The genesis of a field of shamanism, America 1960s-1990s

Throughout his career, Joseph Campbell visibly paid heed to shamanism and other issues that engaged the field of esotericism, shifting his focus on occasion by adopting modish subjects. His 1968 Esalen lecture on ‘Schizophrenia: The Inward Journey’ may count as an example. Campbell talked about the imagery of the schizophrenic fantasy, which perfectly matched that of the mythological hero journey, and he argued that the ‘inward journeys of the mythological hero, the shaman, the mystic and the schizophrenic’ were in principle the same. Yet instead of swimming in it and achieving a richer, stronger and more joyous life, the schizophrenic was drowning.1 As esotericism turned mainstream during the 1970s, Campbell caught the attention of wider audiences, for instance through a sympathetic interview with his pupil and friend, the humanistic psychologist and former professor of philosophy and religion Sam Keen, in Psychology Today in 1971.2

A year after the interview, Campbell retired from Sarah Lawrence College and started to promote his mythology energetically in the booming field of esotericism, where he was already a recognized authority with a great scholarly reputation. More than before, he travelled around and lectured at growth centres. He became one of the most prominent and regular visitors to Esalen, where he lectured on subjects such as Tarot, Carl Jung, Kundalini Yoga, the Tibetan Book of the Dead and shamanism. Again and again, Campbell stressed the need for new myths and the possibilities for individuals to realize their own identity by enjoying the stories of the hero. Identification with the hero and his world as well as understanding the hero myth would lead to spiritual enrichment. As we have seen in the previous chapter, his urging to experience the deeper and essential core of myths instead of listening to religious authorities was heartily embraced by countercultural fields.3

Unusually, his fame increased and reached a peak after he died in 1987. This was the result of the much-admired 1988 PBS special series of interviews about *The Power of Myth* and the companion book to the series. On television Joseph Campbell was the embodiment of the ideal academic. He was gentle, informative, reassuring, unworldly, spiritual and articulate, without being incomprehensible. Campbell impressed his audience with his erudition and with a range of beautiful stories concerning myths as ‘clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life’. Myths could help people to put their minds in touch with the ‘experience of being alive’ and thus with the ‘inner being’ and the ‘mystery’. Artists were the mythmakers of today, Campbell argued, while the mythmakers of ‘early elementary cultures’ were shamans. They understood myths and symbols as they had ‘mythological experience’. Unlike the priest, who ‘is a functionary of a social sort’, the ‘shaman’s powers are symbolized in his own familiars, deities of his own personal experience. His authority comes out of a psychological experience, not a social ordination’. Shamans translated their visions into ritual performances and brought their ‘inner experience into the outer life of the people themselves’. Campbell lamented the fact that shamans had lost their function in the evolution of mankind. Unfortunately, the priests who had taken over were not gifted with the individual powers of shamans.5

The positive reception of Campbell’s *Power of Myth* is significant. Obviously he remained faithful to the basic ideas of his mythology, but this time his lectures touched the nerve of the so-called ‘Aquarian conspiracy’ that swept the United States from the 1980s onwards.6 It involved a tremendous boost in the institutionalisation of shamanism within the mainstream phenomenon that became known as the New Age movement. On this esoteric surf, Campbell and other experts struggled to authorise their supposedly timeless and countercultural aspirations. They were doing well, not so much because their ideas revealed a perennial wisdom but, instead, because of the *Wahlverwandtschaften* between the logic of their fashionable esoterism and the logic of the up-and-coming neoliberal capitalism.7


Neoliberalism gained dominance from the early 1980s onwards, especially after the 1981 election of Ronald Reagan (1911-2004), who combined a moral nostalgia with the optimistic faith that he could unleash America from the constraints of government. The Reagan administration inaugurated a ‘market theocracy’ that hailed the free movement of capital and the loosening of state control over capital as the realistic proven route to freedom, individual opportunities and social cohesion. Neoliberal dispositions gave new meaning to Campbell’s motto ‘follow your bliss’ as it superbly fitted the idea that individuals are entrepreneurs managing their own lives. Inspired by Campbell, one economist even interpreted ‘the entrepreneur as capitalist hero’ in 1994. According to him, Campbell was right to say that a ‘system creates roles for us that are not of our own choosing. This dehumanizes us’. Heroes and entrepreneurs, on the other hand, ‘are called to and take part in the greatest and most universal adventure that life has to offer: the simultaneous journey of self-discovery, spiritual growth, and the personal creativity they make possible’. In other words, they ‘follow their bliss; thus, they revitalize our economy’.9

Indeed, according to the sociologist Sam Binkley the ‘entrepreneurial self’ or, in other words, the highly mobile, self-reliant, self-choosing player in the world of neoliberal economics and accelerated consumption, was composed from the cultural and ethical legacy of the counterculture. In the process looseness was tightened up, as the new looseness was opposed to both the radical social objectives of the New Left and the expressive life-style programmes of the 1970s. Instead of celebrating the liberation of the body from regimes of competition, as was habitual in the 1970s consciousness movement, 1980s yuppies started to explore the possibilities of esoteric practices for the purpose of increasing productivity at work and the expansion of social networks yielding greater access to a variety of rewards.10

This chapter’s target is the genesis and logic of the American field of shamanism. I interpret this ‘process of autonomization’ as the result of strategic steps by academic authorities who, while incorporating their psychedelic experiences into

---


their academic pursuits, started to transfer their knowledge to the field of esotericism. My interpretation of the genesis of this field starts with an analysis of Carlos Castaneda [1], whose work was a major part of the institutionalisation of psychedelic dispositions within the academic field of anthropology [2]. The third part of this chapter focuses on the process in which academic experts used their shamanology to position shamanic practices in the field of esotericism [3]. Finally, after my interpretation of the progression of these practices within the booming field of esotericism within the context of neoliberalisation [4], I interpret the logic of the economy of shamanic goods [5].

Carlos Castaneda

Among historiographers of shamanism it is commonly assumed that the publication of Carlos Castaneda’s 1968 *The Teachings of don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* was the beginning of a new phase in the study of shamanism.11 Remarkably, however, they failed to spot that Castaneda used the terms ‘brujo’, ‘nagual’, ‘sorcerer’ and ‘warrior’ instead of the term ‘shaman’. Occasionally, he used the term ‘shaman’ during interviews, as we have seen in the previous chapter, but he presented the term as a ‘technical word’ that was used mainly by scholars. In his books, Castaneda started to exchange the word ‘sorcerer’ for the more popular word ‘shaman’ only from the 1990’s onwards. At that time, the field of shamanism had already been established and Castaneda had published eight hugely successful books.12

Notwithstanding the near absence of the term ‘shamanism’, however, Castaneda’s work is important for the genealogy of shamanism as it allocates a clear focus on the academic field that was crucial for the genesis of a field of shamanism. Castaneda constructed a kind of scholarly knowledge that his colleagues at UCLA also constructed, albeit in a highly theatrical and exaggerated form. Or, in the words of Richard de Mille: Castaneda’s books ‘brilliantly melodramatise theoretical and methodological controversies that [were] troubling social science deeply’.13

12 According to former devotee Gaby Reuter, Castaneda did so to chime in with ‘the much derided new age community’. See idem, *Filming Castaneda. The Hunt for Magic and Reason* (Bloomington, 2004) 183-4. In his portrayal of Castaneda, Znamenski simply calls Don Juan a ‘shaman’ and ‘sorcerer’; see *Beauty of the Primitive*, 189-93. Von Stuckrad argues that Castaneda’s works were constitutive for the ‘schamanischen Diskurses’, see *Schamanismus und Esoterik*, 153-5.
Castaneda’s academic career, however, went wrong. A year before he published his fourth bestseller, the 1974 *Tales of Power*, an issue of *Time* Magazine fuelled the already existing doubts about the validity and reliability of his publications by uncovering some of Castaneda’s lies about his past. Shortly afterwards, Castaneda left the academic field. Ultimately, he became the charismatic leader of a cult with the intriguing name Cleargreen Incorporated, teaching his devotees a combination of kung fu and Tai Chi under the names ‘Tensegrity’ and ‘don Juan’s Magical Passes’. Apparently, Castaneda had learned many of these moves when he studied kung fu in Los Angeles with the ‘energy master’ Howard Y. Lee. It highlights that Castaneda habitually camouflaged the fact that he had not travelled far to acquire his knowledge of the ‘separate reality’.

Indeed, Castaneda’s works are a most ingenious, successful and lucrative series of anthropological hoaxes – maybe even the ‘greatest hoax since the Piltdown Man’, as one critic wanted his readers to believe. For the wider audience that turned his books into international bestsellers, although the scholarly capital of the book initially enhanced the magnetism of its content, ultimately it was not the kind of capital they valued most. That is to say, apologists still argue that it does not matter if Castaneda’s tales are falsifications as the books contain deep truths. Castaneda attracted millions of readers in seventeen languages and he

---


15 Undoubtedly, there is a significant amount of support for the thesis that Castaneda’s works were hoaxes. For instance, the chronology of events in his different books do not match, and Castaneda failed to show any field notes. Moreover, independent experts have disproved Castaneda’s claims about various details of his life during fieldwork: the mushrooms he claimed to have smoked did not grow at the place where he found them and can only be ingested, the effect of drugs on Castaneda were radically different from what other users had reported, and his hour-long walks in the Sonoran desert at the hottest time of the day would surely have killed him of sunstroke. See R. de Mille, *Castaneda’s Journey. The Power and the Allegory* (Santa Barbara, 1976) and idem (ed.), *The Don Juan Papers. Further Castaneda Controversies* (Belmont, 1990); D. Noel (ed.), *Seeing Castaneda. Reactions to the ‘Don Juan’ Writings of Carlos Castaneda* (New York, 1976); R.K. Siegel, ‘Castanedas Privatapotheke’ , *Ethnologica* 9 (1981) 716-23.

16 C.E. Hardman, ‘“He may be lying but what he says is true”: the sacred tradition of don Juan as reported by Carlos Castaneda, anthropologist, trickster, guru, allegorist’, in J.R. Lewis and O. Hammer (eds.), *The Invention of Sacred Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007) 38-55. For instance, the popular British esotericist with a passion for shamanism Nevill Drury argues that, ‘the fact remains that whether Castaneda’s shamanic accounts are totally authentic or include fictional components, the essential themes and world-view presented remain consistent with the shamanic perspective’. Furthermore, Castaneda’s experience of ‘aerial flight’ is ‘remarkably similar to that of the Greek shaman, Aristeas of Proconnesus’. See N.
even received a PhD for his ‘ethnographic’ reports, which, to use Bourdieu’s term, ‘sanctified’ his work so that many scholars could easily receive The Teachings as a valid and valuable scholarly anthropological publication about shamanism. The group of anthropologists that he worked with at UCLA did not recognise his work as a hoax because it agreed with their findings, and they more or less interpreted shamans and hallucinogens from the same dispositions that had guided the writing of Castaneda’s fictitious accounts. Vincent Crapanzano was right when he argued that this was ‘popular anthropology’, and he may have been right to claim that Castaneda was ‘duped by the idiom of his age’. One could also argue that, by using this idiom, Castaneda duped his audiences, but the main point here is, in the words of Bourdieu: ‘Unconscious borrowing and imitations are clearly the most obvious expressions of an age, of that general sense which makes possible the particular sense in which it finds expression.’

Castaneda conjured up a magic universe by embellishing the made-up teachings of the invented Don Juan with all the esoteric, academic and psychedelic capital that was valued highly in the Californian countercultural milieu in which he participated. Through a paradoxical rope trick, Castaneda’s Teachings were perceived as ethnographic accounts in which the protagonist unintentionally supported the countercultural ideals. For instance, The Teachings starts like the spiritual adventures that Joseph Campbell wrote about, as Crapanzano rightly observed. Undeniably, Castaneda’s first books are heaving with psychedelic significance. And no wonder, Castaneda’s work was primarily inspired by psychedelic authors such as Wasson, Puharich and especially Huxley, whose Doors of Perception ‘contributed most to his interest in respectable occultism’, as his ex-wife Margaret Runyan Castaneda wrote in her memoir. According to her, Castaneda also thought that Timothy Leary and he would be on the same ‘wavelength, both scientists probing social unknowns.’


