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Los Angeles

Wixárika Music, Huichol Music:

The Construction and Commodification of an Indigenous Identity

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Ethnomusicology

by

Nolan Michael Warden

2015

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Wixárika Music, Huichol Music:

The Construction and Commodification of an Indigenous Identity

by

Nolan Michael Warden

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Anthony Seeger, Co-Chair

Professor Steven J. Loza, Co-Chair

This dissertation studies traditional and popular music of the Wixárika (a.k.a. Huichol) people of western Mexico, focusing especially on the phenomenon of Wixárika musicians who intentionally represent themselves as indigenous “Huichol” people yet perform popular Mexican music primarily for non-indigenous audiences. This phenomenon markets ethnic identity within regional and transnational music industries, following in the footsteps of Wixárika people who have successfully inserted their arts and crafts into global markets. The process of becoming indigenous cosmopolitan capitalists is partly the result of direct assimilatory projects directed by early Mexican anthropologists and the indirect outcome of over a century of Huichol identity construction for consumption, aided greatly by foreign ethnographers and other outsiders. On one hand, the commodification of identity through handicrafts, art, and music generates income

for the Wixárika people, and the resultant visibility—sometimes international in scale—may strengthen them politically as Indigenous people. Conversely, the process simultaneously supplants some of the very elements they consider central to Wixárika culture. Musicians often leave their homelands to pursue their craft, making it difficult or impossible to participate in community affairs and ceremonies, and leaving their children bereft of Wixárika language and “customs.” Such people who represent the “customs” but do not practice them are sometimes disparaged as “half disqualified” or “Huichol de pirata” (pirated Huichol), illuminating identity’s commodity form. As the first English-language study of Wixárika music, this dissertation examines the paradox of identity commodification, developing a tripartite model of identity that shows the vital (albeit sometimes inadvertent) role of ethnography in defining the essence of the commodity form of Huichol identity.

The dissertation of Nolan Michael Warden is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2015

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<sup>1</sup> The song “H̄iripa” does not seem to be officially released on any of the main Huichol Musical albums. The label released the song unofficially in 2013 via a link to an unaffiliated YouTube video that used the song. Samuel “El Brujo” López also added it to his own self-pirated version of *Mañana Que Ya No Estés* (2012/2013).

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## Orthography and Pronunciation

Linguists (mostly from the University of Guadalajara), some of them Wixárika, have developed a standardized orthography for Wixárika that is taught in schools, but many variants persist. The Wixárika alphabet is as follows:

Vowels (pronounced as in Spanish):

**a e i u ĩ**<sup>2</sup>

Consonants:<sup>3</sup>

**h k [l] m n p r [s] t w x y ‘**

Pronunciation particulars:

ts = “ts” or “ch”

x = Spanish “rr” or English “sh” plus Spanish “r” (“shr”)

w = English “w” or “v”

aa, ee, ii, uu, ĩĩ = elongated, like Spanish *leer*

‘ = glottal (precedes all words that begin with a vowel)

The word *Huichol* is pronounced in Spanish (wee-CHOL), but the /h/ in Wixárika words is pronounced like the /h/ in English. The word *Wixárika* sounds like “wee-RRAH-ree-kah” or “vee-SHRAH-ree-kah,” depending upon region, formality, and age of speaker.

Opinions differ on whether accents should be used (e.g., Wixárika vs. Wixarika; Wixáritari vs. Wixaritari). I am currently using *Wixárika* (with an accent) and *Wixaritari* (without) because it seemed to be the most common orthography for my collaborators.

Pronunciation can also change for affective intent, as often happens in musical text. For example, a more loving or affectionate way to say *hikuri* (peyote) sounds like *hikuli*. Similarly, the <x> can be pronounced as [s] for affection so that the name Xuturima sounds like Sutulima.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The /ĩ/ is between Spanish /i/ and /u/. Technically, /o/ does not exist in Wixárika but in spoken and written practice it is used (e.g., *pamparios* and *Teopa*).

<sup>3</sup> Some works list /kw/ and /ts/ as distinct consonants. For more details, see *Gramática Wixarika I* (Iturrioz and Gómez López 2006).

<sup>4</sup> For that reason, I put [s] and [l] in brackets above to show that they are often used in written Wixárika but they are not “officially” part of the alphabet



## Glossary

‘**Awá** Bull or cow horn trumpet used by the *hikuritamete*.

‘**Īxatsika** Heightened or narrative register in the Wixárika language.

**Artesanía(s)** Craft(s). In the Wixárika case it usually refers to beadwork and yarn paintings. I use the Spanish word throughout because it signals a more commercial production of cultural goods rather than the hobby-like sense of “crafts” in English.

**Artesano(s)** Artisans or crafters who make *artesanías* for commercial purposes.

**Baile** Dance. Here, it specifically refers to events with popular *música regional* including various instrumentations.

**Banda** Popular Mexican instrumental genre based on wind instruments, a bass drum and *tarola* (timbales), and one or more vocalists. Derived from early municipal wind bands, its resurgence in popular music occurred especially in the 1990s between Sinaloa and Los Angeles. Its repertoire primarily consists of *corridos*, *rancheras*, *cumbias*, and *románticas*.

**Cabecera** The primary locality or headquarters of a municipality or community.

**Cambio de Varas** Change of Batons/Authorities. A major civic ceremony that occurs every January.

**CDI (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas)** National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples. A re-branding of the INI in 2003.

**Comisariado** Commissary or commissariat. Also called *comisario*. The community authority primarily charged with territorial and external affairs.

**Corrido** A ballad or “story song.” Its popularization is often associated with the Mexican Revolution. A major subgenre at least since the 1970s is the *narcocorrido*, about drug trafficking.

**Cumbia** A dance rhythm originally from Colombia, now popular throughout Latin America and common to *música regional*.

**CUNorte** Centro Universitario del Norte, a small but rapidly growing regional campus of the University of Guadalajara in Colotlán, Jalisco. As one of the universities most commonly attended by Wixárika students who live in Jalisco, its indigenous population is a large percentage (but not majority) of the student body.

**Feria** Fair. Usually an annual event in a *cabecera*, similar to county fairs in the U.S. Unlike U.S. fairs, agricultural activities and rides are more peripheral, though commonly eponymous with local industry (e.g., Feria del Mango, Feria del Piteado, etc.). Ferias are usually

centered on town plazas for concerts, food, and copious amounts of alcohol sold at temporary stalls of varying sizes, the largest being self-enclosed and charging an entry fee to enjoy (often live) music and themed ambience. People mill about in the plaza itself, often all night long, drinking and hiring musicians paid by the song or by the hour.

**Fiesta Grande** In ranchos around Tutsipa, it referred to a combination of the Fiesta del Toro, Hikuri Neixa, and *compadrazgo* (god-parenting) ceremonies.

**Grupera** Literally it means “group” music, but is often taken to mean a particular synthesizer-heavy Mexican pop music genre also called *onda grupera*.

**Guadalupe Ocotán** The southwestern Wixárika community. Its cabecera is Xatsitsarie. Politically, it is part of Nayarit.

**Guitarrón** A large bass guitar with arched back, common in mariachi.

**Haramara** The Pacific Ocean.

**Haramaratsie** The easternmost of the five primary “sacred sites” or “cardinal points” of the Wixárika ritual territory. Located at the Pacific Ocean, near San Blas, Nayarit.

**Hikuri** The Wixárika name for the peyote plant (*lophophora williamsii*).

**Hikuri Neixa** Peyote Dance/Ceremony conducted in June. One of three “Neixas” that comprise the pre-Hispanic portion of the Wixárika ritual calendar.

**Hikuritame(te)** A person in peregrination to Wirikuta for peyote, usually also a *xukuritame(te)*.

**Huichol** The common presentational and commercial name for the Wixárika people.

**Huicholero** Huicholer. Used here to refer to “fans” of Wixárika/Huichol culture, either because they see it as the roots of Mexican national identity, a font of “spiritual” knowledge, or simply a means of drug tourism. They overlap to some extent with the Huicholistas, but might be characterized as generally more sycophantic or naïve.

**Huicholista** Huicholista. Used here to refer to scholars who focus a large amount of their work on Wixárika/Huichol people and cultural practices. It could also be extended to include INI anthropologists working in the Wixárika communities.

**Indigenismo** An ideology that sees ancient indigenous culture as central to Mexican national identity and history, but with strong tendencies to ostracize living Indigenous peoples while nationalizing their cultures or “folklore.”

**INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista)** National Indigenist Institute, akin to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the U.S.A. Headed primarily by anthropologists, in the 1960s and 70s it undertook assimilatory projects in the Wixárika communities as part of a larger process of

connecting people in “regions of refuge” into the national labor force (and consumer market). In 2003, it became the CDI.

**Jicarero** (see “Xukuritamete”)

**Kaitsa** A rattle used primarily by women and their children in the Tatei Neixa ceremony.

**Kanareru** A person who plays *kanari*.

**Kanari** Small Wixárika guitar, usually used to accompany the *xaweri*.

**Kawiteru(tsixi)** Member(s) of the council of elders, charged with choosing (or “dreaming”) who will be the next year’s community authorities. They are often mara‘akate or people who have served extensively as authorities in the past.

**Kieri** A sacred and potentially poisonous plant found in the sierra, translated by Zingg as jimsonweed, and by others as *datura*. In Spanish it is called *toloache*, *palo de viento*, and *palo loco*. Scholars sometimes describe it as an oppositional force to hikuri, though my fieldwork yielded no data that showed them to be opposed. It is, however, considered “more dangerous” and “stricter” than hikuri.

**Kwikari(eya)** Song or singing, especially non-sacred. Sometimes now translated as *música* (music).

**Mestizo** Sometimes synonymous with “Mexican,” but more strictly defined as someone with both Spanish and Indigenous heritage who maintains some modicum of pre-Hispanic cultural practices (such as subsistence production of corn, beans, and squash as dietary staples).

**Mara‘akame (pl. mara‘akate)** Usually translated into Spanish by Wixaritari as shaman (*chamán*) or chanter/singer (*cantador*).

**Música Regional** Regional Music. A genre of popular Mexican music primarily associated with rural life. The term seems to have been promulgated primarily by the North American music industry to group various instrumental genres that were previously popular only in certain regions, such as *norteño* from northern Mexico and *banda* from Sinaloa, but have since become transnational and mass mediated.

**Muwieri** A shaman’s wand with feathers attached, often eagle feathers.

**Nawá** Known in Spanish as *tejuino* (or *tesguino*). Sometimes called “corn beer” in English. Made by fermenting the mashed, dried, sprouted seeds of maize. It is essential for many Wixárika ceremonies such as Tatei Neixa.

**Namawita Neixa** One of three “Neixas” in the annual Wixárika ritual calendar. It ensures favorable climate for the growing season.

**Nierika(te)** A word whose semantic breadth leaves it without a sufficient equivalent in Spanish or English. In my fieldwork, it was usually translated literally as “mirror” (*espejo*), but was also used to refer to implements of the mara‘akame such as the desiccated deer face. Others translated it as cheeks (*mejillas*) or face/countenance (*rostro*), especially when painted with ‘uxa. Also a “visionary ability” or the physical object that facilitates such ability for a mara‘akame, similarly facilitating “trance” and “clairvoyance” (Neurath 2015; Fikes 1985:343). Lumholtz pointed out that it also refers to a mask or picture (Lumholtz 1900:108). “Vision or seeing; an ancestral visage; milpa [garden field] of a *tukipa*” (Liffman 2011:234).

**Niawari(eya)** Song/singing, sometimes implying sacred chanting.

**Norteño** An instrumentation common in northern Mexico (hence the name, *northern*) consisting in its basic form of accordion, bajo sexto, and tololoche. It now usually includes accordion, bajo sexto or guitar, electric bass, and drum set.

**Norteño-Banda** Instrumentation based on norteño but with tuba as the bass instrument.

**Parranda** Sometimes translated as “binge” or “party.” Heavy partying, usually implying booze, music, and general raucousness and vice, often part of *feria* and done until sunrise or even for multiple days. Unlike in the U.S. where binging commonly implies college drinking games and beer bongs, Mexican and Wixárika parrandas are about conspicuous consumption of individual beers, music or hiring musicians, and often terminate with the parranderos passed out on the street.

**Ranchera** A song genre distinguished by emotive singing and rural themes.

**Rancho** A village consisting of a small number of families.

**Requinto / Requintero** A Spanish word that usually refers to a higher-pitched melodic and improvisatory lead instrument, often specifically plucked instruments. In the *sierrero* genre, it refers to the 6-string or 12-string lead guitar. The player of the requinto is the requintero.

**San Andrés Cohamiata** The northwestern Wixárika community. Its *cabecera* is Tateikie.

**San Sebastián Teponahuaxtlán** The center-east Wixárika community. Its *cabecera* is Wautia. Technically, its territory also includes Tuxpan de Bolaños.

**Santa Catarina Cuexcomatitlán** The northeastern Wixárika community. The *cabecera* is Tuapurie, but larger “developed” towns include Nueva Colonia and Pueblo Nuevo. Since the 1990s, it has dominated the exportation of Huichol music groups, especially from Nueva Colonia and Cajones.

**Santo Domingo (Ximianame)** The patron saint/deity of the locality of Nueva Colonia.

**Semana Santa** Holy Week / Easter.

**Son (pl. sones)** A word used for many types of regional Mexican ensembles and their music, usually led by violin with accompaniment from other string instruments. In Jalisco, the dance to accompany it is usually called *zapateado*, as is the rhythm itself. The rhythm is also sometimes called *huapango* by some musicians in violin groups in Jalisco, even though huapango proper is from the Huastec region (border of Veracruz and San Luis Potosí).

**Takwá** Circular patio and dance area in front of a tuki or xiriki where ceremonies are conducted.

**Taloneando / Talonear** “Hoofing it” or “to heal around.” A reference to “busking” in plazas or other public areas, but for clients who pay per song and usually request their favorites.

**Tamborazo** Instrumentation that takes its name from the drumming that accompanies its wind instruments. Usually it does not have vocals or amplification.

**Tampuxi** *Tambor* (drum) pronounced in Wixárika. A small drum used during some civic and Catholic-influenced ceremonies in the communities of Santa Catarina and San Sebastián.

**Tateikie** The cabecera of the community of San Andrés.

**Tatei Neixa** Dance of Our Mother. A “first fruits” ceremony done in late October or early November to cleanse the harvest and initiate children into Wixárika society. Also known as Fiesta del Tambor, Wimakwaxi (many spellings), Fiesta del Elote.

**Tatuwani (a.k.a. Gobernador)** The top authority in cultural matters in a community, chosen by the *kawiterutsixi* to serve for one year.

**Teiwari** Non-indigenous person, Mestizo, foreigner.

**Teiwari Yuawi** Blue Foreigner. Usually associated with *kieri* and sometimes with Santo Domingo or the Black Charro of Iberian folklore (Neurath 2005). Considered to be “fast-acting” and powerful but strict. Sought out for assistance especially in matters pertaining to the Western/Mestizo world (including music or schooling).

**Teixatsika** Specialized and allusive register of the Wixárika language used in ritual. Referred to as “scientific words” (*palabras científicas*) by Jorge López Solís because technically they are Wixárika but require special training to understand.

**Tepu** Autochthonous drum used during Namawita Neixa and Tatei Neixa.

**Tololoche** Mexican Spanish term for contrabass used by norteño and Huichol groups, and rarely in some early mariachi. Usually smaller than an orchestral contrabass.

**Tuapurie** Cabecera of the community of Santa Catarina.

**Tutsipa** Cabecera of the community of Tuxpan.

**Tuxpan de Bolaños** Southeastern Wixárika community. Tuxpan for short.

**‘Uxa** Yellow paint used primarily on faces for ceremonies such as Hikuri Neixa, Tatei Neixa, and peregrination to Wirikuta. It is produced from a root found in Wirikuta.

**Vihuela** Small lute with arched back common in Huichol groups and mariachi.

**Violón** Another name for tololoche, but seemingly less common since the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Wautia** Cabecera of the community of San Sebastián.

**Wirikuta** Sacred desert near the town of Real de Catorce in San Luis Potosí. The easternmost of the five primary sacred sites and the site where Wixaritari peregrinate to collect hikuri.

**Wixárika (pl. Wixaritari; see also Huichol)** The name for the Wixárika people in their own language. It can also be spelled without the accent: Wixarika.

**Xatsika** Daily conversational register of the Wixárika language.

**Xatsitsarie** Cabecera of the community of Guadalupe Ocotán.

**Xawereru** Person who plays *xaweri*.

**Xaweri** Wixárika violin, from the Spanish word *rabel* (rebec).

**Ximianame** The Wixárika name for Santo Domingo, the patron of Nueva Colonia.

**Xukuritame(te)** Guardians or keepers of the *xukurite*, and therefore the ancestor-deities by extension. A five-year *cargo* or service at a *tukipa*. In peregrination to Wirikuta, they are called *hikuritame(te)*.

**Xukuri(te)** Small votive bowls used for offerings or to hold ancestor-deities in rock crystal form.

**Yuitiarika** Move (something), play (an instrument).

**Zakutse** San José (Saint Joseph). A ceremonial center and its patron saint in the community of San Andrés, and a common site to visit in hopes of becoming a *xawereru*.

**Zapateado** Literally, shoed. A clogging-type dance to the music also called *son*.

## Acknowledgments (*Saludazos*)

I would first like to thank the Wixárika friends, acquaintances, and collaborators who helped make this research and dissertation. After friends like Ukeme, Jorge, Ernesto, and Maximino (mentioned in the Introduction), community and local authorities were some of the first to hear out my research plans and grant me permission to stay in the Wixárika territory and conduct my research. I thank the community assemblies (*asambleas*) of San Andrés (San Miguel, April 2013), Santa Catarina (Cajones, March 2014), and San Sebastián / Tuxpan (Mesa del Tirador, September 2014) who welcomed me—*con la voz más potente de la comunidad*—to begin or continue my work in their communities.

My immediate and extended family also made this project possible. If my master's thesis required “reckless diligence” to complete, then the doctoral dissertation became an act of irresponsible assiduity. Hilda, Lucía, and Elías bore the resultant neglect of my perseverance. I hope they will forgive me, and I hope the ends will someday justify the means.

My parents and in-laws contributed greatly to the logistics and completion of the dissertation. My in-laws, Maria and Samuel, served a vital role by allowing us to use their house in Colotlán as our main home for the fieldwork period. They also granted use of their Ford Explorer, which was essential for the type of research conducted. In the final weeks of a full first draft, my parents, Marilou and Mike, took over my childcare responsibilities, giving me critical work hours. It was the cherry atop a veritable parfait of unending support through each step of my academic and musical progress. My brother, Elliot, also served as loving *tio* to his niece and nephew, in addition to giving crucial photographic and technological support.

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At UCLA, it was a privilege to have an excellent dissertation committee. I came to UCLA primarily to study with Anthony Seeger and Steven Loza, but was pleased to find additional guides and advocates along the way. Timothy Taylor and David Shorter are the two who completed the dissertation committee, but I would be remiss not to mention support from Helen Rees, Timothy Rice, Jacqueline DjeDje, and Tara Browner, among other influential faculty members.

During my fieldwork time in Mexico, I affiliated with the northern regional campus of the University of Guadalajara (UdeG) called the Centro Universitario del Norte (CUNorte). The affiliation was enabled through the help of Héctor Gabriel Pacheco Salvador, then director of the Culture and Society Division. Other terrific contacts established through UdeG included ethnomusicologist Jorge Arturo Chamorro and anthropologist José Luis Rangel Muñoz. They provided stimulating conversations, conviviality, and the opportunity to present at various conferences and campuses of UdeG.

In Mexico, the two “Huicholistas” who warrant specific mention here for their contributions and friendship are Rodrigo de la Mora and Paul Liffman. In many ways, they were the two unofficial committee members for this dissertation, offering support, insight, and inspiration at many steps.

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Interviews in many forms are foundational to ethnography, and for that reason I want to thank all of the people who gave their time for formal interviews (listed in the back of the dissertation). I also thank all of my travel companions and *raiteros* who provided hours of insightful conversation when driving to, from, and around the sierra.

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## VITA

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### PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

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- “Crossing Diaspora’s Borders: Musical Roots Experiences and the Euro-American Presence in Afro-Cuban Religious Music.” *African Music* 8, no. 4 (2010): 101–109.
- “A History of the Conga Drum.” *Percussive Notes* 43, no. 1 (February 2005): 8–15.

#### **Other Selected Published Articles**

- “The Spousal Subvention: The Unofficial and Unsung Funding Source.” *SEM Student News* 8 (2014): 13.
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- “Conga drum” in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press (2013). Available online:  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2218907>
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- *Afro-Cuban Music: A Bibliographic Guide* by John Gray. Reviewed in *Notes* 70, no. 3 (March 2014): 455–457.
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- “Música ritual afrocubana entre Cuba y los Estados Unidos: la problemática de la diáspora africana como concepto heurístico.” Conferencia magistral. Quinto Seminario Internacional de Etnomusicología. Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco, June 5, 2014.
- “Historias de la música wixárika y sus investigadores.” Cátedra Catzín Huehuetotl. Colotlán, Jalisco, May 5, 2014.
- “Músicos y transculturación: construyendo la tradición de ‘cajón pa’ los muertos’ en Cuba.” Centro Universitario de Arte, Arquitectura y Diseño (CUAAD), Universidad de Guadalajara. Guadalajara, Jalisco, April 15, 2013.

