

Huichol

Secondary source

Entered by Emily Pitek, Human Relations Area Files

**Secondary Source entry, prepared from a literature review by a Ph.D. RA*

Entry tags: Mesoamerican Religions, Religious Group

The Huichol are native inhabitants of what are now the Mexican States of Jalisco, Nayarit, Zacatecas, and Durango. In 1722 the Huichol were conquered by the Spanish, after which Franciscan Missionaries arrived and nominally converted the Huichol to Christianity before leaving the area in the mid 1800's (Lumholtz, 1973:22). Missionaries left a varying degree of Christian influence across Huichol communities, but at the time this entry focuses on (around 1890) native beliefs were still held and traditional customs and ceremonies were still practiced; the Huichol religion would become more syncretic with Christianity in the 20th century. To the Huichol, religion does not constitute a separate sphere of life; there is no distinction between sacred and everyday life. As such, this entry considers the Huichol religious group to be coterminous with the society itself. Religious practitioners known as shamans are trained in healing, divining, and priestly activities, and communicate with the supernatural. In addition to the spirits of the dead, the Huichol pantheon contains a variety of deities representing personified natural phenomenon such as fire, air, earth, and water. Fire (also known as Grandfather) is said to be the greatest and oldest, existing before the sun (Father). Fire is associated with deer and peyote. The Huichol "petition the deities for sun and rain for the crops, successful deer hunts, fertility, good health, and protection from the dangers of the natural and supernatural worlds" (Schaefer, 2016). The Huichol have an annual cycle of feasts and ceremonies associated with the propitiation of gods, and connected to the agricultural cycle and environmental phenomenon such as rain. Most importantly is the annual journey to sacred (known to the Huichol as *hikuili*), peyote land, where the plant is harvested and later utilized in rituals and to communicate with the gods.



Date Range: 1880 CE - 1934 CE

Region: Huichol Territory, Nayarit and Jalisco, Mexico

Region tags: Latin America and the Caribbean,
Central America, Mexico

Huichol Territory, Nayarit and Jalisco, Mexico ca. 1890

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Divale, W. 2004. Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. *World Cultures: The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research*.
- Source 2: Murdock, G.P. & Wilson, S.F. (Jul., 1972). Settlement patterns and community organization: *Cross-Cultural Codes 3. Ethnology*, 11(3), 254-295.
- Source 3: Tuden, A. & Marshall, C. (Oct., 1972). Political organization: *Cross-cultural codes 4. Ethnology*, 11(4), 436-464.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=nu19-002>
- Source 1 Description: Lumholtz, C. (1973). Unknown Mexico: A Record Of Five Years' Exploration Among The Tribes Of The Western Sierra Madre; In The Tierra Calientes Of Tepic And Jalisco; And Among The Tarascos Of Michoacan -- Vol. 2.
- Source 2 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=nu19-024>
- Source 2 Description: Lumholtz, C. (1898). Huichol Indians Of Mexico. Bulletin Of The American Museum Of Natural History, 10, 1-14.
- Source 3 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=nu19-001>
- Source 3 Description: Zingg, R. M. (Robert M. (1938). Report Of The Mr. And Mrs. Henry Pfeiffer Expedition For Huichol Ethnography: The Huichols: Primitive Artists.
- Source 1 URL: <https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=nu19-000>
- Source 1 Description: Schaefer, S. B. (2016). Culture Summary: Huichol.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: The Huichol "...were conquered by the Spaniards in 1722, and Franciscan missionaries followed the victorious soldiers, and built five churches. Nominally the tribe then became converted to Christianity, and the introduction of cattle, sheep, mules, and certain iron implements modified to some extent their mode of living, though not as much as one would expect. Today, however, the churches are in ruins, and there is no priest living among the Huichols...The ancient beliefs, customs, and ceremonies still have a firm hold on the minds of the people, and the Huichols jealously guard their country against the encroachments of the whites" (Lumholtz, 1973:22). "Franciscan missionaries converted them nominally to Christianity, founding the pueblos of Tezompa, Soledad, San Andrés Coamiata, Santa Catarina, and San Sebastian, all on the eastern side of the river except San Andrés Coamiata, which lies on a plain in the sierra on the west... In the country of the Huichols there are today no priests, and there is probably no tribe in Mexico where the ancient beliefs have been so well maintained as there" (Lumholtz, 1898:5).



Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1654, Pacification, indicates that the Huichol were pacified before the 25-year ethnographic present (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Diavle, 2004).



Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1654, Pacification, indicates that the Huichol were pacified before the 25-year ethnographic present (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Diavle, 2004).

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– No

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the recruitment of new members.

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

Notes: The Huichol religion is coterminous with Huichol society; religion does not exist in a separate sphere of life from that of the polity. "Religion permeates all aspects of life, and most Huichol make no real distinction between the sacred and everyday worlds. For the Huichol, religion is life itself" (Schaefer, 2016).

↳ Is religious infrastructure paid for by the polity:

– I don't know

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:

– No

Notes: It appears that the the head of the polity (the gobernador) and the head of the religion (the shaman, maleákami) are distinct figures. However, the shaman holds a higher status than the gobernador. "Apart from these officials, a man is selected to serve as the singing shaman of the temple. He ranks higher than any other shaman, and his dignity is even greater than that of the guardian of Grandfather Fire. In fact, he is the spiritual head of the community, and sets the dates for all the feasts and observances in accordance with communications he is supposed to receive direct from the gods themselves. This singing shaman, or maleákami, is the actual chief and even superior to the tatowán, or gobernador" (Lumholtz, 1973:151).

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

– Yes

Notes: "The government in the Huichol villages remains as it was when instituted by the missionaries, a mixture of the rule of State and Church" (Lumholtz, 1973:245).

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 4000

Notes: "The Huichol community, like that of the Tarahumaras, is a group of isolated rancherías around a center where there is a lonely church or communal building. Tuxpan is one of seven such communities into which the Huichol tribe is divided as a result of Spanish-Catholic influence, and is composed of some 400 souls grouped in perhaps 75 families. The Huichol tribe is estimated to have a

population of 4,000, all living in one of these seven communities" (Lumholtz, 1898:7).

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "Apart from these [temple] officials, a man is selected to serve as the singing shaman of the temple. He ranks higher than any other shaman, and his dignity is even greater than that of the guardian of Grandfather Fire. In fact, he is the spiritual head of the community, and sets the dates for all the feasts and observances in accordance with communications he is supposed to receive direct from the gods themselves. This singing shaman, or maleákami, is the actual chief and even superior to the tatowán, or gobernador" (Lumholtz, 1973:151).

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Yes

Notes: "The movement of birds, especially of those that soar highest, is incomprehensible to the Indian, and such birds are thought to see and hear everything, and to possess mystic powers, which are inherent in their wing- and tail-feathers. Hence plumes of the eagle and hawk are coveted by all American tribes for the wisdom, courage, and protection against evil which they impart. The so-called shaman's plumes enable the shaman to see and hear everything both above and below the earth; and with their help he performs his magic feats, such as curing the sick, transforming the dead, calling down the sun, etc. When he wishes to bring the supernatural forces of his plumes into action, he holds the handle in his right hand, generally giving it a slight trembling motion. The power of the hanging feathers is supposed to emanate from the tips. No shaman is ever seen without one or more such plumes in his hand, and on festive occasions they are tied to the heads of the principal performers" (Lumholtz, 1973:7-8).

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in past lives:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a belief in reincarnation.

↳ Are religious leaders chosen:

– Yes

Notes: Temple officials (ranking below the shaman) are chosen every five years. "All the officers, as well as their wives, are pledged to strict faithfulness toward each other during their term of office. They are chosen every five years, when the temple, too, is renovated, freshly thatched, etc. A great feast, lasting a week, inaugurates each cycle of five years, and the day of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, always falls within that week" (Lumholtz, 1973:151).

↳ Are leaders considered fallible:

– I don't know

↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:

– I don't know

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also “oral scriptures” (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: "I was astonished at the fertility of the Huichols in what we should call legendary lore, but what to them is gospel truth and history. As a rule, the singing lasts only for two nights; but a good shaman, if he has the physical endurance, can sing new verses night after night for at least a fortnight. In their songs they relate how the gods, in the beginning, composed the world out of chaos and darkness; how they instituted the customs of the Huichols, and taught the people all they had to do to please them; to build temples, hunt deer, and go for the hikuli plant; to raise corn; and to make bows and arrows and ceremonial objects. There are no written records kept of these traditions. They live on the lips of the people, as national heirlooms, passing from one generation to the next, as originally did the sagas and folk-songs of the ancient Northmen" (Lumholtz, 1973:8).

