

RENEGOTIATED HUICHOL IDENTITY OUTSIDE ‘LA SIERRA’



BEATE HOVDEN

SUPERVISOR: OLE JAKOB LØLAND (POST DOCTORATE)

Master's Thesis in Religion and Diversity: Conflict and Coexistence

Faculty of Theology
UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Fall 2020

© Beate Hovden

2020

Renegotiated Huichol Identity outside 'La Sierra'

Beate Hovden

<http://uio.duo.no>



“I am so proud of being Huichol. I am thanking the gods for being Huichol. Huichol art comes from the offers of and from God. Through the art I can share my people’s way with other people” -Iginio 2019¹

¹ Quote from the interview with Iginio 23.05.2019.

Preface

What a journey this has been! Combining family life and a field study on the other side of the world. There are so many I need to thank for making this possible.

First of all, Bjørn Erik Schjerverud. Without you I would never find the courage to “jump”. I thank you for the good conversations, helping me follow my heart while using my mind. Tears and laughter and tons of support, that is how I will remember our sessions at your office. I am forever grateful!

Ole Jakob Løland, I could never have had a better supervisor. So many times, I wondered how you managed to have such a good overview on my work, when I felt like such a mess myself. I am so impressed by your knowledge, how organized you are, and your patience with me throughout this process. Your compliments on my work has given me the courage to continue, even when I have doubted my own abilities the most. You have been a good role model to me within the academic field, and I thank you for enduring with me.

All the participants of this research. Without you sharing so generously of your life and experiences, this thesis would never come about. Meeting you have affected my worldview and perspectives. I will always remember you with gratitude! I hope to meet you all again one day. I wish you, your family, and your communities all the best.

Tania and Andrea, my wonderful friends, and translators through this project. Always flexible and generous about your times. I truly appreciate your enthusiasm and support throughout the field work. Translating all necessary documents into Spanish and accompanying me to all the meetings. Your genuine interest to my work and our wonderful conversations. I am fortunate to have met you and can't wait until we meet again.

The administration at the Faculty of Theology, who has facilitated and supported me through practical issues throughout this project. It means a lot when sitting abroad, knowing that I could just send an email, and someone would “be on the ball” for me. Thank you!

My wonderful family and friends in Norway and Mexico, my cheerleaders. When I was excited with this project, so were you. When I felt I was drowning, you still believed in me. How fortunate I am to have you all!

And last, but not at all least, my three wonderful children. My heroes! Your patience and understanding, all those times you heard “just a minute”, “I’m busy”, “I need quiet for a moment”, and so on. Never have you complained about me being too busy at times. With courage have you all adapted to the new and foreign environment in Mexico. Attended school, met new friends, and learned a new language. Together have we had wonderful experiences, and sometimes we have all missed home to Norway. But you all have impressed me beyond words on how well you have adapted to the “new land”.

Now it is over, we are home in Norway. My project is done, and the thesis is finished. It is time to celebrate the way you have chosen for us to celebrate, with swimming pool, bowling, and cinema. You deserve it!

Abstract

This thesis aims to examine and present insights and explanations on how the Indigenous people, Huichols in Mexico through history have managed to integrate elements of Christianity yet still been perceived by scholars to have maintained their precolonial religion and practice.

Further on will this thesis through material gathered from a fieldwork conducted in Puerto Vallarta and Sayulita, Jalisco, Mexico in the period May 2019 – March 2020, try to answer the research question of how Huichols living in diaspora do perceive and negotiate their Huichol identity, religious life, and practice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	5
Abstract	6
1 Introduction	
1.1 Mexico, a Religious and Cultural Transformation, following the Spanish Colonization	9
1.2 Huichol or Wixarika – The People	
1.2.1 Settlements and Social Structure	11
1.2.2 Way of Life	13
1.2.3 Spiritual Organization and Performance	15
1.2.4 Peyote (Hikuri)	17
1.2.5 The Importance of Huichol Art	18
1.3 Ritualistic Geographic Affiliation	18
1.4 Previous Research	20
1.5 Introduction of Theme, the Research Question	22
1.6 Structure of the Thesis	25
2 Method	
2.1 Field Work	26
2.2 Interviews	30
2.3 Observations	31
2.4 Data Analysis	32
2.5 Limitations	33
2.6 Ethical Challenges	34
3 Theoretical Frameworks	
3.1 An Academic Insistence of the Term Religion	36
3.2 Choice of Theoretical Framework	39
3.3 Religious Syncretism	40
3.4 Cultural Memory	45
3.5 Migration	47

4 From the Sierras to Urban life	
4.1 A Brief Introduction of the Interviewees	49
4.2 Practical Changes of the Daily Life	53
4.3 Keeping Contact with the Village	56
4.4 Holding on to Traditions	59
4.5 Ritualistic Practices	62
4.6 Going to Church	68
4.7 Lady Guadalupe	73
4.8 Jesus	74
4.9 The Voice of a Padre	75
4.10 External Critique on Huichol Characteristics	76
4.11 Renegotiating Huichol Identity	76
5 Conclusion	82
6 Attachments	
6.1 Letter of Consent	84
6.2 Declaration of Confidentiality	88
6.3 Interview Questions Huichol	90
6.4 Interview Questions Priest	93
7 Glossary	94
9 Bibliography	96

1 Introduction

1.1 Mexico, a Religious and Cultural Transformation, Following the Spanish Colonization

Mexico, as the second largest country in Latin America with a population of 128,487,090 by March 2020 (Worldometers 2020), is well known for numerous reasons. From its tequila, the Mariachi bands, and being homeland of the taco, Mexico is known for its incredibly rich cultural history.

Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley start their description of Mexico in *The Oxford History of Mexico*, by describing it “as a product of a collision between, and ultimately a fusion of, two vastly different worlds” (Meyer and Beezley 2010, 1). Following Columbus explorations of the Americas beginning in 1492, Mexico, like the rest of the North, Central and South Americas, became colonized by European voyagers. Cortez’ expedition in 1519 marked not only the beginning of Spain’s conquest of Mexico, but just as well the historical meeting between the Spanish Crown, the Roman Catholic Church (represented by Cortez), and Mexico’s “old world,” represented by the Aztec Emperor Moteuczuma (English known as Montezuma) (Schwaller 2011, 53).

After Cortez and his men’s conquest of Mexico, one could find a relative rapid shift among the native population from its indigenous religious beliefs towards Catholic Christian beliefs through both brutal defeat and some forms of negotiations (with the possibility of some degree of autonomy) (Meyer and Beezley 2010, 2; Schwaller 2011, 52). Torres explain in *The History of Religion and The Study of Religion in Mexico*:

The evangelistic work was very active and a process of fusion between Catholicism and the various forms of regional pre-Hispanic religions started very soon, resulting in varying degrees of syncretism. But generally, the Catholic church controlled the social life of the people. Only 26 years after the Conquest of the capital city of the Aztecs, the Catholic hierarchy was firmly established (Torres 2000).

Yet, throughout the Spanish conquest one can find a general diversity of Indian resistance between northern and southern Mexico, divided by a line running slightly north of Mexico City (Patch 2010, 176). While the Christianization was carried through quite rapidly in the southern part by the homelands of the famous Mexican pre-Hispanic civilizations of Maya

and Aztec, there was a resistance against the conquest in the northern part, known as the homeland of the “barbarous” and nomadic Chicimecs people. Resistance was more successful among some of the indigenous groups and they managed to contain more control of their own culture (Ibid 176-178).

It was the discovery of silver in the Zacatecas region which caused the Spaniards to move on to the northern parts of Mexico. On their path, they raided native settlements to loot and captured slaves (Furst. 1996, 45). Yet, some natives managed to retreat into the labyrinth of the steep sided ravines of the Sierra to avoid confrontations with the Spaniards and this way remained free (Franz 1996, 73). Among them were the people known as the Huichol.

Huichols, or Wixarika, as they call themselves (Wixaritari in plural), are known for having resisted external religious influences through hundreds of years. Stacy B. Schaefer and Peter T. Furst claims in the book, *People of the Peyote*, how the Huichols since the defeat of the Mexica, Aztecs, and Tenochtitlan in the 1530’s “have maintained their pre-Christian religion without significant syncretism and with no more than nominal accommodations to the dominant Catholic faith” (1996,1). c

1.2 Huichol or Wixarika – The People

1.2.1 Settlements and Social Structure

Huichol are one of 78 distinct indigenous groups in Mexico (Global Americans 2017). It is hard to know the exact number of Huichols today, but in 2011 Paul M. Liffmann estimated in *Huichol Territory and the Mexican Nation*, that at least 20,000 out of about 45,000 Huichols lived in the mountain communities within the states of Nayarit, Jalisco, Durango, Zacatecas and San Luis Potosi (2011, 7).



Map showing all the states of Mexico (On the World Map 2012-2020).

The origin of the Huichol people is not clear and scholars have presented numerous propositions of pre-Columbian origins, ranging from the hypothesis of a longtime residence in the Sierras, to the Huichol originally being a part of the Chichimec culture originated from Zacatecas and San Luis Potosi, searching refuge in the Sierra shortly before or after the arrival of the Spaniards (Shaefer 1996, 125). The Huichol language belongs to the Uto-Aztecan family and resembles most closely the Indigenous group called Cora, from Nayarit.

Interestingly one can find profound similarities between these two groups' social organization and religion (Fikes, Weigand and Weigand 2004, xvi).

A Huichol society is built up by settlements of scattered extended family farmsteads, also called *ranchos*², spread throughout four thousand square kilometers where they live as primarily slash-and-burn agriculturalists (Liffmann 2011, 13). They also hunt, fish, and gather wild foodstuffs, both animal and vegetable (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 4). The stock of domestic animals includes dog, turkey (of the old-world origin), cattle, horses, mules, burros, pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens (Sheafer and Furst 1994, 4, 8). Still, Huichols principal cultigen, the maize, holds a central position to the Huichol due to its sacredness and mythological origin (Ibid).

Although Huichols hold a system of bilateral kinship and inheritance, the firstborn sons of the first wife will be preferred as rancho leaders (Fikes 2011, 9). One can also find ranchos grouped together in larger rancherías, and within each rancho or ranchería, one elder (usually male) holds the position as the ritual leader and shaman (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 4).

All the ranchos become part of larger, self-governing districts, called *Comunidades Indígenas*. There are in total five districts: San Andrés Cohamiata (Tateikie), Santa Catarina Cuexomatitán (Tuapurie), San Sebastián Teponahuastlán (Wautüa), Tuxpan de Bolaños (Tutsipa), and Guadalupe Ocotán (Xatsitsarie). For Huichol *Comunidad* is a politico-territorial distinction with a pre-Hispanic significance (Biglow 2001, 8f.).

-All the self-governing districts have elected community officials based on a cargo system introduced by the Franciscans in the eighteenth Century.³ The elected leadership of elders (*kawiteros*), and often shamans within the community, change annually and a new governing body is selected according to the *kawiteros* dreams and consensus (Schaefer and Furst 1994, 8). Cargo systems introduced during the Spanish colonial times are found among several Mexican indigenous societies. Yet, Huichol cargo systems are different from others in Mexico, since they also maintain temple-cargo systems within their aboriginal, traditional temples (Schaefer 2015, 63).

² ² Rancho, a small rural settlement.

³ Cargo system, a civil-religious hierarchy. Includes: traditional governor (tatuwani), juez, captain, alguacil, and the six mayordomos. Cargo system also includes the temple places (tukipa), pre and post ceremonial centers (Neurath 2000).

Within a system of hierarchy, the governor (*gobernado* in Spanish, *tatuani* in Wixarika, meaning the one who speaks well), holds a high position (also as a religious figurehead) together with his wife. The governor's word is to be respected and people will often turn to him to arbitrate disputes (Schaefer and Furst 1994, 8).

Next to the *tatuani*/governor, each district also has its own Huichol commissioners, constables, judge, bilingual secretary, and police. All disputes and crimes are handled within the Huichol district system, except murder, which will be dealt with by the mestizo authorities in the municipalities, which holds the ultimate charge of the different indigenous communities (Ibid).

1.2.2 Way of Life

Shaefer and Furst explain how the Huichol through their religion, their spirituality, and their arts and crafts have captured the imagination of an outside world that has increasingly lost its own spiritual bearings. Huichol religion ties into and permeates all aspects of life. The sacred world and the everyday world are one and the same (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 11, and Shaefer 2015, 54).

The Huichol world-view is based on an animistic nature worship and is organized into and performed as annual cyclic ceremonies and rituals. This insures the cycle of life for all living human, creatures, and their surroundings (Fikes, Weigand and Weigand 2004, xxviii). Due to the climatic reality of long dry seasons followed with months of rainy seasons, much of the focus within their religion revolves around the dry and wet season cycles (Liffmann 2011, 7, Znigg 2004, xv).

Within the Huichol way, there are a great number of gods, or ancestors as they often describe them, revealed as personifications of phenomena and forces in the natural environment. Some of the most central ones are:

Takutsi Nakawe (Great Grandmother) “Grandmother Germination”. She created the world, the rivers and made it turn. She divided the cosmos into five directions: east, west, north, south, and the center. She created the Gods, and she created life (Shaefer 2015, 52). *Takutsi* made several attempts in her creation of people, but displeased after her fourth attempt, she flooded the world. Only one man, *Watákame* and his female dog, *Yukawima/Xutúri iwiékame*

survived. As the dog started to shed it revealed a beautiful woman. Together they made “the people”, *teuteri/téwi* (Shaefer 2015, 12). Huichols today identify themselves as the *téwi*.

Tatewari “Grandfather Fire,” *Werikua* (meaning Eagle, also called *Tayaupá*, “Sun Father,” is the oldest god. He also is a wise and powerful shaman (Ibid, 53).

Tatutsi Maxa Kwaxí “Great Grandfather Deer Tail”, is the divine ancestor from *Wirikuta*, who brought the peyote (*hikuri*) and its sacred teachings to the Sierra and the people (Shaefer 2015, 12).

Tamatzi “The Divine Deer Person or Our Elder Brother,” superior over all ancestors except from the Sun in the myths. His deer antlers are equated with peyote. He also taught Huichols their Peyote dance ritual (Fikes 2011, 1).

Watakáme, “The Clearer of the Fields” taught them to plant maize (Ibid, 53).

All the Huichol gods are ancestral [mythological] shamans, and the Huichol shamans can communicate with all the ancestors through their practices, which gives the shaman an important role as the link between the people and the mythical ancestral gods (Shaefer and Furst. 1996, 13f., Znigg. 2004, xv). There are also numerous sacred sites, natural phenomena, stones etc. which hold central positions within Huichol veneration (Fikes 2011, 41).

From a Huichol perspective the world is inherited from their mythical ancestors. To maintain survival, good health, and prosperity, certain rituals and offerings must be performed in accordance with this mythology (Znigg 2004, xxviiiif.).

Fikes explains, that there are three indispensable elements in each Huichol life: *Cüpori*, *Tocari* and *Iyari* (2011, 114).

The first is *Cüpori* -Living water or spirit.

The *Cüpori* is that which is preserved with the queen [principal goddess], *Tatei Nihuetócame*... she is the one who imparts the life we call *Cüpori* to each human being. From her, we each receive *Cüpori* in order to be born as a human being. ... *Tatei Nihuetócame* is the one [goddess] who takes care of our *Cüpori*. She is paired with our Sun Father. She keeps us alive and healthy. When a person dies, his *Cüpori* returns to her. Our *Cüpori* remains preserved with her in order to return when a baby is born with that same *Cüpori* (Ibid).

This also reflects the Huichol cyclical understanding of life and death. The *Cüpori* is the same essence but return to this world with different persons.

The second fundamental element in Huichol mythology is *Tocari*. It connotes life-energy, night, the rainy season, and more specifically children's health and growth. As a Huichol shaman explained to Fikes in an interview:

Tocari is not essential for adults, but, applies primarily to children. It gives them much vigor. [...] It is from her in particular that I must request *Tocari*, advising her that our children are the ones who must receive *tocari* in order that they enjoy the breath of life and remain free of illness in the future (Fikes 2011, 115).

The third is *Iyari*, which stands for heart, conscience, memory, or spirit. The *Iyari* is a part of a living human. It survives death, and shaman-singers can create contact with the deceased's *Iyari* through the ancestor *Tamatzi* (Fikes. 2011, 36, 73). Still, *Iyari* is limited to Huichols only. Non-Huichols have no "genetic-memory" connections to *Iyari*. Still, Huichols hold a general understanding on how "outsiders" also possible can possess it more- or less comparable to the *Iyari* Huichols holds (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 25).

Huichols count their age according to the passage of the rain seasons (May-October), and equate their *Cüpori* with rain. This unity between an individual's spirit and rain expresses a form for interdependence (Fikes 2011, 8). When a Huichol dies, funeral rituals are performed in order protect the living, but also to ensure that the deceased's eternal components, *Iyari* and *Cüpori* are recycled.

All deceased must visit the primordial underworld. Only the ones who have lived righteous will ascend to heaven and to their divine parents. Impious and sorcerers ("fake shamans") will forever remain in the dark underworld (Ibid, 6). Yet, as Shaefer and Furst underline, there are no strict religious dogmas. Even though there is a wrong way of performing the old ceremonies, still there are many right ones, with several variations on common themes (1996, 2).

1.2.3. Spiritual Organization and Performance

All ranchos are connected to one or more temple groups and ceremonial center, called *Tukipa* in Wixarika. These centers can be understood as seasonal meeting places for political and ceremonial activities (Shaefer 2015, 19). Huichols from the ranchos nearby the ceremonial centers are recruited within a cargo system as temple officers, called *Xukurikate*. Each temple officer conducts five annual ritual cycles for five consecutive years. Fikes explain how the

Huichols believe that the fundamental structure of the environment was originally established by deified ancestors, which now controls the ecological order, protects human health, and hence sustains Huichol survival (Fikes 2011, 10). Therefore the most important tasks for the temple officers are the performance of rituals which please the ancestors, honors, and feeds them (blood offerings of cattle or deer) within the temple ritual settings: “Huichol temple officers must collect peyote, bring back sacred water from shrines of various Rain Mothers, fish, hunt deer, provide cattle to be sacrificed, and give away food to Huichols attending the rituals they are entrusted with performing” (Znigg 2004, xv).

Not only do the temple officers perform the annual ritual cycles, but more so, the ancestors are embodied within the temple officers. Throughout the period of the five years they serve, they will call each other by the names of the specific ancestor each temple officer represents. At the end of the five years of service, each temple officers select their own replacement (Ibid).

There is a certain form for education and prestige within the system of temple officer service. To qualify as a healer, one sequence of temple officer of five years must be conducted. To qualify as a ritual leader or singer (*Mara 'akáme*), two terms as temple officer is required. Elders with expertise in rituals are called *Kawitéro*, holds the highest ranking. (Znigg 2004, xvi, Fikes 2011, 39, and Shaefer 2015, 66).

Even though the Huichols have preserved their aboriginal world view and temple ritual cycles, one can find obvious Christian elements within their rituals as well. All ranchos have their own ancestor-god-house, *xiriki*. In *Comunidades Indígenas* like San Andrés as an example, they also have civil-religious (Christian) structures established (from previous Franciscan attempts of conversions), which are also attended by Huichols today (Shaefer 2015, 68).

Huichols are also elected within the cargo system to take care of Catholic icons such as Christ, Lady of Guadalupe, and other saints. They are given the title *Mayordomo* while serving a given icon, which they do for at least one year. Only the *Mayordomo* elected to take care of the Crucified Christ figure has a five-year term as officer - equal to the aboriginal temple officers (Fikes 2011, 10f.). The Huichols create a very intimate relationship with their gods, the same counts for the Christ and the other saint's icons as well, they are submerged by pagan concepts (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 120ff.).

Huichols also perform Christian/Catholic inspired ceremonies and celebrations, Easter week is followed by *Semana Santa* (annual Catholic tribute to the passion of Christ) and the Lady Guadalupe celebrations take place December 1-12, led by *kawitéros* (Ibid, 237).

