

## **HUICHOL NATURAL PHILOSOPHY**

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### **ABSTRACT/RESUME**

The author presents a model of Huichol natural philosophy. This is a subject of considerable interest among the elders and Shamans of the Huichol. Some superficial comparisons have been made between the Huichol and Indians of the south-west in the past. This model should allow structural comparisons to be made more easily.

L'auteur présente un modèle de la philosophie naturelle des Huichol. C'est un sujet de grand intérêt pour les Anciens et les Shamans des Huichol. Dans le passé, on a fait quelques comparaisons superficielles entre les Huichol et les autochtones du Sud-Ouest. Ce modèle présent permettrait de faire plus facilement des comparaisons structurales.

The term natural philosophy as derived from Russel (1914) and Goodman (1966) and adopted by Pinxten et al. (1983), is here used to refer to a corpus of fundamental tenets about the world on which perception, action and conceptualization are predicted. Such knowledge consists of "absolute presuppositions" of epistemological and ontological status (Collingwood, 1940; Pinxten et al., 1983).<sup>1</sup>

The truth value of such presuppositions is not readily ascertainable since, as Collingwood has written:

An absolute presupposition cannot be undermined by the verdict of experience because it is the yardstick by which "experience" is judged (1940:193-194).

These *are* primary categories on which a society's experience of environment are ordered and new perceptions integrated into a body of knowledge particular to that society. Because perceptions are accumulated through historical time and therefore under changing conditions, it follows that absolute presuppositions can enter into contradiction with "experience". However, of more general note is that the existence of absolute presuppositions provides the means by which perceptions are accommodated into the terms of a system of collective representations. A set of collective representations forms a symbolic classification. The coexistence of classificatory systems does not necessarily imply any coherence between them.

Huichol natural philosophy is the subject of sustained consideration by the *kawitero* or temple elders and the *mara'akate*, the shaman-priests. Because many of the Huichol who have collaborated with ethnographers have held positions as *mara'akate* it is possible to deduce from their recorded texts of myths what such a natural philosophy might consist of. The following exposition is a synthetic construct. The principles which underlie Huichol classifications and their ontological presuppositions are for the most part abstracted from a large corpus of myths, commentaries on the significance of the scenes represented in yarn paintings and ritual data. The resulting *model* is both general and abstract. It is not intended to demonstrate the dynamism of the model in incorporating historical elements or the efficaciousness of a cosmological idiom in articulating political struggles. These are themes that have partly been described elsewhere (Shelton, 1986 Nd). Against these shortcomings, however, the model does have the advantage of making Huichol cosmology amenable to structural comparison. Similarities between the Huichol and the peoples of the American southwest and the pre-conquest Aztec have been noted since the early part of the present century (Seler, 1901; Preuss, 1901; Parson, 1939), and recent-

ly Huichol ethnography has been used to interpret the significance of funerary ceramics from the pre-classic civilizations of Western Mexico. Most of these comparisons have been superficial. It is hoped that this model will enable structural comparisons to be made more easily with neighbouring peoples to eventually provide a cultural profile of the Greater North-west.

### Structure of the World, Kiakari

In traditional Huichol discourse the world, *Tatei Urianaka*, is conceived as a shallow gourd which rests on its bottom and is surrounded by five seas. This gourd, conceived as a female deity, is also used to represent the idea of fecundity and is sometimes referred to as a metaphor for the womb (*urianaka*, literally, stomach, abdomen). The female earth is imbued with motherly attributes as suggested by the prefix *tatei*, mother.

Over the gourd earth lies another semi-circular area called *Taheima* which is reigned over by another female deity, *Tatei Werika Wimari* (Our Mother Young Eagle Girl). At the highest limits of the sky exists a door which leads to the land of the dead.

Under the gourd is a dark cavernous underworld known as *WatetUjapa*. These are the only three vertical levels that the universe is commonly said to be divided into.

The three levels are circumscribed by the movement of the sun, *Tau*, which passes through the ellipse of the sky and descends over the sea to return under the earth's concavity and rise again by a magical staircase, *umumui*, over *Rreunar*, a sacred mountain to the east.