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: According to Murdock and Wilson (1972), Column 6: Large or Impressive Structures, "the most impressive structure (or type of structure) is a temple, church, commemorative monument, or other essentially religious or ceremonial edifice."

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes

↳ Tombs:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of tombs.

↳ Temples:

– Yes

Notes: "The Huichols live mostly in circular houses (i-ki) made from loose stones, or from stone and mud, and covered with thatched roofs. Their temples (to-ki-pa), which are devoted to various, gods, are of similar shape, but much larger, having their entrance toward sunrise" (Lumholtz, 1898:6).

↳ Devotional markers:

– Yes

Notes: "Idols are never found in the temples, but are hidden away in remote caves, or in some special sacred small edifice made for the purpose, either round or rectangular" (Lumholtz, 1898:6).



Other type of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes [specify]: God houses

Notes: "Outside of the [temple] door is an open space surrounded by small god houses (sǰí-li-ki), rectangular in shape, and covered with gabled and thatched roofs. The entrance to the sǰí-li-ki faces the open place in front of the temple. Such small god houses may also frequently be found in the forests, and are sometimes circular in form" (Lumholtz, 1898:6).

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

Notes: "There are a great many sacred caves devoted to various gods. These generally contain some little spring or pool which makes the cave sacred. Such pools or springs, which are called ku-tsá-la, are also found in various parts of the country outside of caves; and the water is used for religious purposes, that from a few of them being thought beneficial to children, while a salutary influence upon human beings in general is attributed to that of most of them" (Lumholtz, 1898:6).



Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– Yes

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: In Lumholtz's (1973:242) account of funeral rites (as described to him by shaman) it is indicated that as the shaman performs the rites, the soul of the dead comes in the form of a white fly or small bird to sit with the shaman. The two will communicate for a time, before the soul continues on its journey.

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: A belief in the afterlife is present, but the afterlife is not described in extensive ethnographic

details. See questions below for available information.

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined horizontal space:

– Yes

Notes: "During the night the shaman sings to all the quarters of the world. At daybreak he stops, and, standing up, stretches out his plumes toward the east. This he does because the dead always go first to the hikuli country, though afterward they settle in the west" (Lumholtz, 1973:242).

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a belief in reincarnation.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: Corpses are typically interred. See questions below for more details.

↳ Cremation:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cremation.

↳ Mummification:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of mummification.

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: "In the southern part of the country the dead are buried in the middle of the house, in graves a little more than a yard deep. The Huichols do not pull down the house in which a person dies; but when four generations have lived in it, it is abandoned. In the other parts of the country, caves are utilised for burial purposes and the entrances closed with a wall of stone and mud. In any case, the body is placed with the feet toward the east" (Lumholtz, 1973:242).

↳ Corpse is flexed (legs are bent or body is crouched):

– I don't know

Notes: Not clearly specified.

↳ Corpse is extended (lying flat on front or back):

– I don't know

Notes: Not clearly specified.

↳ Corpse is upright (where body is interred in standing position):

– I don't know

Notes: Not clearly specified.

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cannibalism.

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of exposing corpses to the elements.

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating that corpses are fed to animals.

↳ Secondary burial:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1850 (Secondary Bone/Body Treatment) indicates that secondary bone/body treatment is absent (Schroeder, 2001; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for re-treatment of corpses.

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of co-sacrifices.

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

Notes: "A dead person immediately receives a gift of water in a hollow reed, and five tortillas...The deceased takes away with him all his clothes and the reed of water" (Lumholtz, 1973:242).

↳ Personal effects:

– Yes

Notes: "A dead person immediately receives a gift of water in a hollow reed, and five tortillas...The deceased takes away with him all his clothes and the reed of water" (Lumholtz, 1973:242).

↳ Valuable items:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating that grave goods consist of valuable items.

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for more information regarding Huichol burials.

↳ As cenotaphs:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cenotaphs.

↳ In cemetery:

– I don't know

Notes: Lumholtz (1973:59) mentions the presence of a cemetery, but does not indicate if the Huichol typically bury the dead in such places.

↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of family tombs-crypts.