1.2.4 Peyote (Hikuri)

Huichols are well known for their usage of the visionary cactus, Peyote (*hicuri*). Peyote, which grows in the San Luis Potosi desert (In Real de Catorce, east of the Huichol settlements), is a spineless, psychoactive cactus essential to the Huichol culture.

According Huichol spirituality, life emanates from the peyote and will return to it upon one's death. Thus, Huichol spirituality is based on a cosmology centered on the ritual use of the peyote (Biglow 2001, 36). To the Huichols, the peyote contains the *Iyari* of the First shaman, *Tamatzi* (also called The Divine Deer Person, our Elder Brother, or our Elder Brother Deer). Consumption of the peyote enables Huichols to access *Tamatzi*'s spirit mind through ritual guidelines (Fikes 2011, 78). The peyote functions as an ally, protector, and facilitator of the ecstatic trance, places it naturally at the core of the shaman's universe, and field of work. (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 20).

Peyote is not only used as a spiritual, ritualistic tool, but also for medicinal purposes (Shaefer 2015, 57). Everyone within a Huichol community can (but not always do) consume peyote. Men and women, through all ages, from embryo in the mother's womb, through the breastmilk as babies, and as a child grows up, and so on through all stages of life may consume peyote (Shaefer 2015, 58). Huichols pay close attention to a child's first taste of peyote (bitter at taste). If a child expresses a somehow pleasurable reaction, it is more likely that the child will follow the path of a shaman (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 10f.).

According to Huichol cosmology the world interconnects all people and places (Biglow 2001, 38). As the Huichol agricultural year is divided into dry (December- May) and rainy seasons, so is the religious calendar. At the beginning of the dry season the ritual deer hunts (the harvest of peyote) begin in the Wirikuta desert, about 350 kilometers east of the Huichol homeland (Fikes 2011, 4,6). For Huichols, the peyote and the deer are the same (Sheafer and Furst 1996, 146). Within this tradition Huichol pilgrimage to sacred places, to all the cardinal places in south (Lake Chapala), west (San Blas/Haramarsie), north (Xapawiymeta) and east to

Wirikuta by San Luis Potosi, where all the gods congregate, manifested as mountains, hills and rocks (Shaefer 2015, 12,59, 62).

By the end of the peyote hunt, Huichols will eat the first peyote collected in Wirikuta before they return to their ranchos, with enough peyote for themselves and their family stock to last throughout the coming year (Shaefer 2015, 171ff.). Earlier such pilgrimage would take about two months by foot. Today the pilgrimage takes about one month, since certain routes now are necessarily arranged with buses etc. (Fikes 2011, 122).

Shaefer and Furst, suggested that the communal peyote rituals can be traced back to an even older nomadic culture in Mexico:

The last intact survivor of a very old Chichemec/Desert Culture peyote complex. Divinatory, ecstatic, and medicinal uses of peyote once were the common property, with local variations, [...] but today the Huichols remain the only bearers of a fully integrated range of peyote-related beliefs and customs (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 23).

1.2.5 The Importance of Huichol Art

Like most indigenous traditions the Huichol practice have no ancient written sources. Everything is based on a long tradition of oral expressions and physical performances of mythical stories, dances, venues, poetry, and traditions (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 2). In addition to these expressions, Huichol tradition is rich in artistic expressions through decorations on a great diversity of materials such as clothes, bags, wooden figures, wax figures, beaded art, embroideries, traditional woven products, gourd bowls, and feathered arrows. Huichol art can be made for both decorative and sacred purposes. Art is a way for the Huichols to visually manifest their religion (Shaefer 2015, 54).

In the artwork, they express their innermost feelings, [peyote] visions and dreams through symbols representing their gods, sacred and ceremonial places, and objects.

1.3 Ritualistic Geographical Affiliation

The homeland of the Huichol is the mountain range, Sierra Madre Occidental It is located in the states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Zacatecas, and Durango (north-west of region of Mexico). These states occupy some of the most rugged terrain in the mountain chain, characterized by high mesas, sheer cliffs, and deep river valleys. The elevation ranges from about 600 to over 1800

meters above sea level (Shaefer. 1993, 124). The geography of the Sierra Madre Occidental creates natural barriers which have served to insulate the Huichol from the outside world, and in order for Huichols to avoid the Spanish colonial authorities, they would move higher and deeper into the Sierra Madre (Biglow 2001, 26).

According to Huichol mythology, Grandmother Great Germination divided the cosmos into five directions: to the east *Wirikuta*, the sacred peyote desert; the west, the goddess of *Haramaratsi*, The Pasific Ocean, by San Blas. To the north, the goddess of the sacred caves *Ututawita*, in Durango. At the south, the goddess of Lake Chapala. In the center of all the sacred spaces, the fifth place, is the center (Heartland) where all the Huichol communities are located. (Shaefer 2015, 52). All four places surrounding the Huichol communities, contain sacred shrines which the Huichols pilgrimage to as part of their veneration.

The four thousand square kilometers inhabited by Huichols today, is about half the size of their territories prior to the Spanish conquest (Fikes 2011,11). However, that is only the possessed land. Huichol ceremonial territories which they need to access seasonally, extends over an area twenty times as large (Liffmann 2011, 8).

The image below illustrates well the vast distances of the Huichol home and ceremonial homelands

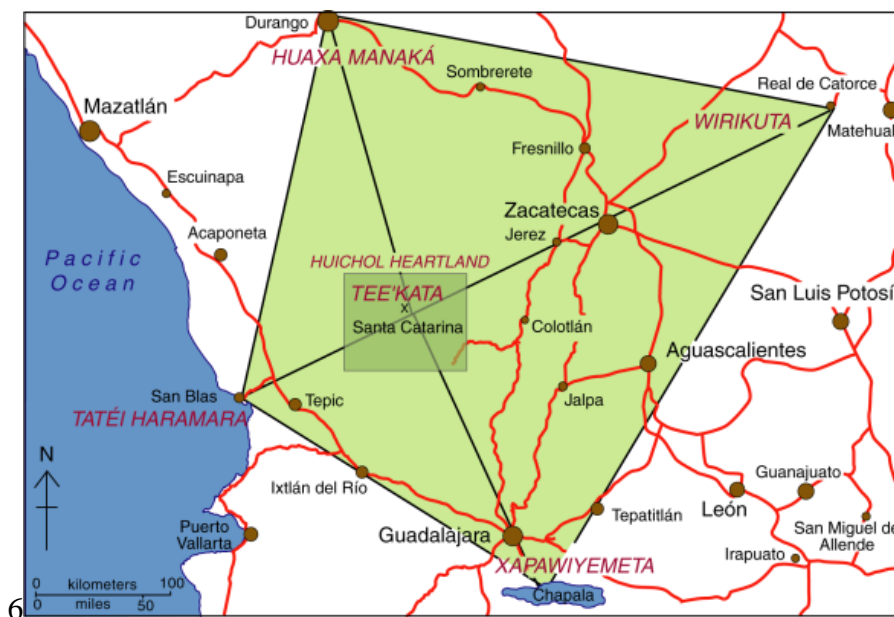


Image I: The Sacred Geography of Mexico's Huichol Indians (<http://geo-mexico.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/huichol-cosmology-map.png>).

1.4 Previous Research

When reading literature about Huichols, one can find a sort of common understanding about them prevailing pre-colonial religion historical as well as in more recent times. From a historical perspective one can find a broad focus on this matter: through Carl Lumholtz (fieldworks during the period 1890-1910), Léon Diguët (fieldworks in the periods 1893-1914), Konrad Theodor Preuss (fieldwork 1905-1907), and Robert Zingg (1934). Stacey B. Sheaffer (several fieldworks 1970s – 1990s), and Peter T. Furst, also provided good insights in *The People of the Peyote* (1996) Fikes, Weigand and (2004), Editing Robert Zingg's *Huichol Mythology*, and Shafer's book *Huichol Women, Weavers and Shamans* (2015).

Yet, Jay C. Fikes, Phil C. Weigand, and Acelia Garcia De Weigand stands out to a degree with a slight contrast in their introduction to the edited book of Robert: Zingg (1934). They proclaim first that:

This is the most authentic and comprehensive work on Huichol mythology ever published. We have little firsthand experience on recording myths and observing rituals specific to Tuxpan, the Huichol community where in 1934 Robert Zingg transcribed the myths we have edited for this volume. Our Huichol research has focused on Santa Catarina (Fikes) and San Sebastián (the Weigands) [..] Accordingly, in this introduction we will summarize Huichol ethnohistory, a topic we feel well qualified to address and one that has been relatively neglected in most recent studies on the Huichol (Fikes, Weigand and Weigand 2004, i).

Further on they presented a critique on a general pattern among anthropologists of ignoring Zingg's research on Tuxpan's version of Christian myth and rituals: "His research on Tuxpan's version of Christian myth and ritual is exceptionally valuable, not only because of its wealth of detail and accuracy, but also because this topic has been treated as if it were trivial by some anthropologists" (2004, xxxii). Yet, as Fikes and the Weigands further presented the historical line of events of Catholic efforts to subject the Huichol under Catholic domination, they concluded that:

Aboriginal ceremonies remained of vital concerns because Huichol settlement pattern and subsistence practices were altered only slightly rather than completely replaced. Accordingly, at both ceremonial centers, and ranchos, Huichol religion flourished despite the best efforts of Franciscans. Huichols simply integrated Catholic creed and customs into their aboriginal myths and annual ritual cycle (2004, xxiii).

In *Huichol Mythology*, Zingg presents a section which included the “The Christian Myth Cycle”. This section contains three Myths: “The Bee-Mother Gives Wax for Candles”, which included one sub-story. The second myth “The Birth of the Saints”, included three sub-stories, and the last myth, “The Myth of Santo Christo” included no less than seven sub-stories. Despite the critique by Fikes and the Weigands (2004), did also Fikes present the general understanding about insignificant syncretic effects on Huichol religious orientation and practices in *Unknown Huichol*:

Despite the Franciscan efforts to Christianize them, the Huichol have preserved an aboriginal temple ritual cycle with a worldview more complicated than most of the other Indians in North and Middle America. Christian elements in their aboriginal rituals are obvious, but syncretism has remained relatively insignificant, at least in Santa Catarina (2011, 10).

The search of material with a focus on subjects regarding continuations and/or changes in Huichol religious beliefs and practices within more recent literature, from 2010 until today has been mostly unsuccessful. Yet, I found one article by Santiago Espinosa García, Maria Patricia Domínguez Eherrerría, and Luzia Eirene Vergara Sakellari, called “Huichol Shamanism and Christian Syncretism in Wirikuta, Mexico: A Cross Cultural Study”, which presented in contrast to the general trend, a perspective on Huichol-Christian syncretism developed by “Christianity reinterpreted in indigenous terms and allows for adaptation by the native people” (2018, 35). Their research stands more in line with the theoretical perspective and findings of my dissertation.

Still, most information produced recently, seems to be “resting on” and referring to previous observations and findings by the scholars mentioned above. Especially *People of the Peyote*, edited by Shaefer and Furst seems to be one literary work on Huichols used as reference by many within the field. On this matter it is important to underline that most of those studies are not studies aimed to investigate subjects of Huichol religious orientations or practices. As one can find little literature with a sole focus on Huichol religion. On the other hand on more recent literature, one find an increased focus on subjects regarding Huichol-life as a marginalized population, often with severe poverty and health issues, as well as subjects regarding identity markers through clothes, legal, health and educational issues among

Huichols. There has also been an increasing focus on Huichol emigration from the Sierras due to territorial issues.

In *Huichol Women Weavers, and Shamans* from 2015, Shaefer mentions developments and changes within the Huichol communities from the 1990's up until 2015. Implementing educational programs in villages, roads being built, cars replacing horses and mules etc. With installation of electrical sources, movies, and other impulses from "outside" can be found at the core of the villages. Building roads and the making of airstrips has also led to easier access to the villages from the outside world (tourism etc.). But also, and what will be the focus within this thesis, is how these developments have created greater opportunities to exit the Sierras for those choosing to leave.

This research will clearly and necessarily be conducted with previous literature in mind. But instead of leaning on to the literature of previous findings, will it in this case be more fruitful to use the literature as comparative material to the findings that emerges through this fieldwork. This dissertation will also keep a focus on and search for a possible explanation to the seemingly contradictories in between findings and conclusions regarding Huichols prevailing pre-colonial traditions and religious practices. On this matter is it important to point out that this dissertation is based on English-language literature, so it cannot be ruled out that Spanish literature has a greater focus on this topic than what has been found within English literature.

1.5 Introduction of the Theme, the Research Question

Most of research literature has argued that one can still to a high degree find Huichol religion and culture intact as it has mostly survived colonization. In its present cultural forms, it still bears traces from its pre-colonial origin. There is still a wide scholarly consensus about this (Shaefer and Furst 1996; Shaefer 2015, Fikes 2011; Franz 1996; Yasumoto 1996).

Nevertheless, there is undeniable evidence of numerous inclusions of several Catholic saints, church buildings, and the central position that the Catholic [Mexican] Lady of Guadalupe holds within Huichol lives. It seems like Huichol cultural and religious life has been processed or adapted in ways that have neither eliminated nor diluted their original shamanic

religion, culture, or social structure, despite certain degrees of Christian influence or syncretism.

Illustrative of this is the answer I got as I asked a Huichol man selling artifacts at a market in Puerto Vallarta. Through our informal conversation, I asked if he would consider himself as Christian, and his reply was: "I am not Christian, I believe in Jesus, and Lady Guadalupe is with me, but I am not Christian. We Wixaritari are more than that." It was quite interesting that four of the participants in this research replied positive to the question of them being Christians. All confirmed that they in fact were Catholics.

I will through this thesis examine and present insights and explanations on how Huichols through history have managed to integrate elements of Christianity yet still being perceived among both scholars and Huichols themselves, as having prevailed their precolonial religion and practices. I will further move the focus towards the core of this thesis, the search of Huichols experiences on maintaining their Huichol identity and way of life after moving out from their homelands into the Mexican (urban) society. The research question will hence be - **How Huichols living in diaspora do perceive and negotiate their Huichol identity, religious life, and practice?**

The answer from a man at the market cannot be taken as representative for all Huichols, just as the answers from four participants in this thesis, or the findings from anthropological studies among certain Huichol communities. Still, these examples reveal an interesting difference among Huichols. It is obvious that there are Christian influence or syncretism within Huichol ways. Still there are some factors which make Huichols identify in different ways when it comes to the Christian religion.

As the main perspective among most academics has been that Huichols have prevailed their aboriginal religion and culture most authentic to pre-colonial times, few observations and a crucial question appear - What about the Huichols who have migrated out of the Sierras?

Most research regarding Huichol cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and practices have focused on and been conducted in the homelands of the Huichols. But according to Liffmann's data in, *Huichol Territory and the Mexican Nation*, only about half of the Huichol population remain in the Sierras today, which means that at least 20,000 Huichols live outside the Comunidades indigenas, spread throughout Mexico, mainly in the western regions (2011, 46). It is hence necessary to view Huichol realities within two different settings:

Huichol life/experience, living within its own homeland, and Huichol life/experience among the ones living in diaspora⁴, as members of the Mexican society.

I have not managed to find much literature regarding how emigration from the Huichol Communities directly or indirectly mediate or change Huichol religious identity, practices, and traditions, but the Mexican social anthropologist Salomón Nahmad Sittón presented an observations on how Huichols living remote from their homelands as they moved into Mexican Cities had a tendency of becoming “more Huichol”, with a form of certainty that the old ways being superior (1996, 497).

He also reflected on an awareness of the possible critical consequences if the Huichols in the Sierras would lose the rights to their ancestor’s homelands, due to privatizations, silver mines etc. (Ibid). I find this reflection just as important as it relates to Huichols living distant from their homelands. How does the physical distance affect the Huichol identity and way of life? Keep in mind what Liffmann wrote, “Memory connects space and time. In Huichol territoriality, this memory is embodied in land (2011, 20).”, or, “Cultural dreams are played out in urban and rural settings all across the globe as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities [...] (Ibid, 46).”

This study is based on field work and research on Huichols living in the Puerto Vallarta/Sayulita area. Puerto Vallarta (in the state of Jalisco) is a city with a population of about 520,000 and is a popular tourist destination on the West Coast of Mexico. It is the second most important beach destination in Mexico, with more than 4.7 million tourists visiting in 2018 (puertovallarta.net and PopulationStat 2020). Sayulita is a small fishing town about 45 minutes north of Puerto Vallarta with about 2300 inhabitants in 2010 (citypopulation.de). Sayulita has also experienced a rapid growth of seasonal tourism the last years.

⁴ From Ancient Greece: Diaspora meaning ‘scattering’. Diaspora often used for people displaced or dispersed by force. “dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions, the expansion from a homeland in pursuit of work or trade, or to further colonial ambitions; a collective memory, and myth about the homeland; a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; and a sense of empathy and solidarity and the maintenance of ‘transversal links’ with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlements (Castles, De Haas and Miller 2014, 42).”

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This chapter has provided a general introduction on Mexico, on the Huichol people and on their way of life and on the research question. I will in chapter two present the methodical framework. This research is conducted with a fieldwork in Mexico and at large the focus within this section will be on topics regarding fieldwork and interviews, procedures, ethical challenges, and solutions.

The theoretical framework is laid out in chapter three and includes conceptual understandings of the terminologies of religion and identity in relation to the subjects of focus in this thesis, the Huichols. The theoretical framework can be summed up on the keywords -religious syncretism, cultural memory, and migration.

Chapter four presents the findings of the fieldwork. It introduces the participants of the research. Through chapter four, the aim is to connect the past with the present and to clarify as far as possible the role of Catholic elements within the Huichol culture today. Moreover, it seeks to investigate eventual developments of changes, causes and effects.

Chapter five presents the conclusion on the findings of the research.

2 Method

2.1 Fieldwork

A fieldwork is a systematic effort of observations and interactions in the study of people's behavior and the interplay with their environment (Brinkman and Kvale. 2015, 128). By carrying out a field work, the aim is to produce a particular knowledge of a chosen theme, about a selected group of people. By achieving an in depth understanding of people, one need to necessarily take into consideration the complexity of several factors, which directly or indirectly affects their way of thinking, acting, in personal as well as social settings. A fieldwork will in some cases be necessary to gain a more complete base of information than a structured interview can produce.

As the aim of this thesis is to find patterns on how emigration from Huichol Communities of the Sierra Made Occidental, directly, or indirectly mediate or change religious identity, practice, and traditions to Huichols on individual basis. To collect the most accurate information, I have conducted a fieldwork at the west coast of Mexico, more specifically in the tourist towns Puerto Vallarta and Sayulita. Within the selected group of informants or interviewees, there are people who recently moved out from the Sierras to people who settled more than ten years ago.

Contact was created by reaching out to possible Huichol informants as I met them in the settings of them selling their art on street markets through, incidental meetings on the street, or through recommendations from a third party, people cooperating with, or "heard about", through art shops, "friends of", and etc.

Before the departure to Mexico in August 2017, I read about the Huichol religion, culture, and history. Reading articles and books from anthropologists, such as Peter T. Furst and Stacy B. Schaeffer helped to provide a thorough introduction on a broad range of subjects related to Huichol life and history. Yet, during the preparations, and as I was reading Robert M. Zingg's book on *Huichol Mythology*, it became very clear that parts of the subjects I was about to research, were so remote from any of my own living experience, pattern of thinking, and practices I had studied as a student of Religion and Society, as well as within the master

program of Religion and Diversity. It was in many ways ungraspable for me to truly get the meaning of the mythologies, due to me being so remote or distant to the geographical sphere of the mythology's origins, climatic conditions, but also the mythologies' narrative structure and content also appeared quite foreign to me.

I moved to Mexico August 2017. First after having spent two years there I realized how I by that time in some aspect, could relate to and understand some of the Huichol mythological narrative and resonance. With personal experiences through the dry and wet seasons in Mexico (which the Huichol Mythology centers around), was I however "positioned" to gain some sort of insight of the Huichol myths and rituals. Even though I have not been as fortunate to have visited any of the Huichol villages or entered what they perceive as their sacred spaces and places in the mountains, I have experienced some of Mexico's outstanding nature and climate in ways that helped me to understand more of the physical surroundings and background to the religious culture of the Huichols.

