

Dreaming the Fifth World Awake:
Sacred Songs, Plants and Healing Ceremony
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When beginning this paper I knew I was starting down a rabbit hole that I would have a hard time being quick and to the point. There are many facets in which I want to keep unraveling and diving deeper, to allow for a more comprehensive look into the world of healing through sacred songs, plants and prayer. Being a ceremonialist, in which I believe every day is a new beginning and that each step I take is a prayer, I have chosen to open the door to a topic that encompasses my walking and waking life. In this paper I will begin to connect the dots between both North American and South American shamanic approaches to plant medicine, sacred songs, and the powerful effect they have on unlocking our infinite potential, by allowing us to start our journey home, in return, healing our minds, body and opening up to our eternal soul.

“It was in the beginning, before time was, when which the beautiful greatness of all of creative was looking for a place, a place in time, in the timelessness of all of forevers. And it was in this moment, before time was, there, they were all the potentialities, the potentialities of the most beautiful beings of light. And they were from the place, that place of the circle, that one great circle of light, the heart of all of the universes, the universe of the great being, of the being, of the mother of the first song, of the father of light. And it was out of this infinite void, this infinite void of the song of the mother father, for the mother contained all of the potential possibilities, and the father was her light, and when it was time the mother released them, released them to the father and the father took them and made them into billions and billions of lights, for they were to be the eyes, the eyes of the great circle.

And so it was at the time, that came, to become, and they descended out of the moment of the pure void of the mother’s heart. They came. First one, then twos, then threes, then fours, then so many many lights out of this beautiful dark clarity, they came down into the vastness, the vastness of the soul for they would find their home where they would come to play with the mother, for mother earth is calling.

And the father was there and began to teach them of the ways of the potential possibilities inside of the continuum of timelessness, and so it was from the very very first beginning, time now could walk, for time was now created from the great spirit, of the mother father principle, because she knew and he knew for a while they would need to be in the music of time.

And time became the action of doing, and they said they understood that work was worship, and they were given beautiful forms, and

some were two legged, some where four leggeds, and some were winged and some where the beings that would crawl on the earth or would swim in the seas and the oceans and the rivers. For out of that potentiality, out of that very very first song came all of the multitudes into the timelessness of the moment, and because they would have to live in the moment they were given faces. They were given beautiful faces that they might be able to enter into those moments. For inside of those moments they would know that the mother earth was calling.

And they knew about crystallization, they knew that in that crystallized light they would find the beauty of the one great star that created the very very first beginning of their relationship to the father mother, to the great being to the great spirit of all creations.

And as they began to travel on their return home, they understood the mysticism, they understood that from that very very first cloud that was before time was, was the mystery and that the mystery was the force that would carry them back home, that mother earth was calling.

And on the journey as they took, the different paths of light, they saw the beauty of a flowering forever, they became to know that they were the songs of many songs, of many traditions of many places, of forms and eternity. For they understood that they were music made for time, for this time, for all times. And they knew that they would find themselves in the eternal now. And the great gift of the journey home was to hear the calling song, the gift of the mother, for mother earth is calling.

And through all of the sunlight days and the moonlight nights they would dream themselves into the capacity of visionaries, for they came from the great circle, of the very very first great circle, the circle that gave them capacity to see, and they knew that only through their visions and their dreams would they live, for they knew that they were eternal begins, they were the beings of all eternity and they knew that they came from love. And to find their destiny they would sing the beings of inspiration. For they new they came out of inspiration and only through inspiration could they find their way home. And through the many doorways, moment by moment as they passed through them and so they knew, the new was truth.

And so it was.

Because they understood they were made of principle ideas that governed the cosmos, and they had made many different ceremonies because they had fallen in love. They had fallen in love with the principle of inspiration, the breath, of light of the first great circle. And out of this night into the day time, they walked. Mother earth is calling.