20 M. Runyan Castaneda, A Magical Journey with Carlos Castaneda. Life With the Famed Mystical Warrior. A Memoir (Lincoln, 2001) 59, 89, 121. When he met Leary at a party in 1964 Castaneda was disappointed: Leary was the hip and stoned centre of a drugs party that
Castaneda had a superb feeling for the games that were played in the partly overlapping academic and esoteric fields. It is telling that one of the UCLA scholars who approved of Castaneda’s ‘ethnographic’ texts was Harold Garfinkel, the sociologist known for his ethnomethodology. With his influential yet controversial 1967 *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Garfinkel contributed to what philosopher and anthropologist Ernest Gellner (1925-1995) called the ‘re-enchantment industry or Californian way of subjectivity’. Castaneda must have been familiar with Garfinkel’s claim that ‘other meanings of rationality should be taken into account and treated as data in empirical research’. In fact, Mary Douglas (1921-2007) recognized in Castaneda’s ‘campus cult’ a mixture of ‘words of surrealists, phenomenologists and ethnomethodologists’ in a ‘split level version of what everyone is currently hearing’.

Castaneda’s intriguing narrative begins with the meeting of the protagonist of Castaneda’s books – the UCLA anthropology student Carlos Castaneda himself – with don Juan Matus, an old Yaqui Indian from Sonora, Mexico, in Arizona, where Castaneda planned to collect information on ‘the medicinal plants used by Indians in the area’, in 1960. Don Juan appeared to be a ‘brujo’, or ‘medicine man, curer, witch, sorcerer’ with ‘secret knowledge’ and thus the ideal informant for Castaneda. Under his tutelage, Castaneda found, prepared and took various hallucinogenic plants that introduced him to a non-ordinary reality through

appalled Castaneda. Leary, in turn, mockingly recalled that when Castaneda visited him in Mexico, Castaneda supposed that they were ‘twins, soul-brothers’, see T. Leary, *Flashbacks, an Autobiography* (Los Angeles, 1983) 164-9.


mysterious, terrifying and beautiful visions. In the first year of their acquaintance Castaneda met don Juan several times ‘in the capacity of an anthropological observer’. From 1961 on, however, Castaneda became don Juan’s apprentice. Echoing Huxley’s classic, don Juan explained: ‘There is a crack between the two worlds (…) it opens and closes like a door’. Castaneda found the trips to the other world too frightening and decided to refrain from taking don Juan’s lessons in 1965.25

It is highly probable that Castaneda created the image of don Juan and the other ‘sorcerers’ in his books from information he acquired from his -anthropologist colleagues, especially from Peter T. Furst and Barbara Myerhoff (1935-1985). They introduced Castaneda to Ramon Medina Silva, their main Huichol informant, who was a ‘mara’akame’, or ‘shaman priest’. He was, in all probability, one of the foremost models for Castaneda’s don Juan. Castaneda concocted a celebrated account of don Genaro’s balancing act at a waterfall, for instance, right after Myerhoff told him about the balancing act of her informant-shaman at a waterfall. Instead of suspecting a sham, Myerhoff and Furst merely took Castaneda’s account as confirmation of their own ethnographic data. They supposed that in general, Mexican shamans demonstrated their ‘shamanic equilibrium’ at waterfalls. In his ‘alleglossary’ Richard de Mille assembled a number of cases in which Castaneda’s accounts seemed directly inspired by ethnographic and other scholarly texts. Almost certainly, one of the sources of inspiration was Eliade’s *Shamanism*.26 In his turn, Castaneda was a source of inspiration for many others in the field of esotericism. That is to say, his stories functioned as schemas that structured the accounts by which later shamanic authorities would validate their authenticity. Znamenski also stressed that Castaneda’s ‘tales of power’ were constitutive for the ‘spiritual apprenticeship genre’ and the ‘print culture of modern western shamanism’.27

In his 1971 *A Separate Reality* Don Juan provided Castaneda with new rounds of ‘hallucinogenic smoking mixtures’ and ‘psychotropic mixtures’. Again, they brought about a series of amazing experiences, adventures and ‘states of nonordinary reality’.28 From his 1972 *Journey to Ixtlan* onwards, however, Castaneda broke away from psychedelics. He suddenly announced that his previous assumptions about the ‘states of ordinary reality produced by the indigestion of psychotropic plants’ were ‘erroneous’. Coincidentally or not, as the psychedelic momentum moved on, the public commotion about drugs crested and the final issue of *Psychedelic Review* appeared in 1971, Castaneda turned his attention from psychotropic

---

plants to other subjects, especially to the ‘techniques of stopping the world’."

Without using the terms ‘self-development’ or ‘peak-experience’, Castaneda clearly related to the perspectives of humanistic psychologists. His assessment of don Juan was, for instance, warmly welcomed by the aforementioned psychologist Sam Keen, who published an encouraging interview with Castaneda in Psychology Today in 1972. Keen recognised Castaneda’s significance and conferred legitimacy on Castaneda’s distinct combination of academic and esoteric expertise. Castaneda, for instance, told Keen that he had come ‘to understand sorcery in terms of Talcott Parsons’s idea of glosses. A gloss is a total system of perception and language’. Keen came back with: ‘Wittgenstein is one of the few philosophers who would have understood don Juan’.

Castaneda’s accounts also reminded Keen of a Zen story. With good reason, as don Juan taught Castaneda some exemplary Zen-like lessons, similar to the ones Alan Watts taught. Castaneda had to ‘pay attention’ and ‘shut up the internal dialogue’ for short periods of time. Don Juan told him that he was ‘chained’ to his ‘reason’ but also that he would ‘change directions, and break the chains’. Moreover, Castaneda moulded the don Juan figure in the form of the stereotypical ‘Indian guide’, a legendary figure in the Western genre, never determining don Juan’s cultural settings, but only vaguely hinting at an underground tradition of sorcerers. Castaneda thus strategically spiced up the image of the ‘Indian guide’ with an aroma of ‘guruism’. In effect, don Juan served as a ‘guru’. It is a sign of Castaneda’s profound feel for the game that a commentator in Christian Century found ‘remarkable parallels’ between the ‘basic motifs of the teachings of the Yaqui Indian sorcerer Don Juan’ and ‘Buddhist teachings’ without doubting the authenticity of Castaneda’s work. According to his ex-wife, Castaneda transformed ‘rather basic Eastern philosophical ideas into pure shamanic aperçus’.

---

30 S. Keen, ‘Sorcerer’s Apprentice’, Psychology Today 6/7 (1972) 92, also in Noel (ed.), Seeing Castaneda, 73. Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) was an American sociologist whose action theory was inspired by Max Weber, whose works he translated into English.
Psychedelic anthropology

Needless to say, Castaneda’s knowledge was not the knowledge of a solitary ‘nagual’, ‘sorcerer’ or ‘warrior’, but the product of the field of anthropology in which he participated. Without participating in his hoax, at least not consciously, other scholars also incorporated countercultural perspectives in their ethnographies. They also highlighted experience as a means of acquiring ethnographic knowledge and were ‘shaped in the same mould’, as Bourdieu called it. As they were guided by the dispositions that also guided Castaneda, they had in common ‘a certain cast of mind’.34

It is noteworthy that even the scholars from this field who disregarded Castaneda perceived shamanism in ways that were clearly affiliated to Castaneda’s stance. One of the scholars on Castaneda’s dissertation committee, for example, a professor in the departments of psychiatry and anthropology at UCLA, Douglass Price-Williams, made a plea for ‘an experiential analysis of shamanism’ in 1980. Yet, while he referred to Jung, Eliade, Boyer, Opler, La Barre, De Angulo, Devereux, Silverman, Shirokogoroff and to Castaneda’s closest colleagues at UCLA, he did not refer to Castaneda himself, who is also conspicuously absent in Price-Williams’s 1994 article on ‘Shamanism and Altered States of Consciousness’.35

Barbara Myerhoff

One of Castaneda’s closest allies at UCLA was the aforementioned Barbara Myerhoff. She considered Eliade’s Shamanism as the ‘definitive work on shamanism’

The genesis of a field of shamanism, America 1960s-1990s

and suggested that the shaman’s ‘trance is a return to the lost paradise’ in 1966. Echoing Eliade, Meyerhoff emphasised ‘nostalgia,’ ‘paradise’ and ‘no history, only the timeless present’ in her 1970 interpretation of the ‘Peyote Hunt’. This ‘shamanic complex’ circled round ‘a symbolic re-creation of “original times”’ or, in other words, ‘a kind of lost paradise’. Echoing the vocabulary of Eliade and the shaman-beat-poets, Myerhoff also interpreted American youth culture. By perceiving their revolution as a trip, the ‘poet-warriors’ of youth culture embraced the opposing elements of militant struggle and joyous creation, she argued. Their utopian vision was more reactive than innovative and similar to the vision of ‘Lost Paradise’ in some societies. Ultimately, she concluded:

And so the poet-warrior remained, for a time, clear as who he was, who the enemy was, and who his comrades were. With a foot in two different planes, like a classical shaman, the poet-warrior bridges the real world of men’s fantasies, the world of grim, militant determination and struggle, and the world of whimsy, pleasure, and frivolity.

She even perceived the young Americans as ‘new humanists’ who, she thought, moved towards ‘genuine culture’. Instead of focusing on ‘external influences’, they turned to ‘internal influences’, affirming ‘the body, physical sensations, sexuality and hedonic pleasures’. In their ‘promiscuous’ borrowing, the ‘most conspicuous influential’ element seemed to be the ‘American Indian’. Myerhoff would later turn her attention to the Jewish community in Los Angeles, and away from shamanism, even though her study on shamanism had resulted in a well-received 1974 empathetic classic *Peyote Hunt. The Sacred Journey of the Huichol Indians*. In this book she interpreted ‘the journey to Wirikuta as a prototypical ritual – a return to Paradise, a journey back to human origins, a retrieval of man’s beginnings, before Creation, when all was oneness’. Obviously Eliade’s writings had been helpful, but this time Myerhoff was also inspired by authors such as Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, Maud Oakes and Alan Watts. In 1975 Myerhoff even interpreted the ‘mystic visions’ of the Huichol as a version of the ‘coincidentia oppositorum’.


41 B.G. Myerhoff, ‘Peyote and Huichol Worldview: The Structure of a Mystic Vision’, in V.
Peter Furst

Peter Furst also named Eliade’s *Shamanism* as the ‘definitive study of shamanism’ in his 1965 article about pre-Colombian tomb sculptures. He interpreted these so-called Colima ‘warriors’ as ‘shamanic guardians of the dead’ and, referring to Harva, noticed striking similarities between the Mexican and the Asian ‘shamanic complex’ with their ‘shamanic tree’. The ‘shamanic complex’ contained ‘survivals from an extremely ancient common substratum’ but ‘certain aspects of shamanism may arise spontaneously in stress situations, and especially where a community or individuals find themselves unable to cope with the effects of onrushing industrial civilizations’.