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– Yes

Notes: "In the southern part of the country the dead are buried in the middle of the house, in graves a little more than a yard deep. The Huichols do not pull down the house in which a person dies; but when four generations have lived in it, it is abandoned" (Lumholtz, 1973:242).

↳ Other formal burial type:

– Yes [specify]: Caves

Notes: "In the other parts of the country, caves are utilised for burial purposes and the entrances closed with a wall of stone and mud" (Lumholtz, 1973:242).

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: "The gods of the Huichol are obviously natural phenomena personified, and the principal gods represent the four elements: fire and air (male), earth and water (female). The male gods are called Great-grandfathers, Grandfathers and Elder Brothers. The greatest of the gods, the Fire, is called Grandfather, because he existed before the Sun, who is called Father. The female gods are called Mothers, and are the source of vegetation and fructifying rains. There is one Mother at each cardinal point and there is one above who keeps the world from falling down. These five Mothers and the Great-grandmother Nakawe underneath the earth constitute the six world regions of the Huichol. The moon is Grandmother, but is not considered important" (Lumholtz, 1973:196).

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– I don't know

Notes: The following statement implies that Fire, or Grandfather, is a supreme high god. However, this supernatural being is not described in substantial ethnographic detail. "The greatest of the gods, the Fire, is called Grandfather, because he existed before the Sun, who is called Father" (Lumholtz, 1973:196). Additionally, at the time this entry focuses on, the Huichol had been nominally converted to Christianity (see Membership/Group Interactions section above). Because this conversion was only nominal in nature, and native beliefs were still held at the time, this entry does not consider the Christian God to be present as a part of Huichol religion.

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: Previously human spirits are identified as present, but not described in substantial ethnographic detail. See questions below for available information.

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits can be physically felt:

– I don't know

↳ Previously human spirits have knowledge of this world:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– No

Notes: "When, aided by the proper ceremonies, the souls of the dead arrive [to the after life], they cannot return to harm the living or their property" (Zingg, 1938:153).

↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world:
– I don't know

↳ Human spirits have memory of life:
– I don't know

↳ Human spirits exhibit positive emotion:
– I don't know

↳ Human spirits exhibit negative emotion:
– I don't know

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living:
– Yes

Notes: During funeral ceremonies, a shaman is said to communicate with the soul of the deceased. (see Lumholtz, 1973:242).

↳ In waking, everyday life:
– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence of previously human spirits communicating with the living during everyday life.

↳ Only through specialists:
– Yes

Notes: During funeral ceremonies, a shaman is said to communicate with the soul of the deceased. (see Lumholtz, 1973:242).

↳ Only through monarch:
– No

Notes: There is no monarch among the Huichol.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:
– Yes

Notes: "The gods of the Huichol are obviously natural phenomena personified, and the principal gods represent the four elements: fire and air (male), earth and water (female). The male gods are called Great-grandfathers, Grandfathers and Elder Brothers. The greatest of the gods, the Fire, is called Grandfather, because he existed before the Sun, who is called Father. The female gods are called Mothers, and are the source of vegetation and fructifying rains. There is one Mother at each cardinal point and there is one above who keeps the world from falling down. These five Mothers and the Great-grandmother Nakawe underneath the earth

constitute the six world regions of the Huichol. The moon is Grandmother, but is not considered important" (Lumholtz, 1973:196).

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:
– I don't know

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:
– I don't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:
– Yes

Notes: "The gods are supposed to be standing all around the [Page 9] horizon, seeing and hearing everything..." (Lumholtz, 1973:8).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
– Yes

Notes: "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

↳ These supernatural beings can reward:
– I don't know

↳ These supernatural beings can punish:
– Yes

Notes: "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:
– Yes

Notes: "The gods are angry with man and begrudge him everything, particularly the rain, which is of paramount importance to the very existence of the tribe. But when the deities hear the shaman sing of their deeds, they are pleased and relent, and they liberate the clouds which they have been keeping back for themselves, and rain results" (Lumholtz, 1973:8). "Whenever it stops raining for two or three days, the principal men gather in the temple to consult the shaman as to what the gods can be angry about, and it is decided to make another feast and kill more oxen to satisfy them. The people in the ranches all over the country follow suit" (Lumholtz, 1973:10).

