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# THE LIVING CAMERA IN THE RITUAL LANDSCAPE: THE TEACHERS OF THE TATUUTSI MAXAKWAXI SCHOOL, THE WIXÁRIKA ANCESTORS, AND THE *TEIWARI* NEGOTIATE VIDEOGRAPHY

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## ABSTRACT

In this article, we outline the meanings modern Wixárika institutions, such as the school and the museum, may receive as parts of ritual landscape and how the community-based videos shot in the context of these institutions may increase our understanding of ritual landscapes in general. We discuss how ritual landscape can be researched using community-based documentary video art in a way that takes the ontological conceptions of the human and non-human relations of the community seriously. In this case, we understand community-based video art as artistic research in which the work is produced with the community for the community. The making of art, discussed in this article, is a bodily activity as it includes walking with a camera in the Wixárika ritual landscape, interviewing people for the camera, and documenting the work and rituals of the pupils, teachers, and the *mara'akate* (shaman-priests) planning the community-based museum.

**KEYWORDS:** Wixárika • deified ancestors • community museum • community-based art • videography

Good morning! Could all of you from faraway Finland please step closer. This porthole, by which we are standing, is sacred and this disc next to it is also sacred. We will now place an offering inside the hole and shape it. This will allow you all

to return to your families in good health. According to our tradition, this is the gate to heaven. The day we die, we all open it. We have a similar sacrificial chamber in our village temple.

(Alfredo, a teacher of Wixárika culture, during the opening ceremony of a museum workshop in the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school)

It is October in 2014 and we are recording a video in the schoolyard of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi, the Great Grandfather Deertail, junior high school. We have organised a video workshop in the Tsikwaita community together with the school's teachers. Community craftspeople; the Sámi linguist Irja Seurujärvi-Kari; the student Paula Rauhala, who is employed by The Sámi Museum Siida; and Katri Hirvonen-Nurmi, the curator of The Helinä Rautavaara Museum, have been invited to participate. As part of the opening ceremony, the teacher of the Wixárika culture and a *mara'akame* (a shaman-priest), Maestro Alfredo<sup>1</sup> lifts a stone disc, *tepari*, to reveal a sacrificial chamber dug in the middle of the schoolyard. He places an offering into the hole and a burning candle next to it. Doing so he opens a vertical gateway to the beyond – to the upper and lower worlds – and converses with the *kakaiyarixi*, the deified ancestors. We, the guests and the school pupils, walk past him one after another and each one of us receives a blessing administered with his feather wand. A teacher of textile handicrafts, Maestra Rosa shields the candle with her hand to prevent it from dying. We are filming for the community museum that is going to be set up in the school.

Alfredo, Rosa, and other teachers at the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school regularly attend, with their children, annual celebrations and agrarian ceremonies (sowing, weeding, roasting, and harvesting corn) that are held in the communally built circular thatched-roofed *tuki* temple and in the smaller *xiriki* temples, which are maintained by familial communities. Ceremonies are the most important way to familiarise children and the young with the deified ancestors (*kakaiyarixi*), sacred places, and rituals, although today different types of custom are also needed. Not all families are able to attend ceremonies since parents work as migrant workers in sugar fields or sell handicraft in the city and the children are in school. This has inspired the teachers and the members of the parents' association to found a community-based museum and cultural centre, Tunúwame, in which Wixárika culture will be researched, documented, archived, presented, and taught to the Wixáritari, especially the schoolchildren (*Proyecto general* 2016). The young need a place where they can obtain knowledge of their own culture in an interesting and modern way. The idea of founding a museum comes from Alfredo, the leader of the ceremony described above. The aim of the seminar is to consider what kind of knowledge will be presented in Tunúwame and through what means this will be accomplished. The teachers find videography especially important since it enables students to follow the ecological changes of sacred places, and the documentation of the rituals for the museum collections and therefore for future generations. Videography can aid the preservation of ritual practice, the *yeiyari*, and if information is nevertheless forgotten, later generations could learn the details of it by watching the videos. Other similar museum and culture house projects are planned in the context of school network CEIWYNA on the Sierra Madre Occidental mountains.

As representatives of the Finnish civic organisation CRASH (Coalition for Research and Action for Social Justice and Human Dignity), we have been asked to teach videography for the teachers and students of Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school. We have brought

with us videos from the collection of The Sámi Museum Siida by indigenous videographers, such as the Sámi anthropologist Päivi Magga (2016). They are used as examples of how other indigenous peoples have recorded their cultural landscape on video. For several years, we have delivered messages between the Sámi and the Wixáritari and therefore influenced the views of the teachers of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi on the museum. (Kantonen and Kantonen 2015)

In addition to CRASH, the museum network has been supported by the Mexican Catholic University ITESO (Instituto de Tecnología y Educación Superior) in Guadalajara; The Sámi Museum Siida; the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland; and the Arts-Equal project of the University of the Arts Helsinki.<sup>2</sup> The museum can be seen simultaneously as development cooperation, research, and community-based art project. We, the authors of this article, work in cooperation with the whole network, although most of the work is conducted in the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school in Tsikwaita.<sup>3</sup> As artists we seek to facilitate and document the workshops and discussions in which the contents of the community-based museum are built. The starting points of our research are connected to the discussions of the CRASH museum group.<sup>4</sup>

In this article, we outline the meanings modern Wixárika institutions, such as the school and the museum, might receive as parts of ritual landscape and how the community-based videos shot in the context of these institutions can increase our understanding of ritual landscapes in general. We discuss how ritual landscape can be researched using community-based documentary video art<sup>5</sup> in a way that takes the ontological conceptions of the human and non-human relations of the community seriously. In this case, we understand community-based video art as artistic research in which the work is produced with the community for the community.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, videography is for us a way to produce research material. In community-based art, either individuals or the entire community may participate in planning and defining the artistic research or they may act as advisors, realisers, informants and interpreters, or as the owners of and audience for the finished work of art.<sup>7</sup> In our work, we seek to return our research, edited in video form, to the Wixárika community so that members of the community can check and update both their own and our views.<sup>8</sup> We call this constantly updated method *generational filming* (Kantonen, P. 2017). The making of art, discussed in this article, is a bodily activity as it includes walking with a camera in the Wixárika ritual landscape, interviewing people for the camera, and documenting the work and rituals of the pupils, teachers, and the *mara'akate* planning the community museum.<sup>9</sup>

In recent years, the expansion of transportation and communication networks has brought the Wixáritari into closer contact with the entertainment and culture industries. It has also enabled them to engage with the wider critical discussion on globalisation. The Wixárika ritual art has become fashionable and popular, especially among the New Age-minded Mexican and North American religious communities (Liffman 2011: 52; Neurath 2013: 16). The Wixárika communities are popular travel destinations, particularly during the festivities, and many people want to record the rituals on video. Visits by outsiders increase the trade in services and crafts, but they also interfere with the rituals. Most autonomous Wixárika polities have set strict limits on both visitations and recordings. On the other hand, filmmakers are sometimes welcomed to cooperate with the communities who seek to inform audiences about their land and cultural rights through the means of films or videos.

The autonomous Wixárika political structures function as forums for the Wixáritari to discuss the conditions of artistic cooperation among themselves, with their ancestors, and with the *teiwari*,<sup>10</sup> the non-Wixáritari. We discuss the different stages of the project privately with political and religious authorities as well as communally in the meetings with schoolteachers. The American art historian Grant Kester recommends that community artists work for an extended period in discussion with “politically coherent” communities. Such communities have a clear political aim, which the communal art project may provide with understanding and visibility. These kinds of community are often critical of artists’ suggestions and are not easily led by artists or art institutions. Dialogic cooperation is a long-term project that enables the parties to listen to each other and understand their respective aims (Kester 2004; 2011). Other art historians and theoreticians who have written about communal and participatory art have problematised the aims of communal art by emphasising the internal conflicts of communities and the power and dependency relations of the different parties participating in art projects (see for example Kwon 2002; Bishop 2006; Blom 2009; Jackson 2011).<sup>11</sup> Although the Wixárika communities are not always exactly unanimous or coherent, our cooperation with the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school has a political goal, as understood by Kester: the aim is to establish a community museum and to create the conditions for autonomous Wixárika video ocumentation.

