

*About the West African
cosmology of the five elements
in the tradition of the Dagara*

Translated from German into English by Manfred Weule from:

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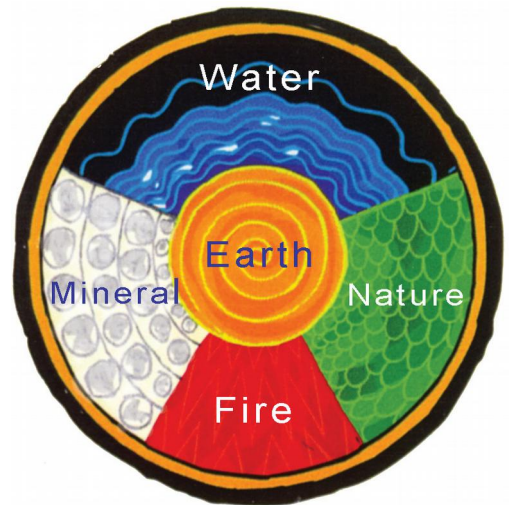
(Manfred Weule, Ancestral soil of Harz mountains
Re-rooting with desire, Mother Africa and obstinacy)

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In our Western culture, theory¹ often has the reputation of being a grey, practical and unrealistic concept or even just a decoration that is woven into written work in the form of text set pieces downloaded from a search engine. However, the practicality of a theory lies in how suitable it is as a tool for your own research and theorising.² Take a look at the 5-element wheel, dear readers. If something in it attracts you, start playing with it and trying it out.³

It is a "nautical chart" of 5 or 2x5 different perspectives, points of view or constructions of reality, described from the point of view of a European fire man.

Over the last 15 years we have learnt in many rituals, wilderness experiences, consultations and oracle consultations: it is a practical as well as profound model to explore how the small, the living environment and the big and invisible interact and develop ritual actions that can dissolve congestion and heal wounds. Is it a universal theory that explains everything? Not at all. But it is a map for ways of researching and navigating in the borderland between our everyday material world, whose simple interactions can be satisfactorily described and experimentally repeated by everyday thinking and science, at least in the "green area" of normality, and the great unknown - the spirit - whose interactions are completely or partially closed to our understanding and language, but are nonetheless real.



The West African medicine wheel of the five elements ⁴

The Dagara in West Africa describe the creation of the world (and their world model of the wheel of the five elements) as follows: in the place of today's earth, a glowing hot ball of fire once rotated and consumed itself. This is why fire is the first element of the Dagara wheel. When this moving and burning ball collided with an enormous mass of water, everything changed. Water be-

1 Theory means in ancient Greek: to look at or watch; spectacle, pageant; scientific observation. In other words, a very sensual and solid basic meaning.

2 What is real or unreal? What is right or wrong, believable or unbelievable? Ultimately, everyone who makes statements about reality has made a decision in favour of one of the following two questions, which are in principle undecidable. These two questions are: "Am I separate from the universe? That is, whenever I look, I am looking through a keyhole at the unfolding universe." Or: "Am I part of the universe? This means that whenever I act, I change myself and the universe changes with me." This decision is not conscious. What is an essentially undecidable question? For example, the question of the origin of the universe, because nobody was there to observe it. This is also clear from the fact that there are many different answers to this question.

Questions of the type "Is the number 3,396,714 divisible by two?" are decidable. Are we under the compulsion of having to decide? No, says Heinz von Foerster. We are free! "We have the choice of who we want to become when we have decided on fundamentally undecidable questions." With this freedom of choice, we have also taken responsibility for each of our decisions. For some, this freedom of choice is a godsend. For others, such responsibility is an unbearable burden. So says the physicist and cyberneticist Heinz von Foerster in: *Ethik und Kybernetik 2. Ordnung (Ethics and Second-Order Cybernetics)*, p.75

3 "There is nothing more practical than a good theory". This sentence was coined by Kurt Lewin, the "father" of group dynamics who was expelled from Austria to the USA.