The Huichol world has definite boundaries which are marked by sacred rocks placed at each of the four cardinal points aligned along an east-west and a north-south axis. The region thus inscribed is known as the Middle Region of *Heriepa* which translates as "sierra". This corresponds to the habitat of the Huichol but sometimes also includes the area occupied by neighbouring peoples. The boundaries of this region were chartered by the voyage of *Watakame* when he together with *Nakawé*, the creator, were carried in a canoe first to the western rock, *Washiewe*, just off the coast of Nayarit facing the village of San Bias in an area called *Tukamerishe* the "Line of Shadows". Following this the canoe drifted to the eastern rock known as *Tomana Tinika* and probably located somewhere in the desert regions of San Luis Potosi. From there the canoe was taken to the southern rock *Mahakate* near Lake Chapala, Jalisco and then to the northern-most extent marked by the rock *Rauramanaka* in the north of Nayarit.

The four cardinal points which radiate out from the region inhabited by the Huichol, "The Land of Clarity", aligned by the four pivotal rocks, are most often referred to by the name of the deity under whose care each segment

is committed. Grimes and McIntosh (1954) list only secular referents for these points, *Hixiate* for east and *Sutiapai* for west, and the existence of these terms in addition to the usual referents might indicate the greater importance given this axis over that of the north-south.

The west is referred to by the name of the deity *Haramara* and the east that of *Nariwame*. The north is referred to as *Tzakaimute* and the south *Rapaviemeta*. Each of these deities is said to hold jurisdiction over the region to which they correspond. In addition, each is associated with the rock that marks its domain.

Within the boundaries of the middle Kingdom there exist five holes which lead inside the earth. One of these is located at the eastern mountain of *Rreunar* or what the mestizos call *Cerro Quemada* while that to the west is found to the edge of the Pacific Ocean. By means of the western hole the sun gains access to the underworld, *WatetUapa*. After travelling underground it exits to the east at *Rreunar*. A third hole is said to be located in the centre of the territory inhabited by the Huichol which is associated with the place where the ancestors emerged from *WatetUapa* and began the work of creating *Heriepa*. The remaining two holes are said to lie to the north and south but uncertainty surrounds their whereabouts and significance.

In summary, the Huichol world is composed of three levels; a dark cavernous underworld, sometimes thought of as being aquatic and known as *WatetUapa*; a concave earth called *Heriepa*; arched by an elliptical sky called *Taheima*. *Heriepa* itself is surrounded by five seas and divided into five regions each under the jurisdiction of a deity through whose name the dominion is known. The Huichol occupy the centre of this divine topography at the point of creation. The universe is delineated by the movement of the Sun through *Heriepa* and its nocturnal sojourn through *WatetUapa*.

The characteristics of these regions and the relations that exist between them will now be considered in greater detail.

#### (a) *Heriepa*, the Earth

The earth is said to have feminine attributes. In the primordial time of creation *Tatei Urianaka* offered herself voluntarily to be sacrificed to form the earth. She had sexual intercourse with *Kauyumarie*, a deer deity affiliated with the Sun, which caused her womb to increase in size, stretching it until it was large enough to provide the land mass of *Heriepa* (Negrin, 1975). She is usually limited to the area inhabited by the Huichol but is sometimes thought of as constituting a larger area which includes all of Mexico.

The earth was divided into five regions by *Tatewari*, the old fire deity associated with shamanism - who then appointed the Sun as governor. The Sun assigned four deer deities to the cardinal regions and invested them

with jurisdiction over them. These were *Kauyumarie* in the east, *Ushikuikame* in the south, *Watemukame* in the west, and *Narihuame* in the north.

The earth is thus conceptualized as female, but governed by four male deer deities. Despite this, for most purposes it is the feminine attributes to *Tatei Urianaka* which are emphasized over the masculine characteristics of its governors.