Although we are not anthropologists, we work together with them using both the existing anthropological literature on the Wixáritari and concepts related to the so-called ontological turn of anthropology as analytical tools. A large amount of research literature on Wixárika rituals, sacred spaces, and the art pertaining to them has been published recently. In his *Huichol Territory and the Mexican Nation*, the American anthropologist Paul Liffman (2011) has mapped the relationship of sacred spaces to both land ownership and civic organisations. The Mexican anthropologist Hector Medina Miranda (2010) has recorded oral histories in order to analyse the changes in the Wixárika ritual landscape and the related oral literature in relation to the changes in the landscape, caused for example by the building of dams and reservoirs. Anthropologist Johannes Neurath (2011), who works in The National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico, has examined the ontology of Wixárika sacred spaces, rituals, and art. Mexican media researcher Sarah Corona Berkin (2002) has studied Wixárika photography. Working in Mexico, Olivia Kindl (1997) and Neurath (2013) have researched the modernisation of the Wixárika ritual art and its adaptation to new contexts. According to Neurath (ibid.: 19, 60, 102), Wixárika art is thoroughly modern, although it is linked to the pictorial continuum of pre-colonial Mesoamerican art.

In the Wixárika ritual landscape, sacrificial offerings and their material are used to communicate with the deified Wixárika ancestors. Sacrifices, places, artworks, plants, and animals are living and changing actors that actively influence the social relationships of people and the ancestors. Ruy Blanes and Diana Espíritu Santo write in the introduction to their edited collection *The Social Life of the Spirits* (2014) that spirits are social beings. Not unlike electricity, law, or virtual currency, they participate in our social relations and shape them in invisible ways. You cannot see them but you can research their effect on human experience and social life. Espíritu Santo and Blanes call these effects “evidentiary regimes”. We approach these regimes through our interview data and let the teachers tell how the ancestors control the videos shot in the ritual

landscape. We will also see what happens if we follow the instructions of the teachers and relate not only to the ancestors, but also to the camera as an independent actor that participates in social situations in its own way.

After the 2014 museum workshop – the opening ceremony of which was referenced at the beginning of this article – that was organised in the school the partners of the museum project, CRASH and ITESO, proposed that the workshop addresses be edited into a book for the community-based museum network. For the book *Ki ti 'utame yu'uximayati – Museos vivos: Experiencias wixárika, na'ayeri y saami* (Kantonen, L. 2017), we interviewed the teachers, pupils, and the members of the parents' association of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school about the thoughts the museum workshop and the shown videos had inspired in them and about their hopes regarding the documentary videos that will be shot for the museum. These interviews are the primary data of this article. The majority of the interviewees are teachers, although we also interviewed young Wixáritari studying in the Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit in Tepic. We were especially interested in how the teachers plan to relate to the ritual landscape and the *kaka'iyarixi*, the deified ancestors, in the Tunúwame museum. As video artists, we are especially interested in the ways pilgrimages, sacred sites, and ceremonies can be portrayed and how the *kaka'iyarixi* can be taken into account in videography. What kind of aesthetic do the Wixáritari want to follow in the shoots and what kind of aesthetic do they want the outsider videographers to follow? What kinds of videography practice are negotiated with the *kaka'iyarixi*? What kind of support do they hope the ancestors will provide and how will this be asked for? How do the ancestors express their wishes? What kinds of danger may ensue in contacting the ancestors and what consequences might follow from neglecting them?

We begin the article by providing background information on the administration, institutions, infrastructure, and ritual landscape of the Wixárika area. This will explain the need to make documentary videos for the museum, and will be followed by a recapitulation of the planning process of the Tunúwame centre. The interview data is assessed next. In the interviews, the teachers state what types of documentary video they need for their school and museum collections, what kinds of ground they use to evaluate videos depicting the ritual landscape that are shot by outside documentarists, and what kinds of video they intend to shoot for the museum collection. The teachers have decided among themselves and negotiated with the *kaka'iyarixi* on the function of the Tunúwame; some of the teachers have also considered the need for documentary videos and the future of the community-based museum. The data implies a tension between collaboratively agreed goals and the personal views of individual teachers. These tensions reveal a community of teachers within which the need for documentation is defined on the epistemological and aesthetic grounds of the indigenous people with multiple parallel conceptions of knowledge. In the conclusion, we assess the videos in light of the aims and values the teachers highlight in the interviews, and consider what kind of knowledge we have obtained by videographing the ritual landscape.

## WIXÁRIKA AREAS, ADMINISTRATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND LANGUAGE

There are currently about 45,000 Wixarika-speaking Wixáritari. They traditionally live in Mexico, in the Western Sierra Madre Occidental range. Some of them spend at least part of the year in cities or work as migrant workers on plantations. Most of the Wixáritari living in the mountains grow corn on the mountain slopes and in the highlands. They live with their extended families in settlements that comprise small houses circling a common yard. In Wixárika, the family home is called *kíe*. Land ownership is collective but the right to cultivate a certain piece of land runs in the family. The Wixáritari are constantly on the move because of work, school, celebrations, and pilgrimages. If the fields are far, part of the family is obliged to live part of the year in the administrative and ceremonial centres because of work or school. During the most important celebrations and political meetings, people gather in the administrative and ceremonial centres, visit their relatives, and go shopping. The Wixáritari living in the centres join their families and relatives in the farms during the sowing and harvest times or to participate in agricultural ceremonies. In Wixárika, the home area with its centres, sacred sites, and travelling routes is called the *kíekari*. It is both a ritual landscape and a lived space where the Wixáritari spend their everyday lives. (Liffman 2011)

The Wixárika area contains three autonomous ceremonial and administrative centres, which during the colonial era were named after Christian saints as San Andrés, San Sebastian, and Santa Catarina, and several smaller centres. Communal religious ceremonies dating back to the pre-colonial times are held in the *tuki* temple. Familial ceremonies are held in the *xiriki* shrine. The administrative centres have separate civilian (*autoridades civiles*) and religious or traditional authorities (*autoridades tradicionales*). Additionally, every *tuki* and *xiriki* have their own authorities. The authorities that gather in the *tuki*, learning traditional knowledge and seeking initiation, are called the *xukuri'íkate*. Different administrative systems interact. Political leaders go for advice to the council of the eldest, which leads the traditional administrative system. The council and the *tuki* comprise initiated shaman-priests (*mara'akate*), who consult the ancestors. Through them, the ancestors can influence the lives of the communities. In 2002, for example, the authorities explained that the ancestors did not want a sawmill, which would have used trees from neighbouring areas, introduced to the Tsikwaita community, but they accepted solar energy and a health centre. Later, after numerous discussions, the community was connected to the national electricity grid. According to Liffman (2011: 10), discussion with the ancestors expands our traditional understanding of the meaning of the political.

Wixárika is part of the Uto-Aztecan family of languages. Spoken in most Wixárika homes, it is also an administrative and ceremonial language. It is mainly used orally, although an orthography and a grammar has recently been created. Verbal eloquence is valued particularly highly (Hakkarainen et al. 1999). Some older people only speak Wixárika while the young also speak Spanish. Most of the schools in the area are state-run and called "intercultural bilingual schools". Most of the teaching in them, however, is conducted in Spanish after the first few years of primary education. Some of the autonomous communities have founded their own junior high schools and high schools and seek to provide teaching in all subjects in indigenous languages and from

the indigenous point of view. These schools are supported by civic organisations and form a network with other Mexican and international schools, civic organisations, and movements pertaining to indigenous peoples (Corona Berkin 2007; Liffman 2011; Rojas Cortés 2012; de Aguinaga 2015). In these schools teachers and pupils are able to use computers with intermittent access to the Internet.