4 This chapter is based on conversations with Malidoma Patrice Somé about the teachings of his mentor, the elder and shaman Guisso. Malidoma Somé Ph.D. (1956-2022) lived in the USA and Burkina Faso, was a literary scholar, shaman and one of the elders of the Dagara. - This traditional tribal culture was split into three colonies by the colonial powers France and England at the end of the 19th century: Ghana (English), Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) and Ivory Coast (French). - Another source is my own practice as a counsellor, ritual facilitator and practitioner of West African cowrie shell divination. In Malidoma Somé's book "The Wisdom of Africa" there is a detailed description of this cosmology and the ritual practice based on it from the perspective of an African water man.

comes the second element in the cosmological wheel. The shock from the collision of fire and water slowed down the combustion process and pushed the fire into the underworld. The surface remained a hot, steaming place, a fertile womb for many forms of life. This surface is the earth, the third elemental principle of the cosmological wheel. The hard components of the earth - stone, mineral or metal - gave it structure and cohesion. Mineral is the fourth element in the wheel. "Meanwhile, dense vapour formed the atmosphere around the earth. As it expanded, its pressure decreased. The reduction in air pressure led to the birth of life" and the fifth element, animate nature, came into existence.⁵

A cosmology of five human gifts

Everything created is a manifestation of spirit in the form of the five elements, on a small, medium and large scale. Their forces also manifest themselves⁶ in the various phases of time cycles. All five elements can be found in a living being, but depending on the quality of its birth time, one of them is dominant. One possible key for assigning a person's dominant element to the quality of the time of birth is the last digit of the year of birth. I was born in 1947 and therefore fire is my dominant element. It denotes a person's special gift. Numbers are just as concentrated an expression of the elements as the major cardinal points and seasons. "Each element carries a power and numbers protect these powers," say Dagara elders. They also use the image that a number "keeps the gate open" for its element.

Fire: Two and seven carry the power of dream and vision. The fires of feelings and Eros burn. The sunrise in the east and the new sprouting in spring correspond to this. We, too, can experience that other inner voices are heard at the fire than usual. This is what the ancient peoples mean when they say "fire is the first shaman".

Water: One and six carry connection, flow, alignment, reconciliation and healing. We are spontaneously drawn to the sea to breathe deeply and relax. There, the sky and the water world meet on the horizon like day and night. In the west, the sun also sets and the night of dreamtime begins. Similarly, in autumn the fruit falls to the ground and old things die in order to come to life anew.

Mineral: Four and nine carry the power of remembering our roots, of intuition. This power is concentrated in the rocky mountain massifs, which attract us when we need to get away from it all and want to find peace of mind. In the warmth of the south and summer, couples find each other, fruit grows and communities come together to celebrate their roots.

Nature: Three and eight carry the power of magic and change. Many of us are drawn to the forest or jungle when we want to feel the pulse of life and the diversity of its forms and relationships again. North and winter enable us to focus on the decisive option for action in this diversity through cleansing.

Earth: Zero and five carry nourishment, protection and well-being. Earth is the power of home, for which we long and to which we want to "come home". Here is the world axis that connects all spheres in the visible and invisible. This is the place where the polarity of fire - water and the polarity of mineral - nature materialise.

Male and female characteristics of the five gifts

The five-element wheel is based on two. Just as there is a male pole in a woman and a female pole in a man, there is also a male and a female expression in each element. The male pole of an element is labelled with one of the numbers from 0 ... 4 and the female pole with one of the numbers from 5 ... 9.

Fire people are connected to the world of dreams and visions and the world of ancestors. If they

⁵ Depiction of the creation of the world from the Dagara perspective according to: Malidoma Somé, *Die Weisheit Afrikas (The healing wisdom of Africa)*, p.180 ff.

⁶ manifest = express itself materially

do not have a grandfather or grandmother at their side, this is particularly important to them. There are "personal" ancestors

of their own families of origin and "impersonal" ancestors such as mountains, springs, places or

animals. Fire people follow a vision and want to protect their community. This identification - whether conscious or unconscious - is so strong that they do not take good care of themselves and do not protect their boundaries. If they become aware of this, they realise that they should treat themselves more carefully and also develop the gift of thinking and reflection.

