



**The Huichol Creation of the World**

# **The Huichol Creation of the World**

**Yarn Tablas by José Benítez Sánchez  
and Tutukila Carrillo**

**Essay and Catalogue  
by Juan Negrín**

**E.B. Crocker Art Gallery  
1975**



*Edited by Roger D. Clisby*

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# Introduction

While much attention has been focused on the Pre-Columbian art of Mexico, little consideration has been given to contemporary indigenous art. A clear separation is made between the modern Mexican artist who has mastered the techniques of Western Art and the legion of folk-artists, many of whom are marginally assimilated Indians. Ancient Mexican art is placed on a par with today's art, for it too, is valued as the beautiful mirror of a sophisticated and dynamic culture. Today's indigenous art is usually seen as "the unvarying reproduction of one model."<sup>1</sup> Its model may be an ancient magical symbol, the significance of which has been lost, and the object is now merely decorative. Fortunately, a closer look at the indigenous art of the Huichol shows such generalizations to be untrue.

We have found three distinct types of art among the Huichol Indians. The first is purely religious art, in which all the symbols and elements of the product have a religious *raison d'être*. Such religious art once extended into all areas of craftsmanship. It was expressed in the construction of a house and the manufacture of a chair, as well as in weaving and embroidery patterns. Religious art reached a peak of symbolic meaning in the votive objects, which we will discuss later. This art form has recently lost much of its vitality. It is well described by Carl Lumholz who carried out unprecedented and unsurpassed field work among the Huichol between 1895 and 1898.<sup>2</sup>

Since Lumholz did his research, the Indian has developed a greater dependence on Modern Mexico's products and culture. A burgeoning trade of Huichol crafts for modern materials or money has developed within the last twenty-five years into the widely known folk-art of Huichol "yarn paintings." Unfortunately, this second type of Huichol art is most often meaningless and repetitive. Slavishly reproduced motifs are juxtaposed at random or in simple symmetrical arrangements. Sometimes the craftsman is a "mexicanized" Huichol, or not an Indian at all; though occasionally he may be a poor mountain dweller willing to sell the shirt off his back to buy some corn for his family. As we shall see, this folk-art has been adversely affected by the merchant, the tourist and the "trading post."

Even more recently, a third type of art has emerged. Here, the artist, nurtured by both religious art and folk-art, bridges the gap between the two forms by expressing his individual experience and love of native culture with personal forms and structures that are renewed in the adventurous double pursuit of beauty and deep religious meaning. Tutukila, a native of the Taupuri tribe, and José Benítez Sánchez, from the Wautua Huichol tribe, are two leading exponents of the third genre which is the original art of



master-craftsmanship.<sup>3</sup> Both artists see their racial heritage being destroyed by attempts to integrate the Huichol more fully into modern Mexican society. They exalt Indian culture and illuminate a complex network of pre-Hispanic mythology.

The works by José Benítez Sánchez and Tutukila presented in the catalogue section illustrate the Creation of the World as the artists envision it through their participation in ritual and devotional exercises. The text which accompanies the plates is drawn literally from taped explanations by the artist. To this we have done no more than add data linking each story to its larger mythological context. So, we have the unusual opportunity to explore archetypes and symbols directly interpreted by their creators. We are dealing with pictographs which are, in a way, similar to the Aztec codices in that they preserve the sacred history of a people in the throes of spiritual conquest. There are close links between modern Huichol folk-art and the creative expression of these artists, but the later art form pertains directly to the magical religious nature of primitive Huichol votive artifacts. The artists insist that their compositions faithfully evoke the oral traditions of their ancestors. Unlike the folk-artist, these artists have participated intensely in their religious traditions and rites; yet, like the folk-artists, they are not the primitive mountain dwellers which Lumholz visited at the end of the 19th century. Both José Benítez Sánchez and Tutukila have functioned in urban Mexico. So, the artist is closely involved with two different social realities (Mexican and Huichol); in his work he fulfills his need to transcend the duality of his existence by tapping his inner creative strength.

"The strength that we possess comes from our Fathers," says José Benítez Sánchez. Indeed, the ethics and the religion of the Huichol are based on following "the custom" (*el costumbre* or *hiiki*): the ritual and the traditional life-style transmitted by the elders of the tribe, the chanting shamans, and the grandparents who are entrusted with supervising the education of children on the family ranches. In effect, the gods of the Huichol drawn in the yarn paintings are themselves ancestors who, through their supernatural feats, organized the world in which their children now live. The story of the Creation of the World chronicles the manner in which the ancestors emerged from an amorphous existence in darkness to find the way to light and harmonious life. Having accomplished their designs, the ancestors died physically. Following the ways of the ancestors involves the women preparing food, sweeping, weaving and caring for the young, while the men work in the fields, collect wood, build thatch roof silos and houses for the ancestors and hunt the deer. It also involves invoking the god-Ancestors and reenacting their feats in drama-filled celebrations and pilgrimages to the five points of the earth: the center and the four corners. Through this ritualistic life-style, repeating timeless actions and actually impersonating the ancestors, the Huichol attempt to establish a direct relationship with the animistic spirits of nature which are none other than their Ancestors. This philosophy of life culminates eventually at death, when the wise join the pantheon of the Ancestors, becoming spirit allies and guides for their descendants.

The manifestations of the Ancestors are concrete and take such forms as earth, sun, fire, water, wind, corn, deer, rivers and rocks. The Ancestors give life and sustenance to the Huichol, while the Indian



renews the powers of the Ancestors by his ritualistic conduct. The traditional way draws past and future together in an unbounded present that is a never ending process of creation. What is here now existed before the world was created, only it now has a form and an identity supported by the activity of man in his symbiotic partnership with the ancestor spirits.

This existential religion weighted with its heavy responsibilities pervades the memory, the heart, the soul and the spirit of the artist (see: *Four Aspects of the Spirit*). José Benítez Sánchez celebrates it in his yarn paintings and contemplates the gap that has developed between his sacred custom and his life in modern Mexico. Separate now from his "custom", he marvels at its beauty and significance, and dedicates himself with love to the task of reifying it in his art. In this process, he maintains his disassociation with the values of the civilized Mexican, and cannot contemplate remaining in the urban environment (see Sánchez' *Dream Visions at the Edge of Darkness*, p. 29). At the same time, however, he has broken radically from the isolated tradition-bound ways instilled in him by his forefathers in his early youth, and he has seen "the custom" from the outside as well.

## The Four Aspects Of The Spirit

The thoughts we entertain within our body as we walk along our path in our own way practicing our devotion, must find rest when we sleep. While our bones and our flesh sleep our spiritual being is released to travel outside the body (Fig. 1).

The four circular symbols represent the four aspects of our spiritual self. *Kupuri*, our soul (at upper center) has the substance of a droplet of dew; its seat is above the forehead. *Tukari*, our life, is our vital energy, our spiritual strength. *Tanierika* (from ta: our, nierika: instrument to see) is "what we see" (lower center) with our spirit, i.e. dreams and visions. *Iyāri* is our "heart," which besides being a physical organ also has an immaterial aspect equated with thoughts and memory (essentially one's awareness of "the custom," i.e. the traditional way).

Each of these aspects is supported above the body and united by four arrows which are stuck in the four corners of the earth. Our soul, life, visions and heart are nurtured and recreated by the arrows of Our Ancestors.

The arrow at bottom right bears the green of the ocean, Tatei Haramara; above right is the arrow belonging to Wirikuta, the sacred land of peyote; above left is the arrow of the Hatuxame river in the Huichol territory, and below left is the arrow of Xápaviyemeta the land of the South, where Watákame, the survivor of the Great Flood and the father of humankind, landed in his canoe (see cat. 4).

When we die (or go into a coma) these invisible aspects of our being also leave our body and our *iyāri* is released with our breath, *iyaya*.





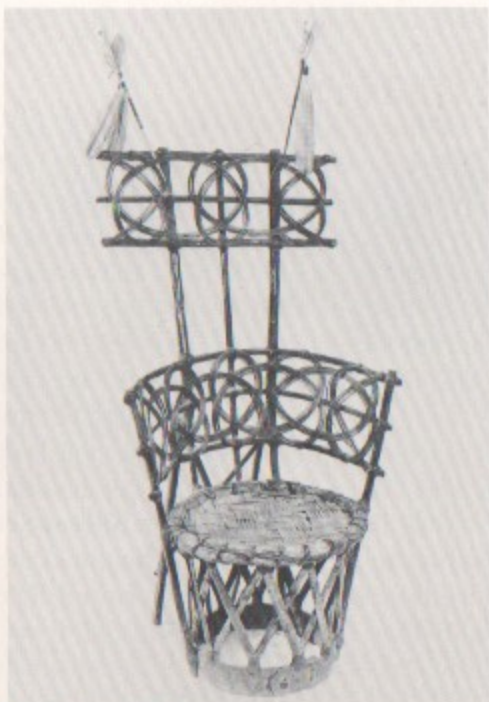
1. José Benítez Sánchez, **The Four aspects of the Spirit**



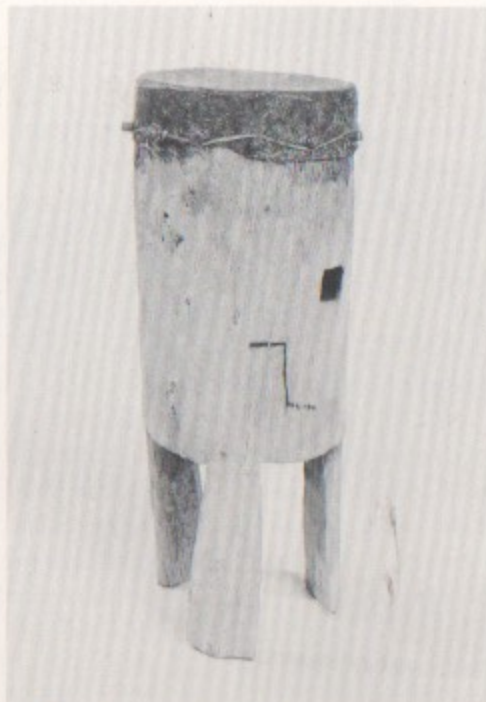
# The Huichol In Time And Space

The Huichol have lived in the deep canyons and elevated plateaux of the Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range since pre-Hispanic times. This area, to the east of the lush Pacific coastline, is sparsely inhabited today by several Indian tribes which are classified linguistically in the uto-Aztecan group. They appear related culturally and linguistically to the ancient Nahuatl Toltecs and Aztecs, and to American Indians such as the Hopi, descendants of the Pueblo. The French ethnographer Léon Diguét, who visited the Huichol in 1896, advanced the theory, based on historical data and oral traditions, that the Huichol, descendants of the Guachichil, once lived with their present day neighbors, the Cora and Tepehuan, in what is today the State of San Luis Potosí. They formed a theocratic state called Hiikúripa under the leadership of Maxakuaxí.<sup>4</sup> Harassment by warring Nahuatl, possibly Toltec, tribes who worshipped more violent gods and sacrificed humans, forced Maxakuaxí to leave this area. Eventually he founded a new state in the Sierra, after subduing its inhabitants. These events would have occurred around the 7th century A.D. Dissension soon set in among the three ruling tribes which dissolved their ties, and they began fighting each other. The thrust of the Nahuatl Empires reduced their territory around the Sierra, but the three tribes maintained their autonomy in the highlands.<sup>5</sup>

The Sierra was not conquered by the Spaniards until the 18th century. Evidently, the Huichol managed to avoid an armed conflict in their territory, perhaps because some joined the Spanish troops who marched against the overtly defiant Coras. In 1722, the Coras were defeated at Sakaimuka, one of their principal religious centers. The temple and adjoining god-houses were burned and historical relics were destroyed, including a stone described as bearing the image of the sun.<sup>6</sup> The Huichol communities of



2. Shaman's Chair (*Uwén*)



3. Three-Legged Drum (*Tepo*)

the Sierra remained independent from the Vice-Regal government in Mexico City, being granted the status of "indigenous communities", and were placed under the administration of the Franciscan missionaries (the Cora were administered by the Jesuits). The Franciscans were able to build churches in five principal ceremonial centers of the Huichol territory, but the projected conversion of the Huichol was not successful. By the time Lumholz arrived in 1895, he observed: "Today, however, the churches are in ruins, and there is no priest living among the Huichols. Many are clever enough to put on an external show of Christianity toward people from whom they expect some favor. The impress the victors made was superficial, and today the natives are practically in the same state of barbarism as that which they enjoyed when Cortés first set foot on American soil."<sup>7</sup>

In the past hundred years the Huichol have been embroiled in armed conflicts over their communal land rights. During the period following the revolution of 1910, the Huichol, who were separated into five communities, broke into violent internecine conflicts. At that time many fled to outlying areas in the Western flanks of the Sierra, dispersing into Cora, Tepehuan and Mestizo (racially mixed Spanish-Indians) areas.

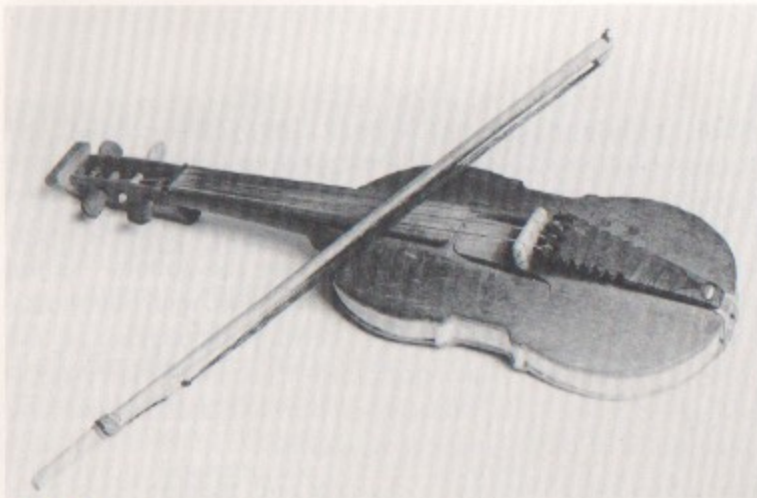
The Huichol call themselves *Wixaritari*. The singular form, *Wixárika* signifies cultivator according to Diguet,<sup>8</sup> according to Lumholz its meaning is healer. As we shall see, both of these connotations accurately



describe the two outstanding features of the Huichol culture. Corn is the main staple of the Huichol diet. The cycle of the cultivation of corn is diligently observed by those who follow the traditional ways. The first stage in this cycle involves clearing the hillside fields of scrub and overgrowth with machetes and axes. To mark this undertaking, Indians who live in widely scattered ranches gather around the nearest temple and ceremonial center, *tukipa*, where they clear the communal plot. The women toast corn kernels and prepare a special mush of corn or *huaute* seeds. For the celebration, deer are trapped with magically endowed snares and sacrificed to fertilize the fields with blood. The Earth Mother who bears corn receives prayers and votive offerings smeared with the blood of the deer which instills life in all religious objects. Another ceremony, invoking rain, precedes the planting of the corn seeds. The Mother of Corn is venerated in the form of an ear of corn dressed and adorned with flowers, the husk of which is then burned. The clouds of smoke rising from the burning husks of corn and the tinder that covers the fields invoke the rain clouds. After the first days of the rainy season the stored grains are planted along the steep flanks of the hills one at a time with a planting stick. A third celebration follows the weeding of the corn fields at the height of the rainy season when the squash flowers bloom. At this time the first fruits of the harvest are celebrated. The small children dance, some in their mothers' arms, while a singing shaman beats the three-legged drum, *tepo*, (Fig. 3) and recites a chant about the pilgrimage to the desert Holyland where the children are taken in spirit. Carried there by the shaman who "becomes" a butterfly, they fly over the peaks which embody the spirits of ancestors who once tried to make their way to the desert but were frozen into rocks for erring in their path. Having "reached" the Holyland, the children may now eat the new fruits which the spirits have blessed. Deer are again sacrificed to lend vigor to the Indian corn which is not yet ripe. When the ears of corn are ripe, a bull is killed and participants dance with clusters of corn adorned as bouquets. The corn cycle ends with a celebration marking the termination of the harvest. The Mother of Corn, symbolized by multicolored kernels, is laid to rest in a gourd-bowl on the altar of the god-house, which is found on most ranches. The stages of the growth of corn are carefully observed and distinguished by some fourteen names which are often used in naming children.

The results of the harvest will depend primarily on the kind of rainfall that the fields receive. The angry Ancestors, weary from lack of devotion, produce droughts, great winds or hailstorms. Rain and water which become very scarce in the dry season are the essence of life to the Huichol peasant. The word *tatéi* means cloudburst, it also means "our mother" and, as such, designates the female ancestors who are the essence of water, earth and sky. Waterholes which never dry out are venerated in the Sierra and in the desert. The Huichol believe that they are the homes of rain mothers who enable the earth to grow corn and women to bear children. Soon after their birth, infants are bathed in spring water brought from one of the sacred waterholes to endow them with "soul," *kupuri*. The parents commit themselves to taking their child to the source of the water, so the Mother of Fertility will protect the tender offspring. The spirit of the waterhole is a substitute for the more distant Mother of the Sea who is the ultimate mother of water and fertility, and the abode of Our Great Grandmother Growth, the mother of all the Ancestor gods.





4. Violin



5. Guitar

Thus, pilgrimages are also made to the sea to present the children and ask for rain. Water may be carried from the eastern desert holyland to the sea because of the belief that it will seek to return to its homeland, provoking clouds to rise from the sea and travel over the Sierra on their way east, precipitating showers in the mountains.

In times of drought the Huichol supplement their meager crops of beans, squash and corn with wild edible plants and small game. They gather a wide variety of wild plants including mushrooms, fungi, roots and tubers such as *jícama*, cacti and agave stalks, fruits, berries, nuts and wild legumes. The Huichol used to hunt their game with small bows and arrows, slings and traps. Since the Mexican Revolution, small caliber rifles have replaced the arrows which are mostly used for ritual, such as "hunting" the peyote cactus in the Holyland.<sup>9</sup> Small game and reptiles occasionally complement their mostly vegetarian diet, but deer or cattle are not generally eaten except during communal celebrations. The killing of a deer is always attended by great ceremony. Special food is prepared for the dead animal, like raw corn mush and little tortillas, and its body is caressed. Thanks are offered to the Ancestor Spirit of the Deer, *Kauyumarie*, for allowing one of his animal progeny to be hunted down, since its blood is needed to stimulate the good will of the Ancestors. The religious paraphernalia, arrows and prayer bowls, are smeared with deer blood to become endowed with the power of transmitting their messages to the Ancestors.

The traditional Huichol way retains the ancient survival methods dating from early pre-agricultural days: digging for and gathering food, and catching fish and small game with their hands, sticks or stones. The ancient deities of Growth, "Our Great Grandmother", and Fire, "Our Grandfather", are associated in Huichol mythology with these earliest rudiments of culture, which appear after a great flood and the volcanic appearance of Fire (Cat. 25). A later stage of historical development is revealed in the importance of the yearly pilgrimage to the desert land in the Northeast. This ritual journey is undertaken by members



of each ceremonial center, *tukipa*. If the pilgrimage is made on foot according to "the custom," it may last up to three months. All sexual activity is forbidden for the pilgrims and their spouses one month before and during the journey. Varying degrees of fasting are observed throughout the ritual; water is used sparsely or not at all for up to five days before reaching the area where peyote is found. The major features of this pilgrimage recall the practices of the nomadic Chichimec tribes related by the Aztecs. As the Chichimecs did, the Huichol offer their prayers to the vigilant spirits of desert waterholes, take peyote as a sacrament, and hunt the deer as the supreme sacrifice to the deities in nature. During this pilgrimage, the Huichol not only emulate the ways of their hunting forefathers, they temporarily "become" their Ancestors whom they visit through the visionary medium of peyote. They have been purified, and assume new names and sacred identities until after the celebration of their return at the *tukipa*.

The Huichol remain semi-nomadic, often relocating their family ranches and moving their corn plantation from year to year as the soil is exhausted. Their houses reflect their inconstancy, being fragile structures with grass thatched roofs supported by loosely bound vertical sticks or crude adobe and stone walls. Fires burned to cook or to heat the single room huts thicken the air with eye-smarting smoke. An elevated hay covered corn silo and a few huts, among them a small god-house, are often surrounded by a low wall of stacked stones. These ranches house a tightly knit family centered around an elder married couple. They frequently live at great remove from similar ranches, since each family unit is largely self sufficient for its daily needs. Large groups of Indians gather for only a few days at a time at one of the ceremonial centers to which neighboring ranches belong. They meet inside a circular temple, *tuki*, dedicated to all the Ancestor deities or in front, by the small god-houses, *xiriki*, containing the spirit of a single Ancestor. An officiating shaman and his seconds pray to the sun, "Our Father", throughout its journey in the underworld at night. Large amounts of food and native alcoholic brews are shared among all and prepared communally. After an animal is sacrificed, everything is offered to the Ancestors in the four corners of the earth, in the sky and down below. The meat and broth of the animal are then shared by all those gathered for the feast. Dancing and music played on native versions of the violin (Fig. 4) and guitar (Fig. 5) can last for days and nights in a row, especially when peyote is consumed after the pilgrims bring it back from their long journey.

## Political Organization

The Mexican government has faced considerable difficulties in its efforts to eradicate the ethnic consciousness that separates the Indian from the rest of the nation. Unlike pre-Revolution governments, it has found the technological means to conquer the mountain impasses; small aircraft land at more than a dozen dirt strips, and dirt roads are starting the penetration of an area that previously had been considered unworthy of exploitation. However, the xenophobic Huichols have passively resisted the idea of concen-



trating in permanent villages where they would be more easily influenced by civilization than in their dispersed ranches which remain inaccessible. It is estimated that there are about 8,000 Huichol,<sup>10</sup> among whom a third speak no Spanish. Many are educated now in a few government and Franciscan boarding schools, but, once again, the distance from the ranches and the traditional ways of the elders have severely limited steady attendance.

Language and tradition are more formidable barriers to achieving contact with the Huichol individual than the treacherous terrain and the poisonous animals of the sometimes arid, sometimes tropically lush land. Several metaphoric images are used to refer to one deity, and animals may be minutely differentiated, as corn is distinguished by fourteen growth stages and numerous color designations. The figurative and metaphoric meanings of words used in sacred chants makes it difficult for even the non-initiated Huichol to interpret the precise meaning of a word in a religious context. The language lends itself to variations of meaning just as the Ancestors change form in the mythopoetic mind of the Indian. Religious rites and language vary slightly among the Huichols. Four basic groups can be identified as well as an increasingly large group of Mexicanized Indians who speak mostly Spanish.

Today the Huichol still largely govern themselves in five indigenous communities. Guadalupe Ocotán, Tuxpan de Bolaños, San Andrés Coamiata, San Sebastián Teponahuatlán and Santa Catarina Cuexcomatitlán are the administrative centers of these communities, in addition to being ceremonial centers. Every year at the beginning of January, a new "Governor," "Judge," and other Indian officials are selected and vested with power at these centers. Three or five elder wise men, *kawiteros*, noted for their experienced devotion, pick the new authorities who are revealed to them in their dreams. Thus, religious tradition extends its influence into the internal politics of the communities. Even though the missionaries may have created new administrative divisions, the older methods of political selection are retained. Recently, many programs have brought the national government into closer contact with the Huichol. New officials have been created by the Mexican government to discuss communal property matters before the Federal government. These officials are elected for three year terms by popular vote within their respective communities. Boarding schools have been set up next to dirt landing strips in many parts of the Sierra. Modern methods of farming and pig raising, use of currency, and increased purchases of city items are rapidly changing the habits of mountain dwellers suddenly in contact with the rest of the nation through the airplane and the transistor radio.

In the past, the vigor of their pre-Hispanic heritage combined with their aloofness in an unexploitable land had enabled the Huichol to adopt only those features of Mexican culture which they found acceptable within the "custom." This explains certain apparent syncretisms in their religious philosophy, since they were ready to integrate elements of Christianity which had already been posited in their culture. Pre-Hispanic Mexicans shared the belief in a divine virgin mother giving birth to a powerful deity. For the Aztecs, Coátlicue, the goddess with a snake skirt, was a virgin who miraculously conceived Huitzilopchtli, the god of war; Huitzilopchtli, a tribal Aztec god, was also identified as the sun god towards the end of the



Aztec Empire. The Huichol artist Tutukila mentions that Tatata, Our Father the Sun, was conceived by Tatéi Waxa Wimari, Our Mother Corn Girl, after she picked up a flower and placed it in her waist. Tutukila then goes on to say that Tatéi Waxa Wimari revealed herself to the white man as the Virgin Mother. Some Huichol explain that Christ revealed himself to the Indians as the sun until the Spaniards (identified as descendants of vipers) brought knowledge of him as a separate entity. The Christian God is accepted in a curious manner. He is venerated under the name of Tatata Ampá, Our Great Father, and celebrated during Easter, which is probably the only Christian holiday observed by a majority of Huichols. For this celebration, five different Catholic images identified as saints (*santos*) are paraded around some of the ceremonial centers. All of the "saints," including two images of Christ and one of the Virgin of Guadalupe, are symbolically buried on Good Friday. On Saturday the "saints" are resurrected as a bull is sacrificed and the sun rises. To the Huichol, Christ is the patron saint of all the wonders of Western civilization as well as the threat that it poses. They pray to Him for money and cattle.

