

Questions for Healers, Yachaks and Parteras - Salasaka

About being a healer	Responses
6.1. What kinds of healers do you know about?	1) Those who cleanse mal aires; those who cleanse evils; those who treat or cleanse witchcraft. I have heard about these, but because they've never treated me I don't believe in them. 2) there are several kinds, they are not all the same. 3) NA 4) They are not all the same, they can be quite different.
6.2. Why did you become a healer?	1) I became a midwife because I gave birth to my children alone. 2) Through a 'spirit' appearing to him in a dream and telling him to work for her (of the wak'a Taita Punta Rumi) 3) The influence of a contact in Santo Domingo de los Colorados. 4) from a dream he had when he was a boy of 11/12 years sleeping on the hillside, he saw two white sheep passing by him [this is another 'classic' the while sheep would have been wak'as in pre-Colombian beliefs]
6.3. How did you become a healer?	1) Actually, nobody taught me, knowledge came by necessity. When I was young I listened to my ancestors who used to cut the placenta only with the sharp leaf of the sigsi (a type of plant). This is how I came up with the idea of cutting the placenta by about 35 centimeters. 2) NA 3) NA 4) After the dream, he was self-taught by his own spirit.
6.4. What is the origin of your powers?	1) My wisdom was born from the ancestral knowledge. 2) From apus/mountains such as Chimborazo or Kinlli Urku. 3) Faith in God 4) From God

6.5. Do you see other healers as if they were in competition with you?	<p>1) I know the yachak[s] and midwives of Salasaka, they are very independent and almost none of them shares their knowledge. I also know the midwives and yachak[s] of Otavalo, on the other hand, they support and teach with advice to try or acquire more knowledge.</p> <p>2) No, not really.</p> <p>3) Some of them.</p> <p>4) No.</p>
Comprehension/understanding of the causes of illness (diagnosis)	
7.1. How do you undertake a diagnosis?	<p>1) When someone comes looking for me I go and help them in their house. I have only helped my own children give birth in my house. In order to help the process of giving birth I usually keep (I have no knowledge) and begin to apply soaping waters of medicinal plants [She hasn't answered the question, but see 7.3 below]</p> <p>2) By using candles.</p> <p>3) With cuys.</p> <p>4) With cuys</p>
7.2. ¿ How do you 'see' the disease? (for example, the ability to see the nature of afflictions, as clearly as the mirror, or as if the body were open to the eye?)	<p>1) I always analyze the family situation of the pregnant woman. My conclusions about the illness come from of stress, worry and family and social problems of the person. [See 7.3 below].</p> <p>2) Sees in his mind the nature of the illness through the candles burning.</p> <p>3) NA</p> <p>4) NA</p>
7.3. Are there means employed, for example, such as candles, guinea pigs, egg yolks, special equipment such as stones or the use of plants that allow them to "see" a disease in a patient and its causes of illness?	<p>1) In order to see the seriousness of the problem / illness in the person I usually use egg yolks, candles and always accompanied by medicinal plants are prepared in infusion and naturally.</p> <p>2) repeats 7.2</p>
7.4. Are these intermediaries experienced or understood as spirits? (for example, as with the spirits of plants).	<p>1) I also always invoke the spirits of nature to give me wisdom in the healing process.</p> <p>2) The mountain spirits (apus(gave him the power.</p> <p>3) NA</p> <p>4) NA</p>
7.5. Can you direct and control good and bad forces?	<p>1) Yes. Yes I can control my power and my wisdom when I am doing the process of cleansing and healing, be in front of good and evil spirits. I can say that having control is that I am still alive, but a while ago I would have been in other worlds. [Puedo decir que teniendo control es que aún mantengo viva sino hace rato ya hubiese estado en otros mundos – rather 'enigmatic' statement?]</p>

	<p>2) Yes, it is possible.</p> <p>3) NA</p> <p>4) NA</p>
Healing	
8.1. What forms of healing and / or rituals do you use for diseases? (for example, magic herbs, tips / cigar, etc.	<p>1) I can treat malaire, espantos, frights, evils of any kind. I use herbs (medicinal and magical plants), eggs, candles, stones, puro (aguadiente) etc.</p> <p>2) Puntas, plants and stones with the power of the mountains. Also journeys with the whip to beat off bad spirits. Journeys at night in dreams, bad spirits, also good spirits that give you a good feeling; he feels called to journey, no other reason than this.</p> <p>3) Herbs, holy water and puntas.</p> <p>4) Herbs</p>
8.2. Are your rituals / therapies carried out by an assistant / spiritual guide?	<p>1) The cleansing process is one and the ritual process is another. The first is the use of medicinal plants with other elements (egg, puntas, candle, etc.). The ritual uses the invocation of the four elements (earth, air, water and fire) and incense, flowers, fruits, candles, grains, etc. are used instead [ie different from the cleansing process]. It's important to indicate that despite the criticism, I invoke the spirits of nature to help me with the wisdom for healing.</p> <p>2) He does it alone.</p> <p>3) Taita Inti (ie the sun, but he has also asserted elsewhere that only God has powers.)</p> <p>4) NA Likely to have been 'God' or his own spirit</p>
8.3. Do you have an altar or a 'mesa'?	<p>1) I have a small 'mesa'.</p> <p>2) Yes, it consists mainly of a collection of rounded stones and he also uses masks and a whip.</p> <p>3) He has a mesa with theirp 'atrmās' ie weapons/tools likely meaning ritual objects.</p> <p>4) Not a mesa, only the artifacts [stones and an axe]</p>
8.4. What special artifacts or equipment do you use for your healing rituals?	<p>1) Medicinal plants, egg; I have two ancestral stones, candle, putas, etc. And I do not use any modern equipment.</p> <p>2) Stones from the mountains, liquor, plants.</p> <p>3) Only with plants.</p> <p>4) Stones and an axe [from parents and grandparents]</p>
8.5. Do you use story telling for any part of this therapy?	<p>1) During the process I do use ancestral narratives with the intention of giving advice or as an example and / or comparison.</p> <p>2) Yes, sometimes. Only related to the therapy required.</p> <p>3) He tells stories about the hills and sacred places, or with reference to them.</p> <p>4) NA</p>

Respondents

(#) refers to the questionnaire number of the respondent

1. (# 31) Female. She is both a partera and a yachak
2. (#21) Male yachak
3. (#9) Male yachak
4. (#23) Male yachak. Comes from a line of yachaks, his grandfather and father before him. He was auto initiated via a 'classic' dream, after which he felt he had a calling to be a healer. He only went to school for 6 months aged 5/6, but seems to read and write. He is self-taught via his spirit, which he does not experience in any exogenous manner, but experiences it as being a part of himself. His own inquiry and insight taught him how to be a healer. He has no formal faith of any kind, does not believe in the power of saints or images, not does he believe in witchcraft, ill wishing etc. He does not believe in evil spirits, but seems to have some belief in spirits (see answers). He seems to have some belief in wa'ka-like spirits as with his belief in the power of springs; also his mountain. He believes that all comes from one God, of which we are all a part.
5. (#13) Female partera (midwife). Not included in the table as she answered very few of the questions in a way that could be interpreted. She became a midwife as her mother was a midwife. She uses physical diagnosis and management/manipulation of the fetus and the mother. She employs the faja – a textile belt applied loosely to the lower abdomen before delivery and more tightly afterwards, which keeps the uterus in places and prevents prolapse. It was clear that she had little understanding of any of the 'spiritual' concepts underpinning traditional healing, although she offers a ritual to Cruz Pamba (geographical feature behind the cemetery) before assisting in a delivery. She prays, she doesn't give an offering.