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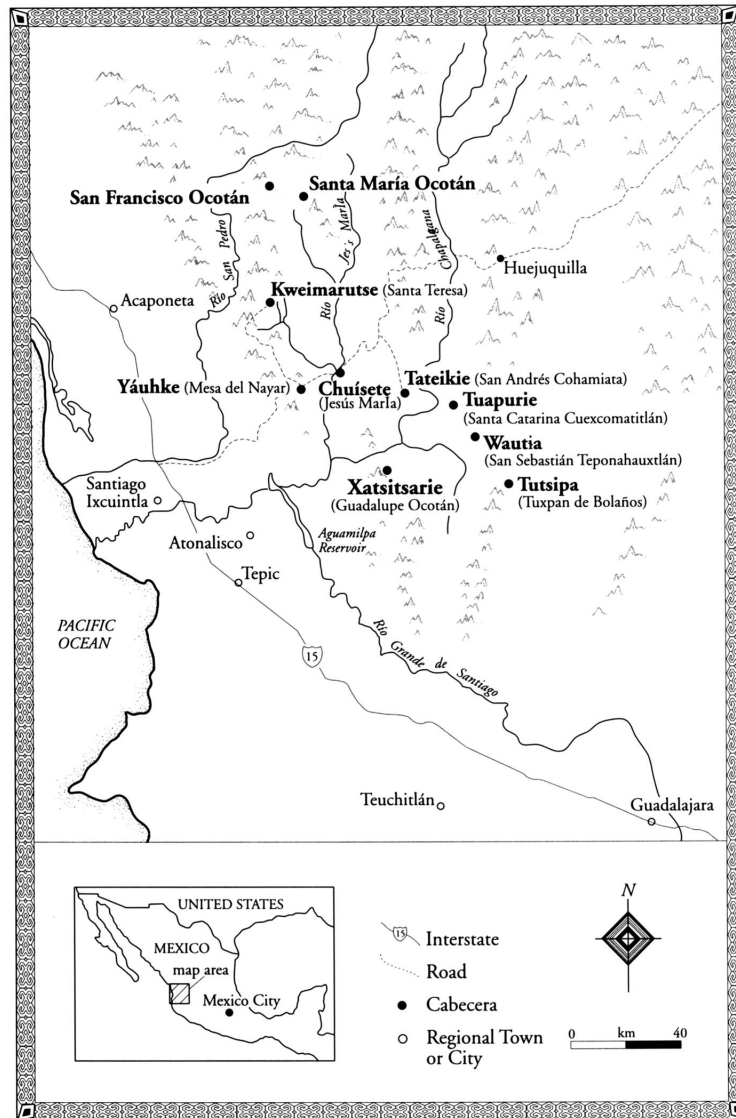
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*Introduction: Ritual and Historical
Territoriality of the Cora (Náyari)
and Huichol (Wixárika) Peoples*

PAUL M. LIFFMAN and PHILIP E. COYLE

This special issue of the *Journal of the Southwest* concerns the indigenous Wixárika (Huichol) and Náyari (Cora) peoples of Jalisco, Nayarit, Zacatecas, and Durango in western Mexico, a region known since the colonial period as El Gran Nayar (see overview map). It brings a new generation of researchers together with a senior master of the field. These authors share extensive fieldwork among the Wixáritari (Huichols) and Náyarite (Coras), as well as common interests in cosmology, ceremonialism, language, history, and sociopolitical structures. They are publishing here the results of their work in the spirit of the pioneering collaborations initiated by Weigand, Hinton, Nahmad-Sitton, and other researchers during the 1970s (Hinton and Weigand 1981; Crumrine and Weigand 1987). This collection presents for the first time in English the results of this new international group of scholars. It should be read, then, alongside the classic monographs, translations, documentary collections, and innovative new research that are regularly appearing in Spanish as part of a series sponsored by the Centro Francés de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos (CFEMCA), the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS), and the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI).

