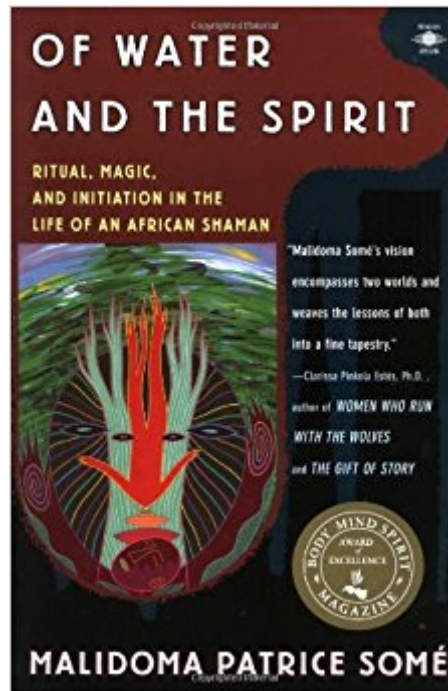


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# Of Water And The Spirit: Ritual, Magic And Initiation In The Life Of An African Shaman (Compass)



## Synopsis

Malidoma Patrice Some was born in a Dagara Village, however he was soon to be abducted to a Jesuit school, where he remained for the next fifteen years, being harshly indoctrinated into European ways of thought and worship. The story tells of his return to his people, his hard initiation back into those people, which lead to his desire to convey their knowledge to the world. *Of Water and the Spirit* is the result of that desire; it is a sharing of living African traditions, offered in compassion for those struggling with our contemporary crisis of the spirit.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Things Malidoma experienced as a young boy around the time of his grandfather's death and subsequent funeral make Carlos Castañeda's and Lynn Andrews' 'accounts' seem rather sanitized, maybe even contrived (especially evident in the case of Andrews). Plus the man is far more of a poet, a seer and a deep philosophical thinker than these others. You'll not find a better writer on matters mystical and religious probably anywhere, at least not in the 'confessional/autobiographical' literature. Then again, herein are so many quotable passages that you could meditate on to form the beginnings of a new personal philosophy, it's really quite stunning. And it all seems like it equally extends from your own body and heart. This is in contradistinction, say, to a well-written but rather dry and compartmentalized account such as J. S. Danquah's 'The Akan Doctrine of God', which is more meant for those who enjoy the scholarly treatise, but might never wish to imagine themselves venturing into village life. Malidoma was

kidnapped by the local priest a couple of days after his father was installed as clan leader, soon after his grandfather's death. He was only 4 years old. He does not pull any punches in detailing the horrible physical and emotional abuse he suffered at the hands of these churchly personages, who made him and other young kidnapes and orphans total slaves to their colonialist/catechumenical education system. After over 16 years of this, the young man escaped and managed to walk back to his village over a hundred miles away. The remainder of the book is a very detailed and intense re-telling of selected experiences he was party to during his subsequent clan initiation. This constitutes the last 100 pages or so of the book.

In the recent years there has been a surge of interest in indigenous tribal life and practices, as Western peoples start to feel the stirrings of their own indigenous tribal souls and go looking for answers to those who still possess the connection with the Land and the Spirit. While a lot has been published about Native American (both North and South), Tibetan, Altaic, Celtic etc. tribal life, rather little is known about Africa. Malidoma Some's book therefore provides a welcome and highly inspiring contribution. With this book Malidoma ('Be Friends With the Enemy') creates a bridge into a world where a person's life is linked inextricably to the breathing of his village and where his destiny interlocks with that of his ancestors, his children and the rhythms of nature. It is a world imbued with meaning; the Dagara share it with tree and animal spirits, with supernatural entities (the kontomble, the "star people") and with ancestors who provide guidance and support. Malidoma also addresses topics of universal importance to all of us. What is a complete human being? Why does one need to be "initiated" into living in order to be "real"? How do we awaken and use all the resources stored in the "inner museum of our being"; what is the role of mystery and awe in the unfolding of our destinies and how does one learn to become available to them? The book is written along the lines of ancient storytelling, and in a flowing delicate prose which radiates human warmth and respect for life. MS does a great job in depicting the Dagara as a spiritually aware people still attuned to their roots and their land.

Malidoma's life alone was a mini-representation of our entire experience as Afro-americans. He was kidnapped as a child from his Dagara village and raised in a Christian missionary school. His own father was somewhat responsible for his kidnapping, because against the will of the elders, his father became friends with a Christian pastor and allowed him into the village (sound familiar?). One day, the pastor came and grabbed Malidoma without a word and took him to the missionary school (he was stolen, but he had access to the village...who's to blame? Sounds like the current debate :).

Malidoma was subjected to all types of abuse as he was forced to think as a European. There were European AND African teachers taking part in the brain-washing (sound familiar?). He was put into quarters with African boys from all over...many didn't even speak his native tongue (sound familiar?). As he and his new friends became older...they started to become more aware of their situation and the oppression. They remembered the pain and suffering of the past and became rebellious. Although they had a small union, most of the other boys were too afraid to fight and some were even convinced that the Euro-education they received although through force, was a blessing that placed them above their "inferior" past (!). One day Malidoma struck out against a priest during class and ran away from the mission. He managed to walk nearly 300 miles back to his village that he wasn't even sure existed anymore. It was a long and HARD journey (!) and he finally arrived...only to realize just how "white" he had become (!). He was no longer a Dagaran...BUT fortunately his elders decided to give him a chance.

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