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- “Return to Huilotita: What 115 Years of Recorded Wixárika (Huichol) Music Tells Us About Ethnomusicology Today.” Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM). Indianapolis, IN, Nov. 14, 2013.
- “Huichol Music and the Commodification of Identity.” World Conference of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM). St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada, July 18, 2011.
- “Crossing Diaspora’s Borders: Musical Roots Experiences and the Euro-American Presence in Afro-Cuban Religious Music.” Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association (ASA). San Francisco, CA, Nov. 18, 2010. Other versions presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM). Mexico City, Nov. 19, 2009, and Africa Meets North America conference (AMNA). Los Angeles, CA, Oct. 24, 2009.
- “The Sacralization of *Cubanidad*: Making the Nation Sacred in Cuban Cajón Ceremonies.” Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM). Los Angeles, CA, Nov. 14, 2010.
- “Formative Analysis: A Complementary Method of Ethnomusicological Representation.” Annual Meeting of the Southern California & Hawaii Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEMSCHC). Scripps College, Claremont, CA, Feb. 20, 2009.
- “Transculturation in Cuban Cajón Ceremonies: Grounds for a Reconsideration of Syncretism in Afro-Cuban Culture.” Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM). Columbus, OH, Oct. 25, 2007.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

A monograph on Wixárika/Huichol music usually would not begin at a Hindustani music concert, but this one does.

In February 2010, at a Hindustani music concert in Los Angeles, my wife and I spotted a man wearing a vivid, psychedelic-style image emblazoned on the front of his black t-shirt. The t-shirt image was a reproduction of a style of “yarn painting” associated with the Wixárika/Huichol people of Western Mexico. We approached the man after the concert to inquire about his shirt. He was pleased we recognized it and said that he had been “into the Huichols” for a long time. After a few minutes, it occurred to me that if the word *Huichol* had been replaced with the name of any rock band in the world, the conversation would have taken the exact same course and used the same vocabulary. “Such a great culture/band, I really enjoy their crafts/music.” Curiously, the catalyst for his long-time interest was “a film by an anthropologist,” probably *To Find Our Life* (1969) by Peter T. Furst.

Having already decided on a dissertation focused on Wixárika/Huichol music long before that encounter, the conversation made me wonder about my role in such processes. Mostly, I wondered about the extent to which my dissertation would be critiquing the commodification process associated with such shirts or supporting future sales, or both. Despite intentions, the ethnographer’s work is enveloped in a world of capitalist commodification and production practices about which we may be powerless to control or even be fully cognizant. When emissaries under the titles of ethnographer, aid worker, doctor, or government official encounter historically non-capitalist societies, the habits and assumptions of the former, which are clearly power laden, will almost certainly affect the relationship. In this way, whether Furst or other

ethnographers intended it, the t-shirt mentioned above, and its sign value for the wearer, are the logical result of a long history of interaction between the Wixárika people and the West.

With a mix of confidence and trepidation, then, I present this dissertation on the music of the Wixárika people, and the commercialization of their identity. For, even though this dissertation has been under development for many years, being aware of my own cultural positioning and the results of previous ethnographic work makes me feel a bit like cartographer Hugh Brody when he set off to study land use by Canadian First Nations people: he was haunted by the thought that “you might find out five or ten years later whom you were really working for” (Brody 1981:xiii). Therefore, though this study is first and foremost about traditional and popular musics of the Wixaritari, the theoretical interest in what I will call the presentational and commercial modes of identity forces a reflexive turn, but not so much in an autobiographical sense. The study turns to focus on relationships between people with different cultural practices and their assumptions and conceptualizations of the other. Behind the curtains of this study is a concern for the extent to which practices like ethnography construct a presentational mode of the identity of an Other, but simultaneously construct or enable the construction of a commercial mode of identity that can become disconnected from the people and practices it purportedly represents.

Let me begin the construction or, better put, summarize its process to this point before furthering it.

## **The Wixaritari and their Environs**

### *Pre-colonial history*

There is little or no archeological data from within today's Wixárika territory. Until recently, many researchers worked under the assumption that the Wixaritari were historically connected to the Guachichil people from the Gran Chichimec region, east of today's Wixárika territory and including Wirikuta where Wixaritari ritually travel to collect *hikuri* (peyote). However, Phil C. Weigand and Acelia García de Weigand (2000) have used the scant archeological evidence that exists, combined with early colonial maps, to argue that the Wixaritari and/or their predecessors were long established in the region they currently occupy. They point to a group labeled "Xuxuctequanes" on a map from 1542, concluding that the group "figured in the evolution of the groups that later became known as the Wixaritari or Huichols" (15). They go on to claim that the predecessors of the Wixaritari were more likely aligned southwards towards Mesoamerica at least since the Classical Mesoamerican period (200AD). Archeological evidence from sites in or near pre-colonial Wixárika territory reveals the similarity of nearby Mesoamerican temple construction to that of Wixárika temple (*tuki*) construction today. Jill Grady and Peter Furst (2011), supporters of the Guachichil origin theory, have countered the Mesoamerican connection with DNA evidence that they claim supports the earlier anthropological conclusions (Grady and Furst 2011).<sup>5</sup>

### *Colonial History and Early Identity Formation*

Despite the lack of pre-colonial evidence for early Wixárika history, there is a long textual history of the region as a result of early colonial actions. Mexican historian Beatriz Rojas has done extensive research to uncover early documentation of the Wixaritari, pointing to early

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<sup>5</sup> To my mind, neither proposal entirely negates the other.

colonial correspondences regarding people referred to as *utzares*, *vizuritas*, *xurute*, *guisol*, *guitzolmes*, and other names (Rojas 1992; 1993). She also cites a source from 1653 referring to the “lengua guichola” (1992:31). When considering the constructed nature of identity, one must wonder to what extent these terms represent the development of the group itself versus the Western perception of them. In other words, we cannot assume that the Wixaritari or their predecessors were unchanging linguistically or in their own perception of themselves. Linguist José Luis Iturrioz has outlined that very issue, pointing towards diachronic changes in the pronunciation of Spanish and Wixárika that resulted in the development of the words *Wixárika* (the endonym) and *Huichol* (the exonym) (Iturrioz 2007).

While Spanish colonists were still defining (for themselves) who the Wixárika/Huichol people were, the Spanish Inquisition had already noted the influence of peyote amongst the colonial populace, including non-indigenous people (Leonard 1942). Its use in the hinterlands for juridical affairs and divination led to a decree by the Inquisitors in 1620, outlawing it and denying that any “herb or root” could have hallucinatory powers. Thus, peyote very early on became a catalyst for contact between indigenous people and other “castes” (*castas*) of colonial Mexico, taking on its current social status as a forbidden fruit and seen by some as a cure for the social and spiritual problems suffered by non-indigenous people.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no evidence in the colonial record regarding Wixárika music, nor has there been any Olsenian “ethnoarcheomusicology” of the area despite the potential.

The attempt to spiritually conquer the Wixaritari and the development of what are their official territorial boundaries today was put succinctly by Johannes Neurath:

In most of the Huichol territory, the activities of the [Catholic missionaries] began only after the fall of the Nayar Mesa in 1722. The Franciscans in charge of [converting indigenous people], however, did not have the capacity to maintain a constant presence in the sierra. At the end of the



18<sup>th</sup> century, the Huichol people received [land] titles that remain today as the legal foundation for the communal ownership of the land and define the limits of each community. (Neurath 2003:7–8)

Despite the early territorial bequeath from Spain, the Wixaritari continue to struggle to assert their land rights. The threat of Mestizo ranchers taking over their lands to graze cattle is seemingly a never-ending problem. Ranchers and their accomplices have even sometimes taken to violence and threats in an attempt to force acquiescence to their territorial usurpation.

Missionaries who had built churches in Wixárika communities were thrown out in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Neurath 2003). Today, with the exception of Xatsitsarie (Guadalupe Ocotán), which still has a Catholic-controlled church, the physical churches of the Wixárika communities have become the ritual territory of the Wixaritari themselves, used for their own ceremonial practices during *Semana Santa* (Holy Week, Easter) and *Cambio de Varas* (the annual change of traditional authorities).

### *Recent History*

During the Mexican Revolution (approximately 1910–1920) and again during the Cristero Rebellion (1920s), some Wixárika communities became rivals. The violence led many to flee the sierra and establish residence beyond the official Wixárika territory in Nayarit and Durango. Wixaritari in those lands still speak the language and practice the *costumbres* (customs) to varying degrees, but have less social and ritual connection to the five official Wixárika communities.

Soon after the revolution, government schooling reached some Wixaritari via *internados* in places like Bolaños, the predecessor to today's *albergues* (dormitories). Government schooling did not become a major force or common practice until the 1970s when it was introduced as part of the national assimilatory project implemented by anthropologists working

for the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (National Indigenist Institute, INI), later renamed *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Populations/Peoples, CDI). The cultural changes brought to bear by the INI's efforts could probably be characterized as cataclysmic, and I present them in detail later in the dissertation.

### *Today's Wixárika Territory and Population*

The Mexican census in 2000 reported there were nearly 44,000 people living in “Huichol homes” in Mexico, taken to mean places where a head of household or their partner claimed to be “Huichol.”<sup>6</sup> The same census registered over 30,000 speakers of the Wixárika language. The municipality of Mezquitic, Jalisco, which has the largest number of Wixárika communities, including that which is the center of the Wixárika ritual territory, counted about 10,000 Wixárika people (around 67% of the municipality's entire population). To the immediate south, the municipality of Bolaños, Jalisco included another 3,000 Wixaritari, over 51% of the municipality's population. Not surprisingly, then, these two municipalities were the first to elect Wixárika candidates as municipal mayors (*presidentes*), both doing so during the period of my fieldwork. Needless to say, the Wixaritari are in a period of great political and cultural change.

The official Wixárika territory defined by royal Spanish decree lies primarily in northern Jalisco, with significant portions in eastern Nayarit and smaller portions in southern Durango and Zacatecas. All of the territory lies within the Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range, rising impressively on the near western horizon of towns like Mezquitic and Bolaños.

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<sup>6</sup> This data comes from Mexico's *Instituto Nacional de Geografía e Estadística* (INEGI), some of it reproduced in the CDI publication *Huicholes* (Neurath 2003:31). It certainly over reports the number of people who would claim to be Wixárika or Huichol because there are plenty of Wixaritari living in Mestizo towns with Mestizo/a spouses but their children are rarely considered to be “Huichol,” especially by those in the official Wixárika communities.

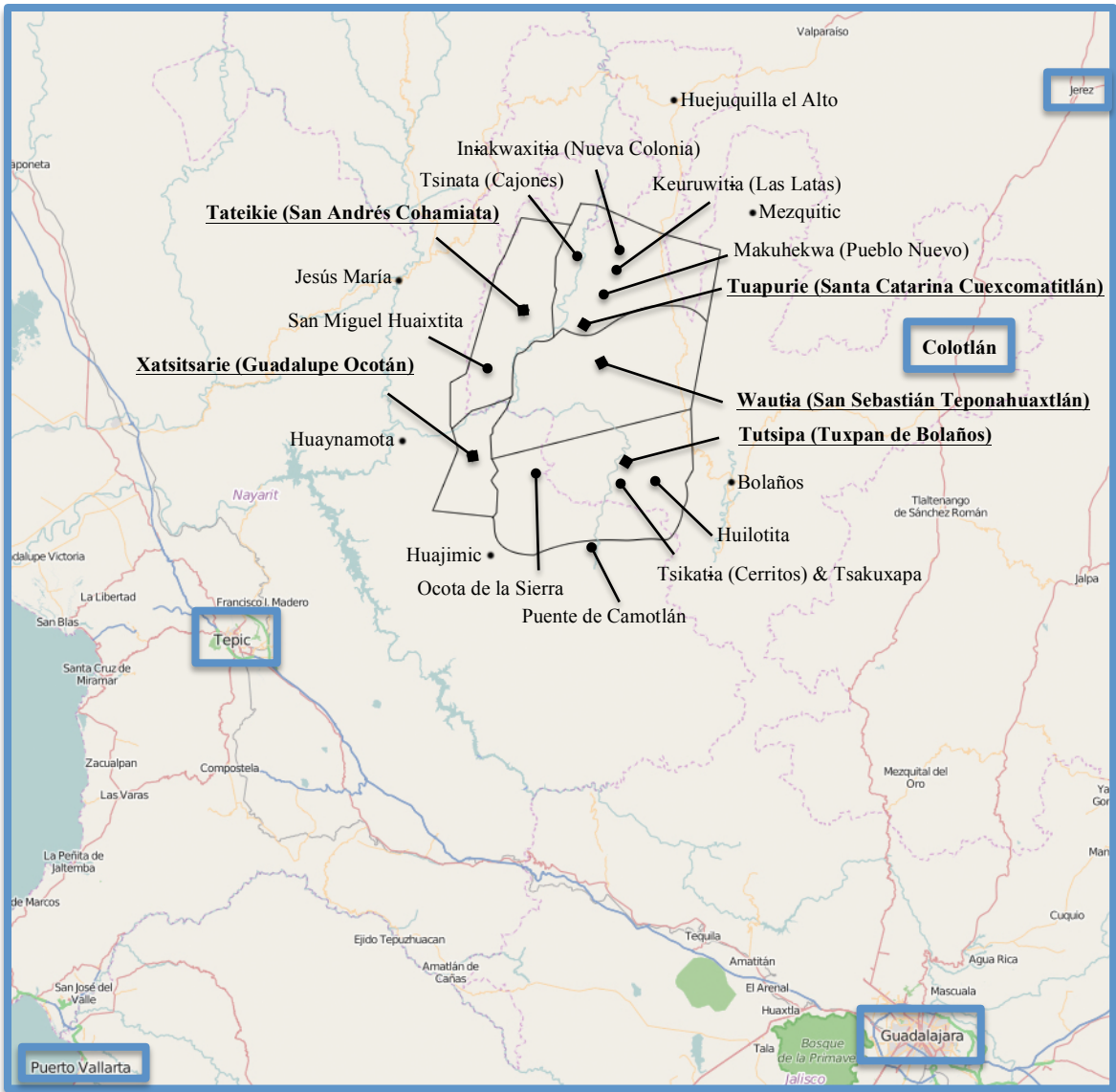


Figure 1. Wixárika communities and research sites.

There are five independent communities (*comunidades*<sup>7</sup>) within the Wixárika territory, listed here by their common names with the Wixárika name for the *cabecera* (headquarters or principal locality) in parentheses:<sup>8</sup>

Santa Catarina (Tuapurie)  
Tuxpan (Tutsipa)  
San Andrés (Tateikie)  
Guadalupe Ocotán (Xatsitsarie)  
San Sebastián (Wautia)

In my experience, when Wixaritari spoke of, say, “San Andrés” or “San Andrés Cohamiata,” they could mean the entire community or the locality which is its headquarters. But when they said “Tateikie,” they usually were referring to the principal locality of San Andrés, not the entire community. I have maintained that distinction throughout the dissertation and therefore refer to the entire community with the shorted Spanish name and all specific localities with their Wixárika names.<sup>9</sup>

Some Wixaritari, especially those from the three communities that pertain to the municipality of Mezquitic, say that there are only three or four Wixárika communities. The communities of Tuxpan and Guadalupe Ocotán were ignored in those cases, revealing an internal identity politics of sorts that connects to issues of the historical formation of those particular communities, the disregard for Nayarit by those who live in Jalisco, and differences in religious and ritual observation. Tuxpan, for example, is considered a territorial “annex” of San Sebastián. They share a territorial leader (*comisariado*) but each has its own cultural leader (*tatuwani*).

Ritual practices in Tuxpan center more on family shrines (*xirikite*) rather than on ceremonial

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<sup>7</sup> The word *community* here is not used in any academic sense, but simply as a translation of the Spanish word *comunidad*, which is used to politically define indigenous groups (i.e., *comunidades indígenas*).

<sup>8</sup> The full official names of the communities are seen on the map. I have left off the Nahuatl words in the community names here because people rarely used them in common parlance. The list here is in order of my familiarity with the community and the amount of time spent in each.

<sup>9</sup> The exceptions to this will be localities that were known primarily in Spanish by the Wixaritari themselves, such as Nueva Colonia, Cajones, and Pueblo Nuevo.

centers (*tukipate*), which thus ritually disconnects them from other communities to some extent. Guadalupe Ocotán is politically within Nayarit and is the only community with a church run by Catholic priests. In the eyes of some Wixaritari in Jalisco, these are issues that make them “less than 100%.” This does not even begin to address the Wixárika locales that are beyond the official Wixárika territory in Nayarit and Durango. Though those locales connect with the official Wixárika territory and its social apparatuses in important ways, they are sometimes denigrated by those in “the main three” communities. Though I think the occasional disregard of Tuxpan and Guadalupe Ocotán by some Wixaritari in other communities is unfair and profoundly detrimental, I must consider the possibility that these prejudices might have affected my work in some way.<sup>10</sup>

### *Regional Environs*

Wixárika people form significant portions of the indigenous populations in urban centers surrounding the Wixárika homelands, especially in major metropolitan areas such as Guadalajara (the capital of Jalisco) and Tepic (the capital of Nayarit), and to a lesser degree Zacatecas (the capital of the state of Zacatecas). Though some urban areas have Wixárika social groups and student organizations, the neighborhood of Zitakwa in the city of Tepic is the only official Wixárika neighborhood in an urban area, and even has its own ceremonial center. Small urban centers and towns around the Wixárika territory also have notable Wixárika populations. A primary one is Mezquitic, Jalisco, the headquarters of the municipality with the most Wixárika communities. Another is Colotlán, the closest town in Jalisco with state government offices, and

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<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, while some people might claim that Tuxpan is less ritually “complete” or zealous compared to Santa Catarina, my focus on ritual at the *xiriki* level allowed me to find evidence to the contrary. Both communities maintained aspects of ritual that were particular to their location. In that sense, either could have claimed that the other community was “missing” something and therefore less ritually complete.

former colonial headquarters for the entire Wixárika region. Colotlán is also the site of the nearest university campus for those Wixaritari who live in Jalisco, resulting in a large and growing Wixárika student population, and therefore a thriving music scene.<sup>11</sup>

To understand the Wixárika territory and its environs, there is some Spanish vocabulary to know. To begin, community (*comunidad*) here is not an academic use of the term but a reference to a political designation for indigenous communities in Mexico. Indigenous communities usually do not refer to themselves as “nations” or “reservations” like in the United States. In fact, those concepts seemed odd to many Wixárika law students. Instead, indigenous communities pertain to municipalities (*municipios*), equivalent to a county in the U.S.<sup>12</sup> Municipalities have a headquarters like a county seat, referred to as the *cabecera*. Towns and villages, including the *cabecera*, are sometimes called localities (*localidades*). In the case of very small towns or villages, the term *rancho* or *ranchería* is used.<sup>13</sup> Unlike the term *ranch*, in English, *rancho* usually meant a village of only a small number of families, often part of an *ejido* or communally owned land.<sup>14</sup> The term *rancho* can refer to Indigenous localities or Mestizo ones.

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<sup>11</sup> The census in 2000 counted fewer than 300 indigenous people in Colotlán. That number must have grown substantially since then as a result of the subsequent construction of the university campus (CUNorte), the state government offices (UNIRSE), and the offices of the regional delegation of public education (DRSE). Now, a *baile* (dance) put on by Wixárika students in Colotlán could draw 200 people but not come near representing the entire Wixárika population in town.

<sup>12</sup> Sometimes they pertain to multiple municipalities at once, as is the case in much of the Wixárika territory. The territory is autonomous to a degree but the people can vote in municipal elections and they are subject to municipal law enforcement for serious matters.

<sup>13</sup> Previous scholars have used the term *ranchería*, and it does have official validity, but I never once heard anyone say it in conversation. The preferred term is *rancho*.

<sup>14</sup> The *ejido* system was a Revolutionary reform to the prior *hacienda* system. With the influence of NAFTA and neoliberal moves since the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the *ejido* system has been hollowed out. Many ranchos were once communally owned *ejidos* where families had rights to land as long as they worked it. In the early 2000s, many *ejidos* were converted into private holdings of their respective families, allowing them to sell the land if they desired. The Wixárika communities are generally still on something like the *ejido* system. For more details, see Liffman (2011).

*“Mestizos” and “Mestizaje”*

The word *Mestizo* is used frequently throughout this dissertation. The concept of the Mestizo person or the mestizaje process is central to the national identity of Mexico at least since the post-Revolutionary period. Originally, the term referred to the offspring of a Spanish man and an Indigenous woman, but it has since come to refer to the general biological and cultural “mixing” of people of European and Indigenous descent. Unlike in Canada where Métis people are considered legally Indigenous and not representative of the entire nation, Mestizos in Mexico are *not* considered indigenous, though the thinking (and the evidence) is that they maintain some indigenous cultural practices. In Mexico, names for ethnic groups are not capitalized, but I capitalize Mestizo here due to English convention. It should be noted, though, that Mestizo is *not* usually thought of as a distinct ethnic group within Mexico per se but is used almost synonymously with the term *Mexican* itself.

The suggestion, though, that all non-Indigenous Mexicans are Mestizos is somewhat misleading, and clearly the use of the term by the Wixaritari gives many Mexicans the benefit of the doubt. That is, it could be said there are some Mexicans more culturally Mestizo than others in the sense that quotidian life in Mestizo ranchos is sometimes strikingly similar to life in Wixárika ranchos. In both Wixárika and Mestizo ranchos, the economy is primarily a peasant one, meaning occasional wage labor in urban areas serves as ancillary to the subsistence farming of maize, calabash, and beans. Adobe or brick homes are often surrounded by the remnants of older handmade stone houses, the ruins sometimes converted for use as storage or livestock pens. Turkeys or chickens walk the premises during the day, and donkeys wait nearby for their next

burden. Fruit trees are often planted near the homes, holding up lines for drying clothes or next year's seed corn tied together by their husks.