(b) Taheima, the firmament

The sky is formed by a female deity. *Tatei Werika Wimari* is said to have emerged as a shadow from the body of *Kauyumarie* (Negrin, 1975:71). She is depicted on Huichol textiles as a great double headed eagle. According to Jose Benitez Sanchez, she radiated a form of energy between her two antlers, one on each of her two heads. From this radiation she created the sky on which the deities could stand above the earth.

*Tatei Werika Wimari* is described as the spirit of heaven but her material manifestation is that of the eagle that stands at the centre of the sky guarding the entrance to the land of the dead.

The sky is considered immaterial, permeated only by wind. At a lower distance than the sun resides the moon, *Mezeri*. The pale orb is imbued with feminine and masculine qualities depending on its lunation.

Higher than *Tatei Mezeri* is the sun, *Tau*, who will only be discussed here according to his day time attributes. *Tau* represents the strongest masculine element in the heavens. He ascends the sky in the east by the five sacred steps that lead to the arid peak of Rreunar. Each step of this sacred mountain carries a name prefixed with one of the five sacred numbers. The first step is called *Sheiwitari* from where *Tau* proceeds to the second, *Jutariaka Niwetari*, to the third *Jairaka Niwetari*, the fourth *Nairaka Niewtari* and from the crown of the mountain *Ashuwirieka* from where it partakes of its daily sojourn (Benitez, 1968:220). The most likely meaning of the prefix attached to each of the numerical stems of the words is "resting place in bringing to light" derived from *nive* "to bring to light" and the verb *uitiarica* meaning "to rest" or "to stop". Hence, the sun's climb into the heavens is seen as a gradual revelation which has five phases.

*Tau* traverses the heavens following an invariable path each day. It circles *Heriepa* from east to south, to west where it disappears in darkness as it passes through the underworld before rising again in the east. The underworld is often equated with the north (Shelton, 1986). During the Sun's submergence through this region it crosses the fourth sea *Nauriakumaka*.

The Huichol note the gradual increase in heat towards mid-day and its diminishment after about 2:00 in the afternoon and attribute this to the relative proximity of *Tau* to the earth during his journey to the west. This stage

of the journey coincides with the Sun passing over the southern region of the earth.

On leaving the Huichol country it passes over all five seas until it reaches the fifth, Aushiviriamaka. This is described as the red sea, the sea of flaming foam, and spray where the Sun descends into a hole at its far side to begin the journey through the recesses of the underworld. The sun's descent into this last of the seas is accompanied by a loud spitting of water sending huge sprays of flaming waves into the sky. Description of this event is always given in an attitude of fright and awe. Lumholtz refers to the sun as having to descend through the jaws of an enormous sea serpent which is the ocean itself (1900:81).

The path of the sun from Rreunar to Aushiviriamaka embraces and demarcates the length of the world as it concerns the Huichol. What lies to the east of Rreunar is not a subject of speculation and is dismissed from natural discourse.

The sun is intimately associated with the eagle as is indicated by it sometimes being assigned the name of *Tawerika*, Sun eagle. The sky kingdom is governed by *the eagles who are always associated with it and who govern each of the five regions*. *Tatei Werika Wimari*, the eagle at the centre of the sky, shares with the sun the purview of all that passes in the world. She is flanked by two smaller eagles, *Tusha* and *Ra/u*, and this trinity is surrounded by four other eagles, each of which stands at a cardinal point and holds jurisdiction over that quarter of the sky realm. *Shurikwe* occupies the south, *Piwame*, the north, *Kuishutasha* the west and *Japuri* governs the east. The eagles are each identified by the colour of their plumage. The eagle *Shurikwe* of the south has black plumes fringed with white. *Piwame* of the north is grey streaked with white. *Kuishutasha* has a mixed plumage of yellow and white while *Japuriin* the east is pink and black. In *Heriepa* the cardinal regions are also each given a colour although there is little consensus about their associations.

