

### **Explain the part of Totem and Shaman in primal religion**

All of today's world's major religions that exist today have their roots in our ancestor's primal religions. Primal religions date back to 50,000 BCE. The term religion has evolved overtime. In our ancestor's time it referred to the way in which ancient societies attached meaning to key moments in their lives. There are 3 similar characteristics that define a primal religion. All of them express the idea that there is a transcendent supernatural world that encompasses every aspect of life, all do not distinguish the secular from the sacred and all are based on oral rather than written sources or traditions. Each has their own myths, folks and legends. An example of primal religion are the Maori people of New Zealand. They erected religious structures and expressed religious practices which still have an effect on our modern world religions. The Maori people believed Gods manifested themselves in some lakes, rivers and oceans. This is not unlike Hinduism today whereby followers highlight the significance of respecting the creations of the transcendent as humans do not control the world but instead form a part of it.

Totem originated from the Algonkian word 'Dodem' meaning 'that person is a relative of mine'. Primal religions selected a significant plant or animal such as a bird that symbolised an individual or tribe in a way which connected them to their descendants. Totemism refers to the familial relation of humans and nature. There were often restrictions on whether the chosen totem could be killed, eaten or touched. The Native American Cherokee clan are one primal religion that used these. The descendants of this clan that exist today frown upon the modern misconceptions of the word. Some people in the world today choose an animal or plant which has some significant importance in their lives and call this a totem. However, the Cherokee clan claim commercialisation of the world results in the loss of the objects spiritual essence and meaning.

The Shaman nearly exists in all primal religions and still has a significant role in the world today. Shaman usually refers to an individual that has undergone intense period of fasting and prayer.

As a result, the Shaman has a good relationship with the spiritual world with due to the hard-work and training endured by the individual. The supernatural world is accessed by the Shaman by entering into a trance by becoming possessed by supernatural beings when is such a state. Once in this trance they could act as a mediator between the natural and supernatural world. Therefore this allowed them to receive supernatural guidance and are said to be able to interpret dreams and have prophecies. Some people would also asked them to bless their harvest or if a person was going on a long journey they would ask them to pray for their safety. The spirits guided the Shaman on what medicine the person seeking aid would need to cure their physical or mental illness. There are also claims that they could control the weather, divination and astral projection. In the Native American creation myth the Shaman places an important role. He places the sun in the sky in a way that a clear path is formed for humans to live on earth. The Shaman played a vital role in primal religions and still exist within some cultures in the world today such as the Native American clans that have survived in American up until this day.

Totem, Shaman, Mana and Tabu are all concepts associated with primal religions. I have explained in my essay the concept of totemism and shamanism. Both of these concepts still exist in today's world in one form or another and in the western culture, often have a materialistic element to them that distorts the original and true meaning.