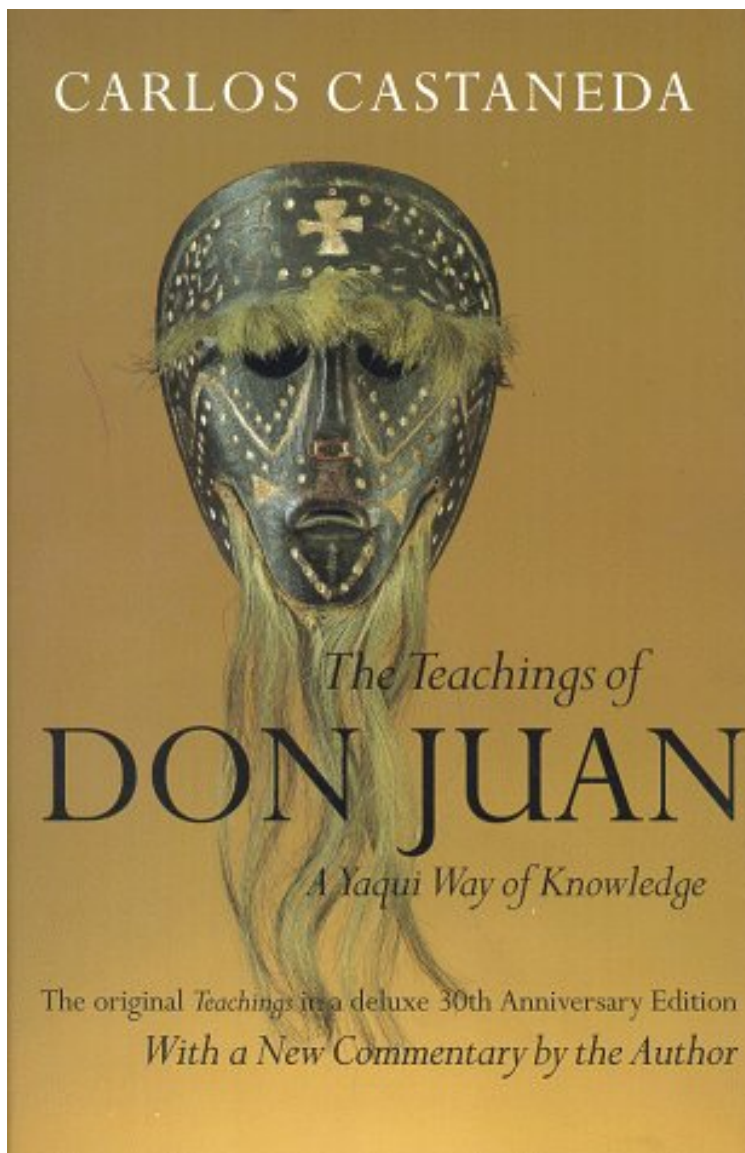


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## The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge

*Carlos Castaneda*

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**Carlos Castaneda : The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Occult ClassicBy ShopperGrrlContacts SubmissionsGeneralInformationGeneralIndexesSpecialIndexesAboutWritingScheduleand SearchCarlos Castaneda,A Separate Realityreviewed by Danielle L. ParkerA Separate RealityAuthor: Carlos CastanedaThe Carlos Castaneda

