CELEBRATE THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

WALKING YOUR PATH

When the Sacred Seeks You
• With the Mazatec of Mexico
• Being a South African Sangoma
• A Western Ayahuascero in Peru

Death in the Mountains
• Ceremony for a lost Mountaineer
• Funeral Rites in the Himalayas

Liberating Demons
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As a moderator on the largest shamanism group on Facebook, I often see posts which either ask ‘how one becomes a shaman,’ or posts from people seeking to become a shaman and seeking a path which they can follow. The lack of an established traditional path in the West seems one of the hardest things that people interested in shamanism have to face, and instead many people have to pick things up here and there, from books and workshops - many of which are full of inaccurate information and unuseful practices.

And yet the spirits find people, and lead them on adventures sometimes, often in the strangest of ways; I have a friend who met a Siberian trained shaman - ‘by chance’ - in a Bristol shop and became their apprentice. It would appear that, very often, if the spirits want you, a way will open for you.

Many of the articles in this issue of Sacred Hoop are about this subject, about the paths people have been led down after the spirits danced into their lives. We have writers who became deeply involved with traditions in Mexico, Peru, South Africa and Tuva. These people are bringing things back to the West, bringing back precious treasures which can enrich our own culture.

There are no long-trodden paths yet in the West, but I am confident that is just a temporary gap in our culture, I have great hope that traditions - which have been tested and honed, and which are real and grounded - will emerge here, and there will be in the future, an established way that people in the West will be able to follow the prompting of the spirits. May it evolve and come swiftly - we desperately need it in the world we have right now.

Blessings to all Beings
Nicholas Breeze Wood
Mario Gómez Mayorga along with Rocio Lopez Ruiz, is the co-founder and co-operator of Con Ciencia Indegina. Con Ciencia Indegina - which means ‘With Indigenous Science’ in English - facilitates numerous spiritual workshops, transcendental experiences and sacred pilgrimages in Mexico.

For over 30 years now, Con Ciencia Indegina has helped people from all over the world to better themselves, grow and learn from the Huichol, Mazatec and Mayan peoples, who maintain their traditional ways of life and connection to the natural world.

Giving Westeners a chance to participate in sacred ceremonies, fiestas, rituals, and pilgrimages to sacred power places, offers an opportunity to experience - and perhaps gain some insight into - the traditional ways of seeing the world, which cultures like the Huichol, Mazatec and Mayan peoples hold.

In our increasingly dysfunctional, insane and heartless world, perhaps we all could learn something from our traditional elders.

Brett: You have been in a close relationship with the most preserved indigenous cultures of Mexico and their healing ceremonies with sacred plant medicines for more than thirty years. What led you to this path?

Mario: More than three decades ago, I was working with a NGO to help support people in the sorts of problems which indigenous nations have in cities, with urban white people, and especially with governmental legal issues.

Because of the relationship I developed with indigenous people through this work, I was regularly invited to assist in celebrations, fiestas, ceremonies and rituals. Over the years, this relationship deepened very profoundly, affecting the core foundations of my person, and catapulting me into a completely different way of relating to life.

I never suspected this was going to happen, and neither was I looking for it. Like most people in the world who come across books where authors talk about...
indigenous magical beings or shamanism, it was not really of any interest to me. But, one day, I discovered that I had become someone entirely different to who I had been.

It happened slowly, without me being aware of it, I just gradually realised I had found myself living inside a universe which was alive and conscious, a universe with whom one can be in a permanent back and forth dialogue, and where one never stops growing. As I discovered this, I realised I would never again be able to go away from the indigenous people, or at least their understanding of the world. I didn’t live among them, I just visited them frequently, but inside I was, and still am, with them all the time.

I see them as my spiritual family. With them I found souls who I call my spiritual fathers, grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers, many incredible sisters and brothers. People from the Spirit, with whom I have lived the most extraordinary things I could not even dream in my wildest fantasies.

You have worked for over three decades with the Mazatec, Huichol and several Mayan indigenous groups. Can you tell us a little about these experiences?

I could write at least two books answering only this question, but I’ll try to condense my answer to just one or two paragraphs.

I found with them a different way of seeing, and a different way of relating to life, to existence. I was just a young, and somewhat confused person - something which is normal in youth.

