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The Subtler Shades of the Black, the Red, and the White

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In his recent article on "Duality and Unity in the Luiseño Cosmos," Richard Applegate attempts and succeeds not only in guiding his reader through a fascinating maze of esoteric religious details, but also takes him below the surface of descriptive ethnography to view the fundamental principles operating at the very core of the Luiseño world view. Despite the impeccable quality of many previous investigations, a sophisticated theoretical analysis of the implicit structure and logic of the Luiseño belief system has been long overdue. Applegate's presentation is a welcome, much needed, addition to local California anthropology as well as a valuable contribution to more general investigations concerning the symbolic study of religion. Positive superlatives are in order.

In the normal course of scrutinizing the societies which they study, many researchers have in recent years followed the Levi-Straussian lead in commenting on the now ubiquitous "binary oppositions" of culture. Many researchers have seen the importance in making the second order abstraction: namely, that these contrasting oppositions are not simply dualistic but that they are also necessarily complementary. The archetype of death,

for example, is not merely the opposite of, or structurally antagonistic with life, but is its necessary adjunct. As Applegate notes in the Luiseño data, Deer and Eagle "are associated with life *through* death . . . 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" (Applegate 1979:75). The same holds true for male/female, light/dark, night/day, east/west, up/down, wild/tame, hot/cold, nature/culture, raw/cooked, and so on. Apparently, the antinomies are only opposed to each other to the same degree that they are, paradoxically, linked together. The outstanding feature of Applegate's report is that it not only outlines these oppositions and, more importantly, their complementarity but also pierces beneath the dualistic landscape to reveal the *unifying* principles which homologize the overt dualisms by showing that they spring from a symbolic unity or alternately merge into one at a higher level. All too often the anthropological search for binary oppositions leads to Manichaeian descriptions of native cultures, without a corresponding concern for the subtle but significant unifying forces and symbols meant to transcend the dualities. It seems that throughout Luiseño ritual, cosmology, and mythology there is a kind of dialectic at work. It is the old Hegelian ghost wearing a new ethnic mask: thesis is countered with antithesis and, in the rich vocabulary of Luiseño symbolism, both are subsequently unified in a transcendent synthesis.

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Applegate's discussion is obviously significant for regional southern California ethnography. But it also has important cross-cultural implications for more general ethnological studies of religions. For example, the Luiseño material bears a rather striking similarity to data I gathered while working with the Tzotzil Maya in the remote highland community of San Pablo Chalchihuitan, Chiapas, Mexico. Referring to the Luiseño cosmogony, Applegate (1979:74) states: "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*" (italics mine). And later, "*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" (Applegate 1979:75-76; italics mine). Applegate summarizes the dualities thusly:

male : female
 east : west
 right : left
 up : down
 Sky : Earth
 older : younger
 dominant : submissive

Now it is interesting to note that in the symbolic vocabulary of the Tzotzil these same seven oppositions, or complementary principles, dichotomize in the very same way. The principles of male, east, right, up, Sky, older, and dominant cluster together at one concep-

tual pole while female, west, left, down, Earth, younger, and submissive occupy the other pole. In the Tzotzil universe the primary principle of order in the cosmos is the sun. Each day, Sun is reborn as a baby *boy* in the *eastern* sky; throughout the morning he ascends the "roof of the sky" gradually climbing *higher*, growing *older* and gaining *strength*. At noon, Sun has reached the highest point in the cosmos; at the zenith he is a young man at the peak of his strength. In the afternoon, as Sun slowly moves towards the *west*, towards sunset, he grows to be an old man and *loses his strength*. He becomes, say the Tzotzil, "*weak like the left hand*," "*weak like a woman*." These principles even influence ritual marching order: in many Tzotzil communities ritual circuits proceed counter-clockwise with the most junior (*7itzinal* or symbolically "younger") man in the lead, while the most senior (*bankilal* or symbolically "older") occupies the most posterior position. Thus, the most senior man is always closest to the sun, the giver of order, and hence is by extension associated with the principles of male, east, heat, right, up, Sky, seniority, and dominance. The identical manner in which Tzotzil and Luiseño cultures polarize these dualities is an interesting cross-cultural parallel. It might also be suggested that since the Tzotzil explicitly associate ascending heat (in contrast with descending heat and coolness) with the male theme and its attendant principles, we could also extrapolate a similar association from the Luiseño data. For instance, because ascending heat is thematically linked to dominance and vitality, the episodes in the Luiseño cosmogony which show Sky (male) prevailing over Earth (female) might indicate such a covert association in Luiseño thought.

