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# The Black, the Red, and the White: Duality and Unity in the Luiseño Cosmos

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A fundamental structure of duality and unity colors Luiseño cosmology. Polar opposites on one level are integrated and unified on a higher level—a pattern which pervades Luiseño myth, ritual, and worldview. The system of dualistic oppositions is more extensive, and it commands by far the greater dramatic interest, but the resolution and integration of duality into a higher unity seems to lead us into the heart of Luiseño metaphysical speculation.

Duality is apparent on every level, while the evidence for unifying principles becomes progressively more speculative as we move from color and direction symbolism through ritual to concepts of the soul. The fundamental dualism of the Luiseño system is common to much of the rest of southern California, and is doubtless derived from the greater Southwest. My purpose here is not to discuss origins, however, but the integration of duality and unity in Luiseño cosmology. Furthermore, limitations on space prohibit detailed discussion of ritual except for those aspects which demonstrate the theme of duality and unity; these are primarily elements of the boys' and girls' puberty ceremonies, particularly the ground-paintings and the *wa:nawut*—a net figure used in the boys' rites.

The term Luiseño here also refers to the group traditionally called the Juaneño. According to White (1963:91), the Luiseño and Juaneño share so much geographically, culturally, and linguistically that they can be treated as a single people.

## THE CREATION MYTH

The creation myth is the most condensed and articulate statement of duality and unity in Luiseño cosmology. It sets forth in dramatic narrative form most of the dualistic oppositions and unifying principles we encounter, although some of these are more fully amplified in ritual.

There are several versions of the Luiseño creation myth extant, including Boscana (1933), DuBois (1904, 1906, 1908), Henshaw (1972), Kroeber (1906, 1925), and White (1957). I present here a composite synopsis of the creation myth, emphasizing the elements which bring out the themes of duality and unity. It largely follows DuBois' fourth version (1908:138-148), with some changes to bring it into harmony with other versions, particularly White's.

Luiseño terms are cited in the transcription of Bright's Luiseño dictionary (1968) or Harrington's annotations (1933) to Boscana.

In the beginning was *kiwviš* *ʔataxviš* 'vacant, empty', the only being. *kiwviš* *ʔataxviš* became *ʔo:may* *ya:may* 'not alive, non-existent', which then became *xwaykit* *piwkit* 'whitish, greyish'. *xwaykit* *piwkit* created or transformed itself into *tu:kumit*, 'Night' or 'Sky', and *tama:yawut* 'Earth'. They were brother and sister. Earth lay in the darkness with her feet to the north; Sky sat to her right. They gradually became conscious, and each realized the existence of the other. Then each claimed to be the older; Sky won this dispute.

Earth asked Sky who he was, and he said, "I am *kiwviš* 'vacant'." Earth replied, "I am *ʔataxviš* 'empty'." Earth again asked Sky who he was, and he said, "I am *ʔo:may* 'not alive'." Earth replied, "I am *ya:may*, 'non-existent'." Then each declared to the other the attributes they would have when creation was complete. "I stretch, I extend," Earth said; "I shake, I rumble." "I am high, I arch over," Sky replied; "I devour, I drink up; I cut off, I sever."

Then in a primordial act of incest—initiated by Sky and resisted at first by Earth—they united to create the *ka:malum*, the first People: forerunners of animals, plants, and natural phenomena, of ritual objects and mythic beings. The last and wisest of the First People was *wiyo:t*.

Sky and Earth created land for the First People to live on. This was a paradisaical time with no sickness and no death; the First People played and multiplied in a world which Earth kept magically expanding to accommodate them all. Their food was white clay. Then Sky and Earth retired, giving *wiyo:t* the knowledge of how to enlarge the world and how to make white clay nourishing.

The First People lived happily for a time. One of them was *waxa:wut* 'Frog', a beautiful woman whose long hair completely covered her back. One day *wiyo:t* saw Frog bathing and he lusted after her; then her hair parted and he saw that her back and buttocks were thin and fleshless. *wiyo:t's* desire turned to

disgust. Frog, a sorceress, read his thought and resolved to kill him, which she did by secretly swallowing his feces. *wiyo:t* fell sick, and as his death approached he told the people how to live after he was gone and how to cremate his body. He promised to return in three days and then died. Coyote snatched *wiyo:t's* heart from the pyre and ate it.

*wiyo:t* had not passed on his knowledge of how to enlarge the world and make white clay nourishing. Faced with death, lack of space, and hunger, the First People met to ordain an entire ecological scheme: who should live where, and—more important—who should die to become food for whom. They killed Deer for food, although he resisted mightily. They also decided to kill Eagle to use his feathers in rituals; he flew vainly to the four corners of the earth trying to escape. He returned to the center to accept his fate, but it was arranged that Eagle and his mate would live forever as long as they gave up their children to be killed.

At this point, *wiyo:t* appeared in the west as the new moon—a sign of the immortality of the spirit. Most of the First People were transformed into their present identities as animals and plants. Two of the women among them experienced their first menses, and the first girls' puberty ceremony was held. Those of the First People who became human beings were given separate languages, and they dispersed over the earth to their present locations. The ancestors of the Luiseño went south.

### DUALITY AND UNITY IN THE CREATION MYTH

In a very condensed form, the opening scenes of this myth give an elegant and compelling account of how the dualities that beset the human condition—both real and symbolic—came about.

In a very real sense, primordial unity gives rise to duality with the opposition of Sky and Earth, male and female, and the multiplicity

of beings that follows. After the death of *wiyó:t*, all beings are divided into those who kill and those who are killed, those who eat and those who are eaten. There are the old and the young, and the members of one generation who die to make room for the next. Life had been taken for granted before, but now we see life inextricably linked with death.

How the First People multiplied themselves in the beginning is unclear, but sexuality as we know it seems to appear only after the death of *wiyó:t* with the first menses of two of the women among them. Here we see the most basic dualities of the human condition: the complementarity of male and female, of life and death. A great deal of Luiseño ritual is concerned with death on the one hand and life on the other—birth and puberty.

Kroeber (1925:677) says the opening of this myth reads like a Polynesian cosmogonic chant, but it also hints at a treatise on Vedanta philosophy in narrative form. According to Vedanta, primordial unity devolves into duality when individual consciousness appears, which means awareness of separate existence and desire for personal satisfaction. Death for the individual is the inevitable result, whether we think of it as personal extinction or merger back into the higher unity. Sky and Earth become conscious of duality—their separateness—and soon Sky's desire leads to a great multiplicity of individual beings. But duality is not fully operative in the Luiseño cosmos until after the death of *wiyó:t*, which again was brought about by desire. Duality, desire, and death are all interdependent consequences of a descent from primordial unity.

