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explanation of natural and social features, and, at the same time, they are part of this world. The “creators” fully belong to their “creation.” Within this immanence, shamanic dialogue is possible.

Apu, though, are not the only spiritual entities in this cosmological view: they are rather situated at the top of a hierarchy of spirits, which do not hold any supernatural power by themselves. Generally speaking, traditional Andean shepherds consider that everything in the world owns an *animo*. The word *animo* itself is derived from the Latin “*animus*,” which came to their ears through Spanish colonization, but it has a much broader meaning. *Animo* apparently refers to both the vital strength and what we could call the essence of all beings, whether they are humans, animals, vegetables, or even minerals. Each being has a different, particular, *animo*, which is also related to the *apu*, whose *animo* stand at the top of the hierarchy. The term *animo* reflects, therefore, the interdependency of all beings, as well as their specificity.

In order for these societies to communicate with the *apu* and other supernatural beings, an intermediate is needed. This is the role of the *altomisayoq*, who appears to be mainly a priest, a medicine man and a fortune teller. He directs collective propitiatory ceremonies, offered up to the *apu* or the *pachamama*, the goddess-earth, cures sicknesses and tells the future. Although he can communicate with all beings, natural or supernatural, through their *animo*, his interlocutor is, above all, the *apu*. In order to become a shaman, one needs to be selected by one *apu*, and survive a strike by lightning. Novices then go through a long process of initiation, conducted by elder shamans. At one point of this initiation period, they often find, in wild places, the tools of their trade, like small copper bells, which they use to call the *apu*, or strange anthropomorphic or zoomorphic stones, full of supernatural powers. These are gifts of the *apu* itself. Apprentices learn the healing powers of plants, and conjuring tricks. This initiation process culminates with the ritual bath in a *qocha* (a mountain lake), where the shaman-to-be calls his tutelary *apu*, who answers in a guttural voice that seems to come straight out of the mountain’s heart. Therefore, the shaman’s legitimacy eventually relies on the will of the *apu*.

Direct communication with supernatural beings is scarcely deemed necessary. Collective propitiatory ceremonies do not need such communication powers and can be directed by a *pampamisayoq* (a practitioner of an inferior rank). The same stands for fortune telling, which many perform by observing the features and distribution of coca leaves, poured over a small patch of *wachala*, a traditional piece of clothing. Even when it comes to healing, direct communication with supernatural beings such as *apu* or *soq’a machu* may not be considered compulsory: in that case, the healing treatment will consist of offerings to the spirits responsible for the disease as a means of

appeasing them. The traditional healer, be he *altomisayoq* or *pampamisayoq*, brings together these offerings on a square cloth, ties it up from its angles, and burns this bundle, called a *despacho*, on some neighboring hill.

Nevertheless, in some cases, direct communication with spirits may be considered necessary. This communication is not the result of extrasensory perception faculties held by the shaman. On the contrary, the communication process always occurs in the world of day-to-day perception. Since spirits are part of this world as well, a conjunction between them and human beings is possible *here and now*. The *altomisayoq* are the only practitioners capable of such direct communication, because of the tools inherited from the *apu*. Shamanic communication flows from the *apu*, to the shaman. Shamans call for the *apu*, using, as a call sign, their small copper bells: thereafter, it is the *apu* which comes to answer the shaman’s questions, in the form of a dove or condor, getting into the room through an open window, and then speaking freely, in a low-pitched or high-pitched voice. Those in attendance hear the sayings of the *apu* as clearly as the shaman does.

One can say traditional shepherd societies in the southern Peruvian Andes still share one coherent cosmology, centered on the *apu*, which for this reason we may call an *apu*-logy. It refers us to very ancient beliefs and practices. It determines the relationship that these societies still hold with natural phenomena, for the *apu* are ultimately responsible for the course of events in the natural world. For instance, the good health of domestic animals depends on the will of the *apu*, and needs retribution in the form of a *despacho*.

Finally, one can say that part of this *apu*-logy is a sort of theory of knowledge (an epistemology in the broad sense), within which the shaman’s performance is legitimate. We can shed light upon this theory of knowledge through a patient analysis of beliefs and religious practices of these societies.

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Further Reading

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See also: Andean Traditions; Shamanism – Ecuador.

Shamanism – Traditional

Shamanism is the art and science by which one purposely shifts perspective. There are different means by which perspective-shift is achieved (meditative/contemplative techniques, use of entheogens, abstinences, fasting, sleep-deprivation, other austerities, and/or utilizing an illness or

fever), but the initial impulse is auto-induced rather than imposed upon the individual by others. Shamanism refers primarily to the techniques employed for achieving changes in consciousness – especially ecstatic consciousness – and secondarily to the body of religious thought and practice in which the personage of the shaman plays a central role.