Those rituals which are identified by the Huichol as having a Catholic orientation are clearly separated from their indigenous rituals. The "saints" and the "ancestors" are not celebrated together and their images are kept by preference in separate buildings. Likewise, the Huichol are often baptised in the Church and given a Spanish name, but they receive an indigenous name first and still follow their traditional rites. According to their "custom" the name of the new-born is revealed in a dream to its grandparents or elder relatives. Being baptised by a priest provides them with an opportunity to receive the blessings of one more god-spirit. A missionary lamented to the author that many Huichol have no other interest in the Church.

The imperviousness of the Huichol to outside influences is expressed in their traditional taboo against marrying or copulating with any non-Huichol and especially with non-Indians. For infringing on this, they believe that they will suffer torment in the Underworld. They share and amplify the Aztec taboos against promiscuity, although, unlike the Aztecs, they believe that men are chastised as severely as women.

Today, however, the Huichol's environment is starting to show the unmistakable marks of our modern times. Roads are boring in, trees are being felled and transported away. Sporadically functioning government stores (CONASUPO) and rural schools are breeding new needs and new concerns in the Huichol. When it is available, medical care is accepted by many, although not to the exclusion of their own efficacious methods of healing. New means of communication and earning opportunities have profoundly affected the Huichol's sense of time and space. Nevertheless, the Huichol shows his strong adherence to the old ways at every opportunity by refusing to cooperate with the winds of change. Westerners and outside Mexicans are not welcome; they are shunned or asked to leave by traditional Indians, and are generally considered a source of annoyance to all. Yet there is no further refuge for these Indians who are being pushed inexorably into the 20th century.



## Symbolic Designs In Huichol Crafts

*"To the primitive man religion is a personal matter, not merely an institution, as with most Christians, and therefore his life is one continuous devotion to his deities."*

*"Religious feeling pervades the thoughts of the Huichol so completely that every bit of decoration he puts on the most trivial of his everyday garmets or utensils is a request for some benefit, a prayer for protection against evil, or an expression of adoration of some deity. In other words, the people always carry their prayers and devotional sentiments with them in visible form."<sup>11</sup>*

These statements still apply today to the traditionally oriented Huichol, even though many a Huichol costume is embroidered nowadays with patterns foreign to their native culture, such as roses, peacocks, horses, Mexican cowboys, and even cars. In this chapter we will confine ourselves to typical Huichol crafts which have not yet become so bastardized as to be devoid of religious content, insofar as they are not intended for commercial gain. Indeed, these traditional crafts are created to draw the attention of the Ancestor-gods to their manufacturer and to his family. The very action of making such crafts is in imitation of the Ancestors, for, by following their ways, the Huichol can attune themselves to the spirits that animate the life-giving substances of water, fertile earth, sun, corn and deer. In order to obtain wisdom the devout will retrace the steps of his elders, who themselves followed the path of the founding Ancestors. Thus, the process of education is ideally undertaken by the grandmother in the case of a girl, the grandfather for a boy.

Certain crafts are of purely religious and ceremonial use. Girls are taught to embroider and to weave with a back-strap loom (men also practice these crafts occasionally). Boys are trained to hunt and to work in the fields; they make traps and arrows which symbolize their sex, whereas women decorate gourd bowls symbolizing the womb and fertility. Their first pilgrimage is made, as we have seen, to visit the female Ancestor considered responsible for their conception; yet she is only one of many deities for whom offerings are made in the form of gourd bowls, little bamboo arrows and so-called "gods-eyes." Eventually, the apprenticeship of the children will enable them to undertake the pilgrimage to Wirikuta where, through the medium of peyote, they may be graced with concrete visions of their Ancestors. But they must first learn to mirror these gods in their actions and in their crafts.





6. Tutukila Carrillo, **Beaded Nierika**



7. **Plumed Arrows** (*Muvieri*), with parrot feathers (left);  
with hawk feathers (right)

The prototype of the religious person in the shaman, *maraakame*. He understands how the gods daily sacrificed themselves for us and, through his own penance, he has learned to commune with them. He has followed the path of Our Mother Moist Earth and her serpent rivers to the West, where she becomes Our Mother Sea. By the end of the earth at the edge of the sea, he finds the trail of the Sun and the path of the dead leading to the underworld. He can follow the serpent mothers rising from the white mist above the waves and invoke them to fecundate the hills of the highlands. His example is Our Grandfather whose spirit is embodied in the flaming feathers of Fire, the first shaman. Like Our Grandfather (*Tatewarí*) he is guided by Our Elder-Brother *Kauyumarie*, the ubiquitous and invisible Deer-Spirit. Through *Kauyumarie*, who is the master of the words of the god-Ancestors and their messenger, the shaman can interpret the wrath of the gods and mollify them in order to ban sickness or drought. The shaman is reminiscent of the Aztec wise man described by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún in the 16th century: The true shaman is "wise like fire" and "a shiny mirror polished on both sides."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, like the deified Fire, the shaman has learned to make use of the sacred tools as instructed by *Kauyumarie*. A small magic mirror, *nierika*, round and often two-sided, as well as an arrow with feathers dangling from its shaft, *muvieri*, are the instruments with which the shaman can establish communication with the supernatural. (Fig. 6 and 7) Many Huichol claim to be shamans and pretend to use the shaman's tools with efficacy, but the true shaman, distinguished with the name *tsauríríka*, is sufficiently scarce today that many Huichol say only a handful of them still exist. Few apprentices follow the difficult way of Our Grandfather Fire. Many a *maraakame* can do little more than chant some of the prayers learned from his elders and peers, but he cannot hear the song of the peyote in the Holyland, and he cannot invoke the assistance of *Kauyumarie*. These are the common shamans; they know the superficial aspects of ritual and religion so they may fool those who seek their help because they are good at deceiving. The powerful shaman is recognized and praised by those who have also perceived some of the visions with which he is familiar. Thus, the shaman



may be challenged for the manner of his invocations by participants who may feel that their direct experience of ritual and their direct revelations are in conflict with the shaman's verbal message and general conduct. In effect, religion is a personal experience for the Indian, implanted in his childhood and validated by the usage of such mind altering plants as peyote. This was understood clearly by the Catholic Church in Colonial Mexico, and the Inquisition prosecuted influential Indians for their use of peyote, considered to be a diabolical sacrament. Nevertheless, peyote is not in itself a means to gain knowledge of the supernatural. It is food for the spirit, as corn is equivalent food for the body. Those who ingest it must have purified themselves beforehand during the long pilgrimage. Otherwise, it will take knowledge away from them instead of enlightening them, and it will punish them gravely if they ignore their vows. Empirical evidence shows them that this is so, and a Huichol who feels unprepared will avoid taking peyote. Any deity becomes specifically aware of the individual who comes seeking its favors. In this case, "Our Mother Peyote" and her allied Ancestors will persecute the pilgrim who ceases to bring offerings in return for the grace which they sought. Peyote is believed to be the incarnation of Elder Brother Kauyumarie's "heart," *iyāri*. Kauyumarie is an agent of water and light, a healer of illness and blight; thus he can grace one with the ability to heal. José Benítez Sánchez says that the "Tree of Wind"<sup>13</sup> is one of Kauyumarie's allies. It is considered a faster medium for gaining powers from the ancestors, but it is also feared as an agent of darkness and of Tukákame, the Master of the Dead. Both plants are believed to enable their users to place effective curses on other people, but achieving such power to hex is an easier accomplishment than to master its beneficent powers.

## Votive Crafts

It was Kauyumarie who first instructed the Ancestors in the manufacture of sacred tools and votive offerings. His innate knowledge was placed in the hands of Grandfather Fire (Tatewari) who first learned the arts of the shaman, according to various accounts of Huichol mythology. The paraphernalia of the shaman is kept in an elongated palm-woven basket, *tacuatsi*, with an identical cover that fits over it. The woven basket is identified with Kauyumarie's carcass and is believed to hold the "words", i.e. magical powers of this metamorphic spirit-guide. Within the basket there are numerous feathers usually attached in pairs to rudimentary arrows, generally short, pointed bloodwood or bamboo reed sticks. The rear or winged part of the shaft is topped with a tuft of down. When the plumed-arrow, *muvieri*, is agitated it is believed to arouse Kauyumarie, whose antlers were the first *muvieri* when he appeared as a deer. Kauyumarie's cheeks, doted with supernatural visions (see *nierika* below) are stimulated as though tickled by the feathers. He listens to the prayers carried to him through the *muvieri* which symbolizes the flight of an arrow and a bird. The feathers are believed to bear the words of the gods. Macaw feathers are used especially to address the deified fire, the hummingbird is used for Kauyumarie, while hawk and eagle feathers carry messages to all the Ancestors. Feathers are a bridge along which the Ancestor-Spirits arrive to assist the shaman. A rattlesnake's rattler may be attached to the base of the shaft if the shaman handled these animals in his particular training and considers them to be his allies.





8. (l. to r.) (a) Votive Arrow (*Uruí*); (b) Votive Bowl; (c) Votive Nierika



9. Woven Shoulder Bags

Certain arrows, *uruí*, stand for a person's life (Fig. 8a). They are made every year, at first by a child's father at his or her birth, from a pointed piece of wood inserted in a bamboo stem and attached with sinew. The rear of the shaft is painted with zig-zag designs (lightning) and circular bands, usually in two colors, whereas plumed arrows have two colors of yarn twisted half-way to the point.

Another important tool kept in the shaman's basket and also created by Kauyumarie is a *nierika*, an instrument for seeing the invisible and conjuring up the sacred Ancestors. José Benítez Sánchez explains that Kauyumarie created his *nierika* on the surface of the water, where a round disk appeared from a film of white foam (see Cat. 42). Today shamans use small round mirrors into which they gaze to find answers to their queries and to protect themselves from the "evil eye." Julio Silverio, a Huichol craftsman, says that the first *nierika* was a spider web woven on a votive gourd bowl to lighten the load of offerings which the Ancestors took to the Holyland of Wirikuta. A deer trap is also a *nierika*, for the deer captured in it is a sacred aspect of Kauyumarie. Another *nierika*, in the form of a small wooden ring framing a loose net-like weaving with a hole in the center (Fig. 8c) is attached to votive arrows to represent symbolically the sacred face or aspect of the Ancestor for whom it is made. Lumholz describes a larger type of *nierika* which he identified as a front-shield: "The front-shield (*ne-alika*) is made from split bamboo reeds interwoven with variously covered crewel, so as to form a flat disk. Sometimes the traditional hole, through which the warrior could see his foe, is left in the centre; but often the opening is only indicated in the weaving."<sup>14</sup> The *nierikate* (plural form) that Lumholz collected were beautiful forerunners of today's artistic yarn paintings with many figures designed in them to convey the sacred aspect of an important deity in its various manifestations and surrounded by its attributes. Lumholz comments that ". . . if these shields were hung up in the temples in some orderly array, they would soon come to be considered as 'speaking shields', or an attempt to record events or deeds in visible form . . ." <sup>15</sup> This is precisely what José Benítez Sánchez, Tutukila, Juan Ríos and Guadalupe González have attempted to achieve with their yarn paintings. We



have, however, no indication that a *nierika* is derived from a soldier's shield, as Lumholz intuited. The hole in the center seems more like an opening into the supernatural world, a channel through which the Ancestors may enter into man's reality and the shaman may gaze into their transcendental realm. Thus it serves the same purpose as a reflecting surface which transmits divine messages to the shaman who sees the image of the Ancestors reflected on his *nierika*. The Ancestors also use *nierikate* to watch man; their *nierika* may be the polished surface of rock on a mountain where they live or a hole through its summit. Tutukila explains that the sun is symbolized at the center of any *nierika* (Cat. 1) where it is reflected. The shaman Carlos Ríos explains that in his *nierika* he can see his children when they are on a distant pilgrimage; it allows him to look after them and exert control over them.

Pre-Columbian Mexicans shared the concept of the *nierika* with the Huichol. Close analogies can be found among the Aztecs who manufactured polished mirrors from obsidian used by priests and sorcerers as a divinatory medium. One of the principal Aztec gods, Tezcatlipoca, was represented with a "smoking mirror" described as his instrument for seeing at night. Another Aztec god, Uitzilopochtli, is depicted wearing a white ring on his breast described as "his breast mirror."<sup>16</sup>

Nowadays a votive *nierika* is generally made from a small roughly circular piece of wood, rather than from split bamboo reeds interwoven with yarn as Lumholz describes them. Traditionally, a thin section of a wild fig tree or a cedar is first covered with a thin layer of beeswax. This beeswax is produced by small stingerless bees native to Mexico's highlands, and is noted for its peculiar adhesive qualities. When warmed in the sun (or by a fire) the beeswax becomes soft, enabling the craftsman to inlay strands of yarn with his fingernails in order to form the images and attributes of the Ancestor to whom it is given as a prayer offering. Such *nierikate* are left by the pilgrim in special spots where the Ancestors dwell (i.e. the Holyland of Wirikuta, the ocean, lagoons, water-holes, caves and mountain peaks).

Another important influence on the yarn paintings is the prayer-bowl, *xucuri*. It is fashioned from the wide end of a calabash gourd, cut to resemble a bowl. In this form it is used as the common recipient for food and drink. For religious purposes the Huichol decorate the inside of the bowl using the native beeswax to adhere objects on it, symbolizing what he hopes to obtain from a given Ancestor. In Figure 8b, Tutukila renders a sacred bowl made for Our Great Grandmother Growth, Tacutsi Nakawé. She is depicted with a squash and an ear of corn which she makes the earth produce. Those who pray to her for a plentiful harvest bring her some of their produce every year, while asking for luck in the harvest of the next year. A serpent is her guardian and avenges her against those who neglect to thank her for bestowing favors on them. A votive arrow with prayers attached in the form of a *nierika* and a wrist-guard bracelet are represented in the bowl to symbolize a desire for children. Other figures are a white and yellow *nierika* for Tacutsi and an orange one for her serpent guardian. Such prayer bowls are made today with beads as in Tutukila's *xucuri*, although they are not necessarily covered completely with beads. Generally the beeswax is applied on the gourd bowl, with contours following the rough design of figures which are not connected to a raised background. Seeds, grains, shells, cotton, yarn and paper flowers are some of the objects that



may be used besides beads to convey the prayers. This custom was observed among the Pre-Columbian Chichimecs who took gourd bowls to sacred waterholes as do the Huichol. The bowls are sprinkled with the blood of a sacrificed animal and other offerings (chocolate, corn-meal, animal crackers, etc.) so that the Ancestor will be pleased and respond to the prayers that are designed in them. Each family keeps its own bowl in the ranch god-house with grains and seeds inside.

Soft volcanic stones sculpted in cylindrical form, *tepari*, which bear carved images of the Ancestors are in many ways analogous to the *nierika*. Here, the Deer Ancestor rests and serpents guard the sacred temples or god-houses.

The "bed-of-the-gods," *itari*, as Lumholz calls it, is a small rectangular mat made like the front-shields, with split bamboo reeds closely attached to each other and interwoven with colored yarn. The *itari* may be attached to a votive arrow as a prayer. For instance the design of a child woven on an *itari* will represent a prayer for children.

Up to now the greatest external influence on the sacred crafts of the Huichol has been the availability of new materials. Already by the time Lumholz arrived among them the natives had started adopting innovative materials to substitute for cactus fibers (*ixtle*, Mex.). Wool, plain white cotton cloth and colored thread were markedly changing the nature of their garments, while glass beads and pre-dyed yarn were similarly affecting their votive crafts. "Glass beads with their various colors have facilitated the rendering of symbolic designs, and enhanced their beauty; thus their influence, too, has been rather advantageous to the development of Huichol art."<sup>17</sup> In effect the bright and varied colors produced by modern dyes afforded the Indian a much greater freedom of esthetic expression than the relatively dull and limited dyes which were previously known to them. It made it possible for them to render more vividly bright color visions and geometric designs. The native Mexican penchant for bright colors is well evidenced in their fascination for the remarkable colors and designs of birds, butterflies, snakes and flowers. The natural feeling of a correspondence between beauty and the sacred realm, leads one to find such animals and plants in the sacred lore of the Huichol.

The role of personal visions and dreams is evident in crafts which have a religious use. The skilled craftsmen of musical instruments must first divine where to locate the tree that possesses the magic resonating qualities that will reach the ears of the Ancestors. Thus, before he could make his violin and guitar (Figs. 4 & 5) to play the songs of the Ancestors, Juan García Bautista enlisted the guidance of his shaman father. After several days of fasting he had a dream-vision of a particular nut tree. The next day he set out with his father to locate the tree in the spot that his dream had indicated. To fashion his instrument he used a machete and glued its body together with the adhesive resin of a tree. The violin eventually became a part of him; his *iyari* or heart-memory, as he took his instruments with him to sacred spots, including the Holyland of Wirikuta and played traditional tunes on them. The three-legged drum, *tepo*, (Fig. 3) is made from a hollow oak tree which the shaman must also locate in his dreams. The deer-skin that covers the top end is stretched and then attached to the drum with wooden pegs. Wooden torches are



placed under the drum to make its skin taut when played, and a square hole is carved in one side to allow the smoke to escape. It is remarkably similar to the Aztec *huéhuatl*. The shaman's chair, *uwén*, (Fig. 2) is also of ancient design. It was given to us by Totopika Robles Cosío for exhibition purposes. It was passed on to him by his father and, having belonged to his grandfather, it is over fifty years old. The chair is made of bamboo and solid wood, attached with a native plant adhesive and with strips of deer skin binding the round edge of the seat. The scroll figures on the back and the arms are said to represent the sins of men on a rope or a snake, *vieru*, which are confessed to the shaman. According to Lumholz these ceremonial chairs symbolize the flower of a sotol cactus.<sup>18</sup>

## Weaving And Embroidery

A sketch of the influences on contemporary yarn painting would be incomplete without mention of their costumes, which are also inspired traditionally by religious and magical concerns. In fact, the current evolution of the Huichol costume provides enlightening parallels with the production of commercially oriented crafts, in particular non-artistic yarn paintings. The immediate impact of new materials was, no doubt, a boon around the turn of the century when Lumholz noticed their introduction in the form of glass beads. But as their crafts became objects of commerce and trade, in the last thirty years, a marked decline in care and imagination accompanied the loss of magical meaning for their makers.

Weaving was once the most common way of manufacturing garments for the Huichol. In Huichol mythology a Mother of Fertility, *Tatéi Aitsárika*, was the first weaver. José Benítez Sánchez describes her as the mother of humanity who was able to bear children once the teeth on her vagina were knocked out by one of the Deer-Ancestors. The word *itsari* means a weaving made on a backstrap or body loom. Nowadays ixtle fiber is no longer used. Handspun virgin wool in its natural colors, ranging from very dark brown hues to white is mostly woven into belts, straps and shoulder-bags. The only natural dyes that are used with some frequency are black and blue derived from boiling the leaves of a certain tree. The bags and belts have strikingly beautiful designs retaining a wide range of patterns and traditional symbols also used in other media such as embroidery and votive objects (Figs. 9, 10 and 11). Some of the designs are flowers associated with corn, peyote, hummingbirds, the double-headed eagle (symbol of the Mother of the Skies) and the steel for striking fire from flintstone. The belts are wrapped around the waist several times. Some of them measure over nine feet long and half a foot in width and with their patterns spread out, it is not surprising that they are associated with serpents (see Cat. 28).<sup>19</sup> Wool is quite scarce in the mountains and these crafts are being replaced by modern items; woven shirts for instance have disappeared as it becomes clear to the less isolated Indians that city brought printed fabrics are far cheaper to buy than their own goods are to make.

Huichol embroidery, a variation of the cross-stitch, can show best of all the extraordinary sense of color possessed by a large percentage of the natives. The technique was borrowed in colonial days from the





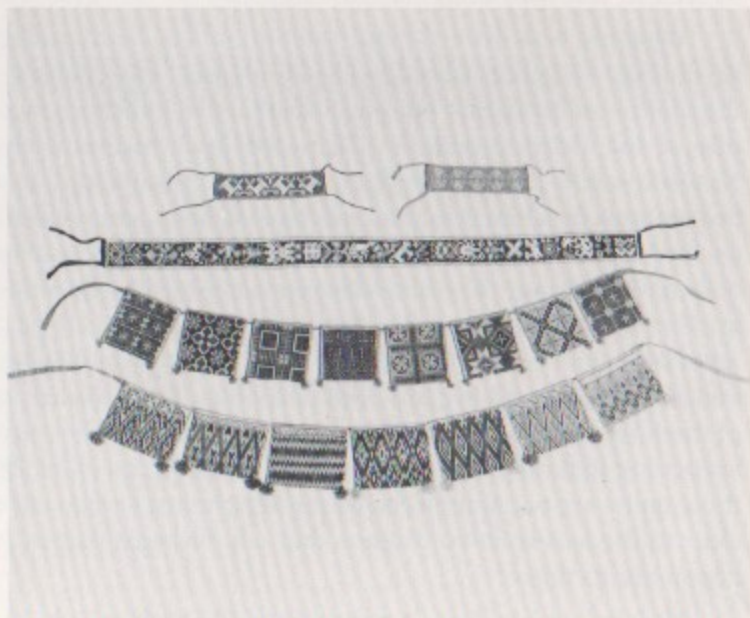
10. Shoulder Bags with Pompoms



11. Belts



13. Man's Scarf (*Tuwana*)



14. (top to bottom) (a) Beaded Bracelets (*Matsuwa*); (b) Peyote Belt; (c) Bag Belts





12. Huichol Man's Shirt and Trousers



15. Nierika Necklace

## Figure Illustrations

1. José Benítez Sánchez, *The Four Aspects of the Spirit*, yarn tabla, 23½" x 23½".
2. *Shaman's Chair (Uwèn)*, Tuapuri Tribe, bamboo and wood with deer skin binding, 37½" x 21¼" x 18½" (*muvi* inserted in the back).
3. *Three-Legged Drum (Tepo)*, from Wautüa, oakwood with deer skin head, 17" x 6¼" (diam.).
4. *Violin*, by Juan Garcia Bautista from Wautüa, nut tree wood, 19" x 6" x 3¼".
5. *Guitar*, from Wautüa, nut tree wood, 17¾" x 5" x 1".
6. *Beaded Nierika*, by Tutukila Carrillo, colored glass beads glued to plywood, with beeswax adhesive, 10" (diam.), mirror in center 2" (diam.).
7. *Plumed Arrows (Muvieri)*, brazilwood wrapped with thread with parrot feathers (left) and hawk feathers (right), 12" and 12½".
8. (l. to r.) (a) *Votive Arrow (Urá)*, painted reed, 9"; (b) *Votive Bowl*, by Tutukila Carrillo, calabash gourd with colored glass beads glued down with beeswax, 6¼" (diam.) x 2¼"; (c) *Votive Nierika*, bent reed with thread network, 2" (diam.).
9. *Woven Shoulder Bags*, from Tuapuri, doubleheaded eagle pattern with payote design in center (at right), brown and white virgin wool, 9" x 10½" (left) and 9" x 9½" (right).
10. *Shoulder Bags with Pompoms*, (l. to r.) *tütü* pattern, 6¾" x 6¾"; double-headed eagle pattern, 7½" x 8¾"; butterfly pattern, 7" x 7¼", (all woven wool yarn).
11. *Belts*, (l. to r.) "Striking metalpiece" (*eslabón*) pattern, 120" x 5½"; from Tatéi Kié, *tütü* pattern 118" x 3½"; from Wautüa, hummingbird and *eslabón* design, 91" x 2¾" (all woven wool yarn).
12. *Huichol Man's Shirt and Trousers*, from Western Sierra, embroidered with two-point stitch, 34½" x 45" (shirt); 34" waist, 34" length (trousers).
13. *Man's Scarf (Tuwara)*, embroidered with two-point stitch, 30" x 30".
14. (top to bottom) (a) *Beaded Bracelets (Matsuwa)*, by Vicente Carrillo, deer pattern (left), tick pattern (right), woven glass beads, 6" x 1½" and 5¾" x 1½"; (b) *Peyote Belt*, from Tatéi Kié, recounting the pilgrimage of the artist who made it, woven glass beads, 30½" x 1¾"; (c) *Bag Belts*, (top) from Western Sierra, cross stitch pattern, 39", (bottom) diagonal cross stitch pattern, 41½" (bag belts are used on peyote pilgrimages).
15. *Nierika Necklace*, from Western Sierra, glass beads and mirror (nierika), 14", 2¾" x 2½" (bag).
16. José Benítez Sánchez, *Dream-Visions at the Edge of Darkness*, yarn tabla, 39¼" x 48½".