The female deities in the sky realms are affiliated to the sun. They keep open his path and afford him protection. *Tatei Werika Wimeri* is also said to care for all the "faces or aspects" *nearica* of the male deities. The Sun is the dominant deity of this region and his election places the sexual qualities of sky and land, *Taheima* and *Heriepa*, in opposition. The level above that which is occupied by the Sun is the domain in which the stars are fixed. According to myth the sparks caused by the first ascent of the Sun flew into the sky and became fixed as stars. Of these, special attention is given to the morning star, the planet Venus. The Huichol recognize few constellations. Grimes, in his Huichol-Spanish Dictionary, lists only two constellations. One which he calls *Simanixi*, a group of seven stars which he translates as the

goat and another, *Nivericate*, the bell. Some Huichol describe the stars as being the companions of the sun which during the day follow him on his path across the sky but remain in the heavens while he descends to the underworld. In this context it is significant that the companion stars are also sometimes referred to as the same as the small rock crystals which are conceived as the embodiment of the souls of the ancestors which accompany the sun on its celestial voyage. The stars are thus the ancestors of the Huichol.

The divisions and the structures of the worlds of *Heriepa* and *Taheima* reveal marked similarities, however the important difference between them is one of sexuality. *Hereipa* is pre-eminently feminine while the sky is a masculine realm assuming its qualities from those of the sun. The governors appointed with jurisdiction over each quadrant of space are of the opposite gender to that of the realm itself. The masculine sky has a female eagle reigning over each quarter while the female earth has male deer deities which have a similar distribution and function.

These two realms, far from existing coterminously confront each other and can, if the correct rituals are not performed, actually inflict catastrophe on one another. They must never be allowed to touch otherwise *Heriepa* would become burnt like the cracked and arid rocks which litter the surface of Rreunar, caused by the ascent of *Tau*.

### (c) The Oceans and the Underworld

As Negrin (1975:70) notes, the oceans are related to the concept of an underworld. The oceans are not included in the category *Heriepa*, but encircle it. As the earth and sky are ordered into five regions, so too the oceans form five areas. They are said to be full of dangerous snakes, some of which attacked the sun at the dawn of creation. The sinuous movement of the Pacific waves suggest to the Huichol the constrictive tractions of the serpent. The closest etymological evidence is between the generic word for serpent, *cu* and its use as a prefix in *cuaimuxari*, "waves" or "ocean spray". Lumholtz, in his *Symbolism of the Huichol Indians*, wrote:

The sea, which to the Indian mind, surrounds the entire world, is, with its snake-like motion the largest of all serpents, it is the great all-devouring one. The sun has to plunge past its open jaws as day sinks into night and all becomes darkness: and with it, human beings disappear, caught by the serpent. But the serpent being all water, and the greatest of all waters is also the greatest cloud maker, and thus beneficial to the Huichols. Its rain-making powers have been appealed to, and therefore its

image is carried to the west as a powerful embodiment of prayer for rain (1900:81).

Finally *Tatei Ipai*, possibly the mythical serpent that was born and lived at the community of San Andres before leaving for the coast is often said to live by the rock *Washiewe* in the Pacific.

The five seas are referred to generally as *Tatei Haramara*, their mistress who dwells at a white rock which protrudes upright from it. This rock, *Washiewa*, lies just off the coast at *San Bias*, *Nayarit*, clearly visible to the unaided eye, and a favourite perch for the flocks of pelicans that rest there.

Each of these seas derives its name from the conjugation of one of the five sacred numbers and an adjective of colour with the name of the deity. In the following table, we have juxtaposed the names of each of the five seas as obtained by Benitez from Bartolo Chibarras of Ocota, San Sebastian (1968:188) with their associated deities which he later enumerates (Ibid: 473).

<b>Name of Sea</b>	<b>Associated Deity</b>
<i>Shewitemaka</i>	<i>Haramara Muyuavi</i>
<i>Jutariakamaka</i>	<i>Haramara Mutuza</i>
<i>Jairakamaka</i>	<i>Haramara Mutazaiya</i>
<i>Nauriakamaka</i>	<i>Haramara Mumeriayuve</i>
<i>Aushiviriamaka</i>	<i>Haramara Shure</i>

The deities he identifies as governesses, but from the repetitive use of *Haramara* it is obvious that there is one aspect which they all share. Grimes (n.d.) translates *Haramara* as *mar*, which relates to the "deified sea". Thus all five regions are aspects of the one deity.