Key themes in this recent series of publications are ceremonialism and the unusually prolonged and violent struggle of the peoples of El Gran Nayar to defend their religious life and territory. In this special issue, we expand on these themes to show how the Wixáritari and Náyarite, like their northern cousins the Yoemem (Yaquis), continue to make claims to autonomy and sovereignty not only through federal law, but also through their own ritually constructed “senses of place” (Feld and Basso 1996). As in other cultures, stories are powerful tools for maintaining senses of place among these indigenous peoples, but for the Wixáritari and Náyarite, treks or pilgrimages to commonly recognized sacred sites further “demarcate” and “inscribe” putatively national territories as autochthonous lands (Evers and Molina 1992: 3; cf.



El Gran Nayar. *Map by Susan Alta Martin.*

Myers 1986). Through these treks, ancient narratives of divine ancestral migration across the Mexican landscape are geographically rooted in a way that the recitation of those narratives alone is not. The articles that comprise this special edition document some of the ceremonial practices linked to these treks and thus shed light on Wixáritari and Náyarite understandings of territoriality. The term *territoriality* as used here, however, does not necessarily mean land in the sense of exclusively owned and rigidly delimited property. Instead, we see it as one type of ceremonially reproduced cultural space.

This notion of territoriality as cultural space is also implicit in the recent series of scholarly publications concerning the indigenous peoples of the Gran Nayar region. In one of the more important of these publications, Jesús Jáuregui and Johannes Neurath (1998) reassess the work of pioneering German ethnographer Konrad Theodor Preuss. Jáuregui and Neurath argue that Preuss offers significant insights for contemporary researchers interested in Mesoamerican “cosmovision” (see also Neurath, this volume). Specifically, they focus on Preuss’s interest in what Adolph Bastian called the “elementary ideas” (Jáuregui and Neurath 1998: 16) that underlie “the intellectual worlds of other cultures” (Preuss in Jáuregui and Neurath 1998: 17). In this regard, they argue that Preuss’s attention to the persistent dualisms of Mesoamerican mythology (such as those between rainy season and wet season or between day and night) was a precursor to twentieth-century anthropological structuralism. Recent publications by Weigand, however, lead to the conclusion that the structured “intellectual worlds” of the Gran Nayar discussed by Jáuregui, Neurath, and others are also grounded in concrete histories. Taking a similar historically informed position, Meyer (1984, 1989a, 1989b), Rojas (1993a, 1993b), and others (e.g. Jáuregui and Meyer 1997) have also produced a series of documentary histories that help to situate Wixárika and Náyarí ceremonial organization in time as much as in cosmological space.

Our own perspective is that the articles in this volume show how these indigenous peoples of the Gran Nayar concretely embody and reenact historically situated cosmological models through their ritual practices. In this regard, we see the essays as spanning the range from structuralism (Kindl, Guzmán, Neurath) to ethnohistory (Weigand) to experientially, socially, or historically situated analyses of ritual and myth (Gutiérrez, Coyle, Liffman). We believe that together these articles show how structured ritual practices grounded in mythological forms

are “good for thinking” history in classical Mesoamerican terms comprehensible to both participant and observer. At the same time, the arrangement of those terms is reshaped in historical time and practice. This participant-centered, sociohistorical approach to ritual emphasizes the constitutive and motivating aspects of specific ceremonial performances. This contrasts with a focus on the regional scale patterning of signification of which the actual participants themselves have little awareness (Bonfiglioli and Jáuregui 1996: 27–28).

An implication of a participant-centered approach to ritual performance is that it recognizes the inseparability of political and religious meanings. Indeed, ever since the earliest documentary evidence on ceremonialism in the Gran Nayar began to appear in the sixteenth century, ritual performance has had demonstrably political purposes. This performative function not only validated traditional political hierarchies (Coyle n.d.), but was also a sign of resistance to colonial and national-state authority (Jáuregui and Meyer 1997). More recently, the political and religious significance of ceremonial treks has been signaled in land claim litigation by various communities of the Gran Nayar (Liffman et al. 1995). The editors consider it appropriate for the territorial and cosmological practices documented in this volume to be viewed as resources for the fuller understanding of indigenous political organization in the Gran Nayar and beyond.

