



The Woman in the Shaman's Body: Reclaiming the Feminine in Religion and Medicine

By Barbara Tedlock Ph.D.

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A distinguished anthropologist—who is also an initiated shaman—reveals the long-hidden female roots of the world's oldest form of religion and medicine. Here is a fascinating expedition into this ancient tradition, from its prehistoric beginnings to the work of women shamans across the globe today.

Shamanism was not only humankind's first spiritual and healing practice, it was originally the domain of women. This is the claim of Barbara Tedlock's provocative and myth-shattering book. Reinterpreting generations of scholarship, Tedlock—herself an expert in dreamwork, divination, and healing—explains how and why the role of women in shamanism was misinterpreted and suppressed, and offers a dazzling array of evidence, from prehistoric African rock art to modern Mongolian ceremonies, for women's shamanic powers.

Tedlock combines firsthand accounts of her own training among the Maya of Guatemala with the rich record of women warriors and hunters, spiritual guides, and prophets from many cultures and times. Probing the practices that distinguish female shamanism from the much better known male traditions, she reveals:

- The key role of body wisdom and women's eroticism in shamanic trance and ecstasy
- The female forms of dream witnessing, vision questing, and use of hallucinogenic drugs
- Shamanic midwifery and the spiritual powers released in childbirth and monthly female cycles
- Shamanic symbolism in weaving and other feminine arts
- Gender shifting and male-female partnership in shamanic practice

Filled with illuminating stories and illustrations, *The Woman in the Shaman's*

Body restores women to their essential place in the history of spirituality and celebrates their continuing role in the worldwide resurgence of shamanism today.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review Scholarly and lay interest in shamanism continues to grow. Many pertinent books are still shadowed by the antifeminine bias of the renowned Mircea Eliade, whose mid-twentieth-century works applied *shaman* to a self-initiated, solitary male practicing "techniques of ecstasy." Eliade's towering influence has led to startling failures of scholarship, with facts twisted to fit his interpretative framework and biased language cloaking the truth. Tedlock reclaims the female shamanic tradition with vigor and clarity, arguing against depiction of shamans as male participants in "a sort of Flintstones private club in which manhood was celebrated and the transcendental achieved by worshiping, then negating, the feminine." The earliest known shamanic burial, she points out, was that of a woman of the Upper Paleolithic (30,000 years ago), whose dwelling included a potter's kiln in which she crafted thousands of tiny heads, feet, hands, and other talismans for healing. Tedlock argues that deliberate misreadings of data have been common, as when a shamanic couple is described as a "shaman and assistant" even when both acknowledged their shared role. She argues that women have been active practitioners and, in fact, the primary occupants of the shamanic role. Salted throughout with her own impressive memoir of initiation (with her husband, anthropologist Dennis Tedlock) and practice of traditional shamanism, Tedlock's book should become the classic on the controversial but now indisputable question of women's place in the shaman's world. *Patricia Monaghan*
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Review

Praise for *Woman in the Shaman's Body*:

"Healing, birthing children, gathering and growing food, keeping communities in balance, presiding over ceremonies and rites passage, maintaining relations with the dead, teaching, ministering to those in need, communing with nature to learn her secrets, preserving the wisdom traditions, divining the future, and dancing with gods and goddesses—these are shamanic arts. *And these are the arts of women.* In a thoughtful way, Barbara Tedlock traces the true history of shamanism, a history in which women have always been an integral and creative part. *The Woman in the Shaman's Body* illuminates the oftentimes hidden, and sometimes openly suppressed, feminine spirit that is shamanism, that is healing, that is life." --**Bonnie Horrigan**

Executive Director, Society for Shamanic Practitioners

"This book is a highly readable yet comprehensive and definitive study of the role of women in shamanism. It is without doubt the best book ever written about the female role in shamanism and perhaps the best book ever done on shamanism itself."--**Timothy J. Knab, Ph.D.**,
Author of *A Scattering of Jades* and *A War of Witches*

"Barbara Tedlock did a brilliant job of weaving together her own story of shamanic initiation along with an incredible depth of research. She shatters current myths about shamanism and shows how women were the originators and key practitioners of shamanic healing and divination. In a time where we see so many women engaging in shamanic practice Tedlock offers valuable insight into the long-standing role of women in this ancient path. I truly loved reading this book!"--**Sandra Ingerman**, author of *Soul Retrieval* and *Medicine for the Earth*