Spaniards. The bright colored cotton thread or wool thread, as well as the plain white muslin cloth on which it is sewn, are city-bought items. However, until recently, the patterns were native. Today the patterns used by some Indians still possess the sacred and personal meaning inherent in the traditional indigenous symbols, but many are copied from Mexican pattern books. Shirts and pants (a recent addition to the male costume), long skirts and short blouses are cut out from the thick muslin fabric and sometimes lavishly embroidered with minute stitchery. The most richly adorned costumes are reserved for pilgrimages and ceremonial occasions (Fig. 12). Women may often wear a short poncho of the Pre-Columbian quechqueme type, *xikuri*. Men wear a scarf folded in a triangular shape on their back, *tuwara* (Fig. 13). Both sexes may wear several shoulder bags, some embroidered, some woven. Beads are used to make belts and especially bracelets (Fig. 14a). The bracelets, *matsuwa*, were once made from leather and used as wrist guards on the left arm to protect against the friction of the bow string. They also have a sacred meaning, representing the pulse of the gods and are used as talismans; for example the design of a scorpion may be a prayer to guard against its sting.

All indications point to the fact that the native crafts, which may have reached the apex of their beauty less than a century ago, have undergone a rapid decline. The entry of the Huichol crafts into the marketplace happened within the last thirty years and has been markedly on the increase in the last ten years. This meant that for the first time they were manufacturing their crafts as an added means of self-support instead of doing so only for members of their family, themselves and their gods. Whereas previously the Huichols were appreciated for the cheap labor they provided seasonally in the coastal tobacco, sugar-cane and cotton fields, now their cheap resalable crafts are being bought by city merchants. However, the Indian's greater contact with the city also afforded him insight into the money value of time in a modern society, besides arousing in him new appetites as a consumer. The result, of course, is that the merchant and the Huichol eventually reach a compromise: the Indian still sells him very cheap crafts as required, but his weaving is loose as is his stitchery; the designs are few and serialized without any personal touches; the materials ("day-glo" dyed synthetics and yarn, cheap thread with rapidly fading dyes) are selected for their inexpensiveness. Since the merchants obviously do not care about the symbolic content of Indian garments and other crafts, nor do they ever recognize the labor involved (at least not in front of the Indians), the Huichol has created for them new kinds of meaningless folk-crafts.

The Huichol have themselves been affected by the notions of time and exploitation of hand-labor prevalent in industrial societies. Richly embroidered costumes with a tight stitch made with only one or two threads at a time may take an otherwise occupied woman a couple of years to make. Similarly, a tightly woven belt will take many more weeks to make than a commercial belt. As a result, today it is rare for a Huichol to produce his finer crafts under any circumstances — even for himself. The complex archetypes which are so clearly depicted in all his crafts are losing the absolute meaning which they once had. Now all at once the Huichol is led to believe that his religious reality is relative, and his individuality is threatening to fade into anonymity as he emerges as a new member of the proletariat, without a culture.



# Yarn Paintings

José Benítez Sánchez and Tutukila

Yarn paintings were introduced as a craft in the last few decades by Huichol Indians who came into intimate contact with the outside world in cities like Zacatecas, Tepic, Guadalajara and Mexico City. These anonymous Indians began using plywood instead of calabash gourds and roughly hewn disks of wood, to create a craft adapted to urban materials with the purpose of selling them or giving them to merchants and influential people. Today yarn paintings are produced by a growing number of city-dwelling Huichols and the craft has been mastered by many non-Huichols. A yarn painting is essentially a collage of yarn on a sheet of plywood or masonite in which the glue is an adhesive coating of beeswax covering the board. The shape of the board is square or rectangular measuring up to four feet by eight feet, the size of a full sheet of plywood. In terms of the long term preservation of the yarn paintings the best adhesive is pure beeswax from the stingless bee of the highlands. This beeswax is hard to knead unless it has been softened by exposure to the hot sun or to some other source of intense heat. Sometimes the craftsman will liquefy it in an oven so as to apply it effortlessly on the wooden surface in an even layer, but in this process the beeswax loses some of its adhesiveness. Better results are obtained by kneading small pieces of sun-warm beeswax and spreading them on the surface of wood by hand. Once this is done, a single strand of yarn is slightly twisted and stretched along the margin of the board while the other hand is used to imbed the yarn on the coating of beeswax with the pressure of the thumbnail. In this manner, the board is framed with three bands of color before the figures within the border are outlined with different colors of yarn. After the figures are filled with yarn, the background is in turn covered with one or more colors that will effectively set off the figures.



In practice, the vast majority of yarn paintings are not made with pure native beeswax but with a resinous mixture thereof which has the advantage of being more readily available in urban centers, in addition to being much cheaper than pure beeswax and easier to use. This mixture requires very little heat to become soft and malleable; thus only slight pressure is needed to inlay yarn in the wax. Unfortunately, not only is this a much weaker adhesive, but also relatively small temperature changes will make it bleed into the yarn and cause a stain. Two strands of yarn are used simultaneously by most commercial craftsmen to reduce the time it takes to produce a yarn painting. This results in a looser inlay of the yarn and makes it impossible to twist it or to control the turns as precisely as it would using only one strand at a time. Moreover, the commercial craftsman is limited in his choice of yarn because only thin yarn can be applied effectively to the resinous adhesive without twisting since the thicker yarn is prohibitively expensive.

## José Benítez Sánchez

José Benítez Sánchez was introduced to us in October 1972 by one of the leading craftsmen in Tepic, Crescencio Pérez Robles. On a previous visit Crescencio had described José as an important shaman whose designs were the source of inspiration for Crescencio's yarn paintings; José would know the precise meaning of the symbols and the stories depicted in yarn. Actually, José Benítez had taught several dozen Huichol how to make yarn paintings. His apprentices were Huichol Indians who had become urbanized enough to try to eke out a living without depending entirely on their farming tradition. Among these apprentices, Juan Ríos Martínez eventually mastered his own forms to produce beautiful and original compositions. Others worked out a superficially personal style while basically sticking to simple compositions which they had at one time helped their master produce by filling in the background and figures that José had outlined with deep grooves in the beeswax matrix. It became apparent that he was the anonymous living source of the designs of many different craftsmen. The other major influence on yarn paintings was the work of Ramón Medina Silva who had been fatally shot earlier that year in a drunken brawl over a woman.

Following the publication<sup>20</sup> of twenty compositions by Ramón Medina Silva, he became the first Huichol artist to lose his anonymity and these compositions became patterns which were grossly imitated by a variety of craftsmen. After Ramón Medina Silva died, his widow, Guadalupe Ríos, and the workers who had helped him manufacture his yarn paintings, inherited some forty pictographic compositions which the artist had produced several times. This group has since continued to reproduce faithful copies,



sometimes taking liberties in expanding their format or varying certain colors. One of his former workers, Elijio Carrillo Vicente did create a number of new compositions that are tastefully elegant and reminiscent of his teacher's style. Medina's work strongly hints at the intricate world of aesthetics and metaphysics inherent in the Huichol culture, yet he limited his themes mostly to stories that the Indians learn in their childhood. If one is to believe his widow and other close collaborators, Ramón Medina Silva died before attaining the status of a shaman. In fact, the essential prerequisite for becoming a shaman among the Huichol is to follow the ways of the Ancestors, which the urbanized Huichol is hard put to do (see previous chapter). Nonetheless, the term *maraakame* (shaman) is loosely used by the Huichol, and we were soon told by José Benítez Sánchez that he was not really a *maraakame* either. A term that could be used literally to describe the role of these two men among their fellow Huichol yarn painters is master craftsmen. They mastered the medium over a long period of working with it and tutored a sizeable number of apprentices; they also were able to develop a style that is easily recognized as their own.

In seeking the creative artists among the good Huichol craftsmen, we became acquainted with more than forty Indians who made yarn paintings during the last five years. Few craftsmen did more than recreate images that had already been created before. Yet we eventually found four outstanding artists: José Benítez Sánchez, Guadalupe González Ríos, Juan Ríos Martínez and Tutukila (Tiburcio Carrillo Sandoval). What distinguishes them from other manufacturers of yarn paintings is visionary imagination that enables them to produce spontaneously fresh representations of their subjective experiences. Another common trait of these artists is that their work is always inspired by their concern with Huichol religious practices and beliefs. For this catalogue we selected works by José Benítez Sánchez and Tutukila because these artists were best able to express both visually and in words many deep aspects of Huichol culture while dealing with a universal question: Why are we here? How did it happen?

José Benítez Sánchez is easily the most fertile Huichol artist. In three years of close involvement with him we have seen José undergo such strong changes in style that craftsmen who had worked with him were baffled to see his new approaches after not seeing his work for a few months. The high drama of the themes that he depicts is rendered by bold color and the complex structures of his compositions. His figures are basic units solidly integrated into the dynamics of the general composition by their gestures and their form. The figure of a deer, for instance, will be simple enough to retain the characteristics of an abstract prototype, which is in keeping with the roots of Huichol tradition in religious design. But, we are made aware that this deer is a vision, not a zoologic entity, a creature of dreams and memories which will readily vanish like a ghost in a magically activated background or mutate into some other prototypical being. Such figures are chameleons animating an equally metamorphic environment. Their precise outlines are molded by their structural interrelationship with other figures.

The artist defines the cultural meaning of his main characters by depicting their magical attributes through symbols. Energy fields and lines of force emanate from his subjects, linking them to each other and signaling the areas over which they extend their immaterial influence.



José Benítez Sánchez draws his forms with a virtuosity acquired over many years of uninterrupted, full-time dedication to yarn painting. He slashes out a web of interconnected lines outlining indistinct forms in a tortuous film of dark beeswax, possessed by single-minded urgency: to crystallize a fleeting inner vision. His strong sense of rhythm and balance reflects the skill he displays in performing Huichol music and dances. The clarity of his visual perception is brought to life by his intuitive use of color. As with his forms, he has no preestablished concept of how he will combine his colors; the choice is made on the spot from a wide array of dyed wool yarn. He uses both thick and fine wool to achieve rich textures and to avail himself of a wider range of color tones. Significantly, he produces more work than most of his peers, yet he finds it abhorrent to reproduce his own compositions or those of another craftsman.

José Benítez was born in 1938 from Huichol parents of the community of Wautúa. His grandparents gave him the native name Yucauye, "silent," and the gods named him Cucame, "he who walks." Thus in Huichol his name is Yucauye Cucame, "Silent Walker." He was raised by his adoptive father Pascual Benítez, a practicing shaman, and his maternal grandfather, who died at the age of 105, after leaving a strong imprint in José's memory. He started working in the fields with his father when he was eight, and the next year, his father decided to train him as a shaman. José recalls vividly the ceremonial hunt that initiated his religious training. The master shaman and his young apprentice searched the canyons for deer trails, setting rope snares (*nierika*) to trap their magic prey. The next day they found a deer caught in a snare. Pascual Benítez considered it a good omen that the animal was still alive. José covered the deer's snout with his mouth sucking its breath until it expired. Afterwards, young José was instructed to go into mourning for six years during which he should not touch a woman nor spice his food with salt. During the next four years he made yearly pilgrimages on foot to the Pacific Coast and to sacred caves deep in the Sierra. When he reached the age of fourteen, however, he was forced by his parents to marry a girl, according to the Huichol custom. Soon thereafter he ran away seeking work in the coastal fields and went out into civilization without knowing any Spanish. "When I started working as a coastal laborer, I left my Huichol clothes and my sandals, changing them for Mexican clothes and I soon felt like a *mestizo* (mixed blood). I never forget my traditional customs, but it was not the same because I had abandoned my plans for becoming a *marakame*." It was not long before José came in contact with government officials in charge of rural communities. He started working for them in various capacities, sweeping their offices and eventually traveling to every community in the Sierra and its foothills as a spokesman for the Mexican authorities. In the meantime he started (1963) to try out his skills at making yarn paintings: "I could not draw the figures as they ought to be represented, but I began to think back about the lives of my grandparents and parents and the sacred lore." By 1968 he was recognized as a foremost practitioner of Huichol arts and invited to perform Huichol music and dances at the Olympic Games in Mexico. During the next three years he headed a workshop for the performance of Huichol dances and he tutored other Indians in the manufacture of yarn paintings, under a program sponsored by INBA (National Institute of Fine Arts). After this, José returned to the INI (National Institute for Indigenous Affairs) being placed in



charge of the selection of authentic Huichol crafts in a government program that was aimed at supporting the heavily exploited Indian artisans. He soon left this position which made him a critic of the crafts of his own people instead of allowing him to direct his creative energy. Three years ago he turned exclusively to his art in order to express the religious vision of his heritage.

José Benítez Sánchez feels that his artwork began to show a marked improvement as a consequence of a pilgrimage that he made to Wírikuta, the land of sacred peyote, where the spirits of his deceased ancestors live side by side with the god-ancestors. "Nierika is a peyote," he writes, expressing that the religious experience of peyote is instrumental in seeing the reality of the supernatural. Through this medium he communed with his ancestors, reexisting their instructions about the "custom," and he returned to his creative endeavors with his heart-memory, *iyari*, possessed by the gods. Addressing himself to Kauyumarie in a song of his composition, the artist exalts his Elder Brother: "Kauyumarie's speech, *niukiteya* [his "words"], and his figures, his designs, his thoughts never come to an end as manifested in his pulse, *matsuwa* [adorned bracelets], and in the sacred designs on his face, *uxa*."

It is not surprising that José Benítez Sánchez was picked at an early age for training as a shaman since he is prone to having vivid dream-visions which shock him out of his sleep, and remain clear in his memory. His composition *Dream Vision at the Edge of Darkness* (p. 31) is a direct expression of such dreams. When he produced this piece the artist had been staying with us on his first extended visit to the United States, and he had not had a chance to work in yarn for a couple of weeks. During that time he had disturbing dreams which he described verbally, expressing the desire to depict the visions which had startled him in his sleep. Then, as soon as he was afforded the opportunity, he set himself to his task, refusing to take a break until he had finished, seven nearly sleepless days later.

The flexibility and spontaneous creativity of José Benítez Sánchez can be seen in this recent yarn painting (see below) which documents his trip to the San Francisco Bay Area. In it, he had included the manifestations of the Bay Area spirits which appeared to him in dreams during the visit. His ability to capture the spiritual essence of these entities (the Bay, the Berkeley Hills, and the plane which brought him from Mexico) shows that yarn painting imagery is not limited to traditional Indian activity, but can be brought to bear on any situation.

## Dream Visions At The Edge Of Darkness

Here we see Yucauye Cucame (Silent Walker — José Benítez Sánchez' Huichol name) when he came to the dark edge of the world (the United States).<sup>21</sup> In his dream state his soul comes in special contact with the Ancestor-gods. They have come from the Holyland of Wírikuta to follow their "paper flower," *xuturi*,<sup>22</sup> who always calls them and his father and mother by name. We see the shadows of the gods that appeared with Elder-Brother Kauyumarie (the Deer-Spirit spokesman of the gods).



Kauyumarie came in person the first night. He found a prayer-mat on which to rest (left of center) by the hearth. He came seeking Yucauye and found him in his soul, *kupuri*. Yucauye was sleeping, as Kauyumarie's words, *niukiteya*, his breath, *iyāya*, left his body to speak with Yucauye's soul or shadow (large figure at upper right). "What are you doing so alone on this course?" Kauyumarie asked.

Then, on the second night, all the gods gathered: Our Grandfather Fire, Tatewarí (orange figure, near center), Our Father Sun, Tawevíékame (not represented), Our Mother Moist Earth, Tatéi Yurianaka (center left margin) and Our Mother Eagle Girl, Tatéi Wērika Wīmari (large bird upper margin). Kauyumarie's soul and his heart, split into two separate deer aspects (his soul is a deer above his head, his heart is the deer below).

Kauyumarie wishes to present his *nierika* (small disk at dead center) to the Spirits of Yuwipa, "where it is dark".<sup>23</sup> Thus his "heart" who is Our Elder Brother Blue Deer, Tamatsi Maxayuavi, speaks to the Spirit of the High Hills (green snake form at lower left).<sup>24</sup> He shows him two souls, in the shape of two faces expelled like vapor from his nostrils; the soul of the Huichol is above and the soul of the American is below. "Look," says the Blue Deer, "our souls are the same, even though we don't understand each other." The red field is the area in which the American soul lives. The light blue field is for the Indian soul. The Spirit of the High Hills then asked the deer what *nierika* meant, to which Blue Deer answered, "Nierika is sight and heart, *iyari*, and pulse, *matsuwa*, and sacred designs on the face, *uxa*, and foot tracks, *kakái* (literally footwear), and soul, *kupuri*." The Spirit of the High Hills in the dark world received this insight and revealed his name to the Deer. His name, Kieraka Cuāca, stands for the plumed-arrow of the sun, *kieraka*, because this spirit on the highest Berkeley hill reaches out to the sky blue area where the sun lives with the Huichol Ancestors. Cuāca means that he cannot be understood, as though he had his mouth full. The Spirit of the Lagoon (San Francisco Bay, located in the pink, white and emerald green areas, bottom center) lies in front of him; its name is Hatsinari, because of the ripples and waves in it. Fog rises from the lagoon to the hills where we see the house (center, below Tatewarí) in which Yucauye stayed.

Kauyumarie's soul is as a droplet of water and it is his shadow which appears in the form of a deer. The deer is linked to the Mother of Above, Our Mother Eagle Girl who spoke in this manner: "We are here because we have followed our 'paper flower.' Well, I do not care to know any more about this. What I say is that our 'paper flower' Yucauye must return to his place." After hearing the words of the Eagle, all the gods agreed that Yucauye should return. Our Mother Ocean (not represented) drew up a punishment for Yucauye: he will have to take a prayer bowl with coins stuck inside in the form of a cross, to her abode on the sea coast. It was also revealed to Yucauye in his dream that Grandfather Fire demanded that another prayer bowl be taken to the Holyland of Wírikuta. (The prayer bowls are below Mother Earth, at left. The black one is for the Ocean, the red one for the Fire.)

Fortunately, Our Mother Earth was also there with him, separating to one side the evil Serpent Spirits of the Dark World (upper left corner) to prevent them from harming Yucauye. Were it not for this he would





16. José Benítez Sánchez, *Dream-Visions at the Edge of Darkness*



have fallen sick, but Our Mother Earth asked the Spirit of the High Hills to be peaceful. She explained that Yucauye was not here for good and promised that they would all be leaving soon after a visit. We see her words (pink dots between the snakes) pacifying the serpents, *kukuterixi*. The red figure (bottom left corner) is the "heart" of the Spirit of the High Hills; this is his wrath, the angry side of his character which forms when he is displeased. Tatei Hätsinari, the Mother Spirit of the Lagoon (crested four-legged animal, lower margin) was becoming angered and getting ready to strike at Yucauye. But the Spirit of the High Hills told her to calm down: "It is the same soul, it is a pity we don't understand each other. I am keeping an eye on him," said Kieraka. The white plumes near the base of his hill are his ears but he cannot understand.

Yucauye has felt estranged in this place. His soul needs the food which his body has lacked. But, at the same time, Kauyumarie advised Yucauye's father and mother of how he had found him here. So, on that second night they immediately came to the edge of darkness from the Holyland of Wirikuta. Since Yucauye had not eaten tortillas as the "custom" requires, his mother (center right margin) brought him four little tortillas, *innüa*, (multi colored circles) like the ones eaten in Wirikuta. They changed to peyote when they reached Yucauye's shadow self. His father (upper right corner) brought Yucauye good "heart" and "soul" to strengthen his spirit so he would not feel sad and lonely. For, although his parents are dead, they still protect Yucauye when he is sad and without food for his soul. His father straightens out his soul with his plumed-arrow. Yucauye learns that he has only four years of life left before joining his parents. His life span is revealed in the four spots on his father's hair and the four little tortillas which each stand for one year. The face of his shadow self is spotted with yellow *uxa* root design.<sup>25</sup> Some of the spots on the right side of his face are slightly smeared, but most of them are intact.

Yucauye's shaman basket (below Yucauye's shadow-self) contains his sacred instruments, words of Kauyumarie appearing outside the basket as a deer's head. The round *nierika* disk (center) is attached to its antlers and Kauyumarie is entrusting it to Grandfather Fire (straddling the house). "Do not leave the *nierika*," says Kauyumarie. "You know that you are in charge of everything for I am busy." Within the house are the designs that Kauyumarie taught Yucauye, drawn on *tablas* (yarn paintings). An ovoid figure within the house symbolizes *Kauyumarie iyarieya* (thoughts of Kauyumarie).<sup>26</sup> If the *nierika* was lost, these drawings would cease to be from the heart of Kauyumarie. The yellow spots (some connected below the house) are dew-drops, the food of the god-Ancestors. Yellow flowers in the sky blue field of the ancestors are the flowers among which Kauyumarie likes to live.

This is what appeared in Yucauye's dream at the gathering of the gods of his soul and so we see how the gods have assisted José Benítez Sánchez. He is represented in person on a bird (lower right), Grandfather Fire, which is the airplane that brought him here. José Benítez Sánchez sits on what appears to be a ceremonial chair, *uwén*, overlooking some high mountains, before reaching the San Francisco Bay. In his hands he feels the power of the craft, and a red line (along right margin) connects him to his dream-self. Two small bug-like creatures at the end of the red line represent his soul which is about to wake up, returning to his head.



Art is the creative therapy through which José Benítez Sánchez reconstitutes his fragmented psyche (to paraphrase Herbert Read). Thus he completes his concept about peyote being a *nierika*, adding that, "Nierika is like what we see in our mind and our mind is like Watetüapa." Watetüapa, as the reader will come to understand from the catalogue entries, is the primordial world which existed before ours. Watetüapa, the matrix of the god-Ancestors, is a black and mute world in which all the elements of our life are posited in embryonic form. Language and vision exist at a telepathic level. Our Ancestors, the gods, had not yet developed their potential being in this stage. They started acquiring identifiable forms through their thoughts which became words and precipitated material events. In Watetüapa all spirit and matter possessed an indefinite human form, although this original form mutates to reveal its eventual reality as a divine Ancestor of earthly beings. "In the beginning," says José, "all creatures were washed in white. When they emerged from the dark Underworld, they took on the myriad colors that we see about ourselves."

The artist's designs as well as his interpretation of religious concepts are expressions of a pre-conscious, pre-linguistic inner time and space. In José's recreated visions, the simultaneous experience of physically disconnected times and spaces is faithfully conveyed as a harmonious unit both visually and thematically. Were he to lose his *nierika* he would not see the images of his dreams and capture their meaning, for his *nierika* signifies his ability to grasp the spirit world, the eye of his soul. With his *nierika* fixed on Kauyumarie's changing aspects, José surveys a kaleidoscopic world in which the physical fuses with the metaphysical. He enables us to explore universal archetypes contained in a deep-rooted religion expressed with highly individual artistry. "Our memories," says José, referring to Kauyumarie and himself, "will stay here in our designs and compositions."

## Tutukila

Tutukila is producing an epic history of the feats of the mythological Huichol Ancestors. All the yarn paintings he has made for us during the two years that we have worked together are linked to each other in a sequence that starts with the world before the flood (see Cat. 1). Despite his youth, Tutukila has been making yarn paintings longer than most older craftsmen, and he is recognized by his fellow artists for his peerless craftsmanship. A close look at his art reveals his intricate manipulation of detail which lends more realism to his figures than we find in the work of José Benítez Sánchez and other artisans. He slowly forms the figures in his compositions, working with great application and concentration, without any outlines sketched on the beeswax. Even in large yarn paintings, the artist will render all the major features of each figure before beginning to form the next one. The color field that surrounds his figures follows their contours carefully, enabling the artist to create unique linear patterns that radiate their forms and integrate them into the overall composition. The vibrancy created by Tutukila's harmonious textural approach confers an inner vitality to his figures (see Cat. 7). Since he has found it difficult to enlist the help of equally



meticulous apprentices, he works mostly by himself or with his wife Turuima ("corn stalk"). Tutukila's art is more reflective and style-conscious than José's, partly because of his painstaking technique and partly because he intends his art to reflect his themes in faithful detail. In effect, Tutukila views his art as part of an effort to capture the significance and richness of his culture. He is keenly aware that other Mexicans and outsiders regard his people as ignorant members of an inadequate culture. He hopes that *mestizos* and young Huichols will come to realize that the Indian culture is valid.