I imagined that upon my arrival in Puerto Vallarta I would attempt to get into one or more villages and Huichol communities in this region. I expected to conduct a "traditional" anthropological fieldwork, such as those I had read about, with observations of group synergies and ritualistic practices and so forth. As I started seeking out informants, however, I quickly understood that my fieldwork would not be conducted as first imagined. I could not find any collective groups of Huichols. I learned that the bonds to the families back in the homelands of the Sierras are the core of the cultural identity of Huichols living outside the Sierras. This does not, however, mean that Huichols isolate themselves from each other when migrating from the Sierras. There are obviously friendships and relations among Huichols living in diaspora, but there seem to be no successful efforts among Huichols of gathering outside the Sierras for ritualistic nor religious purposes. That said, all the interviewees explained how and why everything following the cycles of Huichol life and meaning are contained and conducted in the ancestor's homelands. I will come back to this in chapter four.

The fieldwork is based on meetings, conversations, and qualitative semi-structured interviews with a selection of six Huichols, four men and two women with age ranges from 25 to 43. The meetings have all been placed in the environment of the informants' workplaces such as art shops, galleries, and marketplaces. This was the most practical solution for all attendees, due to their long workdays, from early mornings to late evenings, seven days a week.

Spending time with them at the workplaces, provided a useful insight of their everyday life routines as well as it offered the opportunity of observing their interactions with people on different levels. I got to meet and observe the daily life with their families, their children, friends, and colleagues as well as their interactions with North American tourists buying their artwork.

Throughout the interviews the focus was always placed on achieving the best possible understanding of the interviewee's subjective insight of their own cultural and religious identity, tradition, and religiosity. Later on, and moving towards the core interest of my study, the field work was directed towards gaining insights of Huichols' subjective experiences of living not only distant from their communities, but also within a non-Huichol society.

Due to the already mentioned information in chapter one about the Huichol integration of some Catholic elements into their religious landscape, and due to the fact that four of the interviewees stated that they were Catholics, I chose to include a representative of the Catholic Church in order to reveal a Catholic perspective, relating to and attitude towards Catholic-Huichols. I chose to speak to a priest in one of the largest churches in Puerto Vallarta, a Lady Guadalupe Church, *La Iglesia de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe*, at the center of the town. The choice was made because two of the interviewees had informed that they occasionally attended that specific church.

It became especially interesting to hear how the priest and the Catholic church could accept or not, a syncretism of Huichol-Catholic identification and practices. To me this became interesting since identity must be understood as two-folded. Even though the core understanding of identity must rely within the subject itself (personal identity), is it important to also understand identity within a social setting (as cultural and/or social identity). Xenia Chrysochoou explains in *Cultural Diveristy: It's a Social Psychology*, how the identity is a knowledge about who a person is:

How people perceive themselves, what they claim they are, how they are recognized to be, how they are evaluated by others, together constitute a particular form of knowledge that might "filter" their understanding of the world and influence their actions. Identity summarizes this knowledge (Chrysochoou. 2004, xxix).

I have throughout the fieldwork tried to maintain a reflexive awareness. The reflexive awareness understood as a tool, a reminder of the researcher's background as well as position

within the fieldwork setting (Harvey. 2011, 220f.). Jeppe Sinding Jensen write about the need for historical and theoretical awareness, and hence, theoretical reflexivity being among the most epistemic tools within human and social sciences (2011, 44).

Even though I did not observe nor participate in any religious activity, I soon recognized the need to keep a reflexive focus throughout the interview settings and while analyzing the collected information afterwards. Reflexivity is not only applicable within the interview process, but just as important throughout the process of analyzing collected data and presentation of the findings. This became especially clear to me through the analytical process with the collected material from the interviews. I will return to an example of this in the theoretical chapter.

I also found Neitz's explanation of reflexivity relevant to my research process. She writes: "Understanding the research process as reflexive means seeing the researcher as a part of the research process, not standing outside of it" (2011, 67). This means that I also had to keep in mind how the interviewee's perceptions of me (and of the project) could influence their sharing of information with me. Specially two aspects were important on this matter: To what level did they trust me in order to share information, or perhaps on the other hand hold back information.

As part of the preparations before the fieldwork, and during the period of conducting the interviews, I visited Kevin Simpson who is the owner of the art galleries "Peyote People" and "Galeria Colectika" and I had several visits to Hilda, the owner of Watakame Flores, Artesania Huichol y Zapoteca de Oaxaca, both located in center of town of Puerto Vallarta. Both, Kevin, which is from the United States, and Hilda, who is Mexican, have decades of cooperating with Huichols in the Sierras through their indigenous art galleries. Neither Kevin nor Hilda were subjects in my research but resources to aid me in maintaining effective reliability in my work. My intention was not to get information about the Huichol culture itself but with regards to the interactions between the Huichol and the non-Huichol, particularly those who are remote to their culture.

Both resource persons warned me that Huichols are particularly distrusting but also, and quite interestingly, that the culture compels Huichol people to craft ideas or concepts that the receiver may find amusing or fascinating. In other words, they master the ability to tell you what they think you want to hear and possibly mislead you. Taken this into mind, reflexivity

also becomes a self-awareness of my social position in relation to the interviewees as well as how the unequal social power can affect a knowledge production (Amoureux and Steele 2015, 6).

Throughout the contact with the interviewees, I sought to keep in mind how my own, cultural and theoretical background could affect the way I interacted with and interpreted my informant's descriptions of their perceptions of lived life, experiences and perspectives.

Through this attentiveness I hoped to keep a respectful focus on what the participants aimed to share through our contact, and as far as possible set aside possible pre-assumptions gained while preparing for the fieldwork, through studies of previous literature and research on Huichols. As it related to evaluating the information gathered from the interviewees, have I prepared and tried to formulate the questions as "open" as possible, avoiding formulations that can be understood as leading towards a certain direction of meaning. The analytical process also opened for comparison of the information gathered, which in this case have given a broader insight of the general information shared, which corroborates.

Unlike Hilda and Kevin's warnings, did I experience the interviewees genuinely interested in sharing and teaching me about their Huichol lives. Initially I was misled by some of the information given to me one of the interviewees that later on showed itself to be wrong. Before starting the first interview session, he admitted that he had lived in Puerto Vallarta ten years and not five as he has told me upon our first meeting. I will return to this challenge in chapter four.

2.2 Interviews

I made a questionnaire form with tentative questions as a part of preparations before the fieldwork. The initial scheme was formulated in a way that invited the interviewee to answer as freely as possible. Still, I added a few keywords on the form, in case the interviewee for any reason would find it hard to reply to the questions asked and in order to help me guide the conversation towards subjects regarding the research (Attachement 2 and 3).

My intention was to meet the interview objects within their own atmosphere, and always in accordance their comfort and preferences. The interviews were planned and set up into two different sessions of approximately 1-2 hours each. In this way I got to reflect over the questions and answers from the first session. It gave me the opportunity to ask follow-up questions or clarify if needed before proceeding to the new questions. It also gave me the opportunity to modify questions to the next session based on what had been revealed through

the first one. With the interviews being split into two sessions, it offered the informant some time for reflections from the first session unto the next. This gave them also the opportunity to fill in clarifications or additional information they felt was forgotten, or otherwise left out within the first session.

As mentioned above, I kept a reflexive focus throughout the whole research. Within the interview sessions I also chose to apply a form of semi-structured lifeworld interview, as described by Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale in *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. This means that the aim throughout an interview, is the achievement of obtaining the informants' subjective understanding and descriptions of their own life and worldview (Brinkmann and Kvale. 2015, 149f).

My interview is structured through an interview guide, focusing on central themes, yet open for thematic adaptations dependent on the information shared in the interview process. This type of interview comes close to an everyday conversation, as the interviewee is given the opportunity to describe quite freely, but it is always conducted in accordance the interview guide and the specific themes planned (Ibid. 29-32). The interviewer guides the conversation through both the initial questions as well as the follow up questions. Hence, the interviewer must be quite knowledgeable about the interview topic prior to the interview (Ibid). I found this to be necessary throughout the interview sessions. The background knowledge gathered through the process of preparations helped not only to ask relevant questions and follow ups. It was also beneficial in the trust building between me and the interviewees. As I came well prepared with relevant, basic knowledge about Huichol way and living, I experienced the interviewee "open up" willingly and interested to share more information.

2.3 Observations

I realized already as I conducted the first interview the importance of observation throughout an interview session. In addition to verbal expressions, can one gain important information by observing the interviewees' bodily gestures, facial expressions, and vocalizations (Brinkmann and Kvale. 2015, 32). At times, I could even gather crucial information through unanswered questions. An example of this can be found in one interview conducted in Sayulita. As I asked a Huichol couple about the five sacred cardinal points in the Sierra Madre Occidental. They could only answer about four of the five points, but the fifth cardinal point, the sacred caves in the north, neither of them remembered the name and place (Julica and Jose 26.02.02). As

none of them could come up with the information, I observed their “internal” interaction process. The observations of their face mimics, tone of voice and body language, provided me important information to the analyzing process afterwards.

Observation also helped me to somehow measure and guide the interview progress. By observing nonverbal expressions presented by the interviewees in certain settings of the conversations, helped me in the decision making of when to go deeper into a subject, rephrase myself, or move on to the next question or theme.

2.4 Data Analysis

I chose to transcribe the audio recordings from the interview sessions as soon as possible after each interview. As I transcribed the material from first session and before conducting the follow-up interview, it helped me not only to process the information. It also helped me keeping a sharp focus into the next interview session. It provided me an awareness of what was necessary to focus on in the follow-up. The days I conducted interviews I also wrote some sort of a journal. I found this helping me remember and organize thoughts, ideas, questions, as well as it helped me capture impressions and observations throughout the fieldwork. The notes became useful when entering the data analyzing process.

The data analyzing part was conducted in three stages. First, I needed to analyze the data collected through the interviews. I needed to get a best possible understanding of what and how the informant mediated information through the interviews. I realized that I could not do this without a contextual awareness (Jensen. 2011, 45f). As I worked through the information gathered, I needed to see it in light of (as far as possible) the informants expressed self-experience of personal and social surroundings and relations, not only now, living in the Puerto Vallarta and Sayulita -area, but also in relation to their attachments to the communities in the Sierras.

When I was done with the first stage of analyzing, I worked with the information gathered through the conversations with the priests. At the end, I would analyze the information gathered through the interview sessions in light of, and in comparison to previous research and literature. I have through this process attempted to discern continuations and/or breaches of Huichol religious identity, religiousness, and practices among the representatives in this study.

2.5 Limitations

I did not speak one word of Spanish before my departure to Mexico. As I arrived, I enrolled to Spanish classes. Yet after two years, it was obvious that my language skills were not sufficient to carry on with the fieldwork without an English - Spanish translator. I am aware of the risk of missing the “fine details” of meaning through the extra step of communication, which happens in a translator setting. Working with an interpreter can also affect the important element of trust building that comes more naturally through a direct communication. The two points above are crucial, since this research was completely dependent on information gathered through the interviews.

Another factor that could complicate my relation and trust building process, was the fact of me being a stranger, a foreigner. There might be several cultural factors, verbal but just as important non-verbal factors, which can affect the trust-building process between me and my interviewees. Within this setting I was a foreigner in two cultures, the Mexican and the Huichol.

With an awareness of these possible obstacles, have I through conversations with people who has been working close to Huichols for decades received cultural and behavioral advices before I started conducting the interviews. I have also had a couple of helpful (Mexican) translators. Bringmann and Kvale explain in *Interviews* the importance of selecting an interpreter who is familiar with the culture as well as proficient in the language (2015, 169). The interpreters I have worked with did not have much insight of Huichol cultural or communicational discourses. Still, they were Mexican, and the interviewees I worked with were familiar with the urban Mexican culture since they were living within this society. I have throughout the cooperation with interpreters at times also noticed the advantage of having them accompanied me in the interview setting. In especially one interview, having a Mexican interpreter with me, helped me connect with and build a bridge of trust between the interviewee and myself. The interviewee had moved from the Sierra to Puerto Vallarta only nine months before I met her. She was clearly shy and found it difficult to approach me from the beginning. This interview, I think, could not have been carried out without the translator's efforts of trust building by ways of small talk and other gestures. Not only did I not I speak the language, My Nordic appearance with red hair, and foreign cultural behavior and social gestures can also create barriers with the interview subject. 1) The interpreter being a person “closer” to herself. Meaning them both being Mexicans, both of them mastering the same

language. 2) Through her experience or observation of how the interactions between the interpreter and I were conducted on a level of equality. I looked different, but we related to each other on equal terms. This I think in hindsight, helped the interviewee realize I was maybe not so “different” after all. 3) I communicated at times directly to the interviewee in Spanish, with my poor language skills and strong accent. I think that this also helped remove some of her shyness towards me. After speaking to her, despite my difficulties of finding the right words or grammatic formulations, we could at times laugh together of my clumsy efforts, and somehow this “good will” broke a barrier between us.

I decided to only make a few notes while conducting the interviews. This decision was made since I was making audio recordings of all the interviews. I found it important to focus as little as possible on the notes, and rather be as present as possible throughout the interview sessions. I wanted to observe as much as possible all the gestures paired with the words presented. This was a conscious decision made due to the language barrier already working against me. With the audio recordings I could also through the transcribing process maintain full focus on the observations and information being presented. The recordings also gave me the opportunity to go back and listen to and repeat to clarify [if ever needed] with my translator during the analysis process of the material.

2.6 Ethical Challenges

While conducting a research, it is essential to understand the researcher’s ethical responsibility throughout the whole research process. From the stage of planning, collecting data in the field, processing the data and to presenting the findings the researcher has an ethical responsibility in the handling and interpretation of the data.

Fredrick Bird and Laurie Lamoureux Scholes explain in “Research Ethics”:

As researchers, then we gather, analyze, organize, interpret, translate, re-present and communicate information about religions. In the process we inevitable involve ourselves in several overlapping conversations. [...] These conversations require our ongoing attention to ensure ethical integrity in both our treatment of those we study and, in our efforts to produce and disseminate knowledge about their religious life (2011, 81).

Throughout all the processes of working with my thesis, have I tried to keep the words above as a reminder. I hold a high respect to both, the academics and the field. The same goes for

the people I have studied. I feel humbled by the high level of competence among the scholars, and I have attempted to write this thesis with them all as my role models.

Throughout the research process situations and ethical questions would occur. I experienced especially throughout the interview sessions situations which would need my best judgement on the “spot”, and I also felt a great responsibility as my fieldwork not only included my informants and I, but also translators.

Due to economical limitations did it become clear to me that I would not be able to hire a professional translator. I chose instead to ask two of my Mexican friends to help me translate the interviews. I knew they also spoke English on a daily base through their occupations. Before entering the field, we conversed about the function of a translator. The translator being the media between the interviewer and the interviewee, without taking over the “role” of neither the interviewer or the interviewee (Brinkmann and Kvale. 2015, 169). I think that the interview settings functioned well. I could notice that within the first interviews there could be some instants with comments from both the interpreters of the character “wow, this is interesting”, or “this is important”. On these occasions we had a sort of “debrief” afterwards, as well as I evaluated whether those interactions could be taken into account or not afterwards, while analyzing the data.

If I had similar information or findings through other informants, would I instead or as well use the other informant’s information. In other cases, would I make a conscious choice, based on an evaluation on whether the comment affected the follow up information in accordance what I was looking for in the process.

I chose to handle it this way based on Harveys words: “In conducting fieldwork, one must keep in mind that the researcher’s presence will always affect what people do, even just as an observer at the margins (2011, 227). Throughout the transcribing process could I come across sections which could be understood as leading questions from my side as well (especially in the first interviews). I chose to follow the same procedure of evaluating whether I could include the information or not in those cases as well.

3 Theoretical Frameworks

3.1 Conceptual Understanding

An academic insistence of the term Religion.

As the aim throughout this research is an in-depth understanding of religious identity and practice among Huichols living far away from their traditional communities, the terms religion, religiosity, and religious practice will appear numerous of times, both through previous literature and processing material from this fieldwork. Yet, already throughout the interview sessions in the fieldwork I realized that as I formulated questions which included these terms. Nonetheless, all the interviewees responded with a different type of vocabulary. They were consistently using the words culture or tradition. Only with themes regarding Christian and Catholic subjects, the word religion was used by the participants. Taken this into a reflexive awareness it is important to keep in mind the researchers' own cultural and scholarly background while processing the material. Christine E. Gudorf describes it well in *Comparative Religious Ethics, Everyday Decisions for our Everyday Lives*:

Perhaps the most basic problem is that we inevitably approach another religious culture limited by our own culture and experience. [...] All the concept that we know are limited by our language; just as there are some sounds that are peculiar to some languages and not to others, there are also many concepts that are specific to some religious cultures and not found in any form in others (2013, 1).

In *Freedom of Religion & the Secular State*, Russel Blackford also addresses how problematic the term religion can be. Blackford presents Frieder Otto Wolf's perception of religion as a concept deeply tainted by Euro-centrism derived from a Christian tradition (2012, 5). They also pointed out:

There are no specific concepts of religion in hunter-gather societies, since their various spirits and gods are seamlessly continuous with the observed phenomena of nature. Such societies' "religious" beliefs and rituals are tightly interwoven into everyday thought and action and are not clearly distinguished from a non-religious sphere of activity (Ibid).

The critique pointed out above fits very well to the "Huichol issue" in this thesis as all the participants consequently do not identify their way of life as religion. Still, they all seemed well familiar with the concept of religion, possible through their surroundings and personal experiences.

It is important in for example a fieldwork setting, to keep awareness of the responsibility of representing the subjects of a study in accordance their cultural and contextual background, and not your own. Yet, in the process of producing academic material one also need to adapt the information from the field into an academic presentation. Hence the terminology [of religion] must be clarified in such a way that it fulfills the obligations of representing the field of study, the interview objects, and at the same time it needs to fulfill academic language and formalities (Woodhead 2011, 122).

As mentioned above, religion as a term must be understood within its complexity. Bielo's presentation of no less than nine different definitions of religion in *Anthropology of Religion, the Basics*, illustrates well the broad and diverse specter of definitions based on different perspectives and priorities within studies of religion (2015, 12f). Thus, religion must be understood as a non-static terminology.

In this case I find it appropriate to include Morton Klass' definition of religion:

Religion in a given society will be that instituted process of interaction among the members of that society – and between them and the universe at large as they conceive it to be constituted – which provides them with meaning, coherence, direction, unity easement, and whatever degree of control over events they perceive as possible (Ibid, 11).

This definition does not mention neither belief nor specify what the universe at large includes. This results in a broad definition which focuses on a social aspect, and processes. One can quite easy see this definition in light of Huichol culture and traditional practices. The definition focus lies on establishment of an order, social and universal, which is also central within Huichol way of life.

This definition has also taken into consideration a delimitation of society. This can also be fruitful in the search for insights on Huichol identity, expressions of cultural traditions (some also Christian), as they navigate in at least two different societies.

The explanation found in the work of Jeanette Rondíguez and Ted Fortier of the social effects of religion also fits well between Klass's definition and Huichol communal religious practices:

Religion heightens our communal experience of life. It brings us together in a community that reinforces the events in our life. Religious experience interprets the way a community defines the world, and it does so in such a way that establishes its primary values, affects, behaviors, and choices. The reproduction of cultural survival

is, then, both a biological and an ideological construction (Roríguez and Fortier 2007, 3f).

Identity

One can on a basic level say that identity is created by certain qualities, actions, expressions and/or other features, which differentiate one from others. It is in the way a person presents oneself. Furseth and Repstad defines identity as:

Identitet er ikke noe som er gitt, men den tilegnes gjennom forhandlet og refleksiv bruk av de ressursene som hvert liv tilbyr. Identiteten er skapt og valgt av individet [...] individets forsøk på å lage seg til det en ønsker å være (2016, 85f).