On a more symbolic level, the creation myth sets up practically all of the important equations and oppositions of a pervasive dualism, as well as the unifying themes which resolve these dualities. The central motif here is the duality of the male and female principles. Sky and Earth—*tu:kumit* and *tama:yawut*—are immediately equated with male and female.

A number of dualistic oppositions cluster around Sky and Earth, male and female. The name *tu:kumit* means both "sky" and "night"; the root sense is "night." Sky or night is clearly equated with death when he says, "I devour, I drink up; I cut off, I sever." Earth is just as clearly equated with birth and creation. The association of night and death is explicit for Sky, while the myth does not equate Earth with day, but there is an association of day with female in ritual.

The myth also presents the unities which resolve these oppositions. Spirit is the higher unity which transcends the duality of male and female. Spirit is represented by the stage of creation immediately preceding the appearance of Sky and Earth: *xwaykit piwkit* 'whitish, greyish'. This is a pre-existent form of the Milky Way, a symbol of the spirit (DuBois 1908:86, 163). The Milky Way is beyond sky and earth, just as spirit is beyond male and female. The immortality of the spirit transcends both death and life as we know it in this world. These basic sets of dualities and unifying principles are:

spirit	←————→	male	:	female
Milky Way	←————→	sky	:	earth
		night	:	day
immortality	←————→	death	:	life, birth

In this connection, the identification of *xwaykit piwkit* exclusively with the male principle in DuBois' fourth version of the myth (1908:139) (which Kroeber [1925:677] and Harrington [1933:116] echo) is out of harmony with other versions. Each of the paired names of pre-existent stages before Sky and Earth (e.g., *kiwviš ʔataxviš*, *ʔo:may ya:may*) seems to represent a single entity which may have male and female aspects, but which transcends both. (DuBois' second version [1906:52] gives eight such pre-existences of Sky and Earth, of which *xwayay piway* [ for *xwaykit piwkit*] is the sixth.)

The opening scene of the myth also sets up directional symbolism. The sky is above

the earth, and appropriately, Earth lies while Sky sits beside her; so on the vertical axis, female is down and male is up. On the horizontal axis, Earth lies with her feet to the north, while Sky sits on her right. Female is equated with left and west, while male is right and east. The cardinal direction which transcends this duality is of course north, the direction of the center of the world from which the ancestors of the Luiseño came after the death of *wiyot*. In addition, the center transcends the dualities of east and west, right and left, up and down.

Finally, the creation myth emphasizes the color white. White is a unifying theme for the dualistic opposition of red for male and black for female (Strong 1929:290, 310). This red and black color symbolism does not occur in the myth, but it is very prominent in ritual. Of course, white represents the spirit. We see this in *xwaykit piwkit* 'whitish, greyish', and also in white clay as the food of the First People before death came into the world.

These sets of oppositions, with their unifying aspects are:

spirit	←→	male	:	female
white	←→	red	:	black
north	←→	east	:	west
center	←→	right	:	left
		up	:	down

### ANOTHER ORIGIN MYTH

A myth of the origin of the *no:tuš*—one of an elaborate series of mourning ceremonies—expands on some of the oppositions set up in the creation myth. The *no:tuš* ceremony involved contests, presumably between members of different villages, and there is speculation that the myth may perhaps represent the traces of an earlier moiety division which had become weakened (cf. Strong 1929, White 1963). At any rate, this myth (DuBois 1908:148-150) refers to an obvious environmental division in Luiseño territory.

On one side, Sea-fog leads the western people, whose ranks largely include shore and lowland creatures. Thunder-cloud leads the eastern or mountain people, who include many birds of prey as well as Frog and Deer. In the end, the mountain team wins most of the contests. The general character of these opposing teams seems straightforward at first glance:

west	:	east
coast	:	mountains
sea-fog	:	thunder-cloud
water	:	air

On closer inspection, the oppositions expressed in this origin myth are not so much territorial or directional as conceptual. It is not a matter of west versus east, or coast versus mountains, but of male and female, death versus life.

The western or coastal set represents life. The primary symbol of life here is water, which is implicit in the territorial orientation and most of the membership of the team led by Sea-fog. This equation of life and female principle with the west and water or the ocean emerges explicitly in ritual. In one version of the ground-painting used in the girls' puberty ceremony, a small circle of sand toward the west of the painting represents the sea, made by Earth for the First People, which "gives us the breath of life which fills our lungs" (DuBois 1908:89).

The mountain set is associated with the male principle: with the east, the sky, and death. The association with the sky and death is particularly clear for Thunder-cloud and the various birds of prey. Many of the members of the mountain set are spoken of in one connection or another as being particularly powerful, and they seem to derive their power from an ambiguous or liminal status. The powerful birds of prey, for example, live both on land and in the sky; from the air they seize creatures of land and water; they live by killing. Certain members of the mountain set also derive power



from a more symbolic ambiguity: they are associated both with life and death.

Frog, for example, is a highly liminal creature, able to live both on land and in water. As a female and a creature of earth and water (both connected with the life-giving female principle), Frog ought to be associated with life, but she brought death into the world through her sorcery. There is a clear case of symbolic reversal here, which also shows in Frog's manner of bewitching *wiyo:t*. Feces are perhaps the least valued part of the person, but Frog swallowed *wiyo:t*'s feces and it made *him* sick.

Deer and Eagle show a different aspect of liminality and power: they are associated with life *through* death. There is even a dualism in the pairing of Deer and Eagle this way. The people chose Deer so that his flesh might nourish them, and Eagle's children—rather than Eagle himself—so the feathers might render their rituals efficacious. Through death a creature of the earth nourishes the body, and a creature of the sky nourishes the spirit. This ambiguous dual association of life and death helps to account for Eagle's special sanctity among the Luiseño. Eagle is associated with death on the one hand (and the ritually slain eagle is a messenger to the spirits of the dead [Strong 1929:309]), but Eagle is also associated with fertility, life, and immortality (White 1963:141).