It is not easy for them to understand when others do not see the path of the vision as clearly as they do. This results in great impatience. They are just as easily offended by this as by the fact that they sometimes act like missionaries who see themselves as the mouth and realiser of a solely valid world view. Under the influence of the 2 as the masculine fire quality, a person has the ability to clearly and angularly oppose other points of view and thus promote clarification. The 7 as the female fire quality, on the other hand, needs time to digest. It can spontaneously "enter" abruptly, but can also show an empathetic side.

Without a connection to their life purpose, fire people are destructive towards themselves and others out of anger at the yawning hole where ancestors, vision and community should actually be. If fire people remember their own mission in life with the help of the mineral, their fire is given a goal, can lose its destructive power and become a sustainable long-term orientation and visionary force for themselves and others. With the help of water and the water people, the fire people can work on developing mindfulness for themselves and their own boundaries and thus also for others. In this way, they come to understand and allow other perspectives. Then their destructive fire gradually turns into a warming hearth fire. If we compare the vision to a diamond, then a fire person is its setting, and their cognitive, social and creative abilities are the cut that they can give the diamond. Fire people are particularly attracted to fire, mountains, vision quests, blacksmithing, casting techniques, "hands-on" counselling, museum education, the art trade, etc.

Water connects, is a living flow, balances, heals. Water people are mindful of themselves and others. They are in contact with the flow of life and cry unshed tears. Equipped with this strong "channel", the gift of thinking and reflecting is not part of their basic equipment. Where fire in contact with the great line of a vision confronts and carries out conflicts, water people tend to evade when things get difficult and become mute. Just as fire is a gateway to the ancestors, water is a gateway to the world of the spirit. Those under the influence of 1 as a masculine water quality can clearly show the flow of the living. They address things as they are for themselves and thus have a clarifying effect on the one hand, on the other hand they confuse what is being addressed as long as they lack an idea of the complexity of human feeling. Listening, empathy and diplomacy thrive under the influence of the 6 as the feminine quality of water. They need the warming and hot quality of fire in order not to get stuck, frozen or even frozen by their own unresolved feelings and also to learn to resolve conflicts. In order to be alive and to be able to register and pick up the faintest breeze like a still water mirror, water also needs earth and nature to prevent it from flowing away and becoming marshy with a clear, vegetated shoreline. The saying goes: "Constant dripping wears away the stone". Water people feel particularly drawn to flowing water, springs, lakes



and the sea, to peacemaking, social, counselling, artistic and healing professions.

Nature/wilderness is change, transformation and creative handling of the unpredictable vicissitudes of life. Nature people have access to the knowledge of change and love play and trial of strength. Under the influence of the masculine 3, they tend to wield magical effectiveness like a weapon, while the feminine 8 cultivates the art of seduction. Both find great pleasure in playing and imitating the other elements, often also in creative thinking. If the creativity of naturals succumbs to the seduction of manipulation for personal gain and the misuse of knowledge for power and fame⁷, two things are helpful to them: reconnecting with meaning in the form of art and myth (mineral); using water to make their dried-up well of creativity and creative joy bubble up again.

They are particularly drawn to the wilderness and its pulsating life force, as it manifests itself in all the animals, plants, materials and medicines. They are often researchers, players, sorcerers, witches, counsellors of change processes, healers, artists and magicians.

Mineral is intuition for the knowledge of the mountains and the power of metal. For thousands of years, griots, bards and travelling singers have sung the names, deeds and insights of hundreds of past generations in verse and passed them on from mouth to ear. In cultures without writing, this is one of the few forms of preserving roots and identity alongside the visual arts. Mineral people learn this knowledge and pass it on. This is how they create networks. Under the influence of 4, they tend to sing a song or tell a story, but also set the tone, while under the female counterpart 9, they are more communicative and interactive. Both enjoy bringing people together, singing songs and telling stories. If these tendencies flatten out into mere cosiness and knowledge becomes shallow because listening to inner images is omitted and the connection with valuable traditions is severed, the magic of nature can revive what has been omitted and reconnect what has been interrupted.

They are particularly drawn to mountains, songs, myths, epics, fairy tales, legends and stories; to gemstones and metal, its extraction from ore and its skilful processing; to happy get-togethers and celebrations. They are attracted by professions such as bards, singers, musicians, storytellers, miners, goldsmiths, gemstone cutters, innkeepers and collectors.