The prefixes which are attached to the roots *amaka* or *emaka* in the names given by Bartolo Chibarras to each sea are derived from the sacred numbers: *Shewi*, *Jaika*, *Juta*, *Nauka* and *Aushuvi* (Benitez, 1968:533). Thus we are given the arrangement of the seas around *Heriepa* according to the order in which the Sun passes over them.

Furthermore, the noun *Haramara* is followed by an adjective that gives the colour of each of these seas: thus *Mutuza* contains the adjective *tuza* or "white"; *Matazaiya*, *taxariya* or "yellow". *Mumeriayuve*, *yuvi*, "black", and *Muyuavi* is derived from *yuavime*, "blue". Only the final form *shure* does not readily fit the word for "red", *xetame*.

The seas form a unity which itself is divided into five aspects. In this respect it might be suggested that the frequency with which the number five occurs throughout Huichol society as an integral of wholes makes it denote completeness. The division of the *Tatei Haramara* into five is then a requisite

for its attaining completeness. Similarly, the earthly deer deities, the celestial eagles and the rain deities may each be thought of as aspects of a respective godhead.

The sea is a unitary but divisible region like *Heriepa* or *Taheima*, which reveals its completeness by the five qualitative aspects or jurisdictions which compose its discrete nature.

	Godhead	ASPECTS			
		East	South	West	North
Eagle deities	Tatei Werika Wimer	Japuri	Shurikwe	Kuishutasha	Piwame
Seer deities	Kauyumarc(?)	Kauyumarc	Ushikuikame	Watemukame	Narihuame
Rain deities	Narihuame(?)	Narihuame	Rapaviyeme	Haramara	Tzakaimute
Sea deities	Haramara	Haramara Muynavi	Haramara Mutuza	Haramara Mutazaiya	Haramara Mumeriayuve

**Figure 1: Spatial distribution of the aspects of the godheads**

The underworld, *WatetUapa*, is hardly differentiated from the oceans. It is said that the sun disappears down a hole at the sea's edge, however others, and this is by far the more common view, describe the sun as descending into the sea itself. The sun must wander under the sea, then through the underworld which lies below *Heriepa* to return to *Taheima*. All accounts agree that it is a domain enclosed by darkness. *WatetUapa* is a rocky inhospitable world, but according to Huichol creation it was the original home of the ancestors and as such its existence predates the foundation of *Heriepa*. When the ancestral deities created the present world, *WatetUapa* was sealed off by the seas, (Negrin, 1975:86). Sometimes it is imagined as an aquatic domain.

Par excellence, *WatetUapa* is the domain of eternal darkness. Negrin's Huichol collaborator, Jose Benitez Sanchez, describes it as a place where the ancestors once lived when they possessed no definite shape. They had not become clearly differentiated and existed as white figures (Negrin, 1975:71). It is ruled over by an evil ghoulish who is the god of physical death, *Tukakame*, who is associated with the wild animals of the night.

On death the soul, *kupuri*, of the Huichol travels to the west and after a lapse of time enters *Taheima* and dwells as a star arranged around the Sun. The physical body, however, is interred in the earth which is the repository of the bones of men and animals. In one account, *WatetUapa* is thought as being transformed into an enormous skull after the foundation of *Heriepa*, clearly identifying it with the physical remains of the dead.

While traversing this region, the Sun assumes a nocturnal aspect in which it is considered much weaker than during its daily round in the sky. It

is a potential prey of the wild animals which threaten its path. Perhaps this is the reason why the Huichol believe the Sun must always be accompanied and guided by *Tatewari* whose powerful spells ward off the creatures of the underworld

The sun in its movement through this void follows a marked path from which it must not transgress because of the dangers which confront it. Benitez (op *cit*: 474) lists five points which it passes and which are clearly recognized by the Huichol.

