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A Comparison between the Hmong Shamanism and Nu'm Chai, the Healing Dance of Kung San

Shamanism is a way of communicating with the spiritual world in ancient tribes. In shamanism, drums assist the shaman depart at the start of the trip and arrive back in the ending. Rattles aid the bringing of the spirits.

Shamans must acknowledge the spirits at the start of the journey and cautiously inform them the answers they seek to find. Throughout the trip, the shaman must look for even the slight signs directing to the answers. The answers might not appear straight away, but they will appear at some point in time. Finally, the shaman is obliged to express gratitude to the spirits. They take trips to aid the sick. After shaman's trip to heal, they make an effort to rid an individual of evil spirits (Ryan 12).

Nu'm Chai which is the Kung San healing dance, is performed from dusk to dawn. Dancers etch their round path around the fire to the resonance of musical singing and clapping. During the singing and clapping, a number of the dancers keel over; yelling and try to dash into the fire but others hold them back. A number of the dancers may bleed from the nostrils while experiencing sharp bodily ache that prompt them to go into distinctive physical postures. Afterwards, several dancers scream out verbal abuse at the spirits of the departed who prowl in the shadows of the night (Ryan 15).

In both rituals, the shaman is the conventional healer selected by the spirits who diagnose and treat the illnesses. He does so by travelling both worlds and restoring a person's health. Secondly, there is an element of the shamans getting into a state of trance. They do so in order to cross between

the two worlds and communicate with the spirits (Ryan 16). Thirdly, the shamans have to get rid of the evil spirits and forces that cause the sickness and restore health. Fourthly, the shamans chant to get into the state of trance. The chanting forms a connection with the spirits as the shaman has to call them. Lastly, there is an element of music in both rituals. Hmong shamans have drumming which mark the beginning of the journey and rattles to help summon the spirits. In the Nu'm Chai, singing and clapping accompanies the dancing (Ryan 17).

The rituals provide the need of emotional connection between the spirit world and the humans. The humans believe the connection of well being and sickness to the spirits that have to be appeased. Secondly, both rituals provide a sense of community and belonging to which members can identify with. This is beneficial to members who receive health after sickness and improve both physical and mental health. Lastly, both provide the need of purpose and meaning to the lives of its members, which provides motivation to face life (Ryan 18).

In Kung San, certain natives have 'num,' a therapeutic potency or energy that is second-hand in curing once the shaman is in a daze. The harnessing of the potency aids in going into trance or healing. When in trance, some people cure the sick by drawing out the sickness, converting them into animals that travel to the other world of the dead and the spirits. A Hmong shaman can easily happen to be lost amid the dissimilar worlds; they frequently journey with the Tree of Life that is a plan of the worlds or a spirit guide, to guide and show them the way (Ryan 18)

Work Cited

Ryan, J. M. (2009). Shamanism. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6, 10-18.