The oppositions in the *no:tuš* myth could be restated more succinctly as:

male	:	female
east	:	west
mountains	:	water
death	:	life

### MALE AND FEMALE

The creation myth and the *no:tuš* origin myth set forth a whole constellation of symbolic oppositions surrounding male and female.

In the opening scene of the creation myth,

Sky and Earth identify themselves with different aspects of the first being, *kiwviš ʔataxviš* 'vacant, empty'. Sky speaks of himself as *kiwviš*, which specifically means "vacant of people, uninhabited," while Earth calls herself *ʔataxviš* 'empty' in a more general sense. *kiwviš ʔataxviš* is one entity, but it has animate and inanimate aspects which are identified with male and female, respectively. To emphasize this point, Sky and Earth likewise identify themselves with the state which follows *kiwviš ʔataxviš*—*ʔo:may ya:may* 'non-living, non-existing'. Sparkman (in DuBois 1908:138, n. 196) glosses *ʔo:may* and *ya:may* as animate and inanimate forms of the verb "not to be," as does Harrington (1933:116).

This clear equation of male with human and/or animate, and of female with inanimate, appears to run counter to the oppositions established so far. But to interpret this opposition flatly as animate versus inanimate is misleading; it actually refers to Luiseño concepts of the differences between male and female *ayelkwi* 'knowledge-power'. According to White (1963:145), an individual receives two different kinds of *ayelkwi* from his or her mother and father. The mother bestows the knowledge and power of life and human form, while the father bestows the *ayelkwi* of how to be a particular kind of person (e.g., a member of a particular lineage, with the capacity to acquire particular powers).

So the female principle is life force, while the male principle is will and individual consciousness. The distinction between life versus will and consciousness underlies the opposition of animate and inanimate in the creation myth. Animate and inanimate are not the most apt terms here, but the male principle is animate because it is endowed with individual consciousness, while the female principle is perhaps said to be inanimate by contrast.

Luiseño culture is strongly oriented toward male values, and it is hardly surprising that the

male principle is shown as dominant and more powerful. In the creation myth, when Sky and Earth argue over who is older, Sky wins the argument, proving that he is dominant—if not actually older than Earth. Furthermore, it was Sky who initiated incestuous relations with Earth, overcoming her resistance in most versions of the myth. In the *no:tuš* origin myth, several members of the mountain team—representing the male principle—are said to have great power, and in the end the mountain team won most of the contests the myth describes.

The oppositions set forth here could be summarized as:

male	:	female
older	:	younger
dominant	:	submissive
powerful	:	less powerful
conscious	:	life-force

### PAIRED NAMES

One of the most striking features of Luiseño myth and ritual is a predilection for paired names. In ritual speech, the names of a great many ritual objects and mythic characters are given as doublets, as are place names in myth and many of the words in sacred songs. Members of these pairs are associated in some sense, and they form a unit on one level of analysis; sometimes they are opposite in some lesser sense.

The First People, for example, were generally born in pairs. Some of these pairs include a sacred and a profane member: in the doublet *to:pal ta:myaš*, *to:pal* is an ordinary mortar, while *ta:myaš* is the sacred mortar used in the boys' *Datura* initiation. Pairs of the First People may be opposed in yet other ways. In the doublet *hunwut ʔašwut* 'bear, eagle', Bear and Eagle are the two most powerful and ritually important predators—of land and sky, respectively. Another pair of the First People, *kwi:la šu:kat* 'oak, deer', are the two most esteemed sources of food—plant and

animal, respectively. On the other hand, many of the First People seem to be paired only because they are very similar (e.g., *pive:saš ho:yawiš* 'tule, cat-tail') or because they have some ritual association (e.g., *ši:vat pavyut* 'crystal, ceremonial wand'). Still, there is a real tendency for paired names to reflect the theme duality and unity.

Not only are the names of distinct entities paired, but a pair of terms may be used for a single entity. These paired terms may differ only slightly in meaning, with no apparent attempt at underscoring an opposition, as in *xwyakit piwkit* 'whitish, greyish', the state preceding Sky and Earth. But the pairing of synonyms and near synonyms sometimes describes complementary aspects of one whole, such as *kiwvis ʔataxvis* 'vacant, empty', in the creation myth: *kiwviš* is the animate form of "empty" and *ʔataxviš* is inanimate.

The origin of this pattern is unclear. Kroeber (1925:667) seems to feel that it began with pairs of near synonyms for a single entity and then was generalized to include paired names of distinct entities. Ideally, it may aim at establishing a complementarity between the items thus paired, thereby treating them as a single unit with dual aspects. But the pattern of paired names, whether it had synonymy or complementarity as its driving force originally, is certainly a very generalized feature of ritual speech. Whether this ritual pairing of words shows dualities unified on a higher level or not, it is still a strong linguistic expression of a pervasive conceptual dualism.

### RITUAL RECIPROCITY

The most striking aspect of dualism in Luiseño ritual is the pairing of clans in ritually reciprocal relationships. The majority of rituals cannot be performed by the clan for whose benefit the ritual is held (e.g., a mourning ceremony), but must be performed by some other clan. A clan's ritual leader, or *no:t*, formalized this reciprocal tie with another clan

through an institution called the *no:pet* or *no:t*-road (cf. Strong 1929:302-303; White 1963:150). With the post-contact disruption of Luiseño society, clans whose *no:t*-ship had fallen vacant amalgamated themselves with compatible and ritually viable clans; these larger units are called parties. Under the leadership of practising *no:ts*, parties are still paired in ritual reciprocity (White 1953).

There is evidence that ritual reciprocity between clans is a weakened form of an earlier moiety system, in which all Luiseño clans may once have been divided into two ritually complementary groups (cf. Strong 1929 and White 1963). Such a division characterizes an inland bloc of linguistically related groups adjacent to the Luiseño—the Cupeño, Cahuilla, and Serrano. Strong and White argue that a moiety system coupled with ritual reciprocity must have been part of a social structure common to all these groups, although the Luiseño moiety structure is only vestigial.

### THE SYMBOLISM OF RITUAL RECIPROCITY

White's firsthand description of two surviving Luiseño ceremonies (1953) shows traces of dualistic symbolism at work in the reciprocal relations between two clans or parties. The two parties can be neatly associated with the two opposing poles of Luiseño dualism (e.g., male/female, red/black, east/west), and this is clearly symbolized.

