michela why was she using Wiccan terminologies and structure and she explained that it is mostly to make her tradition more comprehensible to a wider audience.

Another area of Michela's Italian Shamanism that shows an extending attempt is manifested through her choice to break the tradition, or rather create a new one, by not keeping these practices reserved to blood relatives but extending their teaching to selected people in Italy and abroad. From October 2018, Michela will also offer a three-year programme of study, articulated in modules, to become a 'Holistic operator'<sup>9</sup> in the tradition of Italian Shamanism.

In Michela's Italian Shamanism, we can see an example of how the term shaman was indigenized, reinterpreted to fit the local context and existing practices formerly labelled

---

<sup>9</sup> *Operatore Olistico* is a recognised professional figure regulated by Italian law.

in a different way. At the same time, she extended its practices, once prerogative of family members, and now available to people outside the family and the country of origin.

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

According to my analysis, indigenizing and extending appear as two processes that mutually influence each other. They might also be seen as entailing certain preconditions, like the idea that there are borders dividing one place from another or that these borders can be surpassed. Once this crossing occurs, it is likely that something might immigrate into the new territory concurrently as some other aspect is emigrating from it.

In order to have a process of indigenizing, it is necessary to open the gates to the outside, introduce a foreign element and reshape it to become somewhat Neo-native. The dynamic created by indigenizing and extending moves may be figuratively associated with a bridge that connects two interlocked ends or to a communication between two people, where you can have no speaking without hearing. This may suggest that the cultural boundaries between different countries and local traditions are increasingly blurring in the development of certain new religious movements. It seems to be the case with Pagan and Shamanistic traditions, whose fluidity and eclectic nature favour indigenizing/extending dynamics that help these movements to find their own identity and reclaim their roots.

The introduction in Italy of an outsider concept such as shamanism appears able to help people claim back their own indigenous practices, whose previous label was keeping them in the shadows of unacceptance. The same happened with the new positive connotation that Wicca gave to the term 'witch' (*Strega*). Thus, the discourses created and used around the terms that identify practitioners of certain traditions appear to have a significant weight to determine to what extent the tradition itself will be accepted and understood by the surrounding framework of thought. Discourse analysis of the terms 'witch' and 'shaman' showed in what way two different words applied to the same manifestation can impact on how successful a re-appropriation or re-integration of a local tradition can be.

#### **References**

- Arcari, L. and Saggiaro, A. 2015. *Sciamanesimo e sciamanesimi. Un problema storiografico*. Roma: Nuova Cultura.
- Bartolucci, A. 2016. *Le streghe buone. I simboli, i gesti, le parole. Come muta la medicina tradizionale nell'era di Internet*. Reggio Emilia: Compagnia Editoriale Aliberti.
- Blain, J. and Wallis, R.J. 2007. *Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/rights: Pagan Engagements with Archaeological Monuments*. Brighton; Portland: Sussex Academic Press.

- Castaneda, C. 1999. *Gli insegnamenti di Don Juan*. Milano: Bur.
- Chiarelli, M. 2018. *A scuola dalla sciamana. Un'estate di iniziazione allo sciamanesimo di tradizione italiana*. Verona: Cerchio della Luna.
- Chiarelli, M. 2017. La custode dell'arte Sciamanica Italiana di Tradizione Ereditaria familiare. *michelachiarelli.com*. [Online]. [Accessed 22 September 2018]. Available from: <https://www.michelachiarelli.com/chi-sono-2/>.
- Dimitri, F. 2005. *Neopaganesimo: perché gli dèi sono tornati*. Roma: Castelvechi.
- Eliade, M. 1974. *Lo sciamanesimo e le tecniche dell'estasi*. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee.
- Fusco di Ravello, A. 2009. Il male come limite e confine *In: A. Bixio, ed. Sociologia: Rivista Quadrimestrale di Scienze Storiche e Sociali*. Roma: Gangemi Editore, pp. 97–110.
- Gardner, G.B. 1982. *Witchcraft Today*. New York: Magickal Child.
- Ginzburg, C. 2013. *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Baltimore: JHU Press.
- Giordano, P. 2006. What is Stregoneria vs Stregheria. *Stregheria.com*. [Online]. [Accessed 10 September 2018]. Available from: <http://www.stregheria.com/>.
- Grimassi, R. 1971. *Hereditary Witchcraft: Secrets of the Old Religion by Raven Grimassi*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
- Grimassi, R. 1995. *Ways of the Strega: Italian Witchcraft: Its Lore, Magick, and Spells*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
- Grimassi, R. 2000. *Italian Witchcraft: The Old Religion of Southern Europe* Revised edition edition. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, U.S.
- Grimassi, R. 2011. The Home of Authentic Italian Witchcraft. [Accessed 10 September 2018]. Available from: <http://www.stregheria.com/>.
- Harner, M. 1995. *La Via Dello Sciamano*. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee.
- Husain, S. 1999. *La dea. Creazione. Fertilità e abbondanza. La sovranità della donna. Miti e archetipi*. Torino: EDT srl.
- Johnson, P.C. 2002. Migrating Bodies, Circulating Signs: Brazilian Candomblé, the Garifuna of the Caribbean, and the Category of Indigenous Religions. *History of Religions*. 41(4), pp.301–327.
- Johnson, P.C. 1995. Shamanism from Ecuador to Chicago: A Case Study in New Age Ritual Appropriation. *Religion*. 25(2), pp.163–178.
- Leland, C.G. 2017. *Aradia: The Gospel of the Witches*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Leland, C.G. 2007. *Etruscan Roman Remains*. New York: Cosimo Classics.
- Lioni, S. 2016. Incontro con una strega tenera. *Sulla Via degli Sciamani*. [Online]. [Accessed 21 September 2018]. Available from: <http://sullaviadeglisciamani.it/index.php/2016/03/12/incontro-con-una-strega-tenera/>.

- Magliocco, S. 2006. Italian American Stregheria and Wicca: Ethnic Ambivalence in American Neopaganism *In*: M. Strmiska, ed. *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, pp.55–86.
- Malizia, E. 1992. *Ricettario delle streghe: incantesimi, prodigi sessuali e veleni*. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee.
- Malossini, A. 2011. *Breve storia delle streghe*. San Lazzaro di Savena: Area51 Publishing.
- Della Porta, G.B. 1677. *Della magia naturale del signor Gio. Battista Della Porta Napolitano libri XX*. Napoli: Antonio Bulifon.
- Romanazzi, A. 2014. *Guida alle streghe in Italia*. Roma: Venexia Editrice.
- Romeo, G. 2011. *L'Inquisizione nell'Italia moderna*. Roma: Edizioni Laterza.
- Taira, T. 2013. Making space for discursive study in religious studies. *Religion*. **43**(1), pp.26–45.
- Turchi, D. 2017. *Lo sciamanesimo in Sardegna*. Roma: Newton Compton.
- Wallis, R.J. 2003. *Shamans/Neo-Shamans: Ecstasies, Alternative Archaeologies and Contemporary Pagans* 1 edition. London, New York: Routledge.