Later, in his famous 1972 volume *Flesh of the Gods*, Furst made a case for ‘Shamanism as a universal Ur-religion’. Yet again he found ‘striking similarities’, this time between ‘the basic premises and motifs of shamanism the world over’. These suggested ‘great antiquity as well as the universality of the creative unconscious of the human psyche’ and ‘the antiquity of the “psychedelic phenomenon” in shamanism’. According to Furst the ‘hallucinogenic drug use in contemporary society’ recalled elements of ‘their use in traditional non-Western magico-religious contexts’. Furst thought of the ‘primordial peyote quest’ as a ‘return to the mythical original state’ and attached great importance to the ‘true shaman’, who assumed ‘the enormous burden’ of responsibility for the welfare of his community. To function as ‘psychopomp’ or soul guide during the ‘peyote pilgrimage’, he must have accumulated sufficient ‘spirit power’, he ‘must “see” with the inner eye’ and he must have the capacity for ‘balance’ as he must ‘venture without fear onto the “narrow bridge” across the great chasm separating the ordinary world from the world beyond’. In other words, he must ‘complete himself’ before he becomes a shaman and this condition could not be faked. As an example, Furst described the ‘memorable demonstration of the meaning of “balance” of his shaman-informant at a ‘spectacular waterfall’. Indeed, a note referred to Castaneda’s ‘striking similar experience’ with don Genaro. Furst not only proposed an exalted view on shamans, he also made shamanic experiences an option for non-shamans as he downplayed the differences between ‘true shamans’ and other ‘peyoteros’. According to him, ‘participation in a peyote journey makes each man a kind of shaman or priest’.

---

44 Furst, ‘Introduction’, xii.
Most contributors to *Flesh of the Gods* incorporated countercultural considerations in their interpretation of shamanism. For instance, the ethnomusicologist Richard Evans Schultes wrote: ‘Western civilization’s new found ways of attaining the “mystic experience” by altering the chemical homeostasis of the body represents nothing new; for thousands of years, primitive societies the world over have used psychometric plants for purposes of religious ritual, divination or magic.’\(^{47}\) Anthropologist Johannes Wilbert argued that ‘the various forms of shamanism practiced today by the Warao with the aid of tobacco (…) constitute true survivals of a more ancient shamanistic stratum with roots in Mesolithic and even Paleolithic Asia.\(^{48}\) The Austrian-born Colombian anthropologist Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff (1912-1994) promoted interdisciplinary and comparative research on the ‘psychobiological’ effects of hallucinogens to ascertain an ‘important reference point on which to base informed opinion and decisions on the use of hallucinogens in advanced cultures’.\(^{49}\) Gordon Wasson made his well-known point about the origins of ‘poetry and philosophy and religion’.\(^{50}\) *Flesh of the Gods* was a landmark in psychedelic and experiential anthropology and as such, pivotal for the genealogy of shamanism.

Furst deserves some extra attention as he remained a highly influential academic interpreter of shamanism. Although he dissociated himself from Castaneda, for instance by publicly vilifying an anthropologist who accused him of helping Castaneda with his fabrication, his work was laden with the countercultural commonplaces that also permeated Castaneda’s work.\(^{51}\) Moreover, it shaped the trend among scholars of Mesoamerican Art to use the term ‘shaman’. A highly critical and convincing reassessment of this trend points out the specific problems of using the terms ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ in Mesoamerican Art studies. In a deliberately sharp tone, the authors wrote:

> Unless Mesoamericanists can come to agreement on a valid definition of “shaman”, we recommend that the term be dropped. Instead, we encourage art historians, historians of religion, and social scientists to work together to create a more refined, more nuanced terminology that would distinguish, cross-

---


\(^{50}\) G. Wasson, ‘The Divine Mushroom of Immortality’, in Furst, *Flesh of the Gods*, 185-200. In his other contribution Wasson argued that ‘the Soma of the Aryans’ had also been a mushroom (201-13).

culturally, among the many different kinds of roles currently lumped together under the vague and homogenizing rubric of "shaman". (...) Indeed, the “shaman” lives in a timeless space occupied by spirits rather than real people, a mystical space-time much like the otherworld of shamanic lore. He or she, in other words, is a phantom, a member of what Taussig (1989) has called “a made-up, modern, Western category” – a category of people who, some Mesoamericanists seem to think, are not like us at all.52

In his dismissal, Furst retorted by claiming that his critics were ‘stuck in a very old-fashioned idea of shamanism’. According to him, it was not true that ‘shamans and societies in which they serve as “technicians of the sacred” and (to borrow again from Eliade) “masters of ecstasy”’ are steeped in “magical thinking” and mysticism. Abundant literature shows shamans to be, typically, indigenous intellectuals and philosophers, careful observers and interpreters of nature and the natural forces of the universe, whatever metaphors they may employ to make them comprehensible to their people.53


In essence, Furst thus stuck to his essentialist and primitivist interpretation of shamanism. Illustrative of his neglect and even misrecognition of social circumstances is his interpretation of the advance of Huichol art. It began when he asked his informant, the artist-shaman Ramon Medina Silva, to make a series of yarn paintings to accompany a series of myths they were recording in 1965. Afterwards, other Huichol began to produce similar paintings, in some cases based on peyote experiences. The paintings evolved into a major indigenous art form sold around the world. Furst thus instigated a new tradition of shamanic narrative yarn paintings, but he also took decisive steps for the positioning of Huichol art on the global marketplace by emphasising the ‘pure gaze’ of the artists: in his 2003 *Visions of a Huichol Shaman* Furst described ‘the uniquely Huichol yarn paintings’ and explained their development from ‘folk art’ to ‘fine arts’ by pointing to ‘the creative genius of a handful of a superbly trained and inspired Huichol interpreters of visions and mythology’. Furst acknowledged that the paintings were intended from the start for the market but argued that this ‘has not detracted from the sacredness of their content and continuing role in Huichol devotional practice’. Ultimately, he did not recognise his own academic work as position-taking in what Bourdieu called ‘the struggle for the dominant principle of hierarchization’.54

**Michael Harner**

A remarkably bold anthropological volume appeared in 1973 and was a breakthrough in the genealogy of shamanism. *Hallucinogens and Shamanism* was edited by the anthropologist Michael Harner. A year before he had published the ethnography *The Jívaro: People of the Sacred Waterfalls*, which was surprisingly conventional for an anthropologist who had ‘gone native’.55 That is to say, Harner would later claim that he had learned ‘firsthand how to practice shamanism the Jivaro way’ after a ‘barefoot, blind shaman’ encouraged him in his ‘new quest’. The shaman told him that ‘he did not know of anyone who had encountered and learned so much on their first *ayahuasca* journey. “You can surely be a master shaman”, he said’.56


Hallucinogens and Shamanism was controversial and provocative. With the book, Harner intended to rectify the inadequate attention that ‘native hallucinogens’ had received in anthropology. An exceptional quality of the book, Harner argued, was that all authors had ingested ‘native psychotropic materials’. The effect of these ‘subjective experiences’ was that they had come to an empirical understanding of the meaning of the drugs to the peoples they studied.\textsuperscript{57} Harner emphasised the importance of these experiences, for instance when he argued that the realities of shamanism could not be expressed by words. Shamanism could only be approached with the aid of natemä, which was, according to him, ‘the chemical door to the otherwise invisible door of the Jivaro shaman.’\textsuperscript{58} Harner found a variety of corresponding themes among the experiences of South-American shamans when under the influence of ayahuasca, and noted the correspondence between the American concept of the ‘trip’ and the ‘shamanic journey’. This confirmed his idea of the ‘non-cultural origin’ of shamanism. In other words, it was universal.\textsuperscript{59}

The rambling and lengthy contribution of the ‘ethnopoet’ Henry Munn about the ‘Mushrooms of Language’ is significant. Munn was not an anthropologist but Harner still considered him an experiential expert on hallucinogenic plants as Munn had gone native during a Wasson-inspired psychedelic quest in Mexico. He had even married Maria Sabina’s niece. Munn concluded his article as follows:

The shaman, chanting in a melodic communication with the origins of creation, the sources of the voice, and the fountains of the word, related to reality from the heart of his existential ecstasy by the active mediation of language: the articulation of meaning and experience. To call such transcendental experiences of light, vision and speech hallucinatory is to deny that they are revelatory of reality. In the ancient codices, the colored books, the figures sit, hieroglyphs of words, holding the mushrooms of language in pairs in their hands: signs of signification.\textsuperscript{60}

The Chilean psychologist Claudio Naranjo, another close friend of Carlos Castaneda, also contributed. He had already acquired recognition as an authority on psychedelic psychology with his 1973 *The Healing Journey* in which he had ar-

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
argued that “psychotherapy” (rightly understood) and “mysticism” or “esotericism” (rightly understood) are but different stages in a single process of consciousness expansion, integration, self-realization. In Harner’s volume Naranjo interpreted the reactions to ayahuasca or yagé ‘among non-natives that are not informed of the natives’ accounts of theirs’. The result was ‘an embracing whole’ of images and experiences ‘of the sort that is generally misnamed hallucinatory’. The ‘mythico-religious’ element pervaded the ‘yagé experiences’. Naranjo wrote:

The complex of images discussed first as portraying the polarity of being and becoming, freedom and necessity, spirit and matter, only set up the stage for the human drama. This involves the battle of opposites and eventually their reconciliation or fusion, after giving way to death and destruction, be this by fire, tigers, drowning, or devouring snakes. The beauty of fluid fire, the graceful tiger, or the subtle and wise reptile these seem most expressive for the synthetic experience of accepting life as a whole, or, better, accepting existence as a whole, life and death included; evil included too, though from a given spiritual perspective it is not experienced as evil any more. Needless to say, the process is essentially religious, and it could even be suspected that every myth presents us one particular aspect of the same experience.

Myerhoff, Furst, Harner and others from UCLA thus structured a kind of ‘scientific revolution’ by incorporating psychedelic and other countercultural knowledge in their essentialist and primitivist conceptualisation of shamanism. As a ‘circle of legitimacy’ they produced a ‘universe of belief’ in which the shaman came to represent the most authentic charismatic figure who, outside social or cultural structures, had acquired perennial knowledge as he experienced life and the world in all their wholeness. Subsequently, as we will see in the next section, some of these scholars would relocate and transform their experiential knowledge and academic capital towards the field of esotericism, where they positioned shamanism among a range of other ideas and practices that were concerned with transpersonal and other esoteric knowledge.

Four shamanisms

Harner may count as the foremost designer of a field of shamanism as he changed shamanism from a scholarly subject to be approached intellectually and/or expe-

rienced during fieldwork into an assortment of techniques to be taught, learned and experienced during workshops and courses. Esalen was a central location in this process. In the early days of Esalen shamanism was primarily related to psychedelics. Exemplary was the 1964 Esalen seminar on ‘Shamanism: Supernaturalism and Hallucinogenic Drugs’, where both Michael Harner and Joseph Henderson lectured. Harner was assisted by Castaneda and Naranjo. Although Castaneda did not thrive at Esalen, Naranjo became one of Esalen’s most prominent Gestalt therapists. He was so impressed by Fritz Perls (see Chapter Six) that he concluded that he ‘was a genius, a shaman from another culture’. Gradually, Naranjo acquired an authoritative position in the field of esotericism. To the horror of Perls, however, Naranjo created a psychedelic version of Gestalt therapy by incorporating hallucinogenic drugs. Silverman’s 1967 seminar about ‘Shamanism, Psychedelics, and the Schizophrenias’ is a case in point as well. At a 1968 seminar Harner and Naranjo were still on the psychedelic track when they lectured about ‘Shamanism, Ritual and Psychotic Ways to the Unconsciousness’. Gradually, however, as the psychedelic component in the field of esotericism diminished, shamanism also lost its psychedelic gist. In line with the 1970s mainstreaming of esotericism, shamanism became one of a range of other esoteric practices. Harner’s retrospective on his shamanic career is worth citing at length as it summarises the transformation of his approach to shamanism:

Initially I assumed that consciousness-changing plants of one sort or another were probably essential in the “trance” or “ecstasy” associated with shamanic journeying and practice. But after doing much cross-cultural research, I reluctantly concluded by the late 1960’s that shamans in most indigenous cultures altered their state of consciousness without the use of biochemical substances. My research also led me to conclude that percussion sound was far more widely used than plant “medicines” to achieve what I later called the Shamanic State of Consciousness. (…)