However, to demonstrate this crucial equation here requires a brief digression into moieties and dualism among the neighbors of the Luiseño. The Cupeño, Cahuilla, and Serrano all show an alignment of clans into Wildcat and Coyote moieties. The dualism which characterizes Luiseño cosmology is also present among these interior groups—although apparently in a less elaborated form, without the emphasis on unifying themes.

Cahuilla myth is clearest on this point (cf. Gifford 1918:188-189; Hooper 1920:318;

Strong 1929:130-133). The Cahuilla equivalents of the Luiseño Sky and Earth are two brothers—*mukat* and *temayawit*. The sexual dichotomy is not as straightforward here as in Luiseño cosmology, but the main outline of Cahuilla dualism seems to be:

<i>mukat</i>	:	temayawit
elder	:	younger
male	:	female
sky	:	earth
Wildcat	:	Coyote
west	:	east
black	:	white

Some aspects of Cahuilla dualism—particularly color and direction—differ from the Luiseño system, but this does not affect the crucial equation of Wildcat with male and Coyote with female—an equation which is not to be taken in any literally sexual sense.

Traces of the paired opposition of Wildcat and Coyote can be found among the Luiseño. One of the most important items of ritual paraphernalia among the Luiseño (as indeed among the Cupeño, Cahuilla, and Serrano) is a sacred clan bundle called *ma:savut*. According to Boscana (1933:37-38), the skin of a coyote or a wildcat formed the cover of the bundle among the Juaneño and perhaps other western Luiseño clans (although among the eastern clans the *ma:savut* was covered with reed matting [Strong 1929:292-295]). We see Wildcat and Coyote linked in a very important ritual context.

On the basis of evidence too detailed to recapitulate here, White (1963:156) claimed that the present Ivium party can be linked with the Wildcat moiety, and the Anoyum party with Coyote. It seems reasonable to assume that Wildcat and Coyote moieties among the Luiseño would have had the same symbolic orientation vis-à-vis dualism as among the Cupeño, Cahuilla, and Serrano (cf. Strong 1929:341). This means that the Ivium and Anoyum parties fit into the Luiseño dualistic scheme of:



Ivium	:	Anoyum
Wildcat	:	Coyote
male	:	female
east	:	west
right	:	left
red	:	black

The color and direction symbolism of the two ceremonies White observed is congruent with his alignment of Ivium with Wildcat and Anoyum with Coyote. The ritual space was oriented to the north, with the Ivium participants on the right/east, and the Anoyum on the left/west (White 1953:571). In other words, the Wildcat Ivium sit on the male side—east—and the Coyote Anoyum on the female side—west.

In one of the ceremonies, a red bandana was placed on the head of the Ivium *no:t*, while the Anoyum *no:t* received a blue one (White 1953:573-574). Given the colors, bandanas usually come in—red and blue—blue is the logical substitute for black. So the Ivium *no:t* was marked by the male color red, while the female color black (or its substitute) marked the Anoyum *no:t*.

White does not seem to have commented on this color and directional symbolism—either by itself or in connection with the moiety division he proposes. Its appearance in ritual provides independent evidence in favor of the existence of moieties in some form among the Luiseño, as the social expression of a much more pervasive dualism which characterizes Luiseño myth and ritual.

### MALE AND FEMALE IN RITUAL

Aspects of ritual beyond clan reciprocity reflect the division of Luiseño cosmology into opposing and complementary principles. Many of these revolve around the ritual roles of male and female.

Some of the dualistic symbolism in ritual deals simply with color and direction, very much as in the case of ritual reciprocity between clans. For example, the body painting of the *paxa*?—a ritual specialist and cere-

monial manager—is a statement of male and female dualism. According to Strong (1929:290), the *paxa*? was painted red on one side of his body to represent male, and black on the other to represent female. This information on the *paxa*? is crucial, because it enables us to link the color/direction symbolism in ritual with the sex/direction symbolism in myth (where male is right/east and female is left/west).

There are many aspects of sexual differentiation in ritual more fundamental than color and direction symbolism, of which the most important is the differential access to ritual power and knowledge accorded men and women. Since the Luiseño associate the male principle with a greater capacity for individual acquisition of power and knowledge, it is not surprising that men fill all the major ritual roles.

The instruction given to boys and girls in the puberty ceremonies is a good example of sexual differentiation in ritual knowledge. Common to both initiations was a public oration over a ground-painting; Sparkman's literal translations of these lectures (1908:223-226) show them to be largely exhortations to virtue and industriousness, with very little esoteric content. Elsewhere in the girls' ceremony, older female relatives gave much the same advice, also publically (Strong 1929:297). The boys' ceremony, on the other hand, included a good deal of esoteric knowledge imparted in private by the ritual officials in charge (DuBois 1908:82; Strong 1929:313).

One specifically female role in ritual reflects Luiseño dualism very neatly. When the clan for whose benefit a ceremony is held distributes goods to the officiating clan, it is women who make the presentations of food, money, and other valuables (DuBois 1908:84, 101; White 1953:572-576). The female principle gives; the male takes. In the creation myth, Sky hints at this when he says, "I devour, I drink up; I cut off, I sever," and the male

economic role *par excellence*, hunting, involves taking and killing. Women are associated with life and birth, production and giving, and this role is formalized in ritual.

Woman's ritual role was sometimes equated with day. Although goods could be distributed by women during nighttime ceremonies, the feasts which figure prominently in many rituals seem to have been held during the day (DuBois 1908:84). Women prepared these daytime feasts, and probably served them too. In the girls' puberty ceremony (cf. DuBois 1908:95), women sang and danced during the day, while men performed at night. In addition—although it is difficult to substantiate this impression—a greater proportion of the girls' initiation seems to take place during the day than in the corresponding boys' ceremony. So here we see a complex association of the concepts:

female : life : giving : day

There is a correlation between daytime versus nighttime ceremonies and other aspects of dualism: the equation of male with death, female with life. Funerary ceremonies took place almost entirely at night, which is an entirely appropriate equation of male, night, and death, while considerably more—though not all—of the initiation ceremonies took place during the day. Since the initiation rituals celebrated the individual's new status as an adult and hence a potential parent, they equate day and life, although not as unambiguously as funerary ceremonies equate night and death.