Furseth and Repstad address here the personal impetus for creating as well as expressing one's identity. Taken in consideration a human as a social individual, it also becomes necessary to look at how one is being recognized by others as well (Chrussochoou. 2004, xxviii). Biglow addresses this in his dissertation "Ethno-Nationalist Politics and Cultural Preservation: Education and Bordered Identities Among the Wixaritari (Huichol) of Tateikita, Jalisco, Mexico", as he explains how the primary importance in determining Huichol membership, lay firstly in the relations to the lands, and secondly in language and participation in ceremonies: "One can be urban and still Huichol, but one must retain familial ties to the ancestral homeland in the Sierra. Once that pattern is broken, urban Huichol would no longer be considered to be Huichol by some rural members, regardless if they still spoke the language (2001, 54)."

Based on the points above, it also becomes necessary to differentiate the identity aspect between personal and social identity. Both equally important. It might also be constructive to keep Oddbjørn Leirvik's warning against pre-suppositions about 'religion' being the most defining factor in a person's individual or collective identity or identities (Leirvik 2014, 83). This is especially important when studying the migrated Huichols.

They represent a group, which are recognized and accepted in a certain way, as members of indigenous group. It is important to take into consideration what happens when some of the identity markers have changed after emigrating out of the Sierras. It is also relevant to study how they navigate or negotiate identity within or between the two contrasting societies the life in the Sierra and Puerto Vallarta/Sayulita represents. Thus, one need to examine possibilities of differentiating between Huichol religious belonging, practice, and identity. Huichols

presenting themselves as Catholics as well may have yet one more agent to relate to according to how they are recognized or accepted by the Catholic Church.

3.2 Choice of Theoretical framework

When preparing for the research it was hard to decide which theoretical framework to apply. During the preparations to the fieldwork it was important to gather as much background information about the Huichols as possible. Throughout this process history was considered as a possible perspective. History would allow explanations of historical events, changes, and social developments. Yet, as I gained a better historical overview, it led me to deemphasize History best suited perspective. By choosing history there is a chance of “getting lost” in overwhelming amounts of information. With history I would also risk leaving out or losing important finesse of explanations and patterns leading to the core of the questions this thesis is based on.

While conducting research in Mexico, it was also natural to consider postcolonial theory as adequate theory. Postcolonial theory focuses on the human consequences of control and exploitation of colonized people and their land. This framework would also cover important historical aspects. Postcolonial theory also offers a good tool of explaining the push/pull reactions generated by oppressions or marginalization. Still, through postcolonial theory it can be hard to really highlight the essential roles of culture, tradition, and religious beliefs, and not only as a postcolonial reaction.

I landed at the end on three theoretical frameworks that offer a good perspective and focus in examining Huichol Identity, reality, and way of life: Religious syncretism, Cultural memory, and Migration. These theories together will take into account necessary historical contexts at the same time as they include core elements, experiences (personal and collective, first hand, and inherited), as well as physical/geographical changes related to lived realities and identities of Huichols now living in Puerto Vallarta and Sayulita.

3.3 Religious Syncretism

Syncretism is commonly understood as a fusion of diverse religious beliefs, practices, and traditions. Hugo G Nutini explains in “Syncretism and Acculturation: The Historical Development of the Cult of the Patron Saint in Tlaxcala, Mexico”, that religious syncretism can be understood according primarily two distinct meanings:

First as the fusion of religious as well as non-religious traits, complexes of traits or institutions of two cultural traditions in face to face interaction. [...] Second meaning of syncretism is concerned with the amalgamation and reinterpretation of religious elements only and does not necessarily involve the diverse confrontation of the entire institutional arrangement of the interacting cultural traditions (1976, 304f).

Through the first meaning above, and the one Nutini found most relevant within his research in Tlaxcala, syncretism is understood as a special kind of acculturation, where certain elements from two different cultural or religious backgrounds have a relatively high degree of similarities in structure, function, and form (Ibid).

As it relates to the case of the Huichols, both as history related to the communities in the Sierras as well as the individuals now living in diaspora, I find the second meaning presented by Nutini most relevant. Yet, one cannot totally exclude the first perspective in relation to the Huichols either.

In “Pluralism with Syncretism: A Perspective from Latin American Religious Diversity”, Marciano Adilio Spica points out how religious syncretism can be perceived negatively, with the understanding of wrong ways of practicing religiosities and hence a need for religious practices to reject such syncretism in order to prevail a more purist religiosity and religious identity (2018, 237). Still he defends the position that religious syncretism is not necessarily an evil, but rather a natural process of adaption:

Syncretism cannot then be seen as a theological, academic activity, imposed on other belief systems, but as a natural process for the religious believer’s way of thinking. It is not an artificial product imposed by a philosophy or theology external to the way of living and thinking of the religious believer, but proper to the possibilities of believers’ beliefs and practices (Ibid, 236).

Based on Spica’s explanation above it becomes important to differentiate the Catholic work and attempt of converting the Huichols from the Huichols reception and processing of the Catholic teachings.

The Franciscans had a central role in the Christianizing of Mexico (and of Latin America). They set out on their missions of evangelizing the natives in Mexico based on a belief of playing a decisive role of contributing to the millennial Christian paradise on earth. They were convinced that the natives were prepared to live as Christians and only needed introduction or indoctrination in the passion of Christ. Hence, they attempted to eradicate native religion without eliminating native culture (Curio-Nagy 2010, 143f.).

Franciscans focused on learning the native language but also the importance of understanding or gaining knowledge about the indigenous religious system, rituals, and ceremonial life. Based on this information, Franciscan Friars could engage in systematic effort of conversion, acculturation and indoctrinate the indigenous people from the New World into Catholic pious Catholic believers (Nutini 1976, 301f.).

Nutini explains the Friars' success in conversion of the indigenous Tlaxcala people through a syncretic process following three developmental stages:

- 1) Introduction of similarities between Catholic and native religion and practices, as well as introducing the indigenous people to central Catholic figures which could be recognized through their own mythological background.

A good illustration of this is the story of the appearance the Virgin Mary (Virgin of Ocotlán) to Juan Diego, a converted Christian native from Tlaxcala in May 1541. Virgin of Ocotlán has been said to appear to Juan Diego with the request of building a sanctuary in the ruins of an old temple nearby.

The figure of the Virgin can be identified with the Tlaxcala goddess, *Xochiquetzalli*. The Virgin was even dressed in the same type of clothes and colors as the indigenous goddess. The location the Virgin of Ocotlán requested a sanctuary built on, was also the ruins from Xochiquetzalli's old temple. In this way the Catholic Virgin could be recognized as the indigenous goddess, and hence easier for the natives to accept and relate to (1976, 309-313).

The story of Lady of Ocotlán resembles very closely to the story of Lady of Guadalupe's appearance to a native man that was also called Juan Diego, only ten years earlier in Tepeyac, close to Mexico City. This event was said to lead to a massive conversion of indigenous groups in Mexico. Lady of Guadalupe holds a most central position in Mexican Catholicism also today.

2) Nutini explains the second part of the syncretic process starting when the indigenous pre-Hispanic knowledge and practices beginning to fade, due to the friars actively stamping out rituals and beliefs not fitting with the Catholic doctrines (Ibid, 313).

The Spanish conquest in the areas around Huichol territory is known to have been extremely brutal on the natives, led to that those refugees managing to flee from Spanish domination, would escape into the Huichol homelands (Franz 1996, 64-66; Fikes, Weigand and Weigand 2004, xviii).

Through the refugees coming to the mountains, the Huichols knowledge about the Spanish brutality must have affected their trust or willingness of submission to Spanish or Christian dominion, On the other hand, there were also several alliances among indigenous groups including Huichols, against the Spaniards which led to violent attacks on Spanish ranchos and mining settlements (Franz 1996, 68).

Due to times of violent conflicts, Franciscans and other agents from the Catholic Church had to withdraw from these areas at times. This led to lack of continuation and religious foothold in the Huichol homelands.

3) The last stage of a syncretic process starts when the pre-Hispanic religious order is totally forgotten or no longer forming a part of the mainstream of the religious system, and the new (here Catholic) is successfully internalized (Ibid 314f.).

Following Nutini's syncretic development stages taken into Huichol historical context of contact with Catholic conversion attempts in the Sierras, one can find a possible explanation on how Huichols have maintained their pre-Colonial religious beliefs and practices unlike most other indigenous groups in Mexico.

Fikes, Weigand and Weigand explains that even though almost all Huichols already by 1650 had been brought under colonial control, and by 1750 Huichols had assimilated to both Spanish political and religious systems of *gobernancias* and *Mayordomos*, the Franciscans were unable to implement the policy of relocating indigenous people into colonial settlements. This policy had proven to be effective in the evangelizing of natives elsewhere (2004, xvi, xxii).

According to Fikes, Weigand and Weigand the difficulties the Franciscans experienced in converting the Huichols into Catholicism was due to the difficulties the Franciscans had of removing Huichols from their ranchos that was spread in the rugged mountain terrains.

Therefore, they were not able to centralize them in compact towns where priests could have kept them under continual scrutiny (Ibid).

Allen R. Franz (1996) also highlights the challenges that occurred throughout the Christianization attempts of the Huichols. He divides Huichol ethnohistory into five periods Spanish Aggression 1530-1620, Recession and Withdrawal 1620-1700, Spanish Domination 1700-1810, Mestizo Aggression 1810-1930, and the modern period from 1930 to the present.

Without going into the details of each period, one can find a general pattern throughout this historical timeline. As the Spaniards discovered silver in the areas of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosi, it brought a rush of settlers to the area and gave a renewed impetus to exploration.

To illustrate the impact of Spanish activity in the areas around Huichol territories Fikes, Weigand and Weigand explain how:

By 1546 when the La Bufa silver mine opened in Zacatecas, the amount of silver and gold circulating in Europe had increased by about 300 percent from what had been when Americas were “discovered”. By 1600, the supply had increased another 500 percent as mines all over Mexico began yielding silver (2004, xvii).

Still, this did not directly affect the Huichols living spread through the rugged Sierra Madre mountains. Yet they became by some degrees affected by Spanish contact and control. Hence the introduction of the *gobernancias* serves as an example.

In “An Empire Beyond Compare”, Mark Burkholder points out the decrease of native population due to the Spanish conquest:

From a pre Conquest total of 10-12 million (one estimate exceeds 25 million), the native population numbered only about 750,000 by the early 1620s, Epidemic diseases, exacerbated by the Spaniards’ abusive treatment and excessive labor demands, primarily determined the chronology of population decline (2010, 122).

Along with the development of the Spanish silver mining regions, natives were not only stripped of their lands, but were also forced into labor in the rapidly expanding mines. Parallel to the growth of the mines, the need grew for guarding the convoys carrying silver from Indian raiders throughout Mexico. The new jurisdiction headquartered at Colotlan in 1591 was founded in order to administer activities necessary to pacify and colonize Tepecanos, Huichols, and Coras (Fikes, Weigand and Weigand. 2004, xvif.). Since the Huichol

homelands were not directly affected (at least not to a large extent), it first of all became a region of refuge from violence and oppression (Ibid, xviii).

Going back to Nutini's syncretic process following three developmental stages, one can see that the difference between the successful conversion of Tlaxcala and the Huichols, is that the Franciscans only managed to implement (partial) the first stage of this syncretic process. They managed to introduce similarities between Catholic and native practices, as well as introducing central Catholic figures, such as for example some of the Saints, Lady of Guadalupe, and Christ, which could be "linked" to Huichols own mythological background. Still, and evidential, the Franciscans did not "stick around" long enough to where the second part of the syncretic process could take place. Instead the Huichols were left "alone" with the Christian elements introduced, which became reinterpreted and assimilated into Huichol knowledge and practices. Like Masaya Yasumoto pointed out:

Whatever the efforts of the Franciscans, the gods of the traditional religion have maintained themselves in full strength. For the most part they are the deified natural phenomena, such as fire, sun, earth, the food plants, game animals – especially deer – and rain, as well as deified ancestors in the broad sense (1996, 237).

The affirmation that these traditional gods have maintained themselves "in full strength", is however, problematic given the syncretic process pointed to by Nutini. That Catholic elements have been incorporated into the religious practices of the Huichol communities may be said to limit the "full strength" of these non-Christian deities.

The general understanding of Huichols having maintained a pre-Christian religion without significant syncretism in previous literature, can be explained only if syncretism is perceived from a Eurocentric perspective. If one look at the effects of syncretism in Mexico, Huichols stands out as a contrast to what happened to the other indigenous groups. The difference is that the syncretic process of the Huichols, did not end in favor of the Catholic Church.

While syncretism among most indigenous groups seemed to develop in favor of the Catholic Church, with the Huichols the opposite happened. Due to the Spanish and Catholic inability to implement a stable power base and religious regime in Huichol regions, they missed the opportunity to complete all three of the developmental stages of syncretism.

They managed to convince the Huichols about similarities between Catholic and their aboriginal religion and practices. In this process, they introduced central Catholic figures, but

in their shortcoming of keeping the dominance in the region, they missed on the opportunity to move on and follow through the process of eliminating the pre-Hispanic traditions in order to make the Huichols forget about their aboriginal ways. On the contrary, when the Franciscans left, Huichols were left alone not only with their own traditions intact, but also with the new social systems and religious elements. This led to keeping the elements from the Catholicism which they had “connected with” and adapted into their own world view and way of veneration.

At the same time with the experience of the Spanish and Catholic brutality in memory, the resistance on new attempts of conversions would stand even stronger. An example of this is presented by Fikes, Weigand and Weigand when they write about Friar Buenaventura’s frustration:

He was horrified witnessing how Huichols in San Andrés not only worshipping idols and invoking the Christ and Catholic Saints to bless their cattle. He also pointed out: “They could not make the sign of the cross, never confessed their sins, and did not know how to recite prayers (Fikes, Weigand and Weigand 2004, xxi).

3.4 Cultural Memory

As all the Huichols participating in this research consequently used the terms culture and tradition instead of religion, and due to the usage of cultural memory within this thesis is it necessary to first introduce a brief clarification of the term culture. This thesis will lean on Rondíguez and Fortier’s explanation of culture as: “A social construct that is usually understood in and through the contents of its traditions- its feelings, modes of action, forms of language, aspirations, interpersonal relations, images, ideas, and ideals” (2007, 8).

Cultural memory is like historical memory rooted in actual events. Still, and as Aleida Assmann explains: “Memory is something that is constantly transformed and overwritten: a memory is a memory of a memory (2015, 41). Cultural memory is active in the sense that it interacts with everyday life of individuals, groups, and communities. This will further on create both a collective identity and a sense of belonging (Apaydin 2015, 14). Apaydin underlines that cultural memory must be understood different from individual memory. Cultural memory creates and connect a collective identity to the past. A persons’ sense of belonging to a historical/mythical past, connected to its roots will affect present social communities. It will also affect perspective and navigations towards and into the future (Ibid, 15). In this process tradition stands central.

Rodríguez and Fortier present in *Cultural Memory* how tradition transmits cultural memory:

TABLE 1.1 Tradition: A what and how of transmitting cultural memory

TRADITIO	TRADITIUM
Process (Participle = Remembering)	Content (Noun : Remembrance)

WHO REMEMBERS?	HOW IS IT REMEMBERED	WHAT DOES IT EVOKE?
- A people	- in memory	- feelings, biases
- A society	- in celebration	- modes of action
- A culture	- orally	- forms of language
-	- in writings	- aspirations
-		- interpersonal relations
		- Images, ideas, ideals

(Rodríguez and Fortier 2007, 10).

Rodríguez and Fortier includes two distinct characteristics to cultural memory, “(1) the survival of a historical, politically, and socially marginalized group of people, and (2) the role of spirituality as a form of resistance” (Ibid, 1).

As Assmann introduces emotions as an element to the concept of cultural memory: resonance and impact⁵. Resonance evoke, stimulate, and strengthen images, memories, emotions, and meanings. Impact on the other hand describes a trauma which leads to disturbance, distortion or blocking of cultural memory (2015, 44f.).

The Huichols that informed this research expressed the importance of nurturing a close relation to their indigenous communities back in their homelands, the Sierras. Their prevailed relations and veneration to their ancestors are based on a long tradition of ceremonial activities based on stories and mythology inherited from generation to generation. Yasumoto explain the survival of Huichol culture due to the *mara'akáme* (shaman singer) holding the

⁵ Resonate from Latin *resonantia*, meaning echo. Or from *resonare*, to resound.
Impact understood as forceful and extremely dangerous collision (Assmann 2015, 44f.).

repository function of preserving the histories of the ancestors, sacred chants, and the accumulated knowledge that has been handed on from generation to generation (1996, 238).

Still, the fact of them living in Puerto Vallarta or Sayulita today can be understood in light of Assmanns' description of impacts, historical as well as present. Impacts in this case represented through colonization, marginalization, and loosing Huichol territory to (national and international) mining industries, Mestizo farmlands as examples⁶.

3.5 Migration

All the participants of this research have emigrated from their communities due to economical causes and/or hopes for increased opportunities of life and education. One moved as a child, one as young teenager and the rest in young adulthood. In *The Age of Migration*, Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Mark Miller explain how migration as a process affects all dimension of social existence and hence develops its own complex internal dynamics, makes me wonder how migration have affected the participants of this thesis in practicality, in terms of identity and religious beliefs and performances.

The study of cause and effects of the interviewees' emigration to Puerto Vallarta and Sayulita, will in this thesis be done in light of a historical-structural approach, presented in *The Age of Migration*.

A historical-structural understanding of migration presupposes that the migrant not having a free choice since they are fundamentally limited by structural forces (Castles, De Hass and Miller 2014, 32). It is a well-known fact that Huichols living in the Sierras experience great challenges of survival. The contemporary reality of loss of lands makes it hard to impossible for Huichols to maintain livelihood based on traditional agricultural traditions. This has resulted in emerged economical needs in order to buy food and other supplements in the Sierras. Thus, migration has become a pressing reality. This momentum echoes the historical-structuralist interpretation of "migration as one of many manifestations capitalist penetration and the unequal terms of trade between developed and underdeveloped countries" (Castles, De Hass and Miller 2014, 31).

⁶ Mestizo, a person of combined Indigenous and European extraction. The originally used as an ethnic/racial category during Spanish Empire for mixed -race casts.

Individuals do not have a free choice because they are fundamentally constrained by structural forces. Within this perspective, people are forced to move because traditional economic structures have been undermined as a result of their incorporation into the global political – economic system and concomitant processes such as mechanization of agriculture, concentration of landownership, increasing indebtedness and dispossession of smallholder peasants. Through these processes, rural populations become increasingly deprived of their livelihoods, and these uprooted populations become part of the urban proletariat to the benefit of employers in urban areas and wealthy countries that rely on their cheap labor (Castles, De Hass and Miller 2014, 32).

In this case the marginalization of Huichols can be seen as a result of capital relations between Mexico as a developing country and other international companies, such as the Canadian silver mining company, Silver Majestic developing in the Wirikuta dessert (Shaefer 2015, 279).

Huichol migration situation also needs to be understood as a domestic problem in Mexico. Huichols as a marginalized people in need of funds are exploited by fellow Mexican citizens that take advantage of them as cheap labor.

One also need to take into consideration Shaefer's information on more recent attempts from both the Catholic Church and the Mexican government on integrating Huichols into Mexican mainstream way of life:

In the 1950s the Catholic Church again began to make inroads to Huichol communities, constructing airstrips and several missions nearby. Even greater changes occurred in the 1960s when, under the President Luis Echeverria, the National Indian Institute (INI, founded 1949) sponsored a national development program known as plan HUICOT (for Huichol-Cora-Tepahuan). This government agency developed projects designed to integrate Huichol into the mainstream Mexican national culture. Airstrips and roads were built linking the isolated communities to the outside world. Agricultural projects were begun that introduced tractors, fertilizers, and different strains of crops (1993, 125).

All the participants in this research, which grew up in the Huichol communities, explain that they have attended Mexican governmental schools in the mountains. Two of the participants also explained that their decision to move out of the sierras was partly motivated by the possibility of gaining access to more school and higher education than what is offered in the mountains, which only includes *primaria* and *secundaria*, which equals primary school and junior high school.