Tutukila was born in 1949 on a ranch belonging to the Tuapuri community. His Mexican name is Tiburcio Carrillo Sandoval and his indigenous name is Niukame, "sprouting corn." Later he adopted the name Tutukila which he derives from *tutú*, a flower associated with corn, and *kixa*, which refers to the action of beating the corn stalks with a stick to release the pollen or dust before the harvest. In 1963 he began his formal education to "become civilized in the *mestizo* (Mexican) culture." At present, having passed the equivalent of seventh grade, he is one of the better educated Huichol, in contrast to José who never entered first grade. He started making commercial yarn paintings in 1963 as an apprentice to a fellow Tuapuritánaka (member of the Tuapuri tribe), named Andrés Valenzuela. "Andrés," he writes, "did not want to teach me how to work properly, but by observing him I dedicated myself to forming certain figures as a game or for a decorative effect. With time my designs improved although they remained crude." The next year he left the school to go to Guadalajara seeking work as a craftsman. ". . . there, I met the unforgettable craftsman and artist Ramón Medina who was working with Father Ernesto" (Ernesto Loera, former head of the Franciscan Mission near Guadalajara). Medina, whose compositions treated meaningful themes, hired Tutukila to assist him in making yarn paintings. After four months Tutukila returned to the highlands, seeking to further his knowledge about his own culture by asking his father pertinent questions. The father responded by telling his son that he would orient him later if he continued demonstrating an interest in his people's history. Consequently, Tutukila furthered his religious education by visiting the sacred dwelling spots of the great Ancestor-Spirits. At the same time, he continued pursuing his craft and his Mexican education, visiting Guadalajara and eventually Mexico City. In order to learn more about his culture, Tutukila has interviewed elder wise people in his tribe, ". . . but," he writes, "even in these last few years none of them has told me the truth; so, I have relied on my own insight and the teachings that my father has divulged to me." Since he has been working in earnest with us, he has had to perform special rites and sacrifices for revealing aspects of sacred history to an outsider, in hopes that his culture will receive more respect from those who would like to change it radically.

Tutukila stresses the Huichol ethic of not revealing the truth to those who have not reached religious maturity through active practice and rigorous devotion on a long-term basis. The Ancestors achieved their ends by often resorting to treachery and by testing those who sought their help. Today the wise shamans, having gained their knowledge through penitence and discipline, will not instruct others who seek knowledge gratuitously, especially youngsters who would earn a living outside their culture by prostituting the mysteries of a well guarded heritage.



# Notes

1. S. Ramos, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*, Austin, Texas, 1962, p. 34.
2. Published in C. Lumholz, *Unknown Mexico*, Volume II, New York, 1902 (hereafter Lumholz, 1902) and idem, *Symbolism of the Huichol Indians*, New York, 1907 (hereafter Lumholz, 1907).
3. Mention should also be made here of Juan Ríos Martínez and Guadalupe González Ríos who also show originality and serious artistic intent.
4. Hiikúripa means "among the peyote" in Huichol. This is a reference to the Holyland where the Huichol make pilgrimages seeking communication with their ancestors through the use of the peyote cactus. Maxakuaxí means Deer-Tail. He is named in numerous myths dealing with the Holyland, which is generally called Wirikuta, instead of Hiikúripa. (See Cat. No. 4).
5. L. Diguët, *La Sierra du Nayarit et ses indigènes*, Paris, 1899 (hereafter Diguët, 1899).
6. A Huichol shaman named Yausali, meaning "costume of the sun", still makes yearly pilgrimages to the peak of Sakaimuka. He describes the spirit embodied there as the Father of the Sun. Evidently, the memory of this sacred spot and its traditional meaning did not fade in two hundred and fifty years, despite the obliteration of the temple and its temporary replacement by a Catholic church.
7. Lumholz, 1902, pp. 22, 23.
8. Diguët, 1899, p. 22.
9. Peyote, *hikuri* (*Lophophora Williamsii*, LEM.) is a small spineless cactus with most of its body below the ground. It is surrounded by thin bark-like scales and its green head is spotted with small white tufts of fuzzy hair. Peyote contains several alkaloids, notably mescaline, which produce a change of sense awareness, stimulating color and auditory visions. It does not grow in the Huichol region, but several hundred miles away in the desert. Its use was widespread in Pre-Columbian Mexico. The Huichol masticate it slowly despite its extremely bitter taste.
10. Population estimates go as high as 12,000.
11. Lumholz, 1902, pp. 212, 213.
12. W. Krickenberg, *Las antiguas culturas mexicanas*, Mexico, 1956, p. 176.
13. The "Tree of Wind" or Kieri tree is quite similar in its effect to datura (jimsonweed) because of its content of atropine (the author is grateful to Dr. Alexander Shulgin for providing this chemical information on the basis of a small sample). The Indians rarely ingest Kieri and claim to be affected by its mere proximity. Resembling a shrub, often barren of leaves and bearing few branches, knotted and twisted like antlers, it grows in inaccessible areas like steep cliffs and rocky mountain peaks.
14. Lumholz, 1902, p. 206.
15. Lumholz, 1902, p. 208.
16. L. Spence, *Arcane Secrets and Occult Lore of Mexico*, Detroit, 1973, p. 107.
17. Lumholz, 1902, p. 217.
18. Lumholz, 1907, p. 70.
19. Snakes are symbolic of rain, lightning, by extension, good marksmanship and the arrow, rivers and paths. José Benítez Sánchez has expressed to me that the belt itself is also symbolic of the long penis of the male Ancestors which they wrapped around their waist. At that time women had teeth on their vaginas and there was no copulation.
20. P. Furst, *Myth in Art: A Huichol Depicts His Reality*, Los Angeles, 1968.
21. It is so called because the United States is beyond the world controlled by the Huichol Ancestors. It, therefore, corresponds to the underworld that the sun goes through when it sets in the land known to the Huichols.
22. *Xuturi* is the term used by the Ancestors to designate all Huichol adults. Paper flowers are made as offerings to the gods.
23. The Holyland of Wirikuta, where the peyote cactus grows, is the abode of the gods and also of the worthy Huichol, like José's parents, who have died.
24. The Berkeley Hills.
25. *Uxa* is a spiny bush found in the desert Holyland. Pilgrims draw sacred yellow designs on their faces with its pulverized roots. If the design gets smeared it is a bad omen. *Uxa* means joy, strength, delight, thoughts and memory. When the soul is hungry, one's *uxa* fades.
26. The *Kauyumarie iyarieya* are the thoughts of Kauyumarie which he taught to Yucauye and which Yucauye has drawn on *tablas* (Mexican, literally wood boards and, by extension, yarn paintings).



# Catalogue

In compiling this catalogue we are aware that many important aspects of the "creation of the world" are not covered in the entries which we describe hereafter. Even a superficial study of Huichol mythology exposes one to the complexity and diversity of the religious concepts of these people. Our purpose in the first place is to acquaint the public with the fresh concepts of aesthetics rendered by José Benítez Sánchez and Tutukila Carrillo. Secondly we have brought together several works by these two artists which reflect individual styles, as well as an individual understanding of their religious history. Both José and Tutukila have worked with great zeal, understanding the non-exploitive nature of this writer's interest in their ideas and appreciation of their art. We have lived, celebrated and fasted together to achieve a degree of trust which enabled the artists and a number of other Huichols to express themselves with sincerity, insofar as we made an effort to experience their reality and understand the subjective meaning of their words. We hope that the text accompanying the art will enhance the reader's visual understanding of its emotional dynamics, and give him some insight into his own spiritual nature.

## Classification of Catalogue Entries

Catalogue entires 1 through 12 are by Tutukila Carrillo. They are arranged according to their mythological time sequence. The first five yarn paintings center around the story of the flood, the resettlement of the Ancestors in the highlands after the flood, and the death of Tacutsi, Our Great-Grandmother, the principal character in this initial cycle. She possesses a dual personality both as a preserver and germinator of life, and as a fearful blood-thirsty sorceress. Catalogue 6 and 7 are taken from



the "Story of Tatewarí," Our Grandfather, who is deified as the Ancestor of Fire, giving to the world its first source of light and heat. Following Tatewarí's orders the first deer are located and hunted. Catalogue 8, 9 and 10 are from the "Story of Tatata Nuitsíkame," Our Father, who appears as the Sun following the sacrifice of a boy in the flames. Kieri Awatusa, the Tree of Wind with White Antlers is a younger god-spirit who was not manifest before the flood (Cat. 11 - 12).

José Benítez Sánchez' stories are more lyrical and do not follow a clear sequence in that many include simultaneous events. Tamatsi Kauyumarie, Our Elder-Brother Deer-Spirit, is the principal protagonist, representing the unified soul of all the Ancestors. Catalogue 13 through 21 depict Kauyumarie's preparatory actions before the destruction of Watetuapa, the primordial world. Once Kauyumarie organizes the second world, called Heriepa, all the ancestors precipitate their own death and the world is covered by a flood (Cat. 22 - 27). While the spirits of the ancestors rise to the surface of the earth, Tacutsi Nakawé floats with her companion Watákame until the waters recede. Catalogue 28 through 32 are part of this "Cycle of Watákame." The functions of the ancestors become defined as the new world is organized and, once their roles are established, they die again to acquire divine status in the third world, Taheimá. Their earthly bodies change into the various plants, animals and elements that we know. They remain vital to this day, regulating our lives (Cat. 42 - 47).

The pronunciation of Huichol words generally follows Spanish pronunciation with the exception of "x" which is pronounced like the "s" sound in the English word pleasure or the French "j" in Jacques. In almost all instances — the Spanish word Huichol being a notable exception — the letter "h" (pronounced as in English) replaces the Spanish "j." The "ü" is also used in some instances where the sound occurs. Because of regional differences, Tutukila pronounces Tamatsi Kauyumarie as Tamats Kauyumari.



**1 Before the Flood**

36 x 42

Life in the world began in darkness near the coast. The land sloped upward without feature; no rivers or mountains existed. The wisest beings in those times communicated by telepathic means for they were unable to see each other, and they were called *hewietari*. They were the Ancestors (figures left to right in the black area) whose names were Tamatsi Kauyumarie (Our Elder Brother Deer Spirit), Tamatsi Maxakuaxí (Our Elder Brother Deer Tail), Tacutsi (the Wisest, who was to become Our Great Grandmother Growth), Tatéi Yurianaka (Our Mother Moist Earth), and Tatewari, who had discovered the only source of light on earth, *tai*, the fire, and his is the name of Grandfather Fire. The sacred instruments of their powers were kept in their *xiriki*, the god-house seen at lower left. □ Tacutsi knew that a disaster was forthcoming. In preparation, she had each of her companions make a *nierika*, a sacred design symbolizing their divine being. This done, they set out upon a path upwards from the coast (wavy line between the two beings at left). On the first day, they reached Xeutari Waaka, where existed the only lagoon of those times (green and orange oval design) in the area now known as Mesa de Nayar. They continued onward to Kiewimuta where they engraved each *nierika* around a rock face on the mesa. It was there the darkness was dispelled by the first appearance of the sun (upper right), which Tacutsi saw as an omen that a deluge would engulf the earth though the world would emerge again. They then placed a sacred design of the sun, Taweviékame, in the center of their disk, to which they gave the name Nierika Mamna (at center).<sup>1</sup> From left, counterclockwise, around the sun symbol are seen the *nierika* of Tamatsi Maxakuaxí, Tamatsi Kauyumarie, Tatéi Yurianaka, Tacutsi and, at top, Tatewari, whose position indicates that he is always the leader of a pilgrimage. Atop the *nierika* are five *muvierixi*, arrows that are the sacred instruments of their supernatural powers, four of which Tacutsi asks her companions to carry to the four corners of the earth, while she places hers with Nierika Mamna in Kiewimuta, the center of the world. It was here she grew her first crop of maize. □ As these preparations took place, another being, Watákame (far right with cutting tool in hand), was attempting to clear his field for planting maize. Yet for several days he had returned to find the brush he had previously cleared standing again uncut, for at night, unknown to him, Tacutsi would come and raise the brush with her staff. When he discovered her (to his right), he demanded an explanation. She told him his labors were unnecessary for a disaster was coming and instead he should cut down a fig tree (far left) and make a canoe. She instructed him to take as his personal companion a black bitch, who embodied Tatéi Yurianaka (Mother Moist Earth). Two birds, the one (top left) from Xápaviyemeta (a place known as the center of Lake Chapala) and the other from Haramara (the ocean), announce to Tacutsi, their words flowing from their beaks, that the sea is rising and the flood approaches. Above the bird at left are streaks of lightning. □ Though Watákame was a common *hewietari*, his wisdom incomplete, as signified by his two depictions bearing three and two dots respectively (for five is a number of completion), his earnest interest in the conversations of the five divine ancestors won him the privilege of becoming their companion. Taking with them their sacred arrows, the five ancestors boarded the canoe with Watákame and rose atop the waters of the flood to travel for four years to the corners of the earth in search again of Nierika Mamna. In the fifth year, guided by the bird from Xápaviyemeta, they found dry land there and they were able to descend and continue their search.

1. Since then, the sacred aspect of the sun is always placed at the center of a *nierika*.





1. Before the Flood



## 2 After the Flood

36 x 42

The ancestors found the first dry land after the flood at Xápaviyemeta. In the canoe (upper right) sit Watákame with his rowing stick, Tacutsi, the mighty deity of growth, with her staff, *itsú*, and the black bitch of Watákame, embodying Tatéi Yurianaka (Our Mother Moist Earth), with the squash, maize and grains they saved. They consecrate this spot by leaving (on the variegated green area) an arrow and a *nierika*. Watákame placed his arrow in Hauramanaka (in the present state of Durango) and attached to it (top left) a votive bowl, *xucuri*, of Tatéi Yurianaka and his *nierika*, with the design of the Clearer of the Fields and a corn stalk. □ Tacutsi begins her search for Nierika Mamna, which now bears the symbol of the sixth ancestor, Watákame. It is found near where it had been left, at Kiewimuta. Gathered again before the *nierika* are Tacutsi (at left) with her staff and Tatewari, God of Fire, seated on their sacred chair, *uwén*, while Tamatsi Kauyumarie (Elder Brother Deer Spirit) and Tamatsi Waxakuaxí (Elder Brother Deer Tail) appear above, flanking a large arrow. Tacutsi orders them to take this arrow to Wirikuta, which lies to the east, though she makes their way difficult by trying to confuse them with messages sent through the *nierika* (as wavy lines). □ As they near the sacred water sources of the east at Tatéi Matinieri, the antlers of the two deer-people fall from their heads. Tamatsi Maxakuaxí eats his antlers, though they are also his *muvierixi*, and for his mistakes he is transformed into the rabbit, *tatsiu* (top left). Tamatsi Kauyumarie takes his antlers with him and is finally able to reach the center of Wirikuta. Seeking his spiritual being, he takes his bow and arrow (at right below the canoe) to hunt the peyote, *híkuri*, which is also himself as a deer. Tacutsi telepathically attempts to stop him but his *nierika* (seen attached to the deer's mouth) deflects her messages, and he shoots his arrow into the peyote. When Elder Brother Deer Tail finally reaches Wirikuta in rabbit form he is unable to achieve the same transformation and becomes instead a large inedible peyote called maxakuaxí (right of the deer Kauyumarie). They each leave their arrow here at Takao, the blue arrow of Tamatsi Kauyumarie and the red of Tamatsi Maxakuaxí. Kauyumarie then makes ready for his return. He prepares an *aikutsi*, a votive bowl filled with peyote (seen atop his back). He leaves his antlers behind and, with his arrows and bowl, he departs Wirikuta. □ Tacutsi and Tatewari have remained guarding Nierika Mamna until the return of the two deer-people. When Tamatsi Kauyumarie arrives, the four ancestors who stayed behind accept the peyote that is offered. Tacutsi, once having eaten hers, decides to find a more appropriate spot for the sacred *nierika*. A copy is made and it is carried to Teacata near Tuapuri, where Nierika Mamna is now seen surrounded by peyote (lower right). It is here that Tacutsi, Tatewari and Tamatsi Kauyumarie (clockwise at lower right) founded their god-houses and placed their sacred arrows. From the bowl beside the lower god-house is served ground peyote as the ancestors celebrate the feast of *híkuri*. When the feast ends, Tamatsi Kauyumarie returns to Wirikuta where Maxakuaxí stayed. □ Tatéi Yurianaka (bottom center) has, in the meantime, decided to return to the coast, accompanied by Watákame and his black bitch. She carries with her a pot and a votive gourd containing all the seeds for new growth. Watákame carries his water gourd, his cutting tool and his *turikui*, a stick used to gather the brush to be chopped. The maize plant symbolizes the fertile growth since found near the coast. Reaching the coast, Tatéi Yurianaka goes on to enter the ocean and becomes Tatéi Guaxieve, the sacred rock off the coast of what is now San Blas.





2. After the Flood



### 3 Tacutsi Communicates With The Principal Gods

35 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 48 $\frac{1}{8}$

Tacutsi Kiekari <sup>MaqKame</sup> Mahame, whose name means Our Grandmother who lays the foundation of the village, sits on her sacred chair (bottom center) at Teacata surrounded by the houses built by the principal gods. Though they may be on distant journeys or living elsewhere, as Tamatsi Kauyumarie and Tatéi Yurianaka were now, they could always be reached through their god-houses, *xirikixi*. Tacutsi, with her staff at her side and her sacred plumed arrows in hand, chants to convoke them to her side again. □ The *xiriki* of Tatewarí, Grandfather Fire, is behind her. Like all the god-houses, it is surmounted by a *nierika*, through which the god in question can be invoked and seen. Above is the *xiriki* of Tatéi Yurianaka and of Tayao, Father Sun (also Tatata and Taweviékame). In Tacutsi's *xiriki* her presence is not seen for she is in the center. Below is the *xiriki* of Tamatsi Kauyumarie. □ Tacutsi was the most powerful of the gods and she directed their activities. She started singing sacred songs celebrating Tatéi Neixa, so the children of her people, the Tatutuma, would be able to go to Wírikuta, the Land of the Gods. Before her is *aikutsi*, the votive bowl Tamatsi Kauyumarie brought from Wírikuta, with its peyote-corn flower designs, and the large peyote he shot with his arrow. □ Then she had a dream in which she divined that the feats of the gods were incomplete, that what needed to be obtained were a magical bowl and plumed-arrows which were in the possession of a cannibalistic race of people, the Hewiixi. <sup>1</sup> This bowl, which could call for rain, and the arrows were necessary to found a major temple, called *tuki*. Tacutsi wanted the Tatutuma to be able to seek knowledge of the gods in Wírikuta. For this they had to build the *tuki* and surround it with god-houses. Then, when the Tatutuma returned from pilgrimages, they could come to the *tuki* and to Teacata where she sang. And so she made plans to capture these instruments from the Hewiixi. □ Tacutsi first started calling back Tamatsi Kauyumarie. With her telepathic powers, she saw him in Wírikuta in the guise of a peyote cactus (upper right), two deer emerging from the peyote's painted face, above which is a peyote flower. The flowers on the face and the painted symbols attached to the cactus were Tamatsi's words to Tacutsi. They indicated to her that he was already returning to Teacata from his second journey to assist Tacutsi in her plan. □ Tacutsi then contacted Tatéi Yurianaka, who appeared to her in a cloud over the sea as a siren-like being with sea serpents in front of her (upper left). Tatéi Yurianaka expressed her agreement with Tacutsi and sent to Teacata two serpents, Háikuyuáve. In this manner, she would help Tacutsi with her "words" (expressed by the serpents merged into one entity (at top center) and with her sacred aspect, *nierika* (between the serpents' heads). □ Tatewarí was present, close to Tacutsi. In his aspect as fire, he also was present everywhere. His words emanate from the flames (lower left). As Tacutsi's ally, he communicates with her and with Tatéi Yurianaka and Tamatsi Kauyumarie. □ By now Tamatsi Kauyumarie has arrived in his human form in Teacata (bottom right). He dances the peyote dances of Tatéi Neixa with his plumed-arrow from Wírikuta in hand. He has brought a second votive bowl with five dots on it, signifying that if the Tatutuma go to Wírikuta to gain knowledge from him they must go at least five times. The bowl is set on a woven mat called *itari*, prayer-mat. A flower design on Tamatsi's cheek is his *nierika*. □ Tacutsi is now ready to befriend the Hewiixi, whose powerful instruments she desires, by singing at their religious celebrations.

1. The Hewiixi are the people who populated the earth at the edge of the sea. They are generally evil. From them came the Tatutuma who are the ancestors of the Huichol who follow good precepts.





3. Tacutsi Communicates with the Principal Gods



## 4 Tacutsi and Tamatsi Kauyumarie Steal The Rain-Bowl and The Arrows

35<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 48<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

By singing chants which they admired, Tacutsi gained the friendship of the cannibalistic Hewiixi tribe, who possessed the two mighty plumed-arrows and the gourd bowl which brought rain. They would call on her to instruct them in her secret knowledge by singing her sacred stories at their celebrations (seen at lower right smoking a cigar with a drum, *tepo*, in front of her and a *muvieri* in her hand). Now they wanted Tacutsi to sing during their celebration of Nama Wita Neixa, which is held before the seeds are planted in June. In honor of the occasion, the Hewiixi, who ate people and survived solely on blood, had sacrificed one of their tribe (bottom left margin). Tacutsi had to partake of their custom, and for drinking blood she was now of their family with her new name Nakawé.<sup>1</sup> □ However, before the celebration began, she had passed on the description of the bowl and the arrows to Tamatsi Kauyumarie, who was told to arrive that midnight with copies and exchange them for the instruments of the Hewiixi. They undertook this plan with the assistance of Itaikarixi, spirits who communicate at night: the *kuatsa*, black crow, the *kauxay*, fox, and the *muikuri*, owl (not depicted). These creatures placed a spell on the Hewiixi, and by midnight they had fallen asleep (as seen at lower left). The dots emanating from the crow are sleeping spells, *peha*. □ Tamatsi Kauyumarie had waited on a sharp peak (top left corner) in the area over a place where the Hewiixi lived called Kurupú Nakatá, meaning "inside" (*nakatá*) "the snail" (*kurupú*) because of the deep cave which was beneath the peak. Before he descended, he spread the ground with thorny stickers of the *tauxirra* plant (Mex. Guizapol, green plant with blue burrs, top left). Then reaching the area where the Hewiixi slept, he replaced the bowl and arrows and escaped back up the cliff. The Hewiixi awoke and, discovering their loss, set off in pursuit of Tamatsi Kauyumarie. Each time they would near him he would change into another form, animal, plant or mineral. And the fox and crow threw in their path more *tauxirra* stickers, the horn-shaped needles of the *upá* and the spines of the *ruxi* (two varieties of acacia).<sup>2</sup> □ Unable to track down the deer-person, they returned to capture Tacutsi Nakawé instead. But, as soon as she saw the instruments had been stolen, she stopped her drumming and fled in the opposite direction, taking her plumed-arrows, *muvierixi*, and her staff (upper right). When the Hewiixi finally approached, she ejected hot ashes from her body and a substance from her staff that released sparks when it hit the ground. Though the Hewiixi were scared, they kept returning to harass her. She finally escaped by bewitching them into killing each other and suffering deadly accidents. □ With the help of the instruments captured by Tamatsi Kauyumarie, the *tuki* was built and the gourd that calls for rain was placed within it. The two arrows, one blue for invoking female spirits and one red for invoking male spirits, now enable the peyote hunters to make the pilgrimage to Wírikuta, to hunt the peyote-deer and to celebrate afterwards Tatéi Hikuri, the peyote ceremony. Thus, the Tatutuma were able to reach Wírikuta as do their descendants, the Huichol (*Wixaritari*).

1. A *nakawé* is any dangerous beast who devours people.

2. The three species of thorny plants that were thrown at the Hewiixi to aid the escape of Tamatsi Kauyumarie are to this day spread around the house of a dead person to prevent it from returning to harm the family.





4. Tacutsi and Tamatsi Kauyumarie Steal the Rain-Bowl and the Arrows



## 5 Tacutsi Is Pursued By the Hewiixi

35½ x 48⅛

Tamatsi Kauyumarie had escaped from the Hewiixi with the powerful rain-gourd and arrows Tacutsi Nakawé had asked him to steal. Unable to find Tamatsi, the Hewiixi turned their pursuit to Tacutsi. Many who approached her were rendered drunk or crazy by the powers of her magic and fell from cliffs or killed each other. But a relentless few reached her and threatened to kill her if she did not return their arrows and bowl. Tacutsi told them that before they killed her they must learn more of her sacred knowledge. She said they must know how to take their hearts out of their bodies and she removed her heart from her chest and hung it on a tree (lower left) asking them to follow suit. As each Hewiixi removed his heart, he would die, while Tacutsi would promptly replace hers in her chest. Thus, the last of Tacutsi's pursuers was destroyed.

→ □ As she continued on her way, Tacutsi was met by Xurawe Temai and Tuamuxawi, who had been looking for her to sing as the principal shaman for her people, the Tatutuma, congregated at Teacata. Her blood boiling from her last encounter, she excused herself by saying she felt sick. Xurawe Temai and Tuamuxawi followed her insisting, but, when they realized their pleas were useless, Xurawe told Tacutsi they did not need her for they had learned something from her after all. This response angered Tacutsi. When midnight came, she transformed into a *nakawé*.<sup>1</sup> She appeared like a bat with many colors and large eyes (upper right corner). Her mouth spewed blood which fell around Tuamuxawi and Xurawe Temai creating a waterhole, called Tacutsi Haapa, which is near the area known as Tatéi Kié (Our Mother's House). To this day its water is red. □ The dripping blood made them realize that this horribly transformed creature was no longer the Tacutsi they knew and they shot at her (lower right). The arrow of Xurawe Temai wounded the beast (center) and she became Tacutsi Kiekari Mahame again, in human form. □ "This time you have mortally wounded me," said Tacutsi. "It was my own fault. You had the right to kill me. It is well." □ She gave them her staff and her sacred bowl (lower right). It fell between them in flames which they doused in the blood red waterhole. Reflected in their *nierikate* (the disks above their heads) the two Tatutuma saw Tacutsi's image as an idol (top left) by Tacusta where she used to live. Tacutsi asked them to carve this image from the wood of the Kuaixuri tree and to clothe it with her dress made from a cactus fiber. She saw her image, which was her "heart" and her spirit, calling her to the spot at the top of this high peak which has a hole near the summit. She directed her body where the rays from her eyes fell on the hole. Shedding white tears, she went to die. □ A god-house was eventually built for Tacutsi at the foot of this peak where she dwells in image form. At their main temple at Teacata, the Tatutuma built houses for each principal god and in that of Tacutsi they placed her staff and bowl so she would always be present at their celebrations. They modeled themselves after these gods and went to the sacred spots like Wirikuta, so that in five years they had learned some of the wisdom of the creating goddess, Tacutsi. She was the most learned shaman, and knew the words of all the sacred chants. Thus the Tatutuma continued the way of the first gods who laid the foundations: Tacutsi, Tamatsi Kauyumarie, Tatewarí, Tatéi Yurianaka and Watákame.