"Scholars and lay readers alike are indebted to Barbara Tedlock for combining her personal and professional

experience in this insightful, cross-cultural interpretation of shamanism.”--**Douglas Sharon**, director, Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley

“Barbara Tedlock is part of the present big struggle to drag anthropology out of the rationalist and anti-humanist black hole in which it has found itself. Barbara Tedlock started her career in anthropology with the “distant coolness of a scientific observer.” But the K’iche’ Maya among whom she worked responded by healing her in her illness. They thenceforth taught her to practice as a healer herself. This is the pattern in advanced anthropology today. Now Barbara Tedlock has written the definitive book on women’s shamanism—its history, the way it is activated, and its particular roots in the woman’s body and in her powers of creation and procreation. The book is simply written, full of real stories, real dreams, and real shaman journeys. It will be a treasure for all adventurous women.”--**Edith Turner**, Editor-in-chief of *Anthropology and Humanism*, published by University of Virginia; author of *Experiencing Ritual* and *The Hands Feel It*

“This is a wonderful, insightful, and compelling introduction to Shamanism as “a healing practice and religious sensibility” performed by women from time immemorial to the present day. Barbara Tedlock is a working Shaman and proud descendant of Shamans native to North America. She is also an accomplished social scientist who understands the rules of empirical analysis that apply to the scholarly study of religion and ritual. With the clear, engaging prose of an expert observer and the personal experience of a spiritual practitioner, she weaves a story that is both autobiography and persuasive argument for the importance of women as Shaman world-wide and throughout history.” --**David A. Freidel**, Ph.D., University Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, Southern Methodist University

Barbara Tedlock’s study of female shamans offers rare gifts: luminous insight, exhaustive scholarly knowledge, and accessible language that pulses with quiet intensity. After Tedlock, no one will ever again be able to portray shamanism as a male enterprise.”

--**Michael F. Brown**, Ph.D. Chair, Dept. of Anthropology & Sociology Williams College and/or as the author of *The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in an Anxious Age* and, more recently, *Who Owns Native Culture?*

“If Joseph Campbell or Mircea Eliade had been feminists, this is a book they could wish they had written. This canon-busting romp across history and around the globe, from Paleolithic Europe to contemporary North America, insists on the centrality of women to the shamanic traditions that have until now been considered the province of men. Drawing on her training in the healing arts as a young child by her Ojibwa grandmother, her later professional training with Mayan shamans in Guatemala, and her more recent observations of shamanic rituals in Mongolia, Tedlock has created a formidable work: a meticulously researched yet delightfully absorbing compendium of women’s shamanic skills across time and space.”--**Alma Gottlieb**, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology at University of Illinois; co-editor of *Blood Magic*, and *A World of Babies*; President, Society for Humanistic Anthropology

From the Hardcover edition.

From the Inside Flap

A distinguished anthropologist—who is also an initiated shaman—reveals the long-hidden female roots of the world's oldest form of religion and medicine. Here is a fascinating expedition into this ancient tradition, from its prehistoric beginnings to the work of women shamans across the globe today.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jennifer Mendoza:

Reading a publication can be one of a lot of exercise that everyone in the world adores. Do you like reading book therefore. There are a lot of reasons why people like it. First reading a reserve will give you a lot of new information. When you read a e-book you will get new information due to the fact book is one of many ways to share the information or perhaps their idea. Second, looking at a book will make you actually more imaginative. When you studying a book especially fictional works book the author will bring you to definitely imagine the story how the characters do it anything. Third, you may share your knowledge to other individuals. When you read this *The Woman in the Shaman's Body: Reclaiming the Feminine in Religion and Medicine*, you could tells your family, friends and soon about yours reserve. Your knowledge can inspire others, make them reading a guide.

Ray Ortiz:

Reading a book tends to be new life style on this era globalization. With examining you can get a lot of information that may give you benefit in your life. Along with book everyone in this world can easily share their idea. Books can also inspire a lot of people. Lots of author can inspire their very own reader with their story or perhaps their experience. Not only the storyplot that share in the guides. But also they write about the knowledge about something that you need example of this. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach children, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors in this world always try to improve their talent in writing, they also doing some investigation before they write to the book. One of them is this *The Woman in the Shaman's Body: Reclaiming the Feminine in Religion and Medicine*.

John Ashcraft:

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Johanna Land:

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