Today they no longer look back, they know their way, for they were made of ideas, they were made of song, they were made of light. They know that they came for the most beautiful one, the mother father, and they also know the mother father walks with them, and

sometimes the mother father sleeps with them, dreams with them, talks with them. It is the destiny to listen, for mother earth is calling.

And now they know they are from the north and from the south and from the east and west, and from the up above and from the down below and they know they are the descendants of that very first vision, the vision from that very first visionary. For after he had created them, he went into a dream and today he lies there as the first mother, as the first father and he lies there and he dreams. And all of their children, they have become their eyes and the children see for the one first dreamers.

And so it is. From the very very first song that contained the total potentiality, today lives. It lives in the ocean, it lives in the highest mountain or in the smallest one, it is in the smile of little children, or at the moment of birth of a little baby child. This potential lives among the rock people, among the grasses, among the land and in the hearts of all, the essences of the first beautiful dream that created the first beautiful vision, and they know there is no other place then the eternal now, and that song is playing them awake, the dream of the very first dream, mother earth is calling.

And so it is, the people are the vibration of the first dream.”

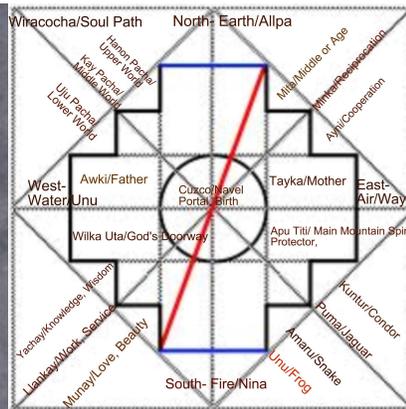
- Beautiful Painted Arrow, Joseph Rael Mother Earth Is Calling

Mother Earth is calling. She is calling us to return home, to remember our hearts song. To re-awaken to our infinite potentials by reminding us of our vast omnipresence, that we are connected to all things. The time is now, more than ever, for consciousness to remember this intrinsic connection to our planet and all of her inhabitants. We live in a vast universe of sound, music and light. All that exists around us is an arrangement of atoms, ions and molecules vibrating at a unique and particular frequency. All we need to do is to listen with an open heart.

In many of the North American traditions they speak of walking the *red road*. This is the road between spirit, the heart and our connection to the great mother. On the medicine wheel this connects to the north and the south, as well as to above and below, as within, so without. They also speak of the black road. That is our the road of our everyday existence, our logical thinking. This is west and east. Another way to look at it is the rising and setting of the sun, or the cycle of our day to day. One can also view this as an opportunity of transformation. When we lay this idea on the human body, if you were to draw a line from the top of the head down to the bottom of the feet that would represent, north and south, or the

red road, spirit and earth. Then make another line from right hand to left hand, east to west, black road, coming and goings. At the center you find the heart.

In South America, this concept can be explored through the Chakana, otherwise known as *The Cross of the Andes*, or the *Inka Cross*. The Chakana has many interpretations. The root of the word chaka, in Quechua, means “bridge. The best translation can be summarized to mean, “acting as a bridge,” the connection between heaven and earth. It is sometimes said it represents the Southern Cross, the primary constellation in the Southern Hemisphere, and the equivalent of Polaris, the North Star. The middle circle is sometimes seen as mother earth. The three step sides represent the three levels of consciousness or worlds, . The upper-world, Hanaq Pacha, associated with the condor, the middle world, Kay Pacha, connected to the puma, and the lower world, Uju Pacha, represented by the serpent. The Inca also connected this to the skills that characterize human behavior, the ability to love, munay, the ability to take action, yankay, and the ability to think or gain wisdom, yachay.



the four cardinal directions (South, West, East, North) acts as a transition point between the material and the spiritual. It is a time of life associated with it: a personal path to spirit. West is the path of self-discovery. North is the path where we dedicate ourselves to a life of service. South is the path of birth. In that vein, it also represents the masculine (vertical) and feminine (horizontal) which creates all existence.