The similarities are also apparent in the foodways, with the corn tortilla as the staple. Unlike in urban areas where tortillas are produced on mechanized conveyors, in the ranchos, the entire process is still often done by hand. Dried corn kernels are soaked in water and lime, run through a metal grinder, and then further ground by hand on a *metate*, a pre-Hispanic mortar found throughout Mexico, still used in some ranchos, but otherwise only put on display for tourists. The dough (*masa*) for the tortillas is slapped into flat discs before being put into a wooden or metal hand press. The raw tortillas are then cooked on a metal plate (*comal*) over an open fire, the fire having been started with bits of highly resinous and flammable *ocote* pine in a cooking area mostly exposed to the outdoors. Also over the fire, one might find an urn-shaped clay pot for cooking beans. Nearby, bamboo palettes suspended from a ceiling are used to dry homemade cheese.

Even just a decade or two ago, Mestizo ranches looked even more like Wixárika ranchos today in that many did not have electricity or running water. When they do have running water, it sometimes comes only from a single spigot at the patio or cooking area. The biggest differences between Wixárika and Mestizo ranchos, then, are primarily religious practices and language.<sup>15</sup> Despite these striking similarities, many Mestizos harbor undeniably racist attitudes towards Indigenous Mexicans. On the permanent frontier between Mestizo lands (i.e., Euro-América) and Wixárika communities, the remote, rural, and agricultural lifestyles lend a palpable “cowboys and Indians” feel, described in the first interchapter.

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<sup>15</sup> Even within language and religious practices, though, one can find overlap. Mexican Spanish is filled with words from the indigenous Nahuatl language. Also, I have noticed that in both Mestizo and Wixárika ranchos, the elders often bless their progeny before they set off on a trip. Communal feeding is another point of connection.



## Wixárika Worldview and Ritual Cycle

In describing Wixárika worldview (*cosmovisión*) and ritual practices one could begin with the main ritual counterparts of the “deer-maize-peyote complex,” the ritual territory, or the ancestor-deities that form and control the world. Ultimately, any analytic separation of land, natural elements, deities, economic practices, and kinship is a false separation. I will begin where ritual, kinship, and economic production begin for most Wixaritari, at the *xiriki* (family shrine, pl. *xirikite*).

Lumholtz referred to *xirikite* as “God houses.” Architecturally, a *xiriki* is similar to other houses in the rancho which usually face it in a semicircle. The “Gods” in this house, however, might better be characterized as ancestor-deities, some more recently deceased, others more mythological. The ancestor-deities reside in the *xiriki* in small “stones” or rock-crystal form, tucked away in gourd bowls (Wix. *xukuri*; Sp. *jícara*). The *xiriki* is usually the most prominent house in a Wixárika rancho, on the eastern side of the dance patio (*takwá*), its door facing westward.

Each *xiriki* is usually ritually connected to a nearby *tukipa* (ceremonial center), and its *tuki* (temple). The *tuki* is like a large *xiriki*, but on the west side of the *takwá*, its door facing eastward toward the rising sun, and with a circular foundation.<sup>16</sup> While many ceremonies, especially Tatei Neixa (First Fruits) are conducted at the *xiriki* level, they are also conducted at a *tukipa*. The difference is that the *xiriki* level is common familial ritual; everyone from the rancho and extended family may participate. Conversely, the *tukipa* ceremonies are larger and more elaborate, but also more specialized, involving primarily those people chosen for a five-year service as *xukuritamete* (Sp. *jicareros*), keepers of the ritual gourd bowls of the *tukipa*. The *xukuritamete* are also those who travel to the far off desert of Wirikuta in the state of San Luis

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<sup>16</sup> There are around twenty Wixárika ceremonial centers (*tukipate*) in the sierra.

Potosí, taking on the title *hikuritamete* (peyote pilgrims) as they ritually hunt *hikuri* (peyote), also known as Tamatsi Maxa Yuawi (Our Elder Brother Blue Deer). In all cases, rituals are led by a *mara 'akame* (pl. *mara 'akate*), a shaman who is a chanter, healer, or both.

Wirikuta, however, is only one of a plethora of sacred sites throughout the sierra and western Mexico considered to be the birthplace or seat (*asentamiento*) of Wixárika ancestor-deities. The deities are usually named with kinship terms such as *tamatsi* (elder brother) for some male deities or *tatei* (our mother) for female deities, especially those associated with water. They include, for example, Tatei Haramara (Our Mother Ocean) and Tatei Yurienaka (Our Mother Earth). Of the seemingly countless sacred sites, there are five main “cardinal points” that map a ritual territory much larger than the official political territory shown above. Strikingly, the five points form something akin to the shape of a *tsikiri* (“god’s eye” cruciform). At its center is the birthplace of Tatewarí (Our Grandfather Fire) within the community of Santa Catarina.

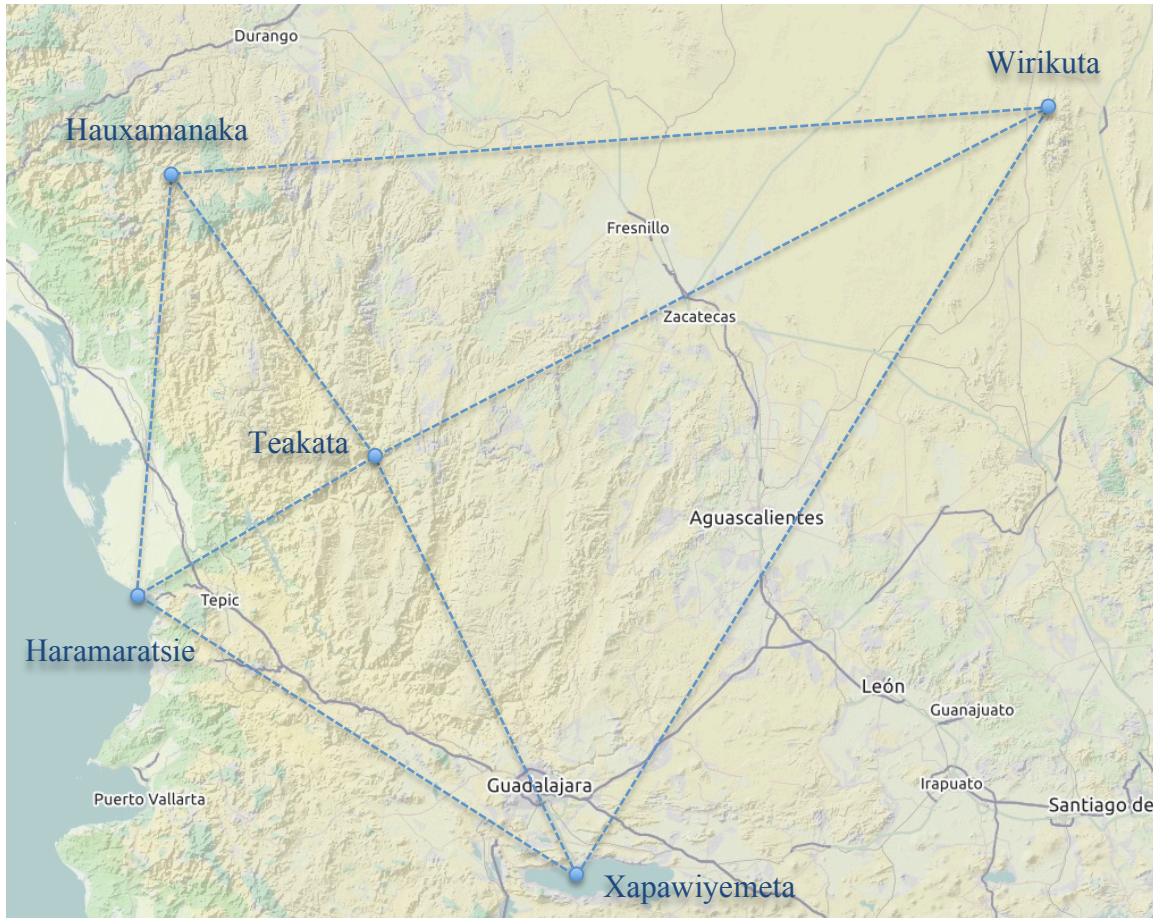


Figure 2. The five primary “sacred sites” form a *tsikiri* (“god’s eye,” a rhomboid cruciform common in Wixárika ritual).

In addition to the tuki-xiriki ritual connections, which Liffman (2011) found to be metaphorically related to a gourd vine, some ritual practices in Wixárika communities also involve the *casa real* (“royal house” or community headquarters) and the remnants of the mission churches, now mostly under Wixárika control. These sites are vital to rituals such as Cambio de Varas (Change of Authorities) and Semana Santa (Holy Week), respectively.

There is a cyclical temporality involved in Wixárika rituals, especially notable in peregrination to Wirikuta, in which those involved in the ritual actually become their own ancestors, living the “myths” about first times. In such times, participants even refer to each other as *teukari* (grandparent/grandchild), embracing the idea that the people in the ritual with

them are simultaneously their ancestors (Liffman 2011:76). The practice forces a question that I take up in later chapters regarding whether one can even conceive of an “original” and its “reproduction” in such cases. The temporal cyclicity is also found at the ritual micro level (in balancing the day-night dichotomy) and macro level (year-long dry-wet dichotomy).

### *The ceremonial cycle*

The Wixárika ceremonial or ritual cycle can be viewed or analyzed in numerous ways, including from that of the solar seasonal calendar (revolving around the solstices), pre-Hispanic rituals verses those of Spanish influence, the place(s) of the ritual, or even the Western calendar.

Early scholars of Wixárika ritual focused on a perceived divide between pre-Hispanic and “Catholic” ceremonies (e.g., Zingg 1938). Though the historic influence of Catholicism and the Spanish colonial period are clear, the division is not much of a Wixárika one. Upon expelling the missionaries, most Wixárika communities took control of the physical remains of the mission churches and incorporated select ceremonial practices such as Semana Santa (Holy Week) as well as some Catholic saints into their own ritual purview.<sup>17</sup>

Later scholars (e.g., Neurath 2002) focused more on the pre-Hispanic side of the equation, shifting the emphasis to a Wixárika worldview (*cosmovisión*) and in particular to its seasonal dichotomy marked by the solstices that divide the dry season (*tukari*) from the wet, planting season (*tikari*). The dichotomy is also seen in the symbolic conceptualization of those seasons as a yearlong cosmic sway between daytime and nighttime, lightness and darkness, male and female. The problem with this view is that it does not incorporate the Spanish/Catholic

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<sup>17</sup> Tutsipa, being more recently created, is the only community headquarters without a physical church, though converts to strict Roman Catholicism and Evangelical Christianity abound. Guadalupe Ocotán is the only Wixárika community with a church that is still controlled by Catholic priests. Also, the use of saint names does not always mean they are referring to an actual Catholic saint. Even when bearing saint names, the saints themselves are often localized and considered to be Wixárika, not European.

influence of Cambio de Varas or Semana Santa, which have long been incorporated by the Wixaritari themselves as vital and inextricable parts of Wixárika ritual and worldview.

Another approach, spearheaded more recently by anthropologist Paul Liffman (2011), is to focus on where rituals take place and the way in which they link land and people(s). The approach leads to a focus on the linkages between local family shrines (*xiriki*) and ceremonial centers (*tukipa*). It also incorporates political headquarters (*casa real*, *presidencias*, and local *agencias*) and the remnants of mission churches (*iglesias*).<sup>18</sup> The landed-ritual approach also allows for a family-based focus on ritual at the *xiriki* level—the perspective from which most Wixaritari understand and experience ritual—though a focus on the *tukipa* and its ritual charge holders (*xukuritamete*) remains. From an ethnomusicological perspective, De la Mora (2011) follows his advisor’s approach (i.e., Liffman’s) in his dissertation by focusing on places where music is performed and places identified in song.

Another view, perhaps simpler but increasingly common amongst Wixaritari, is to think of the ceremonial cycle in relation to the Western (Gregorian) calendar. As Western schooling and professional work situations become more common for Wixárika people, summers, inter-semester vacations, and weekends become increasingly important for scheduling ceremonies in the sierra. Most tend to take place on or around weekends for the sake of attendance. Beyond this pragmatic aspect, though, no Wixárika person in speaking to me ever referred to, say, Tatei Neixa as a fiesta for “solstice,” “first fruits,” or “harvest.” Instead, they were more likely to be called the “October fiestas” (*fiestas de octubre*). I also once heard a family discussing when they prefer to conduct what they called “Fiesta Grande” in the community of Tuxpan. In addition to seasonal climate concerns (rains and long, cold nights), the family was most concerned with

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<sup>18</sup> I say “remnants” of mission churches, but actually the Wixaritari have often made the churches larger than when they were actual missions. In Tateikie, for example, the church is more than double its original size. They do not, however, have the extravagant and luxurious trappings of a Catholic church, though.

when people would be able to attend, focusing on times that would be between school semesters or even in long weekends due to observance of national holidays.

No matter how one decides to categorize or analyze the timing of the ceremonial cycle, there are a number of ceremonies, all with some sort of musical aspect, that are recognized throughout most parts of the sierra.<sup>19</sup> Arranged from the start of the Gregorian calendar, they include:

| Wixárika / Spanish name                          | English translation                | Approximate date                        |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Patsixa / Cambio de Varas                        | Change of Authorities              | January 1 <sup>st</sup> (or early Jan.) |
| Weiya / Semana Santa                             | Holy Week / Easter                 | late March – early April                |
| Hikuri Neixa / Danza del Peyote                  | Peyote Ceremony/Dance              | June                                    |
| Namawita Neixa                                   | Rain Ceremony/Dance                | July                                    |
| Tatei Neixa / Fiesta del Tambor <sup>20</sup>    | Dance of Our Mother / First Fruits | late October – early November           |
| Pariyatsie yeiyari / Peregrinación <sup>21</sup> | Pilgrimage to Wirikuta             | December – February                     |

Cambio de Varas is exactly as the name says, a changing or transfer of the *varas* (batons) that mark authority in the community. The change happens every year, with new authorities chosen (or “dreamed”) by the members of the council of elders (*kawiterutsixi*). Semana Santa celebrations also occur in each community, coinciding with the Catholic calendar but generally without any influence from Catholic clergy. The next three ceremonies, the Neixas, are “pagan” ceremonies based on the solstices and similar in some respects to other Mesoamerican rituals of the solar calendar. The “Neixas” are conducted in the ceremonial centers (*tukipate*) and family shrines (*xirikite*). Hikuri Neixa is the culmination of the peregrination of the hikuritamete to

<sup>19</sup> Even though these ceremonies might be known by all Wixaritari, they are not practiced by all people every year, especially at the xiriki level, which is where most people participate.

<sup>20</sup> Also known as *Wimakwaxi* (with various spellings), *Fiesta del Tambor* (Drum Ceremony), *Fiesta de las Calabazas* (Squashes), and *Fiesta del Elote* (Corn).

<sup>21</sup> De la Mora notes that this is the name when it is part of a *tukipa*, not when it is a family or personal journey (2011:269). Similarly, when done with a family or for personal reasons, it could be done at any time of the year.

Wirikuta. Soon after, Namawita Neixa prepares for the wet planting season. Tatei Neixa concludes the wet season, makes the harvest ritually clean for consumption, and initiates children into Wixárika society by narrating their symbolic flight to and from Wirikuta. Like the xukuritamete who serve for five years in the tukipa ceremonies, the children participate in Tatei Neixa for the first five years of their life.<sup>22</sup>

All of these events are known in all parts of the sierra, but not all people practice them. There are numerous regional variations, distinctions between tukipa and xiriki practices, and less complex but nonetheless vital ritual practices that take place at the level of the individual or nuclear family (e.g., planting and weeding fields, or petitioning a saint/deity regarding personal concerns). One stellar example of the possibilities for variation and adaptation of rituals is what is called, around the community of Tuxpan, *Fiesta Grande* (Large/Grand Fiesta). I found no Wixárika word for the ceremony, probably because it combines three ceremonies into one, namely Danza del Toro, Hikuri, and making of godparents through the baptism of children. This ceremony did not follow a ritual calendar but that of work and school availability. Also, because Tuxpan is more xiriki- than tukipa-centered, there was probably less concern for orthodoxy in regards to scheduling or the combination of rituals.<sup>23</sup>

There are also many ritual practices that are not shared throughout all communities or take place only as needed. One important example is the *fiesta patronal* (patron saint fiesta) of places like Wautia and Nueva Colonia where Xapa and Santo Domingo, respectively, are honored for their local importance. Happening on an as-needed basis are funerary rituals in

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<sup>22</sup> As quickly becomes clear, five is the “magic number” for the Wixaritari. Similarly, Wixárika numeration has a base of five. As I point out later, the importance of five seems to carry into musical realms where pentatonic modes are extremely common, as is the *sesquialtera* rhythm that is characterized by an ostinato of five accented pulses.

<sup>23</sup> The ranchos around Tuxpan are not aligned with a regular tukipa, though the Casa Real in Tutsipa functions as a tukipa of sorts.

which a mara'akame might undergo a possession trance in order that the deceased be able to finalize his worldly affairs before departing. Also as-needed are local rituals in which the mara'akame chants all night in conversation with the deities in order to research or investigate (*investigar*) the metaphysical causes of local problems or afflictions.<sup>24</sup>

### **Places and Period of Fieldwork**

My earliest visit to northern Jalisco was in 2002, and visits have occurred at least annually since then. The initial visits were family related; my wife was born in Colotlán and my in-laws were raised in ranchos near there. Having become familiar with the racism suffered in the U.S. by Mexican immigrants, it was striking to see the same attitudes towards Indigenous Mexicans by Mestizo Mexicans in places like Colotlán. At the same time, indigeneity was seen as part of the national story, a celebrated cultural “root” of the nation itself. This intriguing incongruence and my growing fondness for *música regional* and Huichol music groups formed the early spark of this dissertation.

Though I had been laying the groundwork for many years, fieldwork officially began in Guadalajara and Colotlán with the Arnold Rubin Award grant from the Fowler Museum at UCLA in 2010. Later research grants from Fulbright-IIE and UCMEXUS allowed me to move in July 2012 with my wife and seven-month-old daughter to Colotlán, Jalisco. Colotlán served as our home and headquarters for most of our time in Mexico, with the exception of a two-month stay in Guadalajara coinciding with the birth of our son in June 2014. We returned to the U.S. in January 2015 after 2.5 years of permanent residence in Mexico, during which time I also became a Mexican citizen.

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<sup>24</sup> Around the locality of Makuhekwa (Pueblo Nuevo) during my research years, a number of tragic deaths led the people to seek out a mara'akame to investigate (*investigar*) the reasons for the town's problems by conversing with the deities through the chant.



Massive amounts of my time in Mexico were spent on the road going to and from Wixárika communities, or following music groups to *bailes* (dances). I might also point out that some of the preparation for the study was done via the internet prior to moving to Mexico via sites like the Wixárika-run and music-centered PuebloIndigena.com. Upon arriving in Colotlán, I quickly realized that it would be impossible to conduct fieldwork on popular music, especially amongst Wixárika youths, without starting a Facebook account. It was usually the only way some *bailes* and new recording releases were announced. As pointed out in a later chapter, Facebook was often the primary or sole means of promotion and distribution of new recordings.

As Timothy Cooley wrote, ethnomusicological fieldwork “should happen where music happens” (Cooley, Meizel, and Syed 2008:106). In the case of Wixárika/Huichol music, it meant a multi-sited and multimedia approach. Multi-sited ethnography has been critiqued by some who believe the “mystique and reality of conventional fieldwork is lost” and because it may attenuate the “power” of fieldwork (Marcus 1995:100). On the other hand, “to do ethnographic research, for example, on the social grounds that produce a particular discourse of policy requires different practices and opportunities than does fieldwork among the situated communities such policy affects” (ibid.). It could also be said that the “reality” of what is usually called “Huichol music” today required a multi-sited approach specifically for comparative purposes (i.e., to compare, for example, how repertoire or performance practices change from one site to another). Also, because my central research questions involved outsider involvement in the creation and commodification of Huichol identity, work had to be done in the sites and contexts where such discourses and practices take place. As Wixárika/Huichol identities are multiple and multi-sited, so must be any ethnography of them.

The multi-sited nature of the work, though, does not reject a focus on some sites more than others. Furthermore, a somewhat comparative approach, in addition to the importance of studying ritual music of remote Wixárika ranchos, benefited greatly from my relatively long period in the field. Though 2.5 years of fieldwork is far more than what is feasible for most dissertation projects, it still seems painfully short when considering the depth of Wixárika music and culture, its many forms, and its seemingly endless variations from one location to the next. In the Wixárika worldview, the “magic number” is five, and thus the completion of any major ritual undertaking requires a minimum of five years. From that perspective, I am barely halfway done.

The map of the Wixárika territory above highlights the central places where I realized this study. In fact, every marked location on the map was a research site.<sup>25</sup> These sites were central due to the settings in which music takes place: in ritual, in the recording studios, on the radio (and other media), onstage, and on the road. Although the region seems small on the map, the distances feel enormous when walking through the mountains or traversing dirt roads that sometimes require four-wheel drive. Traveling by car from Colotlán to anywhere in the Wixárika sierra would take at least four to seven hours. However, many localities in the Wixárika communities were only accessible via footpaths. My trip from Xatsitsarie to Huaynamota took over six hours on foot, though my Wixárika guide certainly could have made it in five.