4 From the Sierras to Urban life

4.1 A Brief Introduction of the Interviewees

Juliana, 29 years old at the time of the interviews 23.05.2019 and 30.05.2019. She is married to Iginio and lives downtown of Puerto Vallarta. Juliana moved to Puerto Vallarta only nine months before we first met. She was born and lived until recently in a small Huichol village in ‘the Sierras’. She has no family in Puerto Vallarta except from her husband, Iginio. She has no children.

Juliana’s educational background is five years of *primaria*, and she is now working with making and selling Huichol arts and crafts. She is beading, weaving and embroider traditional Huichol art to sell at a market where Huichol art is sold and their Gallery of Huichol arts in Puerto Vallarta.

The first interview took place in their spot on the Marketplace, and the second session took place in their Huichol Gallery, which I understood was where she mostly worked.

On the second session she seemed more comfortable and we managed to create a better contact and hence an easier flow of communication. During the interviews she explained that she was born and raised Catholic in her community. Her family and neighbors were all Catholics as well.

As we were done with the interview, she was happy for having participated. She said it had made her think more about things (without going more into details), and that she thought that it was good for her.

Iginio, 43 years old when the interviews were conducted at a Marketplace in Puerto Vallarta, where he has his booth with Huichol arts and Crafts, 23.05.2019 and 28.05.2019.

His Huichol name is, Niuweme, which means the one who speaks or the translator. He explained that this name comes from when the Spaniards came to Mexico, and the person who translated between the Spaniards and the natives, was called Niuweme. Iginio finds it important to share his knowledge about Huichol to as many as possible: “I want as many as possible to know about my people. Sometimes, if I feel a good intention or friendliness with people, I will bring them with me to the village”. He is well spoken, and one can easily sense

his engagement. It is obvious that he is familiar with sharing of and explaining to “outsiders” like me.

Iginio was born and raised in in a village near San Andres. He moved out from the Sierras to Puerto Vallarta ten years ago. He explains that he regularly goes back to his village for ceremonies, to attend community meetings, or if ever his community needs it. In average every three months and stay for 10-15 days, depending what is the need of culture or community.

Iginio expressed in the first interview session: “I think I am Catholic. Everything we do in Huichol, is almost the same as in Catholic religion. Huichol and Catholic, almost the same but no. They do things in different ways”.

Iginio has four children, three daughters and one son, which all lives with him in Puerto Vallarta, and his wife Juliana.

Iginio explained that when he moved from the Sierra, it was his own decision, he wanted to learn more. He wanted to study more, and the community he came from did not have *secundaria*, junior high school. He explains that he learned more Spanish after leaving the Sierras. He expressed that even if he was so happy coming to Puerto Vallarta then, now he wants more to be in the community.

Lupillo, 29 years old when the interviews were conducted in his booth filled with Huichol artifacts, at one of the market places 02.02.2020 and 10.03.2020.

One of Lupillos Wixarika names are Werikatemai, which means young eagle. Lupillo explains that Huichols are given four names when they are children. It is parents and grandparents who give the names to the child. He is born and raised in a village near San Andres. He moved out from the community about ten years ago to live in Puerto Vallarta. He is living outside the center of town together with his wife and their three children. He also has a sister and a brother living in Puerto Vallarta. The rest of the family are still in the mountains.

His educational background is *preparatoria*, high school. His occupation is Huichol art, making and selling in one of Puerto Vallarta’s Marketplaces. He is one of two interviewees that were interviewed in English and without translator.

Lupillo does not define himself as either Catholic or Christian. He explained, “We are practicing our *naturaleza*”, the sun and the peyote. That is our religion. Different from everything, we have different religions around us in words. But it is something different”. He has some relatives and friends that are both Huichol and Catholic as well as both Huichol and Jehovah’s Witness. But for him it is important to keep the way of life of the Huichols separate and “pure”. He acknowledges that it can appear to be many similarities between Catholicism and the Huichol culture. Still, he insists on there being important differences between the two ways.

Julia, her name in Wixarika is Kliwinia -meaning blossom. She is 26 years old at the time of the interviews 26.02.2020 and 11.03.2020.

Julia is also from a village near San Andres, and her educational background is primaria. She is living in Sayulita together with her husband, Jose, and their five-year-old son. She and her husband make a living of making and selling Huichol *artesanias* at the street market in Sayulita. She is also the sister of Iginio, which is presented above. This information came to my knowledge during the first interview session with Julia and Jose.

When Julia was six years old, she would travel seasonal out of the community in the sierra together with her parents, as they were working seasonal “outside”. When she was fifteen, she moved to Sayulita to live with her sister. The reason why she moved to Sayulita was to work.

Jose is 25 years old at the time of the interviews, which were conducted with him and Julia together. His educational background is *secundaria*. Next to working at the market selling arts and crafts with his wife, he also works in the “high season”, tourist season (November- April) as a surf instructor at the local beach, about two minutes walking distance from their market stand.

Jose moved out from the Sierra together with his family when he was one year old.

Both Julia and Jose consider themselves as Catholic. This they explained, was a decision they made together, and unrelated to family or friends.

Cilau

I met Cilau at a gallery near Puerto Vallarta. The gallery mostly contains yarn paintings made by himself and his family but there are also some yarn and beaded art made by other Huichol artists living in the Sierras.

Cilau who is 32 years old at the time of the interview, 14.03.2020. He has a mixed national background. His father is Huichol, and his mother an anthropologist from USA. He grew up in a small village in Nayarit, but at the age of fourteen he moved to California and completed high school there. This gave him the advantage of learning English fluently.

After high school Cilau moved back to Mexico. To the question about how he experienced growing up with a Huichol father and a mother from USA, he replied that he had a turbulent time as a teenager. He explained that not everyone in the mountains would accept him as a complete Huichol, due to his mixed background. The ones close to his family did accept, but some of the other members in the community did not. As mentioned above, his teens were turbulent. He was “acting out” and rebelling as he struggled finding his place and path. “Finding back to the Huichol life and art, was what saved me”, he replied.

Through all of Cilau’s life, his mother has been devoted to the work of supporting Huichols and prevailing Huichol culture. Because of this, Cilau mostly grew up with his father, his father’s wife, and his younger siblings from his father’s second marriage.

In many ways I grew up without my mother. I used to hold some resentment towards her for it when I was younger, but now when I see and understand what she has accomplished, I am very proud of her! Did you know that she was just nominated for very prestigious prizes for her work on prevailing Huichol culture and way of life?” I am very proud of her devotion and how much she has managed to support the Huichol people.

Cilau is confident when talking to people about Huichol way of life and reality. On his business card he is titled Master Wixarika Artist /Warrior. He explained during the interview that his struggle is the fight for Huichol cultural survival. He has travelled extensively and brought Huichol art to USA, Canada, Europe, and Asia. On several occasions he has presented the artwork and taught about the Huichol people and culture.

Cilau is Huichol. He explained that he does not think Huichols traditionally are either Catholic or Christian. He finds no mixture or syncretism between Huichol and Christianity. On the other hand he thinks that using Christian names or terminologies on certain things

might be a way of adapting names in a way to make “others”, the “outsiders” understand the connection and meaning certain ancestors have to Huichol. If there exist any mixes between Huichol and Christianity, he thinks it must be in places like San Andres. He explains that those places have been and are more affected by outside impulses.

4.2 Practical changes of the daily life

All the interviewees described a significant contrast between living in the Sierras and the daily life after moving to Puerto Vallarta or Sayulita. The participants described a freedom in the Sierras, a freedom which was exchanged with work, school, daily duties, and responsibilities after moving out of their communities. Julia expressed: “It is a bit tiresome here because of all the work. Here it is a lot of work all the time, over there it is very calm. In San Andres life is more relaxed. They can work with the agriculture, but here it is busier with other types of work”. Jose agreed and filled in: “We have to work here all day, every day. In the Sierra we have money to maintain there, which we can do because we work here all the time”. Iginio expressed: “My life is in the Sierra, but I am in Puerto Vallarta to make money, so the community can function better”.

The statement of Iginio illustrates well the historical-structural perspective of migration. Due to economic issues he is left with no choice. He must stay in the City in order to fulfill the obligations for survival to not only himself and his family, but also due to a responsibility of providing for the community.

All the interviewees described a significant contrast between living in the Sierras and the daily life after moving to Puerto Vallarta or Sayulita. The participants described a freedom in the Sierras, a freedom which was exchanged with work, school, daily duties, and responsibilities after moving out of their communities. Julia expressed: “It is a bit tiresome here because of all the work. Here it is a lot of work all the time, over there it is very calm. In San Andres life is more relaxed. They can work with the agriculture, but here it is busier with other types of work”. Jose agreed and filled in: “We have to work here all day, every day. In the Sierra we have money to maintain there, which we can do because we work here all the time”. Iginio expressed: “My life is in the Sierra, but I am in Puerto Vallarta to make money, so the community can function better”.

Unlike Iginio, Jose considers his life to be in Sayulita. He explained that this is because he is in Sayulita all the time, and for the last sixteen years he has been very little in the Sierra: “It is in Sayulita we rent a home, our son attend school, and we have our business”. Julia agrees with Jose and points out how their child has more opportunities in Sayulita.

Lupillo would like to live both in Puerto Vallarta and in the Sierra: “I would like to live both, here and there. Because I like it here. It is a beautiful place. A lot of customers here. It is better for my business. In there (the Sierra) it is nice too, but it is hard. You need to make a lot of money to come back there”. “Our culture is very important, but it is very hard to make money there. You need to plant (corn, beans, and squash). If you want something new for your house or anything, you can’t. Only what you need to be in there. It is hard! It is a tough life, in a difficult area”.

Iginio also expressed a contrast between the Sierras and Puerto Vallarta as it relates to food and pollution. “For Huichols, some types of food are meant only for ceremonies and are being prepared in different ways than with the ones in Puerto Vallarta”. Sometimes he gets sick from the food in Puerto Vallarta: “Food prepared in Puerto Vallarta is processed so different with chemicals and oils. The food in the Sierras is so natural and organic. The flavor of the food is so different from the one I get in Puerto Vallarta. The fruits are so different in taste as well, it is so good in the Sierra”. Still, and all together Iginio expresses a content about living in Puerto Vallarta: “I feel so good to be in Puerto Vallarta. This way people can learn about Huichols. I want as many as possible to know about my people, and sometimes if I feel a good intention or friendliness with people, I will bring them with me to the village”

Especially Cilau, Iginio, and Lupillo underlined their wish for more people to learn about Huichols. In knowing more about their people, in understanding Huichol way of life (in the mountains) hopefully more people can understand the importance of preserving the communities in the Sierras. Huichols are still continuously losing territory and sacred land in the Sierra, due to expansions of Mestizo farmlands in their region, constructions of highways and projects of silver mining. In people knowing more about the Huichol people and history, the hope is to create awareness and engagement from the outside to support them in their struggle to ensure their cultural survival.

It became evident throughout all the interviews that the participants felt the necessity to support the communities they had left behind. One cannot escape the thought that some of the

participants are performing a form of “sacrifice” of their communal life in in the mountains, in order to give their community a better chance of survival in its traditional way.

All the participants informed that they are supporting their community with selling artifacts in Sayulita and Puerto Vallarta, made by family and/or community members. They also support their community by bringing gifts as well as economical recourses into the Sierra.

The participants who had children also explained that living in the city provides opportunities for the children’s future. Outside the Sierra, the children have greater chances of completing a higher education, which again improve their futural opportunities. Living in or close to centers also leads to better access to improved medical healthcare. Taken into consideration the high infant- and child mortalities among Huichols in the Sierras, living in a modern society represents a real benefit (Gamlin and Holmes 2018). This means that even though Huichols make some sacrifices by leaving the Sierra, they also experience advantages with such move. Yet, one question arises. How does the migration affect the bonds between the individuals moving out and the indigenous communities left behind?

Biglow’s explains in “Ethno-Nationalist Politics and Cultural Preservation”, that living the “Huichol way” means being in harmony with the surroundings. Several places still do not have electricity and/or running water. On this matter Biglow explains that:

The sun and the seasons therefore determine the length of a productive day” [...] Labor is usually cooperative, there is little room for individualism. To be independent is looked down upon because no one can survive under such harsh living conditions without assistance of family and friends (2001, 111).

Taking Biglo’s information into consideration while analyzing the information from the interviewee’s, two factors stand out. First, the experience of increased workload is a consequence of settling in Puerto Vallarta or Sayulita. As an example, the marketplaces open 11 am and closes 8 pm. Before opening the markets, they set up their marketplace, and display all the art. At the end of the day they necessarily need to pack everything down again. This means that they will need to show up 1-2 hours before opening and stay equally long time at the end of the day, seven days a week. This means that the participants work long days every day of the week. In addition, the ones who have children will also have to follow up the bringing and picking up from school as well as homework etc. On top of this are the duties of keeping up a home, cleaning, laundry, cooking, and such. In comparison to what is presented by Biglow, the days are significantly extended, and leave little to no time for social activities.

Secondly, Biglow explains how Huichols in the community cooperate with all the labor, and hence independence being looked down upon. Through the interviews it became clear that all the participants are handling their work and household loads independently. As Iginio explained, some have family and friends living in Puerto Vallarta, still here everyone has their own work, duties, and responsibilities, and therefore do not meet so often. They are now in reality living on their own. This means that Huichols living in kinship in the Sierra, and Huichols living separate in urban places are in reality living distinct realities of daily lives. The question is how they manage relating to each others differences of living realities. Is it possible for the ones living in the Sierra to understand the different demands that is represented for the ones living in the City?

Despite the hard work mentioned above, the interviewees also expressed a great content of living in Puerto Vallarta and Sayulita. Even though work was the main reason given for moving out of the Sierra, at least two of the participants explained that the wish to learn and study more was also a determining part of their decision making when moving out.

Despite living “isolated” and distant from the community, it seems like all the participants are holding on to mindsets and priorities which maintains their ties to the community.

4.3 Keeping Contact with the Village

As all the participants expressed close connections to their *Comunidades Indígenas*. Most of them, except Juliana and Lupillo explained how they travel back to their representative communities on a regular basis, about every three months with a duration of one-two weeks.

Juliana left the village only nine months before we met for the interviews. Nobody in her community knew that she was planning to leave. She only informed her mother. Juliana did not specify why she chose to leave, only that her mother did not like it. She did not explain why she had not been back to the community or if she was planning to eventually go back to visit etc. Maybe it was due to the short time since she had moved out? Still, during the last interview session she received a phone call from her sister. They spoke in Wixarika and Juliana’s tone changed drastically. She sounded confident and clear, unlike how I experienced her within the interview settings where she had to talk in Spanish with my translator. After ending the conversation on the phone, she confirmed having regular contact with her family and that they were all close.

Lupillo explained that due to responsibilities in Puerto Vallarta, he only travels to the Sierras about once a year. “I have kids and they go to school. They have vacation in July, and sometimes we take them to go. But we also have work here. You either go with your family, or you (pointing to his store). “It is hard”.

Lupillo also told that going to the villages means that you need to bring a lot of gifts for friends and children. Gifts can include clothes, shoes, necessary articles or candy for the kids. Lupillo explained how this can become expensive since many people can be living in the rancheria everyone expects gifts. “They get so happy for the gifts because they need it. Sometimes you see no *huaraches* (leather sandals), or only very bad shoes on the children”.

Iginio, Julia and Jose all told how their trips to the Sierra were connected to appointed ceremonies in their representative communities. The travel time to the Sierra is about a twelve hours’ drive. Even tough highways and roads have been constructed to connect the *comunidades* to the “outside world” the travel is still risky, due to both unsecured roads in the high mountain slopes with sharp turns, and the risk of assaults along the roads by cartels or other criminals. Jose and Julia told that they once had an incident on their way to San Andres. Bandits attacked their car. Jose explained it was a big problem and their son was still traumatized from the incident.

Yet and as already mentioned above, all participants talked very warmly about their communities and with an understanding of still being a responsible member of their community despite the physical (geographical) distance.

If you experience sickness, or life crisis, either you go to the community, or some from the community will come to you from the Sierras. If it is a personal problem you try to fix it yourself, but there is a strong connection with the community, and that is why I go so often back to the Sierra (Iginio).

Jose was only one year old when his parents moved out from the Sierras to work. He explained how it was for his parents to move out from their community: “It was easy for them to leave, because it was understood by the others why they needed to depart. The problem is if you don’t take care of your duties and participations within the community. If you leave and don’t come back”. Julia underlined: “You need to help your community. That is the only thing”.

If Huichols for any reason are hindered from returning to attend their community duties, they can send money to support costs related to ceremonies, maintaining temples and *Cargos*. This

way they still support some of their community's needs. Lupillo explained the same practice of paying for the year of 'failing the fulfilment' of one's community duties due to living remote.

All the interviewees expressed an understanding of living in accordance with the Shamans authorities despite living 'outside':

It depends on the shamans' command. He will tell you where you need to go. If the Shaman tells you that you have to go to the community tomorrow, you have to go! [..] For example If you are sick and the Shaman tell you what to do to get healthy. If you don't and you die, it will go on to your son or daughter. Then, they have to do it for you. The commandment needs to be fulfilled" (Jose).

All the participants expressed a deep respect to the Shamans. For them, the Shamans are in direct contact with the ancestors, and the mediator between the ancestors and the Huichol people. The shaman is the holder of the culture, the one who mediate the Myths and the one who heals. He brings them to Wirikuta and he is the one who leads the ceremonies.

Through the interviews it became clear that despite the physical distances, the belonging and understanding of oneself as a responsible member to one's community were maintained and acted on within a balance of life demands and duties, both in Puerto Vallarta/Sayulita and the Sierra.

It is like everything that is Huichol, is in the Sierra. In order to "do or act" Huichol, you must be in the Sierra. Staying connected with both, the people and the ancestors, located in the Sierra Madre Occidental landscape. All but one of the interviewees grew up in the Sierra, they grew up within the tradition. The children growing up outside are naturally raised under different conditions, and hence lack the same personal experiences of communal life as their parents have had. The time spent in the community is mostly reduced to be during some of the school vacations. It is not unlikely that these factors can affect the ties to the Huichol communities.

4.4 Holding on to Traditions

All the interviewees explained the importance of keeping contact with their community following the need to maintain their cultural connection and traditions. At the beginning of all the interviews I asked them to explain what it meant to them being Huichol, and they replied:

“Huichol is my dialect, my culture, my clothes. My way to think [...] It is my culture and my art. Yes, because the culture is me. Huichol means the culture and the art” (Lupillo 02.02.2020).

“To be Huichol is in how you speak, the way you dress. The ceremonies, and the food. It is very different” (Iginio 26.05.2019).

“Huichol is about the language and our culture” (Juliana. 23.05.2019).

“Being a Huichol, I feel very proud! It is my tradition and my culture, my background” (Julia. 26.02.2020).

“It was hard growing up with a mixed background. It was hard finding my place and path. I was rebellious, but coming back to the Huichol life and art, was what saved me” (Cilau. 14.03.2020).

All the interviewees explained the need of returning to the Sierras in order to maintain not only the culture and their traditions, but also to attend ceremonies at different affiliations in the Sierras. These attendances are just as important to ensure good health and prosperity for themselves, their family and community. To fulfill obligations in accordance their ancestors, authorities, needs, and expectations.

All ceremonies and practices need to be conducted within the homelands of the ancestors.

It has to be there because the sacred places are there. The ceremonies must be done where you are from, where your ancestors are. Every place has a name in Huichol. The meaning in Huichol is, **the house of the mother earth of San Andres. Tateykie is her name. One need to be close to her home to perform the ceremonies. Today many people have family outside the community, some live ten years outside the Sierra, but you will come back. Sometimes it is because something bad is happening, and it makes you go there. You have your roots there, and the roots never ends there (Iginio).**

Huichols are not only responsible for keeping up with the culture and traditions for them self. They also need to ensure their children learning the Huichol culture and way of life. On the question of who taught them the tradition, they all replied that they had learned from their grandparents and parents. All the interviewees seemed committed to including their children to a Huichol way of life. “We are responsible to teach them the religion, traditions and culture” (Jose). Still they expressed a form of worry about their children’s challenges and losses by learning the Huichol culture and traditions while living outside the Sierra.