Earth people are "fathers" or "mothers". They give, nourish and protect. They know how to do this. 0 or Father Earth bears the name Tingan in Dagara and stands for a powerful force that provides protection and well-being. It helps to solve material problems on the path of life's mission. Under the influence of 0, earth people have the ability to act decisively, but may also tend to tell others what is good for them according to the motto "I know what is good for you". 5 or Mother Earth is called Timbalo in Dagara and embodies creativity - the secret of creation and life. It helps to connect with creative primal roots. Under the influence of the 5, earth people endeavour to find and satisfy everyone's needs and create a home for them. Both easily forget their own uniqueness and well-being. Their learning areas are to take care of their own well-being and not to keep their protégés on a drip of constant care, but to encourage them to become independent and then let them go. In their shadow side, they are sometimes "mothers and fathers who have not been nourished" and long to receive attention and be seen themselves: you can tell from their way of giving that it is more about the giver than the receiver.

They need water to be in flow, fire to mature, mineral to strengthen their life project and nature to understand more deeply which wild plants need their fertile soil. If this "dosage" becomes imbalanced, deficiency and poisoning symptoms occur in the humus soil of nature's rainforest. They are particularly attracted to fertile soil, lush fields and gardens and caring, nourishing, protective, grounding - also artistic (e.g. clay and pottery!) - activities.

⁷ See Johanna Wagner, Die, die so, die so aussehen wie jemand, aber möglicherweise etwas ganz anderes sind, (Those who look like someone but are possibly something completely different) Berlin: Verlag Clemens Zerkling 1991; also published under the title: Das Geheimnis des Medizinmanns (The secret of the medicine man). A woman learns African magic, Reinbek, Rowohlt Taschenbuch 1996

Body as a metaphor for the medicine wheel

The element earth is the nourishing belly with the digestive system. Our blood is the water. The fire of our longing burns in the heart, which beats in our chest. The bones are made of mineral. They are the memory or database of knowledge (even computer memory elements are made of mineral compounds). Involuntarily acting from deep knowledge, this element is comparable to the left hand, which is connected to the right hemisphere of the brain. The element of nature corresponds to the changing and playfully creative right hand and the eyes that guide this hand.

It is also remarkable to observe how differently groups of people of the same element behave. The fire people find it difficult to get together, the water people "dig their heels in", the earth people find it difficult to get away from what the others need, the mineral people are usually not there because they already have a community and the nature people? They clearly have the most fun together and laughter is often heard.

With our dominant element, we also know our particular

Source of power and inspiration

Can you understand the 5 elements from a book? Hardly. These words, black line patterns on white paper, can only indicate a direction that helps to orientate our perception in the sensual-physical, in the emotional-emotional and in the spiritual towards our own experience. This "map" invites you to explore elements in nature with all your senses and all your inner levels of resonance.



Feuerschrein

I would like to encourage you, dear reader, to look outside in nature to see which place attracts you. Come to rest there, slow down and open your senses to what elemental effects you can recognise in this place. Listen to the inner resonance that they trigger in you and what images and impressions arise. Also experiment with addressing an invisible counterpart that you sense and telling them what moves you.

We often remember places where we enjoyed spending time outdoors in nature as children. Their elemental characteristics, as well as those of the landscape in which we grew up as children, characterise our "energy equipment" and can give us strength again when we are exhausted and feel drained. Another way of exploring is to build an elemental shrine - like the ones in these photos - together at the start of a community ritual. A shrine or altar is a place of dialogue with the invisible and expresses the essence of an element. Without much