The opposition of male and female roles in ritual can be summarized as:

male : female  
 red : black  
 night : day  
 death : life, birth  
 taking : giving, producing  
 funeral : initiation

### NORTH AND CENTER AS UNIFYING PRINCIPLES

Ritual orientation toward the north and the center provides a unifying theme for many aspects of the ritual dualism of the male and female principles. As the creation myth shows, the sacred direction north transcends the duality of east and west, male and female, and after death the spirit rises to the north (Sparkman 1908:225).

There are many examples of ritual orientation toward the north, of which the most significant are the orientation of the *wamkiš*—the ceremonial enclosure—and the ground-painting. The *wamkiš* is a semi-circular (or semioval) wall of brush, open on the south side, closed on the north, with a fire in the center (Harrington 1933:138; White 1953:572). Ritual specialists tend to occupy the space to the north of the fire.

Most versions of the ground-painting demonstrate the primacy of north. A central pit is surrounded by three concentric circles which all show a gap to the north. This gap almost certainly represents the path of the spirit rising to the north after death (Sparkman 1908:224), and it may also represent the birth canal of Earth as she lay with her feet to the north to bring forth the First People.

More specific instances of ritual orientation to the north are the north-south alignment of cremation pits—undoubtedly to help the spirit of the deceased to rise to the north—and the pit in which the *wanawut* figure was laid out, with its feet to the north (Kroeber 1925:671). The ritualists who laid out the *wanawut* also stood facing north (DuBois 1908:85), and, in fact, according to DuBois (1908:89) all ceremonies and invocations are performed facing north.

Like the north, the center transcends the dualities of east and west, as well as the dualistic oppositions of inner and outer. There is an association of male and female with relative degrees of proximity to the

center: female is associated with the house and village, near the center, and male with the surrounding country further from the center. Initiations provide a good example of this relative proximity. Before the girls' puberty ceremony, the initiates were kept in seclusion in their houses (Strong 1929:309); boys, on the other hand, were taken "into the field" (Sparkman 1908:221) and did not visit their homes for a full month (cf. also DuBois 1908:77-79; Strong 1929:310, 313).

Intensification of the female principle—at puberty and after the birth of a child—is associated with proximity to the center, as well as with warmth and proximity to fire. Perhaps the equation is of life and warmth. Girls undergoing the puberty ceremony were immobilized for three days in a heated pit in the *wamkiš*, with warmed stones on their abdomens, and for up to a year afterward they could not drink cold water (DuBois 1908:94-96; Kroeber 1925:674). After the birth of a child, a woman was expected to remain in the house by the fire for a number of days (Sparkman 1908:214). This sort of intensification of the female principle is evident in the Luiseño version of the couvade, too. For some time, after his wife had given birth to a child, a man refrained from the usual male occupations and remained in the female sphere of the house and village (Boscana 1933:54; Kroeber 1908b:184).

Another aspect of the center emerges in a note by Harrington on Luiseño shamanism (1933:161-162). The shaman has a power object called *to:tuwiš* which remains within his body, very much akin to the "pain" of the Yurok shaman. Significantly, the Luiseño shaman keeps his *to:tuwiš* in his heart—the conceptual or spiritual center of the body.

Many aspects of Luiseño ritual and cosmology use the image of concentric circularity to emphasize the center, as Charles Irwin (1978) points out. The most striking concentric image, or course, is the ground-painting, the

central pit of which represents the *axis mundi*. This pit figures prominently in each of the rituals in which the ground-painting appears. According to Boscana (1933:37-38), the *wamkiš* had an inner and an outer precinct, with a fire and the *ma:šavut*—the sacred clan bundle—at the very center. Moreover, the *wamkiš* stood at the center of the village, which was the conceptual center of a clan's territory.

The archaeological artifacts described by Irwin (1978:91-92)—thin stone discs incised into concentric circles with a large central perforation—obviously replicate this concentric organization of the village, the *wamkiš*, and the ground-painting as an image of the cosmos. Irwin (1978:93) goes on to suggest that the principle of concentric organization might also apply to levels of ritual knowledge as the individual progressed from non-initiate to novice to full initiate. How neatly this ritual progression fits the symbolism of unity and duality emerges in the discussion of sacred and profane that follows.

The center, often associated with concentricity, is definitely one of the themes of unification in Luiseño cosmology. Outside the center, the dualism of the male and female principles and all they represent prevails, but the center transcends these dualities.

### RED AND SANCTITY

The sacred is often associated with a unifying theme—such as the spirit, north, the center—rather than one of the opposing dualities united by the higher theme. But sometimes sanctity also seems to be equated with one member of a dualistic opposition, particularly where color symbolism is concerned.

Many of the reported ritual uses of the colors red and black do not correlate neatly with oppositions such as male versus female, or Wildcat versus Coyote moiety. This color symbolism often denotes sacred versus profane status. For example, in a ceremony described

by Boscana (1933:57; Harrington 1934:36), the chief and the shamans were all painted red and black, (and perhaps white), while the common men were simply painted black. Black marks low ritual status, while the combination of red and black (and white) marks high ritual status—the sacred dimension, which in this context would mean individuals endowed with greater *ayelkwi*, “knowledge-power.” When we read of some ritual object being painted only one color, it is red. In the boys’ initiations, for example, the *paxa*’ carried a ceremonial stick painted red (Strong 1929:311). Traces of reddish pigment were found on some of the perforated stone discs described by Irwin (1978:91-92).

The sacred status marked by red (or a combination of red and black and white) may characterize an individual in the liminal period of a rite of passage. The faces of girls undergoing the puberty ceremony were painted red (Curtis 1926:17), while the older women who danced and sang around them were painted black (Harrington 1934:21). In the concluding rites of both boys’ and girls’ initiations, initiates raced to a designated rock and painted it red (Kroeber 1908b:176; Sparkman 1908:210; Strong 1929:299). Various sources are either vague or even contradictory on the exact color schemes of the initiations, but it is clear that red is the dominant color.

A number of aspects of power, sanctity, and redness are united in the concept of *čawi:wut*, a magical animal sacred to Chinigchinich (Harrington 1933:132-133). This is a large deer of dark reddish color, with spreading horns. It is an agent of Chinigchinich’s punishment, by luring a hunter farther and farther into the wilds where he may be bitten by rattlesnakes or fall over cliffs. *čawi:wut* is male, supernaturally powerful, invulnerable, associated with death and the dangerous wilds, sacred to Chinigchinich—the personification of power and knowledge—and appropriately enough it is red.