Lupillo’s wife brought in 2019 their three children to her community near San Sebastian for one year to be a part of and study (experience) the culture. Both Lupillo’s father and mother as well as his wife’s father are Shamans. Still he recognizes the inevitable cultural and traditional loss represented by living outside the Sierra:

For example, I have lived 10 years here and it is hard to sometimes go to my community, like for example every three months for one week. It is hard, and in that I think we forget. Because we live far away, and we don’t practice in the city. You only live normal in the city, you work and only get out in the afternoon. You forget who you really are. [...] And the dialect. You don’t speak Huichol with anybody. When you have children, it gets even harder. You forget almost everything, really.

He continued explaining that he does not think they display the ‘real’ for their children. That he thinks that they did not do enough for the children to learn, not talking enough about the Huichol life. And even if they speak the dialect of Wixarika at home instead of Spanish, it is not enough.

Iginio shared his reflections around the possible loss of culture and traditions as it relates to the children’s upbringing outside the community. His face got serious as he concluded that growing up outside will affect the children a lot:

They like it more here (Puerto Vallarta) because they are born here and spend their time here. This is their home. But they like to go to be with their family in the Sierra. Their roots are there. Still, **I think Huichol life is getting lost when you move outside. For the most, when they move out of the community, you have lost everything. The food, the television, the internet. This worries me.**

In the conversations with Jose and Julia, Jose explained that he does not know so much, since his family moved out when he was only one year old. Jose’s realization fits well with observations made throughout the interview settings, where he repeatedly would confer with Julia before answering several of the questions presented.

As it relates to the aspect of keeping up with the tradition, the challenges of living in diaspora became more evident. It was a little surprising when coming into the theme about the children. Some of the participants would quiet down in a way, and one could get the impression that this was a subject that had not been dwelled much or deeply about. It was like the focus had been on what they, themselves could do “there and then” in relation to the community.

According all the interviewees the tradition was taught to them mainly by their grandparents and parents. As pointed out above, Jose explained his lack of “Huichol knowledge” with not having been so much in the Sierras, and hence lost the opportunity of learning many of the stories, mythology, daily interactions, and doings. This is worrying as it relates to the coming generations of Huichols living outside the Sierra on several levels.

Who will ensure the continuation of passing on the heritage of the tradition to future generations of Huichol children growing up outside the Sierra? All the interviewees confirmed the grandparent’s central role in teaching the new generations about the “Huichol way”. This can in near future become a problem. What will happen when the grandparents of the coming generations themselves grew up outside the Sierra?

Another significant identity marker presented by the interviewees, was the Huichol language. Yet and again, some of the participants, like Iginio and Lupillo expressed a concern about also this being problematic as it regarded the children growing up “outside”. Even though one try keeping a focus on speaking Huichol at home and with the children, Spanish has become the main language to the children. Through both school and other social interactions.

4.5 Ritualistic practices

As all veneration and ritualistic practices are bound to sacred places in the Sierras, no activity of such were to be found in neither Puerto Vallarta nor Sayulita. Iginio explained that the ceremonies must be conducted in the homelands, because that is where the sacred places are.

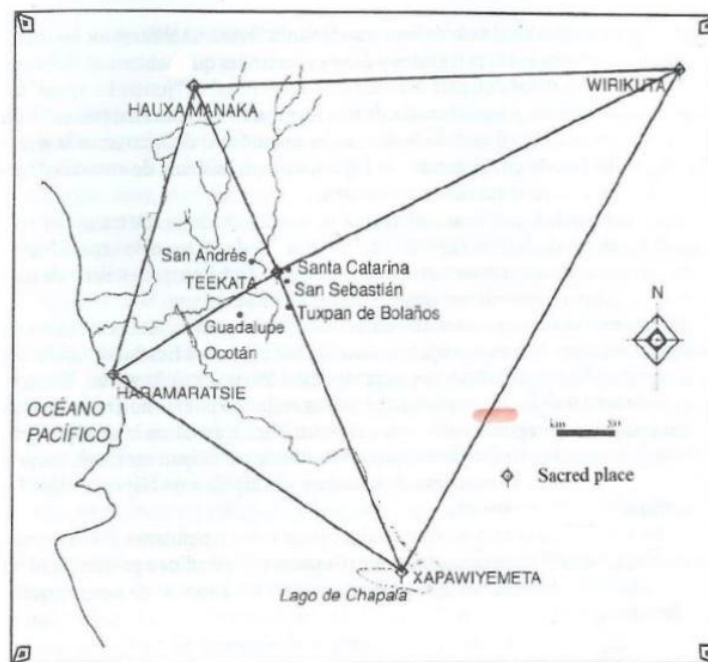


Image II: Sacred Homelands: Eye of God (Neurath. 2003. 41-47).

As mentioned in chapter one, Huichol ceremonial territories which needs to be accessed seasonally, extends an area twenty times larger than their lands with settlements. Iginio explained that the places marked on the map are now registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The four cardinal points on the map were pointed out by the ancestors. Mother Earth gave the people the four elements water, air, earth, and fire through these places. “That is why these places are sacred to Huichols”.

Place and Element:

Tatei Haramara /Haramaratise, Location San Blas – Water

- Huaxa Manaká / Hauxamanaka**, Location Durango – Air
- Xapawiyemeta**, Location Chapala – Tierra /Earth
- Tee’Kata**, Location Santa Catarina (or Living homelands of Wixaritari)
– Sun/Fire (Tawerixte means sun)
- Wirikuta**, Location Real de Catorce – Pilgrimage for Peyote.

Iginio explained how Wirikuta is somehow separated from the other places. Preparations are done within the four other places before traveling to Wirikuta.

Lupillo explained how Huichols conduct different ceremonies, five different ceremonies a year: “Going to several sacred places like Chapala, San Blas and Tee’Kata. In the middle of the cross, we are in the middle. That is why we make the Eye of God. It is protection for the people. The Eye of God is representing the sacred places”.



“*Ojo de Dios*”. Photo: Beate Hovden. Captured in a market, Puerto Vallarta

Ojo de Dios (Eye of God) represents the sacred places of Huichol ceremonial locations. Iginio explained that when a child is born, from five days old until five years old, Huichols will

celebrate with certain ceremonies every birthday. Every year new elements are added on a *Ojo de Dios* until the child reaches the age of five. After five years the *Ojo de Dios* will be completed. Throughout this process the child is introduced to all the ancestors and hence becomes a full member of the community. Before the child turns five, the mother and father will make offerings for the child, after five years of age, the child will participate in the family dances, and he/she can do their own offerings.

Iginio continued explaining about number five being a sacred number. Number five means totality, the four (cardinal) points and the eye of God in the center is number five. Iginio showed a figure of the eye of God. It was made by weaving a design out of yarn in multiple colors upon a wooden cross. He pointed out the center of everything, and how everything exists around this. Water is brought from the four holy points to the center where the ceremony is held for baptism. This happens when a child is five years old. The water from the four points is sacred water.

Julia and Jose also described a Huichol baptism during the first interview:

We have baptism, but it is very different from the Christian one. In the first ceremony the child is brought with a Shaman, once a year for the five first years the Shaman makes a healing process. The ceremonies must be on different places in the Sierra, different places of the mother, the father, and the grandparents. It needs to be in five different places. This way the child is introduced to all the places we are from. This is a presentation of the child to the family and the places the ancestors come from. All families have duties within the divine order and the new generations need to do the same, to follow the tradition. If you don't do it, the ancestors will not know them and if you bring the child without introducing it, it can die. It can get infections, scorpion sting, a snake or something. If the child is introduced, it will not have any problems. Most of the time when children are brought without being introduced, they can die.

Jose and Julia's son is five years old. This far they have had three out of five ceremonies for him. They explained that it is not so easy to organize all the ceremonies living outside the Sierras.

Going back to Biglow's point about the only possibility of being accepted as urban and Huichol by members of in the Huichol *Comunidades*, is if the familial ties to the ancestral homelands are maintained. Bringing that thought into the context of Julia and Jose -their five-year old son, who had only been taken to three of the five annual ceremonies that are necessary in order to introduce the child to his ancestors. Neither Julia nor Jose expressed concern about not having completed all the ceremonies yet, as they explained the

“shortcoming” with the practical difficulties of maintaining the obligations due to them living outside the Sierra.

In the Sierras the infant mortality is extremely high, “up to 50 percent before the advent of modern medicines for epidemic childhood diseases of foreign origin, such as measles, whooping cough, scarlet fever, diphtheria, etc. -a Huichol is considered a complete human being only upon reaching the age of five” (Shaefer and Furst 1996, 8). Maybe, living in the city, with access to modern medical centers and hospitals, eases the parents fear for their children’s lives. The fear of the child dying might not be the same as it would be living in the Sierra. Julia and Jose did not have the impression that they would not complete all the baptismal ceremonies, merely more that they have not been able to complete them according to the traditional timeline, and hence will be conducted within an alternative timeframe, even after the child is five years old.

Shaefer and Furst explains that:

Children are of enormous importance. They are much indulged, they are the center of attention, and all members of the extended family help in their care [...] Sometimes the child is considered to be “everybody’s”, rather than belonging only to his or her biological parents. Grandparents have a special relationship to the offspring to their own children (Ibid).

Clearly the child growing up outside the community will not be raised with the same closeness and tight family bonds, which are created through the daily contact. One can use Jose as an example. He grew up outside the Sierra. His parents would bring him with them when going to the community in order to participate on ceremonies and etc. He seems to have close bonds to his community. Julia expressed that she never had experienced him as very different even though he didn’t grow up in the community. She explained that her family knew his family well since they participated in the community ceremonies etc. In that way she explained, they are much the same. She thinks that it would be bigger differences if he would have come from another temple district.

Returning to the son of Julia and Jose, and based on the points above, one can get an impression that the initial ties to the community don’t seem to be at risk. Still he is not yet taken through all the baptismal ceremonies, hence, his *Ojo de Dios* is not yet complete. He is not fully introduced to the ancestors, what happens then with his membership to the community. As explained before, upon the age of five -the child becomes a full member of

the community. What happens to the ones who did not complete all the ceremonies before turning five?

One of the most central and important features about Huichol culture and tradition is the annual Peyote hunt in the Wirikuta desert. Through the interviews the awe all the participants held towards what this place represented was evident.

Iginio explained that the pilgrimage is organized and conducted within the period of February-March. All in all, it takes about one month to complete this ceremony. This ceremony demands a lot of preparations before the pilgrimage. The preparations contain duties such as making different types of offering gifts and harvesting corn. Within this pilgrimage and on the way to Wirikuta many sacred places will be visited where offerings are presented to the ancestors. When the pilgrimages come back, in May, a big peyote ceremony is held in the community (Iginio).

Through the interviews, all the participants explained that Wirikuta is one of the four cardinal points they need to visit in order to make offerings. Wirikuta is the most sacred place, since this is where *Maxa Kwaxí*, Great Grandfather Deer tail led the divine ancestors to (Furst 1996, 29). There is no consensus on how many times they have to go the cardinal places, but at least once. Many goes many times. Wirikuta is where they hunt for the *Peyote*, not only for the ceremony in the Wirikuta desert. They also need to collect enough to cover the needs for one year.

Jose, Julia and Lupillo also talked about the pilgrimage to Wirikuta. They informed that the duration of this pilgrimage would take about three to four days all in all. The differences in how long the pilgrimage will take. Can be with Iginio including the necessary preparations conducted in the community before traveling to Wirikuta. He explains that before traveling to Wirikuta one must sow the corn, one must prepare many offering gifts to the ancestors, for all the sacred sites they will visit on their way into the most sacred place in Wirikuta, where they will collect the peyote.

On the question if they had partaken on the pilgrimage to Wirikuta, only half of participants confirmed that they have. Jose has been there once, while both Iginio and Cilau had been there several times.

Lupillo, Julia and Juliana had not been there yet. They all want to go, but especially Lupillo and Julia expressed a kind of fear or worry making them hesitate partaking on the pilgrimage. When I asked them what they feared they both answered that they were worried about their reactions on eating the peyote. Lupillo shared:

I have been to San Blas and the other three places too. Only Wirikuta is missing. I think to go there is hard. It depends on your mind sometimes. I am scared to go. It depends on how you feel in your mind and heart. When you go, you have to eat peyote. I have taken small bites before, but in Wirikuta you have an obligation to eat more. Maybe it is no good for me? Sometimes when you are not ready to go 'over there', when you eat peyote you can be *mucho* (very) crazy. If that happens everyone will talk about you.

If you seek to alcohol when you are sad, you are like.. when you are drunk. The same is with peyote. I need to do it, I want to learn, is it true or not, that when you eat you have different visions? I can go one special day, I need to go for myself, not my mother or anyone else telling me. I have an opportunity to go this year.

Lupillo ended up not going this year either, in fact we had our second interview the day he was supposed to departure for the pilgrimage. He explained: "It is hard and depending on how you feel in your mind, in your heart".

Julia explains that going to Wirikuta, the Shamans will ask you questions before entering the desert, as a form of confession. They need to know your intention. It is a kind of trust and if you don't tell the truth, they will know by your reactions when taking the peyote. If you are dishonest, you will have a bad experience/vision.

Julia also wants to go to Wirikuta one day, but she also has a bit of fear of it: "I am scared of the reaction. I don't know how I will respond -my emotional reaction".

Both, Lupillo and Julia explained that, within that setting there are two obstacles. Before consuming peyote in the Wirikuta desert, all individuals must make a confession to the shaman bringing them. This in order to assure the good intention of the person before they "go in", and also to ensure that they don't consume while "holding on" to anything that can affect the experience negatively.

The participants who had not been to Wirikuta, all expressed the fear of the peyote consumption as the reason for not having gone yet. They did not feel ready yet. They described a two folded fear. First the fear of getting a bad reaction when consuming the peyote. The other, a fear of attracting attention from the others if they got a bad reaction.

None of the participants explained what could cause a bad reaction. If it was caused by doubts within them self, guilts or? But Lupillo hinted about the state of mind and heart affecting the experience. Still with the focus of attracting others' attention and that leading to other Huichol talking about them, leads to the question if this in any way affects Huichols living outside differently than the ones living in the Sierra? Do they fear these reactions happening for not living "the right way" or judged for not doing so? Maybe a fear of resentment from their ancestors, if in any way being displeased with them? No matter the reason, the Peyote reaction is proven to be not only a social issue, but perhaps also illustrating an ambivalent belonging to a deeper religious unity, which they potentially may feel rejected from.

Another and important symbol within the Wixarika orientation is the *Ojo de Dios*. As explained above the eye of God understood as a frame around the Wixarika landscape in all geographical directions, with the Wixarika *Comunidades* protected at the center. Does the Huichols living outside this landscape of *Ojo de Dios* falls outside the frames of protection. Still, Jose and Julia explained, that when having completed the five annual ceremonies in childhood, "the ancestors can protect you, anywhere you are". This represents an understanding of the ancestors' powers exceeding the Wixarika territories in the Sierra.

4.6 Going to Church

During the interviews four of six confirmed being Catholics.

For Julia and Jose, it was a decision they took together. Being Catholics have not caused any problems for them in relation to neither family nor other community members. On the other hand, they told about another close member of Julia's family who became a Jehovah's Witness⁷. They explained that the difference of acceptance was based on them still taking part on Huichol ceremonies as well taking part in the traditions and supporting the community. The relative which had turned to Jehovah's Witness on the other hand, did no longer do that:

As Jehovah's Witness, he can no longer participate in the communities' duties. He negates the duties of the tradition and denying the presentation. For us it is no problem, but in the community, it is a problem. He has not gone to the Sierras the last four years, and we have not seen him in two-three years.

⁷ In 2018, about 1,2 percent of Mexican population had affiliation to Jehovah's Witness.

Julia talked about the acceptance from the family. She thought that it is more acceptable to be Catholic since there is a Church at the center of town where she came from in San Andres. This is a Church, but no masses are held in that Church. There are no priests. None of them knew why there are no priests. They talked a bit in Wixarika and explained that there are no priests because they have Shamans for “that”.

Jose explained there is a Church, but no “Christ”. On the other hand, there are presentation of three gods. Julia and Jose talked a little bit in Wixarika. They found it hard to translate from Wixarika to Spanish. After a little back and forth, they explained that the presentations inside the Church are: “*Tanana*, The Virgin and *Santa Domingo* (Thomas). *Tanana* is the primary one, he is like Christ”. Further explanation revealed that *Tanana* is presented on the crucifix.

Jose and Julia mentioned a celebration in the Church which stand in relation to the Catholic *Semana Santa*⁸. When asked for their insight on this celebration they explained:

It is like with the Catholics. Five weeks we do not eat breakfast, and the final week we do the same. Yes, we do the same. There is no Shaman and no priest. There are members of the community which is responsible for the Saints, and they arrange everything in *Semana Santa*. We do not participate in that ceremony, we only look.

Lupillo also explained about *Semana Santa*:

It is almost catholic, because “he” died for us. It is the same. Because in the Catholic way, Jesus Christ died for our, yeah it is the same.

We also do like the Jewish, on Friday we can’t do anything, only stay home. In the special Friday in April, in the *Semana Santa* week. We have like fifty *judeo* (Jews). They are walking around and watching over the whole community. They are all dressed black, also painted all black. If you are for example listen to music those days, they will come and take your music (making a gesture like someone plug the cord from the wall).

The reason why you can’t do anything, is because it is a special day. The day our principle God died. Therefore, everybody must show respect and do nothing. It is a myth. If you do anything that day, you can have an accident.

⁸ *Semana Santa* – Spanish celebration for Holy Week leading up to Easter. Dates back to the 16th century when the Catholic Church decided to present the story of the Passion of Christ in a way that the layperson could understand.

Easter in Mexico is a two-week holiday consisting of *Semana Santa* (The Holi Week, beginning on Palm Sunday and ending Easter Sunday) and *Pasqua* (Starting with Easter Sunday and ending the following Saturday). *Semana Santa* is undoubtedly the most important holiday in Mexican culture.

On the question about them going to Church in Sayulita, Jose talked a bit with Julia first. It seemed like he wanted to say that they are going to Church, but she corrected him. He replied, “We don’t go so much”, while he smiled, and Julia laughed at his attempt of exaggeration.

“We go when it is the petronella, Lady Guadalupe days. And sometimes to mass when it is not ceremony season. We go just to return to good health. The priest is not important to us. The importance for us is the saints which is represented in the church.

The interviews revealed a connection between the Catholic Saints and Huichol deities or ancestors. Some of the participants equates The Crucifix with the Huichol *Tanana* (Goddess of Life), others With *Taa ta ta* (Bright Fahter Sun).

On the questions about them following the Catholic practice of crossing themselves, they replied that that is something they did not do. On the question to whom they pray, they explained that it is more like a thought with God.

In the interview with Juliana, she told that she was born Catholic. Her family is Christian and so were their neighbors in Durango. When she grew up in Durango the Church was not built yet. Still they would meet as Christians, and the priest who was not a Huichol, would baptize the babies and bigger children. Everything in the Christian gatherings was about what the priest said. She explained that there are two different baptisms. The Huichol and the Catholic.

In Durango she did not go to mass, but after moving to Puerto Vallarta she sometimes attended the Church down-town. She explained that when going to Church she does not go to confession or communion. She does not read the Bible. Just going to the Church.

About being a Catholic, Iginio explained:

I think I am Catholic, everything we do in Wixaritari, is almost the same as in Catholic religion. Huichol and Catholic, almost the same but no. They do things in different ways. For example, *Dia de Santos (Semana Santa)* is a big difference. Catholics go on vacations. Huichols travel to their communities. They do not drive cars, does not drink, and does not eat, and we have no music while we are there. It is a Holy time. The community has people watching out that nobody is doing what they should not do. One can rest and take free. Others will take care of the Church. The Church is not like the Churches in Puerto Vallarta. It is a special sacred place for Huichols, with the ancestors. It has a table where the elder writes advice to each member of the community. Writes it on a special branch (like the arrows Huichols use for offerings) The sizes of the branches are different depending on the persons status, and the Governors is the biggest.

