

Renouncing Shamanistic Practice: The Conflict of Individual and Culture Experienced by a Mapuche Machi

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This article analyzes the conflict between traditional beliefs, cultural roles, and the search for individuality through the study of Fresia, a young Mapuche woman who renounced shamanistic practice. Her case demonstrates that the social transmission of traditional beliefs and symbols is not in itself enough to ensure the commitment of shaman/healers who must also internalize their cultural beliefs and attach personal meaning to them through their dreams, visions, and ritual practices. If this does not occur, as in Fresia's case, individuality emerges and may contradict ideal cultural representations even in contexts such as that of the Mapuche where the concept of the person is inextricably bound up with one's role in the social system. Copyright © 1995, Wiley Blackwell. All rights reserved