



Received: 13-09-2025
Accepted: 23-10-2025

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

A Report on the Practice of Shamanism in Africa and Beyond

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2025.5.6.5174>

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Abstract

Shamanism is one of the earliest examples of mankind's healing modalities, beginning with African bushmen such as the Kalahari Kung. Some Africans and others still use trance dancing and medicinal substances to heal themselves and their patients, whether for free or through barter. Traditional Chinese Medicine (approximately 5,000 years old) heals the body and mind through affordable herbs or acupuncture that generate qi (pronounced chi and meaning life force). Treatments are specifically tailored for patients after consultation with a master/practitioner. A comparison with western medicine (approximately 100 years old) is more fully examined in Dr. Keown's "The Spark in the Machine." Modern medicine divides healing into multiple specialties. Doctors and specialists treat every part of the body or mind as distinct. They independently prescribe a range of expensive therapies, pharmaceuticals, and surgeries, while seldom consulting as a team. In some western countries large health corporations, led by CEOs and boards, decide who deserves treatment based on profit margins for the

company. Prior to this system, benign homeopathic remedies were prescribed. Swedenborg was an 18th-century European noble with a strong background in diverse sciences, including anatomical research discoveries. After he became a mystic and revelatory prophet, he stopped this lifelong pursuit and documented his journeys between our world and the Beyond for 27 years. It was in Heaven that his 'love affair with Africa' began, where he encountered Africans in spirit form whom he described as having 'a highly developed inner sight ~ accepting the good and true things of heaven more readily than others do'. These traits are essential for shamanic healing and revelatory visions. Many traditional cultures agree that healing must be offered freely, or traded fairly: high prices are rarely healing or humane. This paper is a report regarding the experiences of specified individuals in connection with healing, beliefs and Shamanism. The paper provides some guides to alternative healing methods.

Keywords: Ancestors, Experience, Healing, Shamas, Swedenborg, Yoruba

1. Introduction

S. A. Harty: The answer as to why *Shamanism in Africa and Beyond* was born and then dedicated to Emanuel Swedenborg lies in his uncanny fascination with African spirituality over 250 years ago. Swedenborg, a revelatory prophet, claimed to understand African spirituality through encounters with Africans in spirit form, not through physical travel or interactions. An Australian friend, healer and clairvoyant, once asked me "Why?" in reference to my recent manuscript: *Near Death Experiences versus Swedenborg's Dual Consciousness*. The answer is deeply personal: after surviving my son's death at age 16 followed by my own repeated near-death experiences (NDEs) ~ without dying ~ I was perplexed and driven to research sacred knowledge about both. NDEs, I discovered, are akin to shamanic trances intended for revelation or healing, but do not culminate in death (*for more detailed research about NDEs versus Death see reference*). Swedenborg himself reportedly knew the exact date and time of his own death. He witnessed that: "Our life in the world is barely like a moment compared to our life after death, which is eternal." Swedenborg, *Secrets of Heaven*, §5006.

Death, as he came to understand it through both personal experience and scholarly study, is a very different and final process ~ one of spirit removal from a dying body during a three-day "resurrection into eternity." Not everyone is able to experience or survive NDEs. They may result from a specific physiological condition, possibly genetic. **Medical Note:** The *foramen ovale* is a passage in the fetal heart that allows blood to bypass the lungs. In about 25 percent of the population, it remains open with no ill effects. Swedenborg believed ecstatic, near-death states could only be survived by individuals with this condition, as it

functioned like a pressure release valve, allowing blood to flow backward without bursting coronal arteries: <https://drdankeown.com/lesson/7-4-heart-function-physiology-part-1/> (Dr. Keown's 5 minute Octavia Course). Significantly, Lewis-Williams (1981) and Katz (1982) ^[9] convincingly argue that death, within Bushman traditions, serves as a metaphor for the experience of entering trance. This insight further deepens the relationship between shamanism and altered states of consciousness: <https://iloveafrica.com/the-magical-healing-dance-of-the-san-bushmen/>

The purpose of embodied life, Swedenborg believed, is to choose ~ daily ~ whether one's spirit will live eternally in Heaven or in Hell. A choice based on personal actions and the exercise of free will. According to his theology, we choose what we love. Therefore, Hell is not punishment, but a result of choosing what aligns with our deepest affections. None of this astonishing spiritual insight would be known without the discoveries of Swedish scientist-mystic Emanuel Swedenborg during his 18th-century solo journeys between worlds. Yet Swedenborg's sanity has long been debated. Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss psychologist, offers the most balanced and educated assessment: "I admire Swedenborg as a great scientist and a great mystic at the same time. His life and work have always been of great interest to me, and I read about seven fat volumes of his writings when I was a medical student... Swedenborg was a seer of unparalleled profundity, a scholar with superior intelligence" (*Jung, as cited in Swedenborg Foundation*). The fact that Swedenborg behaved normally despite 27 years of daily spiritual (shamanic) interactions and prophetic revelations is evidence of his sanity. His prolific intellectual gifts, demonstrated by extensive writings in multiple languages are further proof. Born into a devout Lutheran family, his bishop father was even considered saintly.

Dr. J. Agai: During a research tour to Mai Idon Toro in Plateau State, Nigeria, I encountered a large field surrounded by cactus plants and filled with diverse vegetation. Curious about its purpose, I asked the local elders. They told me that when they were children, their parents would take them to this place for medical attention ~ not to a conventional hospital, but to what was essentially a living plant reservoir.