Red seems to have marked power and sanctity, whether permanent or temporary (e.g., in the sacred liminal period). Times and places in which power is often more accessible to the human world (cf. Bean 1975)—at night, for example, and away from human habitation—are also equated with red by their association with the male principle. In short, Luiseño cosmology associates the male principle and the color red with the more power-laden member of several dualistic oppositions:

male	:	female
red	:	black
older	:	younger
conscious will	:	life-force
initiate	:	non-initiate
sacred	:	profane
distance from center	:	proximity to center
wilds	:	house, village
night	:	day

The association of red with sanctity and power provides strong motivation for the equation of red with male and black with female. On first inspection—before the fundamental association of red and power and male is obvious—this color symbolism seems oddly reversed. Black might seem more appropriate for male, because it is associated with night and death. And red would naturally seem to symbolize female because it stands for life and blood—particularly menstrual blood, given a general Californian preoccupation with menstruation which the Luiseño shared.

Groups surrounding the Luiseño followed one form or another of this more intuitively obvious pattern, either equating red with female or black with male or both. Among the Diegueño, in fact, this is exactly the pattern we find: red is female and black is male (Waterman 1910:313). Among the Cahuilla, black is male and white is female (Strong 1929:130-131). Among the Chumash and Kitanemuk, red is female and white is male (Hudson and Blackburn 1978).



	Male	Female
Luišeño	red	: black
Diegueño	black	: red
Cahuilla	black	: white
Chumash	white	: red
Kitanemuk	white	: red

A literal and strictly sexual interpretation of color is apparently subordinate to a much more abstract and fundamental association of red with sanctity, power, and the male principle in Luišeño cosmology. Historically, this association very likely preceded the elaboration of the unifying themes which logically would equate white with sanctity; the unifying principles must be a later superstructure on a much older dualism which had already equated red with sanctity in numerous contexts.

### PROGRESSION FROM DUALITY TO UNITY

Color symbolism does more than mark the dualistic opposition of sacred versus profane status: it can also mark a progression of increasing sanctity toward unifying principles.

A significant pattern in initiations is the progression from black to a combination of black and red and white. For example, after girls finished their three days of roasting in the puberty ceremony, their faces were painted black for a month, white for another month, and red for a third month (Strong 1929:298). The *to:tuwiš* dancer—dancing to commemorate the death of a chief—was painted black on the occasion of his first appearance, but black, red, and white in subsequent performances (Curtis 1926:15). Likewise, Boscana seems to indicate that a new chief was painted black in an inauguration ceremony (1933:41), but that afterward his usual insignia was black, red, and white (1933:57).

In the light of Irwin's suggestion (1978:93) that the ritual progression from non-initiate to novice to full initiate reflects the theme of concentric circularity, this progression from

black to red plus the other colors is very significant. It echoes the sequence of colors in the ground-painting, moving *outward* from the center: the innermost circle is black, the next red, and the outermost white. In ritual, black seems to mark non-initiates, low-status initiates, and peripheral participants, as well as certain high-status individuals before they have proven themselves. Red marks novices in the sacred liminal period. A combination of black, red, and white generally seems to mark individuals of high ritual status.

Boscana (1933:30, 34) gives three names for Chinigchinich corresponding to stages of his ritual development in myth, and these three names neatly match the color symbolism of the ground-painting. Harrington (1933:139) unravels them as *ša'u:ra* 'non-initiate', *to:vit* 'initiate', and *kwa'uwar*, the name given to Chinigchinich "when he died and ascended above among the stars" (Boscana 1933:34). The term *to:vit* may conflate the statuses of novice and full initiate as opposed to non-initiate, since no mortal would rise to the level of sanctity indicated by the third name *kwa'uwar*.

The extreme sanctity of the name *kwa'uwar* (cf. Harrington 1933:139) and its association with the stars bespeaks a unifying theme, one which transcends the duality of initiate and non-initiate. This analysis fits the color symbolism of the ground-painting very nicely. The status of non-initiate (*ša'u:ra*) is marked by black, which is associated with the female principle and a low degree of ritual knowledge and power, with the earth and proximity to the center. The initiate (*to:vit*) is marked by red—associated with the male principle and greater ritual power, and with the sky and greater distance from the center. Chinigchinich as *kwa'uwar*—the ascended personification of power and knowledge—is associated with the themes unifying these dualities of initiate and non-initiate. *kwa'uwar* is associated with the immortal spirit, and is

marked by the color white, standing for the Milky Way—a symbol of the spirit—which surrounds sky and earth and transcends male and female.

So the symbolism of power and sanctity in Luiseño cosmology is not a simple matter. There are relative levels of sanctity, which are symbolized differently. On the highest level, the sacred is associated with the unifying themes that transcend profane dualistic oppositions. On a lower level, within the world of duality, power and sanctity are more associated with the male principle than with the female. Sanctity is concentrated in the center, which transcends dualistic oppositions, but it also increases with distance from the center.

Those aspects of sanctity which can be clearly associated both with unifying themes and dualistic oppositions are summarized as follows:

spirit	male	:	female
immortality	death	:	life, birth
Milky Way	sky	:	earth
<i>Kwa'uwar</i>	<i>to:vi</i>	:	<i>sa'u:ra</i>
	(initiate)	:	(non-initiate)
white	red	:	black
north	east	:	west
center			
	distance from center	:	proximity to center
extreme distance from center			

### THE GROUND-PAINTING AND CONCEPTS OF THE SOUL

The three concentric circles of color in the ground-painting provide a key to concepts of the soul. Of the various forms of the ground-painting reconstructed (cf. Kroeber 1925:663), the ones used in the girls' puberty ceremony definitely had the triple circles of black, red, and white.

Three accounts of the ground-painting agree in showing white outermost, red in the middle, and black innermost (DuBois 1908:88; Curtis 1926:17). Another version cited by DuBois (1908:88) differs in having the white circle between the red and black ones, but highest on the rim of the painting so that it is

*above* the red and black circles. White either surrounds red and black, or is above them, but it has priority.

Sparkman (1908:221) doesn't specify colors, but he labels the circles as "Milky Way"—"night"—"blood." Given Luiseño color symbolism, it is quite likely that night is red because it is male, and blood (or life) is black because it is female. This interpretation of Sparkman's version of the painting would bring its color sequence into harmony with that of most of the other versions.