Indeed, the notion of “ritual and historical territoriality” put forward here is quite literally far-reaching as it intersects with indigenous categories of cosmologically significant geographical space such as *hiakim* for the Yoemem (Evers and Molina 1992) and *kiekari* for the Wixáritari. In both cosmological and practical ceremonial terms (Neurath 1998; Liffman, this volume), for example, the Wixárika kiekari covers tens of thousands of square kilometers beyond the traditionally defined area of the Gran Nayar region. Hence, insofar as territoriality entails ceremonially reproduced cultural space, it includes all the paths, sites, and areas where people like the Náyarite and Wixáritari habitually reproduce themselves as social groups through collective ritual and subsistence practices. On the one hand, these practices include material production such as maize agriculture, which requires ownership by a group (Weigand 1972). On the other hand, for most of the roughly 90,000 square kilometers of Wixárika territory (kiekari), the principal land-use practices are seasonal hunting, gathering, and site-centered ceremonial activities.

This sort of land-based discourse and practice is generally acknowledged by Mexican law (particularly the recently amended Article 4 of the Constitution) under the category of *usos y costumbres* (customary usages) as well by the international treaty rights Mexico adheres to under Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO). Thus these statutes offer a basis for the indigenous peoples of the Gran Nayar to reestablish access to their ritual and historical territories in order to carry out traditional activities. In fact, with this new recognition of *usos y costumbres* in recent years, these indigenous peoples have become more vocal about the explicitly political significance of carrying out the ceremonies that constitute these extensive territories. Thus ritual performance is itself becoming a symbol of wider Indian political rights in a more openly multiethnic society.

THE ARTICLES

The theoretical perspectives in this collection are diverse, ranging from Lévi-Straussian structuralism to interpretive and practice-oriented ethnography to more classical historical methods. Nonetheless it is striking to us that many of the articles are linked by their focus on synecdoche—the notion that ritual practices, objects, and organizations are inclusively nested within one another through direct, physical contact or movement to higher-level instances of sociopolitical and cosmological organization with similar formal patterns.

The spatial or political aspects of synecdoche are notable in Olivia Selena Kindl's discussion of *xukurite* (gourd bowls), Adriana Guzmán's discussion of *mitote* patios, Johannes Neurath's discussion of the *tukipa* (temple compound), Philip Coyle's discussion of *haihsa* (springs), and Paul Liffman's discussion of exchange between *tuki* (temple) and *xiriki* (family shrine). In each case, shared formal patterns map out cosmological or territorial models. There is also a temporal dimension to the synecdoche discussed in these papers. This is prominent in Arturo Gutiérrez del Angel's article, "Blood in Huichol Ritual," with his focus on *mawarixa* (blood sacrifice) as a founding cosmological practice (cf. Schaefer 1989, n.d.). The point is also clear in the implicit sense of ritual as conscious reenactment of ancestral practices or mythological episodes that emerges from all of these ethnographically oriented papers (cf. Fikes 1993). Through this temporal synecdoche, ritual links

to the primordial past are woven into political organizations and spatial territories.

The order of the papers presented here reflects our understanding of the authors' different approaches and scales of analysis. Weigand's interpretation of prehispanic and colonial polities, entitled "Huichol Society before the Arrival of the Spanish," links the kinds of ceremonial practices described in the other articles with large, ceremonially constituted political-administrative units and a vision of macro-regional history from before the Spanish onslaught through the Mexican Revolution. Indeed, he argues that contemporary Wixárika *kawiterutsixi* (temple district elders) represent the vestiges of a prehispanic and early-colonial political structure tied to a neighboring Náyari polity that extended far beyond the current limits of indigenous settlement (cf. Neurath 1998). This structure was coterminous with the tukipa (temple districts) revolving around the principal ceremonial centers to which Wixáritari in the *comunidades indígenas* of the Sierra Madre Occidental still belong. The tukipa, according to Weigand, was the fundamental form of political organization that existed before the Spaniards imposed the *comunidad*-centered organization with its *gobernadores*, *alcaldes*, *alféreces*, *topiles*, and other offices. As other essays in this volume amply illustrate, the tukipa continues to be the principal level of organization for defining the most meaningful relationships to specific places across the entire five-state area of the Wixárika kiekari.