This experience affirmed a long-standing truth: Africans have had their own healing systems, both spiritual and physical, for centuries. Shamanistic practices in Africa are ancient and remain in use. Many continue to seek guidance, healing, interpretation of events, and communication with the spirit world through *shamas*. A once-thriving civilization of African healing has diminished over time due to factors like oral traditions lacking written preservation, the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and the general neglect of indigenous knowledge systems. Yet belief and healing remain vital to human experience. People find healing in various ways, in different places. Whichever path works for you, pursue it. Africa must rise again ~ and part of that resurgence depends on rediscovering and validating the African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) of healing. With the tools of modern sciences, we can study existing plants and their effects on human health. With the rise of parapsychology, we can investigate the spiritual systems embedded in African traditions. There is so much to learn from these systems—and so much to reclaim. The term 'shama' might have been derived from the Hebrew word for

"to hear" or "to listen," reflecting the shaman's role as a mediator between the spiritual and physical worlds."

2. A Love Affair with Africa

Swedenborg's love for Africa and its people (in Heaven) inspired the first Abolitionist Society in Sweden and the British anti-slavery movement, as well as Rev. Dibb's paper: *A Love Affair with Africa: Nineteenth Century Swedenborgian views on Africa*. "Whatever spiritual qualities a person acquires in the world remain with him or her after death." *Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell* 349.

The Africans

"Of all the Gentiles Swedenborg encountered in the Spiritual World, the Africans impressed him the most. His theological Writings contain many references to the potential of African spirituality. In the Spiritual World he found himself able to speak to them on deep subjects, about God and the nature of human beings and he was amazed at their judgment in these matters. They could clearly understand spiritual principles that were stumbling blocks to many educated Europeans.

He compared them to the wisest people who ever lived.

'They said that they are looking for information, and that they love to know truths'. Despite their ignorance of spiritual matters in this world, the Africans in the Spiritual World are keen to learn about God. To this end, angels are sent to them to teach them, and the Africans learn with joy. When presented with the truth, they are more receptive than any other people and accept the truth willingly. As they learn, so they adjust their lives to harmonize it with what the angels have taught them.

Since Africans in the eighteenth century were largely ignorant of the Christian religion, and yet were able to be lifted to such heights of spirituality, the question naturally arises: where did the impetus for this come from? During his conversations in the spiritual world, Swedenborg discovered that Africans told him that while they were on earth they received a direct revelation about God, in contrast with the written revelation of Christianity.

He described an oral communication from the spiritual world to the natural, which the Africans do not always hear as a voice, but which opens in their minds the ability to recognize truth when they come across it. Africans, therefore, received a revelation directly from heaven that provided the essentials for religion. While this made them receptive of truth, and able to enter states of spiritual illumination, it also led them to reject things they perceived to be false. This is how Swedenborg recognized such heightened qualities in Africans whom he encountered during his afterlife journeys.

The most celestially angelic people in the world, Swedenborg wrote, who were welcomed immediately into heaven, were not the white Christians of the west, but unknown African tribes who lived far from the pernicious influence of Christian missionaries, and were more spiritually "interior" than any other people's living.

The published reports of Dr. David Livingstone, whose travels took him deep into the heart of Africa, rekindled the belief that somewhere in Africa the New Church existed, that a revelation was taking place, the Word read, and that elusive angelic culture flourished. Livingstone's journey into modern Malawi enthused English readers, one of whom writes:

Who shall despair of Africa when we find it contains a race energetic and industrious in their habits, skillful in workmanship, obedient to law, and holding a belief in one God and a future state? Such are the people of Nyassa....

3. Swedenborg and Shamanism

Swedenborg was an 18th-century anthropologist-ethnographer of his own spiritual journeys, per Prof. Leon James, American psychologist and author of *Jung and Swedenborg on God and Life After Death*. D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhist and author of *Suedenborugu*, proclaimed him a “buddha of the north for westerners.”

“There was a numerous crowd of spirits about me that sounded like a disorderly stream. They were complaining that everything was going to destruction; for nothing in the crowd appeared organized, and this made them fear destruction. They also supposed that it would be total destruction, as is the case in such circumstances. But in the midst of them I perceived a soft sound, angelically sweet, suggesting nothing but order. Angelic choirs were there within, and the disorderly crowd of spirits was without. This angelic strain continued a long time; and I was told that it betokened how the Lord rules confused and disorderly exteriors from what is peaceful in their midst, regulating the disorders in the circumference, by restraining each from the error of its own nature.” - *Swedenborg, Arcana Coelestia* (§5396), 1749.

Rev. Dibb: “A hundred years before Darwin, Swedenborg described first humans as the “Most Ancient Church,” a race with different brain functions from ours. The people of the Most Ancient Church were not intellectually motivated as are modern humans; instead, they were driven by their will, and the intellect followed to enable the will to act. In the early stages of creation, the will of these people was still innocent, devoid of selfishness and greed, along with the other tendencies towards these things which plague later people. Because their will was in this state of innocence ~ rather like a newborn child ~ the people of the Most Ancient Church were receptive to God’s love, and without any evil they had direct contact with heaven and through it with God Himself. They could be led to increasing states of love, and so to increasing wisdom.

This was the first, or Most Ancient Church, represented in the book of *Genesis* by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, naked and not ashamed. Shamans bridge the gap between the spiritual and natural worlds and fulfilled two general functions: revelatory and/or healing. Both their revelations and their healing were for the tribe or group they served. Indeed, all of the prophets of the Old Testament were in a very similar sense revelatory Shamans.