## RITUAL LANDSCAPE

The most important Wixárika sacred sites can be found according to four general directions, which are reminiscent of but do not equal compass points: Haramara in the west on the coast of the Pacific about hundred kilometres from the Wixárika area; the Wirikuta desert with wild peyote is a site of annual pilgrimages 400 kilometres northeast in the state of San Luis Potosi; deer are hunted for ceremonies at Hauxa Manaka on the northern border of the Wixáritari area; Tatei Xapawiyemeta is connected to a myth about the Flood and can be found on an island in Lake Chapala 200 kilometres southeast; and Teekata is in the middle, in San Andres. In Wixárika ritual objects and artworks, the general directions and the centre are often represented by either a circle or a rhombus. East and Wirikuta are 'above' and linked to the sun, light, heat, dry period, and order, while the Pacific coast and the jungled valleys and gorges are 'below' and linked to the Pacific Ocean, tropical canyons, monsoon, chaos, and the *teiware* (Liffman 2011; Medina 2010; Neurath 2011).

According to the myth, the Wixárika ancestors left Haramara at the beginning of time and wandered east towards the Wirikuta desert. Some of them, or at least parts of their being, were left behind as mountains, rocks, and springs. Pilgrims leave offerings in these places, where they have followed their ancestors (Medina 2010). The Wixárika word *yeiyari*, which signifies the ritual activity that takes place in the *kiekari*, also denotes following in the footsteps of the ancestors (Kantor 2012, ref. Neurath 2013: 21). Sacred places are ancestors as sacrificial and pilgrimage sites, which the Wixáritari visit for specific purposes. Different places have different powers for helping humans. Some of them, for example, heal illnesses while others help them to learn a specific skill, such as craftsmanship or musicianship. The *mara'akate* are able to tell where to go in a specific situation for either help or advice (Kindl 1997; Rojas Cortés 2012).

The *tuki* temples in the ceremonial centres and the biggest villages send a group of pilgrims annually – every three years in the Tsikwaita community – to the Wirikuta desert for the hallucinogenic peyote cactus, which is used in the *tuki* and *xiriki* rituals. The group of pilgrims often consists of the *xukuri'ikate*, who go to Wirikuta for the knowledge and understanding required for initiation. Each of them carries a *xukuri*, an effigy bowl belonging to a sacred ancestor. The pilgrimage is a ritual drama that takes several weeks and sees the pilgrims transform into their ancestors, move in a ritually organised queue, eat and sleep only little, abstain from sexual intercourse, and say even the most mundane things using a backwards language (Myerhoff 1974). The Canadian company The First Majestic Silver has staked mining claims in Wirikuta, threatening the ecological balance of the place and giving rise to a global protest movement demanding that the place be protected (Shipley 2014).

On the pilgrimage to Wirkuta, the *xukuri'kate* carry the ancestors, manifested as the *xukuri*, between the *tuki* and the sacred sites. Sometimes they also carry blood, water, a drink called *tejuino*, peyote, or yellow pigment. In this way the *xukuri* and the *xukuri'kate*, the bowls and the people who maintain them, and which both are and represent the ancestors, participate in the exchange of fluids within the ritual landscape. (Kindl 1997; Neurath 2013: 48–50) Uninitiated people also carry objects and substances between places.

Liffman (2011: 91–96) has analysed the practice of the Wixáritari in the *kiekari* in relation to land ownership. The Wixáritari hold their ceremonies in the *tuki* and the *xiriki* and move between sacred places, temples, and cultivated areas in order to maintain the cosmos and renew their right to cultivate land. The Wixáritari have successfully defended their land ownership rights and through legal proceedings managed to regain some of the lands taken from them. The right to cultivate and use the land is justified with their traditional pilgrimages and travel routes, which they have used since time immemorial to navigate the landscape.

According to Liffman (*ibid.*), the *xiriki*, the *tuki*, and the sacred sites are in a hierarchical relationship in the *kiekari*. The *tuki* gathers the people of a certain area as members of the ritual community, and each familial *xiriki* is subject to a specific *tuki*. The *tuki* are subject to *Teekata*, the centre of the *kiekari*. The circular or oval architecture of the *tuki* and the *xiriki* represent the *kiekari* in miniature, as do the rounded sacrificial offerings and artistic objects such as *xukuri* bowls and *tepari* discs. The *xiriki*, the *tuki*, the *tepari*, and the *xukuri* repeat the form of the *kiekari* over and over again, endlessly copying each other (*ibid.*). According to Kindl (1997: 25–28), however, the *xukuri* is not a symbolic representation of the *kiekari*, but it is the *kiekari* and an ancestor, rendering both of them visible in a performative manner. In addition to ritual art, the Wixáritari also produce commercial art objects that are sold to tourists and collectors. These include, for example, masks, *xukuri* bowls decorated with glass beads, and brightly coloured yarn paintings. These types of art or craft are not related to the *kakatiyarixi* in the same way as ritual art is. Yet this does not mean that all commercial art is inauthentic or worthless (Neurath 2013: 84). The artists interviewed by Kindl (1997: 144) say that for them every *xukuri*, even when manufactured for commercial purposes, is a microcosm.

#### NEW RITUAL SITES: SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY-BASED MUSEUMS

The Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school is located at the edge of the Tsikwaita ceremonial centre on a hill descending east towards the River Camotlán. Many of the Wixáritari come to the school on foot at dawn, having travelled several kilometres. While they have breakfast on the cool kitchen yard, the sun rises from beyond the rugged gorge walls on the eastern side of the river, warming the place up. In the reverse light of the morning, the gorges appear as dark and shadowy while in the afternoon as the children return home, they glow red. During the school day, the children live amidst the landscape and in relation to the cardinal directions.

Community-based schools such as the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi are new ritual places among the *tuki*, the *xiriki*, and the sacred sites. They are sacred buildings because the

sacred mission of the Wixárika is to teach children and youth the traditions prescribed by the *kakáiyarixi*. The porthole dug in the middle of the schoolyard covered by the *tepari* disc that Agustín removed during the opening ceremony, defines the school space as a *xiriki* (de Aguinaga 2015: 74–77). In this way the school is connected to the network and hierarchy of the *xiriki*, the *tuki*, and the sacred spaces (Liffman 2011: 157).

According to Alfredo, the Wixárika communities started to become alienated from the *kakáiyarixi* with the introduction of mestizo or *teiwari* schools. These schools teach foreign values and knowledge that has no use in the *kiekari*. Educated youth tend to leave the ceremonial centres since they fail to acclimatise to the ancestral community and rituals. The Tsikwaita authorities initiated the junior high, Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi, where traditional subjects are taught in the language and from the point of view of the indigenous people together with the traditional Wixárika knowledge of the *kakáiyarixi*, the rituals, and the rights of indigenous peoples. In practice, the school does not differ much from contemporary schools in for example Finland. The meetings between the students, teachers, and the parents' association nevertheless engage all parties in deeper reciprocal learning than is usually required. The pupils take responsibility for organising the learning landscape, and by doing so commit themselves to the larger landscape. The school meetings are modelled after the community-level meetings, thereby accustoming the young to the administrative and ritual practices (Rojas Cortés 2012). Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi, the Great Grandfather Deertail, is a powerful *mara'akame* in Wixárika mythology (Liffman 2011: 138). Deer tail is a ritual object the *mara'akate* use as a tool. Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi manifests in the school logo, in the teaching, and especially during important school feasts when the *tepari* is lifted, the gateway to the domain of the ancestors is opened, and offerings are placed in the sacrificial chamber.

The recent years have seen a network of community-based museums and cultural centres planned in connection with the autonomously founded schools (*Proyecto general* 2016). Tunúwame, the name of the museum and cultural centre planned in Tsikwaita, comes from one of the five appearances of the sacred deer and is designed as a sister project to the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school. In this way both of these institutions, named after a deer, reference the Wixárika ancestors, ritual landscapes, stories about deer, and treasuring the knowledge of the Wixáritari (Helle 2015: 92). The Tunúwame museum will get a fireplace and next to it a *tepari*, a sacred disc.<sup>12</sup> The teachers want the Tunúwame to be a modern museum and cultural centre that does not simply collect historical items and documents but also records knowledge of modern life (Kantonen and Kantonen 2015). In the future, a sacred chamber that will be covered with *tepari* will transform Tunúwame into a ritual site and a part of the ritual landscape.

## OUR EXPERIENCES OF VIDEOGRAPHY

The *kakáiyarixi* manifest, among other things, as meteorological phenomena. Season and the time of day, the cardinal direction, temperature and humidity define the nature of the landscape and the practice within it: farming work and rituals are timed in relation to the season and the weather. When a Wixáritari or a *teiwari*, a school pupil or an artist, wanders in the landscape and records work or a ceremony with a camera, he or she shares the meteorological conditions and changes with the ritual community.