Shifting from Weigand's large-scale approach to political structure, Olivia Kindl and Adriana Guzmán focus on Wixárika ceremonial objects and Náyari mitote patios as models of the world. In her article, "The Huichol Gourd Bowl as a Microcosm," Kindl stresses the isomorphism between what she (following Lumholtz 1900) calls "effigy bowls" and Wixáritari cosmological principles. Guzmán, in her "Mitote and Cora Universe," continues this emphasis on structural connections in her analysis of Náyari ceremonies and dance patios. Johannes Neurath, in "Tukipa Ceremonial Centers in the Community of Tuapurie (Santa Catarina Cuexcomatitlán): Cargo System, Landscape, and Cosmovision," focuses on the more expansive scale of ceremonial architecture. Here Neurath reveals hierarchies within synecdoche: for example, the tukipa compound with its central temple and surrounding *xirikite* (shrines) embodies the structure of the world with its East-West, North-South, and vertical axes, as well as the temporal axis of wet/dry seasonality (cf. Schaefer 1996).

In his “Blood in Huichol Ritual,” Arturo Gutiérrez del Angel takes a more participant-centered approach to these issues with his focus on the simultaneously visceral and mythological act of sacrificing animals. Philip E. Coyle, in “‘To Join the Waters’: Indexing Metonymies of Territoriality in Cora Ritual,” also develops this emphasis on the participants’ practical enactment of structure through his account of treks to collect sacred water. In such treks, human action is directly implicated in the creation of cultural space as Náyarite connect mythologically charged places with mitote ceremonies through physical movement of water. Both blood and water become sanctified substances that establish an immediate metonymic connection to the primordial sacrifices of the mythological past, but on different cosmological scales. Finally, in “Gourd vines, Fires, and Wixárika Territoriality,” Paul M. Liffman returns to a more structural but still participant-centered approach. He shows how Wixáritari link family *rancherías* to regional temples and then to the sacred sites that define the limits of the Wixárika cosmos through both mythological histories and ritual exchange practices centered around the metaphors of fire and gourd vines. Moreover, he shows how contemporary Wixárika take up these defining myths, rituals, and metaphors about their ancestral territory as a basis for political action.

The collection closes with a set of reviews of some of the more significant historical and anthropological works to have appeared on the Gran Nayar region in recent years. The reviews address “Territoriality and Historical Consciousness in Beatriz Rojas’s *Los huicholes en la historia* (by Paul M. Liffman); two books by Leon Diguët: *Por tierras occidentales: Entre sierras y barrancas* and *Fotografías del Nayar y del California 1893–1900* (by J. Andrew Darling); and Phil C. Weigand’s *Ensayos sobre el Gran Nayar: Entre coras, huicholes y tepehuanos* (by Olivia Kindl).

In all of these articles and reviews, the editors have attempted to standardize orthography based on conventions currently used by linguists and writers working in the Wixárika language. No such widely accepted conventions currently exist for writing the Náyarí language (but see Casad 1984), and there are substantial dialectal differences within that language. Still, the editors have partially modified the orthography of authors citing either Wixárika or Náyarí terms. We do this with the aim of participating in a dialogue conducted in the emergent written standard forms of these languages, based on systematic linguistics.

The conventions used for writing the Wixárika language are based on the phonology originally developed by Grimes and MacIntosh in the 1950s and modified in the 1990s by Iturrioz and his group at the Departamento de Estudios de Lenguas Indígenas of the Universidad de Guadalajara (Grimes et al. 1981: 7–10; Iturrioz et al. n.d.). There are five vowels (a, e, i, ɨ, u): /a/, /e/, /i/, and /u/ are pronounced as in Spanish; /ɨ/ is halfway between /i/ and /u/ and is unrounded like /i/. There are thirteen consonants (the stops p, t, k, kw, ’; the aspirate h; the liquid r; the trill x; the nasals m, n; the affricate ts; and the glides w, y): /’/ is a glottal stop as in the Cockney English “’enry ’iggins”; /h/ is breathy and /r/ is retroflexed as in “hark” in Old Chicago English; /x/ is a retroflexed fricative like the /ř/ in Czech “Dvořák,” which ranges from voiced in San Andrés to unvoiced in Santa Catarina and San Sebastián; /w/ before /i/ or /e/ is pronounced like the /v/ in “weaver” and otherwise it is pronounced /w/; /y/ is unpalatalized as it is in English. The remaining consonants can be pronounced as in Spanish. Stress is phonemic and falls on the penultimate syllable unless otherwise marked. All Wixárika syllables have the shape CV or CVV, so no word begins with a vowel.

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