

The Concept of Medicine: An Approximation As Exemplified by the Apsaalooke (Crow)

Focus on Crow *baaxpee* (spiritual power) and *xapaalia* (tangible representation of medicine), with correspondence to Coeur d'Alene *suumesh*, Nez Perce *weyekin*, Eskimo *sila*, Algonquian *manitou*, Lakota *wakan*. (Story e.g., "bar fight and two bullets" and "John's Snake")

Context: *ashammaleaxia* and *dasshussuuu*

1. ***Akbaatatdia*** (The One Who Makes Everything). Medicine is ultimately derived from the Maker; Maker is recipient of one's prayers and vows; Maker is the ultimate source of vision and cure, of transformative power of life. Varied images: *Akbaatatdia* "The One Who Makes Everything," *Ichihkbaaleish* "First Doer," *Baakukule* "One Above," *Isaahka* "Old Man," *Isaahkawuattee* "Old Man Coyote." Is not anthropomorphic nor monotheistic, and does not project a morality, does not seek supremacy over nor retribution for transgression. Is diffused and pervasive, omnipresent, within all phenomena--landscape, animal, bird, plant, human, and rock.

2. ***Iilapxe*** (medicine father). While derived from Maker, mediated through Medicine Father. Not so much distinct from Maker, as extension--arms, legs, ears, voice and eyes--linkage, channel to Maker. Pray through Medicine Father, (story e.g., "young man's visit from Eagle, Meadowlark, Elk"). Expressed as Eagle, Elk, Buffalo, Snake, Meadowlark, Otter, Mole, etc. Parallelism: the quality associated with the natural phenomena expressed in the particular character/abilities of the medicine--(story e.g., "Mole earth for internal bleeding," "Squirrel for food," Eagle for strength"). Extensions: *Awakkule* "Little People," (story, e.g., "visit to John's home"). Instructs recipient in proper care for medicine and sets "taboos of respect," (story, e.g., "handgame and right to guess"). And never to use *aannutche*, "to take by the arm," "bad medicine," "to curse someone," (story, e.g., "fancy dancer 'shot'"). "It will come back to you."

3. ***Baaxpee*** (spiritual power). While medicine can involve a physical agent or property, it always entails a transcendent power. (story, e.g., "brew," and "gift of the eagle feathers") Efficacy in spiritual power, not physical attributes.

4. ***Baalialia*** (to doctor). Medicine alters peoples' lives, (story, e.g., "nurse's guilt and Sun Dance," "Vietnam bundle"). It is understood as a real and true power, not imaginary, not psychologically based, not based in belief (story, e.g., "woman at Sun Dance"). Pervasively applied: control weather, clairvoyance, control animals, love medicine, war medicine, contests and gambling, and healing ceremonies--e.g., Lakota Yuwipi, Navajo chantways, Crow bundle opening.