He also explained the difference between the Churches in his Community:

We have two different, Church and *Caligüey*. *Caligüey* is for Mother Earth, and the other Church for Jesus Christ. They are separate, for example in holy week we attend Church, in May or June it is in *Caligüey* (for the peyote ceremony as the pilgrimages returns from Wirikuta).

When Iginio said Church, he did not mean the same as the Catholic Church. He said it is their sacred place. The community have Shamans, and Shaman Singers, but they have no Christian priests. No representatives from the Catholic Church, no Padres. They chose new representatives every five years for the different Cargos. “Only sometimes priests come to the community only to... Or participate, but they never interfere. Only the members of the community can make changes”. He explained how the priests only arrives to the Community twice a year, December 12, a Catholic holiday for Lady Guadalupe and the *Semana Santa*.

He also explained that everybody goes to church, but only the ones with a position have to go to the *Caligüey*. People have no problems/conflict about these two places and can attend to both.

In Puerto Vallarta Iginio goes to Church about once a month. He visits the Lady Guadalupe Parish in center of town, Puerto Vallarta, or one more antique close to Puerto Vallarta. When he is not going to the Sierra, he follows the ceremony at the Church. “But I do not attend confessions at the Church, I make confession in Wirikuta”.

On the question about reading the Bible he replied:

No, I don't read the Bible”. I do pray. But praying depends on the hierarchy of who you are. A boy will only listen. He can't pray yet. There are certain things you will have to do before you can pray. There are certain things you need to learn first. Offerings that needs to be done. If you have fulfilled that, then you can pray. But you never pray like in the Church. A prayer depends on the connection with the spirits. It is not a play to pray, you need a special connection. If you don't know how to pray, it will be better not to do it. Then you have a *Marakáme* do it for you. When a priest pray it's valid, but it is not the way we do it. Sometimes when we go to the church, we make the symbol (the crossing) but we only do it because the others there do it, not because we feel it. When I am in church maybe I think about Jesus Christ, but outside no.

On the question of his intention about going to Church, he replied that “There is only one God, and everyone knows that.” He does not know why his ancestors or grandparents went to Church. He thinks that everything is a coincidence. Still, they didn't tell him that he didn't have to go, on the contrary they told him, “you have to go!” He said there are many

coincidences between Huichol and the Church, but that they can not forget the pure of Wixarika.

When going through the participants insights on being Catholics, their explanations on some of the Catholic representants, and their experiences going to Church, several interesting aspects appears. In this case it can be productive to see the information given by the interviewees in light of Nutini's perspective on religious syncretic processes following three developmental stages, in combination with cultural memory.

None of the participants who confirm being Catholics follow a pattern of how one would expect a member of conventional Catholicism would do. It is in fact difficult to get a clear understanding of what position Catholicism holds in their lives. As none of the participants neither read the Bible, pray, participate in confessions or communions, and they do not find the priest having a significant meaning to them.

From what is gathered through the interviews, the participants who identify themselves as Catholics relates to the Catholic presentations in the Church (description given by the interviewees), the crucified Christ, Lady of Guadalupe, or Virgin Mary, and other Saints presented in similarity to how they relate to their ancestors. They go visit them where they "live", and they show them their respect. Like they turn to their ancestors, they also go to the Figures presented in the Church: Christ, Virgin Mary and the Saints. Like Julia and Jose explained, they go them in order to return to health.

Lupillo, who is not Catholic explained that the Catholics say that one can't have more images, only one, the *Cristo*. To him, that is hard to understand. He also explained how they celebrate *Semana Santa* in San Andres. He explained that it is almost the same as with the Catholic Church, but somethings are different. Different in a way he do not think the Catholic would accept. He explained:

It is almost like Jesu Christo, but not the same. But I have not seen him, because he is always covered. Through the whole year he is covered with a red cloth. Only one day a year will they take the cover off. This is in *Semana Santa*. Similar to the Catholics, we also do not eat for five weeks before *Semana Santa*. But in *Semana Santa* we sacrifice cattle, maybe thirty of them, in front of the entrance of the Church. And then sometimes the shaman will drag the cow around inside the church. But only for the blood. The Shaman says that the God in there likes blood.

Lupillo told that when he was a little boy, his mother told him not to go into the Church, that it was only for older people. At the same time, he explained that through some conversations with this father, which is a shaman, the father had told him that he thinks that the priests are shamans too. Lupillo explained that his reaction to this was (making a gesture of doubt or confusion). “Finally, they are now good too. They do good. And I say, I don’t think so, but I think so they do too”?

4.7 Lady Guadalupe

Iginio explained that Lady Guadalupe is the same as Virgin Mary, and as far as he knew, her position is only Catholic, not Wixarika. Still **the celebration December 12, is not celebrated the same way in the Sierras as in Puerto Vallarta. Wixarika celebrating Lady Guadalupe present more offerings to her. He explained that his grandparents celebrated her the same way. He clarified Lady Guadalupe presented herself after the Spaniards arrived.**

Iginio specified that they (him) believe in God. Yet he pointed out that the veneration is very different. He thinks that makes a big difference between Huichols and Catholics.

I go when I have to make sacrifice. I then need to go to the ocean (San Blas) and bring the water from there to Mexico City and offer it to the Lady Guadalupe for protection of the family. I offer to the old shrine, the little one at the mountain. I can go to the Bacilica that is there also, it’s the same. But the good one is the little one, it’s like a small temple.

On the question about Lady Guadalupe, Julia replied that she thinks it is more or less the same as the Catholic. Following the same tradition as the Catholic. Pilgrimages to Mexico City and the Guadalupe shrine to give offerings.

The virgin Mary used to speak Wixarika. Another one as well, I don’t know if it was San Domingo or San Cristobal? They spoke like us. Where they went they told the people to not stop speaking Wixarika, and also to sing like the shamans. Someone sent them to the people and told them.

Juliana explains how it was Lady Guadalupe who taught the ancestors how to make the *costura de cruz* (cross/flower figures embroidered on clothes or other props): “Because, Satan wanted to win, so I think it was for some protection. I think the Satan could not do something like this, pointing at the bag she has in the store with this specific symbol on”.

4.8 Jesus

Julia presented Tanana as similar to Christ and Jose continued:

Tanana es singular de Cristo, Tanana is the representation of Jesus Christ in the Sierra. We do not know the history about Jesus Christ or *Tanana*, because our parents never told it to us. They have never talked about this relation. They talk about *Tanana*, but never the history of *Tanana*. We go outside San Andres and we have not heard these stories. The ones staying in San Andres know all the histories. And they know everything. I moved out and don't know so much, I never asked either. My parents know everything.

While talking with Juliana it was difficult getting a clear understanding of her 'relation' to Jesus. She turned quiet and it seemed like she found it hard to answer.

Jesus...(turns quiet and looks to the floor). I think Jesus... (turns quiet again). In all the parties they have, someone brings to the fiesta Lady Guadalupe or Jesus. In designs and things which they have made. Also, some photos and small frames. They buy them and then offer them. I think there is only one God. How do you want me to explain? Like the God that everybody say that is with us every day? Or which one? The God that they say is with us all days. Everybody say that, that Jesus is all day with us. If we argue he hear us, if we fight, he can see us. Everybody says that. I don't know If it is true, but I think so.

Iginio thinks that there is a coincidence between what he learned about the four elements and Jesus, whole pointing at a *Ojo de Dios*. He said that based on that, he made the conclusion. The dates are the same in what is being done, but it is so different from what they do in Puerto Vallarta.

I believe that Jesus died for us. I like to watch the videos about the holy week because I learn about it. Maybe I don't believe in all of that, but I like to know about it, to be cautious about what happened. We have Jesus in the church in San Andres, we make offerings to Jesus, and also to the saints we have in the Church, like Saint Andre and Saint Jose.

When talking about Jesus with the participants who had confirmed being Catholic, it was interesting how little Biblical references they had about him. Most of the focus rested on the presentations of him within Churches, the knowledge about him "dying for us", and there only being one God.

Another interesting observation throughout the interviews, was how all the participants would explain celebrations such as *Semana Santa*, they would all say “it is almost like Catholic”, nondependent on whether they had confirmed being Catholic or not themselves.

4.9 The voice of a Padre

I had an interview with Padre Francisco Cordero Robles at the *Parroquia Senora Lady Guadalupe*, Puerto Vallarta, 29.01.2020.

Before starting the interview, Padre Francisco told about a Huichol which now was a student to become a priest in the northern part of Nayarit. He did not know him well but had met him on one occasion.

The aim of the interview was to gain an insight on what position priests, and the Catholic Church in Puerto Vallarta takes Catholic Huichols.

Padre Francisco elaborated that the Huichol *padre* (priest) he told me about initially, is a Huichol, which needs to venerate the Deer⁹. Padre Francisco continued -They say it is like Jesus Christ (as he chuckled a little). He kept on:

The Priest said to me that The Deer is the same as Jesus Christ, a syncretism. To venerate the Deer is the same as venerate or believe in Jesus Christ, all he can see in his cosmic vision, all the things he can see, is like the same God.

I think that it is true that in a certain way, in a certain form, God manifests to all human. It can be through a deer or anything. The difference I think is that Jesus brings all the knowledge to the world, can you see Jesus, you can see the father, God. There is a truth in all religion and sects you can find, but only Jesus offers the complete knowledge and truth about God to the world.

Padre Francisco kept on and explained that he thinks that the Church will accept, the only problem is that there can be some priests or a part of a Church that will not accept, those who are more conservative. Some of the conservatives have expressed that they will not accept “the uncultured”. It was important for Padre Francisco to underline, that in studying with the Priest from the Sierra, are they open about all the believes of “these people”.

⁹ *Tatutsi Maxa Kwaxí* (Great Grandfather Deer Tail”, is the divine ancestor from Wirikuta, who brought the peyote and its sacred teachings to the Sierra and the people.

At the same time did he admit that he do not know much about the Huichol way of living or veneration, and that there might be aspects of veneration which can be problematic in accordance to the Catholic Church.

4.10 External Critique on Huichol Characteristics

While conducting the fieldwork in Mexico, I experienced on several occasions a certain negative attitude against Huichols living in Puerto Vallarta. Assertions about the Huichols living in the city not being “the real deal”. These assertions would appear in informal conversations in a party, in a dialog with a person working close to Huichols through their art, and while getting a ride with an uber driver. The common theme was that the Huichols living in Puerto Vallarta no longer live like Huichols, they have left their “way”, and are now at best normal, but also according to some, that they have corrupted their culture. The main elements of the critique against them, seemed to be based on them “selling their culture as souvenirs”. Making money, living in the city, benefitting economically, and neglecting their people in the Sierra. On several occasions did I also meet people who initially could not understand my interest on the people living in Puerto Vallarta, as it was a waste of time, since the real Huichol live in the mountains.

4.11 Renegotiating Huichol Identity

When comparing previous literature with findings in this research, one can find a continuation of historical and contemporary descriptions of Huichol culture, veneration, and ceremonial traditions. The central and repeated explanation given by the interviewees of why and how they act about and conduct ceremonies and other duties within Huichol way of life, is because “that is how it has always been done”, “that’s how the ancestors taught them”, and also that “this is the way the grandparents also did it”. The teachings lie in the mythologies and the Shamans are the authoritative mediators.

Huichols hold a strong communal identity and sense of responsibility to their community. All ritualistic and ceremonial practices are conducted with a sense of loyalty to ancestral role models, needs, and demands. And most importantly everything must be conducted in the geographical space of the homelands of the ancestors. On questions of why it has to be done in the Sierra, two factors came forth in the interviews. The first one is like mentioned above,

the need of performing the ceremonies in the presence of the ancestors. Another factor presented, was the need of having Shamans leading the ceremonies, and no Shamans wants to live in the city.

Going through the interviews with the participants it became evident that living outside the communities, represents challenges on several aspects. To be accepted as part of their communities and maintain their communal membership, they must fulfill their communal duties in accordance with the tradition. The majority of the interviewees stated that they are in close contact with the community, which means that they are travelling to the Sierra about every three months to attend ceremonies or other obligations.

The consequences of failing to live up to these obligations can be severe. Jose and Julia explained that the consequences could be injuries or diseases and in the most severe case it could lead to death to the person that do not fulfill the ritual obligations. Another consequence of missing out and not fulfilling traditional expectations, can be the loss of the recognition as a true Huichol by other rural members (Biglow 2001, 54). Yet in some cases one can find arrangements between the Huichol living outside and the community, such as paying certain amount of money if one fails to show up in the community to fulfill one's duties. One of the interviewees confirmed to have chosen this solution. On this matter he explained the importance of keeping a receipt for the amount payed. This because sometimes someone in the community can try to claim money again.

Biglow addresses the phenomena of a gradual expansion of a market economy among Huichols and how this can create class distinctions that stand in tension to the traditional ranking systems: "The class distinctions are emerging in contrast to traditional ranking systems that emphasized prestige as a prescribed status earned by *Kawiteros* and *Marakámes*. The new distinctions are creating a tow-class system among the Huichol" (2001, 61). Huichols who has moved to the city bring back money and other supplements to the community. This can create a new type of ties between the ones who has emigrated, and the ones left in the community. Emigrated Huichols becomes to some extent a provider for the community. Based on that, a different type of status can emerge parallel to the traditional ranking systems. With an emerge of such status system follows a pressure of how much one must "bring back to the community", maybe comparisons between the ones bringing a lot and those bringing less. This might also affect the bonds to and the status within the community.

Taken Biglow's observation into consideration, Huichols not only have the possibility of negotiating Huichol identity and membership to the community. On the other side, based on Lupillo's information on the importance of keeping proof of payments, Huichols living outside can also be at risk of being exploited or pressed to pay more money by other members of the community in order to keep the insurance of "keeping their place". The spiritual identity may come with an economic price.

Huichols living in Puerto Vallarta are not only striving to fulfill its communal obligations in the Sierra. They must also integrate and fulfill the obligations of functioning within the Mexican society as well. As presented by the interviewees and pointed out in the section of "Practical Changes", life in the City stands to a large degree in contrast to the one in the Sierra. This does in reality mean that they are balancing in between two distinct worlds.

Huichol identity is not only negotiated with the ones back in the communities. The Huichols living in places like Puerto Vallarta are also measured by the "outside world". One can find an expectation of them dressing, talking, and moving in a certain way, based on a biased expectations of Huichol behavior and way of being. Not meeting these expectations can lead to ideas about them not being the "real deal", a deception of a Huichol. The effect of this can be the perception of being a fraud as they are selling their art at the market.

For Huichols raising children outside the Community, serious dilemmas and worries affect them as it relates to facilitating a continuation or growing of Huichol identity, introduction and maintaining Huichol culture and traditions for the upcoming generations. In light of cultural memory, moving out of the community may cause a trauma in sense of prevailing Huichol identity within its traditional meaning. Yet, it is important to keep in mind Oddbjørn Leirvik's warning against presuppositions about "religion" being the most defining factor in a person's individual or collective identity or identities (2014, 83) Hence, it becomes necessary to investigate possibilities of differentiating between Huichol religious belonging and practices.

According to Liffmann, about 20,000 Huichols are now living outside the Sierra. As data from this research present, Huichols living outside the Sierra today are already through adaptations and negotiations with the community, maintaining their Huichol communal membership and identity. This proves that the communities can to a certain extent open for alternative solutions in order to maintain the bonds between the urban Huichols and the

community, possibly due to the economic benefits coming back to the community based on keeping these relations.

It is important to take into consideration that the communities in the Sierra are just as well going through developmental changes. Due to easier access to some of the communities many are now in reality and to larger extents open to external influences.

Moving on to the aspect of Huichol religious traditions, one find several syncretic elements of Catholicism within the Huichol religious landscape, which is pointed out on several places within this thesis. The *Mayordomos* which are cargo members in charge of Catholic churches and icons, elected within the same system as the ones in charge of serving the ancestors, serves as clear examples of such syncretism, so do the *Semana Santa* celebrations, Lady of Guadalupe, and perhaps the pilgrimage to Wirikuta which includes confessions.

The same can be said about the Huichols within this research who confirmed being Catholics despite containing only nominal knowledge on biblical stories, not attending communions or confessions. The preachers of the padre having no real consequence for them. Iginios explanation of how it is when he goes to church serves also well to illustrate:

When the priest pray it is valid, but it is not the way we do it. Sometimes we make the symbol (make the sign of the cross) in Church, but only because the others do it, not because we feel it. When I am in Church maybe I think about Jesus Christ, but outside, no”.

The examples of the Catholic- Huichols representations in this thesis resembles very closely Friar Buenaventura’s expression of frustration of Huichols performance of religious syncretism in 1839, presented by Fikes and the Weigands:

He was horrified witnessing how Huichols in San Andrés not only worshipping idols and invoking the Christ and Catholic Saints to bless their cattle. He also pointed out: “They could not make the sign of the cross, never confessed their sins, and did not know how to recite prayers (2004, xxi).

It is necessary to return to previous research in light of the findings presented in this study, using Shaefer and Furst as examples when they write: “Huichols have maintained their pre-Christian religion without significant syncretism and with no more than nominal accommodation to the dominant Catholic faith”. In-light-of the findings in this dissertation one can only partial agree to their statement.

All previous research admits some sort of syncretism, but merely with minimal significance to the Huichol pre-Christian religion. According to the information revealed in this research one may ask whether the syncretism of Catholic and Huichol religious practices is more extensive and significant than the scholars of the Huichol culture has so far assumed.

In a historical perspective some evidence of this can be found in the frustration expressed by representatives of the Catholic Church, through reports on how the Huichols would “misuse” Catholic icons and figures as they were worshipping their ancestral deities. It appears as if few of the Catholic doctrines or liturgies were incorporated into the Huichol world view. Nonetheless, and as Zingg revealed through his transcriptions of Huichol mythologies, the Huichols reshaped their myths where they included Christian elements. To a certain extent they identified some of the Christian figures with the aboriginal deities. Hence, there was a religious fusion that went far deeper than a mere nominal accommodation to the dominant Catholic faith among Huichols, as stated by (Sheafer 1996). It is not simply the case that Huichols are counted as Catholics within Mexico’s religious economy or merely say they are Catholics while they in reality have no traces of an authentic Catholic belief. The interviews here point to how Huichol people relate to Catholic figures as real spiritual entities comparable to the spiritual reality of the Huichols’ ancestors.

In the perspective of cultural memory, Huichols have historically gone through the elements described by Assmann as resonance and impact. The impact is represented in the rupture of Huichol reality caused by Spanish and Catholic domination. In accordance with Assmann’s explanations the impact caused by colonization created a blocking of Huichol cultural memory due to disruptions of the aboriginal culture, traditions, and religious practices.

The impact resulted in a Huichol culture that through resistance maintained most of their pre-colonial cultural, traditional, and religious traits. In addition, did they also included elements which emerged under the domination of the Spaniards and the Catholics. Thus, they created a new cultural memory based on the resonance with the old and the new elements of Huichol identity and cultural strength.

Moving on to the Huichols who participated in this research, taking their explanations in comparison to the historical aspect, one can find the continuation and resonance with the Huichol presented in previous literature. One will of course find some alternations, yet, and still in accordance with Assman’s description of memory: “Memory is something that is constantly transformed and overwritten: a memory is a memory of a memory (2015, 41).

As pointed out above, the participants of this research seem to mainly having retained their distinctive Huichol culture, tradition and religious practice, in accordance with their communal obligations despite the obvious challenges, which appear due to the physical distance, and differences of everyday realities and challenges. Yet, the participants of this research have close ties to the communities, they were born and grew up in the communities. It will be interesting to see how it will be with the future generations, how these new generations of Huichols will handle the issues of communal belonging and the ties to the ancestors while growing up outside the Sierras.

5 Conclusion

I have through this thesis examined and presented insights and explanations on how Huichols through history have managed to integrate elements of Christianity yet still been perceived by scholars to have maintained their precolonial religion and practice. Within this process have I focused on previous literature on this subject, and with a special focus on *People of the Peyote*, which is a multi-national collection of essays on Huichol history, religion and survival, edited by Stacy B. Shaefer and Peter T. Furst. The choice of keeping a special focus on this book, is due to its rich collection from several authors and research. *People of the Peyote* can be understood as a leading work within the field of Huichol studies, and is frequently used as reference point by others in the field.