I was overwhelmed by the powerful, straightforward, serious and responsible, but at the same time beautiful and magical ways to engage with life I had discovered, which beforehand I’d had no idea even existed. My world was altered by observing the poetic actions my new indigenous friends did, the mysticism of their practices, and the incredible lucid relationship they had with nature.

Just being exposed to what they were doing totally changed me, and entered me into an exploration of consciousness, by observing the proposals, practices and customs they lived their lives based upon.

There are a lot of New Age fantasies around, triggered by the novels of Carlos Castaneda, and from then, until now, nothing has stopped the flow of non-existent, unreal, fake ‘indigenous knowledge,’ which sells weird books, and triggers so many self-proclaimed ‘shamans’ and nonsense trickery.

I also quickly realised that there are a lot of New Age fantasies around, which are not actually found in the indigenous world, despite what most people believe. These were initially triggered in the 1970s by the fictional novels of Carlos Castaneda and others, and from then, until now, nothing has really stopped the flow of non-existent, unreal, fake ‘indigenous knowledge,’ which sells so many weird books, and triggers so many self-proclaimed ‘shamans’ and nonsense trickery.

Yes, of course, the indigenous world is full of beautiful conscious aspects, many somehow magical in the sense that they open one’s awareness and give the possibility for you to become a better person and live a better life. But indigenous people are humans, and not all of them are into knowledge and responsibility. They have a full array of all the human problems in their communities, with the complete ‘ego pack of personality types’ taking actions through all they do.

Indigenous cultures also have severe problems, such as alcoholism, violence, and the abandonment of their communities and traditional knowledge, in the quest to make a better life earning dollars, often - in the cultures of Mexico and Central America - immigrating as ‘illegal’s’ into the U.S.

Once they do that, many may never return, and the ones who do go back have their minds polluted.
The Leopard is a sacred animal in Africa. Many healers, herbalists and statesmen have leopard skins, or imitations, in their homes. They represent intuitive intelligence, and are a symbol of strength, nobility and independence. Possessing a Leopard skin is a call to merge with nature and to become more instinctual, wild and intelligent.

The ‘Way of the Leopard’ are teachings that I have developed from my lengthy apprenticeship (over ten years) in the Xhosa tribe in South Africa to become a senior sangoma, or what is known amongst the Xhosa people as ‘ligqirha linkulu.’

‘The Way of the Leopard’ are indigenous teachings about ‘Ubuntu’ (humanity), showing people how they can connect to their intuitive essence through honouring their ancestors (bones), working with plant medicine and listening to one’s dreams.

These teachings incorporate the old Xhosa teachings of ‘Ubuntu Ubunzulu,’ meaning the ‘depth of humanity.’ They have survived for thousands of years, and have been passed from one Xhosa sangoma to the next, via a process of transmission through a sangoma apprenticeship, as well as through family ceremonies from elders to their children.

They are not secret teachings as such, but rather oral instructions from elder to student, guiding them to a place of selfless harmony, so they can dream and merge with ‘uThixo’ (The Great Spirit).

They are known and revered by traditional peoples in the rural areas as a way to maintain harmony between people and their ancestors. As this harmony is achieved it also spreads to the natural world, and like the leopard we merge with the spirit of nature.

They involve a deep and profound honouring of ancestors (bones), and as we do this, a profound ‘remembering’ occurs where we as individuals realise our true calling and what our job is in this world. When human beings honour their bones (ancestors) we are said to engage with ‘umsebenze ukukhanya,’ the ‘shining work,’ because the true nature of a human being is beautiful, loving, humble and in service to the planet.

I would like to share with you a few stories about how I become an African soul doctor, medicine man, what we in South Africa call a ‘sangoma,’ people who connect to the spirit world through rhythm and song.

My journey began in the heart of the Southern African bush-veld in the deserts of Botswana in the 1980s, and moved like a mystic wind to the hills of South Korea and Ireland, before landing in the heart land of Nelson Mandela territory in the Xhosa nation in the Eastern Cape, South Africa in 2007.
We watched the sky for signs. The vultures circled above us on thermal air currents, a clear sign of a kill below. All we had to do was follow them. There were no roads in Botswana at that time. I was on a school outing with my Biology teacher, I was only 16. We slept below the stars in tents.

One night we camped near a small dam. It was cold and the stars were bright, opening us up to many worlds above us. I slept deeply, and was woken by an excited cry from my friend David, “There is a leopard drinking nearby, get up quickly!”

I replied from a sleepy wonderland, “I will see it later.”