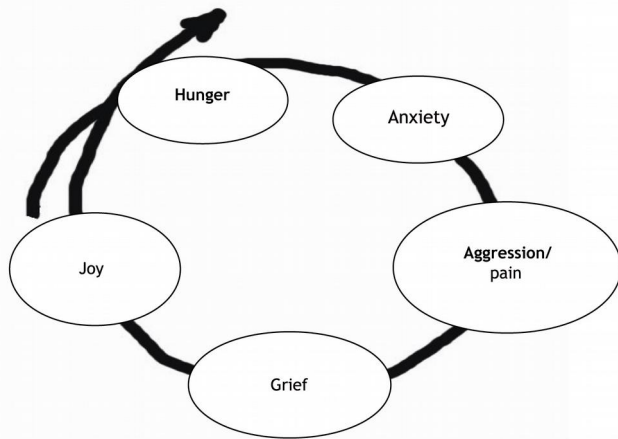
planning and talking, many people work together to design it and within a short time an "installation" of great beauty is created. Many have confirmed the experience of having gained deeper insights in this joint creation. The beauty of the design attracts us. It also attracts the spirit. This is good if we seek dialogue with it.

This dialogue does not flourish through the use of "correct" formulas and does not get off the ground if we are afraid of making a "mistake". Letting out what is there, giving fear and doubt a voice. A connection is established through feelings such as hunger (curiosity), fear, sadness or joy. Feelings are the "fuel" of ritual as well as science, especially the questions that hunger and sadness pose.



Wasserschrein in Graubünden

Feelings are the motor of our learning.⁸ Feelings create contact.



"Feelings are sacred," says Malidoma Somé. If, as children, we are forced to adopt the views and attitudes of adults in order not to lose affection, we begin to betray our own feelings and perceptions. Each element has a certain power to reverse this process.

In the meantime, community rituals in the "Place of Silence" have given rise to a number of shrines that serve as a place of dialogue. People who know nothing about this and are visiting the square for the first time often say: "This place has something special".

There are also "installations" of beauty in the mountains and in some parks that are shrines. There should be more!

The Two in Dagara Cosmology

*In the beginning, the two were one,
man and woman were united in one being.
This was the beginning of confusion and imbalance,
that one became two,
that they separated into two beings.⁹*

*It is the task of the shamans,
to bring the feminine and the magic of nature
back into the world*
The Dagara elder Guisso

Our Western way of thinking is familiar with logical-hierarchical thinking. It is a **thinking in the one**, a thinking of separation: either something is right or it is wrong, all other possibilities - that someone can, for example, be conflict-orientated and conciliatory at the same time - are excluded by logical axioms (theorems). It also contains rules for drawing conclusions, according to which conclusions may be drawn from the general to the particular, but not in the same way from the particular to the general. It is well suited to turning insights into realisable projects. Its fathers are Parmenides and Aristotle.

Thinking in two exists in the West as dialectical thinking. Dialectics means the ancient Greek "doctrine of two" and is a process of both ... and thinking that can promote development processes from the interaction of two opposing forces (thesis and antithesis) in such a way that a qualitatively new state of equilibrium (synthesis) is achieved. Its fathers are Heraclitus, Hegel and Marx.

The third style of thinking is **thinking in many**, intuitive-networking thinking, which views complex system realities (with many variables and causal cycles) like a mobile and seeks to grasp the relationship patterns between the system elements both internally and externally by linking sensory data and visual associations. His father's name is Dschuang Dsi (Zhuāngzi).

Dagara cosmology describes interactions that can be grasped with both dialectical and intuitive-networking thinking. The pattern of life itself appears in cosmology (description of the world).

8 Cf. Wielant Machleidt et al, Grundgefühle (Basic feelings). Helga and Manfred Weule, The emotional organisation. Creative individual and group processes follow the process phases of the basic emotion cycle of hunger (curiosity), fear, aggression/pain (= action threshold), sadness and joy: see diagram. On betrayal, see Arno Gruen, Wider den Gehorsam (Against obedience), Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 2014

9 The bisexual being Hermaphroditos is an ancient being, much older than the Etruscans and Greeks. Cf. Karl Kerényi, Das Urkind (The primal child). 7.Hermes, in C.G.Jung and Karl Kerényi, Das göttliche Kind (The divine child), p.66 ff.