When the horizontal and vertical planes of the stepped cross meet, a portal is opened: the open space at the center, which symbolizes the portal of our hearts where light and possibility pours forth.

These concepts are being brought up to show the connection between the heavens, the human, our heart and our connection to the great mother earth. In many native traditions of both the north and the south, we find that the basis of many of their teachings is living in right relations. This idea focuses on relationships as a whole. Relationships are represented by everything we come in contact with, be it our family members, our friends, our environments, the earth that we walk upon each day, the trees in our front yard, our garden,

everything we touch, see, smell, taste, talk to and about. We have a relationship with everything. When we come into contact with anything our five physical senses can grasp, we are forming a relationship.

In the same way that relationships are with everything around us, many native traditions have specific ceremonies that are celebrated around creating these bonds. Ceremony and rituals have long played a vital and essential role in native culture. Often referred to as “religion,” most natives do not consider their spirituality, ceremonies, and rituals as “religion.” Rather, their beliefs and practices form an integral and seamless part of their very being. Like many aboriginal peoples around the world, their beliefs were and are heavily influenced by their methods of acquiring food, both hunting and agriculture, as well as gathering plant medicines. They also embraced ceremonies and rituals that provided power to conquer the difficulties of life, as well as events and milestones, such as puberty, marriage, and death. Over the years, practices and ceremonies have changed with tribes needs.

Symbolic healing rituals and ceremonies are often held to bring participants into harmony with themselves, their tribe/community, and their environment. Ceremonies have been and are used to help groups of people return to balance and vary widely from tribe to tribe. Some use the teachings of the medicine wheel, some sing and dance for days at a time, some also use fasting, sometimes to obtain a vision from the spirit and dream worlds. Some traditions use many plants and herbs as remedies or in spiritual celebrations, creating a connection with the person, spirits and the afterlife. Some of these plants and herbs that are commonly used in spiritual rituals included Sage, Red Cedar, Sweetgrass, Tobacco, and many others. Many entheogenic teacher plants are also used, depending on the tradition, varying widely by tribe, community and situation. These plants allow one to tap into the divine within. They include plants such as ayahuasca, peyote, wachuma, marijuana and psilocybin mushrooms to name a few. There are many common plants around us that some consider toxic, yet when used in specific situations, doses, etc., can produce a huge healing effect.

The healing process in almost all North and South American native medicine work includes beliefs and practices that combine some form of religious beliefs, spirituality, herbal

plant medicines, song and rituals, that are used for both medical and emotional conditions. From the native perspective, medicine is more about healing the person than curing a disease. Traditional healers, medicine men and women, shaman, etc., work to make the individual “whole,” believing that most illnesses stem from spiritual problems, creating a disease within the body, and if not dealt with will eventually lead to disease.

In addition to herbal remedies, purifying and cleansing the body is also important and many tribes use sweat lodges for this purpose. In these darkened and heated enclosures, a sick individual might be given an herbal remedy, smoke or rub themselves with sacred plants, and the medicine man or women might use healing shamanic practices to drive away angry spirits and invoke the healing powers of others. Sometimes healing rituals might involve whole communities, where participants sing, dance, paint their bodies, sometimes use mind-altering substances to persuade the spirits to heal the sick person.

All native traditions view song as an integral part of their everyday lives. They are sung to welcome the sun and greet the day, to assure success in everyday activities, to lighten the burden of work, to build moral, to teach a task, to harvest food and plant medicines, to mourn a loved one, to celebrate a life, to help a baby fall asleep, etc.. Native songs consist of four interrelated elements: music, words, body movements and the belief of the singer. Music is the vehicle through which words are conveyed to an unseen power and it is essential that the words of prayer reach the positive creative forces in the world. Help from these forces can allow anyone to achieve anything.