In *An Ancient Cousin: The Impact of Swedenborg’s Teachings about China* regarding revelations among the Manchus, they revealed principles of life and thought which they wrote down in Manchu, calling them *shen ben* (meaning “spiritual books” in Chinese, but which are actually scrolls). Professor Fu Yuguang of the University of Changchun, a world authority on Manchu Shamanism, has collected many of these *shen ben* and has searched in them for references to the Ancient Word without finding them.” (Brush, Bown and Sun 2002:219).

S. A. Harty: While battling post-viral illness using weekly acupuncture and still experiencing NDEs (including visions of deceased family and their silent communications), I saw

and heard “angels” singing. They hovered like a fluffy white cloud in my American “living” room. It may have been a group of healing “Raphaels” or a single, six-winged angel (outer energy currents resemble electricity and nerves inside human bodies). Describing such a heavenly choir, Swedenborg says that although there were a host, they nevertheless all thought and spoke as one, thus they all represented as one.

Like Swedenborg’s angelic choirs, my angels sang so harmoniously, with one voice, that I can no longer tolerate the sound of most human singing, harsh voices, or strong accents. I was afraid and have not seen or heard from angels since that visit. Before I rented out my home, I had it blessed, not knowing the angelic visit (*perhaps ancestral*) was a “sound” healing, tailored for me alone.

4. They Live with Us Even After Death by Jock M. Agai

Once born to live, one lives forever. This is a common African belief. Though not all qualify to be ancestors, once a person has reached the status of becoming an ancestor, then the living can be described as being saved because the ancestor stays to help the living. He or she provides them with healing and solves other needs of the living. Another entity that lives alongside the living is the *Egungun*, who are known to be the physical representatives of the dead and can mediate between the living and the dead.

Ancestors are regarded as one from whom a person descends without any limit to distance and time, so an ancestor could be an immediate father, grandfather or great grandfather. An ancestor could also be a mother, grandmother or great grandmother. The main purpose of an ancestor is to maintain a relationship with the living. It is not everyone who dies that is qualified to become an ancestor (Awolalu 1979:54–55) ^[24].

Parents had to be honoured because they have the abilities to become ancestors: “In Africa, it is a general belief that a living father or a living mother, by virtue of his fatherhood or her motherhood, is endowed with the power to bless or curse an offspring effectively. That is why every passage of life and every undertaking by the offspring requires parental blessing.” ~ Idowu (1973:184–185) ^[28].

A father is more respected because the Yorubas believe that the father links the family to their ancestors more than a mother. To be welcomed as an ancestor, one has to live a good life, have children, should not die a premature death or a “bad death,” and must be given a befitting burial rite. Continual food and water offerings to the dead also contribute to determining if the deceased could continue to be an ancestor (Awolalu 1979:54–55) ^[24].

Lucas said that: “The Yoruba custom of leaving an open hole in graves is meant for the continual passage of food and water to the deceased. The heart-soul would not rest but torment the living if the proper funerary rites and a continual food and water offering are not performed. When accorded the proper burial, the deceased spirit associates himself with the souls of other deceased and would wander at will and may appear to family members in dreams” (Lucas 1948:253) ^[30].

The heart-soul of a deceased parent that is well taken care of through food and water offerings would always come to protect, bless, and guide the child who is committed to nourishing the dead, hence the Yoruba song: “*oku Olomo k i sun gbagbe*,” “The spirit of a parent never sleeps and forgets his children.”

Lucas (1948:254) ^[30] explained that in Yoruba culture, the spirit of the dead is often summoned to bless and give good fortune to the living. He said that sometimes the dead may appear in human form, unknown to the relatives. The main message here is that the Yorubas believe that when the deceased's family members or relatives perform the rites that are expected of them, then the dead would bless them in return.

Awolalu noted that: "It is believed that the new ancestors will see the old and that there will be a reunion; this is why the living sends messages to the former ancestors. The Yorubá provide food for their departed ancestors and they make sure they make regular offerings at their graves. The more the offerings, the better-placed are the ancestors and consequently the more favour will they bestow upon the living descendants" (Awolalu 1979:57) ^[24].

To go to the world of the dead successfully requires a long journey, which is why the dead ought to be fed with food and water. The biggest joy of those who lived a good life during their lifetime is not just going to heaven alone, but being remembered by their loved ones who are still living. This is why the Yorubas regard with high esteem the ideas about the presence of the dead among them and the need to give appropriate services to the dead. To the Yorubas, remembering the dead through certain rituals is regarded as obligatory.

For example, if an ancestor is well remembered, the ancestor is said to be living within a dual existence in the world of the living and in the world of the unborn with other ancestors. However, if the ancestor is not remembered, then it is assumed that the ancestor would simply slip into the expanse of *Zamani*, the home of the divinities, where he cannot help the living and is therefore not qualified to be regarded as an ancestor (Strong 2020).

The Yorubas believe that ancestors are more powerful than human beings and that they have been given the authority to oversee the affairs of human beings (Adedeji 1983:117) ^[18]. It is believed that ancestors have been given powers by the gods to mediate between the gods and man and to communicate with the living. The living, in return, seek the help of the ancestors for protection and provision (Adamolekun 2001:611) ^[19]. Ancestors are thought to have the right and the power to punish the living who have forgotten about their relationships with their ancestors. The Yorubas also believe that ancestors oversee that the living live out their life span as allotted to them by the gods (Eades 1980:122) ^[25].