Eventually he woke me up, and we climbed onto the roof of our Landrover for safety, whilst we observed the leopard nearby.

The leopard drank from the nearby watering hole completely oblivious to us, caught in its own world of stalking and preying. It was a large male with lightning eyes amidst a stealthy yellow dotted body.

My teacher reckoned that it had never met humans before, because it was completely unperturbed by our presence. A small wonder in itself.

It felt like an emissary from Mother Nature, and it sparked a flame of wonder for the wilderness inside of me that quickly moved towards a hurricane when I received the calling to become a sangoma a few years later.

I received many dreams and a dreaded illness called the thwaza, the traditional sangoma ‘calling illness,’ endemic in traditional shamanic circles around the world.

The illness brought me close to death and madness as well, as mystical moments of incredible beauty. It opened me to the world of traditional sangoma healers, where I was graced with being educated and mentored by some of South Africa’s greatest mystic healers. It also opened me to the world of Zen Buddhism, and I was guided by Zen Masters in South Korea.

My gentle flame was fanned steadily by dreams. One of my earlier dreams, a few months after observing the leopard, formed the start of my prophetic dreaming gift. It involved me searching for gold in South America.

I was walking through dense forest with a verdant hue and I found a large chest full of gold ingots. As I awoke, a woman’s voice said; “In order for you to find your destiny you will need to come close to death”.

Upon awakening I felt excited beyond words, not depressed or anxious at the mention of death. It felt as if I had touched an ancient world and my soul was fed, and like a plant, started to grow in the most surprising ways. My world was filled with magic and wonder, I was being called to become an alchemist.

South Africa at that time was in the midst of a terrible bush war in Angola, as well as a civil war within our borders under our apartheid government. Young white men were conscripted (drafted) into the South African army.

I knew that I was going to be drafted when I was 18, and that I could choose which branch of the military to serve under, and after this dream I knew in my bones that I needed to choose the Medical Core and help heal, not kill.

With the innocence of an adolescence, I felt the call to become an operational medic and serve troops at the frontlines in Angola. I was certain that I would come close to death, which would honour my dream and open up my destiny. As luck would have it the Angolan war ended a few months before I was scheduled to join the South African Army, and I was drafted into a military hospital, one of the largest in Africa. Soldiers were airlifted from the front lines and treated there.

My first assignment was to manage the rehabilitation of soldiers. Many of them were from the front lines of the recent bush war in Angola and some were from our national civil war.

Most were black soldiers from various special forces battalions. They became my friends and greatest teachers. It was here that I encountered traditional South...
In November of 2001, at the age of forty, I had a strange dream; flying upwards into blackness, I opened my mouth and hooted like an owl. For that New Year, my wife and I visited her parents in Kyushu, southern Japan. At the time I was running ‘Star Temple,’ a British psychic readings company, and the break from work was very welcome. Although we’d made the journey before, this time jet lag hit me hard. I lay awake night after night, often going into the kitchen to make herbal tea. One night I looked at the clock and noticed the dial had been set inside the figure of an owl. I then realised the dream had been about this insomnia.

In desperation we got some sleeping tablets from a local doctor. Finally, after nine days I slept. In Japan, for New Year, people get up early to welcome the first sunrise. We did this, and drove to the sea, where the sounds of drumming could be heard from distant hills. As we walked towards the beach, I noticed a pristine feather lying on the path. When I picked it up, I realised it was an eagle feather, and a few eagles were lazily circling in the dawn sky above.

Back in the UK the insomnia persisted when the tablets ran out. I got some more, and eventually a friend recommended the herb valerian, and this enabled me to sleep naturally. That first night, I dreamt my spirit was dancing above me, before descending into my body. Upon awaking I felt much better, and painted what it looked like.

Although the insomnia passed, the spirit dreams continued, beginning with one about a snake that reared up and bit my right eye. The next night I lay in a hospital operating room with spirit doctors removing the eye and replacing it. Two weeks later I dreamt the flesh from my body sloughed off, exposing a thick black gunk within my skeletal structure. This liquefied and drained onto the floor.

For most of my adult life I had worked as a psychic and an astrologer; ‘Star Temple’ was an expansion of this, a company I started a couple of years before, which grew quickly due to a favourable article in Cosmopolitan magazine about a reading I had given to a journalist. During this period of intense dreams, 60 psychics were working for ‘Star Temple,’ giving thousands of consultations a month. I mention this to explain the heavy stress I felt. We did our best to ensure ethical standards were met, but I couldn’t help feeling depressed when listening to some of the readings meted out to our clients.