Another conceptual opposition which Applegate has noted the metaphoric significance of is the linking of specific colors with either the male or female principle. This color-sex duality is expressed in Luiseño cosmology

by associating red with male and black with female. Applegate (1979:81) states: "The association of 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 . . . Among the Diegueño, in fact, this is exactly the pattern we find: red is female and black is male." The internal consistency of the red-female : black-male opposition in Diegueño thought is reflected not only at the level of myth and ritual as Waterman (1910:313) and Kroeber (1925:716) have noted but is further replicated in other ideological strata as well. Several years ago while investigating shamanism and magic among various Diegueño groups, I was introduced to the subject of *wii'ipatt* or "live rock crystals." Diegueño consultants consistently stated that "black *wii'ipatt* are men, but red *wii'ipatt* are women" thus corroborating the aforementioned Diegueño polarity of red=female/black=male (Levi 1978:46). Significantly, Applegate (1979:76) mentions in passing that crystals are also integrated into the main body of Luiseño religious thought in his section on the paired names of the cosmogony. It would be interesting to now discover whether the Luiseño further dichotomized magic crystals in terms of their own scheme of color-sex oppositions. That is, if the Luiseño do class sacred rock crystals according to sex, are male crystals red and female ones black, i.e., the anticipated reverse of the Diegueño system, as Applegate's analysis would lead us to suspect?

Finally, I would like to offer two alternate interpretations of Applegate's analysis of the Frog motif in the Luiseño creation myth. Applegate has correctly ascribed the effective-

ness of many Luiseño symbols and images to the fact that they "seem to derive their power from an ambiguous or liminal status" (1979:74). Liminality, symbolic ambiguity, paradox, and ambivalence are frequently cross-cultural metaphors of power. As boundary players they are symbols of the borderline beings that participate in contradictory realms or zones yet are contained in neither for they subsume them both. Commenting on the origin of death as explained in the myth, Applegate (1979:75) continues: "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." Perhaps Frog's association with death would appear less puzzling if one suggested that she simply represents the so-called negative pole of the same female principle. The paradoxical mythological archetype of the ambivalent woman who, with the same hand extended, both gives and takes away, is—as Jung has noted—an old and familiar idea in world religions. In Hindu belief, for example, this principle is symbolized as the bloodthirsty Kali—"the loving and terrible mother." Thus, if Frog is a creature associated with water, earth, and the female principle, one might suspect that she "ought to be associated with life," with nurturing, generativity, and growth. But because she is a liminal creature, and specifically associated with death, we are not compelled to suppose that she is merely an interesting exception or reversal of an otherwise benevolent female principle, for one might equally posit that she simply represents the other face of the same female principle: the dark aspect of earth and water. This is a realm of cthonic imagery, of death and the River Styx, of dark subterranean passageways that course their way through the uncharted depths of this ancient archetype. Additionally, it might also be noted that in the Tzotzil myth-

