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The Making of a Shaman

By Boyd Martin

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At 50, I decided to revisit the Carlos Castaneda Don Juan adventure series. I had delved into the Yaqui way in my 20's, but now Don Juan seemed to call to me from the bookshelves and I could sense that immersion was near. I checked out Another Reality from the library, and a few days later, a friend dumped the next four books of the series in my lap from a garage sale...a pretty obvious confirmation.

After a several weeks of intimate study of the material, I began to wonder if there was going to be an embodiment of a sorcerer/teacher showing up in my life. The crows were swirling and squawking, squirrels were coming up to my feet, and the wind had a funny twist to it. All signs seemed to portend an arrival of some sort, so I was on the lookout.

Then appeared Frank Coppieters. It was as a result of a conversation about Reiki with Shay, who had been a student of Frank's. It just so happened Frank was having a shamanic gathering at his studio, and so we went, partly because Shay wanted to renew her connection, and partly because she felt I needed to meet him. The kicker was he used drumming as part of his gatherings. I am a professional drummer myself. This was certainly getting interesting!

The experience was fabulous. Frank was socially highly gracious, but when we went into his "light shamanic trance," as he calls it, he was positively otherworldly. His primal vocalizations conjured images of mystical worlds and cosmic places. And with the hypnotic drumming accompaniment, punctuated with an array of bell and rattle sounds, I was whisked away on a magic carpet ride.

The two-and-a-half-hour session seemed like 15 minutes, and the time distortion continued as I found myself driving and arriving home in what seemed like moments.

I reconnected with Frank again for a personal shamanic session, and was so blown away, I asked if he would be open to some freelance journalistic coverage. He was all game, and I sat with him for 90 minutes, covering his background and how he came to do what he was doing.

The Making of a Shaman

Frank's approach to his particular brand of shamanism had its roots in experimental theater. During his tenureship at the University of Antwerp, he had the good fortune of meeting up with Jerzy Grotowski, considered one of the most influential forces in fringe theater. He also was a bit of a shaman, absorbed with the concept of "ritualistic theatre," where the audience becomes an active participant in improvisation by the actors. Later, one of Frank's students decided to do his master's thesis on the work of Carlos Castaneda, which gave Frank the opportunity to read all of Castaneda's works. The focus ended up leading to a meeting with a real-live shaman.

Frank relates, "I did end up with what I would call a personal teacher—Joska Soos is his name, from Hungary. So he's the one that I have worked most with and whose presence I feel the most when I do my work. I've also studied with other lineages and other teachers over the years. But Joska himself came from a shamanic lineage. In Hungary there are apparently 108 clans, and one clan is the shamanic clan. They are called the Bacsa. So he was born into the clan, and was taught from when he

was a kid of five or six by the local blacksmith, who was a shaman, which is a typical shamanic profession, you know—dealing with metal and fire and all that. Apparently he was a great shaman—his name was Tomas Bacsí. Joska was born as a shaman with the cowl [a birth cowl: layer of skin over the face traditionally a mystical sign of extraordinary psychic powers. The skin must be surgically removed]. It was meeting Joska that had the biggest impact on me of remembering. There was this immediate shock that I seem to know this. It seems to invoke something in me that is so profound. I couldn't not see Joska for a while. I had to go there every week. I just jumped on the train and every week I was there—very faithful. But I had no idea that I myself would do that work one day. That was then still so foreign from my own way of manifesting myself in the world."

Frank says it took him eight to nine years to comfortably make the transition from "daily rational awareness" to shamanic awareness. "There was no longer a battle inside my own mind about that," Frank says. "It was just like two aspects of the world as I knew it, and of parts of myself—the way I knew myself to be."

I asked now, as a full-time shaman, if he was in shamanic consciousness all the time. "Oh, no, it would be too draining. It is very intense work. In fact, I consider normal daily consciousness as a break from the shaman work." Frank stressed the need for balance between the types of consciousness, with that balance making both more meaningful and multi-dimensional.

Visit Frank on the web at www.livinglightcenter.com, where he lists his upcoming events and workshops.

GRAPHICS/LINKS: <http://www.subtleenergysolutions.com/newsletter-frankcoppieters.html>

Boyd is the webmaster of www.subtleenergysolutions.com and the newsletter writer for that site. He enjoys a wide range of experience both in the ways of the internet, alternative health, environmental issues, and in freelance writing. An active, professional drummer, Boyd performs in the Portland area with several area blues and R&B bands. Boyd is also an avid, daily practicing Bikram Yoga student.

Out Of This World – Shamanism Healing

By Eric Cho

Many of the ancient cultures of the world adhered to one or the other form of Shamanism. This is a tribal healing tradition where a Shaman is said to transcend the boundaries of the conscious world and travel to a world unbeknown to the ordinary man. Here, the Shaman converses with spirits and come back with secrets that allows him to heal others, foretell the future, control the weather and even ward off attacks.

The word `Saman' is defined as a technique of ecstasy. A Shaman is a practitioner who is able to enter an altered state of consciousness where he can communicate with the supernatural. He acts as an intermediary between the world of man and the world of Gods and often has the power to descend to the realm of the dead. He leaves his body when he is in trance. This trance is induced by chanting, beating of the drum or passionate dancing. In the more unsophisticated cultures, Shamans even used to take to fasting, ingesting psychotropic drugs or even undergo torture to achieve the trance.

As seen from the practices, Shamanism is based on the principle that the world is divided into 2 distinct parts - that visible to the ordinary man, and that visible only to the man with powers. In the second part, there is a miraculous world populated by the spirits who influence the world of the living and who are always willing to help. The Shaman acts as a link between the two worlds and works for the benefit of his society. Shamans are therefore experts employed by animistic societies.

Healing is the most important function of the Shaman followed by prophecy. Shamanism, in the larger sense of the word, is thus perhaps the oldest form of healing. It is a form of religious medicine that originated more than 25,000 years ago. The healing practices of most of the ancient cultures stem from a shamanic tradition.

The Shaman is often credited with magical healing powers and is crowned as the religious or spiritual head of a tribe. He is called upon to treat the sick and to drive away demons. It is important to remember that in most ancient cultures, sickness was considered to be the result of demoniac forces acting on the individual. The difference between the ordinary man and the Shaman is that while the man is possessed by spirits, the Shaman controls the spirits.

All this may lead one to believe that Shamanism is an occult practice that is buried in the past and that it has no significance to the modern man. But Shamanism is still practiced all over the world, although it has evolved into different forms. Native Americans are said to perform Soul Flights to heal. In Tibet, the Shamans use a drum to help them in soul retrieval. In Kerala, Shamans are closely tied to the temple and use amulets and music to contact the spirits of the nether world. Shamans in Africa often use hallucinogenic plants to induce trance.

Shamanism has found a place in modern day healing because of the importance it places on the soul, mind and spirit. Shamanic healing includes relief from pain, anxiety, stress and emotional healing. It is believed that there is an inner Shaman in everyone - a force that can be released if one is able to concentrate hard enough. Unleashing the power of this inner Shaman will help cure maladies that afflict us.



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