

How The Shamanism Conference Got Started: Historical Notes

In September 1962, on the initiative of Rob Wikan of the Finland-Swedish University and the Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, forty scholars from four Nordic countries, as well as H. Dioszegi from Hungary, came together for a symposium on shamanism, held in Abo. Nine of the presentations were later edited and published by Edsman, 1967.

Nearly twenty years later, in September 1981, a symposium was organized by Mihaly Hoppal in Hungary, in cooperation with the Ethnographic Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (e.g., Basilov). The discussions focused on Eurasian shamanism. Most of the forty-two contributions were edited and published by Hoppal in 1983.

This symposium was followed, in the fall of 1981, by a colloquium on shamanism in Paris, (Nanterre) who had invited mainly French participants. In 1982, another symposium was held in Manchester, England, on "Shamanism among Lowland South American Indians," organized by Joanna Ofering Kaplan from the London School of Economics.

Hoppal then called again, in August 1983, scholars from Austria, Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Hungary, Great Britain, Italy, Poland, Sweden Switzerland, the USA, the USSR, and West Germany to participate in a three-day symposium on shamanism in conjunction with the XI International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, (ICAES) in Vancouver, B.C. (Canada). He organized a similar three-day symposium again in conjunction with the XII ICSEA in Zagreb (Yugoslavia) in July 1988.

At the 1983 symposium in Vancouver, participants expressed interest in continuing the discussions the following year in California. Therefore, the First International Conference on the Study of Shamanism was convened in San Rafael, California, on the Labor Day weekend in September 1984. The aim was to integrate recent studies on shamanism and stimulate further research. Participants came from Canada, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Peru, the Philippines, the United States, and West Germany. During the conference, participants went one step further and investigated contemporary forms of shamanism, which included "urban shamanism."

The need for a broader approach led to inviting 77 colleagues from Italy, Peru, Finland, the USA and West Germany representing the disciplines of anthropology, art history, art, education, history of religion, hypnotherapy, parapsychology, philosophy, psychiatry, psychology, psycho-neuro-immunology, and psychotherapy, to attend the Second International Conference on the Study of Shamanism the following year in fall 1985, again at the Santa Sabina Center in San Rafael, California. Theoreticians met with experientially oriented experts and gravitated toward the investigation of shamanic elements in the process of healing.

The Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth International Conferences in San Rafael (1986 - 1989) were then devoted to the study of shamanism and alternate modes of healing. The proceedings of these conferences, containing from thirty to forty contributions, as well as the transcripts of the discussions, are now available in print.

Notes from *Shamans of the Twentieth Century*, by Ruth- Inge Heinze, p. 144- 146.

On August 30 - September 1, 2008, the 25th Conference on Shamanism and Alternative Modes of Healing will convene at Santa Sabina Center in San Rafael. Forty presenters are expected to participate.

<http://www.ShamanismConference.org>