Colotlán was an ideal location for this research. Established as a colonial outpost in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the territory under its control included the Wixárika lands. The name, which in Nahuatl means “scorpion place,” is known equally in Wixárika as Teerikayapa. Since colonial

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<sup>25</sup> There are many sites where I conducted fieldwork that are not marked on the above map. There are only two highlighted sites on the map (Ocóta de la Sierra and Keuruwitia) that I did not personally visit.

times, Colotlán has been an important place for the Wixaritari.<sup>26</sup> Today, the town is one of the main places for Wixárika students to attend preparatory school and university (CUNorte<sup>27</sup>), which made it an excellent place to meet musicians and future leaders of the Wixárika communities, many being the sons and daughters of the current community leaders. It was also at CUNorte where I began my Wixárika language study with linguist and then-chair of the Culture and Society Division, ‘Hítemai Gabriel Pacheco Salvador.<sup>28</sup>

## Literature Review

The literature on the Wixárika people is vast. My collection of academic and popular works on the topic is incomplete but still takes up nearly an entire bookcase. What follows, then, is a selective review of the most important scholarly works from cultural anthropology and music research that have influenced this work. As I will point out, though, my own theoretical questions forming this project are unlike those found in the work of other *huicholistas* (Huicholists).

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<sup>26</sup> Rodrigo de la Mora quoted the elder mara‘akame Rafael Carrillo Pizano who said that each year, newly-installed Wixárika community authorities were supposed to travel to Colotlán to leave offerings in the cliffs to the east of town above the rancho of San Nicolás. Carrillo Pizano seemed to think that no one does it anymore, but I have seen Wixárika offerings at the base of the cliff, though I could not say what their particular intention or origin was. Some Wixaritari have told me that people on pilgrimage to Wirikuta from southern Wixárika communities stop at these cliffs to leave offerings, and some Wixárika students reportedly visit the place as well. The municipal park at the base of the cliffs was also the site of a nightlong ceremony conducted by a mara‘akame in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to heal the ill father of one of the main contacts for this research.

<sup>27</sup> CUNorte stands for Centro Universitario del Norte. It is the northernmost regional campus of the University of Guadalajara, the largest public university in Jalisco, and the second largest in Mexico. With over 250,000 students total, it also ranks as one of the largest universities in the world.

<sup>28</sup> My Wixárika language skill is perhaps better than many but not fluent. Like many researchers before me, I was unable to achieve fluency partly because the majority of Wixárika people speak Spanish and preferred not to tolerate my practicing Wixárika with them. Still, my formal studies with Pacheco Salvador endowed me with a sufficient vocabulary, enabled me to say basic things, pronounce the “‘” well, and understand some song lyrics. I worked with musicians to translate songs and musical concepts, but my training in the language made certain insights possible, especially those outlined in the chapter on traditional music.

## *Cultural Anthropology*

The first ethnographic study of the Wixaritari came from Norwegian explorer-ethnographer Carl Lumholtz in the late 19th century. His study of the Wixaritari occupied most of the second of two volumes called *Unknown Mexico* (1902). Compared to today's research, Lumholtz achieved a fascinating logistical feat. He earned multiple audiences with Mexican president Porfirio Díaz but was clearly working under the social-evolutionary thought of the era. Despite no clear research purpose beyond collecting information and artifacts, the work is an invaluable historical document. Other Europeans followed suit, including Léon Diguët from France, Konrad Theodor Preuss from Germany and, later, Robert M. Zingg. Having studied anthropology at the University of Chicago, Zingg was the first modern, professional anthropologist to work with the Wixaritari, meticulously recording their myths (unpublished until 2004), but also beginning to ideate them for popular consumption in his main publication, *The Huichols: Primitive Artists* (1938).

One of the most productive eras for academic studies of the Wixaritari coincided with the countercultural movements during the late 1960s in Mexico and the United States. Mexican “journalist-historian” Fernando Benítez and U.S. anthropologists Peter T. Furst and Barbara G. Myerhoff are some of the most notable for their influence in academic and popular realms. Where previous researchers such as Lumholtz and Zingg had been unable to participate in the peyote pilgrimage to Wirikuta, these authors focused on the “peyote hunt” to a fault. Benítez, purportedly the first non-indigenous person to participate the pilgrimage, was developing a multi-volume work, *Los Indios de México* ([1968] 2002).

The second volume of *Los Indios de México* focused on the Wixaritari and was rapidly excerpted to become *En la Tierra Mágica del Peyote* ([1968] 1971) when he learned that Furst

and Myerhoff had also undertaken the pilgrimage and intended to publish on it.<sup>29</sup> Both Furst and Myerhoff worked with the shaman and artist Ramón Medina Silva, leading Myerhoff's book *Peyote Hunt* (1974) to seem like the textual and photographic companion piece to Furst's film *To Find Our Life* (1969). The overemphasis of the peyote pilgrimage and the extrapolation of cultural information primarily from one consultant have come under criticism and in many ways created a rift between Huicholistas in Mexico and the U.S. Jáuregui and Castilleja (2005), in an excellent historical look at Wixárika scholarship, have criticized the ethnographic validity of such works, and charges of opportunism have been leveled by Fikes (1993).<sup>30</sup>

Over the past decade, a resurgence of scholarly activity about the Wixaritari has occurred, especially in Mexico. The Mexican Huicholista renaissance began with a monograph on "processes of social hybridization" (Torres 2000), followed by a number of other ethnographic monographs: an in-depth study of the rituals associated with the peyote pilgrimage (Gutiérrez 2002); a study of rituals of the tukipa, with data primarily from the tukipa of Keuruwitia, *Fiestas de la Casa Grande* (Neurath 2002); an aesthetic and comparative look at the votive bowls (Wix. *xukuri*; Sp. *jicaras*) used in ritual and commerce as a microcosm of Wixárika worldview (Kindl 2003); a Turnerian study of liminality in Wixárika and Nayeri rituals (Geist 2005); and an anthology edited by Jesús Jáuregui and Johannes Neurath, *Flechadores de Estrellas* (2003), which includes a piece on Huichol music groups by Jáuregui, among other fine contributions.

Much of the work done in the U.S. around the same time tended to pull from earlier studies such as the memoir-like *Rock Crystals and Peyote Dreams* (Furst 2006) and collections

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<sup>29</sup> This is according to Furst in the introduction to the 1975 translation of *In the Magic Land of Peyote*.

<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that both Furst and Myerhoff were working through UCLA, Furst as an administrator with the Latin American Center's office in Mexico and Myerhoff as a PhD student in anthropology.

based mostly on tired data (Schaefer and Furst 1996). Another new publication, *Mad Jesus* (Knab 2004), was based on data gathered mostly during the late 1960s and early 70s. Two fresh perspectives, however, came from Paul Liffman (2002; 2011) and Stacy B. Schaefer (2002). Liffman's anthropology dissertation at the University of Chicago, his work at the Indigenous-rights NGO AJAGI in Jalisco, his work as a faculty member of the College of Michoacán, and his exemplary book *Huichol Territory and the Mexican Nation* (2011) focus primarily on Wixárika land rights and discourses of territoriality. Stacy Schaefer, a student of Furst, has also published a notable study of women's weaving in Wixárika communities, *To Think With a Good Heart* (2002), bringing the experience of Wixárika women to the fore in an otherwise male-oriented (and male-dominated) ethnographic literature.

### *Music Research*

The historical and anthropological literature mentioned above covers music only in passing, if at all. Spanish-language scholarship on Wixárika/Huichol music has only recently begun in earnest and significant works (prior to this) do not exist.

The first major work to appear on music in the Gran Nayar region (which includes the Wixárika sierra) was an anthology compiled by Jesús Jáuregui (1993) of previously published works on Wixárika and Nayeri music. Mostly comprised of short descriptive vignettes, and more about the Nayeri people than the Wixaritari, it does contain some essential contributions, especially Jáuregui on "the first Huichol mariachero" and his descendants. Another vital piece is the contribution by Mata Torres (1993) that provides a snapshot of musical practices as the beginning of the Huichol popular music group phenomenon, making it an essential primary source.

One of the first major publications specifically on Wixárika music appeared as part of the Mexican linguistics journal *Función*, taking up four entire volumes and published as one unit. *Wixárika Xaweri* by Xitákame Julio Ramírez de la Cruz (2003–2004) is a massive work of scholarship but is entirely textual. As a Wixárika man with a master's degree in linguistics, his work seems extremely well informed and supersedes similar smaller works (e.g., Mata Torres 1974; Ramírez de la Cruz 1993) by clearly classifying subgenres and characteristics of songs. He has also translated a number of popular songs released commercially by Huichol groups that are sung in the Wixárika language. However, as a linguist, he focuses primarily on texts and does not at all consider musical elements or characteristics.

Similarly, the French ethnologist Denis Lemaistre apprenticed with a mara'akame to understand the chants and symbolism used by the mara'akate, collecting the experience in his doctoral dissertation and the book *Le Chamane et Son Chant* (2003). Unfortunately, like Ramírez de la Cruz, Lemaistre's work is entirely textual, ignoring musical aspects entirely. The work is academic, focused primarily on understanding ritual, but the focus on apprenticeship to become a mara'akame makes one wonder whether the Wixaritari distinguish at all between ethnographers and New Age seekers.

Perhaps the earliest Spanish-language study of sacred instrumental music was a thesis by Xilonen Luna Ruiz (2004), focusing on the instruments *xaweri* and *kanari*.<sup>31</sup> Luna Ruiz begins by noting the sonic dimensions of Wixárika mythology and cosmology (i.e., the spoken appearance of sounds or music in the myths). She also describes the role of instrumental musicians in ritual. In her employment with the CDI, she produced and annotated a semi-

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<sup>31</sup> Luna Ruiz's thesis was for the *licenciatura* (between a BA and MA degree) in ethnomusicology at the National School of Music of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).

commercial CD release of the wax-cylinder recordings made by Lumholtz for the American Museum of Natural History.<sup>32</sup>

Arturo Chamorro Escalante (2001; 2007) has also published on Wixárika/Huichol music and song. In a book on Wixárika “expressive culture” and performance theory (Chamorro Escalante 2007), he devotes a chapter to xaweri and kanari, another to peyote songs, and a very brief section to Huichol conjuntos, which he calls “mariachis,” as do many other Mexican scholars. This is one of the first works that can be considered rightly ethnomusicological in the sense that it sees music as an integral aspect of culture and cultural production but does not shy away from describing and analyzing musical concepts. Its only fault, perhaps, is that it leaves the (ethnomusicologist) reader wanting more.

Recently, the most active Mexican scholar of Wixárika/Huichol music is Rodrigo de la Mora.<sup>33</sup> Most of his academic pursuits have focused on the Wixárika people, including his master’s thesis in ethnomusicology (2005), journal articles (2007; 2009) and his anthropology dissertation (2011). His master’s thesis studied the manner of xaweri playing amongst various Wixárika communities, noting the way its execution could be said to form both a sierra-wide Wixárika identity while maintaining community-specific styles. His dissertation, influenced heavily by the work of one of his advisors, Paul Liffman, focuses to a large degree on the inscription of territory in and through music, as well as the recontextualization of Wixárika musical forms, especially in “hyper-mediated” settings. I frequently cite his work in my own take

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<sup>32</sup> In the recording’s liner notes, Luna Ruiz suggests the recordings were made in various Wixárika communities but does not indicate how she came to those conclusions. In my research at the AMNH with Lumholtz’s diaries and itineraries, it seems that in 1898 (when the recordings were made) he only traveled to localities within the community of Santa Catarina.

<sup>33</sup> Some of his publications list his entire name, Rodrigo Alberto de la Mora Pérez Arce. With his blessing, I cite him throughout simply as “De la Mora.”



on Wixárika traditional music, but pursued in greater depth the phenomenon of Huichol popular music groups.

Though scholars seem to be slowly moving away from portraying Wixárika cultural practices as inert and singular, they have not significantly taken up the issue of Wixárika/Huichol identity (or *identities*, as many Wixaritari leave their homelands for urban and transnational lives). I have found no work that deeply probes questions about how Wixárika people decide who they consider to be Wixárika and why.<sup>34</sup> How do they define Wixárika identity in the official territory and beyond? Along those same lines, there are no prior studies that consider the potentially tremendous effects of a commercialized Huichol identity in a rapidly changing Wixárika world and worldview. Nor has there been serious consideration of the extent to which ethnographers have defined and promulgated that identity for outside consumption. I aim to bring these issues to the forefront through the methods mentioned below, focusing primarily on music and sonic aesthetics, and the extent to which musical sounds may be usurped by visual aesthetics as a means of outside identification and authentication. Before describing my research methods, let me first address the problematic concept of “identity.”

### *Identity*

Identity is a complicated matter, not only for individuals and groups, but also for scholars. Despite the explosion of the term in academic work—mostly since the 1990s and tapering off in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—*identity* is a hardworking word with disparate definitions and theorizations (when authors theorize it at all, and often they do not). In ethnomusicology, and

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<sup>34</sup> One exception might be *Cultura de Maíz-Peyote-Venado* (Guzmán Mejía & Anaya Corona 2007). The book covers some of the basic elements that Wixaritari use to determine whether a person is “100%” Wixárika, but it does not probe the dynamic or present cases that might reveal the leeway available in an otherwise “dogmatic” definition (119).

seemingly in other disciplines, scholars have taken it up individually but failed to create any real conversation about it by engaging each other's work on the matter (Rice 2007). As a result, in anthropology identity is a "vexed" and "murky" topic (Lurhmann 2001:7154). In folklore, it has been called "strangely undertheorized" (Berger and Del Negro 2004:124).

Even the definition of identity is "rather confusing" as authors often avoid an explicit definition, leading to different operational definitions that the reader must intuit (Rice 2007:21). Some authors use a mostly colloquial definition that sees identity as "characteristic qualities attributed and maintained by individuals and groups of people" (Negus 1996:99). Academic authors have apparently found identity useful as an alternative to what was felt to be the increasingly restricted and reified "predicament" of the word *culture* at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Identity, instead, was seen as something imagined rather than given, changing rather than static. Stuart Hall defined it as a process of production, never complete, and "constituted within, not outside representation" (1990:318).

There is also a good deal of ambiguity as to whether identity is more about interpretation or representation.<sup>35</sup> Berger and Del Negro (2004) portray identity as "an interpretive framework and a set of interpretive practices, a particular way of making sense of social conduct and expressive culture" (125). In contrast, Turino defined it as "the representation of selected habits foregrounded in given contexts to define self to oneself and to others by oneself and by others," or in the case of groups as "the recognition, selection, and sometimes conscious creation of common habits among varying numbers of individuals" (Turino and Lea 2004:8). Definitions like Turino's seem more common as they focus on a "subject-centered sense of personal

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<sup>35</sup> Brubaker and Cooper (2000) have made the distinction between identity as a "category of practice" and a "category of analysis." I mean something slightly different here because I am using "interpretation" not just to mean a scholarly or academic take compared to a "lay" categorization, but to mean an interpretation by any person outside the group in question.

agency,” even in groups (Lurhmann 2001:7156). That focus might be evidence of the remaining influence of the early work on identity in psychology by Erik Erikson in the 1950s. But even before Erikson, the use of the term *identity* appeared early on in ethnomusicology in reference to groups.

At least as early as 1958, Mantle Hood clearly used the term *identity* to refer to a group, specifically of a society in general, in a paper delivered at the Society for Ethnomusicology meeting in Berkeley, California. Hood was later quoted:

These cultural expressions, representing the heart and soul of a people, can serve as a kind of camera obscura reducing the vast and complex panorama of their multifarious activities to a sharp image in miniature. Through language and literature, through music, dance and theater, through the graphic and plastic arts can be revealed in natural color and living images all of those essential attributes which go to make up the very identity of a people. (Hood 1958:19, quoted in Merriam 1963:210)

Hood frames identity as something made up of “cultural expressions” seen as the “heart and soul” of a group, its essence.<sup>36</sup> This “sharp image in miniature” (i.e., reduced, delimited, and framed), includes presentational and commercial modes of identity, which I will explicate later.

Hood’s thinking about identity in relation to a group presaged the general shift away from Erikson’s focus on the identity of an individual (seen in music research in Keil 1966) towards something often called “cultural identity.” The shift occurred in the 1980s and 90s, outlined in the work of Christopher Waterman who began the 1980s by talking about the “social identity” of individuals (1982), but entered the 1990s writing about the “cultural identity” of groups (1990). The shift seen in Waterman’s work was paralleled in many disciplines and heavily influenced by James Clifford, though Clifford never entirely embraced the term *identity* himself. In 1986, Clifford wrote that “culture is contested, temporal, and emergent” (Clifford 1986:19). Only two

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<sup>36</sup> Hood also used *identity* in a similar way in an article in *Ethnomusicology* (1960).

years later, he wrote that “identity... [is] mixed, relational, and inventive.” The striking similarity of his definitions of the two terms explains why he seems to use them synonymously:

[Culture is a] serious fiction... [one that needed] a concept that can preserve [its] differentiating functions while conceiving of collective identity as a hybrid, often discontinuous inventive process... [culture is] a deeply compromised idea I cannot yet do without.” (Clifford 1988:10)

Thus, Clifford clung to *culture* but slyly and simultaneously began to speak of “collective identity,” a move that would be echoed prolifically by other scholars.

The seemingly exponential number of positions on and definitions (or lack thereof) of identity necessitate a broad and inclusive definition if one hopes to benefit from and contribute to the disparate conversation that has already occurred under its heading (if it can even be called a conversation).<sup>37</sup> In the corpus of music research that takes up the identity theme, there are a number of aspects that become salient even when identity is not explicitly defined. Those recurring notions about identity are...

...*identity can be (and maybe must be) layered and plural*

It can have telescopic subcategories or be assembled horizontally.

...*identity is based on notions of inclusion and exclusion*

It is associative or indexical but also differential or dissociative.

...*identity must be articulated and maintained (or changed)*

To do so, people must have some awareness of its elements.

...*identity is often contingent*

e.g., “Afro-Cuban” requires notions of “African” and “Cuban.”

...*identity has many components*

It includes elements such as arts, language, food, dress, religion, etc.

...*identity is historically situated and emergent*

It is portrayed as more malleable than culture, a result of agency.

...*identity is often linked to a desire for autonomy*

It can include social distinction or sovereignty.

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<sup>37</sup> Of course, it is hard to call it a “conversation.” Timothy Rice’s impugning of the situation (2007) showed it not to rise to the status of conversation. In preparation for this research, I expanded his study to include uses of the “identity theme” not just in the journal *Ethnomusicology*, but also in *Ethnomusicology Forum*, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, musicology journals, anthropology journals, and folklore journals. I also studied the theme in a number of monographs, anthologies, and academic encyclopedias in the disciplines of ethnomusicology, anthropology, musicology, psychology, and cultural studies (Warden 2011).

Considering the variety and breadth of these implied maxims about identity, an overly precise or restrictive definition of the term would be like squeezing tightly to hold a greased football. So that it does not get away from us, a better approach would be to broaden (and loosen) the grasp to allow for better control. With that in mind, I define identity as: *concepts about groups and individuals and one's relationship to them.*

My definition of identity fits the maxims above and is intentionally broad to include multiple subject positions and configurations. The definition is plural, multilayered, historically situated, and implies the potential for change. It focuses on the “ponderables” and particulars considered essential to a group’s uniqueness. I use the word *concept* rather than *notion* for a dual reason. It implies something created—conceived—but is a word also sometimes used for the idea behind a commodity or brand. Though my definition is not intended to be a purely Marxian one, I entertain the possibility of a deeply embedded capitalist influence in the very concern for identity in both commercial and academic realms. In other words, the concern for identity might be a “symptom of today’s neoliberal capitalism” (Taylor 2014:320).

It should be kept in mind that identity has been discussed in terms of both representation and interpretation. My definition allows for both, but representations and interpretations occur from many very different (and sometimes opposed) subject positions and with myriad audiences. Therefore, I have split my take on identity into a tripartite model to incorporate some of those important distinctions that are oftentimes problematically elided in prior works. My model involves three “modes” or “forms” of identity. I use the words *mode* and *form* to indicate representational and interpretative aspects, respectively, but also dynamic action and static instantiation.<sup>38</sup> The three modes/forms are: participatory, presentational, and commodity. The

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<sup>38</sup> The word *mode* seems appropriate for its musical connotations as well. Three distinct musical modes can be based on the same pitches, but in performance are approached from different understandings of

first two are influenced by Turino's (2008) thinking on musical activities, thus creating a musical and ethnomusicological take on identity from the outset. The latter is influenced heavily by writings on brands, "virtual objects," and commoditized ethnicity (e.g., Lury 2004; Arvidsson 2006; Lash and Lury 2007, Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, et al.).

The first—participatory—is primarily a mode, it could be said, because it concerns being Wixárika from an insider perspective, participating in the things that Wixaritari themselves define as essential to being Wixárika. The mode is coterminous with what they see as meaningful practices. A Wixárika person who says to other Wixaritari, "I am Wixárika" or "we are Wixaritari" primarily operates in a participatory mode, referencing the things that the group generally finds necessary for correct and legitimate belonging in the group. The identity does not usually need definition in the moment because the attributes are generally agreed upon.

The second—presentational—is both a mode and a form, encapsulated in statements like "the Wixárika people are \_\_\_\_." There exists an attempt to define and present, but the speakers and audiences can vary. A Wixárika person making that statement to other Wixaritari actuates both participatory and presentational modes of identity, but a museum exhibit that says the same thing to foreign tourists is something quite different and can be seen as a purely presentational form of identity. Ethnographic works are another clear example. The presentational form of identity, then, is usually a step removed from the people and their practices, but requires at least some knowledge of participatory Wixárika identity in order to create a selective presentation. Its relationship to participatory identity is that of the "sharp image in miniature," but it can also have a flattening or homogenizing effect that expands minor or exceptional facts to the entire image

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how those pitches relate to one another. Likewise, a large collection of possible pitches in one mode could be selectively diminished and rearranged to create another mode based on fewer pitches. My approach to identity, then, is a musical understanding of interpretation and representation.