The dreams continued throughout 2002, and I started to research what they might be about. It soon became clear that they might have been about a ‘shamanic calling,’ and the more I found out...
I had recently seen crows flying with food on three separate occasions; a possible sign of coming abundance? I was paying careful attention to my surroundings.

I was headed north for a weekend in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, USA, and was planning a stop at a local mountaineering shop to meet Ron, the store owner and a world-class mountaineer. I had some materials that were part of a fundraiser for mountain search and rescue operations, and Ron had agreed to let me use his store.

While I waited in the front, my eyes fell to a beautifully ornate bell with a hand written note that said it was from Nepal and used in Buddhist ceremonies. I held it and liked its weight and its pulsing energy.

Ron had brought it back from a recent trip to Nepal, where he was trekking near Base Camp on Mount Everest. It was 2015; and while he was there, thousands were devastatingly killed in earthquakes in the region. This bell held those vibrations. The violence released in those quakes surely caused this bell to ring in Nepal.

Ron has been to the summit of Mount Everest, and as we shook hands, I was momentarily connected to the top of the world. He offered me the bell as a gift, and I accepted it with gratitude, knowing, somehow deep within me, that it was the treasure the crows had shown me was coming to me.

### A DEATH ON THE MOUNTAIN

In a regionally well-documented incident, a woman named Kate had died that winter in New Hampshire’s Presidential Range on Mount Adams, near Star Lake. This is a visually stunning and spiritually powerful place, but it can also be a dangerous one.

Kate ventured into conditions where no one goes: 100 mile per hour winds and temperatures down to thirty degrees below. Those who know the power of storms high above the tree line, those who know of the 150 people who had died in recent years along this ridge stayed home that day.

But Kate was training to climb the world’s highest peak. She dreamed of standing atop Everest. To her it seemed like a really good day to get some bad weather training. But she didn’t know what she was proposing. This storm was different.

The first time I climbed Mount Adams myself, I felt its magic, its energy, and over the years I have climbed it twenty times or more - in all seasons of the year - and I never tire of its boulder-strewn and often snowy flanks.

Many hundreds of feet below the summit cone, in the windswept saddle between Mounts Adams and Madison, is a place I have felt near my heart for a long time. There sits Star Lake, a shallow,
"Tell me," I said to my guide as we walked, "are there ‘spirits of the mountain’ in these ranges? And do the people really believe in them?"

"Yes, sir," replied the young fellow, "there certainly are a number of them, and they are often very troublesome, especially to certain people. They are seldom known, however, to kill anyone."

"Then they are not quite so bad as some human beings," I replied.

"Well, sir, they are very bad. They seize sleeping people by the throat with claws like iron, sitting on the chests of their victims."

"Does not that sound more like an attack of indigestion?"

"No, sir. The ghosts of the mountains are the spirits of people that have not gone to heaven. They are to be found in swarms at night in the forest. The people are terrified of them. They haunt the mountain-tops and slopes, and they can assume the semblance of a cat, a mouse, or any other animal; in fact they are said to frequently change their appearance.

Where no man can tread, among rocks and precipices, or in the thick jungle, the spirits seek their retreat, but often they abandon their haunts to seek for men. The person who becomes possessed generally remains in a semi-conscious condition and ejaculates mad cries and unintelligible words.

There are men who profess to know charms to draw them out. Some remedies are for that purpose commonly used by the natives with more or less success.

A grass called bichna (nettles) has the faculty of frightening the spirits away when applied on the body of the sufferer, but the most effective remedy is to make pretence to beat with a red-hot iron the person possessed. The spirits seem to fear that more than anything else."

"Do the spirits ever speak?" I inquired, interested in the curious superstitions of these hill men.

"No, sir, not often, nor usually directly, but they do it through people who are possessed by them. It is they who tell many strange tales of the spirits. One curious point about them is that they only seize people who are afraid of them. If defied they vanish."

"Do the natives adopt any special method to protect themselves from these mountain demons?"

"Fire is the only sure protection. Any one sleeping near a fire is safe, and as long as there is a flame blazing the spirits keep away."

"Do you know any one who has seen them?"
In the shamanistic-fused, magical Tibetan Buddhist traditions, there is an ancient rite which the Tibetans called bsgral-ba, which translates to ‘liberation’ in English.