Following his initial shamanic training in the Upper Amazon in 1961 and 1964, Professor Michael Harner developed his personal practice of shamanism and shamanic healing in the United States. He also began to teach about the practical importance of the ancient shamanic knowledge and wisdom of the tribal peoples of the world. As he wrote and lectured on shamanism, students and others began to ask him to introduce them to the shamanic meth-

---

64 Anderson, *The Upstart Spring*, 224-5; Kripal, *Esalen*, 105, 174-5. Later on, Naranjo did well as the promoter of the Enneagram, a supposedly mystical Islamic categorization of personality types that was probably created by Gurdjieff. During the 1990s, Naranjo and others successfully implemented their version of this esoteric technique into the business world as a way to gain insight into the functioning of individuals and or in organizations, see also www.claudionaranjo.net/.

ods. In response to these requests, he started giving training workshops in the early 1970’s to small groups of people. Interest in this training rapidly grew, and in 1979 he founded the Center for Shamanic Studies in Norwalk, Connecticut, to facilitate the training.66

Core-shamanism: Michael Harner

Harner stamped his shamanic authority on the field of esotericism once and for all with his 1980 *The Way of the Shaman. A Guide to Power and Healing*. This landmark study was the first do-it-yourself manual for the practice of shamanism. As ‘the ancient methods of shamanism are already time-tested; in fact, they have been tested immeasurably longer than psychoanalysis and other psychotherapeutic techniques’, the purpose of the book was ‘to help contemporary Westerners, for the first time, to benefit from this knowledge in their quest to supplement the approaches of modern technological medicine’. It was time to help transmit this knowledge ‘to those who have been cut off from it for centuries’. During fieldwork among different North American and South American tribes, Harner claimed, he had been successfully ‘taught firsthand’ the ‘practical aspects of this ancient human legacy’. From these experiences, Harner had distilled and adapted a variety of exercises that he considered the core of shamanism, hence the name by which his practices became known: core-shamanism.67

Core-shamanic techniques offer doorways to an authentic yet academically verified powerful world of spirits. Through Harner’s shamanic courses, participants could start down an infinite road towards self-improvement and self-realisation. Basic elements of the shamanic road towards perennial knowledge as described by Harner are drumming and visualizing techniques. They facilitate the ‘shamanic journey’ into the ‘shamanic Lowerworld’, and can cause a ‘shamanic state of consciousness’, which is the ‘cognitive condition in which one perceives the “nonordinary reality” of Carlos Castaneda’.68 *The Way of the Shaman* introduces techniques that focus on the ‘mythical paradise of animal-human unity’ and the so-called ‘power animals’, which are guardian spirits accessible in ‘non-ordinary reality to the shaman and vision-seeker’. Via shaking rattles and specific body movements in techniques such as ‘calling the beasts’, ‘the starting dance’ and ‘dancing your animal’, it becomes possible to ‘participate in the power’ of the animal world.69

In Harner’s shamanic universe, power animals, also known as guardian spirits, help to increase the ‘physical energy and ability to resist contagious disease’, and

69 Idem, 57-68.
mental alertness and self-confidence’. They can help people to become ‘powerful’, which ‘is like having a force field in and around you’. This is crucial as this can make people ‘resistant to power intrusions, the shamanic equivalent of infections’. According to Harner’s shamanic point of view, ‘illnesses usually are power intrusions’, hence the focus on journeys and other techniques ‘to restore power’. A group journey is also doable as a technique to ‘retrieve someone’s power animal’. So-called ‘synchronicities’ form ‘one of the interesting features of a successful guardian spirit journey’. This concept, taken from Jung, denoted the ‘remarkable coincidences’ that occur during journeys. The frequent ‘occurrence of positive synchronicities’ or, in other words, ‘good luck’, signifies that ‘the shaman is working correctly and benefiting from power’.

Core-shamanism also entails the interpretation of dreams, a technique by which power can be restored at a distance. A ‘bone game’ is based on the idea that objects ‘that attract you for no clear conscious reason’ can be ‘power objects’. Shamans ‘attribute a singular importance’ to quartz crystals as these are ‘the strongest power object of all’. As final points, Harner describes techniques to extract ‘harmful extrusions’ with the aid of ‘plant helpers’. In addition to his supposedly ‘traditional’ shamanic methods, Harner created ‘shamanic counselling’, which differs from common western counselling methods as it is ‘experiential’ rather than ‘verbal’. Certified shamanic counsellors help people to learn how to make their shamanic journeys into ‘shamanic reality to obtain guidance and wisdom to deal with personal concerns’.

Harner positioned his core-shamanism next to other esoteric and transpersonal practices by presenting core-shamanism as the ‘universal or near-universal principles and practices of shamanism not bound to any specific cultural group or perspective’ and as a successful ‘strategy for personal learning and acting on that learning’. One of the features through which Harner distinguished his own non-formative shamanic practices from other practices in the field of esotericism was his distinct shamanic lingo. As a professor in anthropology he had the linguistic competence or, in Bourdieu’s terminology, the ‘mastery of liturgy’, to mobilise his authority in the field through words. His words were effective because the individuals whom he addressed recognised him as authorised to do so. Slowly but surely, his concept of ‘shamanic states of consciousness’ was recognised as a separate esoteric category.

70 Idem, 69-90.
71 Idem, 113-34.
It is noteworthy that Harner structured his shamanic practices in accordance with his academic dispositions. His students can gain certificates which allow them to manage introductory and advanced workshops in shamanism. And so his entrepreneurial gatekeeping corresponded to the credentialing of America, where educational requirements increasingly became the major basis of separating work into distinct positions and career lines. Harner remained loyal to Esalen, where he led five invitational conferences on shamanism from 1984 until 1988, but he primarily engaged himself with his own shamanic enterprise, teaching experiential courses throughout the United States, ranging from beginner to advanced. When he resigned his chair in anthropology in 1987, his Center for Shamanic Studies was integrated into his Foundation for Shamanic Studies (FSS), an organization dedicated to ‘the worldwide preservation, study, and teaching of shamanic knowledge for the welfare of the Planet’.

Harner’s successful position-taking in the booming field of esotericism was vital for the genesis of a subfield of esotericism that was devoted to shamanism, that is, a field of shamanism. He secured an acclaimed authoritative position for himself as his combination of academic and esoteric knowledge provided him with unsurpassed authority in the field. One of the reasons for the expansion of core-shamanism is that Harner’s certified students started to manage workshops and established foundation-recognised drumming circles, a kind of shamanic self-help groups. His habitual anti-authoritarian stance gave students of core-shamanism the liberty to diverge from the methods that Harner had developed and to establish their own distinct form of shamanism. In this way new shamanic ideas and practices were positioned next to and at variance with core-shamanism. Gradually, a variety of esoteric teachers from outside core-shamanism also began to present themselves as shamanic experts. They all represented, in their own way, a supposedly authentic and perennial shamanic knowledge and they all proposed self-realisation through empowering techniques. Before I turn to the socio-political setting in which a field of shamanism was established, I will first look at some of the other shamanic experts who took major steps in this process.


77 Townsend, ‘Core Shamanism and Neo-Shamanism’, 49-57.
Transpersonal shamanism: Stephan Larsen

While Joseph Campbell loomed over the field of shamanism as a major scholarly intellect, his students contributed significantly to the structuring of a field of shamanism. Campbell’s student and biographer Stephen Larsen, for instance, stimulated its genesis by publishing *The Shaman’s Doorway* in 1976. Larsen was a Swedenborgian transpersonal psychologist who evoked the lessons of his teacher when he described the shaman as ‘man’s basic creative response to the presence of the mythic dimension.’ The shaman’s ‘primary allegiance is to the supernatural dimension, not to the society’ and thus he relates to the ‘psychological aspect that lends depth and richness to the human existence, whatever its setting, which I shall call guidance.’ Critically reflecting on Christianity and Judaism (‘the myths that have guided and shaped our destinies for the past thousand years’ and that ‘emerged from the doings of a particular group of Semitic nomads wandering around the Mediterranean Near East’), Larsen considered the time ripe to return to ‘the visionary quest’ of shamanism. Shamans were ‘the prototype of the spiritual, the psychological, the adventurer.’ They were the opposite of priests on account of their ‘internal voyage, the plunge within.’ Their ‘path’ was relevant for ‘the modern world’ as Larsen believed that, ‘at the present time our priestly, orienting relationship to myth is on the wane and the shamanic, guiding aspect once again urgent. We are unhappy with our orthodoxies and ask for experience.’

Larsen acknowledged the importance of psychedelics, as they had shown the presence of ‘the realm of myth’ in the here and now, but he did not advise the use of drugs. Instead, he recommended working with ‘mythic patterns’ to ‘initiate a change in consciousness.’ As ‘sociological and psychological problems express each other, by analogy’, the required societal change had to come from individuals working on themselves. Indeed, Larsen presented shamanism as the resolution of ‘our current predicaments, both outer and inner. The ecological crisis, for example, seems an extension of how we treat our bodies in this technological society’. Larsen thus unfolded a shamanic ecological plan that was, in Bourdieu’s terms, ‘antipolitical political’ as it rejected ‘the primacy of economics and politics’. Instead, his psychologism guided him towards an emphasis on individual accountability.

As founder and director of the Center for Symbolic Studies, which he established in the Hudson Valley near New York ‘to carry on the work of Joseph Campbell’, Larsen nowadays combines ‘shamanism’ with ‘personal mythology’ and the ‘creative imagination’. Furthermore, as practising psychotherapist and director of

---


80 Idem, 7, 14-5.
the Stone Mountain Counselling Center, he provides the same region with counselling, Biofeedback and Neurofeedback. Larsen has thus made progress as an ‘experience maker’ on a distinctly esoteric and therapeutic branch of the ‘experiential industries’, to use the terminology of Alvin Toffler. Guided by the dispositions that had also guided his intellectual hero, Larsen positioned himself as a scholarly interpreter of shamanism in the field of esotericism in a distinct niche that covers shamanism, mythology and transpersonalism.81

Buddhist shamanism: Joan Halifax

The foreword to the 1988 edition of Larsen’s book was provided by the medical anthropologist Joan Halifax, another scholar who was vital for the genesis of the American field of shamanism. Praising Larsen’s work extensively, she wrote: ‘The shamanic influence can connect us not only with the past, but also show us how to enter the future in a sane and compassionate manner. It is well over a decade since The Shaman’s Doorway was written, but like shamanism itself, the content of this volume is timeless’.82 Of course, by presuming this timeless quality, she also reflected on her own work. That is to say, she also took steps down the shaman path, so to speak, for instance by coordinating a month-long seminar on ‘Shamanism and the Mystic Quest’ at Esalen in 1977. The list of contributors to the seminar offers a view into the network in which Halifax participated. It was crucial for the genesis of the field as it contained, inter alia, Henry Munn, Barbara Myerhoff and Joseph Campbell.83 Undeniably, Halifax was at home in the Esalen network and her shamanology clearly echoed Esalen’s ‘tonality of mood’, as Bourdieu called


83 See www.esalen.org/air/esaleninitiatives3.shtml [01-09-2008].
it. She worked as Campbell’s research assistant on his *Historical Atlas of World Mythology*, and for a while she was married to Esalen resident and transpersonal psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, with whom she published *The Human Encounter With Death* in 1977, a description of a programme of psychedelic therapy for people dying of cancer. Maria Sabina had inspired them as well as the ‘shamanic initiation’ as described by Eliade.