The terms “shaman” and “shamanism” have increasingly developed into three fundamental applications. The first and most narrow understanding applies the designations to specific institutions among the Tungusic peoples of Siberia. This would be the original import of the terms. Secondly, the label of the “shaman” has become extended to practices among other peoples that reveal similar animistic or quasi-animistic understandings of nature – whether these peoples are indigenous (American Indian, African), national entities (Japan, Korea, Mongolia) or contemporary (New Age, modern Western Paganism). In this wider and more generally used sense, shamanism designates any religious system centered on “a religious specialist who has great powers derived from ecstatic experiences in which he or she has contact with sacred forces” (Smart 1989: 38). Consequently, the term “shaman” as a generic is applied alike to the North American “medicine person,” the Latin American *curandero*, the Japanese *miko* and the practitioner of Michael Harner’s “core” shamanism. Lastly, the expression of “shaman” has come to refer to various New Age and neo-pagan practices in general in which the individual seeks to shift his/her conscious perspective for purposes of health, deeper understanding, ecstasy and social concern – including increase in environmental sensitivities. Consequently, shamanism in the context of its relationship to religion and nature may be loosely classified as traditional, New Age, urban and psychonautic. As distinguishable sub-sets of traditional shamanisms, we have individual geographic expressions ranging from Ecuador, Alaska and Lapland to Nepal and Mongolia.

Possibly Immanuel Velikovsky was the first to use the term “shaman” in the more contemporary sense. The German *Schamane* had been adopted from the Russian *shaman* which, in turn, had been received from the Tungus-speaking peoples’ *šaman*. However, the designation appears among the now-extinct Tocharian peoples of Central Asia as *šamāne* as well as the Indian Prakrit vernacular as *samaṇe*. These are to be traced to the Sanskrit term for “ascetic,” namely, *śramaṇās*. In other words, the term is not originally indigenous to the peoples to whom it retains its primary association.

Pivotal roles in the development of the West’s understanding of shamanism have been played by the Russian Sergei M. Shirogokorov and the Romanian Mircea Eliade. Shirogokorov’s seminal work is the *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (1935). Earlier, in 1923, he published his *General Theory of Shamanism among the Tungus*. Another

important early work is Knud Rasmussen’s *The Intellectual Culture of Iglulik Eskimos* (1929). Eliade’s classic originally appeared as *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l’extase* in 1951. This was subsequently translated by W.R. Trask in 1972 as *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*.

In Siberia, shamanic spiritualism is found among approximately thirty different ethnic groups – with the Yakuts being the largest numerically. The traditional economy is based on reindeer herding. The spirit of the immediate location is believed to enter the stove. Here, with the lighting of the stove, the fire-spirit is offered the first mouthful of food. Recognized spirit places in Siberia include graves, umbilical markers (burial sites of umbilical cords), rivers and mountains. Most shamans were liquidated by the Soviet authorities, and today the resurgence of shamanist elements among the local people is facilitated more by ethnologists, film-makers and the like than by the few surviving traditional shamans in an area roughly the size of the Republic of India and holding a population of approximately one million.

There are countless variations between individual and particular tribal shamanic practices. Nevertheless, there are also certain universal features or patterns that allow it to be considered an identifiable and independent phenomenon in itself. Its basic idea appears to be the institutionalization of a socially recognized intermediary who liaisons between the world of pragmatic realities and the more subtle realm of spirit. From a religious perspective, shamanism is a loose federation of cosmologies. But it is always strictly contextual – relating to the religion and society in which it occurs. Yet despite its many forms and the variety of roles it serves, a certain range of cosmology, religion and society is recognizably conducive to belief in the shaman as someone who specializes in trance techniques during which (one of) his/her soul(s) leave(s) the shaman’s body to enter the otherworld. Whether among indigenous peoples of Australia, Siberia, South America, Central and Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa or elsewhere, there appears to be remarkable similarities between particular elements of shamanic mythologies and techniques.