Those who practice liberation take the view that a spirit - or even a person - who causes harm to others is suffering themselves, and trapped in an unfortunate state of existence, an unfortunate life.

Because of this, through the rite, they are ‘liberated’ from this life and the negative karma they have accumulated over time - which has resulted in their present birth and suffering. Liberation is, of course, a euphemism, it means they are killed, so they can be seperated from their negative karma and achieve a more positive rebirth.

The evidence for this rite is very ancient, there are numerous C7th and C8th texts from a cave at Dunhuang, a place on the Silk Road, in Gansu Province, northwestern China, which are manuals for its practice. The cave is a treasure trove for early manuscripts, containing many Tibetan, Islamic and even Christian texts, on a wide variety of subjects, many of them highly esoteric.

The origin of this method of working is perhaps lost in the depths of pre-Buddhist time, but one important central myth regarding it is the story of the demon Rudra.

Although a god in Hindu cosmology, Buddhist cosmology sees Rudra as a one-time great practitioner of Buddhism, who gradually became a monstrous demon because he lacked compassion. So, as way to heal the wound on the earth which Rudra was creating, a Buddha - a being of great compassion - forced a trident into the belly of Rudra, killing him, and then eating him, to put an end to his reign of terror.

In the stomach of the Buddha, Rudra was digested and purified, and eventually emerged from the Buddha’s anus a changed being, pledging allegiance to the Buddha. The buddha gave teachings to Rudra, before finally totally destroying him - liberating him - turning him to ‘emptiness,’ and then back to ‘form’ as a protector of the Buddhist teachings.

This then is the core of the liberation rite, the total destruction of someone (spirit, or physical being) so they can remerge as something different.

There is an echo of this in one of the life stories of Padmasambhava, who was said to have ‘liberated’ some family members because they had ‘bad
The giving of sacred cords for people to wear is found in several ancient spiritual traditions, most notably Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism, but similar cords are also a part of Nepalese, Tuvan and some Mongolian shamanistic traditions too. They are generally thought of as either ‘blessing cords’ or ‘protection cords,’ and sometimes a cord is given to remind the wearer of a vow taken, or an empowerment ceremony received.

In shamanism, they can be a very simple - but effective - magical and psychologically beneficial thing to give to clients, which acts as a magical device, a powerful placebo and a reminder of a sacred process - such as a healing. The tradition is, however fairly unknown in the West, outside of Buddhism, and so this article aims to bring them to a wider audience.

The cords are generally called bsrung mdud (pronounced sung dü) in Tibet, while in Nepal they are called rakashya bandhan and in Mongolia zangia.

In Buddhism, the cords are blessed and given by lamas on important occasions, for example when one takes a Buddhist vow, does an important retreat, or receives special - often secret - teachings or empowerments.

Some cords, known as tshedue, or ‘life cords’, are given with the aim of helping longevity, however, cords are mostly given as a general benediction; to help with health issues; to ‘seal’ a healing after it has been performed; for personal protection - especially during travelling - and other reasons.

It is for these kinds of more general reasons that cords are given within shamanism, most often by a shaman to a client, but on occasion - as in Buddhism - they can also be given to a student after a special initiation.

Cords are generally made of wool, cotton or silk, and sometimes of thin strips of fabric. Modern ones are also sometimes made of synthetic material like nylon, but I would imagine most readers would want to stick to natural materials. A cotton or wool one will generally break after a few weeks, a well made silk one might last a year or more.

The colour of the cords vary, but often they are red. Red is seen as a protective colour in a lot of cultures worldwide. It represent blood, and therefore life. Many cultures (including some ancient British ones) painted front doors and windows red to stop spirits getting into a house. In Native American traditions many healing objects have red handles in some form or another, to protect the healer from sickness. Red can also represent fearlessness, courage and bravery, ideal attributes if one is performing a little shamanic protection magic.

Other colours used will depend on the vision of the shaman and the reason the cord is being given. For example, Bhola Banstola the Nepalese shaman gives tri-colour cords - red, black and blue - when giving a empowerment into the practices of certain spirits, such as Kali or Mahakala. The same sort of thing can occur within Buddhism, different colours representing different Buddhist beings.

Some Tibetan practices use multicoloured stranded cords - such as yellow, white, red, green and blue - which represent the four directions and the centre; the five elements (earth, air, fire, water and space); as well as the five Buddha families and other things.