During fieldwork among the Huichol, Halifax had studied with Matsúwa who was, she argued, a ‘renowned shaman among the Huichols’. He helped her during her ‘experience of mental suffering’ that lasted from 1972 to 1978: ‘with him, through him, and with the help of peyote, my humor was unearthed. I had also seen through eyes older than mine, and knew I had to find a way to stabilize and integrate what I had seen on the visionary cactus’. Subsequently, she published her highly influential 1979 anthropological classic *Shamanic Voices. A Survey of Visionary Narratives*. The admiring comments of Gordon Wasson, Barbara Myerhoff, Jerome Rothenberg and Claudio Naranjo adorn the back cover of the book, exemplifying the field in which Halifax had produced her *Shamanic Voices*. It was a volume of ‘shamanic narratives’ from African, American, Australian, Siberian and other classic and contemporary shamans. The book intended to illustrate that the ‘perfection of the timeless past, the paradise of a mythological era, is an existential potential in the present. And the shaman, through sacred action, communicates this potential to all!’

The introductory chapter dealt with many prominent themes of the kind of shamanology that was favoured in the Esalen milieu, such as ‘the crisis journey’, ‘the quest for vision’, ‘the sacred tree’, ‘the spirit flight’, ‘the androgyne shaman’, ‘shaman song’ and a theme that she primarily derived from Myerhoff, ‘shamanic balance’. Following Rothenberg and Eliade, Halifax depicted shamans remarkably unrestrainedly as healers, seers, and visionaries who have mastered death, (...) poets and singers, (...) spiritual leaders but also judges and politicians, the repositories of the knowledge of the culture’s history, both sacred and secular, (...) psycho-

---

87 Halifax, *Shamanic Voices*, 34.
logists, entertainers, and food finders. Above all, however, shamans are the technicians of the sacred and masters of ecstasy.88

Surprisingly, although she became involved in shamanism, she eventually became a Soto Zen priest in 1997. Years before, in 1979, she had established the Ojay Foundation in California, ‘an educational community deeply influenced by Buddhism and the wilderness’ and, shortly afterwards, the Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In the meantime, she introduced shamanism to wider audiences. The author of the 1988 Shamanism for Everyone and the 2002 The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Shamanism, for instance, learned about shamanism through a travel brochure that featured a group trip to Ecuador, led by Halifax, ‘to meet with shamans and other traditional healers’ in the early 1980s. Halifax’s richly illustrated 1982 Shaman. The Wounded Healer also reached large audiences. In an uncomplicated style, Halifax suggested that for the shaman ‘all that exists in the revealed world has a living force within it. This life energy force, like the Polynesian mana of the Sioux wakanda, is conceived as a divine force that permeates all’.89

In due course, Halifax acquired a position in the field of shamanism as a teacher with scholarly and experiential knowledge of the ‘spiritual paths’ and ‘mystical experiences’ of shamanism and Buddhism. These paths complement each other as shamanism ‘tends to develop the instinctual side of one’s being – the lower chakras in Tibetan Buddhist terms’ and cultivates the ‘life energy force’, while ‘the teachings of Buddhism related to the “practice of virtue”’.90 She combines Buddhist and shamanic themes, for instance by exploring the ‘five directions on a mandala or medicine wheel of deep ecology’ and asserting that, ‘the encounter between shamanism and Buddhism has something to offer us. Both traditions are based in the experience of direct practice realization, of direct knowing, of communion, of understanding through experience, of seeing through the eyes of compassion’.91 As von Stuckrad observed, Halifax was very influential on the ‘schamanischen Diskurses’, also because her books address more intellectual audiences than the books that Harner and Castaneda published.92

92 Von Stuckrad, Schamanismus und Esoterik, 157.
In contrast, one of the most infamous celebrities on the field of shamanism is Lynn Andrews. When she set off her career with her bestselling 1981 *Medicine Woman* she did not yet offer shamanic knowledge. Instead, she offered ‘medicine power’. Andrews would adopt the label ‘shamanism’ later, only to have it boomerang back on her when critics nicknamed her the ‘Beverly Hills Shaman’.93 At the time that Andrews adopted the term ‘shaman’ a range of Native American Indian and other experts on medicine power had also started to label their ideas and practices as ‘shamanism’. In fact, many of the teachers nowadays known as ‘white shamans’ began their careers as a ‘medicine man’ or ‘medicine woman’.94

Lynn Andrews’s supposedly autobiographical *Medicine Woman* is a noteworthy book as it includes many themes that Castaneda had used before. According to Andrews, her spiritual quest was initiated by her encounter with Hyemeyohsts Storm at a party, where she was aware ‘of suddenly stepping into a magic circle with Storm.’ The way in which Andrews strategically positioned her own practices by referring to the distinguished Storm is exemplary for the field of shamanism. This strategy involves, in the terminology of Bourdieu, a symbolic exchange of capital that, in this case, enhanced both the position of Storm and of Andrews.95

Eventually, Andrews’s life changed completely when the American Indian ‘medicine woman’ Agnes Whistling Elk recognised Andrews as the ‘chosen’ one and took her on as an apprentice. Sure enough, after a range of mystifying ordeals Andrews acquired medicine power and was initiated into secret Native American knowledge.96 Due to its success, the book changed her life in other ways too. Nowadays she presents herself as ‘Shaman, Teacher and International Bestselling

---

93 L. Andrews, *Medicine Woman* (New York, 1981) 14-5, 38-9; Jenkins, *Dream Catchers*, 179. Znamenski, however, uses the term ‘shaman’ to refer to the Native American teachers who featured in Andrews’s *Medicine Woman*, see *Beauty of the Primitive*, 220. One of the first to combine ‘medicine power’ with shamanism for a non-academic audience was the Swiss-Canadian poet and lecturer Evelyn Sybil Mary Eaton (1902-1983), whose *The Shaman and the Medicine Wheel* (Wheaton, 1982) was published by the Theosophical Publishing House. It was a first-person account of Native American healing rituals that, as she explained on the first page, ‘may be called an attempt to travel the Shamanic Journey into a realm of experience we usually believe belongs to specialists, Medicine Men, and Women, Lamas, Saints, Enlightened Ones. We are not to leave it respectfully to them. It is the journey all of us will take when the time is right, and the time may be right for many who do not realize it, now.’


Author! who has ‘written 19 books about my adventures, personal transformation and spiritual growth with (...) the 44 women of the Sisterhood of the Shields of whom I am, today, a member.’ As an initiated member she has acquired enough esoteric capital to organise online and other courses, retreats and gatherings through which her clients can ‘achieve the highest levels of consciousness and spiritual skills’. Her institute is located in Oceanside, California, but her site on the world wide web is also important, as visitors to her website can ‘Give the Gift of Spirit’ by visiting her ‘Online Store’. Andrews has become an agent through whom people may discover ‘Inner Wealth’. They may find ‘the missing links to retrieval of self-worth’ and open ‘the flow of well-being and personal abundance!’97 While critics from outside the field of shamanism harshly condemn her practices as ‘Commodity Fetishism’ and ‘Pop Culture Feminism’, millions of admirers find Andrews’s medicine power a shamanic source of self-mastery, self-discovery and empowerment.98

The rise of shamanic practices

The question now is how to interpret the explosive rise of shamanic practices during the 1980s? For an answer we will return to Beckford, who emphasises the ways in which healing practices can empower people. Indeed, each in their own way, but all in accord with the logic of the field of esotericism, Harner, Larsen, Halifax and Andrews emphasise the empowering opportunities of their shamanic practices. Beckford’s stress on the importance of macro-sociological processes is also significant as it leads us to assess the conditions of life in which shamanic practices came to flourish. Matthew Wood’s analysis of contemporary healing practices can help us here, as he relates the occurrence of healing practices in which possession is a core element in the rise of ‘neoliberal globalization’. According to him, neoliberalisation has people ‘disempowered over their working lives’ at the same time as they are forced to make choices in their lives. People are called on to exert self-authority while at the same time being denied access to authority, but ‘means of possession’, which shamanic practices are, present a religious form that enables people ‘to exert authority over higher powers that exist beyond them within social contexts that access and limit such authority’.99 Because my interpretation of the

economy of shamanic goods is, for a large part, inspired by Wood’s analysis, I shall pay neoliberalisation some extra attention here.

Neoliberalisation

In general terms, neoliberalism can be described as a Utopian position that prioritizes market-based and market-oriented responses to regulatory problems. It strives to intensify commodification in all realms of social life and it often mobilises speculative financial instruments to open up new arenas for capitalist profit-making. Neoliberalism postulates that *homo economicus* fares best in private and free (that is, unregulated) global markets and that an economy is a self-regulating, self-perfecting system which works through its own internal dynamics. It should be noted, however, that ‘neoliberalism’ is a contested concept and that various neoliberalisms and neoliberalisation projects can and should be distinguished. In spite of the global and universal claims of neoliberal prophets and the essentialist interpretations of critics, among whom Bourdieu, different processes of neoliberalisation have taken place and are taking place in different pre-existing ‘landscapes’.

For the instigation of neoliberalism in America, the Nobel Prize-winning American economist Milton Friedman (1912-2006) was crucial. He was one of the main gurus of neoliberal utopianism when he lectured to wide American audiences in his renowned 1980 PBS TV series *Free To Choose*. Friedman was a central intellectual force behind Reagan’s aggressive free-market policies during the first phase of neoliberalism. In this ‘roll-back’ phase, neoliberal policies focused on the destruction, deregulation and discreditation of welfarist and social-collective institutions. The second or ‘roll-out’ phase of neoliberalism took place during the 1990s, when the Clinton and Blair administrations purposefully constructed and consolidated neoliberal state forms and modes of governance.

(Aldershot, 2007).

---


101 P.J. Boettke, ‘Milton and Rose Friedman’s “Free to Choose” and its impact in the global movement toward free market policy: 1979-2003’, *Proceedings, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas* (October 2003) 137-52. Friedman, who also advised the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the Chilean general Augusto Pinochet (1915-2006), had already captured his neoliberal disposition in his 1962 *Capitalism and Freedom*: ‘because profit making is the essence of democracy, any government that pursues antimarket policies is being antidemocratic, no matter how much informed popular support they might enjoy. Therefore, it is best to restrict governments to the job of protecting private property and enforcing contracts and to delimit political debate to minor issues’, cited in H.A. Giroux,
included shifts from national economic management to the facilitation of global economic integration, from a policy orientation to full employment to a new focus on full employability, and from passive and redistributive welfare states to active and punitive workfare regimes. Ultimately, the predisposition of social and spatial redistribution was succeeded by the acceptance and even encouragement of market distribution and inequality.\textsuperscript{102}

Neoliberal politicians triggered a global transformation that entailed, in the terminology of the German social theorist Ulrich Beck, a ‘second modernity’. Beck has characterised this situation as ‘a recognition of the imperative to decide’ and the ‘social recognition of plurality and ambiguity’. Typical for ‘first modernity’ were notions of controllability, certainty and security. However, these collapsed into ‘second modernity’, leading to what Beck has labelled ‘risk society’. This radically uncertain modern world is an ‘inescapable structural condition of advanced industrialization’. Critical for this development is the process of individualisation which is, Beck argued, not a private experience but institutional and structural. The process of individualisation may bring individual freedom as it liberates people from traditional roles and constraints, but it is the ‘precarious freedom’ of individual responsibility for individual success or failure. Structural shortcomings are perceived as personal shortcomings and career paths have become increasingly open-ended.\textsuperscript{103}

The British scholar of religion Paul Heelas, who will also feature in the next sections, interpreted these changes as detraditionalisation, which involved, he argued, a shift of authority from ‘without’ to ‘within’, thereby, somewhat naively, taking the discourse of individualism as a description of an individualised social reality.\textsuperscript{104} As a matter of fact, both Beck and Heelas have been criticised for overemphasising the agency side of the classic sociological dynamic, and downplaying structure. Their thesis of individualisation seems to resonate with the political rhetoric that considers individualisation as inevitable, and even desirable, from the point of

\textit{Public Spaces, Private Lives: Beyond the Culture of Cynicism} (Lanham, 2001) 56.