Variations in communal alertness, dependent as it is on weather and the time of day, is recorded in the video. Videography as a method produces the kind of bodily and rhythmic information of the ritual landscape that would be difficult to obtain through any other means.

Over the last 15 years we have visited the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school seven times in order to lead video and photography workshops. In the video workshops, the pupils have been tasked with envisioning the kinds of recording processes they would like to see in the Tunúwame museum. According to their wishes, we made recordings of school lessons and breaks, walked in the village filming craftspeople, interviewed a farmer, recorded the cooking of pinole, the making of a *mara'akame* toolbox and a *xukuri*, and the carrying of a *xukuri* using a *xikuri*, a poncho-like garment that can be worn as a head scarf or on the shoulders and is used for carrying things.

For 15 years, we were only allowed to film in the school. We only shot videos of the *kiekari* outside the school when we were accompanied by students. In 2015, the authorities gave us permission to film elsewhere in the ceremonial centre. The same year, the filming of a weeding ceremony was permitted by one of the traditional authorities, and we joined a day-long pilgrimage, which we also recorded. The weeding ceremony began one evening in the *xiriki*, lasted overnight, was resumed in the corn fields, and ended with dining and dancing back in the *xiriki*. Violin music and singing linked the different parts of the ceremony: the weeders walked the routes between the *xiriki* and the fields in line, following the fiddler, who also played while they worked. A number of children and young people participated in the weeding and the guitarist accompanying the violinist was a child. At every step of the ceremony, the participants and the camera were blessed with water from a sacred site. The speeches and songs were translated for us afterwards. Judging by the translations, the adults and the children conversed and joked with each other during the ceremony and while they were transitioning from one place to another. Children and young people learn unofficially how to act in a ritual space by participating in the ceremony with adults. This kind of experience-based learning supplements the school teaching about the *kiekari*.

## THE ANCESTORS IN THE RITUAL LANDSCAPE

Our work in the community-based museum network with other researchers of indigenous peoples has encouraged us to consider the relationship of human and non-human actors in more detail from the point of view of ontology.

The deified ancestors of the Wixáritari, the *kakaiyarixi*, have many forms, such as the cardinal directions, planets, meteorological phenomena, authorities, and the wands of the authorities. Their names are based on terms of kinship. They may appear in different ways and take the shape of plants, animals, or even Catholic saints. The most important ancestors are the god of fire Tatewarí (Our Grandfather Fire) and the goddess of the monsoon Takutsi Nakawe (Our Grandmother Nakawe). The *kakaiyarixi* participate in the life of the residents of the Tsikwaita in different ways. They are revered at sacred sites, in the *tuki*, the *xiriki*, the administrative buildings, and the modern institutions of the indigenous people. They are communicated with through sacrifices and the songs of the *mara'akate*. Favours are exchanged with them: in exchange for a sacrifice, they grant

people fair weather, good crops, health, and harmony, while neglecting to present them with offerings may bring ill health, discord, turbulent weather, and the disappearance of items. Typical sacrifices include animals, *xukuri* bowls, and painted arrows on which are hung geometrical patterns, such as crosses and circles, fashioned out of thread and wooden sticks as well as small embroidered pieces of fabric. The material of the sacrificial offerings and the liquids carried within them are connected to the *kakaiyarixi* and contain ancient force. Their patterns reveal what the person presenting the sacrifices is asking the ancestors for, or what they are being thanked for. According to Neurath (2011), the logic of reciprocal exchange is how uninitiated people communicate with the ancestors, while the relationship between the initiated and the ancestors is characterised by voluntary sacrifice. Following the example of the ancestors, the *mara'akate* sacrifice themselves and are revered as ancestors even during their lifetime.

The *mara'akate* supplicants studying for initiation may ally themselves with plants or animals and receive power and knowledge from them. Plants, animals, and other actors living in the shared *kiekari* may talk to them in a dream or while they are under the influence of peyote. On pilgrimages, they direct all their senses towards the *kiekari* in order to obtain a special power of seeing, the *nieri'ka*.

Philippe Descola (2013) has divided the ontological relationships of humans and non-humans into four categories: animism, totemism, naturalism, and analogism. Neurath (2011) finds the model too simplistic, claiming that Descola sets animism, which is dominated by the mutual destruction of humans and non-humans, against analogism, which depicts a reciprocal relationship. According to Neurath, a single group may nevertheless have several parallel ontologies. He argues that in relation to the *kakaiyarixi*, the Wixárika rituals represent two different and simultaneous ontologies. The *rukuri'kate* moving between the *tuki* and the Wirikuta desert aim for initiation and reciprocal relationship with the *kakaiyarixi*. Their ceremonies are mainly based on an analogous ontology that emphasises reciprocity, although the initiation demands a sacrifice, which has more to do with animistic ontology. In the *xiriki*, an initiated *mara'akame* leads ceremonies in which ancestors that have transformed into arrows are revered. They might be dangerous for their descendants, which is why protection against them is necessary. Here, the relationship to the *kakaiyarixi* is largely animistic. The ceremonies in both the *tuki* and the *xiriki* have both a harmonious and a threatening dimension, while no one either explains this contradiction or seeks to overcome it. (Ibid.)

During our fieldwork in the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school, we rarely encountered the destructive side of the Wixárika world other than through warnings about the capricious nature of both certain places and ancestors. Some places and the ritual objects within them – which are the ancestors – are dangerous for the uninitiated. The Wixáritari prefer to keep the most dangerous dimensions of the ritual landscape hidden from the curious *teiwari*, or non-Wixáritari. In this sense, it is only natural that we, just like all the other researchers connected to the school world, have mainly been in contact with the organised world of the east, the sun, and the dry spell, which follows the logic of reciprocity. Liffman, Rocío de Aguinaga, and Angélica Rojas Cortés, who have conducted fieldwork in the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school, very seldom mention ambivalent powers in their writings. In interviews, the teachers generally explained the workings of the *kakaiyarixi* according to the principle of reciprocity.

## GRATEFULNESS AND RITUAL PRACTICE

The official talks and publications of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi emphasise that the school's teaching is based on the Wixárika "cosmology" (Liffman 2011: 145–146; *Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi* 2014: 21; Helle 2015: 95). In the teaching, cosmology means the exploration of the concept of the *kiekari*. The school teaches children and the young to live in the *kiekari* and obey the *yeiyari*, that is, to respect the ancestors and live in harmony with the sacred sites, the ancestors, plants, and animals. The planned Tunúwame museum also follows the Wixárika cosmology.<sup>13</sup> The young must be taught the knowledge of the *kiekari* possessed by the elderly, lest it be forgotten (Helle 2015).

According to Liffman (2011), defining the concept of the *kiekari* through debates between three different generations of the Wixáritari played an important part in founding the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school in the mid-1990s. The Tsikwaita community already had a largely modernised administration and economy and a relatively large number of its inhabitants were bilingual, educated, adults. For the young, the *kiekari* meant acting in their own environment: walking, working, and participating in the duties of the self-government of the indigenous people. In their definition of the *kiekari*, the teachers emphasised non-Christian practice in the landscape and continuing the traditions began by the *kakañyarixi*. The initiated representatives of the older generation emphasised carrying out agricultural ceremonies. Liffman notes that in these discussions, the *kiekari* was given a stable and objectified definition instead of emphasising its processual nature as manifested by walking, pilgrimages, and communal rituals. The aim was to outline a joint definition that would unify the school community in maintaining the traditions pertaining to the *kiekari*. (Liffman 2011: 145–160)

In school work, the *yeiyari* is taught by conducting short walks and pilgrimages (Helle 2015) as well as by interviewing the elderly. Students document their excursions through writing, drawing, and photography (Corona 2002; Kantonen, L. 2005; Liffman 2011). In the workshops we have overseen, they have photographed and filmed different *kiekari*-related activities such as farming and craftwork. The Spanish-language teacher, Maestro Armando, is particularly interested in ritual geography and the documentation of sacred sites. He is worried about the ecological changes of sacred sites and hopes that through documentation the Wixáritari might be able to protect them.