Singing in many native cultures can be seen as a serious occupation for it use throughout almost all ceremonial practices. Rarely are they used for entertainment. Singers can take a lifetime to learn, for there is a great power and respect and wisdom that comes with training and knowledge. It is believed that there is a power of a great unknown force (some may view this as spirit or source) could be harnessed through words and used for both good and evil. This power can be dangerous to a person who is not wise, or does not know the tradition or meaning of the song. For each song can be considered a key, and not every door wants and or needs to be opened.

Long chants, songs and rituals are guarded by many elders, medicine men and women in communities. They are seen as the heart of spiritual beliefs of that community/tribe. It is

believed that publication, recording or misuse of songs and rituals risks unleashing the power of the words evoked.

Various kinds of songs exist in every tribe, though each culture seems to favor their own particular style. One main theme that runs through many of them is the capturing of songs in the dream state. It is considered that in dreams, spiritual powers speak to a person, allowing them contact with the sacred, source, etc.. Supernatural elements can be dealt with in the dream realm, providing guidance on how to deal with an illness or dis-ease. When these dream songs are shared with a person, most times the medicine man or women of the community, they become the property of that person and are to only be used by that person in particular situations. These songs tend to come after a life challenge or suffering situation. The songs can sometimes be considered a binding obligation and to be used at particular times or situations to help themselves or others in need. These songs are typically passed on as a legacy when the person is nearing crossing over, so that it may be used after they are gone. They can also be shared with others if they so choose.

In the North American Native tribes, especially the Chippewa, Sioux and northern Utes, they have acknowledged by saying that they “receive their songs in dreams.” The song can also be a gift from a bird, animal or plant which appears to the dreamer and thereafter is considered his supernatural aid. The words of these songs were often received in what was considered a “sacred language,” which consisted of common words used with an occult significance. Sometimes the medicine man will tell the story or context of the song prior to them singing, yet this is not always necessary.

Medicine men and women sometimes share their healing song with others, and include a regiment of healing herbs that must be used during the singing of said song. An example would be that a certain herb is used for the treatment of fractures, and when it is applied to the body, a particular song must be sung for the herbs to activate and help heal the person.

It is common in both the north and south, that when a medicine man or woman is going to gather herbs used for healing there are particular protocols that must be taken. They start with offering the spirits of both the land and sky, as well as the directions some kind of sacred offering. This can be tobacco, particular smudge smoke, or tokens that the tribe or lineage

deems acceptable. They also make sure to keep a clear mind during the entire gathering. This is known as keeping an intention. It is acknowledge that what the person going to gather the medicine and prepare the medicine know what their intention is. This done so that they can connect with the spirits of the plant and listen to what the plant may be open to sharing. This can be several things, how to work with the plant, a song or melody to be sung, or maybe even a time to pick the plant or not to work with said plant. The intention can also be the patient or ritual coming up. Whatever it may be it is best to be centered in oneself. It is also important to note that several different songs may be sung to honor the plant that is being gathered, the earth in which it grew, the water that gave it life, and so forth.

Once all the medicine is gathered, it is still prepared in a sacred way. The area that the medicine man or woman is working in is cleansed, and it is extremely important that the intention is still clear and set, for everything will go into the “medicine” being made. Once made, they can share this medicine with a person or in a ceremony/ritual. There are particular songs that will be sung to help activate this medicine. This may be for the medicine man/women to sing or for the patient or group to sing.

In South America, especially Peru, Icaros (or Ikaros) are the magical tunes or lyrics which may be sung, whispered or whistled by shamans (and sorcerers alike), to communicate with the spirit world. The word possibly derives from the Quechua verb Ikaray - ‘to blow smoke’ a technique used by shamans in their healing. Shamans use these melodies to magically charge a person, a plant, or virtually anything else, whether animated or unanimated, with a specific intent or purpose, to obtain or influence a desired outcome. They represent a special language intended to interact with the spirit world, including, but not limited to the plant spirit realms.

