

Our Earliest Spiritualist Ancestor

The First Spiritualist Journals?

When we talk about Mediumship, typically what comes to mind is the idea of communicating with the departed. We also may be reminded that this is the foundation of Spiritualism, but such events predate not only Spiritualism, which is traced back to 1848, but also Christianity and extends beyond the historical records of religion. We can trace this form of communication to over 30,000 years ago.¹ These are possibly the oldest recordings of high priests or priestesses discovered. These recordings are the cave paintings in France, Spain, and Portugal. At one time, archeologists associated these images with magic,² knowing there is no evidence to support such a theory. Many insist describing primitive religion as being naught but the worship of supernatural powers,³ which, even today, has not changed. In contemporary religion the worship of God is not considered to be primitive because God, despite having unnatural abilities, is not viewed as aa supernatural being. A contradiction to say the least. There is no evidence we can point to as being the origin of religion. Perhaps we should say no origin we are willing to admit. Our investigation is not about religion, but one of its cornerstones.

As stated, the earliest journals of those first priests are potentially those images in certain caves and rock paintings and etchings throughout the globe. They may be the chronicles of journeys into the unknown. These High Priests of old maybe the first Shaman, long before the romanticizing of these unknown pioneers and what is called Shamanism. We are talking of the Shaman of old, who were a different breed than those we are familiar with today. Their accidental foraging into what we call Mind may have occurred while gazing into the flames of night fires, or when staring intently into the blackness of the night searching for danger. All may not have experienced the same altered state of consciousness. All may not have experienced the same visions of the past or future. We know this because contemporary science has found this to be true, as have those who meditate and have compared notes. Much of what the Shaman experienced may have been, in part, due to the sensitivity of the temporal

¹ (Whitley, 2009)

² (Whitley, 2009)

³ (Tong & Von Falkenhausen, 2002)

lobes, more specifically the right lobe.⁴ Those experiencing epileptic seizures and certain other mental disorders may have qualified them as a Shaman.

A common theme has been discovered which connects them to us. Some of the patterns found in the cave paintings and various open-air rock paintings and carvings are expressions of what contemporary meditation practitioners experience:⁵ entopic symbols. These representations are geometric symbols appearing as spiderwebs, waves, spheres, spirals, and other shapes. These are loose descriptions. For instance, instead of spiderwebs, one may describe them as glass shards or the facets of a crystal. A typical experience may include colorful geometric patterns morphing into iconic symbols or motifs, followed by the sensation of becoming part of the hallucination⁶ or of something more encompassing than what we are familiar with. Other meditative experiences include an absence of time, space, and of one's physical existence.⁷ Regardless, our meditative experiences may connect us with those potential experiences centuries ago.

Who was the Shaman?

Shaman were unusual people. Their qualifications may have been emotional sensitivity or instability, epileptic fits, hallucinations, or similar mental disorders.⁸ The same was later said of the early Spiritualists. Many of those related to Spiritualist Mediums had physicians declare them as being insane.⁹ Today, it's not much different, a person's religious experience may trigger an emotional response that goes beyond the experience itself,¹⁰ interfering with life. Often, the path into the role of Shaman, began with some form of crisis which often triggered emotional pain, mood destabilization, or some form of hysteria.¹¹ Today, these experiences often become debilitating, however, the Shaman would adapt to these conditions, leading peculiar lifestyles that alleviated many of their chronic conditions.¹² This strange lifestyle allowed them to do what others were unable to, which was to

⁴ (Murphy, 2010)

⁵ (Whitley, 2009)

⁶ (Whitley, 2009)

⁷ (Travis, 2013)

⁸ (Tong & Von Falkenhausen, 2002)

⁹ (Hardinge, 1870)

¹⁰ (Schaap-Jonker, Eurelings-Bontegne, Verhagen, & Zock, 2006)

¹¹ (Whitley, 2009)

¹² (Whitley, 2009)

commune with spirits. As the role evolved, they may have been summoned to the path through clairaudient and clairvoyant experiences¹³ as were some Biblical prophets.

The Shaman is often referred to as a magician and probably a witch by contemporary archeologists and anthropologists. To the Spiritualist, they were Mediums because they were also referred to as the Master of Spirits.¹⁴ This was their vocation. They were the pioneers of Mediumship and Prophecy; thus, their methodology is cruder than ours. For them to achieve the proper mental state they would push their body to the limits of exhaustion, sometimes near death, or mesmerize themselves through drumming, dancing, as well as fasting, consuming drugs and poisons, and sometimes meditation.¹⁵ Theirs was a path of passion, and based on many of the paintings, their visions may have been of equal intensity. Today, there are those who explore their passions or emotions through dance, drumming, and similar methodologies attempting to evoke intense visions. Many of our artists travel these paths for inspiration. Jim Morrison, of the Doors, was one of many who used drugs, mushrooms, and peyote to 'open the doors of perception.'¹⁶

The term, 'Shaman,' despite its spelling does not imply men only. The early Chinese Shaman were called 'xi' for male Shaman and 'wu' for female Shaman. Wu is the more common term, suggesting the early Shaman may have been mostly women.¹⁷ The development of writing skills did not occur until sometime around 3,000 B.C., and by then religion had already been around for almost 4,000 years.¹⁸ This suggests women, not men may have been the principal designers of religion. Archeologists suggest religion may have planted its roots as far back as 25,000 B.C. and the recognition of a Goddess becoming known around 7,000 B.C. The religious forum we are familiar with possibly formed between 1,800 and 1,500 B.C.¹⁹

¹³ (Czaplicka, 1914)

¹⁴ (Whitley, 2009)

¹⁵ (Tong & Von Falkenhausen, 2002)

¹⁶ (Hopkings & Sugerman, 1980)

¹⁷ (Tong & Von Falkenhausen, 2002)

¹⁸ (Stone, 1976)

¹⁹ (Stone, 1976)

Another important role of the Shaman was leadership.²⁰ Their ability to communicate with what we call supernatural beings, or spirit, uniquely qualified them. Their visions allowed them to lead the tribe or clan away from events such as drought, lack of game, weather conditions, etc., that may put the tribe in danger.²¹ These early pioneers may also have been teachers, scientists, and social architects, laying the groundwork for civilization to emerge.²²

The Shaman was the first Prophet/ Medium. As religion is potentially developed from the observations of nature, most likely the stories of the Principles of Nature and the inner world of the souls began with them.²³ They laid the groundwork for the religions that developed, including Spiritualism, and those yet to form. Communicating with Spirits was their primary responsibility to the people. Through such communications they guided, healed, and inspired those around them. They led the way into what we call the astral plane, altered states of consciousness, and discovered the natural flow of creation. The Shaman of yesterday are an inspiration to us today.

²⁰ (Tong & Von Falkenhausen, 2002)

²¹ (Stone, 1976)

²² (Tong & Von Falkenhausen, 2002)

²³ (Czaplicka, 1914)