In the workshops, we have noted that the young understand the landscape through walking. They are able to draw out of memory very accurate depictions of routes between, for example, their homes and the school or a pilgrimage. Some young people are always interested in sacred sites. Their drawings and videos reveal the kind of knowledge about the *kiekari* that enables others to learn. For example, in a 2002 land rights workshop called Taller de la Tierra, two girls painted a large picture of the *kiekari* with accurate depictions of the most important sacred sites in all four cardinal directions. (Kantonen, L. 2005: 213; Kantonen and Kantonen 2013: 115)

The headmaster of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school, Maestro Catalino, has twenty years of experience in explaining the ritual landscape to outsiders such as us. According to Catalino, everything in the landscape is sacred: the cultivation of corn and all the other actions of men, animals, and ancestors. The school has to teach the children to respect sacred things and to show gratitude towards their ancestors in and through ceremonies. The *kiekari* is full of sacredness and corn is one of the deified ancestors:

When we have corn and when the cobs are ripe, you cannot just eat them like that: see, the corn is ripe, how nice, I shall take a cob and eat it. No! The *mara'akame* has to bless it before it can be eaten. Why? Out of respect. Because we respect it. It is said that by doing so we can avoid getting ill. So that nothing bad happens to us, because we have not been grateful.

If the *yeiyari*, as the skill of showing respect towards the *kakañyarixi*, is forgotten, the whole world – and not just the area surrounding the Wixáritari – falls into imbalance. People become ill and, at worst, ecological catastrophes threaten the continuity of life. The *mara'akate* are convinced that the survival of the ecosystem depends on offerings made to the ancestors. The continuation of life and culture is also a good reason to demand that the government of Mexico, universities, and civic organisations support the schools and cultural centres – it is for their own good. In this way, the work CRASH and ITESO have done for the school, such as enabling the videography, is reciprocal activity that benefits everyone.

#### CONNECTION TO THE ANCESTORS THROUGH DREAMS, TRADITIONAL MATERIALS, AND TECHNOLOGY

According to Neurath (2013), the logic of reciprocity (observed by the official, written discourse of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school and the Tunúwame museum) is the means through which the uninitiated Wixáritari stay in contact with the *kakañyarixi*. The communication of the initiated is more complicated and conflicting. The knowledge of the *mara'akate* does not need to be simplified for the school teaching, since it is not necessary for either the children and the young or the outside researchers and collaborators to have profound understanding of the knowledge of the initiated. The *mara'akate* are involved in the school activities as teachers and members of the parents' association. They participate in meetings and in decision-making and give advice to pupils regarding important decisions. They also participate in designing the museum. They receive knowledge from the *kakañyarixi*.

One of the most important ways for the *kakañyarixi* to participate in the activity of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school is by providing the *mara'akate* with dreams. They gave the founders of the school its name in a dream and the *mara'akame* Alfredo has received ideas regarding his teaching of the Wixárika culture in dreams. The dreams provide the basis for his lectures and have been edited into a book on the subject (Salvador Martinez and Corona Berkin 2002).

The written mission of the Tunúwame explains that the future museum building is to be built using the traditional Wixárika materials of stones and compressed earth blocks and will be rotund like the *tuki* and the *xiriki*. The reason for the round shape is that the first 'person' created the world by starting from the middle of the circle and then proceeded to the four cardinal directions. On the inside, the museum and cultural centre is a modern space that offers the possibility to carry out the functions of a contemporary museum (Helle 2015).

During the interviews, the teachers spoke of the ancestors as "gods" or "saints", perhaps because they believe that the *kakañyarixi* is too difficult a concept for us. Only the

*mara'akame*, Maestro Alfredo, speaks of the "ancestors" (*antepasados*) and the "people" (*personajes*). He tells us what kind of museum the ancestors are expecting:

We have to build a sacred building, like the one the people [*personajes*] built in the past. That is what we need to do. It will not be built out of the same kind of [contemporary] materials as this house [we are in]. The ancestors [*antepasados*] will not allow it. A cultural house cannot be made out of materials such as these, which is how I see it. Let us see what we will build.

The first people provided the Wixáritari with a model they have to follow in their ceremonies. Alfredo believes that the rotund shape of the Tunúwame museum and the traditional building materials enable the museum to follow the example set by the *kaka'iyarixi*. Nevertheless, Alfredo is not convinced that the museum will become a part of the ritual landscape the way the *tuki* and the *xiriki* are. He adds:

It will comprise a number of meanings, so many that we are unable to understand them ourselves. We have to explain them all. It will be a copy. It will not be like the sacred buildings we have had for ages. It will only be a copy.

Alfredo is interested in the design process of the Tunúwame because it requires that the meanings of a ritual building are investigated and explained to others. As is typical of him, he speaks enigmatically. At first he says that the Tunúwame will be a sacred building constructed of traditional materials, but later on he asserts that it is only going to be a copy of a sacred building, the *tuki*. The data collected by Kindl (1997: 56) and Neurath (2013: 85) suggests that the Wixárika artists consider as "copies" those handicrafts and artworks that are made for the non-Wixáritari and have neither ritual meaning nor independent power. Alfredo might think that the museum building will be a harmless version of the *tuki* with no power to hurt the museum visitors, children, or the *teiwari*.

Puzzled by Alfredo's response, we asked Maestra Rosa the same question: Will the ancestors come to Tunúwame? The video shows that initially the question makes her laugh, but she soon loses her jollity. She thinks that the question is misplaced and answers (in this case referring to the ancestors as gods and goddesses):

If anything, we shape the gods and invite them to the museum. If we have sacred corn and we sacrifice it, the goddess will enter [drawn by the offering]. If the museum presents the gods with sacrifices, there will be gods. I believe that if I have a stone and I present it daily with an offering, take care of it, and feed it, it will become a god for me. This will also happen with technology.

Rosa thinks that a sacrifice creates or activates the ancestor, not that the ancestors are already active beings within the reach of a group of people or an institution. Rosa's answer differs from the simplifying ones the *teiwari* are usually presented with. According to her, the ancestors come into being through the sacrifices. Neither Alfredo nor Rosa will say whether the ancestors will appear in the museum, but they both worry in their own way about the consequences of the ambivalent forces their appearance would unleash. To prevent anything unexpected from happening, the *kaka'iyarixi* need to be presented with offerings. In designing and opening the museum, it is important to follow the instructions the *kaka'iyarixi* give the *mara'akate* in a dream. It is just as important to follow the instructions of the *mara'akate* regarding videography.

Electricity and digital technology bring new actors to the ritual landscape and institutions of the Wixáritari. Electrical and information networks have power and become new gods or ancestors for the Wixáritari, with which they need to interact. Any object that is given attention and presented with regular sacrifices can be an ancestor. It may be a sacrificial offering made out of traditional materials using traditional means, a digital device, or a digitally produced work of art. Both old and new technologies may produce living and potentially dangerous objects and artworks.

## RECORDING A PILGRIMAGE

Numerous documentary movies and videos have been made of the pilgrimage to Wirikuta. We sought to acquire as many as possible for Tunúwame and watched them together at the community's central square. The screenings were followed by public discussion. Members of the community like the fact that pilgrimages have been recorded on video and think that all the videos and films have something positive about them. Hernan Vilchez's *Los últimos guardianes de peyote* (2014) shows the environmental destruction that would follow if the mining plans regarding Wirikuta were followed through. Alejandro Zapata Alargon's *El sueño de la flor* (2014) depicts several beautiful scenes of different stages of the pilgrimage and the ending ceremony in which the pilgrims regain their human identity. The teachers criticise the filmmakers for focusing on the most cinematic moments of the ceremonies while neglecting to record the most important aspects of the ritual. *El sueño de la flor*, for example, only shows short snippets of the ceremonies, all the high points were missing. The clip showing the dance at the ending ceremony was too short and did not reveal how many times the dance was repeated. The teachers seem to agree that outside documentarists have not yet succeeded in recording the ritual in a way that would serve the need of the Tunúwame museum to archive the information for future generations. This has given the teachers the idea that they should shoot their own videos of the pilgrimage.