- I. Shiraunita described as a sea of noise caused by the boiling water as a result of the sun's descent.
- II *Turanita*, a "place of precipices".
- III. *Mayashure*, "red rocks".
- IV. *Paritauta*, "The land of darkness."
- V. *Werikamuta*, The exit or "the place of the rising eagle".

Neither the seas, the sky or *WatetUapa* are suitable abodes for man but they all contribute to his existence. *WatetUapa*, other than being the near amorphous realm of pre-creation ruled over by the ghoul *Tukakame*, is also the home of *Tatewari*, the deified fire and *Nakawethe* the eldest goddess in the Huichol pantheon who is associated with regeneration and growth.

The association of growth with the subterranean region and its ultimate nature is revealed in the name for this region "underground water". For our present purpose the most important characteristic *WatetUapa* is its association with dissolution. This is attested by the presence of the physical dead, as a place abandoned by the ancestral deities, and as a cavernous, barren world devoid of light. It is a place that appears as regressive from creation and in its lack of distinct form it is comparable to the sea.

## The Elements

Within the spaces which have been delineated in each particular realm, there exist elements or materials to which the Huichol ascribe great importance.

Air, *eca*, appears to be best conceptualized as the wind. It is deified as *Ekatwari* (Benitez:582), a male principle in the form of a deer. Different grades of "wind" appear to be named. Thus *Ekatwari* refers to the wind that blows over the sierra and the coastal region. However, Benitez also mentions a *Eacataweakame* (280) which he calls the "mad wind" and a *Tawekame* which he says signifies a drunk or crazy wind. These latter are held in fear and are conceptualized as whirlwinds. Both these "winds" in addition to *Teuka* and *Haikuli* are considered malevolent and harmful to man.

*Teuka* is a gentle whirlwind which is said to bring disease, while *Haikuli* is referred to by Benitez as the "air of the dead". *Haikufi* is said to be the form by which the dead depart as well as the manifestation they take when wishing to visit evil on the living.

In addition to this there seems to be some *justification* to the opinion that the Huichol consider the wind to be a basic principle of motion. It is the wind that carries the sacred arrows which the deities send to cause sickness against men. Because it was created with excessive force it had to be removed from *Heriepa* and now resides in *Wirikuta*, the sacred land to the east where the sun rises. Finally the idea that the wind, *Ekatewari* is elected to destroy the present world (Negrin, 1975:103) along with *Kauyumarie* and the *kieri*, when the Huichol abandon their traditional life, suggests a strong affinity with the idea of motion force. It is the wind that will change everything by causing such a movement that all will be battered and fall. Its destructive power makes of it a cause of *eschatology* and *the* transformation of the world anew. This destructive element confirms the view of Benitez Sanchez (Negrin, 1975:103) that the wind was born in *WatetUapa*, the place which suggests the chaos of pre-creation times.

Clouds are of cardinal importance and are divided into groups corresponding to the four corners of the world. A mother goddess had jurisdiction over each grouping of clouds. They are thought to rise from the seas and much of Huichol ritual and ceremonialism is devoted to procuring their movement across the sky to carry the rains over their territory.

All sources of water are deified and are considered as exceptional gifts bestowed on the Huichol through the suffering and sacrifice of the *ancestral* deities. The most important water deities are identified with watery expanses which lie in each of the cardinal directions. *TateiHaramara* is identified with the Pacific Ocean of the west and is the only one associated with salt water. *TateiRapaviyeme* is identified with Lake Chapala in the south and also other stretches of water such as Lake Magdalena and Lake Patzcuaro which lie in the same direction. *TateiNarihuame* is identified with a spring near Rancho Hedionda in the east in San Luis Potosi and the northern rain deity is sometimes referred to as *Tatei Sacaimuca*, who lives in Mesa del Nayar in the Cora country. Their names are also used to refer to the clouds that are believed to have their homes at each of these localities.