Awolalu speaks further about the authority of the ancestor: "The deceased are truly members of the families on earth; but they are no longer of the same fleshy order as those who are still actually living on earth. They are closely related to this world; but are no longer ordinary mortals. Because they have crossed the borderland between this world and the super-sensible world, entering and living in the latter, they have become freed from the restrictions imposed by the physical world. They can now come to abide with their folk on earth invisibly, to aid or hinder them, to promote prosperity or cause adversity" (Awolalu 1979:63–64) ^[24].

Egungun literally means "bone" or "skeleton" (Ellis 1966:107) ^[27]. The association of Egungun to the rising of the dead explains the reason for the involvement of a skeleton in this ritual. Egungun refers to an individual who is supposed to be a man in the spirit form who is said to have risen from death (Ellis 1966:107) ^[27]. When a Yoruba

elderly man dies, his spirit joins the ancestors to become an Egungun. Egungun is regarded as a citizen of Heaven who is believed to have returned from the spirit world to check on the welfare of the living (Lucas 1948:133) ^[30].

During the Egungun festival, the living act on behalf of certain ancestors or spirits of the dead and are identified as Egungun. Therefore, members of the communities who practice Egungun are regarded as the representatives of Egungun on earth and are also referred to as Egungun. Egungun, as divinely chosen human beings, are always dressed for the Egungun festival in coloured clothes with the head and face covered, with a small opening for view. Their feet are also covered so that no part of the skin is visible. In this case, many see them as spiritual beings. Egungun masks are inherited within the community and worn only by men who have gone through the rituals of initiation. Women should not know the identity of the wearers of Egungun masks except for an official woman called *Iya Agan*, who is charged with the responsibility of helping the men to dress (Eades 1980:123) ^[25].

The spirit of the dead ancestor sometimes is invoked and would, in turn, appear in physical form and give comfort and words of hope to the deceased's descendants. During the Egungun annual festival, the spirit of all the ancestors is often summoned, and Egungun are to be seen going street by street and house by house chanting words of blessings to the community and individuals. After chanting words of hope and blessings to the living, Egungun receive offerings from the people who are then blessed. The Egungun also mediate between people and their ancestors and may warn against any form of natural disaster that affects a family or a community (Awolalu 1979:65–66) ^[24].

Egungun, as an individual, is also believed to participate in funerals; he visits the bereaved family to report to them about the state of the deceased in the afterlife. He is, in turn, supported with gifts and may dine with specific members of the deceased's family during or after burial. A whip was carried along whenever the Egungun was going out, and anyone ~ especially women ~ who touched the garment of the Egungun would be whipped and sometimes put to death by the Egungun, especially in the past. This made the people honour and respect Egungun.

The Egungun masquerades are sometimes inappropriately used by royal leaders to torment their enemies or to strengthen their political will because the Yorubas believe that Egungun are divine beings (Adedeji 1983:123–126) ^[18]. It should be noted that the main purpose of Egungun is to appear as a figure that creates the impression that the deceased is making a temporary reappearance on earth. The Yorubas have a lot of respect for the Egungun. They venerate, they help, they offer sacrifices, and they believe that the main purpose of the Egungun is for the ultimate good of the living. They think that Egungun mediate with the dead on behalf of the living, and they therefore fear and honour the Egungun.

The Egungun, in return, bless or curse them. Yoruba beliefs hold that the spirit of the dead can rise and that the Egungun are the representatives of the dead. Ancestors are higher than the Egungun because the Egungun are only representatives of the ancestors. The primary function of both entities is to protect and provide for the living, but where and when necessary, they may curse the living. They both help to unite the family and keep family bonds together. They help the living to remember their roots. Most

importantly, they help heal the living both spiritually and physically and can be consulted when an individual is sick.

5. African Shamas

E. J. Langdon points out the essential difference, in Eliade's view, between soul flight (typical of shamanism) and possession (typical of African religions) in E. J. Matteson Langdon and Gerhard Baer (eds.), *Portals of Power: Shamanism in South America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992).

S. A. Harty: My own introduction to early African shamanism and healing through trance dancing was Richard Katz's book *Boiling Energy: Community Healing Among the Kalahari Kung*: Katz, Lee and Powell with backgrounds in clinical psychology, cultural anthropology and sociology lived and studied with the Kung for three months. "These were their five tasks: describe the fascinating healing rituals in graphic detail; trace the role that healing plays in the lives of the healers and the community at large; sociological analysis of how the form and function of healing are based on egalitarianism, food sharing, collective ownership of resources while this social order is being challenged by the economic changes sweeping Africa." (*Foreword by Lee*).

"Since the !Kung have no written language and their click sounds, glottal stops and nasalization make it hard for English speakers to understand when spoken, they gave Katz permission to *Tell our story to your people*." (Orthography, p. 311). The Kung calls themselves *Zhutwa* (*Zhutwasi plural*) meaning *true or real people*. This was the dedication selected by Katz in return for healing wisdom from a disappearing people who have been filmed, studied and interviewed for over thirty years. The twenty male and female healers who participated in *Boiling Energy* ranged in age from 20-80 and these are their names: *Bau; Bo; Chuko; Dau; Debe; Gau; Kaha; Kana; Kashay; Kau Dwa; Kinachau; Koto; Kumsa; Nau; Tikay; Toma Zho; Tsaa; Tsama; Wa Na; Wi*.