Maestro Enrique has practiced videography, aiming one year to record the pilgrimage. He served the village of Tsikwaita as a political authority in 2015 and hopes to be elected among the *xukuri'ikate*, the authorities serving in the *tuki*. As a *xukuri'ikame*, he would have the right perspective to film the pilgrimage. He has already envisioned the video in his mind: at every stop, a ceremony dedicated to the *kakatyarixi* is recorded. The videographer has to know the structure of the ceremony in advance in order to be alert during the most important moments of the ceremony.

Maestro Catalino dreams of an entire school class doing a documentary of their pilgrimage to Wirikuta. He wishes that the pupils could participate in planning and carrying out the documentary. He thinks that the participatory process of filming is as important as the end result. Maestra Rosa notes that the visual details of the ceremonies, such as the sacrifices and the dance steps, have to be recorded from close enough that future generations can watch the videos and revive the traditions.

Pablo, a student of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school, has taken photographs on a pilgrimage to Wirikuta. He was granted permission to be absent from school on the condition that he documents the journey through photography and uses the pictures to create a PowerPoint presentation for the school. This presentation was first shown in the

museum workshop in 2014. Pablo himself did not provide a commentary on the photos because pilgrims who have only been to Wirikuta once are not allowed to describe their journey through words. In the workshop, the photos were explained by Juan, Pablo's uncle and member of the parents' association. Pablo was thanked for having taken photographs that, at every stop, excluded nothing.

The teachers of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school agree that the ceremonies and the pilgrimages have to be recorded from beginning to end. The documentation should begin with the travel preparations and the making of the sacrificial offerings and it has to continue until the ending ceremony, during which the pilgrims, who during the journey have become ancestors, are restored to their normal human state. Nothing is to be left out. If the entirety of the ceremony cannot be recorded, at least the most important parts need to be. In order for the videographer to know which parts of each ceremony are the most important, he must understand the philosophy and the meaning behind them.

According to Neurath (2013: 24), the Wixárika artists find it important to depict the highlights of ceremonies in the yarn paintings. It is also important that the details of the picture come together in a coherent way. The late artist Refugio Gonzalez told us that it is important for yarn paintings that portray a specific ceremony to depict the things that are related to that ceremony and nothing else. They should not contain a mixture of random patterns or include patterns that relate to other ceremonies. Neurath (ibid.: 84–85) states that artworks and sacrificial offerings are autonomous actors that have their own will. In principle, videos are also autonomous actors. This is why the teachers find it important that in a video depicting the ritual landscape, things important to that ritual, such as dance steps, the number of repetitions, and the details of the sacrificial offerings, are depicted 'correctly'. Otherwise the video does not function the way it should, since future generations will not learn the *yeyiari*, the practical information learned from the *kakaiyarixi*, by watching it.

#### PLANTS AND ANIMALS CAN TALK AND ALLY THEMSELVES WITH HUMANS

In the Wixárika ritual landscape, the ground and water shapes, plants, animals, artworks, sacrifices, and the images depicting them are all independent actors. From a sacred site called Tuimayehu on the way to Wirikuta, the pilgrims take water that is later used in the *tuki* both in the ceremonies of the pilgrimage and to bless the family members who remained at home. A plant that contains a yellow pigment called *uxa* is gathered from Tatei Matinieri. It is used to decorate the faces of the pilgrims and the items they carry with them. Certain animals and plants are connected to specific places. For example, in a valley near Tsikwaita there is a sacred site called Turamukameta, which is connected to scorpions. If a human being kills a scorpion in Turamukameta, he will soon encounter hundreds of them.

Both the initiated Wixáritari and the supplicants move in the *kiekari* with a special focus on different plants and animals that are healing and will either provide them with strength or a message. The artisans and the artists who produce ritual craftwork get their material from the *kiekari*. The craft materials are also 'people'. Talking trees may

tell people that they want to be felled and worked into drums, which the *mara'akate* and their assistants then play in ceremonies. Catalino says:

I would also have liked to see [in the museum workshop] how and where the tree [that was used to make the frame] was felled and how the people knew that it was a tree fit for making a drum. It is said that a drum speaks, that it sounds, so that people would notice it.

Teachers at the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school invited renowned experienced and knowledgeable craftspeople to the museum workshop. The teachers and the guests from Finland recorded their work on video. In an interview, Catalino was self-critical about this workshop. The whole process of making a drum was neither followed nor filmed, rather the focus was on the moment when the leather was stretched on an existing frame and decorated with flowers. Catalino notes in his address that the video shot in the workshop is imperfect. It should show the whole process from beginning to end, starting with the moment when a person hears the drum speak in the tree trunk and realises that the tree must be felled in order to actualise the potential drum. Ultimately one needs to record the drum being used in the drum ceremony, the *tatei neixa*.

It is possible to ally oneself with plants and animals in order to attain a specific goal. A craftspeople, for example, may ally him or herself with a lizard (for example Eger 1989) or small ants. Once the goal has been attained, a sacrifice has to be taken to a sacred site. When Maestra Rosa was a child, her mother and grandmother took sacrificial offerings to a sacred site, the Paratsikatsie, on her behalf for six years in a row so that she would learn crafts. She also had to tolerate stings by small ants so that her hands would become nimble. After six years, the Paratsikatsie received as an offering some crafts by Rosa that were dipped in the blood of deer and oxen. Ever since, she has been swift in all her work and now teaches handicrafts in the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school. (De la Cruz 2014: 17)

Catalino's address and Rosa's story reveal how a listening and focused outlook is important when moving in the *kiekari*. A craftspeople, especially one looking to be initiated, has to constantly keep ritual sites and ceremonies in mind, observe the surroundings, and communicate with the *kakaɣarixi*. Rosa finds the *kiekari*, with all its plants and animals, beautiful, which inspires her to produce beautiful crafts. When work produces results, for example when an important object is made, a skill is learned, or initiation is attained, an offering is taken to a place that has helped her as an expression of gratitude. A videographer, too, walks in the *kiekari* fully focused and observing both humans and non-humans.

#### WHO CAN BE FILMED IN THE KIEKARI? WHAT DO THE KAKAɣARIXI EXPECT FROM A VIDEOGRAPHER?

The relationship between the Wixáritari and the *teiwari*, the non-Wixáritari, is tense in the *kiekari*. The *teiwari* represent a dark and chaotic world of west, rendering them uncivilised and clumsy and unable to understand the Wixárika philosophy unless it is explained to them as if to children. During ceremonies, the differences between the Wixáritari and the *teiwari* can momentarily weaken and the *teiwari* can participate in the

reciprocity (Neurath 2013: 19). Some *teiwari* have participated in pilgrimages (Myerhoff 1974; Kindl 1997) and even been initiated (Eger 1989). Normally the *teiwari* carry a camera and they want to take photographs or shoot videos. In principle, most communities prohibit the photographing and recording of ceremonies and in the public space of the ceremonial centre, but some photographers and film crews have received a permit from the local authorities, often after having paid the community a substantial sum of money.

Neurath (2013) repeatedly stresses that ritual objects are not meant to be seen by the uninitiated, let alone the *teiwari*. The *kakañyarixi* do not usually allow the recording of ritual songs or the photographing of ritual objects. Since the *teiwari* tend to want to know the meanings of the objects and artworks they have collected and bought, the Wixáritari prepare simplifying explanations of traditional knowledge for them and create stereotypical versions of ritual objects in which the ritual meaning is concealed. However, the *mara'akate* of the Tsikwaita community have started to share their knowledge with the researchers and documentarists from the universities and civic organisations that have supported the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school. The *mara'akate* have been told in a dream that it is time for some of the communal traditions to be documented and written down so that they will not be forgotten. The community nonetheless wants to participate, through their authorities, in the process of deciding how their traditions are represented. Not all members of the community or even all the teachers agree on whether the *teiwari* can be granted permission to film, and if they are, on what conditions.

Of the teachers, Enrique and Armando think that only the Wixáritari can portray sacred sites and ceremonies in the right way, since only they know the context and the people. Marta, a student from Tepic, notes that even a Wixárika documentarist working in his or her own community is not guaranteed to receive the trust of the community, especially if that person has not received formal training in cinematography.