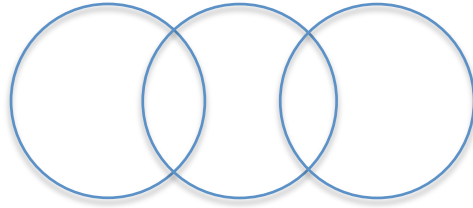
when they are only representative of a subset of the population.<sup>39</sup> Though the presentational mode usually has its foundations in a strong ideological motivation (such as “the good of science,” multiculturalism, or *indigenismo*), it does not have a strong or central profit motive.

The third mode of identity considered here is primarily a commercial one, often taking a product or commodity form. It is distinguished from the other modes by being relatively disconnected from the people it purports to represent. It often takes forms that would be unrecognizable or non sequitur to Wixaritari themselves. Its representation is not based primarily (or at all) on interaction with Wixárika people but takes its substance from prior representations. Sometimes, these prior representations are ethnographic in nature, “lifted” or “pirated” for commercial ends. Here, the vocabulary of Lash and Lury (2007) becomes useful to the extent that the commercial form, which in this case I call Huicholness, is primarily an intangible concept or “virtual object” that can be “actualized” in other virtual or tangible objects. From that perspective, to the extent that Huichol *artesanías* (artisanals or crafts) are perceived to have or embody Huicholness, they are an actualization of that virtual object. As I show, though, Huicholness can be actualized in myriad products and commodities, not just those created by Wixárika people. In that way, Huicholness is a relatively unmoored and public concept, like a brand but not literally owned or trademarked by any person or group.

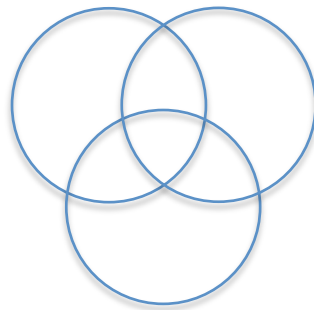
If the identity modes could be visually represented, they might be like this (with the presentational mode in the middle):

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<sup>39</sup> A good example is when I visited the Museo Wixárika in Mezquitic, Jalisco with Ukeme (mentioned later in this introduction). Despite living near a river and being well acquainted with fishing, he was interested in a type of fish trap on display in the museum because he had “never seen it before.” Another example is the way that mythology and ritual practices of the *tukipa* come to represent the entire Wixárika people, though not all Wixárika people share a profound knowledge of those things.



However, because Huicholness can theoretically circle back around and influence participatory Wixárika identity, the relationship could also be represented like this:



The problem with the above illustration, though, is that the dead center of it seems to be mostly theoretical (so far). I imagine it to be a member of a Wixárika community who creates a “Huichol Museum” for outsiders, but one in which each item in the museum is for sale. On the other hand, it could be argued that Wixaritari who make and sell artesanías or work as musicians are at the center of the three rings. The only caveat is that those Wixaritari usually do not have a purely ideological motivation behind their work. Therefore, their actions are not usually a presentational mode per se, but one of many means of making money to buy the commodities now seen as necessary for ritual and daily life. In that way, making artesanías and music are primarily participatory modes even though they might fit the presentational and commercial forms of Wixárika/Huichol identity for outsiders. In other words, a singular cultural practice can have different degrees of importance and meaning in the different modes of identity.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The modes, then, could also be mapped onto the concept of “regimes of value” (Appadurai 1986)



Part of what convinced me that it made sense to separate modes of identity for heuristic purposes was the bifurcation of the words *Huichol* and *Wixárika*. These two words were, centuries ago, more similar, but have become distinct as a result of the changes within each language over the centuries (Iturrioz 2007). More important for informing this study, though, is the attempt to make *Wixárika* the official word for self-representation, despite the enduring preponderance of *Huichol* for commercial purposes.

In my initial visits to northern Jalisco (around 2002), the most common word for the *Wixárika* people was *Huichol*, a word some *Wixárika* people still use while speaking in Spanish. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, though, there was a concerted effort by *Wixaritari* to use and be known by the word *Wixárika*. By 2010, the word *Wixárika* had become familiar to many Spanish speakers in the region, but often only in writing, and many today remain uncertain about its pronunciation. The result was that the words *Wixárika* and *Wixaritari* became more common for government documents and official self-representation but *Huichol* has been retained for its commercial value. It has also remained ingrained in academic writing where a lot of outdated orthography also stubbornly persists.

The value of the word *Huichol* for commercial purposes is not hard to understand when considering the word's utter dominance for outside discourse about the *Wixaritari*. A Google search alert from April through May 2015 resulted in 414 results for "Huichol" but only 14 for "Wixarika" (which would have also included "Wixárika"). The value of the term for identification and promotion means that most popular music groups comprised of *Wixárika* musicians use the word *Huichol* in the group's name.

The commercial mode of identity makes it strikingly similar to the commercial use of music; they are both intangibles that can be actualized or take material form in physical

commodities. The similarity is further compelling when considering the formation of identity for musical groups or bands, and that of ethnic groups. For one thing, they are repertoire-based in the way that identity is a concept based on select elements. Music and identity are both sometimes loosely called commodities, but do not fit an orthodox Marxian definition that sees a commodity as a physical product intended for a marketplace, its maker and consumer usually unknown to each. To see where I am coming from on this, a brief review of some of the literature on music commodification would be helpful.

### *Music as a Commodity*

Music can (sometimes) be understood as a commodity in a loose Marxian sense as something produced for exchange in a market environment. Music as a commodity is immediately problematic, though, because of Marx's focus on the tangible nature of commodities. A commodity is an "object outside us" that "satisfies human wants of some sort or another," but commodities only exist "in so far as they have two forms, a physical or natural form and a value-form" (Marx [1867] 1978:303, 313). Commodities also consist of use-value and exchange-value, where use-value is a qualitative property of a thing resultant from its usefulness, and where exchange-value is an abstract relationship between commodities resultant from the labor needed to produce them. These definitions allow a sort of reverse engineering of our conceptualization of music as a commodity to the extent that we think of it as something with use-value and exchange-value. Thinking of musical sound as a commodity was not nearly as easy in Marx's time since it was before the appearance of mechanical means of reproducing sound; recordings are the most common example though one can also include player pianos (Taylor 2007).

This separation of music from human sources can be described in Marxist terms as “reification,” that is the “process of making music something apart from the social and apart from one’s own labors... masking the social labor that produced it” (Taylor 2007:295). This masking has engendered a great deal of concern from many scholars, made clear in the vocabulary used to discuss the concept. For example, Manuel Peña’s (1999) take on *música tejana* positions music-as-commodity within the realm of the “superorganic” (i.e., a potentially latent, non-active realm of culture). His take on *conjunto* is that “in its commercialized form [music is] susceptible to the reifying effects of exchange-value—that is, the tendency of commodities to become fetishized objects of individualized consumption limited in their capacity to transmit vital cultural communication” (109). That they have a “limited capacity” for cultural communication is debatable, but surely reification of music makes it possible *not* to have or build social relationships with other people through music.

The mechanical reproduction of music also makes it increasingly difficult to understand in a Marxian labor theory of value. For example, Jacques Attali pointed out that “the growth of exchange is accompanied by the almost total disappearance of the initial usage of the exchanged. Reproduction, in a certain sense, is the death of the original, the triumph of the copy” (Attali 1985:89). The truth of this is even clearer in the years after his writing, affirmed by the appearance and “triumph” of digital technology. In fact, digital reproduction (and sales) of things like the MP3 might seemingly frustrate any theoretical understanding of value since it is possible to have almost no unique “original,” no tangible object as the basis of the “copy,” and a degree of labor in each copy that approaches infinitely small quantities as digital copies proliferate. And yet, as the success of iTunes makes clear, music in digital form can still be sold. It still has exchange value expressed in money. A more sophisticated explanation of how this is possible

was framed by Arjun Appadurai when he said, following Georg Simmel, that “the economic object does not have an absolute value as a result of the demand for it, but the demand, as the basis of a real or imagined exchange, endows the object with value” (Appadurai 1986:4). Thus, digital reproduction seems to perfectly manage exchange value, demand, and supply with copies transferred to users’ computers as soon as demand exists.

But, this increasingly intangible existence of music and its various media forms forces the question: What is actually being sold? One attempt to explain this through Marxian theory is the concept of the “fetishism” of commodities, imbuing commodities with “mystical” or metaphysical characteristics that they do not actually possess (Marx [1867] 1978:320; Klumpenhouwer 2002; Taylor 2007). This explanation seems to posit that the “commodity” is being purchased for its fetishistic qualities, an explanation that works rather well for earlier forms of capitalism in which, say, player pianos were the height of music technology (Taylor 2007). Recent works on “late capitalism” seem to suggest that these elusive, intangible, or even metaphysical notions are the things being exchanged while the specific medium or object-form of the commodity is comparatively decentralized.

For Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (2005), “late capitalism” is characterized as a mentally connected world of projects, a “connexionist world” of social capital and networking. Scott Lash and John Urry (1994) saw things similarly, as an age of post-Fordist “networks.” Importantly, for my work, they pointed out that “the objects in contemporary political economies are... progressively emptied out of material content. What is increasingly being produced are not material objects, but signs” (15). In this era, they say, culture companies are “in the business of exploiting rights in intellectual property by copying it and selling it” (135), and thus the capitalization is performed in the immaterial realm. Brands become more important than the

goods in which they manifest, and a record company sells “not so much the record, but the artist” (137).

Lash’s later work with Celia Lury (Lash and Lury 2007) took this even further, seeing culture as no longer belonging to a Marxist “superstructure” or even part of it, but as something “thingified.” When considered globally, culture is flattened or collapsed into the base so that the classic Adornian take on the culture industry as “mediation by means of representation” becomes a “mediation of things” (3). Thus, goods become informational, work becomes affective, and property becomes intellectual (7). They conclude that the “objects of global culture industry are virtual objects,” or “potentials that generate a succession (a series or flow) of actual forms” (182). Thus, intangible experiences or ideas (e.g., music, concepts, identities, brands) can be actualized in many forms and are the virtual object with which the consumer wants to associate. Therefore, starting from the object commodity and considering its “fetish character” might be more pertinent to industrial forms of capitalism while “virtual objects” (and intangible commodities) may be the starting place in today’s global capitalism.

To put this more concretely, the virtual objects found in a recording—music, Huicholness, Mexicanness—are not the fetishes of the CD or MP3 file. I am suggesting the reverse. Virtual objects—concepts—exist first and are actualized in myriad tangible commodities or other virtual objects. From whence does this *a priori* Huichol identity come? Like all commodities, tangible or virtual, it involves labor intended for exchange.

### *Identity as a Commodity*

Identity, or at least one of its modes, can be understood as a “virtual object,” and thus a virtual commodity. As a virtual commodity, it can be actualized in a number of tangible forms,

as can be seen by looking at the unique case of the “culture industry” surrounding indigenous goods in Mexico.

The *culture industry*, a term first introduced by Horkheimer and Adorno, is not understood quite the same in Mexico as in the United States or Europe. The culture industries in the U.S. and Europe are usually taken to mean mass media and industries surrounding the fine arts and performing arts (Hesmondhalgh 2002). In Mexico, however, the concept includes what might be called “folk art” in the English. That type of cultural industry is much larger in Mexico than in the U.S. because of handmade *artesanías* (artisanals, crafts), often made by indigenous people (see Garcia Canclini 2002). Huichol *artesanías* include “yarn paintings” (images made by pressing yarn into beeswax-covered boards) and bead-encrusted statuettes. These are common as tourist souvenirs in Mexico but are also sometimes sold in pow-wows in the U.S. and on eBay. The origins of these *artesanías* are found in Wixárika votive bowls and figurines, though the commercial versions now certainly outnumber the production of their ritual counterparts. Both Garcia Canclini (2002) and Lash and Lury (2007) have pointed out the way in which such handmade goods, though all very similar in structure and visual appearance, avoid modernistic mechanical mass production. Because each object is technically one-of-a-kind, they are ideal objects of desire for bourgeois distinction through consumption. Indeed, they fit very well into the descriptions of late capitalism in the way they embody the “design intensive production of difference” (Lash and Lury 2007:4).

What identifies these objects as Huichol (as opposed to coming from another Mexican indigenous group) are the unique visual motifs they contain, in addition to their vibrant colors. These visual motifs also make their way onto Huichol CD covers, though the main aspects that distinguish Huichol music are the use of Wixárika clothes and language. Musically, Huichol

groups are not unlike Mestizo groups with the same instrumentation.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, Huicholness in music does not necessarily spring from the music itself but can be placed there. Huicholness can also be placed in the music of Mestizo musicians and in other commodities in a manner sometimes entirely disconnected from the Wixárika people.

Will Straw (1999–2000) has pointed out that music as a commodity, unlike other commodities, does not necessarily separate its producers from the commodity itself. Instead, it shows them off. In an article on the commodification of Congolese *soukous* music, Bob White (2000) came to the conclusion that the sale of cultural goods *depends* on some sort of identity, and it “is on this basis that they are sold” (47). The evidence I present here shows that identity certainly is used to sell music, but that identity is not available exclusively to the people it purportedly represents.

At the same time, to associate oneself with Huichol identity through consumption—through handmade commodities or songs in the Wixárika language—affirms the concern for “authenticity” and “realness” in the “new spirit of capitalism” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). Similarly, then, we might have been able to predict the trend over the past decade to refer to Huichol popular music groups as “traditional mariachi.” A relatively new phenomenon is thus repositioned as the roots of modern mariachi, despite the backwards somersault of historicization such a claim requires, and the total disregard of the view of the musicians themselves.

Though some of what I call Huicholness is spuriously representative of the Wixárika people, its existence should not be automatically seen as fatalistic. Commoditizing Huichol identity has been economically advantageous for many Wixárika people, and certainly many of them enthusiastically participate in the endeavor. However, John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff (2009) point out the potentially deleterious affects: “the more successful any ethnic

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<sup>41</sup> Repertoire is one important difference, but the sound of the groups is often indistinguishable.

population is in commodifying its difference, the faster it will [seemingly] debase whatever made it different to begin with” (19). Investigating this apparent paradox is central to my research.

The commodification of music and identity may be a double-edged sword for the Wixárika people, but what enabled that practice in the first place? Indeed, much of what constitutes “Huichol identity” as understood by non-Huichol people has been gleaned directly or indirectly from the results of ethnographic work. On the other side of the coin, the people charged with officially bringing modernization and “economic development” to the Wixárika people were anthropologists (Reed 1972). The co-operation of these sides is observed when the commodification of Huichol artesanías is taken to be a “culturally appropriate” form of “economic development” (see Candia Goytia 2002). Thus, the specter of Gramsci haunts this topic to the extent that he frames the intellectuals as the “deputies” of social hegemony and political government in hegemonic encounters (Gramsci quoted in Milner and Browitt 2002:70). To study how identity as a virtual object is separated from the people themselves and actualized (and sold) in various media, ethnographers can begin simply by turning the camera around.

## **Research Methods**

For this study, I have utilized three interrelated research methods: ethnography, musical/sonic analysis, and textual analysis (broadly defined). The first method, ethnography, focused on interviews and participant observation. As mentioned above, this took place in various sites and amongst people with varying perspectives on the topic. I conducted over thirty formal interviews with musicians, studio engineers, record label owners, and youth leaders. The formal interviews ranged in length from thirty minutes to three hours, but were commonly ninety minutes long. Equally important were the countless hours of conversations I had with people



while we were driving to, from, or around the sierra. In fact, these conversations were incredibly insightful because they were often done with recordings of Huichol groups on the car stereo, which allowed me to elicit (or be given without prompting) reactions and information about the music.

Another ethnographic technique was participant observation in everyday village life, in recording studios, at *bailes* (dances), and on the road with musicians. This approach, coupled with the multi-year fieldwork period, allowed for comparison between village and urban life in multiple locations. It also enabled me to witness “the same” ritual in different places throughout the sierra and sometimes more than once in the same location. Following Huicholness to its periphery, though, I also sought out the “seekers,” the so-called drug tourists and *huicholeros* (Huicholers) who associate themselves with the Wixaritari, hoping to find their own Don Juan or get in touch with what they imagine to be the roots of Mexican culture. Here the identity “commodity” finds its logical end, the consumption of a concept as much or more than peyote itself, not unproblematically.<sup>42</sup>

Another central research method used here, clearly connected to ethnographic methods, is musical study and analysis. In my early fieldwork, I studied both popular and traditional music with various people, but found it to be of limited value. My knowledge of the repertoire became extensive without the need to play the songs. Though I learned to sing a number of songs while accompanying myself on vihuela, doing so seemed to be of only limited value since I did not

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<sup>42</sup> Wixárika-run websites, regional Mexican newspapers, and even National Public Radio in the U.S. have featured exposés of the problem of youths from around the globe who travel to *Wirikuta* in San Luis Potosí, often hiring “shamans” to help them find peyote in the desert. Reportedly, the result has been a depletion of peyote itself, making it harder for Wixaritari to find the sacred cactus. The sacking of the desert’s floral resources is not unlike the exploitation of its mineral wealth for mining, a process reinvigorated under president Felipe Calderón’s administration only a short while after he appeared in a Wixárika community dressed in Wixárika clothes to speak about the cultural rights of indigenous peoples. As of this writing, the mining concessions in Wirikuta for the Canadian corporation First Majestic have been “suspended,” but not cancelled. The drug tourism, however, continues.

intend to perform with a music group. In the end, my prior percussion abilities became useful and I was called upon a few times to record metal *güiro* (scraper) on some cumbias. In addition to instrumental music study, I also utilized archival recordings to compare to current practice, and found the “old fashioned” analysis of tuning systems to be of some value when considering unspoken factors in traditional versus popular Wixárika musics.

An approach used to study Huicholness included analysis of textual and visual representational strategies and contexts. That included reading ethnographies and other academic works as primary sources (i.e., deconstructing them in a sense) as well as studying Huichol themes in popular media. For example, many popular magazines in the U.S. have included Huichol articles or stories, including *National Geographic*, *Bead & Button*, *Sacred Fire*, and *Shaman's Drum*, among others. In the case of *Bead & Button*, for example, the author of the article also wrote a guide on purchasing and evaluating Huichol yarn paintings, and was a student of Peter Furst (see MacLean 2005; 2012). This demonstrates a certain “trickle-down” popularization, but more direct examples can be found in the magazine *Artes de México* where advertisements for jewelry, cognac, and Chryslers are found in a special issue on Wixárika/Huichol art with texts written by eminent Huicholistas such as Johannes Neurath and Juan Negrín (see Orellana 2005). Whether such contexts reveal artful activism or capitalist complicity is food for thought. The analysis also included audio-visual uses of Huicholness, especially popular music videos that show xaweri but sonically silence it.

The fact that my research methods mentioned above were used in an indigenous cultural context in the name of Western research must give one pause. Indeed, one of the main points of this study is that ethnographic work has had intended and unintended commercial consequences. In light of this and the scathing criticism lodged by Indigenous peoples against colonialist

research methods, an evaluation of my own research methods was necessary. Some indigenous authors have contended that outside researchers are less objective than they realize, prone to focus on negatives, and ultimately comparing “studied” to the “studier” with the “inevitable consequences of rating one over the other” (Wilson 2008:16–17). Though much of my study is comparative in nature, the motivation is more about the question of self-determination for the Wixaritari and Western researchers themselves as their cultural and economic assumptions are increasingly interrelated and mutually influential. Are the Wixaritari embracing self-determination with their cultural industries, or is it a more complex acquiescence to economic hegemony under the rhetoric of “development” and “progress?” Likewise, do academics have total self-determination in these interactions when the result of their contact with other cultural groups may be the opposite of their intentions? This concern for self-determination as a research agenda and a goal of social justice is at the core of decolonizing Western research methods and moving towards an indigenous research paradigm and agenda (e.g., Smith 1999:117; Wilson 2008).

It was with these concerns in mind that I undertook this project. At times, I felt I had little agency as a researcher in these larger matters of economic assimilation and identity commercialization. For example, part of this dissertation argues that the Wixárika people most visibly benefiting from the commercialization of the Huichol “image,” are by necessity those who are most rapidly losing their connections to a participatory Wixárika identity. Many musicians and artesanos lose community member status as a result of their work, and their children often lose fluency in the Wixárika language and ritual practices. What was I to do, then, when Wixárika musicians asked me to take photos of them for their CDs and online promotion? My ethnographic skills were being put to use for commercial ends at the *behest* of Wixárika

people. In such situations, one cannot really say “no,” and thus the agency of the researcher is often not as great as we might think.

In order not simply to “take” ethnographic data as the grist for the academic theory mill, I also attempted to “give back” in a way that would benefit my training. Though I always began research in the Wixárika communities only after receiving permission from the authorities in charge (*comisariado*, *tatuwani*, and/or *agentes locales*), I also eventually presented myself at community-wide assemblies (*asambleas*). I used the opportunity to submit (*entregar*) or “repatriate” archival documents pertinent to the respective communities, including audio recordings and photographs. On some occasions I even traveled to specific ranchos, such as Huilotita where Henrietta Yurchenco recorded in the 1940s, to “repatriate” documents and recordings (or at least copies of them) to specific locales of origin.