The process of examining insights and explanations on the perceptions of Huichol prevailed cultural and religious practices, has been conducted in-light-of a theoretical framework containing Religious Syncretism, Cultural Memory and Migration. These theories have provided a perspective which has led to presenting a contrasting conclusion to what has in general been presented in previous literature, regarding Huichol prevailing precolonial religion and practice. This thesis reveals through several examples that Huichol traditions and practices are on a significant account influenced through and by the contact with the Spanish conquest and the Catholic Churches attempts on converting the Huichol people. *Semana Santa* celebrations, Celebrations of the Lady of Guadalupe in December, Venerations of the Saints which in many cases as connected to some of Huichol deities and ancestors illustrates some of these examples.

Yet, the syncretic effects did not evolve as the Catholic Church originally aimed for, but instead Catholic elements and teachings were adapted into the Huichol specter of mythologies, practices of veneration, ceremonial practices, and identity.

This thesis has sought to answer the research question of how Huichols living in diaspora do perceive and negotiate their Huichol identity, religious life, and practice. The fieldwork conducted in Puerto Vallarta and Sayulita, May 2019- March 2020, provided good insights on Huichol experiences, challenges, and solutions in relation to Huichols living apart from their communities in the Sierras, as the interviews conducted provides direct information from the interviewees own standpoints, thoughts and experiences.

The fieldwork revealed that despite the great physical distances, the Huichols living in diaspora manages to keep a tight bond to the communities in the Sierras. Through some

adaptions and negotiations have they managed to find a way of living abroad as Huichols and from distance keep and hold on to a sense of belonging to their cultural and religious communities.

Despite the great physical distances have the participants managed to maintain their communal membership, follow up community obligations and participate on ceremonies. Huichols in diaspor -also live with an awareness of providing the community with economic funds which is much needed.

Attachments

6.1 Letter of Consent

Do you want to participate in my research project, 'Renegotiated Huichol Identity outside La Sierra'.

This is a question for you to participate in a research project where the purpose is to how life in diaspora might affect religious perspective and/or practice for Huichols in the area of Puerto Vallarta. In this letter we give you information about the goals of the project and what participation will involve for you.

Purpose

This project is a research project related to my Master degree, taken at the Theological Faculty of the University of Oslo. As I am studying Religious Diversities, I find it interesting to search for a deeper understanding of the religious identity and practice of Huichols living distant from their cultural, religious, and ritualistic origin, being the Sierras. I am especially interested in Huichol belief and practice in relation to Christian majority surroundings.

Who is responsible for the research project?

Theological Faculty at University of Oslo (Norway)

Conducting research: Beate Hovden

Responsible for the Project: Ole Jakob Løland

Why you are asked to participate?

___ I am looking for (5-10) Huichols (male/females in ages between 18-80) living in Puerto Vallarta area who can describe their religious belief, practice, and experience outside the Huichol Villages in the mountains.

___ I am looking for (3-5) Christian (Catholic/Protestant) representatives working in relation with or towards Huichols in the Puerto Vallarta area.

What does it mean for you to attend?

The research will be conducted through interviews and possible observations. The interviews will be recorded through notes and audio, and the material will be registered electronically. ___The interviews will be conducted in 2 sessions and will take approximate 1 hour per interview.

___ The interview will be conducted in 1 session and will take approximate 1 hour.

___The questions will contain issues regarding your religious belief and practice.

___ The questions will contain issues regarding your interactions and work towards Huichol population.

Volunteering is optional

It is voluntary to participate in the project. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving any reason. All information about you will then be anonymized. It will not have any negative consequences for you if you do not want to attend or later choose to withdraw.

Your privacy - how we store and use your information

We will only use the information about you for the purposes we have described in this letter. We treat the information confidentially and in accordance with the privacy policy.

- Your information will only be accessed by me who conduct the research, a Spanish-English interpreter (within UIO's data processing agreements and regulations), my Project Manager, Ole Jakob Løland and Program Manager, Marianne Bjelland Kartzow.
- «I will replace your name and contact information with a code stored on my own list of names separate from other data», save data on research server, locked / encrypted, etc.

What happens to your information when we finish the research project?

The project is scheduled to end May 2020. Personal data will be anonymized at the end of the project.

Your rights

As long as you can be identified in the data material, you are entitled to:

- an overview of what personal data is registered about you,
- to get personal information about you,

- Get deleted personal information about you,
- Get a copy of your personal information (data portability), and
- to send a complaint to your privacy representative or data protection agency regarding the processing of your personal information.

What gives us the right to process personal information about you?

We process information about you based on your consent.

On behalf of the University of Oslo, the NSD - Norwegian Research Data Center AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with the privacy policy.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the study or wish to avail yourself of your rights, please contact:

- Beate Hovden: beatehov@student.teologi.uio.no
- Ole Jakob Løland: o.j.loland@teologi.uio.no
- Research Ethical Selection: Forskningsetisk utvalg ved Teologisk Fakultet
- Personvernombudet at UIO. Maren Magnus Voll: personvernombud@uio.no
- NSD - Norwegian Center for Research Data AS, by email (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or phone: 0047 55 58 21 17.

Sincerely,

Project Manager

Ole Jakob Løland

Beate Hovden

Consent Statement

I have received and understood information about the project, **'Renegotiated Huichol Identity outside La Serra'**, and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I agree to:

- To participate in interviews
- To participate in religious practice, rituals during observation/fieldwork
- Information about me is published through anonymized data.

I agree that my information will be processed until the project is completed, approx. May 2020.

Date, name, and Signature (Signed by project participant)

6.2 Declaration of Confidentiality

Declaration of confidentiality

This declaration of confidentiality concerns the execution of work related to the following Master's thesis at The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo:

Title of Master's thesis: Renegotiated Huichol identity outside "La Sierras".

Master student: Beate Hovden.

Interpreter's duty of confidentiality

In the Act on the mode of treatment in administrative cases, the provisions on the duty of confidentiality that shall be applied to the interpreter in section 13, first and third paragraphs.

Section 13, paragraph 1, reads as follows:

"Anyone who performs service or work for an executive agency is obliged to prevent others from gaining access to or knowledge of what he is told in connection with the service or work:

- 1) Anyone's personal relationship, or
- 2) technical facilities and procedures, as well as operating or business matters, which it will be of competitive importance to keep secrecy in view of the one to which the information relates. "

§ 13, third paragraph reads:

"The duty of confidentiality also applies after the person has terminated the service or work. He also cannot utilize information as mentioned in this section in his own business or in service or work for others. "

The provisions of the third paragraph are in their entirety included in the declaration of confidentiality and in practice include any exploitation for the purpose of gaining the information or contacts the person has received as an interpreter.

§ 13 c: (Information on confidentiality, retention of information subject to the duty of confidentiality) entails:

All documents an interpreter has access to prepare for the assignment or to translate orally during the interpretation are covered by the interpreter's duty of confidentiality and shall be kept in a satisfactory manner. Any notes the interpreter has taken during the interpretation must be canceled in the parties' supervision when the interpretation is completed to prevent suspicion that the information is being published. The interpreter's notes can also not be regarded as a memo for some of the parties.

The provisions of the Public Administration Act that certain information is exempt from the duty of confidentiality cannot be applied to interpreters.

Place: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

6.3 Interview Questions

Tentative Interview Questions, Huichol

Session 1

Personalia:

- Name
- Age
- Living
- Family
- Education
- Occupation
- Where were you born (Sierras or born “outside”)
- Do you belong to any Comunidades indigenas?

Before we start, what do you prefer me to address your people as, Huichol or Wixárika?

1) What does it mean for you to be a Huichol?

- Identity?
- Social?
- Spirituality?
- Religion?
- Other?

2) How will you describe your spirituality/(religion?)

- Central teachings
- Central figures/personas?
- Individual/Personal?
- Spiritual/Religious leaders?
- Church/Temple/Chapel?

3) How will you describe your spiritual/religious practice?

- Rituals?
- Life cycle rituals?
- Pilgrimages?
- Religious community?

- 4) Do you think your spiritual/religious life is affected in anyway because of where you live?
- 5) Do you have family members who belong to other religions or spiritualities?
- 6) Do you have friends who belongs to other religions?
- 7) Do you know if there are any Governmental programs to prevail your spiritual/religious needs in the area you live (or in general)?
- 8) Have you ever had any contact with religious representatives from other religions, such as missionaries etc? (on a group level, or with fictive names)
 - When?
 - How?
 - Why?

Need to prepare possible questions based on last conversation (possible “follow ups”)

Session 2

- 1) **Have you heard about Lady Guadalupe?**
 - Does she have any position or relation to Huichols?
 - If yes, how?
- 2) **Have you heard of Jesus?**
 - Does he have any position or relation to Huichols?
 - If yes, how?
- 3) **I have noticed as I have worked on my preparations on my thesis, that several Huichols have names which can be found within historical Christian figures or personalities, does those names have any special meaning to Huichols?**
 - Jesus
 - Jose
 - Gabriel/Gabriela
 - Maria
 - Angelica

4) Are there festivals or other holy celebrations Huichols celebrate similar to for example Christians (Example Holy week (easter))?

- If yes, what are the similarities?
- What is the difference?

5) Have you ever lived in the Sierras?

- If yes, how would you describe or compare your spiritual/religious life here in comparison to when you lived there?
- If not, how would you (if possible) describe or compare your spiritual/religious life in comparison to how you understand their life is there?

6.4 Questions Interview with Priest

Tentative Questions in Conversation with Priests

- How will you define a Christian person?
 - In relation to the Catholic Church

- Do you have any knowledge about Huichol population belonging to your parish?

- If a Huichol identifies as a Christian, but remain Huichol traditional rituals etc. How do you, as a priest take stand on this?
 - Are there any guidelines within the Church on how to relate to indigenous people, and their Christian / indigenous syncretism?
 - Does it exist a limit of what can be accepted?

- Does the Catholic Church have any work or project towards the Huichols in Puerto Vallarta?
 - Other places?

- If so, can you explain the projects origin, process, and aim?

7 Glossary

Comunidad	-Spanish term for a town
Cüpori	-Vital principle of the self. Located at the top of the head.
Haramára	- The Pasific Ocean
Híkuri	- Peyote
Kalihuey	- Sacred Huichol temple
Kaliwey	- Sacred Huichol temple
Iyári	- Heart-memory
Kawitero	- Wise elder
Mara'akáme	- Shaman
Mayordomo	- Cargo member in charge of Catholic Church and icons
Mestizo	- Person of mixed Indian and Spanish ancestry; common term used to refer to someone with this mixed ancestry who is from Mexico or has roots in Mexico
Rancho	-Small Huichol Settlement for a family
Reduccion	- An Indian community set up under ecclesiastical or royal authority to facilitate colonization. Natives forcibly relocated to new Spanish settlements.
Semana Santa	- Catholic Holy week. The week immediately preceding Easter
Takutsi Nakawe	- Our Great Grandmother of Growth and Generation
Tamatzi	- Our Elder Brother Deer
Tanana	- Goddess of Life
Taa ta ta	- Bright Father Sun
Tateriké	- Place of Our Mother

Tatewari	- Shaman Singer
Tatuani	- Governor, Gobernado in Spanish
Tatutsi Maxa Kwaxi	- Great Grandfather Deer Tail
Tayaupá	- Our Father the Sun
Téwi	- “Person”, When Huichol refer to one of their own kind, “one of the people”
Tocari	- Life, moon goddess
Tukipa	- Wixarika ceremonial Center
Watakame	- The only man to survive the great flood that destroyed a previous world
Werikua	- The solitary-eagle; the sun
Xiriki	- The household temple or ancestor god house
Xukurikáte	- Votive gorud bowl

8 Bibliography

Amoureux, Jack and Brent J. Steele (Ed.). 2016. "Introduction" in *Reflexivity and International Relations*. London. Routledge. pp 1-20

Apaydin, Veysel. 2015 "The Interlinkage of Cultural Memory, Hritage and Discourses of Construction, Transformation and Destruction. In *The Formative Past and the Formation of the Future: Collective remembering and itendity Formation*. By Stordalen, Terje and Naguib, Saphniaz-Amal (Ed.) Oslo: Novus Press, pp 13-25.

Assmann, Aleida. 2015 "Impacta and Resonance: Towards a Theory of Emotions in Cultural Memory. In *The Formative Past and the Formation of the Future: Collective remembering and itendity Formation*. By Stordalen, Terje and Naguib, Saphniaz-Amal (Ed.) Oslo: Novus Press, pp 41-70

Beezley, William H. and Michael C: Meyer. 2010. *The Oxford History of Mexico* (Ed.) New York: Oxford University Press.

Bielo, James S. 2015. *Anthropology of Religion, the basics*. New York: Routledge.

Biglow, Brad Morris. 2001. "Ethno-Nationalist Politics and Cultural Preservation: Education and Bordered Identities Among the Wixaritari (Huichol) of Tateikita , Jalisco, Mexico". Doctor of Philosophy. University of Florida.

Bird, Frederick and Laurie Lamoureux Scholes. (2011) "Research Ethics" in *The Routledge Handbook or Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. By Stausberg, Michael and Steven Engler (Ed.). New York. Routledge. pp81-105

Blackford, Russel. 2012. *Freedom of Religion & The Secular State*. United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Burkholder, Mark A. 2010. "An Empire Beyond Compare" in Beezley William H. and Michael C. Meyer (Ed.) *The Oxford History of Mexico*. New York. The Oxford University Press. Pp111-142.

Castles, Stephen, Hein De Haas and Mark J. Miller. 2014. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. UK: Palgrave Macmilliam.

Chrysochoou, Xenia. 2004. *Cultural Diversity: Its Social Psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

City Population <https://www.citypopulation.de/php/mexico-nayarit.php?cityid=180200092>

Retrieved: 14.10.2020.

Curcio-Nagy, Linda A. 2010. "Faith and Morals in Colonial Mexico" in *The Oxford History of Mexico* by Beezeley, William H. and Michael C. Meyer (Ed.) New York: Oxford University Press.

Fikes, Jay Courtney. 2011. *Unknown Huichol. Shamans and Immortals, Allies Against Chaos*. United Kingdoms. AltaMira Press.

Franz, Allen R. 1996. "Huichol Ethnohistory". In *People of the Peyote, Huichol Indian History, Religion and Survival* by Schaefer, Stacy, B. and Peter T. Furst. 1996. (Ed.) Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Furseth, Inger og Pål Repstad. 2016. *Innføring i Religionssosiologi*. Oslo. Universitetsforlaget.

Furst, Peter T. 1996. "Myth as History, History as Myth" in *People of the Peyote, Huichol Indian History, Religion and Survival* by Shaefer, Stacey B. and Peter T. Furst (Ed.). Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. Pp26-60.

Gamlin, Jennie and Seth Holmes. 2018. "Preventable perinatal deaths in indigenous Wixárika Communities: An Ethnographic Study of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Structural Violence". BMC Pregnancy Childbirth. US National Library of Medicine, National Institute of Health. Published online 2018 June 18. SoI: 20.1186/s12884-018-1870-6.

Global America. 2017. "Socioal Inclusion, Minority Groups & Discrimination. Indigenous Political Representation in Mexico": <https://theglobalamericans.org/2017/10/indigenous-political-representation-mexico/>.

Gudorf, Christine E. 2013. *Comparative Religious Ethics: Everyday Decisions for our Everyday Lives*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Harvey, Graham. 2011. "Field Research: Participant Observation" in *The Routledge Handbook or Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. By Stausberg, Michael and Steven Engler (Ed.). New York. Routledge. pp217-244.

Jensen, Jeppe Sinding. 2011. "Epistemology" in *The Routledge Handbook or Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. By Stausberg, Michael and Steven Engler (Ed.). New York. Routledge. pp40-53.

Leirvik, Oddbjørn. 2014. *Interreligious Studies. A Relational Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion*. Great Britain. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Liffman, Paul M. 2011. *Huichol Territory and the Mexican Nation. Indigenous Ritual, Land Conflict and Sovereignty Claims*. Tucson. The University of Arizona Press.

Neurath, Johannes. 2000. "Tukipa Ceremonial Centers in the Community of Tuapurie (Santa Catarina Cuexomatitlán): Cargo Systems, Landscape, and Cosmvision". *Journal of the Southwest*, 42 (1): 81-110.

Neurath, Johannes 2003 "Territorialidad, Peregrinaciones y Santuarios en el Gran Nayar". In *Los que Caminan en el Amanecer* by A. M. Barabas, (pp. 41-47). Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Nutini, Hugo G. 1976. "Syncretism and Acculturation: The Historical Development of the Cult of the Patron Saint in Tlaxcala, Mexico (1519-1670)" *Ethnology.*, Vol. 15, No. 3. pp 301-321.

On the World Map, Free Printable Maps. Mapa del Mundo 2012-2020. Downloaded: 07.03.2020. <http://ontheworldmap.com/mexico/>

Patch, Robert W. "Indian Resistance to Colonialism" in *The Oxford History of Mexico* by Beezley William H. and Michael C. Meyer (Ed.). New York. The Oxford University Press. Pp175-202.

PopulationStat: World Statistical Data. 2017-2020 PopulationStat 07.03.2020.

<https://populationstat.com/mexico/puerto-vallarta>

PuertoVallarta Vacations 1998-2020 "All about Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico" 07.03.2020

https://www.puertovallarta.net/fast_facts/about_pv

Rodríguez, Jeanette and Ted Fortier. 2007. *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith, and Identity*. United States of America: University of Texas Press.

Shaefer, Stacy B. 1993. "Huichol" in *Encyclopedia of World Cultures. Vol 8: Middle America and the Caribbean* by Dow, James W and Robert Van Kemper (Ed.). New York, NY: G.K. Hall & Co. pp124-128.

Schaefer, Stacy, B. and Peter Furst. 1996. (Ed.) *People of the Peyote, Huichol Indian History, Religion and Survival*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Shaefer, Stacy B. 2015. *Huichol Women, Weavers, and Shamans*. New Mexico: The University of New Mexico Press.

Schwaller, John Frederick. 2011, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America: From Conquest to Revolution and Beyond*. New York: New York University Press.

Silva, Ramon Medina. 1996. "Introduction" to the "How One goes Being Huichol" in Shaefer, Stacey B. and Peter T. Furst (Ed.). *People of the Peyote, Huichol Indian History, Religion and Survival*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. Pp169-205.

Sittón, Salomón Nahmad. 1996. "Huichol Religion and the Mexican State: Reflections on Ethnocide and Cultural Survival" in *People of the Peyote: Huichol Indian History, Religion, and Survival* by Shaefer, Stacey B. and Peter T. Furst (Ed.). Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. Pp468-502.

Spica, Marciano Adilio. 2018. "Pluralism with Syncretism: A Perspective from Latin American Religious Diversity" in *Open Theology* Volume 4. pp236-245.

Torres, Yolotl González. 2000. "The History of Religion and the Study of Religion in Mexico." In *Method & Theory, in the Study of Religion*. Online Publication 01.01.2000. Volume 12: Issue 1-4. p38-48.

Woodhead, Linda. 2011. "Five Concepts of Religion" In *International Review of Sociology*. Volume 21: Issue 1. 121-143.

Worldometers. 2020. "Mexico Demographics" 02.03.2020.

<https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/mexico-demographics/>

Yasumoto, Masaya. 1996. "The Psychotropic Kiéri in Huichol culture." In *People of the Peyote, Huichol Indian History, Religion and Survival* by Schaefer, Stacy, B. and Peter T. Furst. 1996. (Ed.) Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Znigg, Robert M. 2004. *Huichol Mythology*. Jay C. Fikes, Phil C. Weigand and Acelia Garcia De Weigand (Ed.). Tuscon: The University Press of Arizona.

Table 1.1

Rodríguez, Jeanette and Ted Fortier. 2007. *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith, and Identity*. United States of America: University of Texas Press.