Only two plants (roots) with mind altering properties were briefly mentioned as teaching tools: gwa and **gaïse noru noru**. Instead, trance dance was the specific mode of healing documented in *Boiling Energy*: "To drink num is the process or act of learning to heal and often refers to the first kia experience in which the person can also heal (Glossary page 314). Kia is an enhanced state of consciousness, with associated behaviors, which results from the activation of num and is a pre-requisite for healing. Kowhedili is an aspect of kia that occurs when healers expel the sickness from themselves, referring to both a state of consciousness in which there is great pain and a set of behaviors and sounds dramatically expressing that pain." (Glossary page 315).

NOTE: In Baja CA Mexico, which has a large Catholic and Christian population, I consulted with two female healers (curanderas) about some health issues in 2024. They were actually channeling two Native American Lakota shamans in North America. The language barrier was a challenge, so I said nothing about the specific injury. However, no words were needed after the one who was a seer (in a trance-like state) blessed and covered my body with a sheet from head to toe. She then left the room so I was completely alone. I have no idea how long I lay there, but I clearly felt a light feathery touch work its way up my left foot, ankle, knee, hip, head (problem areas from a dance injury in New York City 1983 that eventually caused Arthrosis). I lay in a deep,

calm, meditative state during this long distance, diagnostic procedure. It reminded me of a Native American (twenty minute) drumming-to-heartbeat ritual that can sometimes induce a spirit animal to appear: I lay comfortably with a scarf over my eyes and imagined myself at the top of Arizona's Havasupai Falls. Immediately, I transformed into a grey, spinning dolphin and dove into the pool at the bottom of the waterfall. The drumming ended with three firm beats and I returned to a California afternoon.

6. Entheogens and Shamanism

Caputo in *A Glimpse into the Entheogenic Ubiquity of Ancient Mysticism*: "Dating at least back to the oldest known literary epic, allusions to magical plants or their substrates are found throughout ancient writings and transcend the world's earliest cultures...It is well-documented throughout the subsequent, ancient cultures that men and women, priests and paupers, the mystic and the moribund, sought divine experiences through entheogens."

Mitchell and Hudson: "It is widely accepted that Bushman shamans enter into altered states of consciousness and that their experiences of such states are intimately bound up with the imagery represented in southern African rock art. Most accounts of contemporary trance performances by Kalahari Bushmen emphasise that such states are attained in ways that exclude the use of psychoactive plants. This paper reviews the relevant anthropological, ethnohistoric and archaeological literature to argue, on the contrary, that psychoactive plants may sometimes be employed by Kalahari healers at present and that they may also have been used among more southerly hunter-gatherers at times in the past. The paper concludes by suggesting ways in which future research on this topic might be developed..." <https://www.ethnopharmacologia.org/prelude2020/pdf/bibli-o-hm-75-mitchell.pdf>

Pasquali in *Leshoma, the visionary plant of southern Africa*: "The bulbaceous plant *Boophone disticha* ~ known mainly by the term *leshoma* given by the Sotho ethnic group ~ is characterized by powerful hallucinogenic properties and is used as initiatory and divinatory plant among many southern African ethnicities. Once known as the main compound of San arrow poisons, its psychoactive properties have been recognized by Western scholars only in the last 50 years, since its ritual use was strictly kept secret by its initiates. Through the analysis of the few ancient and modern ethnographic observations that have been able to bypass the wall of secrecy that envelop the use of this plant, the Sotho male initiation rite (*lebollo la banna*) and the use of the plant as divinatory "bioscope" among the South African sangoma (healers) are described. As evidenced by archaeological findings, man's relationship with this plant has lasted for at least 2,000 years. Careless consumption of the *B. disticha* bulb, both for therapeutic and intoxicating purposes, causes more or less serious intoxication in South Africa and other southern African nations, which in some cases can lead to death (Laing, 1979). Even if its secrets were cleverly hidden to anthropologists and missionaries for many years, from data assessed it is evident that *Boophone disticha* mind altering features are common knowledge among a discrete group of different South African ethnicities."

A recent study on frequently used medicinal plants of Baja California Norte, Mexico (Winkelman 1986a) found that only five of 22 plants (23%) had psychoactive properties, and these were specifically used for nervous problems or

conditions. Only one plant was considered to have toxic properties that made its use undesirable, and even that plant was not of a strength that would lead to immediate toxicity or fatalities. Similarly, Tyler (1987) considered over 100 herbs and related remedies in common use in America. Although he found inconclusive evidence about the safety of about 15 percent of the plants, only three of them had recognized psychoactive properties, only about 20 percent were considered unsafe, and only five percent had the extreme toxic properties characteristic of many Kung medicine plants. Clearly the Kung medicine plants listed by Lee (1979) are unusual in the extremely high incidence of psychoactive and acute toxic properties. The high incidence of trance-inducing properties among the group of plants considered here suggests that there are Kung medicine plants used for medicinal purposes other than the activation of num and the induction of *kia*.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Psychological and Medical Perspectives

“When spirits begin to speak with man, he must beware lest he believe them in anything; for they say almost anything; things are fabricated by them, and they lie; for if they were permitted to relate what heaven is, and how things are in the heavens, they would tell so many lies, and indeed with solemn affirmation, that man would be astonished; wherefore when spirits were speaking, I was not permitted to have faith in the things they related.” ~ *Swedenborg, Spiritual Diary* (§1622).