**Figure 3. “Repatriating” photographs and recordings from Henrietta Yurchenco’s trip to Huilotita in 1944 (photograph by Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz, 2012–10–13).**

My original plans for “repatriation” of archival documents originally included depositing copies of everything at the Museo Wixárika in Mezquitic, Jalisco to be a central location that would be

readily available for consultation by Wixárika students in Mezquitic and beyond. Unfortunately, due to the political and institutional instability of the museum, the plans were put on hold indefinitely.<sup>43</sup>

Ultimately, I hope that Wixárika people doing their own musical and historical studies in the future might use my research.<sup>44</sup> Whether they read my work in its original English or in translation, I will simply say *saludazos neamikus, quizás desde la tumba ya. Ojalá que mi trabajo les guste.*

### **Primary Collaborators**

Numerous people made this dissertation possible, as mentioned in the acknowledgements, but there are some whose influence needs more detailed recognition. The four people mentioned below provided invaluable details, musical and otherwise, on what it means to be Wixárika today. They offered their knowledge, their kindness, their support, and even their homes. Their immediate and extended families also became trusted supporters, and I could not have asked for better friends there. It was clear that when I was in the sierra, I was with “the right people.”

#### *Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz*

Ukeme was the first person to invite me to the sierra, having met via internet after I began to inquire about his “indigenous communication” project, PuebloIndigena.com. Ukeme’s father,

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<sup>43</sup> At times, it was even unclear who the director of the museum was, and the appointment of directors was clearly a political process more than the careful selection of someone trained in museum studies or anthropology. I hope to rekindle this part of the project in the near future, perhaps depositing the archival documents at CUNorte instead.

<sup>44</sup> I intend to deposit my ethnographic materials in the Ethnomusicology Archive at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Kiaka José, was from the rancho Tsakuxapa in the community of Tuxpan. His mother, Abelina, is from Xatsitsarie. Both of his parents were teachers, and he followed suite. Though Ukeme lived in Tepic for many years for school, his urban-oriented style eventually gave way to a strong neo-traditionalist streak. He was one of the few young people who made an effort to wear Wixárika clothes on a daily basis, partly out of personal conviction, and partly to set an example for his grade school students. His family has houses in Tutsipa, Xatsitsarie, and Tepic, in addition to the rancho of Tsakuxapa and their own rapidly expanding cattle ranch in Cerritos. When in those locations, I would almost always stay in their homes. Tragically, Ukeme's father died of cancer in 2013. As the eldest male offspring, Ukeme thus began a new stage of life as the heir to his father's ranching operations, but also as a mara'akame in training, a status he currently embraces but was initially reluctant to accept.

In his younger years, Ukeme was the vihuela player for the group Conjunto Tamari, which toured the Wixárika community extensively after they became a hit with their recording of the song "Tsinari." His popularity as a musician, his training in indigenous pedagogy, and his creation of PuebloIndigena.com have made him an unofficial youth leader. He is recognized as such by outsiders as well, and has been involved in honorary national and international indigenous youth events, and as a result has his photo alongside the likes of Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama.



Figure 4. Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz near Tutsipa (2012–10–13).

*Jorge López Solís*

Jorge’s name preceded him. My wife’s Mestiza cousins, students at CUNorte, would say, “you have to meet George.” They pronounced his name in English, like many of his Wixárika friends, because at the time he was studying English intensively at CUNorte simultaneously with his undergraduate major in telecommunications engineering. His interest in English and my interest in learning Wixárika led us to begin study sessions.

Our academic connection grew to a family connection. He would often visit our house in Colotlán and, after a rocky start, I began to visit his family in the rancho of Tuutu Makawe (Rancho Atotonilco), just outside of Pueblo Nuevo, in the community of Santa Catarina.<sup>45</sup> He was in his early thirties at the time, the youngest of five brothers, and he estimated his mother to be in her late seventies or even early eighties. Her stories about earlier days in the community of

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<sup>45</sup> Like Lumholtz, my initial attempt to enter Santa Catarina was met with resistance. In my case, though, it was the result of other foreigners who immediately preceded my arrival, trying to be Lumholtzian by making a “documentary,” but doing so without permission from community authorities. They were kicked out and their camera was confiscated. When they complained to (Mestizo) municipal police, the police apparently arrested the Wixárika authorities. Unknowingly, Jorge and I arrived immediately after the debacle, asking for permission to do my fieldwork, which included recording interviews, etc. The tatuwani at the time would have none of it, and I went home dejected. We had to wait until the authorities changed a few months later to return and ask again.

Santa Catarina have also informed this dissertation. His brothers and his nephew, Wawiekame Armando López, were also helpful in my studies. I went on a ritual deer hunt with them in the foothills of Mezquitic, and Armando, also a CUNorte student, organized the rancho's Tatei Neixa ceremony in 2013, inviting me to attend with my wife and daughter.

The family's rancho was a case study of Wixárika history being lived in the present. It was one of the few ranchos where I saw a common house—or at least the ruins of one—with the old-style circular stone foundation. By the end of my research period, the ruins of the house had been disassembled, its stone walls used to form the foundation for a new, rectangular house of adobe bricks that Jorge was building by hand.

Jorge's rancho was also evidence of the ongoing modernization of the Wixárika communities. During my initial visits, Jorge's house was the only one with a simple solar system to power a few light bulbs at night and a combination radio/USB/cassette stereo during the day. By the midpoint of my research period, all of the houses on the ranch had small solar systems provided by the government. In my final visit, only a couple of weeks before returning to the U.S., visiting Mestizo workers were busily running electrical cables through the forest to the newly installed concrete posts. Similarly, while one's "bathroom" business once involved walking into the woods with some toilet paper, by the end of my research period the rancho had been filled with a number of outhouses, again provided by the government, but without running water for the nice toilets or showers.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The effort to install running water in Pueblo Nuevo and its nearby ranchos (like Jorge's) resulted in at least one death during my time there. A Wixárika man, while surveying with a group, fell off a steep cliff. Messengers ran to nearby ranchos, alerting Jorge and I to the incident, and we ran to help. Along with many others, we carried his gruesomely bloodied and groaning body for hours to get it out of the ravine and to a road. He died on the road to the hospital, three hours away. The doctors had not bothered to call a plane to evacuate him at the nearby landing strip. Imagine my thoughts, then, when a Mestiza doctor later claimed the government "cared" so much for the Wixaritari that even a mildly malnourished child would be immediately airlifted from the sierra to the nearest hospital.





Figure 5. Jorge López Solís (center front) with his wife (left, holding child), mother (right, holding child), one of four brothers (rear center), children, and nieces and nephews in front of their xiriki in Tuutu Makawe (2013–03–23).

*Ernesto Hernández Bautista*

Ernesto was the violinist and leader of Sueño Musical Huichol and a law student at CUNorte who graduated as I was finishing my fieldwork. During my second year of fieldwork, he was also president of the indigenous students organization at CUNorte, EICUN. After meeting at an EICUN baile, we soon became travel partners going to performances and to the sierra. Today, his family lives primarily in Tateikie but they are originally from Las Guayabas, in the nearby valley south of Tateikie. His father is a schoolteacher and a former *comisariado* (commissary of land and external affairs) in the community of San Andrés. His mother, during the time of my fieldwork, was beginning to sing at ceremonies, a rare female mara'akame.

Ernesto's brother, Emilio, was the *tololoche* (bass) player for Sueño Musical Huichol. During my fieldwork, Emilio also played guitar in the popular *sierreño* group, Dinastía de la Sierra, as did their cousins.

In my trips to Tateikie, I would stay at Ernesto's family compound, and it was with him that I met two *mara'akate* who are frequently quoted in this work and others, Rafael Carrillo Pizano and José Bautista Carrillo, the former being Ernesto's uncle.



Figure 6. Ernesto Hernández Bautista (left) with brother Emilio before a recording at LEMA Records (2013–04–02).

### *Maximino Hernández Carrillo*

Maximino was one of the first *requinto* (lead guitar) players for a Huichol *sierreño* group, starting the group Werika Yuawi (Blue Eagle) with his uncle Jesús Carrillo. Though originally from the community of San Sebastián, he lived in Colotlán throughout my fieldwork period,

leading his group Alucinantes de la Sierra and occasionally returning to the sierra to plant crops or attend ceremonies.

I first met Maximino through anthropology students at CUNorte who had decided to interview him as part of a project for their ethnographic field methods course. As it turned out, he lived only two blocks from where I lived in Colotlán, in the neighborhood of Tochópa. Soon, his two youngest children began visiting to play with my daughter and our families became close. I took a couple of vihuela lessons from him, and we often found ourselves in conversation about the history of Werika Yuawi or other music groups. Maximino's older son, Prisciliano "Tatsiu," began playing tololoche in his father's group but was quickly scooped up for his talent by widely known groups such as Pasión Huichol, Herencia Huichol, and Renovado Huichol.

Maximino and his family, like many Wixárika musicians and artesanos—the family also makes ends meet by making Huichol and Mestizo artesanías—reveal the necessity of a longitudinal research project. Having left the sierra to pursue musical labor and educational opportunities for the children, it remains to be seen what effects that decision will have on the cultural practices of the family in the generation(s) to come.



Figure 7. Maximino Hernández Carrillo with wife and two youngest children near Colotlán (2013–03–20).

### **The Tenseness of Tense: “Ethnographic Present” Reconsidered**

In the above paragraph, I stated that Maximino’s family “makes” ends meet, not “made” ends meet. That is because they are still living, he is only a few mouse clicks away on Facebook as I write these words, and I will likely see Maximino making ends meet by playing in Colotlán’s plaza when I return after my dissertation defense. Because of the strictures against the ethnographic present, I often found myself feeling like I was supposed to be writing about things

in the past tense, even when they were literally ongoing as I wrote. Indeed, in one or two instances my “informants” informed the dissertation in the very moment it was being written, answering follow-up questions via Facebook chat. To say they were often present while I was writing is not hyperbole.

For these reasons, in addition to the fact that I began writing the dissertation in the field, it felt awkward, dishonest, and even hostile to write only in the past tense. It also made me aware of hypocritical exceptions to the preterit rule for quoting previous scholarly texts or writing image captions. It seems appropriate, for example, to quote “so-and-so *states* that music groups played in plazas.” But to write “Maximino’s group *plays* primarily in plazas,” is considered poor ethnographic writing, even though I can call him on his cell phone to confirm that he will be headed to play in Colotlán’s plaza this evening, if he is not already there. The rule against the ethnographic present is also suspended for visual examples, where I could write a caption that says “Maximino’s group *plays* [or *playing*] in a plaza.” Thus, documents are privileged over living people and their ongoing practices. Past texts live on infinitely in the present while lived practices, even when ongoing in the moment, are linguistically terminated, given a falsely finite end. It should not be understated how extremely disturbing such a predicament is when writing about Indigenous people. The ethnographer’s preterit encourages, even confirms, the patently erroneous but common assumption that Indigenous people in the Americas are a thing of the past. The ethnographic preterit can be an act of scripted violence, death by Word.

This problem came to a head only after I had written a large portion of the dissertation. I was aware of the problem of the ethnographic present, but I had never pondered the potentially more insidious problem of the ethnographic past. For that reason, some of the dissertation might reveal some ambivalence about tense. Were I starting over today, I might write everything in

present tense to give the lives of Indigenous musicians the same privilege granted scholarly texts and documents. Whatever style of writing is in fashion decades from now, I hope my future readers will forgive me. And since introductions to monographs always seem to have an obligatory mea culpa regarding author error, I will take it one step further. Forgive me, my readers, and bless yourselves, for in the minds of future readers we are probably all sinning.

### **Outline of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into three main parts, but in addition to regular chapters there are also a number of interchapters. The interchapters are vital to the general themes of the dissertation, but they tend to be ethnographic vignettes that are important but did not fit well in the regular chapters. For example, the interchapter “A Tale of Two Tukite” has little to do with music, but was a perfect way to further define and analyze the three modes of identity. The first interchapter—“The ‘Guerra de Sonidos’ on the Permanent Frontier”—is a companion to this introduction but attempts an aesthetic evocation of the region, its quotidian “feel,” and an introduction to some of the larger musical and cultural issues at play in this region of Mexico. It contains a more experimental ethnographic writing style that I call formative analysis. In this case, formative analysis means a composite of many events into one, written in a way that does not always reveal the author’s interpretation, but attempts to encode pertinent details and conclusions in a way that allows the reader to “discover” them in a manner that might resemble the way in the author “discovered” them. In that way, a reader’s understanding of a place might more closely resemble the author’s memory of it.

The first of the three parts is simply titled “Traditional Music,” with quotation marks (for reasons that will become clear). This part includes only one lengthy chapter called “Niawari,

Kwikari, Xaweri.” In addition to covering “traditional music,” it embraces a more “traditional” (some might say “old fashioned”) form of ethnomusicology in that it includes some analysis of tuning systems and other forms of musical analysis. Part of the main purpose of this chapter is simply to present overdue ethnographic data about Wixárika music to an English-speaking audience.

Part Two covers Mestizo music in the Wixárika communities and the history of Huichol popular music groups. It also considers seemingly opposing genre-fictions of the musical phenomenon, in addition to studying the music as labor and commodity. The main chapter takes previous scholars to task for using the label “traditional mariachi” when referring to Huichol popular music groups, and reproaches ethnomusicologists more generally for failing to utilize a shared vocabulary that would help avoid historical confusion about musical sound itself. The sole interchapter in Part Two is on bailes, describing what they are like in the region and comparing how they change depending on place and audience. The interchapter begins to introduce evidence that supports thinking about identity as having various modes.

Part Three is titled “Music as Identity, Identity as Commodity.” The first chapter—“Of Huicholistas and Huicholeros”—covers a double front of anthropology in Wixárika life, one implementing an outright assimilatory national policy beginning in the 1970s, and the other creating markets for the commercial form of Wixárika identity. It also considers how the explorer-ethnographer theme of early anthropology has become ingrained in American culture but domesticated, tamed so that “exploring” is done in SUVs. Similarly, “collection,” once done for museums in the name of science, is now done to decorate homes throughout North America and beyond in the name of multiculturalism and “helping to preserve a culture” through cash infusions.

Part Three's first interchapter is "A Tale of Two Tukite," which investigates the modes of identity as they play out in state and commercial institutions. Specifically, it studies a Wixárika student dormitory adjacent to the Museo Wixárika in Mezquitic, Jalisco, and compares them to a museum-like commercial "boutique" of Huichol art in Santa Fe, New Mexico. This is done while simultaneously describing a ritual deer hunt, utilizing a more impressionistic and interpretive ethnographic tone.

Part Three's second interchapter—"A Counterfeit More Original than the Original"—is about the piracy of intangibles. Specifically, it is about the surprising counterfeiting of entire music group, Huichol Musical, by one of its former members. The interchapter considers the difficulty of thinking about the "aura" of an "original" in the case of intangible goods or brands. In that way, it contributes to thinking of music and identity as virtual objects that are equally capable of being commoditized and "pirated." Part Three concludes with an eponymous chapter that moves towards a nascent theorization of music's relationship to the different modes of identity, and the alarming potentialities of commoditizing identity.

I conclude the dissertation by considering the results of this work, and what it means for the agency (or lack thereof) of both ethnographers and their "subjects."



**(Interchapter) Battles Witnessed in the “Guerra de Sonidos”: The Order of Chaos on the Permanent Frontier**

*“Hay tantos caminos por andar...”<sup>47</sup>  
—Julieta Venegas / Herencia Huichol*

Ukeme and I planned to meet in the plaza. We had woken up late, dizzy and dehydrated the day after a *baile* (dance), but needed to leave Colotlán soon in order to make the five-hour trip through the sierra to Tutsipa, and then farther on to Puente de Camotlán where the annual *feria* (fair) was getting into full swing. It would be another exhausting weekend of rutted mountain roads and all-night bailes. This was old hat for Ukeme as the director of the indigenous news website PuebloIndigena.com. For him, making the daylong trip down from the sierra to Colotlán to take photos for his website was nothing new, but I was still getting accustomed to these grueling outbursts of fieldwork, never completely sure where (or how) I would spend the next night or for how long I would be on the road. “Ese Nolan, pura pachanga,” my in-laws liked to joke, thinking my work was nothing but drinking and dancing. “¿Cómo está la otra mujer?” They loved to insinuate about “another woman” when my wife was around, just to goad her. The joke never seemed to get old.

Waiting in the plaza on his all-terrain vehicle (ATV), Ukeme is busy chatting up a group of female Wixárika nursing students from CUNorte. Taking his leave, he dons his helmet that matches both the color scheme of his ATV and its custom decals advertising his website. We head towards the mechanic to drop off his ATV for repairs, a recurring theme. I follow him in my in-laws’ Ford Explorer as we circle the plaza in front of the town hall, noticing that he’s making quite the scene as he goes by. Wixárika people are a daily sight in Colotlán, but not on an ATV, and definitely not on an ATV while wearing Wixárika clothes and taking cell phone calls one-handed through a helmet. The police don’t seem to mind that he’s chatting away while

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<sup>47</sup> “There are so many roads/paths to travel...”

driving—just another unenforced law. Even the Wixárika vendors of *artesanías* in the plaza point and giggle at the sight. As Ukeme liked to joke whenever he got into a driver’s seat, “look out, Huichol at the wheel!”

It’s a sight that seems incongruous to many, but as Ukeme would point out with a grin, “you know, they call me the technological Huichol.” Indeed, he usually revels in the opportunity to proudly dash stereotypes while sporting Wixárika clothes, but sometimes the stares get old. In conversations and formal interviews he had admitted to me that despite being a neo-traditionalist of sorts regarding clothing—he preferred clothes that showed his “true self”—he also sometimes grew tired of the attention and would put on “Mestizo” (i.e., Western) clothes to rest from the stares when he visited the cities, or not to hear the gasps when he went shopping in high class department stores in Tepic or Guadalajara.



Figure 8. Ukeme turns heads, driving through Colotlán on his ATV while wearing Wixárika clothing and taking calls on his mobile phone.

We leave the ATV at a grimy workshop and Ukeme hops into the passenger seat next to me. He double-checks his *kitsiuri* (shoulder bag) and backpack contents—he’s a busy person, often lost in thought, which leads him to forget things. “Ready,” he affirms, as we begin to head out of town. A norteño group—with accordion, *tololoche* (contrabass), and *vihuela*—perform in the plaza’s gazebo, hired by the municipal government to entertain the weekend crowds after an ordinance had been passed taking sonic control of the space by banning itinerant musicians from busking in the plaza at most times.

The town center is filling up with people running errands, the market bustling with early lunch customers snacking on *sopas* and *gorditas* to start their day off with an invigorating dose of *manteca*, and perhaps a *licuado*. Trucks carrying potable water and canisters of gas for stoves are beginning to make their way through town, announcing their wares for sale with jingles

blasted from the loudspeakers on the roofs of the trucks. The church towering next door begins to reflect the rising sun's heat down onto the statues of The Virgin Mary and Pope John Paul II who keep an eye on the din of vendors selling artesanías, dried chili peppers, and pirated CDs and DVDs. The church tower, partially felled during the Cristero Rebellion—so they say—was never rebuilt, its remnants in a constant battle with desert-strong weeds. The second-class bus, full of Wixaritari and their gifts for family in the sierra, fills up as Ukeme and I make a final stop at the bank's ATM, the last opportunity to do so as we prepare to head to the sierra, a vast area to the west of Colotlán which, despite a decent population, leaves its working populace with no way to store or access their money locally.

Of the two ways to reach the Wixárika territory from Colotlán—driving, that is—one can head northwest through Mezquitic, or southwest through the mining town of Bolaños, both remote outposts of Jalisco in their own right, and both a solid two hour drive from Colotlán. Then, another two hours or more and one reaches the nearest regions of the Wixárika territory. We hit the highway southbound towards Bolaños.

While heading out of town, I realize that a description of such trips could be a useful variation of “the road in” introduction in ethnographic writing. But it would be a conceit to the extent that it would fit a genre more than really represent the classic—and romanticized—experience of an ethnographer “discovering” a remote tribe and being the first foreigner to live amongst them. That might have been closer to the mark when Carl Lumholtz was passing through Colotlán on his way to the sierra in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the world and the Wixaritari have changed dramatically since then. The Grammy-nominated group of Wixárika musicians, Huichol Musical, performed in my hometown of Lafayette, Indiana before I ever visited Wixárika territory. According to their record label, they “conquered” the United States and

Europe in that tour. A couple of Huichol groups even had their CDs stocked at the Lafayette Walmart. Still, “the road in” device would be a fitting start to the dissertation since driving had become essential for my fieldwork. The vastness of Wixárika territory had made my work not just about a “road in” but a road always.

We pass by Totatiche, a small town known for its delectable sweet bread. We pass Temastián, land of the Cristeros and a major Catholic pilgrimage site for those who come from hundreds of miles around, some walking or even on their knees, to seek the miracles of Señor de los Rayos.<sup>48</sup> Temastian’s pilgrimage site is primarily visited by Mestizos, but a fair number of Wixaritari also visit, primarily those from the southern communities of Tuxpan and San Sebastián. In a prior year, I had visited Temastián as the chauffeur for my Wixárika neighbor in Colotlán, Maximino, and his music group Los Alucinantes (The Hallucinators). Hired to play onstage on the night of the feast day of Señor de Los Rayos, they couldn’t *talonear* (go busking on foot) in the afternoon because they were sonically overpowered by the number of Indigenous-style folkloric dancers (*danzantes*) and military-type groups that had come to honor the Señor. As there were too many groups to perform individually in front of the church, multiple groups performed for him all day long, one group next to the other, resulting in complete and constant “sound barrage,” a cultivated (or at least tolerated) musical chaos (Video 01).