We might expect the three bands of color in the painting to be equated with the earth, sky, and Milky Way, and this is very much the general metaphysical level of Sparkman's interpretations. The meanings assigned by DuBois (1908:88), however, strike a considerably more metaphysical note: they all refer to the spirit in one way or another. The colors and their meanings are:

- a) white : Milky Way
- red : *tu:kumit*, the sky
- black : *kwi:namul*, our spirit
- b) Milky Way
- čam-to:wi*, our spirit
- kwi:namuš*, the spirit

and in the painting with the white band central but *uppermost*,

- c) red : *čam-to:wi*, our spirit
- white : *čam-wa:namul*, our spirit (the Milky Way)
- black : *čam-kwi:namul*, our spirit (root, origin)

We are obviously dealing with conceptions of the soul which show the familiar tripartite structure of a basic dualism unified by a higher principle.

In a monograph on concepts of the soul in North America, Hultkranz (1953:95-96) claims to find evidence of soul-dualism among the Luiseño, as in many other parts of the continent. As Hultkranz uses the term, soul-dualism is a belief in two souls: one is usually associated with the breath and life-force, while the other is the seat of individual consciousness

and will. White's discussion of male and female *ayelkwi* (1963:145) matches these conditions: female *ayelkwi* is the life force, and male *ayelkwi* is will and consciousness. This analysis applies whether we are dealing with two distinct souls, as Hultkranz claims, or with two complementary aspects of one soul. A single soul with dual aspects, in fact, fits the known facts best.

The black circle closest to the center of the painting stands for the female aspect of the soul called *kwi:namuš* or *kwi:namul* (which we must assume are more or less synonymous). The basic meaning of *kwi:namuš* is "root" or "origin," although it also means "soul" or "spirit." Just as a plant has its root in the earth, the origin of mankind in Luiseño cosmology is Earth, the female principle. This female aspect of the soul, *kwi:namuš*, is not only associated with the life-force, but with breath, too, recalling Hultkranz' equation of the breath and life-force. In the creation myth, Earth created the sea to give us the breath of life which fills our lungs.

The red circle surrounding the black one stands for the male aspect of the soul. In DuBois' account of the painting this is called *to:wīš* (grammatically, the non-possessed form of *-to:wī*), but the situation is more complex. The male aspect of the soul would surely be associated with will and consciousness, but according to a mission manuscript from 1811 (Kroeber 1908a:10) the "rational soul" is called *-šun*. The range of meanings of *-šun* includes "center, heart; mind, soul; life," and it has definite connotations of consciousness and thought.

The term *to:wīš*, on the other hand, refers to "spirit" or "ghost." Harrington (1933:198) discusses the differences between *-šun* and *to:wīš*; he notes that *both* can be used of the spirit of the living or dead, although *to:wīš* is definitely more associated with death. Since a good deal of Luiseño funerary ritual is concerned with the proper treatment of ghosts, it

is only natural that the aspect of the male soul mentioned in the ground-painting is *to:wīš*.

The white circle surrounding the red and black stands for the Milky Way, a symbol of the spirit. This is the aspect of the soul which transcends the duality of male and female, just as the white circle is outside the red and black ones. But any discussion of the Milky Way and the spirit should also include the *wa:nawut*, one of the most striking of Luiseño rituals, and a symbol par excellence of the unifying principle in soul concepts.

### DUALISM IN THE AFTERLIFE

Before going on to discuss the unifying principle in soul concepts, it might be in order to deal with the dualistic aspects of the after-life which match dualistic aspects of the soul. The spirit seems to have two possible destinations after death: the region of the stars and an underground land of the dead called *tolmul*.

These two possible destinations of the soul fit neatly into the rest of Luiseño dualism. Associated with the earth and below, *tolmul* would naturally be equated with the female principle, and the male principle with the stars and above. If Hultkranz (1953:96) is correct that we are dealing with two distinct souls, rather than two aspects of the soul, it would be tempting to assume that the female *kwi:namuš* goes below to *tolmul*, while the male *-šun* or *to:wīš* rises to the stars.

But the dualism here is more complex. There seems to be one soul with two possible destinations, which depend on the ritual status of the individual during life. Among the Juaneño, only the souls of chiefs and shamans went to the stars, and only on the condition that at their funeral a ceremonial official called the *ta:xku* ritually consumed a bite of their flesh (Boscana 1933:77; Kroeber 1925:642). This commemorates the mythic incident in which Coyote snatched *wiyot*'s heart from the pyre and ate it; *wiyot* of course ascended to the region of the stars. The souls of all other

individuals went underground to *tolmul*.

Elsewhere in Luiseño territory, we can infer that the fate of the soul depended first on proper initiation into the Chinigchinich cult, and second on strict observance of ritual injunctions. The lecture to boys and girls during their puberty ceremonies laid great stress on proper conduct, and clearly made the stars the preferred destination of the soul.

A recurrent theme here is that going to the stars depended on proper ritual conduct and relatively high ritual status—chiefs and shamans for the Juaneño, initiates versus non-initiates for other Luiseño groups. The afterlife among the stars is equated with the male principle, with high ritual status, and with a greater degree of ritual knowledge and power. The female principle, on the other hand, equates the underground *tolmul* with lower status and lesser power. We are not dealing with dualistic concepts of the soul here so much as dualistic concepts of the afterlife as an extension of roles in this life.

### THE *WA:NAWUT*—TRANSCENDING DUALITY

The outermost white circle in the ground-painting stands for the Milky Way—a symbol of the spirit and the transcendent principle unifying dualistic aspects of the soul. Another symbol of the spirit and the Milky Way is the *wa:nawut*, which is perhaps the heart of Luiseño metaphysical conceptualization. However, the inferences made here—at a level of abstraction far above the concrete details of color and direction symbolism—are definitely speculative.

In ritual, the *wa:nawut* was a net of milkweed fiber woven in the rough outline of a human figure, placed in a trench with its feet to the north during part of the boys' puberty ceremony. José Albañas, one of DuBois' consultants, explains something of the esoteric significance of the *wa:nawut*:

Wanawut is the symbol of the Milky Way, the Spirit to whom our spirits go when they die. Since the spirit cannot be seen, some symbol of it is required for the instruction of the candidates. This figure is shown to them and explained. Piwish, the Milky Way, was put up where he is as a sign that we are only going to live here for a little while. Death came from Ouiot [*wiyot*]; but when we die our spirit will be sent to Piwish Ahuta [*piwiš ʔahu:tax*, the Milky Way]. . . . The symbol wanawut was to remind boys of the spirit . . . . The main wanawut would be in the sky, but we do not see it . . . [DuBois 1908:86].