Katz: “!Kung exhibit behaviors they themselves consider ‘crazy’ (di), such as a woman who rolls on her back and spreads her legs, a man who lives alone in the bush with his wife and sister and has sexual relations with both, and a boy who breaks a food taboo and loses his wits. The Kung associated these behaviors with madness, attributing such acts to spiritual or psychological instability.” *Boiling Energy* (page 20).

Van Dusen: “The way out of madness is: To do useful things to contribute to the environment. To act with as much consideration and understanding of others as possible. In both of these one can forget the painful self, at least for a while, and reestablish the self as a meaningful part of the world. Corresponding to this, the relationship to inner feelings and symbols will improve. Delving into the psyche is helpful only insofar as it is translated into some kind of socially active result. It is perhaps an odd paradox, but madness is uselessness. Sanity is usefulness. The internal is messed up only insofar as the external is messed up. Mysteriously, the reality of the internal is the external.” *The Natural Depth in Man* (page 104).

Aviv: “Mary Had Schizophrenia—Then Suddenly She Didn’t. Some psychiatric patients may actually have treatable autoimmune conditions. But what happens to the newly sane? When Mary was treated for cancer, the drugs also relieved her psychosis of twenty years. Her daughter Christine described her as a psychological *débutante*” (*The New Yorker* magazine).

S. A. Harty: My sister was diagnosed with Paranoid Schizophrenia when she was 34 years old and disappeared in South Africa for 15 years. When I found her again, she had contained the paranoid aspect of her illness by “talking back” to the voices in her head. She reports that the voices now entertain her and that she would miss them if they were quiet. Volunteering eight hours a day in the senior center

where she lives provides daily structure and acts of service contribute to her mental, physical, and spiritual health.

A critical turning point in my very severe case of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/cfs), which left me homebound and bedridden for seven years, was surrendering to the concept of: “Thy Will Be Done.” However, since doctors did not consider me disabled, let alone terminal, I paid out-of-pocket for weekly acupuncture as a form of hospice in 2018. At that time, I could no longer swallow, eat, drink, or sleep, and was in extreme pain. Miraculously, after six weeks, I was able to get up and dance next to my bed. I continued weekly acupuncture for eighteen months until an Arizona acupuncturist gave me a Native anti-viral tincture that kills all pathogens.

My pathogens included Epstein-Barr Virus and Atypical Polio, both of which had reactivated and were “off the charts.” ME/cfs and long-haul Covid are often misdiagnosed and treated globally as clinical depression. At the time of surrender, I heard these words in French: “Calme toi. Je suis ici.” The next day, I found that BECALM was the name of a new acupuncture office, a five-minute, agonizing walk from my home. The healing experience and story are documented in *HOME ALONE 2020*, which captures everything that transpired before the Covid-19 pandemic: Document link and <https://www.aol.com/articles/70-people-near-death-experience-204901063.html>

Although *Zambian* born, I have a very small percentage of Native American DNA, which may explain why I responded so quickly to daily Native Lomatium. I could feel the pathogens dying over six months, as confirmed by laboratory tests before, during, and after taking the tincture. This resulted in an enormous emotional release, as though my trapped body and spirit were soaring free. Lomatium was successful against the Spanish flu in 1918 and was laboratory-tested in 2019 by Dr. Chia, an Asian American infectious disease specialist. Chia confirmed that it kills all pathogens.

A 2025 ME/cfs patient shared this testimonial with me: “I’m feeling normal for the first time in over 40 years! Hard to be 100% sure on the ‘cocktail’ but it seems like Lomatium and acupuncture kicked it off the most. I bought a huge bottle of **Lomatium** and will probably take it daily for life. A Barlow’s employee there said he’s taken it every day since birth!” (PW) www.barlowherbal.com. Weekly acupuncture generated enough energy to keep me alive until I found Lomatium. Specific needle placements trigger angelic-like electricity. However, I also healed through spontaneous trance dancing to music (using headphones). Later I learned that these practices are used by shamans and angels, respectively, for healing. My paper *How Do Healers Heal?* touches on such mysteries: Document link.

After Covid-19, it was discovered that Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV) sometimes reactivates, and in combination with latent or reactivated Covid it may trigger long-haul Covid, similar to ME/cfs. There has also been a significant increase in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD/ADD), which may initially be triggered by a virus such as Herpes Simplex 1. This virus travels rapidly from the mouth to the nose and brain, much like ubiquitous EBV. Without vaccines, both viruses can be transmitted via the placenta from mother to child. Kissing is a common form of transmission, along with genetic vulnerability for example MethyleneTetraHydroFolate Reductase (MTHFR) mutations.

My genetically similar cousin's ADD was diagnosed in her thirties. She had marked her which indicated an overlap and they overlap at **41.67%** with comprehensive ME/cfs symptoms. Many doctors misdiagnose such conditions as mental illness or even hypochondria (soul flight or possession, according to shamans, curanderas, sangomas). Traditional Chinese Medicine identifies them as reactivated viral (or mixed pathogen) overloads that can be contained by acupuncture, which reactivates energy/qi (pronounced chi). Actual healing only happens after taking specific herbs such as **Xue-Fu-Zhu-Yu-Tang**, which was prescribed and effective in my case, but immediately debunked as impossible and stopped by my western doctors.