books have floated around colleges for years, and for all I know, still do. A fellow student I can no longer remember pressed the series on me and insisted I read it. I read just enough to think, This is weird, and pass the dog-eared copies on. Not to someone in my set, though. The group I associated with had one goal. By hook or crook, claw and struggle, weekends lost to study and romances forgone, we would forge a living. We had no time for silly stuff. The traditional wild-side college experimentation passed us by. None of us were going back home. A Separate Reality turned up recently in the thrift store I browse for books. I held the battered copy in my hands and thought, Hey... guess I can finish it. What will I think of it now? Is it still weird? For those who don't know the history, Castaneda was an anthropologist who gave up scientific distance. Instead, he immersed himself in his subject. Castaneda became the apprentice of a Yaqui Indian brujo, a self-described sorcerer. If you ever wanted a myopic view of how a shaman is born, this is it. The works are most famous for Castaneda's flights on the wings of various psychotropic plants. Peyote, jimson weed, datura and the other hallucinogens used would have terrified us just to think about. A Separate Reality is Don Juan's attempt to teach his apprentice to see. Don Juan's thesis is the way we perceive the world is but one limited way of seeing. Poe said it best: a dream within a dream. Don Juan uses hallucinogenic plants like Mescalito to break his student's confidence in the reality of ordinary perception. His secondary goal is to gain his apprentice an ally, a supernatural familiar spirit. And last but not least, to instill a warrior's iron heart and freedom from desire. To me, the most telling scene is Castaneda's first experience in smoking Don Juan's psychedelic mixture. A gnat buzzes before Castaneda's face. As the smoke overcomes him, the gnat becomes a giant, mysterious, flying being, the guardian of the other world. And yet it is still only a gnat. The narrator doesn't realize his failure. Castaneda cannot resolve his conflicts. He fails as an anthropologist, because he is no longer a detached observer: he is a participant. He is unable to see, because his real purpose is publication, not seeing. He fails as a warrior, because he has no self-will. When Don Juan tells him to stab a total stranger, a supposed enemy, Castaneda obediently takes a blind swipe at the woman. It's to Don Juan's credit he does not make worse use of his abject slave. Castaneda becomes confused and angry at the trick played on him but never understands the lesson. Yet reading the book, one still glimpses those iron Indian warriors. Don Juan explains: A detached man, one who knows he has no possibility of fending off his death, has only one thing to back himself with: the power of his decisions. He has to be, so to speak, the master of his choices. He must fully understand that his choice is his responsibility and once he makes it there is no longer time for regrets or recriminations. His decisions are final, simply because his death does not permit him time to cling to anything. The Castaneda books are occult classics. Castaneda doesn't completely succeed in documenting a shamanistic tradition, because the conflict between observation and immersion can never be resolved. You can see or see, but not both at once. The gnat is either a giant whirling monster... or a gnat. The works are worth reading, too, for the complex character of the Yaqui shaman. Part wise man, part trickster, pursuer of power and advocate of Zen-like detachment: Don Juan too exemplifies irreconcilable conflicts. And I still agree 100% with my college-age self. Let someone else try the peyote buttons!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Justly Famous Book About a Shaman and His Apprentice By Neodoering This very famous book follows the path of Carlos Castaneda as he is instructed in Shamanism by an old man named Don Juan. It is a light and breezy romp through the Yaqui Indian way of shamanism, relying on knowledge of exotic plants and animals to perform divinations and magic spells. The relationship between the two men is touching and funny and endearing all at once, and you'll find yourself rooting for them both as the old man teaches the young one how to be a shaman. Carlos seems to have learned his lessons well, and you get the feeling of knowledge deeply ingrained as you read the book. When I was finished with this book I was hungry for more, and fortunately for me Carlos has written several more books about Don Juan and shamanism and the Indian way of understanding the world. This is a justly famous book, and it won't disappoint. If you're into anthropology, or the Indians and their life ways, this is an outstanding reference and a fast read. Seems like I was just sitting down with it on page one, and suddenly I was at the end. Thank goodness for more books!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Someone Let the Genie out of the Bottle! By Charles Scott You can almost visualize author Carlos Castaneda traveling to Mexico City and meeting a couple of tour guides who want to show him the sights around town, such as the museums, restaurants, shopping boutiques, and other featured popular attractions. Doing so would be a pleasant diversion. To pursue this line of speculation, then, a liberal arts student from South America with a background in anthropology, philosophy, religion, sociology, and psychology, he makes discreet inquiries about opportunities for medical research, especially those concerning the inner workings of the human brain. After all, several of the universities in the city do offer advanced professional degrees in the health sciences field. He learns, it just so happens, that a certain individual has been searching extensively for a qualified new apprentice, but his scholastic program is neither accredited nor recognized by any of the institutions of higher education in Mexico, nor by the American Medical Association, the truth be told. His curiosity aroused, the undaunted, intrepid author goes forth to seek further information about the alleged don Juan, his particular whereabouts, his teaching methods and his credentials. On the other hand, you might just as well believe that the author simply went to Mexico to buy pharmaceuticals he couldn't get in Los Angeles, California, where he had been attending college. As you may know, the apothecaries south of the border do not always check for a prescription from your physician. And they may not be overly concerned about FDA approval. In any event, The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge,