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5. Tacutsi Is Pursued by the Hewiixi



## 6 The Story of Tatewari: Our Grandfather Fire Transfers His Powers

23<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

After Our Great Grandmother Growth had died physically, the other elder god-Ancestors also decided to transfer their knowledge to a younger generation of god-Ancestors. The world was still plunged in darkness, and Tatewari, Our Grandfather, guarded the knowledge of fire. He was an ancient man who kept his fire carefully hidden in a cave. However, the young god-Ancestors whom Tutukila calls the Hewiixi became aware of the flickers of light which came from the cave. They entrusted Xurawe Temai, Young Star Person, with the task of obtaining the secret of fire. Using various ruses, and helped by the opossum, *yauxu*, Young Star was able to steal a burning ember of fire from the ancient Master of Fire. □ Now the Hewiixi had fire, but, to appease the anger of its ancient master, they vowed to sacrifice a deer to him and to smear his sacred arrow with it. However, the deer was not yet known to them, and they seemed incapable of finding it. □ The arrow which Young Star had made for Tatewari was not vested with the power to assist the young god-spirits. For this reason they could not succeed in their search for the deer and the wisdom of the elder god-spirits. □ At this point, the old man, Tatewari (bottom center), himself decided to make the arrow that was properly his, as well as his own *nierika* (a disk symbolizing his sacred face) and a sacred mat, *itari* (above fire). Young Star, standing by the seated old man, decided in like fashion to create his own sacred instruments. □ Thus, in the end, the ancient Master of Fire told the young god-spirit that he was fashioning his instruments in preparation for his death so that they could inherit his powers. He requested that an idol be made in his image with his arrow and its attached god-face (*nierika*) at one side and the arrow of Young Star on the other side. In that Manner they would find what they sought. □ Young Star, Xurawe Temai, was the name that the elder god-spirits had bestowed upon the young god-spirit when he was by their side.<sup>1</sup> He called his mother to his side, who asked him to reveal his true name and vest his arrow with his own powers. □ While Young Star sets out to produce his own arrow, next to Tatewari and his fire, his mother, Tatei Haiwima, appears within a cloud in the form of a star. Tatei Haiwima (Our Mother Who Is Like A Cloud) cries for joy, saying that her son is doing something of great importance for all, insofar as a new life is being formed. She conveys the news to the other god-spirits with feather-like lightning bolts (her words are multi-colored spots). □ A stain marks the chest of Young Star who is assuming his real identity as the master of the hunt and relinquishing his false name.

1. See Cat. 5. Young Star, Xurawe Temai, was not the true name of this young god-spirit.





6. Our Grandfather Fire Transfers His Powers



TUTUKILA CARRILLO

## 7 The Idol of Tatewari

23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

Finally all the religious objects were formed appropriately: the arrows were made with due preparation and the idol was fashioned, much in the likeness of the old Master of Fire. □ The ancient man's votive arrow was placed to the right of the idol (our left) with its god-face, *nierika*. On the other side are Young Star's instruments: his arrow and a prayer-mat, *itari*. Healing plumed arrows, *muvierixi*, are attached to the idol's head. □ Upon the ancient man's death, his idol was removed from the inaccessible cave where he dwelt and placed in Tatewaritá, near the village of the gods, Teacata. □ Now the ancient man was named Tatewari, Our Ancient Man, the Grandfather of Fire. Indeed, he was previously called the ancient man, *teiwari*, for the Hewiixi did not know him or his significance. But, in time, his meaning became clear as the deer allowed themselves to be seen. Young Star also revealed himself now with his real name: Tamatsi Paritsika, Our Elder Brother, the master of the hunt and owner of the game. □ At present, the Huichol take vows to Our Grandfather Fire to the cave of Tatewaritá, where the idol is imbued with powers. There we learn his story. The idol is made of soft lava stone, *teanuxa*. Bits of the idol from the region of the heart are swallowed to instill inner strength. □ Soon after the idol was made in Tatewari's image, the Hewiixi continued the hunt for the deer, which they still needed to sacrifice to the deceased ancient master who remained present in fire as a god. Eventually, they located the game which has, since then, dispersed all over the earth. At the same time they discovered that Young Star was really the Master of the Game and that he had been misdirecting them in their hunt. Only after they had shown their ability to sacrifice themselves in their search, did the Master of the Game allow one of his animals to be killed in order to soothe Tatewari.

TUTUKILA CARRILLO

## 8 The Boy Is Sacrificed

23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

In a time before the sun had come into being, the world was in darkness. In the area of Heriepa, the highlands of the earth, lived a people called Hewiixi. There was a boy among them who was so disliked that he was constantly persecuted, and certain Hewiixi would chase him, beating him with sticks. The boy would walk sadly by himself about the hills and through the brush playing expertly with his bow and arrows. He felt like an orphan, for he did not even know who his parents were. □ Nevertheless, in his wanderings in the hills, he had come to meet some people who were really god-spirits. They told him not to turn these hurts against others for someday he would be something special. This was before he knew that he was destined to become Tatata Nuitsikame, Our Young Father, the Sun. □ One day as he was going to meet the god-spirits, the Hewiixi guards caught him, beat him with sticks again and tied him with the rope carried about the waist of one of his assailants. Then they took him to a place where many had gathered to see him die in a pot of boiling water. □ The boy was placed into a large pot of water boiling over



a fire. A sign appeared from above to a guard standing over the wood pile to free the boy, for he had suffered too much. But the guard ignored this telepathic communication from the distant god-spirits and the boy died. As he expired, he sighed and blood spewed from his mouth. Spots appeared on their flesh, and the Hewiixi became aware of how mistaken they had been to so mistreat the boy. □ The soul and spirit left his dying body. He was now Tatata Nuitsikame, Our Father In His Inception, the coming Sun. □ In spirit form, he returned to his customary spot in the hills to speak with the god-spirits. They asked him to stay by the surface of the earth and to search for his parents, who, they revealed to him, were still alive. Thus began his search to fulfill his obligations to come into being for the good of the world.

TUTUKILA CARILLO

## 9 The Sun Boy Visits His Parents

23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

The parents of the Sun Boy received a sign, so they went to a spot to spend the night in vigil by a fire. Their son, who was pursuing his path as a disembodied spirit, appeared to them at dawn above a peak. □ First they saw bright rays and then the ghostly figure of their child. The plumes upon his head were by now luminous rays, which were to be the arrows of the Sun. □ Blood from the hands of the young soul-spirit fell to the flames as he communicated his thoughts to his parents through the Spirit of Fire. Tatata Nuitsikame informed them that he no longer could be at their side, for he was to go far away. He offered the blood from his soul as a plea to his father to assist him in his struggle to rise above the earth. □ His parents, however, wished to have him come closer so they could see him better even if he was a ghost form. So they sent a Hewi to fetch him, but when the Hewi tried to approach he was struck by small-pox ejected from the Sun Boy's mouth. □ In need of assistance on earth, Tatata Nuitsikame set out to find a small child who would serve as his medium once he himself had ascended in the skies. To this child he would entrust his bow and arrows, his plumed arrow of speech, *muoieri*, and his *nierika*, a disk that reflects images of the god-spirits. Thus the child would become the very god-spirit of the Sun, and through him the high priest could speak with Tatata Nuitsikame in the heavens.<sup>1</sup> After a long search, he located his *hakieri*, the child who would be his representative.

1. To this day, a child under five is picked by an old man of the tribe to be the Medium of the Sun among the temple officers.



TUTUKILA CARRILLO

## 10 The Sun Fulfills His Struggle

23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

Then Tatata Nuitsikame started emitting heat. He rose slowly in the sky, pausing at four stages in his ascent when he could not climb any higher. At the same time his heat became so intense that rocks melted and plants were set afire. Once he reached the fourth level of altitude, near Tacutsi Metseri, Our Great Grandmother Moon, the Sun was fed the blood of a sacrificed bull by his *hakieri* to reach his final stage. After the blood gushed from the animal, rain began to pour on the scorched earth. □ Tatata Nuitsikame, strengthened by the sacrifice, made his final climb to reach the fifth level where he would remain forever. Thus he fulfilled his struggle to illuminate the once dark world in which his people had had to live as Hewiixi, so called because they could see in the night. □ Then his shaman father, Tatata Ampá, and the *hakieri* prepared a final offering to the Sun of the blood of a deer while his mother, Tatéi Guaxa Wimari, the Spirit of Corn, looked on. With the points of their arrows of speech, they sprinkled the blood from a bowl held by the *hakieri* in the direction of the Sun. The *nivotari*, or altar, had been prepared to receive the horned heads of the deer and the bull. Beside it were placed the votive arrow and the sacred water bowl of the Sun. The first new growths of the plants, which had been scorched, sprouted from the earth. □ Tears flowed down his face at his great distance in the sky, for he was never to be among his people again. Yet, the spirit of his presence would remain on earth among the Indians to whom he had bestowed his sacred instruments. □ Nowadays, he is embodied in a stone idol to which the blood that is not sprinkled in the air to him is brought, along with the horns and antlers of the sacrificed animals. From his special waterhole come the liquids used to fill his sacred bowl, the *aikutsi*.

TUTUKILA CARRILLO

## 11 The Strength of Kieri Awatusa is Tested

24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 48

Tsítsika Temai, Young Bee Person, stood between his fire and his shaman's chair, and, with his sacred plumed arrow, he spoke with the other god-spirits for Tamatsi Awatusa, Our Elder Brother White Antler. All the god-spirits finally agreed to give recognition to the Kieri plant.<sup>1</sup> *Xaye*, the large rattlesnake and most powerful of animals, is sent to guard Kieri Awatusa so that only the devout could approach the plant. □ A *nierika* is given to Awatusa by Tamatsi Kauyumarie, the Deer Spirit, to increase the powers of the Kieri. It is a copy of the one the god-spirits use in Teacata to receive and transmit sacred messages. Awatusa's companion, the woodpecker, acknowledges the recognition given the new Kieri by the god-spirits of Fire, Deer and Bees. □ Tsítsika Temai acts in agreement with Tatata, Our Father, the Sun, as they decide to test the strength of Kieri Awatusa. The hummingbird is sent by the Sun to try the juices of the Kieri's flowers,



but so powerful are they that the bird is knocked unconscious. Then the bees are sent by Tsítsika with offerings of flowers to test the pollen that Awatusa sends their way in person. The bees lose their flowers and become confused in their direction. □ Tatata, the Sun, thus accepts Kieri Awatusa and recommends him to the rest of the god-spirits because, by his demonstration of special powers, he has shown he will be of service to the Hewiixi, who are the people of that area.

1. See essay, p. 35, note 13.

TUTUKILA CARRILLO

## 12 Kieri Awatusa Is Feasted and Consecrated

32 x 48<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

All the god-spirits gather in Teacata and prepare a celebration to grant White Antler status as a god-spirit now that he has earned their acceptance to occupy the spot he had chosen. In recognition of his attributes, he received the votive arrow, the greatest symbol and instrument of power. The arrow, decorated with a bow, small footwear and a mat on which his spirit can rest, is placed at the base of his plant form.<sup>1</sup> □ A bull is sacrificed to him so that its blood may nurture his spirit, which is now becoming one with his plant. The spirit and soul of the bull will go to rest with the Kieri, as it requests before it expires. Incense is burned in a three-legged clay vessel to honor the bull. Great Grandmother Growth and Grandfather Fire dedicate votive candles to the spirit of Kieri. Tsítsika Temai conveys his felicitations from all the other god-spirits and asks for luck in finding blossoms. □ As the god-spirits of the area, Kieri Awatusa is served by his official animal companions and messengers. *Xaye*, the rattlesnake, conveys his gratitude to the god-spirits for receiving charge of guarding the Kieri. *Awatsay*, the crested woodpecker, will alert the Kieri spirit to the presence of those who approach. Kieri juice is expelled from its beak. *Tiiki*, the pollen of Kieri, is around its flower. □ The Moon and the Sun each offer him their personal *nierika* so he can be in contact with their spirits. Tacutsi Metseri, Great Grandmother Moon, is communing with Awatusa particularly, for they are spiritually akin in their androgynous nature, each taking on the appearance of a man to women and of a woman to men. The Moon smiles broadly, greeting her companion. She has painted her face to give the appearance of a pregnant woman whose skin changes hue. □ Thus Kieri Awatusa gained his place among the ancestor-spirits.

1. Thereafter, pilgrims who devoutly seek wisdom will bring such arrows, known as Tamatsi Awatusa Uruya, to White Antler so they can receive some of the power.





7. The Idol of Tatewari





8. The Boy Is Sacrificed





9. The Boy Visits His Parents





10. The Sun Fulfills His Struggle





11. The Strength of Kieri Awatusa Is Tested






12. Kieri Awatusa Is Feasted and Consecrated



## 13 The Ancestor-Spirits Meet For The First Time

23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>



Elder Brother Kauyumarie is seated at center, uniting the ancestor-spirits in the primordial world called Watetüapa. In those times, before the earth had been established, Kauyumarie brought the ancestors together, for they did not know each other yet. They did not know their own names or even how they would live, united or separately. □ Kauyumarie had the deities come to see him and thus they met each other little by little. Just as we do not get to know one another all at the same time, the ancestors came to know each other in stages, and so they joined in accord with one another under Kauyumarie's good auspices. □ Here we see the ancestor-spirits of the Sun (top left) and of the Sky (top right) both descending from their abodes in the upper reaches of the underworld of old. They are carrying their "words" in a small tobacco-gourd suspended from their wings. At the center, Kauyumarie gestures with his *muveri*<sup>1</sup> introducing the Spirit of the Sky to the Spirit of Dawn (bottom right). At the same time the Spirit of Dawn is greeting the Spirit of the Earth (bottom left). The words and life of the deities in the lower area are contained within round prayer-bowls. Flowers symbolize these "words of the gods," who change from birds into rock. □ The gods meet in the Holyland of Wirikuta which was in Watetüapa, the underworld, in those times.





13. The Ancestor-Spirits Meet for the First Time



## 14 The Communication Of Our Ancestor-Spirits

23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

We see here how the ancestor-spirits used to communicate with each other in the primordial world called Watetüapa. In those times our ancestors, the first "gods", did not use speech; instead they spoke in their soul, *kupuri*, or in their "memory." □ Their "words" would leave their minds to go very far away, reaching the top of a rock peak where they would expand into thoughts.<sup>1</sup> To them the tip of the peak was the sky, but the whole rock was really Tatéi Wērika Wimari, Our Mother Young Eagle Girl, who is the ancestor-spirit of the sky. The "sky" in this first world was a solid mass which would expand to form the earth (our world) above the underworld. Once the "memories", as José calls the travelling minds of our ancestors, got to the top of the peak, there was no place they could enter to go beyond the tip of the rock which they called the sky. After this, their memories returned, lowering themselves in swirling winds into the top of the head of our ancestors. □ Thus, here we see Tatewari (bottom center), Our Grandfather, the master of fire, and to his right, Taweviékame, Our Father, who became the sun, as they stand in front of a prayer-mat, *itari*, making contact with each other through their soul (small pink flowers) and their memories (the bug-like figures above them with swirls of wind attached like wings). Two yellow dots represent the information which the two ancestors receive from each other. □ While Our Mother, the Spirit of the Sky, was in the shape of a rock (flame-like form bisecting the painting) she collected the memories of the ancestors. Thus, when our world was created, she possessed the words of the ancestors which she instills in our soul. We are first born in her soul and then implanted in our mother's womb. The heart of Our Mother Young Eagle Girl was a serpent (seen enclosed in the rock) which is why eagles eat snakes today. The souls are attached to her flank in the form of four large flowers to the left of the great ancestors. □ The ancestors disappeared when their "words" reached the top of the peak; then they would reappear (yellow flowers) as if reborn. □ Ditch reeds (green object at right) also appeared in this first world. The first arrows were made out of them to contain the "words" of the ancestors. □ At this time Tamatsi Kauyumarie, the Deer Spirit (not seen) was arranging these things in the old world to enable the beings of the world to communicate their thoughts. Because all that existed in the first world exists now, there are people today who are dumb and deaf, as our ancestors once were.

1. "Words" in this instance refers to mental units which can manifest themselves as deeds. They are primary elements of thought at a pre-linguistic level which existed before the formation of the world.





14. The Communication of Our Ancestor-Spirits



## 15 The Squash Boy

24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 32<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

Here we see the ancestor Kauyumarie dealing with a boy who is a vine which is the squash plant. In the primordial world of our ancestors everything existed in person, all things spoke and walked. So, squash too, had the appearance of a person: it was a boy. However, in that old world called Watetüapa, Kauyumarie thought of arranging these ancestors so that in the next world they would be identified according to their usefulness and the characteristics which they would display when they performed as people. □ In this world (the earth on which we now live) only the spirits of our ancestors remain. Their spirits were all taken to Wirikuta, the Holyland, which is why we take sacred things to that holy desert. So the vital force of squash survives as a spirit on earth in Wirikuta. □ Here we see how a boy called Xeuniuwe came to be identified with squash: Kauyumarie was sitting against a pile of rocks one morning (lower left) when he heard the song of a dove atop a nearby tree (at right). He ordered the boy to find out what it was and bring it to him. However, when the boy got to the spot from which the sound was coming, he could not see the bird. In fact, he was hearing another voice speaking to his spirit. As he stood wondering what it could be, suddenly something fell on his head. It was like a squash flower, *xewá*, which was then a star of the morning called Xewápapayari (at top right). The boy took some little tortillas made of squash seeds (two red spots in front of his hands), which he brought back to Kauyumarie. □ When he returned to Kauyumarie's side he had vines with squash, leaves and beautiful flowers all over his head like hair. "Well!" said Kauyumarie upon seeing him, "I did not ask you to sprout. It did not tell you to go playing among the vines. I asked you to find the dove and bring her to me. Therefore, you shall be a vine, and you will become squash." Then large wasps (*jicotes* in Spanish) started coming to the plant (upper left). □ Kauyumarie kept these things in his memory, and he decided the vine should take the shape of a snake which would then crawl in the next world where a use would be found for it. (The other snake above Kauyumarie is the calabash-gourd vine.) □ The dove was the embodiment of Corn (called Kukurú Wimari). She was to be the companion of squash. The tree on which she perched is the one from which the ceremonial drum would be made; thus the tree's antlers signify its sacred role in the celebration of the first fruits of harvest. The forked tongue (upper right) rising from the bird's tail refers to the sounds of the dove transferred to the star of the morning.





15. The Squash Boy



JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 16 The Creation Of The Birds

23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

Our ancestor Kauyumarie's memory (his thoughts) created all the birds which are his medicine. Here, he is depicted forming the first birds in his sleep. Flame-like projections from his body (lower right) represent his creative dream-energy and three green dots, leaving his antler-topped head, symbolize the birds which he is forming. When he woke up the next morning, Kauyumarie saw the three birds which he had concentrated on creating. □ The *yuiyari*, Grandfather Fire's "grey eagle" (at center), was the first to appear so its feathers could be used by shamans for healing. The *buitse*,<sup>1</sup> (top right) and the *tsika*<sup>2</sup> (with its pink crest slightly separate from its head) are the next birds to be formed.<sup>3</sup> Three light blue flowers symbolize the life of the three birds. □ Our Father Sun (top left) manipulates an arrow with bird feathers<sup>4</sup> to verify if communication can be transmitted through the plumed-arrow. Indeed, the feathers are found to carry the words of our ancestors, echoing their messages. □ Our Grandfather Fire sits amidst his flames (lower left). He has a bow, an arrow and a yellow quiver with two small tobacco filled gourds so that he may hunt the birds, for he will be the first to taste their meat as he cooks it.

1. The *buitse* may be a frigate bird.
2. The *tsika* is probably a small hawk.
3. José Benítez Sánchez lumps these birds in a general category as eagles.
4. The arrow with two yellow feathers has three blue points attached to indicate that it incorporates plumes from the three birds.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 17 Invoking Our Mother Rain

23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

Among the flowers of midnight, *tutú tunuari*, Kauyumarie (at left) and his assistants the Spirit of Sun, Taweviekame, and the Spirit of Fire, Tatewarí, called Our Mother Rain by chanting. The morning star, who is above Kauyumarie (upper left), is calling the rain by name for the first time. This takes place in the old world when Tatéi Wiitari, Our Mother Rain, was living within a gourd-bowl above Tatewarí (upper right). □ When Kauyumarie reveals her name in his chants, two elongated clouds lift up over the sides of the bowl between Tatewarí's flames (red and yellow lines). Rain then begins to fall upon the deities who are now surrounded by rain clouds (variegated colored forms, in front of the three deities). Upon feeling the rain, the deities of Sun and Fire said to Kauyumarie: "Yes! This is good! We believe this is how it will be!" Thus Kauyumarie shows how rain would appear and how the shamans would call it in the new world, after the world of darkness was destroyed. He also established that an arrow (top



center) should be made as an offering to Our Mother Rain. As the multi-colored raindrops fall in front of the Spirit of Sun (to the right of the arrow), so the rain covers him today when rain clouds appear. □ The rain first falls in certain humid places located in those hills which have trees called *kieviyeme* (literally "let it rain") trees.<sup>1</sup> These trees are always soaked full of water which drips off their branches. It never ceases to rain there because water emanates from these trees. Three of them are represented in the lower area of the picture.

1. José Benítez Sánchez calls them *cuale* trees in Spanish.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 18 Our Ancestors Travel The River On Stone Slabs

24 x 32

The old world, before this one, was covered with water almost everywhere. In that first world we see Kauyumarie, with antlers on his forehead, travelling on a stone slab upon a vein of the sea. The ancestors of Fire and Sun follow him on their own rock slabs while he leads them along a river, a vein of the sea which penetrated all the way to Wirikuta, the Holyland. The vessels upon which they travelled were built like rock so that with his slab Kauyumarie could smash the walls of the ravines in order to continue the journey. Thus, he and his companions built the rivers that flowed in Watetüapa. Although the rivers of this world in which we live were made by Tatéi, Our Mother (rain and water), the stones in the river-beds still pound against each other when the water runs. □ As he was to do later in the world, Kauyumarie went to the four cardinal points of the underworld, visiting all parts. When he and his companions went to Wirikuta by water for the first time, they followed the Green River, Kuuteveurika.<sup>1</sup> In front of him, where the river comes to an end, Kauyumarie is seen holding a reed (far right). □ In Wirikuta (blue-violet field), the ancestors left an arrow, *iteuri*, representing their life (at top center, like a tree). Kuka Iwa, the Ancestor of Vultures (at top left) follows at some distance, since he was a close companion of the three principal male ancestors. The river bed dried out behind Taweviekame, the Ancestor of the Sun, and the path of the gods was covered up with flowers. But the waters thinned out (red lines), gnats were born flocking to bite Taweviekame on the head. □ Kauyumarie is standing beyond the Holyland of Wirikuta atop the mountain peak of Le-unaxu. The altar of Pariya which holds the rock vessels of the ancestors is today located on this peak. □ The insect-like figure above Kauyumarie's head represents his breath (his effort).

1. It is green because of the sins washed off in it.



JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 19 The Ancestor-Gods Try Peyote

24 x 32

Here we see the major ancestor-gods: Kauyumarie, Our Elder Brother Deer-Spirit, Tatewari, Our Grandfather Fire and Taweviekame, Our Father Sun. This is the way they saw themselves when they ingested the peyote cactus, which is their own heart.<sup>1</sup> □ They each took the same amount of peyote (which is represented as three barrel-like figures with roots projecting to the right). In this manner they went about determining the taste of the plant, the amount that would be proper to ingest, and the duration of its effects. □ Under the effects of peyote, Kauyumarie saw himself transformed into a deer (upper left). Feathers appeared everywhere he looked. He then turned to see a human face on his tail, with which he began to converse.<sup>2</sup> A prayer-mat, *itari*, or bed-of-the-gods, projects from Kauyumarie's neck (irregular shape extending down toward the center). □ Our Grandfather Fire (lower center), was the most affected by peyote; he saw himself crawling like a serpent, spreading out as ashes from which he saw flowers appear. Indeed, all three ancestors saw flowers and arrows strewn around them amidst the hills of the Holyland of Wirikuta. □ Our Father Sun, took on the shape of a mountain lion as he was still consuming the roots of his peyote. He was moving, as is the nature of the sun, but he felt as though he were precariously balanced on a tree about to fall because of its swaying motion. □ The three ancestors then saw drops of dew falling upon their *kupuri*, soul. At that point Our Father said, "Dawn must be breaking." Then the first rays of day appeared (at top right) and Pariya, the Spirit of Dawn, saluted them. □ After this, the ancestors compared their feeling and the different visions they had experienced. They had seen some of their own attributes revealed by ingesting the sacred peyote, which is like their heart.