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APPENDIX 2. ME/CFS Symptom Prevalence and Severity

(These prevalence and severity figures are from A definition-based analysis of symptoms in a large cohort of patients with chronic fatigue syndrome, P. De Becker, N. McGregor, and K. De Meirleir. *Journal of Internal Medicine* 2001;250:234-240.) A total of 2,073 consecutive patients with major complaints of prolonged fatigue were assessed. Among them 1,578 met the Fukuda criteria and of those, 951 met the Holmes criteria. The figures indicate the differences in prevalence and severity of symptoms between these patient groups.

SYMPTOM	PREVALENCE (%)		SEVERITY (range 0-3)	
	HOLMES	FUKUDA	HOLMES	FUKUDA
Fatigue	100	100	2.8	2.8
Post-exertional malaise	98.8	97.3	2.8	2.7
Attention deficit	95.9	93.0	2.4	2.2
Sleep disturbance	94.8	91.9	2.5	2.4
Headache	92.0	87.8	2.3	2.1
Myalgia	90.1	87.1	2.4	2.3
Memory disturbance	89.3	85.6	2.2	2.0
Muscle weakness	88.3	84.3	2.3	2.1
Gastrointestinal disturbance	85.6	81.8	2.2	2.0
Sore throat	84.1	74.1	2.1	1.9
Exertional dyspnea	83.5	79.2	2.2	2.0
Recurrent flu-like symptoms	80.9	69.7	2.1	1.7
Difficulty with words	80.4	75.5	1.9	1.7
Personality change	77.2	74.4	1.2	1.1
Cold hands and feet	77.2	72.2	2.0	1.8
Arthralgia	77.1	73.3	2.0	1.9
Photophobia	75.8	70.7	1.8	1.6
Difficulty with calculations	75.1	71.6	1.7	1.6
Light headedness	74.6	69.6	1.7	1.6
Visual acuity	74.2	70.9	1.7	1.6
Dysequilibrium	73.7	69.1	1.5	1.4
Hot flushes	72.6	64.8	1.9	1.7
Numbness/parathesia	69.1	66.4	1.6	1.5
Swollen/tender lymph nodes	67.9	57.7	1.6	1.3
Spatial dysfunction	64.5	59.9	1.4	1.2
Muscle fasciculations	64.1	58.5	1.5	1.4
Alcohol intolerance	63.7	59.5	1.7	1.5
Symptom exacerbation in extremes of temperature	58.7	53.9	1.5	1.4
New sensitivities to food/drugs	54.8	48.5	1.3	1.2
Urinary frequency	53.9	47.9	1.3	1.2
Tinnitus	52.1	48.5	1.0	0.9
Diarrhea	45.6	40.8	1.2	1.1
Rashes	45.3	40.0	1.0	0.9
Altered taste, hearing, or smell	42.4	38.0	0.9	0.8
Persistent cough	39.2	35.2	0.8	0.7
Speech difficulties	36.2	31.8	0.7	0.6

7.2 From the Black Ant to the Fulani Healer

Dr. J. Agai: Even when an individual feels healthy, there is always an encouragement from health workers and African Shamans on the need to visit the Doctor, and in most cases a medical doctor. In recent years, traditional healers in Africa like the Iyanga, Sangoma, Babalawo, Boka and others have filed suit for them to be addressed as doctors. In Africa, traditional healers are also called Doctors especially the traditional healers that live in city areas. Those that live in the rural areas are not concerned about how they are being addressed. But for an individual to stay healthy, he or she needs to regularly visit the doctor. Sadly, for most Africans including myself, we only want to visit a doctor when there is an immediate problem in our lives and only when it pertains to our health. During my stay within the ghettos of Africa, I had no reason to visit a doctor unless I confirmed that I was sick. Myself and others regarded visiting a doctor when one is not certain about our sickness as a waste of

money. In 2001, I had an unusual experience after being bitten by a black ant.

The Black Ant

I was a serious student studying for a bachelor of science in Mathematics at the University of Jos when in June 2001 I had a bite from a black ant. As usual, my mattress was kept on the floor and while sleeping with my lights on, I stretched one of my hands onto the floor. I did this so that I would not sleep fully and forget that I needed to study. This was my daily routine, to wake up every night from 11pm and study until 4am. I was trying to be the best student in my class so I had to pay the price by studying hard. Keeping lights on normally helped me to wake up on time. While one of my arms was on the floor, something bit me. I woke up immediately because of the pain which was intense, and on opening my eyes, I saw a tiny black ant trying to escape. The light was visibly on and I could see the ant vividly on the wide space left on the floor. I stretched forth my hand to kill the ant and I followed its movement. I reached my hand out to press it to death as that was how we normally killed tiny insects. To my greatest surprise, the ant disappeared. It never went under my mattress neither did it enter any hole in the room. The ant literally disappeared. I was shocked because I had never seen anything like that.

I kept wondering in the middle of the night where the ant actually went. I couldn't sleep again because of the pain that never stopped. I grew up in the village of Kurra Falls in Barkin Ladi Local government of Plateau state. My later father was a farmer and as children, we always played with ants and most times, the ants bit us. We never cared about the pain because we adapted to it and our immune systems became resistant to the pain of an ant-bite. But the very black ant I saw in my room that night was different. Different because the pain was intense and it never stopped. In the morning at about 6:30am, I saw my left arm swollen and the point bitten by the ant was visible. What shocked me the most was that the hind limb on my leg surrounding the tibia and fibula bone was highly swollen to the point that I could not stand nor walk. It was as big as the size of a huge tuber of yam. In the afternoon of that same day, it became bigger and when touched it was as soft as though a bucket of water was inside my leg. I had to call on my neighbors for help. I left school that same day for my family house located in Jenta Adamu street of Jos. I knew how my widowed mother suffered to raise money and pay for my school fees. It pained me most that I disappointed my mother by not staying in school even when classes were ongoing.