In traditional shamanisms, the shaman’s entire endeavor is shaped by his or her role *vis-à-vis* the community. Deliberately sending forth one’s free-soul, exploring the spiritual realms of the otherworld, being beyond the boundaries of the norm and of normal behavior is, in a Western cultural context, to be mad, insane or schizoid. And in the indigenous understanding of soul-duality, if a person’s dream-soul does not “return” to the waking body, the person’s deranged state is a form of mental illness – one that invariably is followed by physical disability as well. For the ordinary person, soul-loss is considered an accident or misfortune. For the shaman, by contrast, the very propensity for entering an altered state of conscious-

ness is his or her trade. But it is still not the *raison d'être*. The purpose instead is the community welfare.

In navigating the dangers of the world of spirit, within the condition of an altered state of consciousness, even for the experienced shaman there is the risk of soul-loss. It is the very social function of the shaman that provides his or her way back to this world. Community service becomes the anchor that prevents the shaman from becoming permanently lost in the otherworld. So while the mediumship of the shaman is what allows a community an access to the spiritual without which there is the danger of collective madness, it is the community itself and the shaman's duty to serve it which provides the shamanic safeguard against the specialist becoming imprisoned perpetually in the world of purely analogical and magical effervescence. It is this aspect that is essential in all indigenous forms of shamanism.

Following Shirogokorov's seminal work in the 1930s, Russian scholars tend to associate shamanism with spiritual healing as its most salient feature. The West, by contrast, under the influence of Eliade, considers the key aspect of shamanism to be its "techniques of ecstasy." This last is more conducive to the wider application of the term to various magico-religious elements found among many non-literate peoples as well as in some world religions. Nevertheless, the healing aspect of the shamanic vision quest is virtually an inevitable feature all the same.

The shaman, therefore is someone who participates directly in spiritual dimensions in the roles of healer, diviner, clairvoyant and/or psychopomp. For example, the role of the Chinese traditional shaman, designated *wu*, whether male or female, is typically that of seer, healer and keeper of justice in Chinese villages in the context of the popular traditions and/or Daoism. In an induced trance state, the shaman is believed to leave the body and visit other worlds. The purpose of shamanic journeying, therefore, is to convey sacrifices to the gods, to escort the dead to their next destination, to acquire knowledge to heal illnesses, and to return with prophecies. The shaman's duty is both to instruct people on a proper course of action and to cause good things to happen. The shaman's overall function is to ensure, maintain and/or restore his/her people's proper relationship with the natural environment and with the spiritual realm as it manifests itself through that environment. The shaman may also bestow fetishes or sacred objects in the form of feathers, ritual rattles, special drums or ceremonial pipes. These, in turn, are venerated and employed to ensure harmony. Their pragmatic import is to assist their users to be mindful and vigilant concerning the preservation of holistic equilibrium.

The principal means of communicating with the spirit world by the shaman is through the utterance of special words and by rhythmically beating a sacred drum. With the help of healing spirits, the shaman is believed to overcome malignant powers. Shamanism only exists when

communication between this world and the spirit world is not deemed to be possible on the part of ordinary persons. Since the shaman's role is one of intermediary, he or she is often found in cultures in which a high god is believed to have receded and become inactive in the affairs of this world. This relates to the "loss of communication" mythology between human beings and spirits at the close of the primal era. In the void which ensues with the high god's absence, numerous ancestor spirits and spirits of nature come to intervene, and it is these beings with whom the shaman becomes an adept in communicating and controlling.

In the traditional context, the would-be shaman responds to a call. In some cases, the profession is hereditary. Normally, however, there is a reluctance to assume the shamanic mantle. While he or she is often highly respected and revered, there is also great fear attached to the shaman who usually lives a relatively isolated life. At first, the candidate undergoes a powerful but spontaneous spiritual experience – one that generally coincides with sexual maturity. This is usually an illness, often mental, which is nevertheless an empowering experience. In many tribal societies, it is not uncommon for many people to suffer an episode of schizophrenic-type illness lasting perhaps six to nine months. Unlike in the West where the mentally ill are sequestered and institutionalized, in the indigenous environment, these people are comforted and integrated as much as is possible into the social framework. Most people eventually recover and assume normal lives thereafter. But those who are deemed to have extra insight and dream-capacity may instead be selected for shamanic training. When viewing contemporary Western forms of shamanism, it is important to keep in mind that traditional shamanic training is often a prolonged and difficult ordeal which, if the candidate succeeds, is followed by an initiation that incorporates themes of death, dismemberment and reconstitution.