Nothing is by itself. Everything is in interrelation with others. The woman is connected to the mystery of life and birth, but she is not alone. The man as a creator in the outside is not of himself alone, both are alive in the interrelationship with each other and life is propagated from their union: the three arises from the two.¹⁰

The 5-element wheel is based on the two. This has already been described for the inside of each element in the form of the female opposite pole in the man and the male opposite pole in the woman. The Two also works on the outside, i.e. between two polar or complementary elements of the medicine wheel.¹¹

Fire and water is the first dual polarity, that between masculine and feminine, between masculine confronting fire and feminine balancing and embracing water. Their interaction bears fruit in the earth. In order to nourish vegetation, the earth needs light and warmth as well as water.

The second dual polarity is that between **mineral and nature**. Mineral stands for knowledge, continuity and structure. Nature stands for the opposite pole of play, change and transformation.

The interaction between mineral and nature also bears fruit in a third pole: the earth. It is humus, which has to harmonise the nutrients of the mineral with the "hunger" of the vegetation wilderness of nature. Here, earth is a "biotope" of the diversity of uniqueness.

In the Dagara elemental wheel we see a static model of two pairs of opposing poles, whose interaction is reflected in the quality of the centre - the earth - and which must always be brought into balance.¹²

Four elements are connected to each other in pairs. In other words, it is a 4+1 element system. The quality of the relationship between two pairs of elements (fire-water and mineral-nature) is reflected in the fifth element, the earth centre. And vice versa, an imbalance in the centre of the earth has an effect on the element pairs. Without an opposite pole, no element could develop and become effective, but would destroy itself: fire would burn itself, water would solidify or vaporise, the knowledge of the mineral would decay like a "library" without a user, the magical play of nature would lose its way as an end in itself without meaning, the earth would become lifeless and barren.

The Dagara medicine wheel as a model of innovative cooperation

We have found that the medicine wheel also provides a weaving pattern of possible creative diversity and tension in groups, communities or "villages" that we lack in the West. The diversity of the male and female elemental "gifts" and their specific perspective results in 2x5 "truths" that can spontaneously come into conflict in life. This is because we humans find it difficult to imagine that there are other perspectives than our own and automatically assume that others must have the same perspective as we do.

If we realise that someone sees something completely differently to us, we often judge this negatively (e.g. as criticism, devaluation, rejection or even as an attack) and become tense. We ask others to be understanding and instead think that they should be "understanding".

Finding, "savouring" and understanding other perspectives physically, emotionally and mentally within ourselves is a "major subject" in the "school of life" as well as in the training and development of people who work with people, whether as "peacemakers", managers, counsellors, healers, doctors or shamans. How can we make peace in a world where a war of irreconcilable contradic-

10 This can be compared to the "interrelationship between the chicken, the egg and the rooster. You can't say which of them was the first and which was the last. You need all three for all three to exist." (Heinz von Foerster, *Kybernetik der Kybernetik (Cybernetics of cybernetics)*, p.85).

11 There is also a polar interaction between distance-closeness and order-risk in Fritz Riemann's four basic biographical characteristics.

12 In contrast, the Chinese wheel of the 5 elements, on which traditional Chinese medicine is based, is a process or cycle model of interlinking process phases or seasons with the qualities water - wood (\approx nature) - fire - earth - metal (\approx mineral).

tions is raging?

Where could such a learning process take place better than in a group of women and men from all five elements? If their numerical ratio is close to the key shown in the diagram of the wheel, it is easier to balance the tension between the opposing poles and utilise it creatively. The term "group" or "community" here does not refer to groups of regulars, coffee parties, teams or followers of authorities. We are talking about groups of people who want to "turn around" an emergency together because they have recognised that neither they as individuals nor external authorities are in a position to do so. The Occupy movement is a good example of this. This topic is taken up again in chapter 6.

The unknown in Dagara cosmology

Why are states of equilibrium always only temporary? Like the intuitive-networking thinking originating from Chinese Taoism, the Dagara world view also assumes from the outset that we are surrounded and permeated by the unknowable or partly still unknown. Of spirit. We cannot control what we cannot recognise or can only recognise in part.¹³ This is why states of balance are only temporarily stable and we can only make approximate statements about actions that promote balance in complex interdependencies.¹⁴