published in 1969 by Carlos Castaneda, describes the author's experiences in diary format as he embarks on his apprenticeship to seek the warrior's true path of knowledge. He travels a rugged, rocky road along the expansive corridor of the Great Southwest, that begins in central Arizona and leads him to Sonora, Mexico. The hot, dusty, winding road ends in the mountains and desert, which is where the humble, happy home of don Juan Matus is located. He attempts to learn the ancient ways of the Yaqui Indian medicine man. In his diary, Castaneda relates his most extraordinary, spiritual, and supernatural encounters with the candid, humorous, lucid, enigmatic, practical, and knowledgeable don Juan, who guides him in his quest to understand what it means to seek the path of a cosmic warrior. In brief, don Juan introduces him to three types of psychotropic plants: peyote cactus, which relates to a spirit known as "Mescalito;" *Datura stramonium*, otherwise known as "Devil's Weed," which has the potential to conjure up an animal spirit "ally;" and finally a concoction referred to as, "a little smoke," which is vaguely described as a precisely measured mixture of secret dried plant ingredients, including a sprinkling of ground-up small bright yellow flowers, with a powdery substance from a specific kind of psilocybin mushroom tossed into the preparation--according to my limited interpretation of the reading material. It actually sounds like a medieval alchemist's formula. I can just imagine the two of them chewing on peyote buttons plucked from cacti found in their evening desert wanderings, spitting out the fibrous pulp, as if they were chewing gum that's lost its flavor, then chasing these unusual hors d'oeuvres with shots of tequila. After a while they begin watching great performances by the genie who escapes from the bottle. I can even see them scampering and scurrying around chasing gigantic lizards through the desert over rocks through the arroyo and into the canyon, after imbibing several bottles of Jimson Weed tea. But to see them soaring like eagles beyond the Saguaro cactus and high above the mesa, while a flock of lazy, unsuspecting crows circles aimlessly below would be a most impressively spectacular sight. Seriously, I begin to wonder what were don Juan's ancient ancestors and their neighborly fellow inhabitants really doing roaming around in the great Southwest for the past several millennia? Besides escaping war, poverty, slavery, and the various and sundry miscellaneous crimes of other advanced civilizations. Of course, they must have enjoyed their lives and freedom, exploring the new world, doing a little prospecting, and otherwise communing with nature. Besides frolicking on hallowed ground amidst the flora and fauna of a faraway frontier, there is a great deal to be said for survival, self-sufficiency, and gathering empirical evidence. Once upon a time in recent memory... Maybe we can't explain all of the mysteries of the universe, past or present. Strange events have taken place in our own lives. For instance, last Wednesday at 8:37 a.m. on October 27, I awoke and, looking up, was startled to see a distinctive pair of large oval shapes, like eyes, directly above my head, reflecting off the bedroom wall, apparently from diffracted morning sunlight passing through the glass window pane and between the slightly opened blinds. One eye was red and yellow. The other eye was green and yellow. The phenomenon might just as well have been attributed to eyes from the spirit world. Who can say for sure? It only happened once. May the eyes of eternity gaze upon you!

Thirty years ago the University of California Press published an unusual manuscript by an anthropology student named Carlos Castaneda. The Teachings of Don Juan initiated a generation of seekers dissatisfied with the limitations of the Western worldview. Castaneda's now classic book remains controversial for the alternative way of seeing that it presents and the revolution in cognition it demands. In a series of fascinating dialogues, Castaneda sets forth his partial initiation with don Juan Matus, a Yaqui Indian shaman from the state of Sonora, Mexico. He describes don Juan's perception and mastery of the "non-ordinary reality" and how peyote along with other plants sacred to the Mexican Indians were used as gateways to the mysteries of "dread," "clarity," and "power." The Teachings of Don Juan is the story of a remarkable journey that has left an indelible impression on the life of more than a million readers around the world. "For me there is only the traveling on paths that have heart, on any path that may have heart. There I travel, and the only worthwhile challenge is to traverse its full length. And there I travel, looking, looking breathlessly." Don Juan Carlos Castaneda, under the tutelage of don Juan, takes us through the moment of twilight, through the crack in the universe between daylight and dark into a world not merely other than our own, but of an entirely different order of reality." Walter Goldschmidt, from the Foreword

.com Carlos Castaneda's intelligence shines through as clearly in his updated commentary in the 30th anniversary edition of The Teachings of Don Juan as it does in his original story. It is impossible to encapsulate what Castaneda has achieved with his first book about the teachings of the enigmatic Don Juan Matus, a Yaqui Indian sorcerer who shared his ancient knowledge with Castaneda. The academic character of The Teachings of Don Juan is evident in Castaneda's in-depth analysis (and sometimes overanalysis) of his experiences with Don Juan, and readers who lack an interest in anthropological analysis may find this section a bit tedious. However, Castaneda's journal accounts flow effortlessly, the current carrying us through his conversations with Don Juan and opening doors to an astounding realm outside the bounds of everyday life. The phrases "life changing" and "earth shattering" come to mind, and perhaps these are just metaphors, but what Castaneda offered in the 1960s is still for many an entirely new perception of reality. --Brian Patterson From Library Journal Original publisher University of California Press here offers a 30th-anniversary edition of Castaneda's Teachings. Along with the original text, this sports a new introduction by the

author, who, it was revealed recently, died earlier this year. Though this is reasonably priced for a hardcover, libraries needing multiples copies may opt for the paperback. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From the Inside Flap  
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