Consequently, in the traditional context, there is almost invariably a discernible shamanic trajectory beginning with the call, crisis or initial illness and followed by the training and culminating in initiation and transformation. The shaman then acquires a "spirit-animal" or familiar, demonstrates the shamanic performance and experience of trance, and eventually returns or "re-incorporates" and dispenses knowledge. He or she may finally bequeath implements and information to apprentices. For Western neo-shamans, however, this trajectory is much less rigorous if it exists at all in the first place. While traditional shamans are often initially reluctant to assume the shamanic mantle, for neo-shamans the choice to pursue this path is almost invariably a personal and private preference. Moreover, this decision is rarely made in connection to a supportive social community but reflects the atomization of Western society. Much of the training is self-training, though this can be augmented for some New Age

shamans who participate in various eco-tourist opportunities and pursue occasional ecstatic experience through South American *curañderos* in the Amazonian rainforest or the mountains and jungles of Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador. For those who do not pursue this psychonautic route, there are the augmentative options of New Age workshops. However, among the more controversial issues to arise for Western would-be shamans is the question of appropriation of cultural property. Many Lakota Indians, for instance, condemn the theft of Amerindian artifacts (e.g., dream-catchers) and practices (e.g., participation in sweat-lodge ceremonies) as threats to the identity and precarious survival of Native Americans.

Russian scholars have argued that the traditional shaman is an individual who suffers from certain nervous disorders or forms of hysteria – especially in the severe Arctic environment. Others see shamanism as the development of skill in epilepsy. The training and initiation that the shaman receives constitutes in effect a cure. For the traditional shaman, the distinctive feature becomes an ability to control ecstasy and enter trance at will. The shaman is deemed by his or her community to have achieved a great mastery of the natural and psychological dimensions. Typical signs of the traditional shaman's extraordinary superhuman powers include the ability to walk on red-hot coals or even swallow them, to remain unscathed by boiling water, to undergo physical mutilation – including the cutting open of their stomachs which then heal instantly – to release themselves from bonds, and to exercise kinesis.

Nevertheless, despite the various demonstrative signs of the shaman's abilities, it is the ability of certain individuals to communicate with spirits that is the core aspect of traditional shamanism. This feature is closely linked to hunter-gatherer societies and therefore probably of great antiquity. This near universality of shamanism allowed Ninian Smart to surmise that it is ancestral to both the magical or numinous (*bhakti*) and the contemplative or mystical (*dhyāna*) forms of most subsequent religious formation. For Smart, shamanism is an early phenomenon which stretches back deep into prehistory. The shaman is one who encounters numinous beings and the *mysterium tremendum*. He or she is also one who prepares for inner vision and the development of inward narrative through solitude and asceticism. Among its other offshoots are the practice of magic, the development of healing techniques and possibly the creation of epic and lyric poetry. Consequently, the shaman's traditional roles are those of healer-physician, psychopomp, animal-charmer, prophet, sacrificial priest, lawyer, mythologue, epic singer, and keeper of the tribal calendar.

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Further Reading

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- See also: Amazonia; Animism; Animism – A Contemporary Perspective; Ayahuasca; Breathwork; Entheogens; Ethnobotany; Ethnoecology; Harner, Michael – and the Foundation for Shamanic Studies; Huaorani; Inuit; Magic, Animism, and the Shaman's Craft; Maya Religion (Central America); Maya Spirituality (Guatemala Highlands); Reichel-Dolmatoff, Gerardo – and Ethnoecology in Colombia; Peyote; Psychonauts; Raves; Re-Earthing; Saami Culture; Shamanism – and Art; Shamanism – Ecuador; Shamanism – Neo; Shamanism – Neo (Eastern Europe); Shamanism – Southern Peruvian Andes; Shamanism – Urban; Traditional Ecological Knowledge; Tukanoan Indians (Northwest Amazonia); U'wa Indians (Colombia); Yoga and Ecology; Yanomami; Zulu (ama-Zulu) Culture, Plants and Spirit Worlds (South Africa).

Shamanism – Urban

Urban shamanism represents the practice of perspective shift within an urban environment and with the purpose of regaining a pantheistic perception. Varieties include New Age, new Pagan, techno-cyber, rave, psychonautic and environmental warrior forms. The underlying question for the urban shaman concerns locating or constructing the sacred from the profane and determining how and when objects and places become charged with holy power. In the urban context, the shaman attempts to implement what Max Weber referred to as the reenchantment of the world. Enchantment is magic, and the urban shaman endeavors either to re-see the world as innately sacred or, actively, to imbue the world with a ubiquitous magical spell. In a sense, urban shamanism represents the attempt to look at one's home turf as if a visiting foreigner.

All urban shamans, whether New Age or new Pagan, access or relate to at least some aspect of nature, the rural and/or the untamed wild, and their task then becomes one