



# **Fate, Fortune, and Mysticism in the Peruvian Amazon: The Septrionic Order and the Naipes Cards**

*Marlene Dobkin Ph.D. de Rios*

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A medical anthropologist's account of fortune-telling and management of one's own destiny in Peru

- Explains the fortune-telling naipes cards and how Amazonian shamans use them to diagnose clients' ills
- Looks at the Sacred Mystical Order of Septrionism and its techniques for managing destiny

While studying Amazonian shamans who use ayahuasca and Peruvian coastal healers who use mescaline cactus to treat psychological illness, Marlene Dobkin de Rios learned about the naipes cards--fortune-telling cards similar to the tarot used as part of the healers' method of diagnosis. Immersing herself in their culture, she began telling fortunes with the naipes cards and was surprised by the intimacy it induced in the native people she was trying to study as well as the profoundly accurate results she encountered. Finding herself pulled further and further into Peruvian culture, in 1977 Dobkin de Rios was initiated into the sacred mystical order of Septrionismo, which emphasizes specific techniques--such as meditation, ritual, and reflection--to manage one's future rather than depending solely on fate and fortune.

Explaining how to use the naipes cards as well as examining the practices of the Septrionic Order, Dobkin de Rios explores her experiences with both traditions through the lens of her anthropological and psychological training, describing how these diverse encounters opened her mind to the powers of divination as well as taught her the means of directing her own destiny.

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