view of individuals, that is, consumers.\textsuperscript{105}

Here it is time to bring the two French \textit{gauche de gauche} associates Bourdieu and Wacquant back in, as they highlighted the veiled ideological use of individualisation while, at the same time, disapproving of the development of capitalism. They were distrustful of what they call ‘thinly-masked social philosophy’ and ‘neo-liberal newsppeak’ with which processes of globalisation and individualisation are analysed as neutral and logical necessities. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant, the ‘new world vulgate’ or ‘intellectual doxa with planetary pretensions’ produces the ‘illusion of a pure genesis’ while it should actually be seen as the product of political decisions in ‘transnational relationships of power’ that favour the owners of capital.\textsuperscript{106}

Axel Honneth’s ‘paradox of individualization’ is also worth mentioning here, as he points to neoliberal structures that have turned self-realisation into an institutional demand. It is ‘transformed into a productive force in the capitalist economy’. Individualisation provides an ideology for the deregulating of the economy in which individuals have to be willing to make their own choices and, ultimately, to take care for themselves. For the sake of their process of ‘self-discovery’, individuals have to keep their goals and options regarding their own decisions open at all times and arrange their biographies in accord with the model of self-realisation.\textsuperscript{107}

Other scholars have even characterised the ‘modern sense of self’ as structured by a ‘therapeutic habitus’ that is guided by the idea of ‘infinite human resourcefulness’. In other words, neoliberal structures impel individuals to work upon themselves to release their fully realised identity. Managers appeal to the workers’ ‘commitment’, their ‘excellence’ and their ‘accountability’, and they present therapeutic formulae through which workers are supposed to empower themselves. The discourse of ‘wellness’, ‘well-being’ and ‘happiness at work’ are all part of this new ‘therapeutic habitus’.\textsuperscript{108}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{108} B. Costea, N. Crump and K. Amiridis, ‘Managerialism and “Infinite Human Resourcefulness”: a Commentary on the “Therapeutic Habitus”, “Derecognition of Finitude” and the
\end{thebibliography}
Esotericism

Neoliberalisation fuelled the economy of esoteric goods as the field of esotericism offered a range of ideas and practices to work on ‘self-discovery’, ‘self-development’ and ‘self-realisation’. Paul Heelas interpreted this ‘cultural obsession’ as the ‘California self-religions’ in 1982. He focused on the ‘socialising of the subjective’, and his basic argument was that ‘self-religions’ had developed techniques which locate or construe the subjective in such a fashion as to help make this realm predictable, secure, liveable and social. According to Heelas, the self-religions combined and highlighted major cultural themes: the psychological, the religious, the meaningful and the perfectibility of man.109

With his focus on individual experience, Heelas is one of the main representatives of ‘the sociology of spirituality’, a school of thought that I have already mentioned in Chapter 6. From the 1980s onwards, Heelas and other prominent scholars of religion have increasingly focused on private, cultural matters in the lives of individuals, whether or not they relate to institutional dimensions of social life. According to Wood, these scholars have transmuted the discourses under study into sociological descriptions of reality, for instance the idea of the autonomy of the individual.110 It is noteworthy that the use of the term ‘spirituality’ as a sociological category instead of the term ‘religion’ mirrors the way Joseph Campbell replaced the term ‘religion’ by the term ‘myth’ (see Chapter 5). The emphasis on self-authority also seems to reflect Campbell’s appreciation of heroic self-authority.111

Instead of focusing on individual experiences, the American sociologist Danny Jorgenson directed his attention towards the publicly observable context of the ‘esoteric community’. He focused on the ‘occult practitioners’ who participated in practitioner-client relations, social networks and small cult-like groups. Jorgenson has made some observations that require extra attention here. For instance, he observed that most of the organisations in the psychic segment were officially non-profit ‘religious’ organisations. Yet, this only reflected the legal relationships in ‘exoteric society’, as even the ‘highly spiritual’ or ‘religious’ groups were engaged in commercial activities. According to Jorgenson, their non-profit religious status was an adjustment to the ‘exoteric society’. Psychics also became ‘ministers’ for this same reason.112

The circumstances in which esoteric practices were constructed as ‘religious’ illustrates an important point made by James Beckford: in this case, the politics of defining an organisation as ‘religious’ are closely related to tax concessions and the privileged position of organisations that meet the official criteria of what counts as religion. The strategic labelling of an organisation as religious is important as it is part of the construction of religion. According to Beckford, for religious movements (‘even for highly enthusiastic and spiritual movements’) the key to success is effective organisation. Disputes over the definition of religion are not solved by looking for a regulative definition, as Beckford argued. Instead, scholars should study the ways in which definitions of religion develop in relation to other social and cultural changes.113

Jorgensen interpreted esoteric commercialism as a response to the popularity of the occult and the demand for resources to support organisations and individuals. In this regard, he argued, esoteric groups were not all that different from their exoteric counterparts. As esoteric entrepreneurs had to deal with problems of legitimacy, they often presented themselves as ‘professionals’, working with knowledge that was perceived as both scientific and religious. Above all, it was perceived as powerful. Ultimately, Jorgensen argued that ‘occultisms’ were not a serious challenge to science or religion. They participated in society at large and were not the harbingers of some new cultural paradigm. Members of the esoteric community believed they had joined the vanguard of a revolution in American society and were engaged in practices that seemed strange to outsiders. However, the differences between occultists and society at large had been exaggerated, Jorgensen argued. He expected occultists to be a persistent feature of American society for a long time to come, as they provided a social basis for identity, thought and action, and a way of addressing the problems of everyday life in modern society.114

Indeed, in the prosperous yet strained context of neoliberalisation the ‘self-improvement industry’ became a booming business. According to the sociologist and cultural critic Micky McGee, it became one of the main signs of ‘our culture’s fantasy of a disengaged, masterful, rational and controlling self that creates the

of humanity and the supernatural in which salvation, liberation and enlightenment are emphasised; (2) an ‘esoteric’ segment emphasising scholarly study, physical wellbeing and healing; and (3) a ‘psychic’ segment involving an essentially ‘secular focus’ on exploring the human mind in particular, hidden or concealed knowledge is viewed as a path to personal power and success.


possibilities for endless and futile self-improvement. Literature of self-development counsels self-fulfilment and self-improvement as an antidote to the economic climate of increasing competition between individuals for fewer and less stable employment opportunities. Yet the ‘self-improvement industry’ also contributes to the structures that it claims to resist.115

The logic of the field of esotericism can be discerned by looking at it as an economy of esoteric goods that is structured by struggles that are regulated by the prevalence for nonformative authorities. This feature is, as I have argued before, closely related to the specific anti-authoritarian, client-centred approach that was constructed during the 1960s and 1970s wave of humanistic psychology. In other words, Rogers’s clinical framework is a central feature of the field. Obviously, this does not mean that there are no authorities. It means that there are ambiguities of authority.116 The field of esotericism became a so-called spiritual supermarket or, in Beckford’s term, a ‘free space’ that allows people to experiment with new meanings and new forms. Clearly, its consumerism has elective affinities with the neoliberal free market structures.117

Guided by their quest for authentic, perennial and experiential knowledge, esoteric authorities structured the field of esotericism by taking action as nonformative authorities. Under the impact of neoliberalisation the field boomed, as more and more individuals became involved in quests for perennial knowledge to gain control and mastery over their lives. Shamanic practices are produced in the field of esotericism and they are structured by the same logic. Yet, as we will see in the next sections, shamanism has characteristics that set it apart from other esoteric practices. Before I turn to my analysis of the field of shamanism, however, I shall examine some critical scholarly interpretations of the new shamanisms.

**The economy of shamanic goods**

In an insightful 1982 analysis of contemporary western shamanisms, the American scholar of religion (or ritual theorist) Ronald Grimes explored new western shamanism, or parashamanism, as he called it. He identified its ‘social locus’ in the ‘interstices among university, church/synagogue, theatre, and therapy groups’. Parashamans were looking for healing, reflection, performance and mystery on the borders of institutions ‘which regard these activities as their purvue’. Instead of calling parashamanism religious, Grimes called it ‘lived religious studies’, also because parashamans were not taught by shamans but by books about shaman-

116 Idem.
Genealogies of Shamanism

Furthermore, parashamans were ‘inveterate travellers, permanent tourist-pilgrims, (and) culture consumers who bring stolen culture and health. They are omnivorous cross-culturalists performatively and, I suspect, culturalists psychotechnologically, reared as they were on Jung and Eliade’. Grimes distinguished shamanism from its ‘post-modern manifestation, parashamanism’. In its tribal form, shamanism was rooted in hunting culture, while parashamanism was rooted in a completely different context. Here, shamanism depended on a symbolic hunt, namely, the hunt for a job, a mate and the self. In contrast to shamans, parashamans were highly individualistic and focused on a parashamanic flight that involved an ascent above social structures.

Other scholars would also analyse contemporary shamanisms by comparing them to a ‘traditional’ form of shamanism. The American anthropologist Michael Forbs Brown, for instance, argued that ‘New Age enthusiasts’ were right to admire the shamanistic tradition. Yet ‘New Age America’ brushed aside the dark, violent side of shamans that Brown himself had witnessed during fieldwork in the Amazon. According to him, the Americans who practiced shamanism embraced it without any appreciation of its context.

Likewise, the American anthropologist Paul C. Johnson compared shamanism as practised among the Shuar of Ecuador to the ‘neo-shamane’ practices of Harner’s Foundation for Shamanic Studies in 1995. Ultimately, he distinguished ‘neo-shamans’ from ‘shamans’ by their reliance on a context of radical modernity, which entails: (1) the rationalisation of society which relies on (2) universal, standardised conceptions of time and space and (3) the confrontation with a plurality of religions, which leads to (4) a focus on individual agency, choice, needs and a preference in the religious marketplace and (5) an obsession with the ‘self’, subjectivity and reflexivity; (6) the discourse of mobility – individuals are free and capable of converting to any religious system in any place and at any time because (7) space is phantasmagoric and dislocated from place – there are no sacred places but rather only sacred states of mind and sacred relationships with abstract deities. Johnson found that ironically, Harner’s institute exactly replays the script of radical modernity, even as it battles against the ‘disembeddedness of radical modernity’, by relying on local, rooted, ‘natural’, ‘native’, indigenous societies as its source of authority and power. According to him, neo-shamans did so by perceiving shamanism as a universally applicable technique (ideology of mobility), by their individualisation (with the risk of solipsism) and psychologisation (or the claim to a universal mechanism of ‘mind’).

Academic expertise

It can be fruitful to compare contemporary western shamanisms to one or more traditional forms of shamanism, as Grimes, Brown and Johnson were able to pinpoint some of the characteristics of contemporary western shamanisms. As such, their interpretations are valuable. Yet another issue is also important here. Namely, their approach to para- or neoshamanism can also be considered as part of the struggle by the academic authorities to define shamanism. As we have seen, contemporary shamanism was a product of the intersection of academia and esotericism. Harner was a professor in anthropology and Halifax and Larsen were also academic scholars. Their shamanologies were produced as scholarly texts, and their knowledge of shamanism was derived from their academic expertise. Notwithstanding their popularity outside academia and inside the field of esotericism, the scholars who turned shamanism into a contemporary western practice took steps in the academic field. Core-shamanism was positioned within the academic community and core-shamanism’s academic knowledge claims were legitimate as they were produced by a respected academic scholar. It is highly significant for the field of shamanism that it was structured by scholars who turned academic knowledge about shamanism into shamanic knowledge. As a matter of fact, the American field of shamanism still includes an academic scholarly wing.