Everyone in the family was interested in my healing while I was more concerned about my studies. Instead of rushing me to the hospital, my mother decided to apply the usual methods of healing by warming water and using it to massage my leg. She did this a whole day and I was not healed. I was then taken to a hospital and diagnosed. Some tablets and injections were given to me and I kept going to the hospital for two weeks. I was not healed and my leg stayed swollen. The pain was great. We went to another hospital in Jos called OLA hospital and they gave me some injections in addition to some drugs. After another week, I was not healed. Everyone began to associate my sickness as spiritual. They thought that there was no way I could get any healing from the hospital. I believed in this assertion and concluded that my sickness was a spiritual attack. I never told my mother that everything started after the black ant. If

I had told her, she would long ago have concluded that the ant was a demon sent to destroy me.

I was a committed Christian thinking that there was no any way I could be attacked by a demon or the devil. I was so Pentecostal to the point that I believed that my faith in God would not let me down by allowing a demon to attack me so I never believed what my mother believed. I suffered this pain for six months because I refused to be taken to a spiritual healer. Many people suggested that I consult a spiritual healer but I refused. I felt it was a sin for me to seek help from a spiritual healer. I grew up with an understanding that spiritual healers like Iyanga or Sangoma or Buka all have connection with demons and that their healing power originates from demons. Being a Christian role model to many youths in my community, I did not want to disappoint them by allowing myself to be taken to a spiritual healer who cannot be associated with the church. I prayed to God to heal me, but it seemed my prayer was not answered because I had a belief that my healing must come only from a hospital or from the church.

It is important to note that during the early spread of Christianity in Nigeria around the 16th century AD, some of the missionaries from Europe discouraged the locals from the use of herbs and consultations with African spiritual healers describing such types of consultations as evil or sinful. On another note, the rise of evangelicalism and neo-Pentecostalism from America and Europe to Nigeria have contributed to another misinterpretation of the Bible according to which the use of herbs, consultation with African Shamans and seers are regarded as unbiblical. Some have preached that even going to the hospital was a sin. They taught that God has to heal anyone directly from the church or through pastors or prophets (cf. Agai, 2016:40-50)^[22]. This background might have influenced my thoughts on the need not to visit an African Shama. However, after so much pain and no sign of healing, my mother reminded me that she was told about a Fulani healer who lived in Barkin Ladi and she believed he had the power to help me.

The Fulani Healer

I quietly whispered to my mother that I accepted to go to the Fulani healer. I told her not to tell anyone in my community. It would be a disappointment if my other committed Christian friends heard that I visited a spiritual healer so everything had to be done in secret just like Nicodemus went to Christ at midnight to make important inquiries. We took a commercial bus from Jenta Adamu street to Terminus market and bought a second bus to Barkin Ladi. We arrived at 11am. The Fulani man welcomed us and treated us like special guests. He offered us a place to sit and gave us water to drink as a welcome sign. He inquired why we came and I showed my leg to him. He came closer, touched it and said "don't worry, you will be fine." My mother asked him, "please who is the person behind this pain my son is suffering?" He said, "mama don't worry, your son will be fine." He added, that "even if anyone is the cause of the pain, you don't have to worry about it." I looked into his eyes and watched his lips seemingly murmuring. Immediately, I knew someone was responsible for my pain and the black ant that I saw was not an ordinary ant. This could be why the ant had abilities to disappear when I searched for it to kill it. The Fulani man wanted to speak further about the cause of my ailment, but insisted that we should not worry about the person who caused it. To me it

meant the ailment was caused by someone or by some people.

He came back with a powdered green leaf. It was wrapped in a small polythene bag. He said when I got home, I should buy milk and mix it with the green powder and drink it three times a day. That meant, a spoon of green powder and a half-cup of milk. I believed in him because I felt like he knew something about my ailment. I was interested in what he would say. I was eager to hear him call someone's name as the cause of my sickness, but he refused. I later learned that good healers don't implicate other people in their business because they hate trouble and problems. He knew that if he gave me anybody's name, I might go after that person to fight for revenge.

I arrived home in the afternoon and did all that he asked. I took the first dose in the afternoon and the second dose at night. I slept and in the morning my leg and my arms were all healed. This was the shock of my life. I could walk again and stretched forth my arms. I took the third dose in the afternoon and decided to resume school the next day. It was really unbelievable. I was amazed and never knew that this was possible. I asked, "how can a man who does not believe in my God have the power to heal?" I kept thinking about it for some years and realized that God can use anyone and He can use anything to heal us when we get sick. Besides, the Fulani man only gave me herbs to drink. He never invoked any spirit to heal me; he just gave me herbs. The plants, the trees, the air, the mountains and rock we have and the people we see are all meant to help us and lead us to the next stage of life. All I saw was an ant, an injury and a Fulani man. The hospital failed me and my view is that, all healing comes from God and He can use anything and anyone to heal you. Though there are counterfeit and fake people parading themselves as spiritual healers or herbalists, I must confess that there are real and sincere herbalists that are called to heal and foresee the past and the future for those in need.

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