ology of San Pablo Chalchihuitan, Frog (or in some versions Toad) is also a liminal figure associated with the underworld in so far as he is the doorkeeper to the watery, subterranean realm of the Earth Lords who live inside the sacred mountains. Although Frog is male among the Tzotzil and female in the Luiseño material, in both cases Frog symbolizes a liminal cthonian image representing the darker sides of water and earth. Just because Frog is associated in the Luiseño myth with the female principle, earth and water does not mean that she represents the *positive* aspects of the female principle, earth, and water. On the contrary, I suggest that she symbolizes the opposite pole. This theory has the advantage of being more parsimonious than Applegate's explanation for it dispenses with the need for an interpretation in terms of symbolic reversal: Applegate's interpretation asks one to assume that the symbolic triad of earth-water-female represents as a paradigmatic rule, life giving forces. Since Frog is associated with these, but also associated with death, Applegate can only explain this conceptualization as a kind of anomalous reversal or inversion of the normal (positive) order; whereas the suggestion presented here postulates that Frog merely represents the negative aspect of the earth-water-female principle in the first place, and therefore, Frog's association with death is seen not as a reversal of anything but rather a logical and even anticipated symbolic association.

My final point is a criticism of Applegate's use of reversal symbolism as an exegetic device in explaining another one of Frog's machinations. Just as I disagreed with Applegate's (1979:75) statement that "Frog ought to be associated with life . . ." and therefore her association with death represents ". . . a clear case of symbolic reversal," so too do I doubt that "there is a clear case of symbolic reversal . . . which also shows in Frog's manner of bewitching *wiyot*." According to Luiseño mythology, Frog kills the diety, *wiyot*, by swallowing the

god's feces. Applegate (1979:75) writes: "Feces are perhaps the least valued part of the person, but Frog swallowed *wiyot's* feces and it made *him* sick." Undoubtedly reversal is a plausible, and very reasonable, exegesis for one would logically assume that this action would harm Frog and not *wiyot*. But understood in the light of native beliefs and practices there is also an alternate shamanistic or magical interpretation in the context of which feces are not the "least valued part of the person" but, ironically, become valued for the same reason that other bodily wastes (such as sweat, saliva, hair clippings, urine, nail parings, breath, etc.) are valued—namely, they are *metonymic* expressions of that person's whole body, spirit, and vitality.

By "metonymic expression" I mean to point to a useful distinction commonly employed in formal semiology. According to Leach (1976:9-16) (following Levi-Strauss, Jakobson, and others) there are basically two fundamental modes of symbolic communication: (1) *metaphoric* systems based on the supposed similarity between the symbol and the object it represents; and (2) *metonymic* systems wherein "the index which functions as a sign is contiguous to and part of that which is signified" (Leach 1976:14). This same idea is also echoed in Frazer's work in which he distinguishes between homeopathic magic and contagious magic. Metonymic symbolism and contagious magic—both based on the concepts of contagion and contiguity—assert the notion that "a part can always stand for the whole" and "a part once in contact will—at least symbolically—always remain in contact."

That the Luiseño and their neighbors do in fact hold beliefs in which metonymic symbol systems and contagious magic are present is easily demonstrated by merely pointing to some salient examples in the ethnographic record. Sparkman noted that for the Luiseño sorcerer to bewitch his enemies he had to obtain ". . . a little of his hair, the parings of

his nails, some of his blood, or a handkerchief that he has blown his nose in. For this reason it was formerly customary when one had his hair cut to carefully sweep up every particle, carry it away, and bury it, for fear that some enemy might possess himself of it to bewitch him" (Sparkman 1908:215-216). Strong (1929:253) and Spier (1923:315) also noted that if a malevolent shaman obtains someone's hair clippings, nail parings, or saliva he can cause harm to the person that these once belonged to. Yet, returning to the Luiseño myth, Frog bewitches *wiyo:t* not by obtaining the latter's hair clippings or fingernail parings, but by swallowing his feces. Granted it has been shown that these groups signified metonymically and practised contagious magic in general, still what leads us to believe that feces, in particular, are conceptualized in the same class as hair clippings, nail parings, saliva, blood and so on? Spier (1923:315) continues and provides the answer: "A shaman may gather the dirt in which one spits and place it on a red ants' nest so that the victim will die of 'tuberculosis'. Or he may gather the dirt which has been urinated on, *or the faeces*, thus stopping the function of the bowels, when death ensues" (italics mine).