After another hour on the road we arrive in Bolaños, an always-swelting mining town nested at the bottom of an often-dry river valley. Formerly a major center of colonial wealth extraction that pertained to Colotlán, Bolaños is now the head of its own municipality, its crumbling Casa de la Moneda (Royal Mint) and weed-covered colonial stone structures standing as reminders of its former wealth and importance to empire. Bolaños was the first municipality to

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<sup>48</sup> Señor de la Rayos is a figure of Christ in the church at Temastián. His name, Lord of the Rays/Lightening, is a reference to the number of times the church has survived lightning strikes.

have a Wixárika person elected to its top political office, overcoming centuries of minority rule. The municipal president, Oscar Hernandez, elected in 2012, served in full Wixárika clothing, a source of pride amongst the Wixárika communities, even those he didn't represent.

Just before making a break across the Bolaños river, Ukeme and I pull over at the local ranchers association, greeting the elder Mestizos gathered out front who were practicing the fine art of idle chitchat with the assistance of a few cold beers. We had passed by this place many times on the way to Tutsipa before but it was the first time Ukeme had asked to stop. "Friends of my father," he explains as he hops out of the passenger seat of the Explorer. His father had passed away only months before, losing a battle against cancer that had been waged both in hospitals and under the care of a *mara'akame*. As the eldest son, Ukeme had been tasked with taking on the duties of his father whether he wanted to or not, a daunting task as Kiaka was a respected, successful retired teacher and rancher in both the Wixárika community and the larger municipality itself, though the Mestizo ranchers knew him only as José. "You're dressed like a Wixárika today," they remark. "The other day you were dressed like *pinche* Chalino Sánchez," referencing the late *corrido* singer to point out that Ukeme, not being his usual neo-traditionalist self, was more frequently putting on a wealthy rancher look, complete with a tight leather jacket, a cowboy hat, and boots instead of his usual *huarache* sandals. The ranchers buy us both beers, even though they had just met me. We briefly join the chat, and then we journey on, crossing the Bolaños River and slowly climbing the southern edge of the Sierra Madre Occidental on our way to Tutsipa and the *fiestas* in Puente de Camotlán.

Deep in the sierra and still climbing, a number of large cargo trucks come into view near a particularly steep part of the dirt-and-stone road. The recent rains washed away chunks of the road, making passage for large trucks impossible, and forcing the drivers to become temporary

road workers, piling whatever they can find into the gaps cut by the rains. I say a silent “gracias” to my in-laws for loaning me their four-wheel-drive Explorer, switching on power to all four wheels and muscling over the remnants of the road. The truckers will be on their way soon enough, finishing their deliveries to the Wixárika communities where people have come to expect and enjoy the trucks’ cargo of junk food, sodas, cheap electronic gadgets, and plastic house wares.

After many kilometers of one-lane dirt road, perfect pavement suddenly appears near the crest of the mountains. If your truck makes it to this point—and you would probably have to have a truck to make it this far—then it’s smooth sailing for the next few miles until reaching the Crucero de Miguelón—Big Mike’s Crossroads. That’s not the official name, but that’s about the only name people use for it. We pick up speed on the pavement, also marking the point at which the crisp, pine-laden air of the high sierra starts to tickle the nose and give one shivers as the sweat that soaks clothes in the foothills abruptly cools off.

We pull off at the large, unmarked crossroads, heading downhill about a hundred yards to Miguelón’s, the only road stop around. The family here has taken advantage of their remoteness, selling chips, quesadillas, Mexican hamburgers, *pan dulce*, and energy drinks to road-weary travelers. Pirated gasoline is also sometimes available from an oil drum at exorbitant prices. The packed second-class busses stop here on their way to destinations in the southwestern Wixárika territory. Temporary housing around the area previously used for road workers and firefighters is falling apart, the remnants of a forgotten development project. Would-be cute ducks waddle the perimeter snacking on scorpions, and the unattended rural health center—a rickety wooden structure with just one room—has a large wooden crucifix on its wall next to its door.

Miguelón's is a site of sojourners and sadness. Its general weariness thickens the otherwise thin air, carried by the smoke of the family's wood-fired stoves being stoked to cook more quesadillas. Travelers order their snacks quietly, respectful of the family on the other side of the counter whose burdened sighs seem to ask, "Do you know we live in a crime scene?" Miguelón was assassinated a few years ago in an armed assault, rumored to be an act of territory-taking by the Zetas drug cartel. Such attacks are often carried out with truck convoys and weapons that would be heard for miles around, but the shots rang out into an un-policed sierra, and no one seemed to know where the assassins went after the attack, despite there being only two roads on which they could have left. Hours later, state police in armored trucks made their way up to Miguelón's outpost, a charade of control in a place where lawlessness sometimes is the law.

And yet, Miguelón's frontiersman presence is felt larger than ever in the muteness of his violent absence. Most strikingly, it seems he fancied himself an explorer of sorts, evidenced by his apparent fascination with seafaring ships. Across from the compound's main building that serves both as the family residence and roadhouse, an even larger structure is inexplicably built to resemble a massive arc-like boat, as if Noah himself had run aground in this very sierra when the waters dried up. "Why a boat?" I almost apologetically ask the aggrieved daughter behind the counter who took my order. "That's the way my dad wanted it," she says with a shrug. Miguelón probably wasn't the type of guy you would second-guess or pepper with questions for an explanation.





**Figure 9. Miguelon's boat, across from the roadhouse, leans at the Western frontier of Wixárika territory.**

In a darkened back room of the main house, a large fading mural above head depicts a Spanish galleon navigating the seas. To its side, a large shrine to the Virgen de Guadalupe, her lithographed frame draped with a string of slowly flashing Christmas lights. Naturally, both the mural's ship and the boat building face west, pointing towards the crossroads and over the mountain ridge towards Wixárika territory, columbusing towards the permanent frontier.



Figure 10. Miguelon's mural and altar. Homage to the divine conquest?

Miguelón's unfinished conquest boat sits stationary on the hill outside the window where I finish off a Mexican hamburger over an oil-cloth-covered table. Ukeme, complete with Wixárika hat, works on some quesadillas when suddenly the Wild West setting becomes even wilder, and more Spaghetti Western. The theme from "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" interjects into the air already pungent with *ocote* pine smoke, the melody emanating automatically from a lonely gambling machine, the type found in the corner of many small businesses in Mexico. The sound bounces off the stone and adobe walls, its timbre like that of an old Nintendo, which is fitting because the gambling machine's case is inexplicably covered with Super Mario Brothers images, a confusing postmodern mix of signifiers—cartoonish electronic gaming with Italian stereotypes juxtaposed to the grit of a romanticized Old West conjured up in the minds of Italian filmmakers (Video 02). A slight embarrassment grows in me when I consider that I'm the only one here at Miguelon's who's intrigued by this. Other than the sound of the gambling machine, there is no other music. Mourning means silence. We quietly finish our

meals and decide to get the jump on the bus that will be leaving soon. The rest of the trip to Tutsipa is mostly a one-lane dusty dirt road; it's better not to be behind a bus. Besides, judging by the only music in this mournful place, there might be another shootout.

•••

Our moods improve after leaving Miguelón's, enjoying the brisk air and endless mountain views, the *corridos* blasting on the Explorer's stereo as we roll around treacherously narrow ridge roads. We pass a poor soul changing his truck's flat tire in the midday sun. His family waits behind him, his wife the only one dressed in traditional Wixárika clothing, and he gives us a wave as if to say, "it's under control." We smile, but also sigh, as anyone who frequents these roads has dealt with exactly the same problem, usually more than once. I grow increasingly concerned with the scraping, crunching sound coming from the Explorer's right front wheel, the next repair in a never-ending struggle to save the truck from the roads it travels.

Before long, we enter Wixárika territory, a border that exists in the mind more than in any official roadside pronouncements. Such is the case with all Wixárika communities—no signs announce your arrival, the perimeter marked only by an understated barbed wire fence that could easily be mistaken for run-of-the-mill livestock fencing. But the scenery slowly begins to change. What was, since leaving Bolaños, essentially an unpopulated countryside, slowly reveals the idyllic, far flung ranchos that pertain to the Wixárika communities of Tuxpan and San Sebastián. Increasingly common is the sight of *carretones*, granaries raised off the ground with wooden stilts, their pointed roofs thatched with dried wild grass, their contents—dried maize—increasingly depleted to make blue tortillas as the next harvest grows in the mountainside fields.

We finally turn a long-awaited corner to begin the long descent out of the highest sierra, Tutsipa visible in the far off foothills below. A remote marker of government development

projects—a newly paved road—eases what was previously a jarring experience. These are recent infrastructural developments, pavement being put on the highways only within the past few years. Indeed, Tutsipa has only had electrical service for about a decade, though it's hard to tell by the prevalence of satellite television and homegrown convenience stores with refrigerated food and drink marked by a small Coca-Cola or Fanta sign near the door. Until 2013, cell phone signal could be found only in the most unexpected square inches along a road or next to a fence. Walking through Tutsipa at nighttime would reveal these miniature signal hotspots as groups of youths and politically connected elders made calls and checked email on their phones, their faces illuminated by their screens. Now, cell signal is almost taken for granted, with Facebook posts coming from Tutsipa daily, until they experience an unfortunate lighting strike, an occurrence that often leaves places in the sierra incommunicado and without electricity for days or even weeks. Nevertheless, Tutsipa has changed dramatically since the days when anthropologist Robert Zingg opened a lone dry goods store in a *xiriki* in 1933.

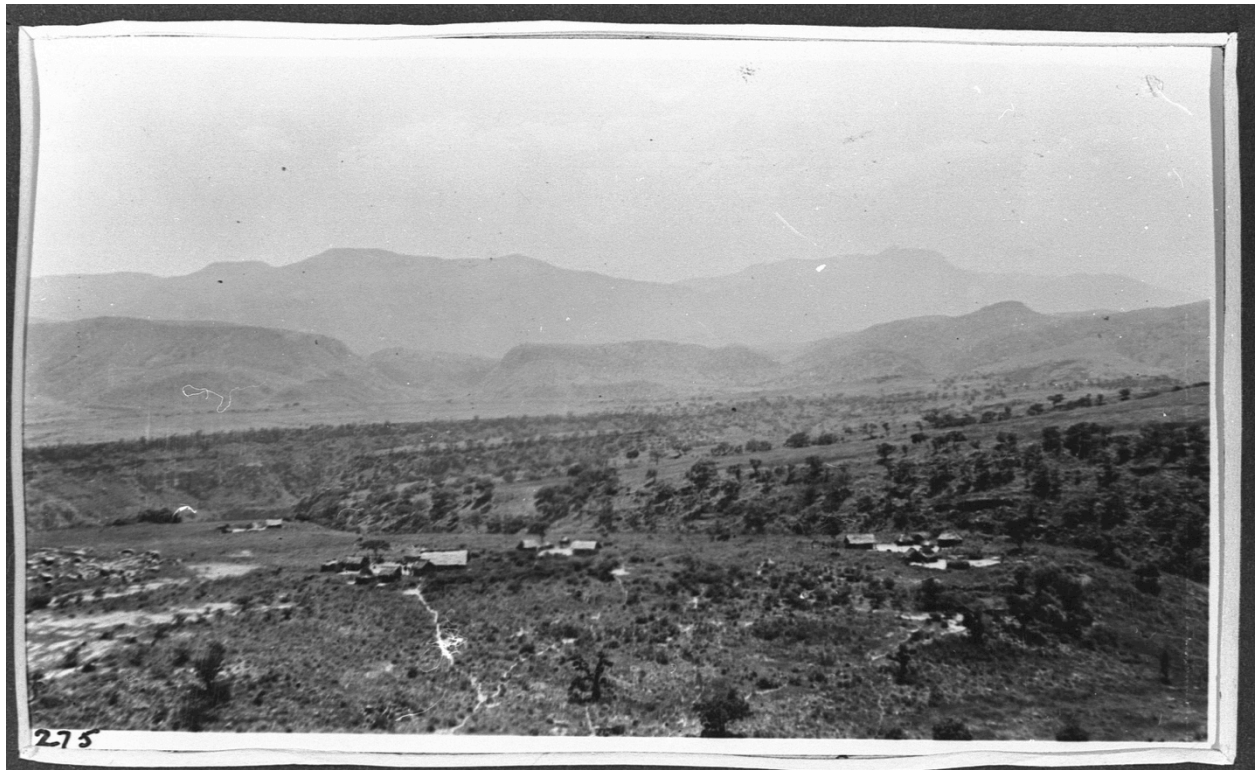


Figure 11. Zingg's original caption from 1934: "View of the rancheria below that of Singer Sebastian; most thickly populated part of Tuzpan" [sic]. Photograph by Robert Zingg (Z-H18-23---491). Courtesy Amerind Foundation.



**Figure 12. Retake of Zingg photograph showing the same ranchos of the Mesa de Tepic, now dwarfed by Tutsipa and its landing strip (background left).**

We briefly stop by Ukeme’s family’s recently-opened butcher shop, a convenient ancillary to their ranching activities, and the only such business in town. Then, it’s another forty minutes farther on the lone paved road out of town, past Cerritos and Mesa del Tirador, to the (in)famous Puente de Camotlán, or “Puente” for short.

Upon entering Puente, it’s obvious that one is entering a wealthier Mestizo ranching community. Livestock pens are more likely to be of modern steel rod construction than stone corrals, and full of bigger bulls. Like the Wixárika locales around it, Puente has its share of poverty, but it also has the opposite of that. Rich ranchers, champion *charros*, and, it’s said, its drug traffickers, all explain the many brand new trucks (*trocas del año*) that line the streets.

We park the Explorer in an enclosed lot at Rayo’s house on the edge of town. Rayo is the leader of the local music group Los Rayos de Puente de Camotlán. I had met Rayo previously on

a longer trip to Guadalupe Ocotán while I was serving, again, as driver for the group Presencia Pesada (Heavy Presence), a norteño-banda side project of “Kawi,” the former leader of the hit Huichol group Los Amos’s de la Sierra. Like Kawi, Rayo was gregarious and dashing, qualities that served him well as a Wixárika musician living on the periphery of his upbringing, strategically embracing Huicholness in Mestizo territory. Indeed, he had even changed his group’s name to show his allegiance to the new patrons in Puente after he relocated from another Mestizo town, Huajimic, previously working under the name Los Rayos de Huajimic. He depended on his new patrons for occasional gigs at anniversaries, *quinceañeras*, and cockfights, and he encouraged their support by putting their favorite songs on his latest CD, and posting Facebook photos of himself carrying their assault rifles on “hunting” trips.

These suspicious connections and the large scar on Rayo’s face masked a softer, almost contradictory past. Much of his vocal and guitar prowess he gained during his time as a student in Catholic seminary, training to be a priest. He didn’t last long, though, being thrown out before finishing. “They called me Padre Amaro,” he says with a grin, referring a well-known Mexican film about a young priest who impregnates an even younger parishioner. Ukeme knows this history already, being unexpected friends with Rayo for years. They represent almost opposites of the Wixárika youth spectrum, Rayo barely speaking his birth language anymore but maintaining Wixárika clothes for his work as a musician in mestizo lands, the best of scant employment options. Ukeme, a neo-traditionalist of sorts, embraces his “mother tongue,” having left behind his work as a musician but still frequently donning his Wixárika clothes in Mestizo lands, and rancher duds in the sierra where he lives and works as a teacher. “Let’s go,” Rayo says, and the three of us walk towards Puente’s plaza where the feria is in full swing.

Mechanical rides of questionable safety are stationed around the perimeter for children, making calamitous clacking sounds as they bob and whirl. Aromas of grilled meats waft out of temporary stands and carts selling all sorts of late-night food. Tongue and tripe tacos, *carne seca*, hoof tostadas, and pickled pork skins are gobbled up by visitors arriving from the far reaches of the municipality and beyond, gearing up for a night of celebration.

We happen upon a Huichol group performing in the cordoned-off street for a gaggle of young Mestizo men, singing along while holding aloft nearly-empty bottles of tequila. The men are dressed to the nines, including velvety black Stetsons, cowboy boots of ostrich and manta ray skin, and large metal belt buckles of pot leaves and pistols encrusted with fake diamonds. They're *mandando música* (ordering/commanding music), looking over the repertoire booklet of the group to see which songs they want next. The music group is a family, the husband and director on violin, the wife on tololoche, and their young son on vihuela, the small four-string arched-back guitar. They break into "El Centenario" (Audio #01), inspiring *gritos* and crowing from the mestizos, a sonic display of masculinity common at such moments:

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Si eres pobre te humilla la gente | [If you're poor, the people humiliate you]  |
| Si eres rico te tratan muy bien   | [If you're rich, they treat you well]       |
| Un amigo se metió a la mafia      | [A friend got into the mafia/cartel]        |
| Porque pobre ya no quiso ser...   | [Because he no longer wanted to be poor...] |

The director of the group looks familiar, I'm sure I've seen him on the cover of a disc from the Fonorama label.

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| ...en un Corvette se pasea tranquilo | [He goes around easy in a Corvette]     |
| Por Tijuana y Guadalajara            | [Through Tijuana and Guadalajara]       |
| Por Los Angeles y San Francisco      | [Through Los Angeles and San Francisco] |
| Y también por Las Vegas, Nevada      | [And also through Las Vegas, Nevada]    |

"Have any of these people been to all of those places," I ask myself, remembering my own visits to each of the cities, though not while driving a Corvette. Indeed, it's entirely possible that both the musicians and their patrons have visited at least some of those cities, even in the U.S. If my



assumptions about the patrons are correct, perhaps they do business in all of those cities, but the semi-cosmopolitan lyrics nevertheless seem mostly aspirational.

The corrido ends and the patrons go back to looking at the group's repertoire list to decide on their next song. I sneak up next to the violinist and ask the name of the group. "Bichón," I hear him say. "Bichón" (big bug)? "No, Pichón" (pigeon), he says, "Pichón Musical." It's getting hard to hear in Puente as the night goes on and the noise grows ornery. "Did you record with Fonorama," I ask, hoping the mestizos don't ask for another song before I can find out who he is. "Yes, with Conjunto Regional." He was a member of one of the most influential and storied groups of Huichol popular music but he's taloneando for mestizos who probably have no idea who he is. Cecilio, as I soon find out he is called, came late to Conjunto Regional, serving as the group's director on their second Fonorama release, but he was influential nonetheless, making historic hits that are still enjoyed today, and leaving a lasting impression on modern groups like Huichol Musical. We exchange numbers for an interview at a later date and the Mestizos order more songs. They crow some more for the young boy on vihuela—perhaps seven years old—as he sings a *ranchera* for them. The wife never takes lead vocals, probably not wanting to draw attention in such a setting, but also fitting a common tendency for Wixárika women to act very modest, especially in interactions with Mestizos.

If the Pichones are lucky, they'll be hired for a private house party soon. The night is gaining intensity as the *tamborazos*, *bandas*, and amplified norteño groups start to set up in the plaza. The early evening window of opportunity is closing for the acoustic instruments of the itinerant Huichol groups. They'll soon be inaudible in the sonic battle against blasting brass horns, rapid-fire drums, and amplified vocals reaching the mechanical limits of mobile PA systems. "Lo bueno" (the good stuff) is about to start.

As the brass- and drum-heavy tamborazos and bandas get started, teenage candidates for queen of the *fiestas* and their female entourages sashay counterclockwise around the gazebo at the plaza's center, their arms locked, careful not to make eye contact with the wrong men or less desirable boys. Single men stand along the edge of the plaza observing this parade, evaluating, cavorting, and calling out to the candidates and other women who catch their attention. This attention is literally showered upon the women and girls in the form of streamers and confetti. Each boy of a certain age has perfected his own technique of tossing these thin streamers, snapping the wrist just right so that they spurt into the air towards the women, ideally draping them rather than falling to the ground. The boldest young men step into the paths of the women they want to focus their attention upon, unfurling their streamers and circularly wrapping them around a woman's neck and shoulders. As the night progresses, it becomes obvious which young women are the most desired and sought after. They parade around nonchalantly, heads held high, wearing entire coats of streamers that trail behind them and make them truly inseparable from their entourage.

Lining the path of the candidates and haphazardly stationed throughout the expansive plaza, music groups are increasingly hired by soon-to-be-inebriated revelers to play their favorite corridos, rancheras, cumbias, and *zapateados*. Some passersby hire a group for only a song or three, dancing briefly, and then moving on to late-night dinner or relaxing as they wait to vote for their favorite candidate. Well-liked music groups are commonly hired for an hour or more by a group of friends or couples, or sometimes just by one or two men for the sake of masculine conspicuous consumption. The patrons take over their own sections of the plaza, publicly setting up their own private party, evidence of their enjoyment displayed in the form of empty bottles

strewn about their patch of plaza—tequila, mezcal, cerveza, whiskey, and broken clay *jarritos* that held mixed drinks sold by the ubiquitous temporary alcohol vendors.

The increasingly chaotic night unfolds in front of the town's tallest building, the church. At midnight, Rayo bids us farewell to put on his Wixárika clothes in preparation for a performance at a large, ticketed baile that will begin in an hour or two and continue until sunrise. At the height of chaotic bliss—perhaps around 1am—there are at least fifteen music groups occupying the plaza at once, back to back, each playing simultaneously for their own clients. Couples dance only inches from the group they've hired, surrounding themselves in an envelope of sound, undisturbed by myriad other groups just steps away. To step back from one particular group, however, or traverse the entire plaza as the candidates do, one's focus is constantly drawn from one group to another, or overwhelmed into aural vertigo (Video 03).

It seems things can't get any more chaotic, more raucous, until they do. A bull-shaped frame comes charging out from behind the church, carried aloft by a frenzied young man who runs the "bull" into the crowd. The bull is above his head, its body covered in strings of fireworks that are already lit and beginning to pop off of the bull, some alighting into the air but most shooting into the crowds of people. The carrier encourages this danger, charging full speed at groups and lowering the head of the bull so as to "gore" them. Fireworks zip into the crowds in every which direction, helter-skelter bits of flaming and popping colors. More than one person is burned, all in good fun. Heaps of paper streamers that had fallen off the popular candidates begin to catch fire, delighting unattended hellions who add more streamers to the growing flames and drag the burning heaps around the plaza. From the gazebo, Ukeme and I see the flames rising, the multitude of music groups who continue to play at full volume, the still-promenading candidates, their coats of streamers in danger of being engulfed in flames. Municipal police on

the large steps above the plaza hold their standard-issue assault rifles at their sides, enjoying the site as much as everyone else.