Take, for instance, the journal that epitomises the American field of shamanism, Shaman’s Drum: A Journal of Experiential Shamanism and Spiritual Healing. The founding of Shaman’s Drum by the Cross-Cultural Shamanism Network in 1985 was a sure sign of the ‘autonomization’ of a field of shamanism. The journal publishes original field research, cross-cultural comparative studies and personal experience articles on ‘traditional forms of shamanism – ranging from Siberian ecstatic séances and Tibetan trance oracles to Amazonian ayahuasca rituals and Native American healing ceremonies’. The Shaman’s Drum’s Mission Statement lets its readers know that ‘shamanism has never been the exclusive province of any single culture – Siberian or Native American. It is truly a universal human phenomenon, or complex of phenomena, that ultimately transcends culture or tradition. For that reason, Shaman’s Drum also endeavors to explore contemporary applications and nontraditional methodologies’.122

A closer look at one of the authorities in the American field of shamanism, Lewis E. Mehl, demonstrates the fuzzy boundaries of the field. In a 1988 volume of articles about shamanism Mehl is introduced via an impressive curriculum vitae: Mehl ‘is a Cherokee Indian and expert on Native American Healing techniques. In addition to his current post as Clinical Assistant Professor at Stanford University School of Medicine, where he teaches behavioural medicine, Dr. Mehl also practices shamanic holistic medicine at the Center for Recovery from Illness in

122 See http://shamansdrum.org.
San Francisco.’ Mehl works with Coyote Medicine, a form of healing that includes ‘traditional medicine’ as well as ‘meditation, Reiki and energy healing, yoga, craniosacral therapy, [and] homeopathic consultation’. While building up his esoteric healing practice, Mehl also built up a remarkable list of hospital and academic appointments, honours and awards, and he has published papers in different peer-reviewed scientific journals. The aforementioned volume, for instance, issued Mehl perspectives on ‘Modern Shamanism: Integration of Biomedicine with Traditional World Views’.123

Mehl may count as the embodiment of the American field of shamanism. He combines esoteric and academic scholarly knowledge to authorise his distinct combination of supposedly traditional and advanced therapeutic ideas and practices. Furthermore, not only does he manage his shamanism in the form of lectures, workshops and weekend incentives, he also publishes books and sells audio tapes.124 Mehl’s presence at several International Conferences on the Study of Shamanism and Alternative Modes of Healing is not remarkable, therefore. On the contrary, the woman who founded these annual conferences on shamanism in 1984, the German-born Berkeley scholar of Asian religion Ruth-Inge Heinze (1919-2007), also combined a position in the academic field with a career in the field of esotericism. She was a Reiki Master, an acupuncturist and she held a Chinese herbal license from the Taoist Academy in San Francisco. Significantly, in her 1991 Shamans of the 20th Century, Heinze perceived her conferences as a continuation of a tradition that started with the 1962 symposium on shamanism at the Donner Institute and the conferences that were organised by Mihaly Hoppál. As a matter of fact, Heinze set up her annual conferences after participants of a 1983 symposium on shamanism in conjunction with the Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Vancouver ‘expressed interest in continuing the discussions the following year in California. Therefore, the First International Conference on the Study of Shamanism was convened in San Rafael, California.’125

One of the most prominent regular contributors to the conferences is the academic parapsychologist and transpersonal psychologist Stanley Krippner, who is an important author of parapsychological and transpersonal interpretations of shamanism. He contributed to the proceedings of Heinze’s conferences, to the aforementioned Shaman’s Path and to journals such as American Psychologist, Journal of Consciousness Studies, International Journal of Transpersonal Studies and Shaman’s Path.126 In a 1988 self-help book he co-authored with another American

126 For Stanley Krippner, see www.stanleykrippner.com/papers/papers_and_articles.html. In an interview published in a 1973 issue of Psychology Today, Krippner talked about telepathy, psychokinesis and clairvoyance and predicted that by the year 2000 parapsychology would
psychologist, PhD, as the book cover emphasises, Krippner focused on *Personal Mythology* and presented a ritual that ‘introduces you to your “Inner Shaman”, a wise companion from the invisible world who will assist you as you make this journey into your mythic depth.’ The book clearly demonstrates that Krippner's idea of shamanism was more inspired by Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell than by Mircea Eliade.\(^{127}\)

In his foreword to Heinze's *Shamans of the 20th Century*, Krippner maintains that 'shamanic traditions have not been taken seriously by Western, industrialized nations despite the fact that many shamans, over the centuries, have developed sophisticated models of human behaviour and experience'. From his paradoxical academic yet anti-establishment stance, he argued that 'the ignorance about shamanic traditions, coupled with the general prejudice against tribal people, has resulted in shamanism being ignored or scorned by most members of the Western medical, scientific, and academic establishments. They do not recall that shamans were the world's first physicians, first diagnosticians, first psychotherapists, first religious functionaries, first magicians, first performing artists, and first story-tellers. In the academic milieu where shamanism is ignored or, at least, viewed condescendingly, Ruth-Inge Heinze stands out as an exception'.\(^{128}\) Yet, as we have seen, Heinze was not an exception. With Krippner and many other academic scholars she took part in the structuring of the American field of shamanism. From their academic position, and with the help of their scholarly capital, they authorised the shamanic ideas and practices that structure the field of shamanism.\(^{129}\)

---

129 The anthropologist Edith Turner, for instance, has become a Field Associate of Harner's FSS, see www.shamanism.org/articles/article02.html. She published about ‘the reality of the spirits’ and used Jung’s idea of the collective unconscious to explore shamanic power, see ‘The Reality of Spirits: A Tabooed or Permitted Field of Study?’, *Anthropology of Consciousness* 3/3 (1992) 9-12, ‘The Reality of Spirits’, *Re-Vision* 15 (1992) 28-32, ‘Shamanic Power and the Collective Unconscious: An Exploration of Group Experience’, *Shaman* 13 (2005) 115-32. The American scholar of religion Michael Ripinsky-Naxon should also be mentioned here, as his Shamanic Dimensions Network initiated the International Conferences on Science and Shamanism in cooperation with the Center for Shamanism and Consciousness in 2001. The purpose of the conference was a ‘paradigm shift’ and to ‘demonstrate the existence of a bio-physical basis for shamanism as a technique of ecstasy and transformation’, see ‘News and Notes’, *Shaman* 8 (2000) 89-91. Ripinsky-Naxon’s *The Nature of Shamanism. Substance and Function of a Religious Metaphor* (New York, 1993) was intended as ‘an integrated examination of the substantive aspect of shamanism as a phenomenology of religious experience and of its cultural function as a metaphor in myth, religion, art, and language’ (2).
Shamanic entrepreneurs

Shaman’s Drum also exemplifies the logic of the American field of shamanism in another way. To be exact, one of the vital features of the journal is that advertisers help to sustain it. The advertisements from schools, organisations, professionals and small businesses that offer services related to shamanism function as a ‘Yellow Pages’ of the field of shamanism. Clearly, the field is a marketplace for shamanic goods, structured by a preference for perennial and experiential knowledge and nonformative authorities. The online ‘Shaman’s Drum Display Ads’ offers a clear glance at the spectrum of shamanisms that the field of shamanism incorporates. A variety of shamanic practitioners are trying to attract and convince potential clients, straightforwardly authorising their expertise of supposed perennial shamanic knowledge by flavouring it with a distinct mixture of scholarly and/or traditional capital. While they emphasise the forms of capital and knowledge through which they distinguish themselves from other shamanisms, they reveal the logic of the field. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this logic and the strategic positioning of shamanisms.130

The content of Harner’s ‘convenient weekend workshops’, for instance, ‘is based on decades of Michael Harner’s research, practical experience, and experimentation, resulting in exceptional and authentic shamanic training – the gold standard for contemporary shamanism’.131 Other practitioners conspicuously draw attention to other forms of capital, for instance by highlighting the distinct traditional source of their shamanic expertise. A curious case in point is the Miami-based Church of Seven African Powers, a Santeria church that ‘offers initiations into African shamanism’.132 Ancestral Voice – Center for Indigenous Lifeways, by contrast, emphasises the ‘Cherokee Ancestry’ of Philip Scott, who is the founder/director of this ‘center of healing and learning’ that is located in Novato, California. Scott, however, also claims to have learned from Medicine/Holy People, tribal spiritual leaders and shamans from various traditions.133

Likewise, the Dance of the Deer Foundation presents itself as a Center for Shamanic Studies. It was established in Soquel, California in 1979 by the ‘Huichol Indian Shaman and Healer’ Brant Secunda, to ‘carry on the vision of his grandfather and teacher, don José Matsuwa, the renowned Huichol shaman. Don José’s vision was to leave Brant in his place to carry on the sacred traditions and to teach Huichol shamanism’. For this purpose, Secunda organises ‘Healing Seminars & Retreats at Places of Power’.134 As the ultimate form of archaic and perennial knowledge, shamanism can thus be found all over the world, and in a wide variety

130 See http://shamansdrum.org/Pages/DisplayAds.html.
of forms. To authorise their distinct form of shamanic expertise, shamanic experts may claim scholarly knowledge, experiential knowledge and/or a combination of traditional forms of knowledge.

Nancy ‘Dancing Light’ Sherwood, for instance, to be found in Nova Scotia, Canada, authorises her shamanism by presenting herself as ‘a contemporary grandmother shaman, an intuitive dancer and healer’. Her training has included ‘traditional teachings and contemporary expression from both living and Spirit teachers. While her genetic inheritance is mostly Celtic, she has learned from shamanic traditions as diverse as the Bon, Miq’maq, ancient Celtic and North American Blackfoot. Other teachings have come from meditation practice, and teachings and transmissions from ancient and living mystics. As a result, her shamanic work translates across cultures and she is comfortable working with a number of healing systems and modalities.”

As may be clear by now, education is a focal point within the economy of shamanic goods. The scholarly logic that structures the field may account for this feature. A remarkable example is the tuition by correspondence, as offered by the Sacred Circles Institute. Through ‘12 home study modules’ and ‘optional weekend incentives’, students can undertake a ‘year long shamanic journey around the ancient wheel’. To sum up, shamanic knowledge, in all its diversity, is a product of the economy of shamanic goods. Early players such as Harner, Larsen and Halifax structured the field, with their primitivism, psychologism and globalism, their scholarly and therapeutic habitus, their focus on esoteric and perennial knowledge and their nonformative commitment to empower clients and students, but nowadays other players continue to structure the field by taking strategic steps in the field according to its logic.

Shamanic artefacts

The adverts in the Shaman’s Drum also demonstrate that the field of shamanism has generated a global flow of shamanic artefacts. A few examples will do to illustrate the variety of shamanic objects that are put up for sale on the global bazaar of shamanism. For instance, under the name Arte Visionario, an art dealer sells Huichol yarn paintings. Shamans Market is a store that trades ‘Shamanic Supplies for Living in the Sacred’: ‘Amazon herbs’, ‘Incense’, ‘Wands’, ‘Super Foods’, Sacred Waters’, textiles, books, DVDs, CDs and ‘much more’. Shaman Gear claims that the swords, drums, bells and other shamanic items it sells are ‘made and blessed by indigenous Himalayan shamans and/or handmade by craftsman according to centuries-old traditions and practice’. The Basement Shaman is specialised in ‘vi-

---

sionary plants’, ‘shamanic preparations’, ‘sacred smokes’ and ‘herbal erotica’, while Spirit Dancer Sage offers 'ceremonial tools' such as 'ceremonial pipes' that are ‘prayerfully handcrafted’ and ‘made with respect and purpose’.137

Self-evidently, the field of shamanism also produces books. Harner, Larsen, Halifax and Andrews are only a few of the many experts whose self-help and other shamanologies have been successfully put on the market. *Shaman's Drum* is a key producer of shamanology. However, other esoteric journals also pay attention to shamanism. For instance, a 1985 issue of *The American Theosophist* was dedicated to ‘Ancient Wisdom in Shamanic Cultures’ and *The Theosophical Publishing House* published the 1987 volume *Shamanism*, with contributions by, *inter alia*, Joan Halifax, Michael Harner, Mihály Hoppál, Stanley Krippner and Mircea Eliade.138 When Gary Doore, who also contributed to this volume and was managing director of *The American Theosophist*, became associate editor of *Yoga Journal*, he compiled and edited a volume of texts named *Shaman’s Path. Healing, Personal Growth and Empowerment* in 1988.139 The volume contains texts from the ‘visionary, healer, writer, singer and ceremonial leader’ Brooke Medicine Eagle and other shamanic practitioners as well as texts from scholars such as Harner, Halifax, Grof, Krippner, Mehl and Hultkrantz. This is significant as it points, again, to the fact that the field of shamanism and the academic field of shamanology overlap.