The traditional way by which shamanic healers in the Peruvian Amazon learn or receive directly from the spirits their icaros, is through a regimen of diet (la dieta). The shaman receives the tunes while they are asleep, dreaming, or in vision while journeying in the spirit world intoxicated by ayahuasca, other various plants, or during the plant diet. The shamanic diet imposes physical isolation in remote jungle areas away from people, and a strict celibacy and abstinence from certain foods (pork, chilli, spicy food, fats, meat from farmed animals, salt, sugar, most vegetables and fruits) too, as well as an avoidance of

alcohol, canned food, and chilled and fizzy drinks. The rigours of the traditional diet in fact only allow for certain river fishes, rice and green plantains (boiled or roasted) to be eaten, all unseasoned.

During the diet the shaman, as well as the apprentice shaman, ritually ingest different plantas maestras (teacher plants) and palos maestros (teacher trees) in the form of teas, made from the resin, leaves or scraped stem of plants and trees, and, or macerates (from the scraped bark or roots of trees), alternating this with the taking of ayahuasca. The choice of the plant teachers to diet with, as well as the interaction between the plants and trees of the diet with ayahuasca (which is usually taken on different days) will vary from shaman to shaman. This is because many shamans receive their instruction for how to proceed with the diet in vision from the plant spirits themselves. The diet is therefore the main method used by the shaman for learning, advancing and progressing in their knowledge of the plant spirit world, and receiving powers. Contrary to what is commonly believed, with the exception of ayahuasca and a few other plants such as one called toé, the plants of the diet do not usually have an intrinsic psychotropic, mind-altering effect. Visions occur by a synergetic interaction between the diet's setting and the plants of the diet, which are naturally complementary to each other.

This is the framework within which the shaman operates, and it is of paramount importance to be aware of this in order to understand the process of the diet and consequently that of the origin of the icaros.

Every plant teacher spirit may bestow, as a gift, an icaro to the person undergoing the shamanic diet, and this icaro becomes the communication link between that plant itself and the shaman. The icaro received is therefore the magical method with which the shaman may directly communicate with the spirit realm, and it may be used to invoke, summon and ask for help from the plant spirits themselves. This is why shamans in the Peruvian Amazon, when performing healing on a patient, call upon the spirit of their plant ally first; they do this to summon power, and then ask for the healing to take place. The longer the diet with a large variety of plant teachers, the more icaros a shaman may receive.

Icaros may also be passed on from master shaman to their students, and they can be sung in different native dialects and tongues, as well as in Spanish. They may also be passed on between maestros, as a gift, during ayahuasca ceremonies. However, icaros received directly during the shamanic diet and sung in native Indian tongue are believed to be much more effective and powerful than those sung in Spanish and learnt from a teacher. This is perhaps because some of the ancient magic formulae are lost in translation, or perhaps because of an intrinsic power embedded in native, indigenous tongues. There are some shamans who sing their magical songs in a mixture of different Indian dialects, to make themselves deliberately unintelligible to others as protection and defense from sorcerers or bad spirits

Icaros serve several different purposes. There are some used specifically for healing or love magic, while others are used in shamanic apprenticeship and initiations (dieta chamanica). Some are used specifically at the point of ending the shamanic diet (icaros por la quebra de dieta), others for spiritual purification (icaros de purificacion espiritual), to cleanse, bless and protect people (el canto de la arkana por la proteccion), to close a shamanic treatment (para finalizar un tratamiento), and there are even icaros to overcome the intoxication caused by ayahuasca (icaros para superar el censo de mareacion).

The shamans of the Peruvian Amazon also have a concept which they call the arkana. This is an invisible energetic protection, which may be given by stones, crystals, angels, rainbows, plant teachers, spirit allies of animals like the jaguar, the eagle, the condor, or other entities engaged by the shaman for a variety of purposes, especially during ayahuasca and healing ceremonies. The arkana is used by the shamans themselves, first of all for their own protection, then for the protection of the participants, both apprentices and patients, taking part in the ritual, in order for all to be shielded from potentially malevolent attacks from brujos (witches), competing shamans, or evil spirits. The arkana, like the icaros, is received during the shamanic diet. Each arkana is different and each ceremony has its own arkana. An arkana may be employed therapeutically through the chanting of an icaro.

