

# From the Editor

KEY TO UNDERSTANDING shamanism is recognizing that it is as much a technique as it is a worldview. What makes the study of shamanism all the more evocative is that it is a practice that can be participated in—for in shamanism, belief is secondary to experience. Consequently, the study of shamanism spans the complete spectrum from the entirely experimental to the entirely observational, depending on the lean and adventurousness of the anthropologist and the shaman with whom he or she studies.

Shamanism has been a part of the human experience for millennia. How far it may go back into the depths of our evolution is still debated but all agree it is ancient. Shamanic techniques and outlooks have appeared in many cultures around the world, throughout all of Asia, in Australia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe.

Certain aspects of shamanism in all these contexts, though culturally unique and specific, nevertheless possess some striking commonalities: First, the shaman takes a journey to other worlds. Second, the journey is motivated by gaining information for a specific reason or problem, be it for the group, an individual, or the shaman. *How* the shaman journeys is quite varied. Nearly all shamanic traditions use some mode of repetitive auditory stimulation, such as a drum or chant, but not all necessarily use consciousness-altering substances.

In this special issue on shamanism, we hear from some expert anthropologists and archaeologists in the field. This issue provides a sampling of the tremendous diversity of scholarship and points of view on shamanism.

Edith Turner, one of anthropology's foremost experts on shamanism, religion, ritual, and the anthropology of consciousness, begins our journey with a solid overview of shamanism, as well as her research on shamanism among the Iñupiat of Alaska. Kenneth Lymer explores the archaeology of shamanism through investigating rock art motifs in the landscape of Kazakhstan. Elin Danien discusses horned shamans from western Mexico and reveals the shamanic content of two wrestlers in our Mesoamerican gallery. Peter T. Furst (pictured right) expands our understanding of the role of consciousness-altering plants in the practice of ecstatic shamanism.

A special feature from folklorist Deborah Kapchan illuminates music, healing, and trance among the Gnawa of Morocco. Though not shamanic, Kapchan's work also addresses shifts of consciousness during healing practices. A second special feature stays entirely in this world and journeys to Ecuador with Michael Harris, Valentina Martinez, Wm. Jerald Kennedy, Charles Roberts, and James Gammack-Clark. This interdisciplinary team investigates the relationship between culture and nature along the south central coast over a span of several thousand years.

The diversity of our Museum's voices continues in this issue. Pam Kosty tells us about the Barrymore award the Penn Museum received last year. For those who enjoy a good yarn, Dori Panzer shares her work with modern-day Irish storyteller Eddie Lenihan from County Clare.



BEEBE BAHRAMI, PH.D.

Editor



Peter T. Furst in Uxmal, the Yucatan, Mexico.