1. See essay note 9.

2. Elsewhere José Benítez Sánchez notes that Kauyumarie, as a deer, disappeared or changed form by wagging his tail.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 20 Kauyumarie Escapes From The Demon Tukákame

24 x 32

Tukákame, the Spirit of the Underworld, was the supreme master when all beings lived in darkness. Our Elder Brother Kauyumarie began to lay the foundations for a new world upon the surface of the earth, which was expanding and forming in accordance with Kauyumarie's designs. As a consequence, Tukákame's supremacy was threatened and he made various attempts to take Kauyumarie's life away. □ Here we see how Kauyumarie escaped death on one occasion. Tukákame, hidden by a hill (pointed rock at lower left), had been spying on his rival, and was prepared to crush him with the hill. But Kauyumarie had many helpers, such as Our Father Sun and Our Grandfather Fire (upper right), to protect him. Thus a swallow appeared to warn Kauyumarie of the rock that Tukákame was hurling at him. Immediately,



Kauyumarie mounted the wing of the swallow and changed into a cloud. As the rock fell, sparks jumped out causing Tukákame to go blind and see only stars while his rival disappeared in the clouds, and rain began to pour. Our Grandfather Fire (center far right) gestures to the swallow with an arrow to remain in place until Kauyumarie can reenter his body. Three aspects of Kauyumarie's being, his heart, his soul and his memory are attached to the body of the cloud dispersed in the wind (upper center). Only after five days of disappearance in the rain clouds did Kauyumarie return to his god-house, *xiriki* (at upper left). This was after the spirits of water informed him that Tukákame in his blinded state could not follow him to his god-house. □ The insect-like figures around the god-house represent Kauyumarie, followed by water-spirits, arriving at his sacred dwelling where he will once again appear as a person.<sup>1</sup> A bird-shaped cloud that is a dragonfly, carries the news of Kauyumarie's confrontation to Our Mother the Sea (bottom right). Ditch-reeds, which appear in Our Grandfather Fire's hand and to the right of the god-house, served as the instruments of Kauyumarie and Fire's power to influence events.<sup>2</sup>

1. Flowers adorn the god-house as symbols of the heart of our ancestors.
2. Ditch-reeds were used as sacred arrows, *mucieri*. See essay page 17 and Fig. 7.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 21 Kauyumarie's Race With Tukákame

23¾ x 31½

The competition between Kauyumarie and Tukákame was a conflict between the Spirit of Light and the Spirit of Darkness who ruled the primordial world of Watetüapa. Kauyumarie had set out to create our world, called Heriepa, but Tukákame, wanting to retain his dominion over all creatures, challenged Kauyumarie to a race, saying: "If you beat me, you will own the world, but if I win, I shall be the owner." □ They started a race from Watetüapa, at the edge of the sea (at right), to the Holyland of Wírikuta, passing through the highlands of the earth, Heriepa<sup>1</sup> (at bottom center). The world was covered with water as the two ancestor-spirits raced through mountain peaks and marshes. □ Here we see Tukákame, the horned spirit of darkness, ahead of Kauyumarie, who appears to be losing the duel. However, Tukákame did not command the sacred tools of magic that Kauyumarie had created. The Spirit of Light, Kauyumarie, pulled out his *nierika* (at center), a round disk reflecting his own sacred attributes, in order to help win "the future" for himself. The *nierika* disk, with its antlers directing it, moved ahead of Kauyumarie whose body stayed behind. When the *nierika* caught up to Tukákame, rain started pouring copiously over Tukákame (at upper left) causing him to smash into a rock. Kauyumarie was therefore able to reach the Holyland in the East (at far left). On hitting the rock, Tukákame exclaimed, "Well, I won!", but the *nierika*, Kauyumarie's sacred indenture, answered back that he had arrived first. □ Our Mother the Sea used her staff (the stick with six prongs to the right of disk) to help Kauyumarie's *nierika*. She and Our Mother Rain produced the rain that disoriented Tukákame. These Mothers of Water are represented as two insects (at



top right)<sup>2</sup> and as two flowers (top left) when they appear to celebrate Kauyumarie's victory, next to a sprig of flowers (top center). An oval figure, behind the *nierika*, (far right center) represents the velocity with which the *nierika* detaches itself from the rock where it was formed, in order to outdistance Tukákame.

1. Heriepa refers specifically to the Huichol Highlands. Sometimes José extends that meaning to signify the earth in general which is located in the middle world between the sky and the underworld or between the ocean and the eastern Holyland. The ocean has certain affinities with the underworld and the Holyland is related to the sky, creating a dual relationship. This is significant because the Huichol will at times refer to the earth as beginning at the edge of the ocean and at other times in the underworld. Both are called Watetüapa. (See Cat. 1)
2. They are preparing to assist their ally with their power from the ocean.

*the latter are called*

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 22 The Initiation Of Death

24 x 32½

In the primordial world death was only a passing state, since our ancestors would reincarnate in a younger body five days after "dying." Kauyumarie, Our Elder Brother, and Tukákame, the Master of the First World, agreed that the body should die permanently after enjoying life in the world. They decided that the creatures of the earth would otherwise be overcrowded and humanity would not last long. □ They induced their own deaths first in order to establish the reality of death for all beings. Thus, the two arch-rivals invited each other to behold their own deaths and their transformation into Spirits. □ Here, Kauyumarie (bottom left corner) reveals his spirit-self (top figure) in the sky above, while Tukákame's Spirit lies below him in the underworld. Tukákame (lower right) chose to have his Spirit remain in the underworld, to become the master of the bones of the dead. With the death of all the ancestors, the trees too died, drying out in old age (above Tukákame's horns). The spirits of the human progeny of the ancestors are represented as multicolored dots attached to the sky after death (upper right), for the souls of the righteous will enter the third world of the sky in the company of Kauyumarie. □ Tukákame, who had tried to usurp Kauyumarie's wisdom, is shown with antlers that symbolize Kauyumarie's powers attached to his hands. His head, upon death, is crowned by simple horns instead of the antlers that he wanted to appropriate. His skull-like spirit-self drips blood reflecting his role as a demon who treacherously steals human hearts. □ Kauyumarie's Spirit is endowed with *nierikate* (shown as flowers) on his cheeks which give him special seeing and transmitting abilities. A figure of an imukui lizard<sup>1</sup> extending from the neck of Kauyumarie's Spirit, represents his "heart." In this manner he is associated with corn because the lizard is an impersonation of the Mother of Corn. □ A white dot (projecting from his head) represents the last breath issuing forth from Kauyumarie's body as his heart stops and his last words project from his face. Lines of communication link Tukákame's body to Kauyumarie's Spirit, as the two take leave of each other, renouncing their past enmity.

1. This poisonous lizard (*Heloderma Horridum*) is similar to the Gila monster.



JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 23 Kauyumarie Sets Out To Found The Second World

48 x 48

Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Thomas C. Bruice

Kauyumarie lived for six years in the subterranean world of Watetüapa, where all life forms originated (in the deep purple areas). This world was dark yet all its creatures were white. Watetüapa is the first step, or stage, in the development of the world; in it, those beings which now each have a fixed form were not yet well defined. □ Young Vulture-Person, who was the scout and messenger for Kauyumarie (at bottom center), appears in both his human and animal forms (lower right). Here he is collecting "memory", or ideas, about the world of Watetüapa (the ideas symbolized by the heart pierced by an arrow). As a person, he carries calabash gourds, water and grass for Kauyumarie; as a bird, he flies from Kauyumarie singing his song. The vulture would return from his trips telling Kauyumarie that the world, in this tender, youthful stage, was dark everywhere. □ But Kauyumarie kept thinking that there had to be a second world. With the arrows on his head, his senses were able to perceive everything. He projected his mind-memory (as two rising arcs with dots at their ends) upward. His spirit-soul, *kupuri*, appeared as a disk which was to be the center of the second world, Earth. This spot had to be expanded for life to exist upon its surface; it would explode into being like a wave richly stained (blue area). □ Kauyumarie decided that he had to go there in person (bottom left). "My path," he thought, "will be my memory;" then his memory became a serpent, who was in his path (above the peaks of Watetüapa, the forms at bottom left). Thus he created the path from the first world to the world above called Heriepa. In a basket on his back, he carried his allies, the ancestor spirits of Fire, Sun and Sky. He takes with him two gourds filled with tobacco (hanging above him), embodying the heart of Fire. Kauyumarie speaks with his serpent path, asking it to remain there until the second world is formed. Indeed, the Earth was soft and agitated and Kauyumarie chanted to stop its motions. □ When (at top left) Kauyumarie reached Heriepa, he was flush with energy and he concentrated his strength. Out of his body sprang the shadow form of Tatéi Wērika Wīmari, Our Mother Young Eagle Girl (top center), who would be the Spirit of the Sky, the third world called Taheimá. Tatéi Wērika Wīmari began to expand, as wavy lines pulsed from the antlers on her two heads, so that there would be space above the surface of the Earth on which the land creatures could stand. The spirit strength of Kauyumarie is located between the eagle's two heads. Kauyumarie also wanted to give light to the new world with the help of Tatewarí, the Spirit of Fire, and Taweviekame, the Spirit of Sun who would dwell with the Mother of the Sky. Taweviekame had first sprung out of Kauyumarie's body as a cloud or shadow form (beside the sky mother); then, as a person (top right), he visited Heriepa. The flower-like symbols are manifestations of the four god spirits.





16. The Creation of the Birds





17. Invoking Our Mother Rain





18. Our Ancestors Travel the River on Stone Slabs

17. Looking Out Mother Rain





19. The Ancestor-Gods Try Peyote





20. Kauyumarie Escapes from the Demon Tukákame





21. Kauyumarie's Race With Tukákame





22. The Initiation of Death





23. Kauyumarie Sets Out to Found the Second World



## 24 The God Spirits Disappear From the Underworld To Form The Earth

48 x 48

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. George Pardee

The spirit of Kauyumarie was ample enough to serve as the basis for the creation of the second world, which is the Earth where we now live. Kauyumarie conceived of this new world called Heriepa when he was living in the first world called Watetüapa. This world beneath the present earth was dark and covered with water (lower blue and grey areas). Kauyumarie would leave the underworld through an opening in a pouch, which had the form of a calabash gourd. Within the pouch, Tukárita, the night in person, and Watetüapa, the underworld in person, guarded the exit, and their thoughts rose like knotted lines to the ceiling of the first world. A rope, like an umbilical cord, dangled from the opening of the pouch, and, whenever someone attempted to leave, it would shake and the pouch would seal itself shut. □ Kauyumarie, however, could make himself infinitely small so he managed to slip through the exit unnoticed, taking with him Taweviekame, the Spirit of the Sun, and Tatewari, the Spirit of Fire, who would work with him to serve his purpose of creating a world which would have light. To initiate their new lives, they imparted speed to their memory and thereby achieved the acceleration necessary to project their memory-souls up to the surface of the world above. The memory-soul of Kauyumarie appears as a blue head with antlers between those of Fire (left) and Sun (right). The world they reached was without a third dimension for the sky did not yet exist. So Kauyumarie decided to expand the new world. The three of them then hit the earth with such impact that sparks were produced and these formed on the ceiling of the second world as if they had been painted. This space became Taheimá, the Sky, and the sparks became stars. In this manner, the third world was formed. □ Then the spirits reincorporated their beings and set out to find the spots where they would dwell on Earth. They were now joined by another being from the world below, Vieruku Temaiku, Young Vulture-Person, who stands beside Sun-Person in the white area; his words or chants are depicted as white knots on his back. Kauyumarie stands behind Fire-Person in the green area in the midst of plants (figure above) and flowers that represent the life that is beginning to appear. While the god spirits searched the world about them, their thoughts flew around in the form of dragonflies. □ It took Kauyumarie six years to lay the foundations for the new world. Now, Tukákame, the ruling spirit of the underworld who is the demon of death, instructed his animal allies, the mountain lion (bottom left) and the jaguar (bottom right), to kill Kauyumarie. Next to the jaguar is his alter-ego, Jaguar-Person, who is holding leaves symbolizing the thick vegetation in which they hide on the Earth to escape Kauyumarie's notice. But Kauyumarie and his three allies eluded the hunters by hiding inside gourd bowls which had been brought from the underworld by Vulture-Person. These nest-like shelters are identified with the womb of a woman and have feeding extensions and umbilical cords. Thus they became invisible to the agents of the demon of death. Clockwise from top right are Kauyumarie, Sun-Person, Vulture-Person and Fire-Person. The yellow dots in the bowls are nourishment. □ Once the new world had been prepared for life and grass platforms created over the world below so there would be dry land on which to walk, the first world collapsed under floods and fire. Its creatures were saved by Kauyumarie and reborn in the second world as plants, rocks, animals and water, but without the dual





24. The God Spirits Disappear from the Underworld to Form the Earth



nature that would allow them to be human as well. The first world continued to be ruled by Tukákame as the world of the dead where the sun sets. □ Because of what they did for us, we adore the spirits who founded this world and we make gourd bowls with designs of the god spirits and of our children who come to life in them.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 25 The Womb Of The World

48<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 48<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

"Here we see the world, but we don't know how it was born and how it was formed by Kauyumarie (the deer-spirit, soul of the gods) from a woman."<sup>1</sup> Her name is Tatéi Yurianaka. Indeed, the earth was originally a woman who lived in the first world of Watetūapa. There, Kauyumarie asked her if she would like to become a world which would be ample and inhabited by the most important gods. Kauyumarie explained that through his power, she would become a gourd-bowl which would be the matrix of the world. She accepted and Kauyumarie entered her womb, which started expanding as though she had become pregnant. □ Thus Kauyumarie is represented as a Deer-Person (at upper center) within a round ball, which is Tatéi Yurianaka's womb. He is implanting the seeds of the fruits and the plants which will sustain our lives. At the very center (pea green field) he planted the first plants which man would collect before he learned the art of cultivation: mushrooms, wild onions, wild tomatoes, chili peppers, *guajes* (a legume), and two types of *nopal*, prickley pear cactus. Amidst this produce, the life of which is represented as flowers and seeds, he also placed an edible worm, *kawí*, and the iguana to serve as food for his "angels," the future Huichol. Kauyumarie brought all these products to the earth in his basket from the first world (lavender field). □ Helping Kauyumarie are his divinehelpers. He placed Tatewarí, the Master of Fire, (at left in the green field) in charge of the deer. The deer, whose flesh will also be a source of food, is Tatewarí's special companion, for its blood is the nurture of his soul. Tatewarí, who cooks our food, has a sacrificial knife in hand which also symbolizes the virulence of his burn. Flames are depicted near his head, which is covered with feathers of fire, and two small calabash-gourds, *yakway*, containing tobacco are suspended under his arms. He walks on flowers as does the other great deity Tawevíékame, the Sun (represented on the opposite side). The deer is Maxayuavi, the Blue Deer, the ancestor of our deer. Its head is turned toward a water-hole located below its neck, which it sniffs. □ Tawevíékame, the future sun, is placed in charge of the turkey, his special animal, the blood of which is offered to him. A ray of blue light escapes from his hand while, above it, raw corn mush, the meal of the spirits, drips from a jar. □ Below (in the pink field) Páriya (right), the Spirit of Dawn in the land of peyote, and Vieruku Temaiku, the Young Vulture as a person (left) are in charge of the prayer gourds. Next to them is the rat and the small squirrel of the sierras, both sources of food for the Huichol. The latter is stuffed for the pilgrimage to the land of peyote in the East where Páriya will dwell. Another animal is the *urrawiki*, a sparrow. □ The world is surrounded by water. Four eagles appear from the foam of the seas which circle the earth. Each eagle is a guardian of the four





25. The Womb of the World



corners of the earth. At their birth the first feathers appear from which magical plumed arrows will be fashioned to speak with the spirits of the world. The eagles symbolize the life of the water in the four corners. Later, the sky will form above the earth as Taheimá, the third world. □ Kauyumarie is seated upon his *uwén*, sacred chair, which contains his strength. It is his energy which expands the belly of Our Mother Moist Earth into the world. Her womb is like a prayer-bowl fashioned out of a gourd.

1. This is a direct translation of the story as written by José Benítez Sánchez on the back of the painting.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 26 The Ancestor-Spirits Rise To The Surface Of The Earth

48<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 48<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

Lent by ABCD Somkin

The ancestor-spirits drew their strength together when they decided to disappear beneath the earth. This happened when they were living in Watetüapa, the primordial world where life germinated under the surface of the earth. They prepared themselves to make the underground journey to the new world above. With this in mind they met in a place called Xápaviyemeta.<sup>1</sup> □ In Xápaviyemeta, the ancestor-spirits climbed to the top of an elevated hill, giving rise to a lagoon. This lagoon turned to blood; the flood (Cat. 1) was precipitated then and lasted five years. □ While the world was inundated, the ancestor-spirits, who are represented here, lost themselves under the earth. Then they emerged upon the surface of the new world (earth) in the Holyland of Wírikuta. □ Tamatsi Kauyumarie, Our Elder Brother Deer Spirit, is depicted seated on his sacred chair, *uwén*, while he and his allied spirits prepared for the destruction of the underworld. He was meditating over how they could reappear in the Holyland after they lost themselves below the earth. □ When the underworld was destroyed, the ancestor-beings also drowned and became lost; however, their spirit survived in the wind above the waters. All was transformed into *kupuri*, soul, vital energy and memory. In this manner Kauyumarie's spirit lived on during the great flood that lasted five years. His sacred instruments and the chair that they are attached to did not perish either and became elements of his spirit-memory. As the most powerful ancestor-spirit Kauyumarie, whom the artist defines as the soul of all the ancestor-spirits united, nurtures and supports the strength of his allied spirits. Tatewarí, who is Our Grandfather, the Fire, upholds the life energy, *tukari*, or *Pariya*, the dawn and of Tawewiécame, Our Father, the sun. Tatewarí stands behind Kauyumarie who is depicted supporting the



life energy of Tatewari and of his own self. The paths of the four ancestor-spirits: Kauyumarie, Tatewari, Tawewiakame and Pariya take the form of four serpents; this signifies that each god become a vein of water burrowing its way through the earth to surface in the Holyland. At the end of five years the serpent-like god-spirits opening their paths with their tongues, arrive in the Holyland, symbolized (top right) by five peyote buttons spotted with white fuzz. The hearts, *iyari*, of the god-spirits were transformed into hummingbirds to also reach the Holyland. □ The deity of the sky, Our Mother Young Eagle Girl, Tatei Werika Wimari, kept the *nierika*, i.e. the reflected image, of the principal male spirits: Kauyumarie, Fire and Sun. She is depicted as a dark bird (lower right) holding the three *nierika* disks attached to her beak as she prepares to rise up to the sky where she becomes manifest after the flood. □ The surface of the earth itself did not appear until the flood waters began to withdraw. After Kauyumarie made his way up to the new world, he became a deer recoiling so as to speak with Our Mother Moist Earth, Tatei Yurianaka, who is still below (bottom right). Now she is ready to ascend on earth with which she is one. She had been busy using her strength to foster the creation of the new world along with her companion, the Eagle Mother of the Sky. □ Indeed, throughout this journey to the earth's surface, during the flood, Kauyumarie was going back and forth between the god-spirits. "You shall be left in charge of the life of the words of the spirits, if we manage to save ourselves. Keep the *nierika* disks in the air," Kauyumarie would say to the Eagle Mother of the Sky. He was in contact with Our Mother Dew Spirit, Tatei Hautsi Kupuri (Cat. 41), who is the life of corn. She is depicted as a small woman figure (lower center), with lines of communication linking her to Kauyumarie's chair. On the other side she is linked to a grain of corn upon which she sprinkles life giving water. The grain of corn, in the form of a pink heart, is germinating; it is in effect the heart of corn which sprouts out of its core. The grain of corn embodies Tatei Niwetsika, Our Mother, the Mistress of Corn. Kauyumarie cautioned the female deities, Corn and Dew-Spirit, to guard carefully over the life of corn. □ The female deities emerged in the Holyland in the sacred place called Tatei Matinieri, Our Mother Who Watches Us (upper left). There, the corn plant appeared bearing corn in the form of a young girl called Tsitakame, she is the spirit of corn with corn silk. "Tsitakame," said Kauyumarie, "must arrive among flowers." Thus, when Tsitakame appeared, Indian carnations, *puguari*, bloomed around the holy place of Tatei Matinieri. A large sprig of Indian carnations rises along the right side of the corn stalk. The base of the sprig of flowers is hidden by a three legged incenser, called *putsi*; its fumes soothe Our Mother Dew Spirit. Six brown flowers, alongside the stalk that sustains Tsitakame, symbolize that she appeared six years after the destruction of the old world; a seventh flower indicates that she was given her name the following year. Tatei Matinieri is the spirit of the sacred water holes in the holy spot which bears her name. At first, she had the appearance of a water bug, who travelled on a vein of water from the underworld. The vein of water flows from its source (top left corner) until it reaches its seat where the waterhole and the water bug united embody the spirit of Tatei Matinieri. This union is symbolized by three crosses within the figures of the holy spot. □ The five peyotes (at top right), which mark the Holyland of Wirikuta, are at the same time prayer gourds for Kauyumarie, for the Spirit of Fire, the Spirit of the Sun, the Spirit of Dawn and for Our Eagle Mother who is the sky. The lives of these deities are represented as flowers. □ Once the ancestor spirits appeared in flesh, reborn as it were upon the new world, they took the paths that lead to Teacata, where they would leave their sacred caves in the highlands. There, they pledged to cover the surface of the earth during the next five years. It is at the term of these five years that the spirit of the sun becomes



disembodied and transforms itself into a bright source of light. □ Thus it is that the gods sacrificed themselves for us and we too sacrifice ourselves for the good of the family. (cf. Huichol pilgrimage ritual in essay)

1. There is also a Xápaviyemeta on earth where Tacutsi Nakawé, Great Grandmother Growth, and her companion Watákame first found dry ground upon which to settle when the flood subsided. (Cat. 2) Everything on earth had its equivalent, if only in incipience, in the old world.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 27 The Domination of the Underworld

48 x 48

When Kauyumarie decided to come to the new world, which he had formed, the old world of Watetüapa assumed the shape of a skull. The seas all around the border (green border) sealed off the old world. □ Kauyumarie, the Deer Spirit, is flanked by his allies from the first world, four women and four men, who now rank as gods in the new world. They are (at left, from top to bottom): Wērika Wīmari, the young female spirit of the skies, Tsitákame, the young mother spirit of corn who becomes a dove, Hautsima, the breeze that bears dew, and Hai Yuavime, the mother of rain clouds. The brown area upon which they stand is Tatéi Yurianaka, the earth who is a Mother-Spirit herself. The male elements are separate from the female deities because they are as angels, not having yet joined. These male deities are (at right top to bottom): Tatewarí, the Owner of Fire, Tawevíékame, the Sun, Pariya, the Spirit of Dawn, and Vieruku Temaiku, Young Vulture-Person, keeper of the bowls of life. The male deities must not walk directly upon the earth, so Kauyumarie has caused flowers to grow along their path. □ The words that were spoken in the first world are carried by Kauyumarie, attached to his ears. Depicted as dots along force fields (two deep blue lines), these words, which Kauyumarie removed from Watetüapa, will be distributed among the creatures of this new world. □ In the blue field above Kauyumarie, the Sun is starting to form in accord with Kauyumarie. Dangling from the Sun are god-faces of Kauyumarie and of the Sun. They are shaped from calabash-gourds used to keep sacred tobacco. A deer (top left), which is Kauyumarie himself, materializes from a sacred arrow that contains the memory of the gods and their speech. Next to it are two prayer bowls that contain the lives of this world and the sky, which is the third world. □ As the gods appear on earth, rain begins to fall, announced by the flight of a swallow (upper right). The rain is represented as undulating lines. □ At this point the new world is still dark, as the Sun has not yet ascended to the sky. The world of Watetüapa is in complete darkness, and, with its transformation into a skull, death has come into being for the first time. Watetüapa cries as it recognizes its defeat by Kauyumarie and the forces of life. Note the course of the Sun is set around the earth (as a yellow zig-zag line), at dusk the Sun will enter the mouth of Watetüapa. Watetüapa will receive the bones of the creatures who originated there, after they die. The underworld of Watetüapa is flanked by four seas, the "words" of which are represented as dots (at lower right and left). The dead will enter the underworld through its ear which first hears of their arrival. The thoughts and life of Watetüapa are symbolized as spots and flowers on its forehead.



JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 28 Watákame Separating The Waters

31<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 48

This is Watákame separating the waters that were on the earth after the flood into the rivers (on the right) and the oceans (on the left). In this manner Watákame extends the earth upon which man is capable of growing plants and hunting and living. With the words which are below him (as six dots), he manifests actions, for they are the thought which are his actions. The vibrations emanating from his arms are the energy and thoughts that reach as far as the edges of the waters he has separated by the powers on his arms (seen as four circles). □ A Huichol peyote seeker, through the guidance of the Deer-Spirit, Tamatsi Kauyumarie, is able to visualize Watákame on top of Burnt Peak, where he was once born. With his plumed arrow, *muvieri*, the pilgrim communicates with the deer. His belt has extended itself to form a snake when he is in his mystical peyote trance. The flowers on each side of Watákame are manifestations of peyote. □ The red colored river on the right is symbolic of unsalted water, which is identified with the soul. There are five seas; the first sea, with which we are familiar, is green. Beyond it lie the multicolored seas that surround the world.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 29 The Creation Of Salt

32 x 48

Tacutsi Nakawé, Mother of the Gods, went to the oceanside where she prepared to die. She pulled out her bones (upper left) which she ground with a stone, and they became salt mixed with earth. She ground the teeth of her jaws and they turned to pure salt, which she sprinkled on the sea. Watákame (far left) watches in awe the transformation of her bones and teeth to salt. □ When Tacutsi, with black wing-like extensions, stepped into the sea (lower left margin) a large wave rose along the coastline (wavy blue line in center). Here, Tamatsi Maxayuavi, the Blue Deer, was born. Another blue wave arose along the entrance to Wirikuta, Land of the Gods (far right) where the peyote cactus dwells. Here, at Tatéi Matinieri, the sacred waterhole at the gates of this sacred land, the god Peyote (four green dots in a circle) sits on his multi-colored altar (extending from left to right corner) guarded by Tamatsi Maxakuaxí, Elder Brother Deer Tail (inverted deer). An izote tree, similar to the yucca, marks the entrance (far right). □ Salt is food for the earth, and for body and soul. But the god of Peyote forbids pilgrims to eat any salt on their journey from the coast to Wirikuta. If he is to communicate with Peyote, the pilgrim must hold to his fast. From his altar, Peyote speaks with the Ocean, assisted on the coast by the Blue Deer, and in the desert by his protector Elder Brother Deer Tail. The sacred deer investigate the pilgrims. Those who have broken their fast are punished.





26. The Ancestor-Spirits Rise to the Surface of the Earth





27. The Domination of the Underworld





28. Watákame Separating the Waters





29. The Creation of Salt



JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 30 The Gods Get Drunk

32 x 48

Lent by Mr. Richard Kilham

Watákame survives the flood, and, with the help of Tacutsi Nakawé, Great Grandmother Growth, settles in the middle of the world, i.e., between the sky and the underworld. After reorganizing the earth for his children, he invites the principal spirits of the world to a celebration for all the sacred spirit ancestors. When Tatewarí, Grandfather Fire, Tatéi Haramara, the Mother of the Sea, and Tamatsi Kauyumarie, Elder Brother Deer Spirit, arrive at Watákame's temple-house, *tuki*, they contemplate the small drinking gourds that their host had filled with *nawá* (*tejuino*, a native corn beer), and they think that such small gourds could hardly get them drunk. Watákame stands by reading their thoughts. □ After candles are lit to the spirits of nature, they drink until they are completely drunk. Tatewarí and Tatéi Haramara fall and lose their awareness, whereas Tamatsi Kauyumarie sits inside his gourd and avoids losing his senses. While the former spirits vomit red matter, Watákame removes their words from their hearts and minds. He sucks their words out (upper left), and throws them into his magic woven-palm bag, *tacuatsi*. Now the spirits cannot demand food and drink in a loud voice. Watákame wanted the spirits to ask for their offerings in secret, and this is why he removed their speech. □ Kauyumarie was more abstemious, and, for this reason, he was placed in charge of the words of the spirits and the sacred paraphernalia. His gourd has a god's eye, *tsicuri*, on it, and two *nierikate* (aspects of a divine face). □ The flowers around and within the *tacuatsi* (at center) are the words of the spirits of the six directions which comprise the four corners of the world, and the directions above and below. The shaman or healer-priest must communicate with Kauyumarie nowadays in order to hear the ancestors who speak in secret ways.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 31 The Dismemberment of Tacutsi Nakawé

32 x 48<sup>1/8</sup>

Tacutsi Nakawé, Our Great Grandmother Growth, once walked on earth. When her labors to found the world were finished, her human body fell to pieces. From each part of her body, new plant and animal forms were born to feed our life. □ Around her skeleton are scattered her jawbones (on either side of her skull), her arms (to the left), and two teeth (lower left corner). Her brains are on top of her skull between her hair. Her tongue is to the left of her chin. Her eyes have left their sockets (top right). Above her eyes is her artery. Below it (from left to right) are her pink-red skin, her tendons, and her loin. □ At lower right is her heart, liver and respiratory system. Below her torso are her bladder, two kidneys, two pieces of marrow, her sexual organs, her digestive tract and her anal conduit. At top left, four objects represent her breasts and flesh from her back. Below is her spleen and a white eyebrow.



JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 32 The Dismemberment of Watákame

32<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 48

Watákame survived the flood with the help of Tacutsi Nakawé, Our Great Grandmother Growth. After the waters receded, he cultivated the soil and laid the foundations for man's life on earth under the direction of Tacutsi. □ At the time of his death, the various parts from his body dispersed, and from them new plants were created. Here are depicted his skeleton and his vital organs: In his red skull, the jawbone is white. One of his ears is behind his head. Two flowers symbolize his soul and memory. His hair flows on his skull. Three teeth are colored pink. Below them is an eyebrow and his white tongue. Above the teeth are his brain and inner ear. □ His digestive tract is at right. Tendons, two blood vessels, his two eyes, his skin and an ear lie around his bowels. Below Watákame are his sexual organs in three parts surrounded by two pieces of marrow. A large piece of his flesh is at top left. The three ovoid figures (far left) are points of his loin. □ Below that, his heart is attached to his lungs and other organs. Next to it is his yellow bladder. At lower left corner are his spleen and the pancreas.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 33 Kauyumarie Appeases Our Great Grandmother

23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

Our Great Grandmother, Tacutsi Nakawé, retired to her abode in the five seas after the flood waters withdrew. She is the generative deity, mother of the ancestor-deities and the matrix of all the female spirits of the earth and water. As such, Tacutsi is the ancestor-deity who had unleashed the great flood. Yet she was banished and her existence on earth terminated because she had taken to devouring her own great-grandchildren in the primordial world before the flood. □ Our Elder Brother Deer Spirit, Kauyumarie, had taken her speech away and left her alone without consecrating any offerings to her. So Tacutsi was filled with rage and decided to unleash another deluge to destroy the earth and Kauyumarie. □ It rained without cease for six months and the sun did not appear. The harvests and domestic animals were destroyed and the rivers overflowed. Meanwhile, Tacutsi, leaving her remote home in the seas, drew closer and closer to the holy source of the South Waters, Xápaviyemeta.<sup>1</sup> The anger of Our Great Grandmother is symbolized as a horse (lower right) for she displayed her power with neighing winds filled with thunder and the loud noise of cyclones. □ At that time Kauyumarie (top left) came to meet Tacutsi. His strength is gathered in his human figure, flowing between his antlers and his hand or pulse. His heart becomes a swallow (white outlined, green bird, top left) in order to relate to Tacutsi's heart which is a wild fig tree, *xapa* (depicted above Tacutsi's head, in front of Kauyumarie). In the exchange that followed, Tacutsi demanded as offerings: a blind and crippled boy, a peccari, an iguana and a small black



dog (bottom left), in addition to a canoe made of special wood, *kwaixruari*, laden with offerings. Kauyumarie agreed that Tacutsi should not be left without a family since she had been an excellent mother to the ancestor-deities in the earliest times. The ancestor-deities all agreed to ready these offerings for her, and Kauyumarie brought them to her in Xápaviyemeta. □ The Spirit of South Waters, Xápaviyeme, was preparing to fly up into the wind upon receiving Tacutsi's orders to flood the world. When Kauyumarie presented his offerings to Tacutsi she consented to disappear in the ocean. At that point, the Spirit of South Waters was transformed into rock (at top right). □ The blind boy is depicted against Tacutsi's bosom. Corn on its stalk was also brought to her (lower right margin), and Tacutsi draws it to her prayer-mat, *itari* (bottom center). Her canoe is filled with squash tips, seeds and corn-grains. White spots represent Tacutsi's communication, and red spots are Kauyumarie's words.

1. According to José Benítez Sánchez, this place is Lake Pátzcuaro, although Lake Chapala may substitute for that distant lake.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 34 The Origin Of Tobacco

32 x 48<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

This is where Our Elder Brother Kauyumarie created tobacco in a seed bed (black area). Kauyumarie (lower right), in front of a prayer-bowl containing his thoughts, made his hand become tobacco and his vertebrae become the veins of the leaf. The black field contains a tobacco flower and a dry leaf and is covered with seeds. Kauyumarie sprinkled the seed so he could achieve his ambition to create something to smoke. □ The first results were not to his satisfaction because the smoke from its leaves was too mild. Samples of these first tobacco leaves are displayed from the top corners of the seed bed. In between these samples, Tatewarí, the God-Spirit of Fire (center), and Tawevíékame, the God-Spirit of the Sun, are trying cigarettes made with a wild tobacco species which Kauyumarie had finally created.<sup>1</sup> A female plant (above Tatewarí) and a male plant are both tested, and the female is found to be milder. □ Just then Young Fox Person was passing by. He asked to smoke a cigarette which Tatewarí allowed him to try. But Fox Person immediately regurgitated and fell to the ground howling (bottom left). The stone machete and axe that he was using to work the fields lie above him. Thus he lost his life (represented by a coiled cord, top left) and was born into his present identity as a fox (also top left). His fur is yellow on his chest and on his feet because it was stained by his vomit. Since this happened to Young Fox Person, even though he smoked part of the milder female plant, young people are not allowed to smoke wild tobacco. □ Kauyumarie sent word (in the form of a white insect, top right) to the hummingbird to spread the seed around (white spots). The hummingbird was asked to carry an arrow containing the seeds and life of tobacco (symbolized as



flowers). □ Set in the midst of flames is a container with dried tobacco (center). The multi-colored triangles framing the painting are the writings of Kauyumarie, which take the form of rocks in every conceivable color.

1. Wild tobacco, called *macuchi* in Mexican, or *ya* in Huichol, is rolled in corn-husks. It is considered sacred and is often used with peyote to lessen tension. The shaman often smokes it when he chants through the night.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 35 Kauyumarie Collects The Words Of The Animals

24 x 31<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

Kauyumarie transformed the ancestors of the animals into animal form. At the same time they lost their speech, regurgitating their words while mutating. □ Here, Kauyumarie (at right) collects the words of the animals, such as the wolf. The wolf is changing into his animal identity (at top left) while the Sun, behind it, waits to receive the words that Kauyumarie will transfer to him. The sun appears in two phases, the morning sun and the evening sun. The morning sun is pale (upper left corner) as it rises in the sky of the Holyland. In this phase its rays open up the bright day (red field with zig-zag contoured spirals of multi-colored light descending from the upper right). In its evening phase, a blue sun descends to the underworld following its special animal companion, the hummingbird (at far left). When the sun reaches the sea to enter the underworld, a great wave rises, opening the night with multicolored rays of light (zig-zag contoured spirals reaching to the upper center from the bottom left). □ In the midst of the words of the animals, represented as flowers and circular forms, a yellow oriole, *wainu*, sits atop a mound (center). The oriole embodies the speech of Kauyumarie's Elder Brother Deer Tail whose carcass is now a temple.<sup>1</sup> The temple (the mound under the oriole) has antlers and feather-like ears. Through the bird, the words of Deer Tail (yellow dots in the temple) are transmitted from the Holyland, where the sun rises, to the sea and the underworld. By means of an arrow, Kauyumarie also becomes the master of these words. Eventually, he will wear a string of tail feathers, *wawainuri*, from the oriole around his neck, thereby acquiring the knowledge of the oriole. □ A feather in Kauyumarie's right hand (from right to center) transforms itself into a cluster of words.<sup>2</sup> From Kauyumarie's other hand he releases messages to the underworld area where he contacts his fellow spirits of Light, the Sun and the Fire beneath the earth. Words that he has collected from the animals ring his head with white spots like a halo. □ Kauyumarie is filling himself with words (also leaving his mouth), but, at the same time, he is inventing many new words for the world (pink knotted chain descending from top center).

1. See Catalogue number 39.

2. In Huichol thinking a feather, *muvieri*, is indeed sheer speech. José Benítez Sánchez says, "When a shaman sings his feathers become words."





30. The Gods Get Drunk





31. The Dismemberment of Tacutsi Nakawé





32. The Dismemberment of Watakame





33. Kauyumarie Appeases Our Great Grandmother





34. The Origin of Tobacco





35. Kauyumarie Collects the Words of the Animals



JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 36 The Ants Are Separated Into Groups

24½ x 31⅞

Everything that we see on earth came from Watetūapa, the world that existed before Kauyumarie made life possible in Heriepa, our own world. Kauyumarie separated the various animals we know, assigning specific habitats and names to each type of animal so they could live in harmony in the new world. □ Here Kauyumarie is separating several kinds of ants, locating them all in places beneath the ground or hidden within trees so that they will not crowd out other earth creatures. Because he was annoyed by the chatter of the ancestors of the ants, he took away from them the territory over which they had previously roamed (symbolized by three lines dangling from his hand, at right). In Watetūapa, the Ancestor-Ants and all the other creatures were undistinguishable, and Kauyumarie could not think in peace because of this chaos. Thus, Kauyumarie blessed them<sup>1</sup> with their defined animal identities and gave them separate homes. □ In the grey area we see the small red ants that sting, *aikuxi*, who live in the "thickness of the earth", underground (large yellow flame-like thing from the center toward the upper left). The large red ants that scavenge and steal stored grain, *tzaruxi*, appear in the blue field (along top left margin), separated by a vertical black line. The termites, *teapaxi*, multiply in the rotting wood of trees that they have felled (bottom left). The stumps (along bottom right margin) remain, and new shoots develop next to the mother tree from its root (wavy white lines). The home of the termites is the carcass of a tree (red and brown variegated form extending from Kauyumarie's feet to the termites). □ In the driest areas lives the large red *aute* ant (blue insect by Kauyumarie's feet in the mustard colored area). Kauyumarie extends the drought (symbolized by the blue and red figure attached to his right hand), making it the appropriate dwelling place for the *aute* who leaves the hills bare of greenery. But the *aute* prepares the best soil for the seeding of calabash gourds on its anthills. Kauyumarie is, therefore, seen throwing gourd seeds in the drought area (three light green dots). Two black ants, *maruwaxi*, are directed to a hollow tree (at top right) as they search for honey. Thanks to Kauyumarie, we are not encumbered by the ants which now live buried in the ground apart from other animals. *living among us as people*

1. Two red spots signify the blessing, five red spots below his right arm are the chatter he removes from them, while several flowers are their hearts, i.e., their life.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 37 Kauyumarie Blesses The Wind

24 x 32

Before Kauyumarie made Tamatsi Eakateiwari, the Spirit of Wind (literally Our Elder Brother Wind Neighbor), rise out of a hole in the ground, hurling rocks into the air from the volcano of Ixtlán, there was no wind on earth. However, Kauyumarie created the wind, a potentially destructive instrument to be



unleashed for the eventual destruction of the world.<sup>1</sup> □ The Spirit of Wind (large figure to the right of center) appears from the mouth of the volcano, facing Kauyumarie (at upper left), who blesses the wind and gives it instructions. Kauyumarie stands on a *kieri*, the Tree of Wind<sup>2</sup> (large forked shape at lower left), to give the Spirit of Wind the power to fly. Kauyumarie's hair changes into whirlwinds as he warns the wind not to uproot the trees and to move with care. At the same time, Kauyumarie tells the Tree of Wind: "You will be my word, appease the Wind and let me know what it does." Hence the Tree of Wind and the Spirit of Wind abide by each other with mutual respect. Kauyumarie's eye is a *nierika*, i.e., a mirror reflecting all his actions, and the six points attached to his hair stand for the six years that it took Kauyumarie to separate all the elements on earth and arrange everything harmoniously. Palm branches, flowers and drops of dew symbolize the healthy life-giving qualities of Kauyumarie's plans. □ The vine-like figure (bottom right) is the root of the wind which starts to move, making the earth shake and producing a loud roar. Kauyumarie said to the Spirit of Wind: "You must concentrate on my hair in order to go to the Holyland of *Wirikuta*." The Spirit of Wind then transforms himself into a bird and, in that form, unites with Kauyumarie's Soul, thus reaching the Holyland. Once in the Holyland, he finds his sacred dwelling spot. This move was necessary to calm his excessive strength. □ The Tree of Wind is represented with two buds (large red and green pods on either side of the *kieri*). Its words are symbolized as a two-headed worm (far left). Kauyumarie's communication to the tree is depicted as a wavy red line with a white dot touching a branch of the tree below his left hand.

1. Kauyumarie, the *Kieri* tree and the Wind are prepared to team up when the end of the world is precipitated. José Benítez Sánchez notes that when all the Indians take on Mexican habits ("... que nos amesticemos todos") then Kauyumarie will be tired and he will tell *Eakateiwari*: "They are not heeding us. Let us go about destroying the world again!"
2. See p. 17.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 38 The Elevation Of The Rain

24 x 32<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

When the rain was a girl and lightning, her arrow, was a boy, the earth was being settled by our ancestors (Kauyumarie, *Tatewari* and *Taweviékame*). Our ancestors set the height of the rain clouds, so that their "angels", *hakiérite*, i.e., their children, would not drown in the rain. They adjusted the altitude from which it fell, until it did not rain too hard or too densely. The girl who is Our Mother Rain, *Tatéi Wiitari*, was told to produce rain in between the sky and the earth. □ The rains rise up from Our Mother the Sea and Our Mother Dew-Spirit like rocks lifted in the wind. Ice starts to form as a thin film in the center of the cloud (white area). Sometimes the ice clumps together producing hail. The film of ice which forms in the wind is the core of the rain. A blue serpent (seen here as a green snake-like figure) then rubs against the



ice and, sliding over it, detaches the water so it will fall. □ The boy (figure at lower right), who later becomes an arrow which is the thunder bolt, shoots his arrows into Our Mother Rain. His arrow (yellow shaft to the left of the serpent) inserts itself into the ice layer carried in the wind, and the rain cloud breaks (in front of the boy at lower right), pouring out rain in accord with the serpent in the cloud. □ The rain readies itself at night or at sunset (black areas). A dark brown bird (upper left) embodies the coming darkness within gusts of wind (wavy lines at top left) which move the rain clouds. The rain swells and collects at the top of a mountain peak around the cloud serpent's head (represented as a small tree-like form at top center). The small yellow bird (lower left) is a swallow flying just ahead of the rains. It is in front of the girl who becomes rain, announcing her arrival. A pine tree (bottom center) is bent under the winds and low clouds. It symbolizes the measurements that the ancestors took to determine the proper elevation of the clouds. Our Father the Sun (round shape with nine rays at top right) overlooks the preparations for rain as he sets. The yellow tree-shaped form at top right is his magic arrow. □ Our god's-eye, *tatsikuri*, (bottom right) is an offering for the Rain Mother so that she stays at the right elevation.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

### 39 Elder Brother Deer Tail Becomes His Soul's Temple

27¾ x 36

Our Elder Brother Deer Tail, Tamatsi Maxakuaxí (at center), was welcomed in the Holyland of Wírikuta by Our Mother Le-unaxu (far right). She is the Spirit of the so-called Burnt Peak standing over the mountains (triangular shapes along the lower right margin) that flank the Holyland in the East. On the other side he was also greeted by our Mother Peyote, Tatei Híkuri (far left). Then in a spot called P̄ariya, Elder Brother Deer Tail's flesh changed into a temple (here indicated with a roof form), and his soul appeared therein in the form of our Elder Brother Deer Spirit, Tamatsi Kauyumarie. Two flowers within the temple (Deer Tail's body) represent the hearts of Deer Tail and Deer Spirit (Kauyumarie) his second self. <sup>1</sup> Then Deer Spirit took the form of a person, separating his pure soul from his deer-aspect, which took on a different identity as Elder Brother Blue Deer, Tamatsi Maxayuavi (the deer-form within the larger animal). □ Deer Spirit (Kauyumarie, the green figure) below the body-temple of Deer Tail, received Deer Tail's words which emanate from his tail. Now in possession of Deer Tail's speech and heart, Deer Spirit becomes his spokesman. In this guise Deer Spirit called the other ancestors to his god-house, the temple. The tears of our ancestors became bees and the original candles appeared. (The tears change into bees and then into beeswax.) Our Mother Peyote's candle (bottom left) lights up to nurture Deer Tail's soul (i.e., Deer Spirit). □ Deer Tail's last breath enters the roof of the temple (upper left) from which his "words" emanate in the form of green dots. Deer Tail's hair becomes blades of grass, *wiwaatsirra* (top left), which



alone may be used to cover the roof of a temple. The plumed arrow atop the temple (blue shaft with green feathers) is now a source of Deer Tail's "words". □ Our Grandfather Fire, Tatewari, stands by the temple (upper right of center) as its guardian. He and Our Father Sun, Taweviekame, (top right) listen to the words of Deer Tail through his soul, Elder Brother Deer Spirit. Our Father Sun is in rapport with Our Mother of Burnt Peak, whom he blesses, indicating that she will remain in the Holyland.

1. The story is told of Tamatsi Maxakuaxi who travelled to the Land of Peyote with his shaman's bag, *tacuatsi*. At the end of his journey, the bag containing his "words" took the form of Tamatsi Kauyumarie. At that same moment Tamatsi Maxkuaxi was transformed into Tamatsi Kauyumarie's god-house, *xiriki*.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 40 The Death Of Our Mother The Sea

28 x 36<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

Our Mother the Sea, Tatéi Haramara, provoked her own death by smashing her head against a rock (at lower left). A wave surged at that moment releasing Haramara's soul in the breeze (upper left) which then reached the earth, Heriepa. The disembodied Mother of the Sea left her life-energy in the sea where she originated (columnar structure at lower right, with a red insect representing her life). In this manner her life is incorporated as the ocean, which still hurls its waves against the rocks. At the center of the trail that leads Haramara to her death, her "words" rise up in streams and are then collected on a sacred arrow next to the temple of the Holyland (at top center). Haramara's words gather on the arrow so that her soul will be received in the Holyland.<sup>1</sup> □ Tatéi Hautsi Kupuri, Our Mother Dew Soul (seen upper left), is the reincarnation of Haramara's soul as we have already discussed, and, in that guise, the daughter of the Sea. Dew Soul rises in the wind on the foam of the exploding wave. She bears her memory-thoughts on her back in a prayer bowl which receives the falling life-giving dew. Our Mother Dew Soul changes into a small bird to reach the temple. □ Pariya, the Spirit of Dawn and the son of Our Mother Earth, (central figure) is also approaching the temple, watching the words of Haramara gather on the arrow. A crane, behind him (lower right), is Haramara's disembodied heart which prods him to reach the Holyland alongside his companion Dew Soul. The bird also urges Pariya to render service to humanity, by bringing us our spirit/soul in the dew. This is why dew appears at dawn. □ Our Elder Brother Kauyumarie stands (top right) above the mountain peak of Le-unaxu, Burnt Peak, where the god-spirits first spoke (their words are depicted as flowers). He leans his antlers towards his temple, listening to hear if the spirits of Dew Soul and Dawn have reached it. When the two god-spirits reach the temple, they are disembodied pure souls (two flowers within the temple) who answer Kauyumarie from within his house. The tobacco gourds of the first male ancestors are attached to the base of the peak. A wavy line connects Kauyumarie to the holy peaks of Wirikuta (upper right margin). Today Our Mother Dew Soul and the light of Dawn still give life to us and to our children.

1. Below Haramara's path is the sea-bed. There, three large flowers represent three aspects of Haramara's spiritual being: her soul, her heart-memory and her sympathy for us, i.e. her life-giving energy. Three small multi-colored tortilla offerings are depicted below Haramara hitting the rock. Two pink-circled green dots above her, represent her Soul looking at her former self below the wave.