However, red is a general good, ‘go to’ colour, but if you decide to take up this practice you should use colours which have significance to you and your own cosmology.

Cords are tied on generally with just a simple knot, one which won’t come undone, but within Buddhism there are also specific, magical knots too, each done in a special way. The ‘scorpion knot’ is one example of these. This knot is associated with some wrathful practices, and the knot represents a scorpion, which is considered to be a wrathful form of Padmasambhava who fights to overcome harmful spirits of various kinds.

Cords can either be a single strand, or several strands twisted or plaited together. The plaiting method gives a stronger and tidier looking finished cord, but takes longer to make. However, the extra time needed allows more intent and focus to be placed upon the empowerment of the cord, as it is empowered during its construction.

In Buddhism, the empowerment is done by a lama going into a meditative state where they ‘arise’ as the powerful being who is giving the protection or blessing. The term ‘arise’ in Buddhism means that they practitioner has stopped being themselves, and has become the Buddhist being they are meditating upon, be it a peaceful being like Green Tara, or a wrathful being like Mahakala.

This is very similar in many ways to having ones shamanic spirit helper ‘come into you’ while you are in a light trance, rather like a traditional shaman would get taken over by their helper spirit, only in...
Epigenetics is the study of the changes in our gene expressions, caused by an interaction with the environment, rather than the DNA itself changing.

The human body is made up of DNA, and a DNA strand holds the instruction manual for our cells. Embedded in DNA are genes. Genes give the instructions to our body to make all of its essential proteins. A good way to visualise this is to imagine that genes are chapters within the body’s design manual, focused on specific categories.

Proteins do most of the work in our cells, from the very beginning of the cell’s formation, to the job it does in the body. As a fetus develops inside the womb, it is epigenetics that determine a cell’s specialisation; what it develops into - for example, a hair cell or a blood cell. In this article, I will refer to these aspects as ‘nature.’

When we are born, and begin to interact with the world, our environment impacts our genes, causing them to turn on or off. I will refer to these effects as ‘nurture.’

Interactions with the environment can result in chemical modifications to our genes. For example, they may be switched on or off by an external environmental stimulant, and this might subsequently lead to an unhealthy state, which could result in an illness - such as cancer or dementia.

In recent years, the study of epigenetics has been pushed to the forefront due to expanded interest in the MTHFR mutation or SNP (pronounced ‘snip’).

So, what is a SNP?

Cells copy themselves to create new cells, and during this process a cell may make a mistake, and create a SNP or Single Nucleotide Polymorphism.

The mistake, the SNP, may then modify the instructions in our manual, and this could affect, or even change our appearance, or affect how our immune system functions, perhaps giving us a predisposition to disease we were not predisposed to before the SNP occurred, for example.

DNA is passed down through our parents and before them our more distant ancestors, so we inherit SNPs through our family tree.

In his book ‘Dirty Genes’, a prominent book on epigenetics, the author Dr. Ben Lynch states; ‘Our genes are not our destiny.’ Remember that genes can turn on or off, based on our environment, our diet, our water quality etc., and Dr. Lynch’s book encourages us to ‘clean your genes’ by eating the right foods, living in the right environment etc. Dr. Lynch argues that when we do these types of things, these changes in our life can help reverse, or even eliminate health issues.

THE ROLE OF KARMA

In Buddhism and Hinduism, karma could be defined as ‘the sum of a person’s actions in this, and previous states of existence, which define their future states of existence.’

Until recently I thought karma was something that was ‘meant to be’ - i.e., fate or destiny, and that karma - either bad or good - was
Shaman’s Ritual Clothing

Goat skin, cotton and other fabrics, tanned leather, cowrie shells, iron and bronze objects and bells, raven and hawk feathers, polecat, ermin and weasel pelts.

The costume is in the form of a short coat made out of the skin of a wild goat, with strips of red and white cotton cloth stitched on to the back, along with long snakes made of cloth, iron jingles, bronze bells, miniature iron bows and arrows and other objects.

The shaman’s headdress is made of red cloth, decorated with cowrie shells, and a black fringe which partially covers the face. Hanging from it are several polecat, weasel, and ermin pelts, which would have been given to the shaman by members of their community as a sign of respect.

The boots are made of black cloth, decorated with cowrie shells.

Buryat People, Lake Baikal area Southern Siberia, Late C19th.