Fire is venerated as the oldest of the male deities, *Tatewari*. He is conceptualized as inhabiting a place in *WatetUapa*, directly under the Huichol middle world and has his shrine in Teiakata in the comunidad of Santa Caterina. He is also, according to Benitez Sanchez (Negrin, 1975:122), said to accompany *Tau*, the Sun during his nocturnal journey through the underworld, when the two gods entertain themselves by play. Because of his

tremendous power he sends billows of smoke through the area which sometimes results in volcanic fire on the surface of *Heriepa*. He is associated with the volcanic region around Tepic, Ixcán, but this activity is controlled by the precautions taken by other deities to preserve *Heriepa* from his nature.

*Tatewari* is associated with the centre. He marks the reference point around which most Huichol activity takes place.

### Appearance and Essence

An opposition running throughout Huichol thought is the distinction between the physical appearance of bodies and a vital essence which is immaterial and on which their reality is contingent. This spiritual aspect is composed of five distinct categories. We shall consider only one here. *Iyari* translates literally as "heart". However, it bears no similarity with the English or the Spanish notion of the word, and there is no evidence that it is usually used with reference to the physical organ.

Negrin in his studies of Huichol art has provided the first approximation to the significance of the concept. According to him *iyari* is a non-material force that fills the apparent space of the sky, *Taheima*. It is therefore associated with the principal governess of the region, *Tatei Werika Wimarit* the eagle deity that commands the centre of the sky and oversees the admission of the souls of the dead into her abode. The evidence for this relationship is drawn from Benitez Sanchez's interpretation of his pictorial representation of the activities of the ancestral deities during the great flood when *Kauyumari* told *Tatei Werika Wimai* that "you shall be left in charge of the life of the words of the spirits, if we manage to save ourselves" (Negrin, 1975:85). Even more illuminating in this context is Benitez Sanchez's description of the ancestral world which pre-dated the creation of the present and is associated with *WatetUapa*. Benitez describes *Tatei Werika Wimari* as being a high rock which encompassed all the region of the sky which had a serpent as her heart. At this time the ancestors did not use a language to communicate but spoke to each other by their soul, *kupuri*, or their memory. The units of this pre-linguistic means of communication were projected into the solid sky and on hitting the top of the rock would blossom into thoughts, which would be conveyed back to the ancestors by the wind. Since these thoughts, referred to as "words" or "memories" had nowhere else to go, *Tatei Weika Wimari* collected them and preserved them through the destruction of the world and its transformation by the flood to install into the souls of new born children. These words are contained in arrows which are therefore recognized as the means by which communication between the ancestors and the Huichol can be mediated. The relationship between *iyari* and *Tatei Werika Wimari* is brought out in Huichol

baptism which is an injection of the "spiritual" content from this female deity into the physical body of the child.

We might tentatively surmise, therefore, that essence in the form of divine non-materiality is the quality ascribed to the celestial domain. In opposition to this the earth is physical. Just as the life of the child depends on an amalgamation between a physical frame and the components which will make up his spiritual being, so too does the physical earth need an infusion of divine life essences from the sky.

The Huichol as physical beings imbued with the sacred essence project material categories to make visible the celestial sky, i.e., by the order they impose on it by bringing about its manifestation in the form of an eagle, while the purpose of the sky is to penetrate the material manifestation of *Heriepa* to give them life and to constitute a deeper meaning under their physical guises.

The relationship between *Heriepa* and *Taheima* is one of the reciprocity where the one constructs physical metaphors to manifest the essentially unmanifestable and the other infuses itself into the material world to make it something more than its appearance. This twist is the essential problem around which the Huichol practice of a theory of divine/secular communication articulates itself.