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "The gods are angry with man and begrudge him everything, particularly the rain, which is of paramount importance to the very existence of the tribe. But when the deities hear the shaman sing of their deeds, they are pleased and relent, and they liberate the clouds which they have been keeping back for themselves, and rain results" (Lumholtz, 1973:8).

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "The gods are angry with man and begrudge him everything, particularly the rain, which is of paramount importance to the very existence of the tribe. But when the deities hear the shaman sing of their deeds, they are pleased and relent, and they liberate the clouds which they have been keeping back for themselves, and rain results" (Lumholtz, 1973:8).

↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger:

– I don't know

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: In addition to the spirits of deceased humans, the Huichol have a variety of deities. "The gods of the Huichol are obviously natural phenomena personified, and the principal gods represent the four elements: fire and air (male), earth and water (female)" (Lumholtz, 1973:196).

↳ Power of beings is domain specific:

– Yes

Notes: It appears that supernatural beings are associated with distinct elements. "The gods of the Huichol are obviously natural phenomena personified, and the principal gods represent the four elements: fire and air (male), earth and water (female)" (Lumholtz, 1973:196).

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

Notes: Based on the following statement, it appears that supernatural monitoring is present. However, there is no further evidence. "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular:

Prosocial norms are norms that enhance cooperation among members of the group, including obviously "moral" or "ethical" norms, but also extending to norms concerning honouring contracts and oaths, providing hospitality, coming to mutual aid in emergencies, etc.

– I don't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about taboos:

– I don't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance:

– Yes

Notes: "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals:

– Yes

Notes: "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

↳ Supernatural beings care about other:

– Yes [specify]: Deer hunting

Notes: "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

Notes: "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:

– Yes

Notes: "All disease comes from the gods, who are thought to come down at night to make people ill. They may have been offended because the people did not sacrifice enough, or did not hunt deer sufficiently, or did not properly conduct the ceremonies at a feast" (Lumholtz, 1973:238).

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic evidence.

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of messianic beliefs.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of an eschatology.

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for required celibacy. (Note that celibacy is required in the months leading up to the hīkūli feast, but this is temporary. See questions below).

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– Yes

Notes: "During all the months consumed in preparations for this feast [the hīkūli, or peyote, feast], from the time of first starting out to gather the plant, until the feast is over,—a period of from four to five months,—entire abstinence from sexual intercourse, and from eating salt, is imposed; nor is it allowed to bathe or wash. Both men and women take part in the dance of this feast, which is afterwards, as is the case with most of their feasts, repeated at each ranch" (Lumholtz, 1898:8).

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of required castration.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of food taboos.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– I don't know

Notes: "The Huichol regards all his staple food as a distinct gift from the gods, and ceremonies are periodically performed in connection with it. It never occurs to the Indian that he has to eat in accordance with natural laws in order to sustain life. He will not partake of his new crop of corn or beans or squashes until a feast has been made and a part of the harvest offered to the gods. Even the various forms in which he eats corn, such as tamales, toasted corn, etc., have to be sacrificed to the deities before he may enjoy the new dishes. The same rules are observed in regard to his intoxicating drinks, and in certain cases also with water. The Indian respects his food and drink, and eats with care, with his thoughts on the gods who are pleased to grant it to him" (Lumholtz, 1973:280).

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– I don't know

Notes: It is unclear if participation in large-scale rituals is mandatory, but ceremonies play a salient and important role in Huichol religion. "The Huichol spends a great part of his life at ceremonies and feasts. From May to August, that is to say the dry and part of the wet season, there are frequent feasts for making rain. During the wet season, should it stop raining only for two or three days, the principal men gather in the temple and decide to sacrifice an ox or two, which means a 'feast,' or propitiation of the gods, lasting for two days. Then there is the feast of new squashes and that of the new corn, as well as that of toasted corn, connected with the cult of hikuli (Sp. peyote); but the greatest of all is the feast for eating corncakes, which are made from ground whole corn, and baked in an oven" (Lumholtz, 1898:7).