## 41 The Deification Of Our Mother Dew Soul

48½ x 96

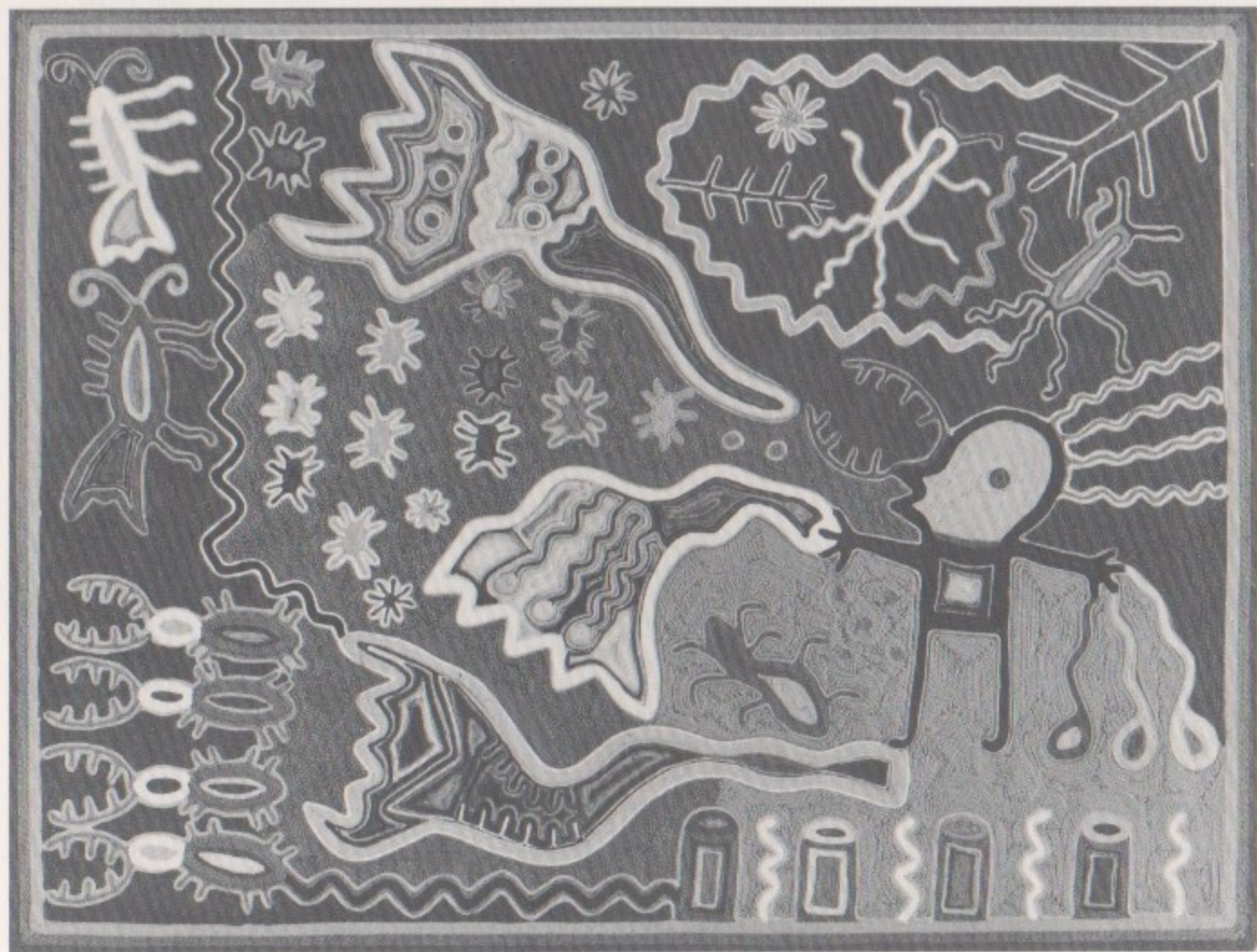
Our Mother Moist Earth, Tatéi Yurianaka, is the essence of Our Mother Sea, Tatéi Haramara, whom she brought to life by dividing herself up. She is the essence of the female deities of Rain and of "Dew Soul." Here we see her feeding Our Mother Rain, Tatéi Wiitari, as she indeed nursed all the god-spirits of the earth; she is depicted as a woman leaning over towards the serpent Mother of Rain (bottom left near center). Our Mothers Rain and Sea were born from the lower back of Mother Earth, where their appearance is symbolized by two flowers blessed with two drops of water by Our Elder Brother Kauyumarie. Our Mother Earth's womb is like a gourd bowl (bottom center). It lies above a pool of blood; this is her placenta, the source of all life on earth. □ Our Mother Sea assumes the same stance to the right of Our Mother Earth, but her soul shoots up to the skies as a wave swelling out of Mother Sea's belly and rises over her back becoming Our Mother Dew Soul, Tatéi Hautsi Kupuri (central figure).<sup>1</sup> She appears in person in the Holyland upon the back of the Earth and the Sea. Her face is shielded lest she blind herself looking at the sky in her ascent.<sup>2</sup> Tatéi Hautsi Kupuri is the soul of the whole world. An umbilical cord links Hautsi Kupuri to the gourd bowl that is Our Mother Earth's matrix. On both sides of the cord small star-shaped flowers indicate souls emanating from Our Mother Dew Soul. □ Upon arriving on earth, Dew Soul is greeted by the male spirits in the Holyland. Her head is adorned with their five plumed arrows<sup>3</sup> so that she may take care of their souls and those of all the other god-spirits. Our Mother Hautsi Kupuri spreads her soul in the form of dew drops on flowers, lending life to everything in this world. The three sprigs of Indian carnations that reach down from top center to connect with her spirit-aura enable her to disseminate life. □ Our Mother Dew Soul is facing the three principal male ancestors around a tree-like arrow, *wa-iteuri*, (far left) wherein they live and rest. This arrow incorporates the "hearts" of the god-ancestors in the Holyland.<sup>4</sup> Here Dew Soul is accepted, being received first by Our Grandfather Fire, Tatewarí. He greets her with his feathers (his flames) which change into a multi-colored serpent that extends from Dew Soul's hands at the center toward the lower left, ending in a face. Thus, he creates a bridge that brings her to his side, where she is blessed and blesses him. An orange line with blue dots connects the back of Our Grandfather Fire's head to the serpent. These are dew drops reviving his soul. □ Our Elder Brother Kauyumarie acts as the "heart" of Our Mother the Earth, so that the world continues to function. He is on top of the sacred arrow where drops of dew gather in knotted strands. Three antler-crowned serpents are attached to the dew-spotted lines. These serpents are transformations of Mother Dew Soul (a red serpent connected through dew lines to Kauyumarie's head), Mother Earth (an orange serpent attached to Kauyumarie's hand), and Mother Sea (a serpent that is white like sea foam). When it rains, these three serpents offer their souls which are borne by the wind. New life sprouts with the first rains and many flowers start appearing (three large flowers at top left center). The winds carry the serpents to the god-house<sup>5</sup> of Parietsié in the Holyland (center left) where they are welcomed. □ At the same time Tatéi Yukaima, Our Mother Who Is Like His Tear,<sup>6</sup> was first presented on earth. She is the original candle and essence of the bees who are her "heart". Hence she appears in the form of a small woman next to the god-house as an offering to Dew Spirit. □ Our Father Sun, Taweviékame, faces Our



Grandfather Fire on the other side of the tree-like arrow of the god-ancestors (lower left). He holds a palm with which he scatters food offerings, *yurarie*, (principally chocolate) for Dew Soul's sustenance. The offerings are contained in a gourd bowl given to Our Father Sun by Our Mother Peyote (bottom left) who nourishes him at night. Our Mother Peyote is concealed in the ground below the arrow of the god-spirits where a gust of wind could cover her completely. Here, under Mother Peyote, Our Mother Rain leaves the Holyland of Wirikuta in the form of a snake to feed on Mother Earth. □ At the far left center, the "heart" of Our Father Sun leaves to travel, in the form of a red insect, in the area beyond the Holyland. That region is identified with the underworld, Watetūapa, (along the upper left side). It is not known how our ancestor's hearts fare there. □ The god-spirit of Dawn, Pariya, appears among the feather rays of the first light (top right center). He is entrusted with a budding reed that has developed into a plumed arrow, and he is given his name. Dew Soul, whose presence spreads everywhere, blesses him with dew. The bees, Yukaima's "heart", make their appearance by the plumed arrow. A green flower symbolizes their chatter. Thus, Dawn receives his first offerings as five candles which are identical with Yukaima's bees. □ Following the wishes of Mother Earth, the rain is ordered to travel to the Holyland by Mother Sea. Clouds lift up from the abode of Mother Sea, who is embodied in the pointed rock of Guaxieve (bottom right center). The cloud serpents merge in the Holyland along the lower right margin extending up to a three-legged drum, *tepo* (seen as a face with three flowers in its forehead). Kauyumarie, whose antlers lie at the base of the drum, decreed that, when played in the middle of the day, this drum would call the rains. As the candle offerings are lit, a cloud serpent rises from a well of water stored under the drum, and a young girl dripping rain from her arm appears from the head of the snake. She is the rain falling in response to the song of the drum. The thunderclap is represented as blue flowers. The radiant extensions on the head of Our Mother Sea express her joy at seeing her request fulfilled. The large blue drop, suspended from a bee near her head, is a candle extinguished by being offered to the Sea. □ When it grows dark the Spirit of the South Waters, Xápaviyeme, (bottom far right) shoots an arrow hitting his own rain serpent so that the rains cease. Nuariwame, stands above Xápaviyeme. She is the source of water in the eastern highlands. The Mother of Western Waters, Kyewimuka, stands in front of a sacrificial bull (top right). Paper flowers which adorn the bull's horns, are arranged along a rope below its head. An antler-like wind forms above Kyewimuka's head and represents her self renunciation. □ Thus, the creation of life on earth is completed when Kauyumarie gathers with his helpers in the heartland of the world; for Kauyumarie approves of this world and achieves a relationship of mutual trust among the principal god-ancestors in the sky, on the earth and in the water. The Sea supports the Earth and the Earth supports Dew Soul and Rain, the germinator. The tears of the Earth are the water-holes where the Spirit Mothers of rain live.

1. She issued from a drop of dew in the sea foam which is depicted between Hautsi Kupuri's wing and Mother Sea's back.
2. Similarly, peyote pilgrims are blindfolded on their first journey to Wirikuta.
3. The five arrows correspond counterclockwise to Taweviekame (Sun), Tatewarí (Fire), Kauyumarie (Deer Spirit), Pariya (Dawn), and Waakuri Temai (the Guardian of the Holyland).
4. Four Tobacco gourds of the gods are suspended horizontally on the sacred arrow. The tobacco gourds, *yákuay*, bring respite to the ancestor-gods.
5. In its center, the godhouse has a multicolored *nierika*, its instrument for seeing, which has the form of a deer trap. Three red dots represent the words of the Mothers of the Sea, Earth and Dew Soul.
6. Tatei Yukaima is so called because she appeared from Kauyumarie's tears.





36. The Ants Are Separated Into Groups





37. Kauyumarie Blesses the Wind





38. The Elevation of the Rain





39. Elder Brother Deer Tail Becomes His Soul's Temple





40. The Death of Our Mother the Sea





41. The Deification of Our Mother Dew Soul



## 42 Kauyumarie's Nierika

48<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 48

This is Our Elder Brother Kauyumarie's *nierika*<sup>1</sup> (the disk at top center) which is his instrument-for-seeing. Kauyumarie has secured life with it. By passing through the hole<sup>2</sup> in the center of the *nierika* he penetrated to the upper layer of the Underworld and entered the temple-body of his Elder Brother Deer Tail, Maxakuaxí, in the Holyland (see Cat. 39), thereby initiating life on earth. □ At the same time, Kauyumarie's *nierika* is the unity of the divine spirits of all things whether it be in the Holyland of Wirikuta, in the sacred caves of Teacata, or in the region of Our Mother Sea, the god-spirits gather in the *nierika*. Kauyumarie is in all regions: the first world of Watetüapa, the Underworld; the second world of Heriepa, the Earth; and the third world of Taheimá, the Sky. In effect, Kauyumarie's *nierika* embraces the whole world. □ We see how Kauyumarie functions in rapport with Our Mother Young Eagle Girl, Tatéi Wērika Wīmari, who is the Spirit of the Sky embodied in the form of an eagle (at center). Her head is turned down as she listens attentively to Kauyumarie. She received the words of Kauyumarie, the words rest here for she is their keeper. □ Kauyumarie is sitting on a rock (bottom right). His words travel from his hand along a thread which ends in a prayer bowl (lower margin). □ The words unite in the prayer bowl becoming *tukari*, life energy (represented as a white flower). These are the words that Kauyumarie entrusted to Our Eagle Mother. Thus she is depicted with a shaman's basket (between her legs at center) within which she received his words. The basket is surmounted by Kauyumarie's antlers which she receives in her heart. □ Our Grandfather, Tatewarí, the Spirit of Fire, listens to Kauyumarie with the feathers on his head which are his flames. He is suspended from the edge of the *nierika* disk (at right), leaning down towards Kauyumarie. Tatewarí and Kauyumarie are linked to a shaman's basket (center right). Indeed, they are chained to each other through their common purposes and joint action.<sup>3</sup> Tatewarí's words are depicted as red and blue dots on his fingertips. □ Our Father Sun is suspended on the other side of the *nierika* (center left). Both he and Our Grandfather Fire reached the edge of the *nierika*, where they could see Kauyumarie disappear in the middle of the disk. □ Kauyumarie first formed the *nierika* from foam covered water. Thus, the white in the *nierika* disk symbolizes the white foam; The black circle symbolizes Kauyumarie's vision in the darkness of night; The yellow circle represents his vision in light; The pink circle symbolizes life. Kauyumarie's words mark the space around the disk (depicted as yellow dots). □ The god-spirits sustain themselves with their *kupuri*, soul, their *nierika*, their *iyari*, non-physical heart-memory, and their *tukari*, life energy. All of this forms a single "heart for Kauyumarie" (Fig. 1). The Sun deity is linked to Pariya, the Spirit of Dawn (orange figure below and to the left of central eagle). Both are in the Holyland where the sun rises. Kauyumarie's *nierika* is located here and so is Elder Brother Deer Tail's temple (dark domed field below the eagle). Elder Brother Deer Tail is depicted within the temple with red antlers. This is his god-figure, after he leaves his body. He is also depicted above as a person (opposite the orange figure of the Spirit of Dawn). When Deer Tail left his body, the temple materialized from his carcass. In the temple, behind Deer Tail, is the deified figure of Tatéi Haramara, Our Mother the Sea. A crane brings a calabash gourd to her. A prayer bowl is made from the gourd, such as the one in front of Deer Tail where Kauyumarie's words become life. In fact, Kauyumarie himself appeared from Deer Tail's disembodied heart-memory. Blue Deer, Maxayuavi (at left center) also sprung to life in the form of a deer from Deer Tail's body. Blue Deer was created to give life-energy to the votive offerings, so a path connects him to the

rest there



calabash gourd because his blood gives life to prayer bowls. Blue Deer also offers his blood<sup>4</sup> in sacrifice to corn in particular, which is why a corn stalk nurtured by his blood rises up to meet his hind legs (lower left margin). □ The green path above Blue Deer is a vein of sacred water used to feed the soul. Our Father Sun's prayer bowl lies just below Our Grandfather's flames (above Blue Deer) next to the water stream. Thus, the Sun, by means of his memory which is in the bowl, and Our Grandfather Fire, through his flames/feathers, remain in agreement. □ Watákame, the first cultivator of the fields (seen at top left), was also a companion of our ancestors, although he performed his deeds after life had become firmly rooted on Our Mother Earth. So, he too, is depicted, albeit distant, around Kauyumarie's *nierika*. Two gourds for water hang from his neck and flowers surround him symbolizing words that he does not master. A sheep is depicted facing Watákame. Its blood was first shed to allow Kauyumarie's words to rest.<sup>5</sup> The plumed arrow, *muvieri*, atop the sheep's head attracts Kauyumarie's words. This symbolic arrow embodies the spirit of the sacrificed lamb which passes from its head. □ The rock on which Kauyumarie sits is in Xápaviyemeta, where the rain first lifted into the sky. The serpent above Kauyumarie (right margin) is the rain which springs from a tree and rises into the breeze, becoming Xápaviyeme (the figure at top right), the Spirit of Rain in the South. This tree of Rain gave life to all the ancestor spirits, and it nurtures Kauyumarie (seemingly through its roots).

1. See essay p. 18 for a further explanation of *nierika*.
2. Kauyumarie designed *nierikate* (plural of *nierika*) out of a soft lava stone called *teanuxa*. Such a stone *nierika* is always placed in god-houses with a hole in its center through which the ancestor-spirits enter the god-house.
3. The healer-priest, *marakame*, enters into communion with all the ancestors through his spiritual partnership with both Kauyumarie and Tatewari.
4. There is a mystical equivalence between the blood of the deer and the rain which it causes to fall when offered to the god-spirits.
5. Since Kauyumarie effects his actions through his words, when they rest he also rests.

JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 43 Kauyumarie Receives An Offering Of Copal Incense

24 x 32

Tamatsi Kauyumarie reached the status of divinity after he succeeded in establishing life on earth. As the deer ancestor-spirit, incarnate also in peyote and corn, Kauyumarie still influences us and is held in respect by the other founding spirits. □ Here, Kauyumarie is represented receiving offerings from the male spirits of the Sun, the Fire (both at left) and Tuamurrawi, the Spirit of Cultivation, embodied in their original forms as people. Later, like Kauyumarie, they will be present only as spirits. □ They offer Kauyumarie copal incense in a three-legged clay censer, called *putsi*, standing before the prayer mat



between them. The smell of burning copal is nourishment for Kauyumarie. So Kauyumarie springs out of his dwelling, which is a calabash gourd (upper left), extending himself in the form of a cloud with serpent tongues to receive his food from the four corners of the earth. *Ukua*, the copal resin, appears in the censer in the figure of a woman whose spirit it is when burned. The censer is adorned with plumed arrows and surrounded by coral snakes, who protect the offerings of the deities. □ All the prayers and offerings made to Kauyumarie are not actually consumed by him but stored on a sacred mat in the Holyland of Wirikuta (top right), which thus becomes the repository of all the words and blessings of the spirits (as dots). Thus, the very offering that the ancestor-spirits made in person will revert to them also when they join Kauyumarie in the spirit world.

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## 44 Our Ancestor-Spirits Are Hidden

24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 23<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

Our holy ancestors began to conceal themselves in the world which they had settled for us. In this manner Hīkuri, the sacred peyote (at center) who once walked and talked, was buried in the ground so that its body would disappear. □ Kauyumarie, seated on his shaman's chair (at right), started making all the god-ancestors disappear until everything was hidden. He and his powerful ally, Tatewari, the Ancestor of Fire (at left), made an effort so that we would only find the flesh of peyote and other sacred things through great self-sacrifice. □ Surrounding the peyote are elements related to the peyote seeker's ritual. Three arrows planted about the cactus symbolize the fact that it must be hunted or it will disappear like a deer. The face of the seeker must be painted with yellow designs (lower center) in symbolic patterns. □ If the peyote seeker comes in grace, pure of soul, the peyote will appear in the midst of rain-clouds. It shall then rain in the desertland of Wirikuta. The souls of Kauyumarie and Tatewari are represented in the form of white flowers in the clouds. The seeker will also find healing arrows (two pink-stemmed arrows with feathers to the left and right of the peyote plant towards the bottom). These will appear as "deer-hairs" which are identical with the white fuzz on top of peyote (here represented as red spots). After finding the peyote, the pilgrim is obligated to hunt deer in gratitude to the ancestors, particularly Tatewari. When the pilgrim is graced with the rain and the "deer-hair", his path is charmed. The path stretches between two large arrows (bottom corners) so he will not fail in the deer hunt. □ Between antlers (top center) we see Nierikayapa, the combined faces of the ancestor spirits. Nierikayapa is the waterhole of Waakuri Kitenie at the gates to the Holyland. Thus, the gods keep an eye on the pilgrim. Tatewari's communication with peyote is symbolized by a red dot at the end of a serpents tongue (extending from his left hand), like a spark thrust out of the flames.



## 45 After Their Death, The God-Spirits Gather in Wirikuta

31<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 48<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>

The ancestor-gods have died in flesh, but they are still alive in spirit. Every year the god-spirits gather to visit their chief, Elder brother Kauyumarie, who is like the soul of all the gods united. □ Once these gods walked and talked, but now, although they still speak, only Kauyumarie understands what they say. Even after the ancestor-gods became disembodied their womb remained in the holy desert of Wirikuta. Here they meet after a year has elapsed. Their hearts, their souls, their pulse (literally *matsuwa*, a wristguard, see p24) and their words are all placed together upon the altar of Parietsié (at bottom center) where they first saw the light of the earth's surface. This is where their umbilical cord is planted. □ Tatéi Yurianaka, Our Mother Moist Earth, and Tatéi Wērika Wīmári, Our Mother, Young Eagle Girl who is the spirit of the sky (perched atop Yurianaka), are above the altar. A white tongue-like shape appears between the god-spirits in the Holyland and in their seat in Ixrūapa, the center of the world in the Huichol highlands. Said communication is received in the Holyland by the mirror of the gods where their sacred aspects are combined (round disk with concentric white lines, near top center). □ Our Elder Brother Kauyumarie is depicted as a deer (at right) with Our Mother Corn, one of his aspects, represented above his back (top right) as a corn plant. The sacred chants of Our Elder Brother transform themselves into Our Mother Haiku Yuave, Blue Snake (here brown and white ringed). This snake is the path upon which Our Elder Brother walks so that his words may reach their destination promptly. □ Emerging from the right of the altar, Tatewarí, the god-spirit of Fire, is depicted with his flames rising about Kauyumarie. Indeed the sacred Fire and Elder Brother act in concert when the shaman invokes them for assistance. The pink disk above the God of Fire is Elder Brother's spirit-memory. The green flower symbolizes the Fire's spirit-memory and the purple flower between Elder Brother's antlers is the spirit-memory of the serpent which embodies his chants. □ Our Father the Sun (at lower left), appears at the gathering of the god-spirits in multiple forms. His heart is a deer (far left) whose red vertebrae are visible since he is separate from his flesh and his body. The words of the Sun appear as red cacti growing on a green mother tree (upper left) which is her heart. Above her is Maxayuavi, the Blue Deer (here he is brown). He represents the life of the gods, for it is his blood (red spots) which nurtures the god-spirits when a deer is sacrificed. □ The memory-spirit of the gods arrives in the Holyland as mutli-colored waves (located throughout). The area in which the god-spirits gather is shielded by a magical fence (red line along the left margin). □ Thus, Elder Brother's kindred god-spirits visit each other at the end of the year to be reborn as a new spirit, just as we do after we die. □ The words of the gods can be called forth by the shaman. They leave the altar of the Holyland in the form of a small bird which lands in a prayer bowl or holywater where the shaman then covers it with his plumed arrow.





42. Kauyumarie's Nierika





43. Kauyumarie Receives an Offering of Copal Incense





44. Our Ancestor-Spirits Are Hidden





45. After Their Death, the God-Spirits Gather in Wirikuta



JOSÉ BENÍTEZ SÁNCHEZ

## 46 Tamatsi Kauyumarie Pacifies The Gods

23½ x 24¾

Taweviékame, Our Father the Sun (top center), and Tatewarí, Our Grandfather Fire (lower right), opened up large holes in the earth.<sup>1</sup> They travelled about the caves and the dark edge of the earth through a system of subterranean canals (symbolized by the blue lines). When the Sun is below the earth there is darkness on earth (left) but light below (turquoise area). □ In their subterranean caves these two gods play and hide. Tamatsi Kauyumarie, Elder Brother Deer Spirit, keeps constant watch on them, and he keeps their words (a string of knots) in his medicine bag (multi-colored oval at the left). He restrains them from using their magic staffs, lest they destroy the world with their "words" and their scorching fury. Tatewarí's staff, with a red point on its tip, emits the vapor and smoke that he exhales from below the earth; it escapes from the orifices of the caves. But Tamatsi Kauyumarie always blocks them,<sup>2</sup> restraining their anger, and preventing Tatewarí from setting the earth below on fire. Tamatsi Kauyumarie's dominion is symbolized by the yellow lines in the green area. His head is crowned by his antler plumes and spirit.

1. José Benítez Sánchez notes that there are five huge holes located in the four corners and center of the earth.
2. His interceding motions are represented as wavy yellow lines.

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## 47 The All Encompassing Aspect Of Tamatsi Kauyumarie

23⅝ x 23⅝

Here we see Tamatsi Kauyumarie. His body is full of "words" of all kinds, songs and prayers. He received all the "words" of the gods. He understands all that happens in this world; he alone has covered the earth. He does not have to study to gain the wisdom of shamans as it is bred from his very body. □ He knows precisely what we say and what the gods say. He knows how many gods there are and what they request each day. He knows how many of us die every day, how many animals there are, and what languages are spoken in the world. He knows precisely how many children are born each day. This man, indeed does everything. □ Tamatsi Kauyumarie extends to every part of the world, gathering the words of all on the tentacles of his body. By stretching his body, Kauyumarie can transport himself to the Holyland of Wírikuta in the East, or to Watetüapa by the edge of the ocean. He lingers in the wind.





46. Tamatsi Kauyumarie Pacifies the Gods





47. The All Encompassing Aspect of Tamatsi Kauyumarie



E. B. Crocker Art Gallery  
December 6, 1975 - January 18, 1976

San Jose Museum of Art  
May 5 - June 6, 1976