The central theme of metonymy runs through all these accounts. If a shaman obtains some "part" of a person, or an article that was once in contact with that person, he can magically affect that individual's whole condition. Equipped with this understanding, we can now interpret Frog's bewitchment of *wiyo:t* in an entirely new light. *By swallowing wiyo:t's feces, Frog was metonymically devouring wiyo:t himself.* It seems that Applegate's interpretation in terms of reversal symbolism makes sense only if viewed from an Eurocentric perspective. From the native point of view there is no reversal, one is not surprised—in a shamanistic context—that *wiyo:t* becomes ill instead of Frog. Just as in Diegueño shamanism (as noted by Spier) a sorcerer will kill his victim by acquiring his feces, so too in Luiseño

mythology Frog magically murders the god by swallowing his feces. Frog's actions are quite within the expected norm of southern California witchcraft beliefs: she is a mythological sorceress engaged in one of the nefarious machinations of her black art.

In this brief commentary, I have striven to emphasize the following points. Applegate's article is a valuable contribution in that it is a new *theoretical* treatment of familiar Luiseño data. It encourages other symbolic analyses of other California cosmologies and stimulates both regional and far-reaching cross-cultural comparisons and discussion. Such comparison has revealed some interesting correspondences between the binary coding systems of the Luiseño and the Tzotzil of Southern Mexico. At the regional level, certain comparisons were noted between the sacred crystal magic of the Luiseño and Diegueño, and a suggestion was made regarding a lacuna in the Luiseño material. Finally, where Applegate has used reversal symbolism to explain two aspects of the Frog motif, I have offered two alternate interpretations which replace Applegate's reversals with the principle of the negative female and metonymic symbolism respectively.

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Apolonio, the Canoe Builder, and the Use of Mission Records

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Hudson, Timbrook, and Rempe (1978) have provided a series of provocative footnotes regarding individual members of the Chumash Brotherhood of the Canoe. These are individuals mentioned by Fernando Librado

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Kitsepawit and recorded in J. P. Harrington's notes on Chumash watercraft. In editing and annotating Harrington's notes, Hudson, Timbrook, and Rempe (1978) provide an excellent monograph on Chumash watercraft, and the criticisms that follow are not meant to detract from that aspect of their work. It is their discussion of Apolonio and Aniceto, canoe builders, however, that we find objectionable. The editors of this volume have "tentatively" identified these individuals on the basis of a cursory examination of the Santa Barbara Mission records. Because tentative identifications of this sort too often become historical fact, we wish to correct their errors before they become incorporated in other works. In at least one instance, Hudson and his colleagues made incorrect use of the baptismal records and they have incorrectly identified both Apolonio and Aniceto. However, the primary purpose of this paper is not to criticize Hudson, Timbrook, and Rempe, but to illustrate the use of the mission records. Only through an understanding of their basic organization combined with thorough examination of the mission records can genealogical data be accurately developed.

Fernando Librado named two individuals involved in canoe and dugout construction as Aniceto and Apolonio:

Aniceto was an old Santa Barbara Indian man who worked as a blacksmith and carpenter and was noted for his iron harpoon points. With his friend José Sudón, Apolonio, and José Venadero, he made a dugout canoe at Goleta Slough. He also helped his brother-in-law Pedro Ortega, José Manuel, and Silverio *Konoyo* construct another dugout canoe in 1855 at Arroyo Hondo [Hudson, Timbrook, and Rempe 1978:169-170].

Apolonio . . . was born in Santa Barbara. He aided Aniceto, José Sudón, and José Venadero in building a dugout at Goleta Slough [Hudson, Timbrook, and Rempe 1979:170].