The first term Albañas uses for the Milky Way is *piwiš*, from a root *piw-* 'to be grey, ash-colored'. This is also the term for a sacred eagle-down headband (Strong 1929:293), with connotations of Eagle's immortality in myth. In the ceremonial doublet Albañas uses next for the Milky Way, *piwiš ʔahu:tax*, *ʔahu:tax* is "the exalted."

We are dealing here with a sacred mystery of which only fragments have been explained. A few points are clear, however. The *wa:nawut* and the white circle in the ground-painting identified as *čam-wa:namul* 'our spirit', carry the same condensed set of meanings. Both are simultaneously ritual objects, symbols of the Milky Way, and symbols of the non-dualistic aspect of the spirit. Grammatically, moreover, both come from the same stem. A ceremonial doublet for the *wa:nawut* is *yu:la wa:nawut*; *yu:la* is "hair." Kroeber (1925:671) conjectures that the *wa:nawut* as a ritual object may once have been woven of human hair, which had other ritual uses. But a far more important connotation of hair here is the spirit—perhaps because hair keeps growing, feels no pain when cut, and does not decay (i.e., die). The doublet *yu:la wa:nawut* refers to the spirit or the spirit of the dead (DuBois 1908:109-110) as well as to the ritual object.

Albañas speaks of the *wa:nawut* as "the Spirit to whom our spirits go when they die"



(DuBois 1908:86), and he mentions *no* prerequisites—no injunctions, no initiations, no special ritual status. This may represent a higher concept of the soul's final destination than the more commonly held dualistic notions of *tolmul* and the stars.

Another possibility is suggested by Harrington's explanation of the apparently contradictory statements that Chinigchñich ascended to the stars and also lives in *tolmul*. It may seem strange that Chinigchñich "ascended to heaven and resides in hell, but by that is simply meant that he and all the dead are of *tolmul*, i.e., of the other world" (Harrington 1933:199). So in one sense *tolmul* may be specifically located underground, but in a larger sense the term may refer to the supernatural dimension in general. Within the realm of duality, the soul goes either to the stars or the underground *tolmul*, but the more esoteric explanation may be that both of these are *tolmul*, and hence one—just as both of the dualistic aspects of the soul (*to:wíš* and *kwi:namuš*) are unified in the spirit (*wa:namul*).

Sacred songs provide yet other clues which may support this interpretation. One of the many series of sacred songs in the Luiseño ritual repertoire was "songs of the spirit," usually called *kiw:namuš* songs, but sometimes *čam-to:wí* (DuBois 1908:105). So songs of the spirit are called after either of the dualistic aspects of the soul. One song in the series practically equates *kwi:namuš*, the female aspect of the soul, and *yu:la wa:nawut*, the transcendent aspect. The verses translate roughly as:

"To the north the spirit [*yu:la wa:nawut*] is tied, is fastened; Then my spirit [*nu-kwi:namu*] lives there" [DuBois 1908:109-110].

So we see both dualistic and unifying aspects of the soul treated very much as a single entity on a higher level. Similarly, the dualistic notions of the soul's destination as the stars or the underground *tolmul* are unified in a

higher interpretation of *tolmul* as the supernatural dimension in general.

All these unifying themes converge to suggest that there may be only one soul, whose origin and destination are one. The spirit symbolized in the *wa:nawut*, the Milky Way, and the ground-painting's white circle is above duality. The spirit gave rise to duality by creating or becoming Sky and Earth and all that this ultimately entails, but the spirit is forever one. The human soul descends from a state of unity into duality, but "we are only going to be here for a little while," as Albañas says (DuBois 1908:86). After death, the duality of our nature is resolved back into a higher unity.

### SUMMARY

A pervasive pattern in Luiseño cosmology is that opposing dualities are subsumed in higher unifying principles. The central theme here is the complementarity of the male and female principles, which are unified and transcended by the spirit. This basic conceptual triad is represented visually by the color triad black, red, and white, and structurally by the pattern of concentric circularity. The master symbol of the Luiseño cosmos is the ground-painting, whose three concentric circles condense a number of diverse elements into a basic tripartite organization.

It is no accident that the color symbols of this tripartite system are black, red, and white. In an essay on color symbolism in an African culture, that of the Ndembu, Victor Turner (1967:81-91) surveys ritual color symbolism in a number of cultures both ancient and contemporary, repeatedly showing the primacy of black, red, and white. There is also a good deal of cross-cultural agreement on the general significance of the three colors. Interestingly, the Luiseño system agrees rather closely with an ancient Hindu division of the cosmos into three qualities which might be roughly characterized as matter, energy, and spirit—

symbolized by black, red, and white. As in the Luiseño system, Turner (1967:86) notes that "the three colors or forms, in ancient Hinduism, are ultimately reducible to a single nature . . ." (1967:86).

The tripartite cosmology of the Luiseño is hierarchically organized: greater power and sanctity are associated with the unifying themes, which have priority of dualistic themes. But on the level of dualism, the male pole of dualistic oppositions has priority over female. Dualism in myth and ritual is not unique to the Luiseño; it is part of a tradition common to much of southern and south-central California, and to the Southwest in general—where we often find color, direction, and thematic dualism much more elaborate than in California. The Luiseños' special contribution to this broader tradition is the principle of unification.

Historically, dualism must have preceded the elaboration of unifying themes; unifying themes are fewer in number than dualistic oppositions, and they are less thoroughly worked out, particularly in the more abstract realms of cosmology. This whole conceptual system must have still been in the process of evolution when it was cut short by European intrusion. Nonetheless, the unifying principle is integrated into every aspect of Luiseño religion, and it certainly pre-dates the very late spread of the Chinigchinich cult into Luiseño territory.

Kroeber (1925:677) says of Luiseño cosmology that it makes "a remarkable attempt at abstract conceptualizing, which, though it falls short of success, leaves an impression of boldness and of a rude but vast grandeur of thought." We can safely strike out the adjective "rude" and the claim that the Luiseño fell short of success. Luiseño cosmology bespeaks a grandeur of thought which rises to heights of sophistication and abstraction unique in Native California, and seldom paralleled elsewhere in North America.

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