Moreover, there are icaros to acknowledge and celebrate a successful treatment, in which the shaman declares 'he logrado' (I've achieved that), and even icaros specific to

invoke the spirit of the icaros themselves (el dios de los icaros). This icaros spirit is the spirit of the teacher plants who reward the shamans with their songs.

Shipibo-Conibo shamans normally sing two or three similar icaros in sequence when they see that their patient is very ill or feeling bad. They do that because when facing a deep-rooted condition, whether of a physical, emotional, mental or spiritual nature, they need more time to enact the healing, and so singing a number of icaros allows them to cleanse their patients a little at a time. These will be icaros that invoke the healing spirits specifically, and exclusively for a cleansing treatment, and not for any other purpose.

The icaros sung by the Shipibo-Conibo shamanic healers are very different from the icaros of shamans belonging to other ethnic groups, and are especially different from the mestizo (mixed race) healers. Shipibo icaros always bear the distinction of a changing of the voice or vocal pitch, often alternating between a strong, masculine tone and that of a more delicate, high-pitched, feminine like tone. This is known as the 'dual choir' singing style, and for the Shipibo shamans, it is a specific way to communicate with the feminine spirits. The spirits are not only invoked by singing this way, as, by through this vocal technique they are also able to directly enter the ceremony and communicate with the Shipibo shaman, by using the shaman's own voice. This dual choir style is one of the most important elements of distinction between Shipibo icaros on one side and all other icaros on the other. By listening to Shipibo icaros it is clearly evident how the shaman is engaged in an open conversation with their spirit helpers, including the ever present spirit of the ayahuasca vine, Nishi Ibo.

The shaman can lend their voice to the spirits of a feminine plant spirit teacher, or they may appear or may be summoned during a ceremony, and when this happens they are compelled to sing in the same fashion as this spirit. The shaman has to shapeshift into the spirit while it is transmitting its powers. It is important to understand that they do not deliberately sing icaros in dual choir fashion, and when they do it, they are not following a rational decision; for when the feminine spirits arrive or are summoned, they themselves sing with a very delicate, high-pitched voice, and the shaman needs to become one with them, singing with them in the same fashion to the summoned power. Aside from being an 'acoustic bridge' between the spirit world and the village world, it may also be said that the Shipibo shaman is an 'acoustic bridge' between the spirit world and the patient, as well as

acting as an 'acoustic bridge' between themselves and feminine and masculine spirit entities operating through them.

The setting where icaros may be appreciated in their full power and beauty is during an ayahuasca ceremony, when the melodies and tunes engaged by the shaman can literally drive the otherworldly journey of a participant along the precise pathways of a mapped visual and visionary landscape. This is especially true of Shipibo icaros, which may be seen in a visual way through the intricate luminescent designs (quené) of the Shipibo people themselves. These designs are reminiscent of phosphoric visions, and are deeply embedded with Shipibo cosmogonic and cosmological motifs, and they can be perceived in an acoustic, auditory way by people under the influence of the spirit world or held within the effects of ayahuasca.

The icaros, whether used for healing, cleansing, protection, love magic or doing harm have power. They are not just songs, they are magical tunes. More research is needed if we are going to unravel the mysterious relationship between icaros and the other important aspects of Amazonian shamanism, as all are inextricably linked with the Amazonian shaman, versed in communicating with the spirit world along precise, coded musical pathways conveyed in the Shipibo world, in musical designs.

I need more time to finish the conclusion. I am not traveling with a computer and have to borrow one when i can. more to come..

Medicine songs capture the powers of the supernatural and