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– Other [specify in comments]

Notes: The Huichol live within the country of Mexico, and are subject to the Mexican Government; the Huichol polity is tied in with the Mexican polity. According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), column 3: levels of sovereignty, there is an "absence of effective sovereignty at any level transcending that of the local community, i.e., a stateless society." Tuden and Marshall (1972) define effective sovereignty as "...the highest level of indigenous political integration at which functionaries have and commonly exercise the power to enforce important decisions at subordinate levels in the political structure-- notably to compel participation in warfare, to collect taxes or tribute, and/or to exact sanctions for

major delicts." Tuden and Marshall (1972) column 1 (political autonomy) indicate that "the society is politically semi-autonomous, being governed by another society with an alien culture which operates largely through the indigenous political institutions, e.g., through indirect rule, but which requires conformity on major issues such as refraining from war, head-hunting, or cannibalism." "The Huichols belong, politically, to Jalisco, and the Governor of that State is, aside from the Federal Government, their highest authority. Under him is the Director Politico in Mezquitic, with whom the tribe mainly has to deal" (Lumholtz, 1973:98).

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– No

Notes: "Anybody who has a natural gift for it may become a shaman. Such a gift will be evidenced from his early youth by his being more interested in the ceremonies and paying more attention to the singing than ordinary boys do. The feasts, where they acquire their knowledge of the gods and their doings by listening to the songs of the shaman, are the only school the people attend" (Lumholtz, 1973:236).

Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Yes

Notes: The Huichol interact with the Mexican Government, but at the time this entry focuses on, the Huichol retained a semi-autonomous status. According to Tuden and Marshall, (1972), Column 1: Political Autonomy, the Huichol "society is politically semi-autonomous, being governed by another society with an alien culture which operates largely through the indigenous political institutions, e.g., through indirect rule, but which requires conformity on major issues such as refraining from war, head-hunting, or cannibalism" (note, identical to SCCS Variable 81, Political Autonomy). "Scarcely had the [Huichol] dispersed when a Mexican on horseback appeared, an unusual sight in these mountains. He came from, the Director Politico in Mezquitic to take a census of the western side of the Huichol country, in accordance with the order of the Mexican Government that it should be taken that year (1895) for the whole Republic. The Huichols belong, politically, to Jalisco, and the Governor of that State is, aside from the Federal Government, their highest authority. Under him is the Director Politico in Mezquitic, with whom the tribe mainly has to deal" (Lumholtz, 1973:98).

– I don't know

Notes: "The government in the Huichol villages remains as it was when instituted by the missionaries, a mixture of the rule of State and Church. Though this condition of affairs is contrary to the laws of the republic, it is still in full force among the tribes not yet Mexicanised. The number of civil and ecclesiastical authorities annually elected by the people makes their village government quite a formidable apparatus. The civil functionaries are: The alcalde, the gobernador, the captain (or sheriff), and four messengers (batopiles). It is not necessary to go further into detail about them. Suffice it to say that the three higher officers are called judges, and must obtain the sanction of the nearest Mexican government official before they can assume office...The ecclesiastical authorities are headed by the major-domos, each the custodian of a saint. Their number therefore varies in accordance with the number of images belonging to the different churches; in Santa Catarina, for instance, there are four. Their principal duty is the care of the money belonging to the respective pictures. Other functionaries of that body are the alguaciles, a kind of constables, and the four priostes, or church

messengers, whose entire duty is to remove the 'saints' as occasion requires" (Lumholtz, 1973:245-246).

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Notes: SCCS variable 20, Food Storage, indicates that food is stored in individual households (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 14, Routes of Land Transport, indicates that unimproved trails are used (Murdock and Morrow, 1970). Presumably, transportation infrastructure is not present.

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– Yes

Notes: According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), Column 10: Police, indicates that "Police functions are specialized and institutionalized on at least some level or levels of political integration" [note: equivalent to SCCS Variable 90, Police].

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Notes: According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), Column 9: Judiciary, "Supreme judicial authority is lacking at any level above that of the local community" [note: equivalent to SCCS Variable 89, Judiciary].

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic evidence. Presumably, no written language is present.

Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– I don't know

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: The Huichol rely predominantly on extensive/shifting agriculture, with hunting as a secondary form of subsistence. Fishing, gathering, and animal husbandry supplement the diet. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

- Gathering
- Hunting (including marine animals)
- Fishing
- Pastoralism
- Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

Notes: The Huichol rely predominantly on extensive/shifting agriculture, with hunting as a secondary form of subsistence. Fishing, gathering, and animal husbandry supplement the diet. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.