Each element is a gateway to the world of the unknown and the secret. Fire to the world of ancestors from our own families of origin and from the "families" of animals, springs, mountains, trees, etc.; water to the world of the spirit, the non-ancestral spirits. Kontomblés live in mountain and earth, Ginies¹⁵ in the wilderness. But these are just names. (...) They are nothing without an empty openness to new experience. In Dagara, there is an apt word for the unknown: "*Yielbongura*" or "*the thing that cannot be eaten by knowledge*"¹⁶

The Dagara world model sees bringing into balance as multiplication by **three**¹⁷. "Ever since things fell apart and separation took hold, it has been confirmed that the force that has pushed the world out of balance must be countered with three times its power." (Guisso) The polarity of fire and water, man and woman, can be kept in balance if there is at least three times more water than fire. 6 (water) is three times 2 (fire). Accordingly, the water sector in the Wheel of the Elements is three times as large as the fire sector. This tells us something about the fiery-destructive situation of our world.

This numerical relationship of the triple opposite pole does not (yet?) exist for the other elements. This is another reason why more is required for the balancing and innovation of the overall system: knowledge from the unconscious and the unknown; the intervention of alliance partners in the invisible. They are then called upon in the ritual when things are stuck.

This is also the case in the ritual of cowrie shell divination (oracle consultation). "Oracle reading takes place in a ritual space. In its simplest form, a ritual space is created by intentionally calling upon immaterial forces - from St Anthony to God, from mountain spirits to the "spirit of freedom", from contomblés to angels - who provide answers, impulses, help, etc.". Malidoma works with a version of the African shell oracle that has been adapted to Western culture. Many shells, stones, bones, feathers, rings and other objects lay on a cloth on which the cosmological wheel of the

13 The connection of Roma, Sinti and Yenish with nature, spirit and magic as well as their healing knowledge is similar in many ways to Dagara culture. See e.g. Thomas Sautner, Fuchserde (Fox soil)

14 Heinz von Foerster explained this topic in a lecture: *Lethology. A theory of learning and knowledge in the face of indeterminacy, undecidability, unknowability*. In ancient Greek, truth means *alethea* or "the non-dark", so lethology means "research into the dark".

15 On ginies or djinns (the "ginie in the bottle" in fairy tales), see Helga Weule, *In verschiedenen Welten wandern* (Wandering in different worlds)

16 Malidoma Somé, *Vom Geist Afrikas* (Of water and the spirit), p.19

17 On the quality of natural numbers, see Marie-Louise von Franz, *Zahl und Zeit* (Number and time). Psychological considerations on an approximation of depth psychology and physics, Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag 1970

Dagara elements was painted. He rattled his spirits and I had to distribute the objects in a circle, turning them with one hand. Then Malidoma read from the patterns.“¹⁸

The questioner distributes a heap of cowrie shells and symbols to form a distinctive pattern. This



Kaurimuschel-Divinationsset

pattern is "read" by the diviner; he/she has the responsibility to show the client ways of restoring balance and healing in an understandable way.¹⁹ The reference system of the 5 elements can be found three times on the divination set (see photo): in the outer circle as symbols, in the inner circle under the shells as sectors ("pieces of cake") of the painted medicine wheel and finally as moving symbols in the heap of shells. The pattern created by turning the moving parts of the set reflects the external "world of 1,000 things" at the moment of questioning.

If you are irresistibly drawn to it, you can learn it. One night I woke up, picked out my divination set, spread it out in front of me and immersed myself in contemplating its beauty. Then I knew: this is also my path! It gives rise to the ability to read the patterns of the spirit in the fabric of events and to recommend actions and rituals to individuals, couples, groups and communities that are suitable for keeping the flow of vitality and innovation flowing or getting it flowing again.

¹⁸ Helga Weule, In verschiedenen Welten wandern (Wandering in Different Worlds) - At school we learnt that the oracle of Delphi deliberately gave ambiguous answers in order to "always be right". Strategic considerations may have played a role for powerful questioners. But: Like the question, like the answer. Who prevented Laius, for example, from asking further questions after he had heard from the oracle that he would die at the hands of his son (Oedipus)?

¹⁹ In 2001, Malidoma Somé began teaching the art of divination in German-speaking Europe together with Helga Weule. With Malidoma Somé's authorisation and with the help of other European diviners, Helga and Manfred pass on this art.