Alfredo thinks that a videographer going on a pilgrimage has to be a Wixárika because outsiders have no legal right to go to Wirikuta, let alone collect peyote for consumption. He worries that "an outside documentarist could end up in jail". On the other hand, Catalino does not think that it is necessary for a videographer of a pilgrimage to be a Wixárika. He believes the most important condition to be that the documentarist supports the political aims of the Wixáritari, allows the portrayed people to participate in the process, and sets in motion socially responsible pedagogical processes. Rosa thinks it important that a documentarist finds good angles so that all the processes and details are recorded at the right distance.

Enrique aims to have meetings of the *rukuri'ikate* in the *tuki* and their pilgrimage to the Wirikuta recorded on video. No outsiders are present in the *rukuri'ikate* rituals, meaning that the only way to record them is by getting the participants to do so.

A Western artist or researcher is usually accustomed to thinking that all topics are possible and within reach. The *teiwari* working with the Wixáritari have to explain to the authorities what and why they want to film and how it benefits the community. Researchers have to accept that there are conditions and limitations to their work. (Glowczewski 2014)

Rosa told us that she had discussed the responsibilities of the *teiwari* towards the ancestors with other teachers. They believed that the *kakañyarixi* do not expect the *teiwari*

moving in the ritual landscape to follow the same rules as the Wixáritari or to present similar offerings nor will they be punished for this, because the *teiwari* are not familiar with the rules. Catalino thinks that the documentarists willing to support the diversity of the ritual landscape and culture are welcome to cooperate with them.

Whether the filmmakers are Wixáritari or *teiwari*, they need to have the right attitude towards filming. In the interviews, the teachers mention several outlooks the filmmakers are expected to have. A *Mara'akame* and a teacher of Wixárika culture, Alfredo, says that a filmmaker has to first and foremost be humble and respectful towards other people. The filmmaker is not supposed to believe that he or she is "somebody". Maestro Armando asserts that a videographer has to aim to tell "the truth". He goes on to say that a documentary recording modern times should not be designed to look old fashioned or too "traditional". Marta, who studies at the Autonomous University of Nayarit in Tepic and is part of the Wixárika and Na'ayerite video collective called Sembrando, considers it important that the filmmaker is committed to the work and asks the *kaka'iyarixi* for help.

#### HOW DO THE WIXÁRITARI LEARN ART PRODUCTION AND VIDEOGRAPHY?

Many researchers who have written about Wixárika ritual art and interviewed the artists have emphasised that the learning of ritual art requires humility, dedication, tolerance of discomfort, persistence, and sacrifice (Eger 1978; Muller 1978; Zingg 1982; de la Cruz 2014). We asked Rosa whether video art can be considered ritual art. She told us that she has seen computers brought to sacred sites for blessing. She thinks the ancestors (*las diosas* 'goddesses') are just as capable of understanding digital art as they are of understanding traditional crafts, but she has never left a computer-made artwork or offering at a sacred site. An offering is a sign of passionate devotion to learning and she is not as passionately interested in learning digital technology as she is in learning the technology of embroidery or loom weaving.

Rosa's view is supported by Marta, who has learnt videography on courses, attended the peer-group of the audiovisual collective Sembrando, and participated in the festival of indigenous Mexican film and video makers. She explains how the ancestors (*los dioses* 'gods') may help a filmmaker to develop:

You can offer a video to the gods. Of course we cannot see them but they manifest in the *xukuri* and in the arrows. I believe that you can present a video as a sacrificial offering. If you make a video and ask the gods to get to know more things [about filmmaking], you have to offer a video at a sacred site. The gods will receive it.

Enrique thinks, however, that the *kaka'iyarixi* do not accept digital offerings.

Music teacher Félix, who also has participated the pilgrimage to Wirikuta, finds it desirable that a videographer documenting a pilgrimage walks all the most important parts of the journey on foot with the pilgrims. Traditionally the pilgrims convivially encourage each other to bear the heaviest parts of the journey. The pilgrimage and the fasting it requires is an offering that may give the candidate the *nierika*, the ability to see (Neurath 2013). For Félix, the *nierika* brings a life full of joy and meaning.

## THE CAMERA AS AN ACTOR IN A COMMUNAL RITUAL

The Wixárika *kiekari*, in which ritual objects and substances are exchanged by travelling the routes between sacred sites and buildings and which is simultaneously fashioned as an aesthetic form, reminds us of the way the world is seen in terms of site-specific art,<sup>14</sup> although it is much more comprehensive than any single work of art. As artists we are interested in the way ritual artworks, buildings, miniature sculptures, and woven patterns can simultaneously be ancestors, miniature worlds, and maps of the world. What happens when an attempt to record this multiform ritual space is made on video by a group of people, children and adults, Wixáritari and *teiwari*, initiated and uninitiated, the movement of which in the *kiekari* is motivated by a variety of reasons, such as teaching children, initiation, art-making, and having fun and who all perceive and are connected to quite different entities?

Within the framework provided by the new institutions and sacred sites, the school and the community-based museum, videography is particularly meaningful, since in addition to traditional documentation it also serves an educating function. The point of videography in the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school program is to teach the knowledge received to the documentarists themselves through the very process of documentation. And not only traditional knowledge but also dreamt up innovations that will become part of the ritual landscape. Videography not only preserves the *kiekari*, but it also alters it by bringing new kind of ritual activity into it. Catalino, the headmaster, thinks that the most important part of filming is the way it enables the students to commit to act in the ritual landscape together with older generations and the *kakaiyarixi*. When the children go to the administrative building to interview the authorities, or to the *tuki* to interview the *rukuri'kate*, or when they join a pilgrimage, they get in contact with the traditional knowledge gathered over a number of generations. At the same time, the electronic devices, digital methods and networks transform the *kiekari* and bring new kinds of entity into it, ones with which they are in a reciprocal relationship.

Ruy Blanes and Diana Espírito Santo (2014: 6) suggest that the “evidentiary regime” of the spirits, their traces in the landscape, experiences, materials, and social relations can be studied by observing their effects and through them, their cause: “Our general proposal here is to work *backwards* from effects to form, from tangible to invisible, from motion to substance, from manifestation to agency and so on” (original emphasis). Could this proposal be followed through practice, by acting and trying? What kind of knowledge regarding the ritual landscape and the *kakaiyarixi* can be obtained through listening to and following the instructions given by teachers of filming in the ritual landscape?

The teachers recommend that the documentarists focus, observe their surroundings, dedicate themselves to the task, and put up with physical strain. Information must be gathered on both the specific activity and its context. Pictures pertaining to different seasons and events documented in different ceremonies are not to be mixed. Every act and ceremony has to be documented from beginning to end, from preparation to the final ritual. It is important that the high point of the ceremony is recorded. The space of the event has to be well and truthfully displayed. The sacrificial objects, dance steps, details of clothing and jewellery, and the number of repetitions have to be clearly observable. The people filmed have to be respected, the instructions given by the *mara'akate* fol-

lowed, and when needed, a sacrifice must be made. The sacrificial offering and the obeying of instructions protect the videographers and the viewers of the video from the dangerous powers of the *kiekari*. Above all, one has to be careful not to become vain.

Although the aim of the videography is good in principle, it still remains threatening. The young filmmakers of the Sembrando collective have noticed that some of the people in their villages are sceptical towards videography although they know that the documentarists are Wixáritari and are aware that the point is the desire to record the traditions of their own people. The *teiwari* using a video camera in a public space within the ceremonial centre may encounter opposition, even if they have permission from the authorities. A *teiwari* may not necessarily understand that filming requires reciprocity with the *kakaiyarixi*. It is possible not to understand that the god of fire, Tatewari, needs to be shown gratefulness when a device is plugged in (Neurath 2013: 21). The etiquette of filmmaking in the *kiekari* can be learned from the students and the teachers in a video workshop. There, learning is reciprocal. No matter what kind of entity the videographer observes and takes into account, the social relations of which the *kakaiyarixi* are a part cannot be avoided. The filmmaker is dependent on the *kakaiyarixi* and on whether they grant permission for filming.