Global flows of shamanism

From the start, the economy of shamanic goods was a transnational phenomenon, and it produced a global flow of shamanism. American academic scholars played a role in this process by defining shamanism as universal, by managing touristic enterprises, and also by contributing to international conferences and academic journals. Again, Michael Harner’s role stands out. At a conference on Shamanism and Healing in Austria, in 1982, he met Paul Uccusic. This Austrian parapsychologist became his student and established core-shamanism in Austria, Germany and other European countries. Uccusic’s 1991 *Der Schamane in Uns: Schamanismus als neue Selbserfahrung, Hilfe und Heiling* and the English version (*The Shaman within us: Shamanism as new Self-Knowledge, Help and Healing*) became international bestsellers. At the time of publication, the German field of shamanism had already produced an array of different shamanisms. The ‘magical passes’ of Carlos Castaneda’s Tensegrity and the ‘Rituelle Körperhaltungen & Ekstatische Trance®’ created by the German-Hungarian anthropologist Felicitas Goodman (1914-2005)

138 Nicholsen, *Shamanism*, xv. Eliade contributed chapter 8 from his 1964 *Shamanism*.
139 Doore, *Shaman’s Path*. 
took notable positions in the German field.\footnote{E. Gudenberger and R. Schweidlenka, ‘Alpbacher Schamanentreffen: Avantgarde mit Verwirrung’, in idem, Mutter Erde Magie Und Politik. Zwischen Faschismus und Gesellschaft (Vienna, 1986) 272-3; G. Mayer, Schamanismus in Deutschland. Konzepte – Praktiken – Erfahrungen (Würzburg, 2003) and ‘Neo-Shamanism in Germany’, in Walter and Neumann Fridman, Shamanism, 496-500. For Felicitas Goodman, see the website of the Felicitas D. Goodman Institute that is located in Santa Fe, New Mexico, at www.cuyamungueinstitute.com. Her German website can be found at www.felicitas-goodman-institut.de. Goodman has contributed to different international Conferences on the Study of Shamanism and Alternative Modes of Healing, see www.shamanismconference.org/proceedings.php. She associated shamanism with glossolalia in her ‘Shamanic Trance Postures’, in Doore, Shaman’s Path, 53-62. The German historian of religion Hartmut Zinser argued that the new shamanism was far removed from Siberian shamanism. Echoing the rhetoric of shamans, he argued that it had to be interpreted as a protest against a ‘vernunftlose, entpersonalisierte sinnenleerte Wirklichkeit’, see H. Zinser, ‘Schamanismus im “New Age”’, Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte 39 (1987) 319-27 at 327.}

In many other European fields of esotericism, the arrival of core-shamanism was also the breakthrough for shamanism in the field of esotericism. In Sweden, for instance, shamanic practices were set up by members of Ygdrasil, a group of individuals interested in their own ancient ‘Nordic tradition’. They only started to practise shamanism via drumming circles and journeys to the ‘alternative reality’ after Michael Harner appeared on the scene in 1983.\footnote{Lindquist, Shamanic Performances, 22-52 at 33. A. Smith, ‘Spiritual Appropriation as Sexual Violence’ Wicazo Sa Review 20 (2005) 97-111. For Hagan’s article see www.sonomacountyfreepress.com/features/spirg-hagan.html.} In Denmark, a former representative of Harner, the anthropologist and ‘shamanic counsellor’ Jonathan Horwitz, established The Scandinavian Center for Shamanic Studies in alliance with another apprentice of core-shamanism, Annette Høst, in 1986. Their story is noteworthy as they cut off their association with core-shamanism in 1993, to focus on their own variant of shamanism. In her remarkable ‘Thoughts on “neo shamanism”, core shamanism”, “urban shamanism” and other labels’, to be found on their website, Host addresses the issue of the ‘essence’ and authenticity of shamanism. As a ‘more innocent and less experienced’ practitioner of shamanism ‘in the new age scene’, she wrote, she used to call her practices ‘core shamanism, as I had learned from Michael Harner’. When she went to the Netherlands to teach a course, however, she discovered that there they used the term ‘Harner shamanism’ to label what she did.\footnote{A. Høst, ‘Modern Shamanic Practice. Thoughts on Core Shamanism, Neo Shamanism, Urban Shamanism, and Modern Western Shamanism’, www.shamanism.dk, which is the website of The Scandinavian Center for Shamanic Studies.} She realised that core-shamanism was Harner’s ‘own personal distillation and interpretation of some of the millennia-old shamanic methods’ that Harner had written in his Way of the Shaman. The term ‘core’, Høst concluded, was ‘a prod-
uct of wishful thinking rather than a description of content'. The term neo-shamanism, however, was not an alternative as it seemed to contrast her practices with 'real' shamanism. Yet she still wanted to call it shamanism or, when related to other traditions, 'Modern Western Shamanism'. She concluded with her hope that, 'We will be able to own both our difference from and our likeness with the other branches on the shamanic world tree. And then we might be able to practice with deeper authenticity'. Indeed, the shamanic world tree is structured by local struggles for authenticity.

The global flows of shamanism were distinctly shaped by Harner’s inclination ‘to foster shamanism worldwide’ and his dedication ‘to the preservation, study, and teaching of shamanic knowledge for the welfare of the Planet and its inhabitants’. In a remarkable twist of fate Harner’s global aspirations attracted the attention of Siberian, Native American, Inuit, Saami, Nepalese and other shamans who wanted to regain and perpetuate their shamanism. They asked the FSS to help them salvage ‘shamanic knowledge’. Harner’s globalism thus inspired the increase of global flows of shamanism, structuring a global economy of shamanic goods. The global circulation of Californian core-shamanism does not imply homogenisation or Americanisation, however, as the genealogy of fields of shamanism is, in the words of Arjun Appadurai, a process of ‘ongoing domestication into local practice’.

Different practitioners offer their distinct version of shamanism on different local yet interconnected fields, often blending core-shamanic practices with local folkloristic and mythical chronicles, with psychotherapeutic practices or with other esoteric or supposed ancient practices. Ultimately, the global economy of shamanic goods engendered an international touristic enterprise, guided by the ‘quest for the authentic shaman’. An assortment of shamanic institutes offer touristic trips to seek out knowledge of indigenous shamans abroad, so that shamanic students can acquire shamanic capital all over the world. In Peru, for instance, where, according to an ad in Shaman’s Drum, ‘sincere and mature’ travellers can experience ‘Powerful deep healing, Ayahuasca and Huachuma ceremonies with Andean Shamans in the Sacred Valley of Peru’. Due to their success, shamanic tourism opportunities have expanded and American shamanic tourists can nowadays even travel to Siberia, where they form part of an arena in which a variety of local shamans struggle to position their distinct form of shamanism vis-à-vis other shamanisms.

143 Høst, ‘Modern Shamanic Practice’.
144 Townsend, ‘Core Shamanism and Neo-Shamanism’, 49-57.
The most curious and paradoxical turn in the globalising and glocalising genealogy of shamanism is the current landscape of shamanism in the supposedly native lands of 'shamanism', Russia and Siberia. In urban fields of esotericism, healers mainly started to identify themselves as shamans after the Transpersonal Institute in Moscow published The Way of the Shaman in the 1990s. The appearance and successful promotion of core-shamanism put 'shamanism' on the curriculum vitae of many healers. At the same time, a 'shamanic' revival occurred in post-Soviet Siberia, where quests for ethnic and national identities resulted in the 'reclaiming' of shamanic traditions. As a result, Siberian healers have launched shamanic clinics and schools and here they were sought out by Harnerians and other shamanic seekers on their quest for 'authentic shamans'. The authentic Siberian 'shamanic' entrepreneurs, in their turn, have acted upon the attention of shamanic seekers by incorporating transpersonalism into their teachings. Some of the Siberian shamans have taken steps in the transnational shamanic fields by managing courses in Siberian shamanism for western European addressees, who attach importance to Siberian shamanism as they consider it primal and authentic. The anthropologist and prominent shamanologist Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer participated in a conference in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) called 'Shamanism as Religion: Genesis, Reconstruction, Tradition' and found that it represented an arena in which the issue of shamanism-nationalism was more than just subject matter. Local folklorists had organised the conference as part of their yearning for an ethnic and spiritual revival. In her very skilful portrayal of the various coinciding quests for the authentic shaman in Siberia, Galina Lindquist demonstrated perfectly that the pinnacles of the genealogy of global shamanism have become entangled with their supposedly indigenous local roots. In this process shamans and scholars have become involved in struggles about the boundaries between supposed 'neoshamanism' and 'authentic shamanism'.

Conclusion

The institutionalisation of psychedelic and other countercultural dispositions within the field of academic anthropology, from the 1960s onwards, shaped the genealogy of shamanism in the direction of a genesis of a field of shamanism, that is, an economy of shamanic goods. The autonomisation of a field of shamanism occurred after academic scholars had incorporated a quest for experiential shamanic knowledge in their pursuit for knowledge about shamanism and started to initiate shamanic activities in the field of esotericism.

The genesis of a field of shamanism occurred within the booming field of esoteric ideas and practices that, from the 1980s onwards, was closely related to up-and-coming processes of neoliberalisation. As a component in the economy of esoteric goods, the field of shamanism is structured by consumerism, individualism and, above all, by nonformative authorities, who legitimise their authority on the basis of distinct combinations of scholarly knowledge, experience and/or tradition. The consumerist logic that structures the economy of shamanic goods also engendered global flows of shamanism. This globalism is related to the primitivism and perennialism that guides actions in the field and the shamanological presupposition that varieties of the same shamanic truth can be found the world over.

The boundaries of the field of shamanism are indistinct. The field was established in California, and thus it may be identified as an American field of shamanism. Yet shortly after its establishment the field became a transnational arena that included touristic enterprises in which American holidaymakers could visit ‘authentic’ South-American shamans, an international trade of artistic shamanic products and, moreover, international academic symposia about shamanism where academic shamanic experts presented their shamanologies. The field has blurred the borders between the genres, as some academic shamanologies legitimise the idea that shamanism is, in essence, an archaic, universal, non-cultural, ahistorical and perennial phenomenon that can be taught and experienced in workshops and courses. In other words, some academic shamanologies authorise the shamanic practices of their authors. The field of shamanism thus overlaps the academic field, as academic scholars practise as shamanic therapists and vice versa. The academic construction of the field of shamanism may account for the educational logic and structures of shamanic practices, and the importance of scholarly knowledge within the field.148

Contemporary shamanic practices were initiated by scholars who were guided by countercultural dispositions, but the meaning of the shamanic quest transformed within neoliberal structures. The elitism waned, as shamanism became available to all, and the promise of a tribal life that contrasted with the machinery

of modern societal structures also faded. Instead, shamanic practices became a range of therapeutic undertakings through which individuals could get a personal grip on their daily lives. Shamanic practices offer potential empowerment in the form of perennial shamanic knowledge that helps to acquire self-control and self-development. They offer the guidance of personal power animals. Shamanism provides the power to realize the ‘inner shaman.’ Instead of changing society, shamanism is aimed at changing individuals so they can achieve something within society, that is, the neoliberal capitalist structures that demand permanent education, self-accountability and individual responsibility. Ultimately, however, instead of an initiation into the ‘mystical space-time’ of shamans, these practices contribute to structure the structures that they claim to resist.