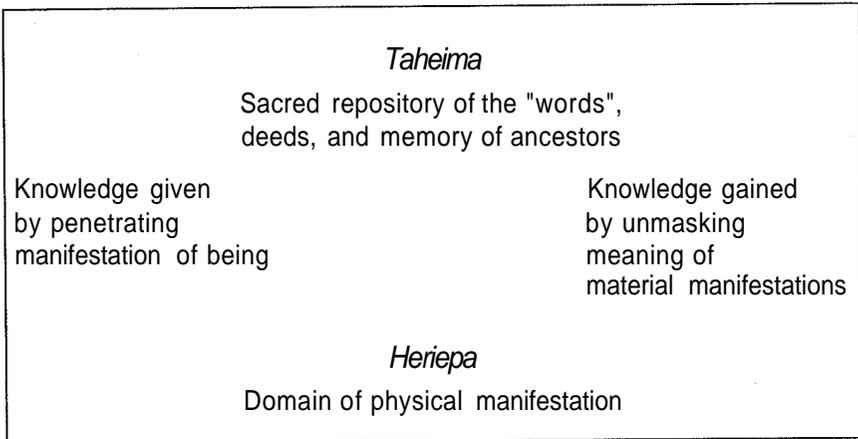


Figure 2

**Mechanics**

The Huichol have a dynamic conception of the universe in which they live. It will be apparent in the mythology, in the expression of prayer, and in the performance of ritual that *kiakari*, the universe, is not a place of static categories applicable to fixed and discrete objects.

The relations between *Taheima* and *Heriepa* mentioned above imply a mystical conception of things. Material phenomena do not reveal any significance without a knowledge of their internal aspects.

Transformation is an essential element of Huichol thought. Not only do objects undergo transformation under the scrutiny of the observer such as with the design of textiles but change occurs as a matter of course between phenomena in the course of their movement. Thus the sea *Haramara*, changes its qualitative aspects as its material referent shifts, with its colour, appearance, and as we have seen even its topography. The clear azure waters of coastal Nayarit are very different from the boiling red infernal region into which the sun plunges shooting cascades of flaming water into the sky.

*The Huichol world has a definite beginning and a knowledge* which is not constricted to it but which is derived from past creations. They do not duplicate what the ancestral deities did but continue it and this is understood by them as continuing the work of creation. Their concept of life then is inscribed in a processional development of the world and not in a static and fixed universe of form. The work of creation according to the prescripts of the ancestral deities is not an indefinite and eternal occupation but one that is limited. The Huichol speak of eschatology which attests to the consumption of the world by powerful whirlwinds once they abandon their mode of life and break their reciprocal compromises with the deities.

All categories are contingent on their inscription in a universe of process and transformation. Given this dynamic character, it is useful to approach the Huichol *kiakari* by the application of a polythetic principle in the untangling of their pattern.

## Boundaries

Within the *kiakari* distinctions are made between areas and regions and seals constructed to limit or prevent permeations from one to another. The boundary between the properties of night and day is constructed by the celestial movement of the sun and associated with its presence in *Heriepa* or *WatetUapa*. The movement of the sun regulates the activities of the Huichol. It is called the "measurer" and defines their moral universe, *tukari*. While the night, *ticari*, is associated with the underworld deity *Tukakame*.

*Taheima* is separated from the realm of the dead, access to which can only be granted to the soul after passing through the gateway guarded by *Tatei Werika Wimari*.

The proper place for man is the middle world, *Heriepa*. He is excluded from the nether region and the sky.

The effectiveness of some deities is limited to the quarter or region over which they exercise governance and to accomplish deeds which affect a

larger area they must co-operate between themselves. Thus the supplication of the rains necessitates the Huichol in arranging (a) a contract between themselves on behalf of *Heriapa* and the deities and (b) in procuring an agreement between the deities of the four world regions to permit the elevation of the clouds and their confluence in the middle kingdom.

Boundaries are thus associated with dominions of power. The movement of objects or persons between boundaries is described as "delicate", dangerous because of their sacred construction and is always accompanied by peculiar ritual gestures and modes of address to the deity whose region they are to impinge upon.

Not only do boundaries exist between the different regions and categories such as those between the dead and the living and nature and the home compound, but temporal concepts are also bounded. Thus day and night, the human life span, and the duration of the *kiakari* itself. The present creation is qualitatively distinguished from past worlds and is itself limited by an impending eschatological event which will mark it off from a future creation.

The concept of boundary has extraordinary value, therefore, in establishing qualitative distinctions and jurisdictions within the Huichol world and is a cause of much ritual elaboration.

## NOTES

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