According to Neurath, depicting rituals in art can be dangerous. The pictures can be too lively. They can come to life and ultimately destroy their maker. (Ibid.: 27) The same can apply to videography. Maestra Rosa believes that technological devices, such as cameras, may come to life. The *xukuri* carried in the *kiekari* are alive if they are shown regular attention. A woman carrying a *xukuri* carries it in a sling since it is a living person. Special precautions have to be taken so that a living bowl, a living device, or a living picture will not destroy its user. In a ceremony, the *mara'akate* and their assistants treat the camera as a person and sprinkle it with sacred water or blood. The sacred fluid protects the camera, the videographer, and the viewer. A drop of blood on the lens tells the human and non-human participants (and later the viewers of the video) that the camera is protected.

The permission to film, granted by a *mara'akame*, usually covers the whole process, ceremony, or pilgrimage. Once the camera has been blessed, it is a part of the *kiekari* just like any other moving or movable actor. The leaders of the ceremony discuss the filming with the filmmaker during the process either through words or eye contact. This is to ensure that the camera will not break down at the wrong moment and miss out on the high point. Direct eye contact between the camera and the leader or a participant in the ceremony creates a sense of security for the camera operator that is considered important. The camera can also be addressed directly and it can be told off or laughed at. In the middle of the ceremony, someone may comment on the ritual and joke about the filming. Reflexivity and suspicion are part of the ritual (ibid.: 96).

Based on the discussions we have had with the Tatuutsi teachers and our experiences of filming, we maintain that the camera can make observations in the *kiekari* as a part of a work group or a ritual community. It can forget itself and direct itself towards the landscape and the rituals. Doing so, it moves up and down rocky and muddy hillsides with the community, enjoys the landscape and suffers from fasting and exhaustion. It is important to record the route from beginning to end, to map the contours of the landscape and follow other pilgrims, ritual objects, and the changes in them. The actor-camera begins to implement its own communal aesthetics. Eye-contact is not nec-

essarily an error and neither is a drop of liquid nor steam that blurs the lens. Rather, it provides important information about the place, the landscape, and the community.

The perceptual skill of the actor-camera alters depending on the time of day and the altitude, temperature, and humidity of the location. The camera does not necessarily perceive the way other members of the community do, nor is it as capable to endure strain, but it nonetheless participates in communal vitality. The music, smoke, and lightning of a nocturnal ceremony produce a specific way of seeing typical to the *kiekari* and the camera might nod off just like any other participant, although it resumes filming. At any moment the *kakatjarixi* could start to speak or the situation might change in some other way.

Editing the video recorded by the camera-actor may give birth to a living picture-actor. A reliable picture-actor stays faithful to the ritual context of seasons and the cardinal directions without mixing together different ceremonies or the images belonging to them.

By filming in the *kiekari* in accordance with the ideas of the students and the directions of the teachers, we have received the kind of knowledge of ritual communality that would have been difficult to obtain by simply participating in the ceremonies and observing them. The camera has received special attention and care in the ceremonies. The participants have been interested in what ends up being recorded. Members and informants of the school community have later translated the discussions and guided our attention to the most important parts of the rituals, such as how children are joked with during the ceremony and the way the ancestors reply to the singing of the *mara'akame*. We aim to share the knowledge considering the filming reciprocally with the community, while being aware of the limits bestowed upon it.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Wixárika ritual landscape is constantly changing in relation to the changing surroundings, which are shaped by climate change and other human activity. The Wixárika communities discuss the appropriation of new methods and technologies both by themselves and with the ancestors. New sacred spaces, buildings, institutions, routes, and works of art appear in the landscape. New technology and social changes provide sacred spaces and rituals with new kind of political and spiritual meanings. The Wixárika community museums, the first of which is being built at the time of writing, are an example of these new kinds of place. They can become a part of the ritual landscape if the communities adopt them for ritual use. The living could then contact the *kakatjarixi* at the museum, making it possible for the Wixáritari who are unable to attend the agrarian ceremonies to maintain contact with them.

The museum network, which cooperates closely with the schools, is a method dreamed up by the Wixáritari for developing, documenting, and passing on to future generations indigenous knowledge. Video documentation methods meeting the needs of community museums can be developed through the means offered by community art. The job is by no means simple. The project includes Wixáritari and *teiwari* of different professions and with varied tasks. Researchers may advocate different methods, the community artists have different views on art, and the Wixáritari conceptions of art and

knowledge are also diverse. Jointly negotiated and clear main goals enable the progression of the dialogue. For the museum project to succeed, it is essential that the cooperation is conducted on the terms of Wixárika autonomy and by listening to the *kakahyarixi*.

Translated by Markku Nivalainen

## NOTES

1 The names of the teachers given here are pseudonyms.

2 This research was undertaken as part of the ArtsEqual project funded by the Academy of Finland's Strategic Research Council from its Equality in Society programme, project no. 293199.

3 Katri Hirvonen-Nurmi, who works with us in CRASH and the ArtsEqual project, carries out field work in the Wixárika community of Uweni Myweye, which belongs to the community-based museum network.

4 In the summer of 2016 the CRASH museum group comprised, in addition to the authors, Outi Hakkarainen, Pauliina Helle, Katri Hirvonen-Nurmi, and Pyry-Pekka Kantonen.

5 We refer to video art since our background is in experimental video and community-based art instead of documentary filmmaking. Working with the Wixárika community, however, this differentiation seemed unimportant.

6 In this context we find the term community-based art (see for example Bruyne and Gielen 2011) relevant, but we could on an equally good basis speak about collaborative art (Kester 2011).

7 In the research group called Socially Responsible Artists and Art Institutions, which forms a part of the ArtsEqual consortium, this kind of communal artistic activity is also called artistic action research.

8 In postcolonial research on indigenous peoples, returning the research to the community is heavily emphasised (see Smith 2012). The same interview data we have discussed in this article is also used in the book *Ki ti 'utame yu 'uximayati – Museos vivos: Experiencias wixárika, na 'ayeri y saami* (Kantonen, L. 2016), which is meant for the use of the community museums.

9 Later we edit the documented data into ethnographic performances, which we present with the people who have appeared in the documentaries.

10 *Teiwari* is Wixárika, the Huichol language, for 'one who is not us' (Helle 2015).

11 Some anthropologists have summarised these discussions. For example, Arnd Schneider and Cristopher Wright (2013: 8–9) compare artists to anthropologists, noting that Grant Kester highlights values similar to those important in anthropological fieldwork, such as the openness of interaction and the recognition of the positions of the different collaborative parties.

12 In 2013 a member of CRASH and a student at the Aalto University Pauliina Helle was an exchange student at the ITESO university and conducted fieldwork that related to the Tsikwaita museum project. Together with the teachers of the Tatuutsi Maxakwaxi school, she edited the mission statement of the Tunúwame museum in Spanish. The teachers shared areas of responsibility among them, collecting data regarding family folklore, traditional architecture, furniture, clothing, jewellery, food, the teaching methods of the school, and the sacred sites and the changes in them. The teachers are meant to collect and document the data together with the students by using videos and photographs. The mission statement shows that the museum and the documentation has to be based on the Wixárika worldview (*cosmovisión*). The primary mission of the museum is to support the school and family task of transferring this worldview to the future generations. (Helle 2015) The Wixáritari believe that the ancestors have given them this educational duty. The world lives on as long as the equilibrium and gift exchange with the ancestors continues.

13 According to Neurath 2013, the concept of cosmology is misleading in relation to the Wixárika *kiekari*, since they have at least two simultaneous worlds and ontologies.

14 See for example Kwon 2002.

## SOURCES

Maestro Alfredo, interviewed in Tsikwaita, Jalisco, November 13, 2014  
 Maestro Armando, interviewed in Tsikwaita, Jalisco, September 23, 2015  
 Maestro Catalino, interviewed in Tsikwaita, Jalisco, November 12, 2014  
 Maestro Enrique, interviewed in Tsikwaita, Jalisco, November 12, 2014  
 Maestro Félix, interviewed in Tsikwaita, Jalisco, September 27, 2015 and in an airplane, December 21, 2015  
 Maestra Rosa, interviewed in Tsikwaita, Jalisco, November 13, 2014  
 Marta, interviewed in Tepic, Nayarit, September 10, 2015  
 Juan, PowerPoint presentation at the conference of museology in Tsikwaita, Jalisco, October 17, 2014  
 Pablo, a lecture at the conference of museology in Tsikwaita, Jalisco, October 17, 2014

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