At the periphery of the plaza is a Huichol music group, watching this scene of cultivated anarchy, their instruments lying silently sideways on the pavement. Groups like Pichón Musical—family groups—have mostly all gone home, catching rides back to Mesa del Tirador or Tutsipa. The younger Wixárika musicians—almost always male—sometimes stick around for the fun despite being sonically excluded. Indeed, some have come to Puente to make money during the evening for the sole purpose of spending it the same night, music being their way to fund their exploration of the world beyond the Wixárika communities of their upbringing. They look on in fascination, listening to the music groups, perhaps fascinated by the spectacle, perhaps by Mestizo culture and Western ways. Often the youths take these musical influences back to their Wixárika communities with them, resulting in another type of sonically contested space, but one not enjoyed by Wixárika elders in the way residents of Puente revel in sound barrage.

Standing in the gazebo in Puente, overlooking the multitude of groups, I remember another series of trips to the same region, not long ago, to numerous Wixárika ranchos around Tutsipa for Tatei Neixa, a first-fruits ceremony. I observed and participated in the ceremony in at least three ranchos around Tutsipa—Tsakuxapa, Barranquillas, and Huilotita, one of Henrietta Yurchenco's field recording sites in 1944. In those ceremonies, another type of sonic contest took place, though not with the general approval of the community, and especially not with encouragement, as in Puente. Those nights, as the mara'akame chanted in front of the fire, surrounded by residents and visitors, another type of music leaked in from the periphery, challenging the mara'akame's sonic control of the space. Other fires had been lit around the *takwá* (communal village patio) for cooking earlier in the evening, but one was later taken over

by youths, forming their own circle of sorts, apart from the ritual activities happening around the main fire. These youths, seemingly visiting from the cities with family just for the ceremony, sat around their own fire, not listening to the mara‘akame, instead listening to the latest hits of *música regional* and even English-language pop music on their cell phones. The loudness of the phones was enough to infiltrate the space of those circled around the main fire in front of the mara‘akame. No one said anything about this musical infiltration of a sacred space, but some elders around the main fire would peer through the darkness towards the youths as if to say in annoyance, “what’s that noise?”

I remember those Tatei Neixa nights while standing in the gazebo in Puente, overlooking its joyful musical chaos. Another related memory comes, a counterexample of sorts that balances those of sonic exclusion and infiltration. The Wixaritari are not always sonically excluded from the plazas during regional *ferias* (though it is the most common sonic result). Indeed, they are often invited to present in staged performances, amplifying their music on par with any other. One clear example is that of the feria in Mezquitic, where I attended the “Wixárika Day” in which they highlight the artesanías and music of the ethnic group that constitutes the majority of the population in the municipality of Mezquitic. The fact that they *are* the majority and have only one day dedicated to them out of an entire weeklong feria speaks reams about the situation.

In the year I attended, the evening of Wixárika Day included presentations by young *xaweri* (Wixárika violin) players, followed by a nighttime concert by the famous Huichol group Venado Azul. The concert was fully amplified on the main stage that was temporarily constructed in the street at the edge of Mezquitic’s plaza. I had an interview planned with the Venado Azul himself (José López) after the performance and observed his show from the audience. I noticed other groups still performing around the plaza and decided to roam the

perimeter to get a feel for what else was happening. Though smaller and less chaotic than Puente's feria, Mezquitic likewise indulged in copious sound barrage. Perhaps only twenty yards from the stage, a tamborazo was going at full blast, hired by mestizos. A few steps more and I arrived at a temporary bar/nightclub, a ubiquitous sort of structure in such ferias. Emanating from its flimsy reed walls was super-amplified electronic dance music that could just as well have been heard in a nightclub in any major metropolitan area of the world. I stood near the tamborazo, taking in all three musics at once—Huichol, regional Mestizo, cosmopolitan (Video 04). Thus, even in a day ostensibly carved out to highlight and appreciate the Wixárika people of Mezquitic, all feria revelers, whether they wanted it or not, were simultaneously subjected to all three musics, the constant pull of three social forces made audible.

A firework from the “bull” in Puente startles me out of my reverie, missing my face by inches and melting a hole in the polyester jacket of a tamborazo musician behind me. “Lo bueno” is in full swing, but the night is just beginning. One of the candidates will soon be crowned queen (*reina*) of the feria. For many, this night is a long-awaited chance to *amanecer* (greet the sunrise) while still partying. For some, feria turns into unmitigated *parranda*, a multi-day drunken bender that, if any sleep is involved at all, begins anew with more drinking to “cure” the hangovers. Such is feria on the frontier.

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Wixárika musicians, though not explicitly denied entry into, say, a Mestizo plaza during feria, are often sonically excluded. Paralleling Mestizo ranchers' incursions into their physical territory, Wixárika ceremonies are often sonically invaded by “Mestizo music” (i.e., popular music of the Western world). Unlike territorial invasion, however, musical incursions do not involve Mestizos forcing their music upon the Wixaritari. Instead, these incursions are (usually)

unwittingly enacted by Wixaritari, especially young men, who have lived outside of the Wixárika communities and return to share their new tastes, whether that sharing is welcomed by elders or not. Now, with internet connections increasingly available in Wixárika communities, youths need not live in Mestizo lands to partake in and share the influence of the Western world.

In cases where Huichol groups are officially brought into the fray through staged performances in Mestizo lands, the context is usually controlled by Mestizos and sometimes results in musical and social segregation. One never sees, for example, a tamborazo group that just happens to have a Wixárika member dressed in Wixárika clothes. Nor would one see a Huichol group with a mestizo member dressed in regionally appropriate cowboy clothes. Indeed, even the word *Mestizo* sometimes seems to be used by Wixaritari as if to give the bearers the benefit of the doubt (in that it implies some indigenous ancestry), and many of those who would be called mestizos prefer to purport “pure” Spanish heritage. This is the complicated, segregated, and sometimes racist reality behind the Mexican nationalist narrative of “mestizaje,” a narrative that finds some of its musicological voice in the concept of the “guerra de sonidos.”

The concept of the *guerra de sonidos* (war of sounds) or the *guerras sonoras* (sound wars) was articulated by José Antonio Robles Cahero (2003; 2005) in response to Serge Gruzinski’s concept of the *guerra de las imágenes* (war of images), itself a means of understanding the cultural upheaval of the Spanish conquest and colonial era in Mexico. As a music historian, Robles Cahero specifically sees the guerra de sonidos as a way to “develop a scenic and musical conception of *mestizaje* y popular culture in New Spain” (2005:43).<sup>49</sup> He sees the guerra de sonidos as divisible into three phases; (1) sonic violence and musical armaments in the conquest, (2) sonic seduction in the religious crusade of conversion, and (3) the sonic fascination that indigenous peoples developed for the Western world as presented to them

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<sup>49</sup> ...plantear una concepción escénica y musical del mestizaje y la cultura popular en la Nueva España

through utopian understandings of New Spain. Especially in regards to the third point, Robles Cahero states that historians of music and dance have a long way to go to understand “when and where, how and why the conquest of indigenous ears and bodies occurred” (51).<sup>50</sup>

This purely historical conceptualization of the guerra de sonidos would benefit from an ethnomusicological intervention, one that expands and refines the concept with synchronic ethnographic detail. The guerra de sonidos, as shown above, is a lived reality today, not merely a past epoch. To treat it as an historical event is to improperly portray mestizaje (or cultural change more broadly), in an a priori manner, as a resultant and perhaps static cultural state of post-colonial Mexico, and the Americas more broadly. Clearly, these processes continue today and thus to speak of “the indigenous people” and “the Western model” paints both with a wide brush. Which indigenous peoples? Which Western models? Similarly, to focus on “indigenous artists” who “translate” Western arts is to make an a priori judgment about the concept of an “artist” in indigenous contexts, a problematic assumption that not only takes for granted Western concepts of occupational specialization but also grants an overly generous assumption of personal and community agency. That might be appropriate in the case of pre-contact Tenochtitlan, but probably not pre- or post-contact Tateikie or Tutsipa. As seen above, juxtaposition is not always a “strategy” but often the unplanned result of a strategy (e.g., strategies of colonization, modernization, “development,” indigenismo, education, and so on).

To begin expanding and refining the concept of the guerra de sonidos, I have emphasized occurrences of “sound barrage,” a practice not specifically highlighted by Robles Cahero, but unavoidable from an ethnographic perspective. The term *sound barrage* was coined by trumpeter and ethnomusicologist Joseph S. Kaminski (2012) whose studies of Asante trumpeting in Ghana led him to create the neologism. The Asante trumpet ensembles would intentionally perform

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<sup>50</sup> *cúando y dónde, cómo y por qué ocurrió la conquista de los oídos y cuerpos indígenas*



different songs at the same time, acting as a type of spiritual protection for the kingdom. In the case of Mexican mestizo ferias, sound barrage primarily serves as evidence of “lo bueno,” a good time, a successful feria. The more groups, the better, and people will speak in awe of those places like Puente de Camotlán where the number of ensembles is exceptional.

Similar to the Asante function, however, sound barrage in this region of Mexico could also be said to serve as a sort of sonic protection. The bandas, tamborazos, and amplified norteño groups close ranks sonically, denying entrance to other genres and instrumentation (such as mariachi ensembles or Huichol groups). Indeed, a Huichol group might be able to compete with the tamborazos and amplified vocals with their own amplification but that would require both the financial capital to own or rent amplification equipment and the technical knowledge to run it, a combination that few Huichol groups have. For those who do have the equipment and technical prowess, though, *taloneando* in the plazas, even in feria, is not their goal (as covered in later chapters). Amplification enters only in the case of Huichol groups hired to present onstage. As shown in Mezquitic, however, the multicultural rhetoric of such presentations does not do away with sound barrage and belies the segregated nature of their production.

The previously mentioned manifestations of sound barrage on the frontier of the Wixárika communities could be thought of as battle tactics in the larger *guerra de sonidos*. Where sound barrage is less about tactics and more the result of them—as in the case of Wixárika youths passively barraging a *mara‘akame’s* chanting by playing MP3s on their mobile phones—the stakes are perhaps even higher. The aspirational cosmopolitanism that some youths pursue is often an uncritical desire to be, in their words, “modern,” “educated,” and “civilized.” With reason, then, some elders (and even some youths) see it as a threat to the “traditions” and “customs” of the Wixaritari. Indeed, that ideology is a threat to the Wixárika establishment and

what Paul Liffman calls its spiritual “shadow state” (2011). When a critical mass of Wixárika youths choose to dissociate themselves from the leadership of a mara‘akame’s chant in favor of their own ostensibly taste-driven musical preferences, the sustainability of the mara‘akate and their chants is questionable, and the prognosis dire.

Indeed, the wiping out of indigenous musics and voices in Mexico through the guerra de sonidos seems to be ritualized in Catholic processions that use the *matachines* dancers, symbols of indigeneity in Mestizo ritual usually called simply “danzantes.” The danzantes, representing indigeneity, lead the procession through the streets, followed by a priest carrying the image or statue of a saint, and closed with a group performing Mestizo music (often mariachi or Catholic hymns) (Videos 5 & 6). The procession is a quintessential and condensed history of Western conquest in Mexico. This historicizing of the guerra de sonidos in Mestizo ritual bodes poorly for the Wixaritari if history repeats itself. Not only can the indigenous element be wiped out, but it will also later be played by non-indigenous Mestizos. But the case is not yet closed. Wixárika youths still return to their home communities for ceremonies when their studies allow. They gather around the fire—the grandfather deity Tatewarí—as they converse and share their MP3s, sometimes of transnational hits in the Wixárika language. Such are the complicated intricacies of the ongoing guerra de sonidos on the permanent frontier.

## **Chapter 2. Niawari, Kwikari, Xaweri: “Traditional” Musics of the Wixárika Communities**

This chapter covers what I often heard referred to as “traditional music” (*música tradicional*) of the Wixaritari. I address the problems of using English and Spanish words like “traditional” and even “music” to explain the Wixárika world, but for the most part I find no reason to jettison the terms completely because Spanish-speaking Wixaritari often used the terms with no need to qualify the meaning. Indeed, *why* words like “traditional” are used even when referring to newly composed pieces becomes part of the study. Still, I use the words “traditional” and “music” cautiously and sometimes with “scare quotes” to refer to the sonic practices considered autochthonous to the Wixárika communities, an ample realm of cultural production in both quotidian and ritual settings.

The breadth and depth of the musical practices in the Wixárika communities has made it possible for them to be the focus of multiple graduate theses and dissertations, academic articles, and books. Despite its amplitude and intrigue, though, “traditional” Wixárika music plays a much smaller role in this dissertation than originally envisioned (i.e., it became one lengthy chapter instead of multiple chapters). The reasons for this include my disinclination simply to repeat or summarize what has already been done in Spanish, and perhaps my own biases and points of entry into Wixárika culture.

One stance (or perhaps bias) affecting my presentation is an aversion to create any work that might fit what could be called the Black Elk or Don Juan literary genre in which a seemingly naïve non-indigenous outsider (usually Euro-American) discovers and then reveals (and profits from) the ancient secrets of a wise old Indian, real or imagined. As a UCLA doctoral student, lifting the needle from that broken institutional record was imperative.

Still, covering “traditional music” is necessary not only for its centrality to Wixárika life and the various modes of Wixárika/Huichol identity, but also to benefit English-readers and researchers who cannot read or access Spanish-language works. On the other hand, covering it in too much detail would be redundant considering the superb literature that appeared in Spanish between the initial inspiration for this dissertation and its fieldwork.<sup>51</sup> Thus, I have relied primarily on my own fieldwork to construct this chapter but have had the benefit of being able to turn to other sources to verify, complicate, and extend my own data.

The fact that my findings sometimes differ from prior works or complicate them speaks not to sloppiness on the part of prior researchers but to the tremendous variations in the data as a result of the differences observed in the vast Wixárika territory. Thus, prior academic attempts to define something called the “Chapalagana Huichol” people seem highly misguided as the variations within that assigned appellation make totalizing statements about them often problematic, and usually rife with counterexamples or contradictions. Not surprisingly, then, there is nothing like a “definitive” ethnographic work on the Wixaritari themselves, much less their music. The vast territory leads to linguistic, ritual, and musical variations that force ethnographies into one of two categories: highly specific to one or a few locales, or overly broad.

Ethnographers, including myself, struggle to strike a balance between these localizing and regionalizing approaches. The matter is complicated by the fact that there is no Wixárika collaborator, academic or otherwise, who knows all the potential variations on a story, a melody, or a ritual. In that way, each ethnographer’s notes, data, and publications become merely pieces in a multigenerational puzzle further complicated by local and regional cultural change. In that way, my ethnographic data and documentation may be more valuable to future researchers than

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<sup>51</sup> I am referring primarily to the work by De la Mora (2005, 2011), Lemaistre (2003), Luna Ruiz (2004), and Chamorro Escalante (2007), reviewed in the Introduction.

this chapter or the dissertation itself because they pertain to many locales and variations, not all of which could make it into this one presentation. For example, my attendance at ceremonies such as Semana Santa in Tateikie and Hikuri Neixa in Tuapurie are mostly excluded here because they were more observational than participatory. Nevertheless, as ethnographic documents from a specific time and location, they may someday be more valuable than any theory-driven presentation.<sup>52</sup>

From the perspective of Mexican authors who have already written about Wixárika music, I might be seen as somewhat “late to the party.” Despite that, I believe they will find a solid contribution in my work that enriches their own findings and fairly introduces the entire corpus to an Anglophone audience. Specifically, this chapter on traditional Wixárika music contributes strongly to the conversation, I believe, in that it (1) questions the cultural and inter-linguistic issues at play when we refer to “traditional Wixárika music,” (2) it enriches the available data with archival and museographic resources that were not available to previous researchers, and (3) it furthers a more ethnomusicological understanding of Wixárika music through attention to sound itself rather than focusing exclusively on texts and contexts.

The third point above—attention to musical sound itself—is something surprisingly neglected despite the amount of research ostensibly done on Wixárika music. The reason is that much of the work has come from anthropologists and linguists who were probably reluctant or unable to engage musical discussions and topics directly. Two notable exceptions are Rodrigo de la Mora’s master’s thesis (2005) and a book by Arturo Chamorro (2007), the latter addressing melodic characteristics of Wixárika song but also comparing them to other nearby musical practices of the Nayeri (Cora) people and other North American indigenous peoples. I attempt to

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<sup>52</sup> Related documents (audio, video, photographs, notes, etc.) will be deposited at the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive.

complement his work through further attention to archival recordings and my own field recordings, and by thinking through some questions of sonic aesthetics (especially vocal and instrumental register), tuning and intonation, mode(s), and rhythm.

De la Mora's claim (2011) that Wixárika traditional music reveals the ability of the Wixaritari to appropriate and adapt outside (i.e., primarily Western) influences into their own worldview is supported in my own research. I agree that this is an impressive and notable outcome to a particular battle within the *guerra de sonidos* (see preceding interchapter), at least from the Wixárika side of things. But I do not agree with the implication that prior multi-century processes are certain to be repeated. The roads built by the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) are only a few decades old, Wixárika villages are continually being connected to the federal electric grid, and television and internet access follow quickly behind. More Wixaritari are leaving their homelands for education, healthcare, and labor than ever before. The assault on a Wixárika worldview and its related way of life, through cultural coercion and even physical violence, are real and intensifying. Taken individually, these are not "bad" changes, but we cannot assume that the prior selective absorption of some Western cultural practices (e.g., keeping European violin but getting rid of Catholic priests) will be curated as successfully in the future.<sup>53</sup> The *guerra de los sonidos* and its larger socio-cultural processes have never been more immediate nor more intense for the Wixaritari.

The reverse, however, is not true. That is, "Mestizo" Mexico and Western society have not embraced or incorporated Wixárika music in the way the Wixaritari incorporated the Western violin to the extent that it became essential. As I show in a later chapter, the rare visual presence of *xaweri* (Wixárika violin) in Western media is usually silenced in deference to

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<sup>53</sup> Many Wixárika elders do in fact say that these changes are bad, and fight projects to "modernize" infrastructure, much to the chagrin of many Wixárika youths and professionals who have bought into Mexico's modernistic concepts of what progress means.

Western music. Assertions, then, of a true multicultural acceptance of a Wixárika way of life by Western society—sonically or otherwise—may be more wishful thinking than lived or observable fact.

### **Music in the Ceremonial Cycle**

Within the ceremonial cycle outlined in the introduction to the dissertation, musical distinctions are not as great as I originally anticipated. This seems contrary to the observation by Lumholtz when he claimed that the “Christian feasts” could be considered “feasts of the violin... because this instrument furnishes the music to the dancing...” (1902, 2:187). If this was an accurate description of a musical distinction in the late 1890s (when Lumholtz was in the sierra) it no longer holds true. Today, the xaweri can be found in any Wixárika ritual, especially in the northern communities where it has been incorporated into most if not all of what Lumholtz called the “pagan” fiestas. Similarly, the chanting of the mara‘akame has made its way into the civil and “Catholic” ceremonies with differences primarily in the texts or epic stories being told rather than melodic, rhythmic, or structural differences. An important exception, though, is that the *tepu* drum is played only during the solstice ceremonies (Namawita Neixa and Tatei Neixa) at the tukipa level, and only during Tatei Neixa at the xiriki level.

One musical difference over the ceremonial cycle that is worth noting has to do with the presence of *música regional* groups or popular *conjuntos* playing corridos and rancheras. As pointed out by De la Mora, these groups are often an important and increasingly integral part of Cambio de Varas. In that case, the outgoing authorities might hire groups to play for the incoming authorities. In my observations in Tuapurie, conjuntos were part of the procession of incoming and outgoing authorities. Such groups were also present in Tateikie during (or, more

precisely, after) Semana Santa celebrations. The groups in that case were only allowed to play *after* the lifting of strictures enforcing somber observance and taboos against technology, working, music, drinking, running, etc. Thus, they were not really a part of Semana Santa per se but a chance to party after observing a multi-day ceremony that usually *does not* include communal dance. Theoretically, conjuntos could play after other ceremonies such as Tatei Neixa and others, but as those ceremonies include good amounts of dancing as part of the all-night rituals themselves (to the tepu, xaweri, or both), further dancing usually is not desired.

### **What does it mean to say “traditional music”?**

Numerous outside observers, and all of my Spanish-speaking Wixárika contacts have felt comfortable using the terms “traditional music” to refer to the sonic practices considered to be autochthonous to the Wixárika people. The terms in Spanish usually group together music of the xaweri and the chanting of the *mara akame*, though the two practices are often linguistically distinguished in Wixárika. Furthermore, much of the xaweri repertoire is newly composed, making it contrary to the usual definitions of “traditional” to mean “since time immemorial.” Hence, the gloss “traditional music” has two major problems: the first is the word “traditional” and the second is “music.” I will approach these in reverse order.

#### *Defining and translating “music”*

Initial investigations into how one might say “music” in Wixárika led me to believe that there was no word in Wixárika that was equally globalizing for all “humanly organized sound and silence” as the English word *music*. While I still believe that is the case technically and historically, I have found that Wixárika speakers often employ expanded definitions of words



that otherwise mean “song” or “violining” to apply to all music so that, for example, *wixárika kwikarieya* (from the Uto-Aztecan root *kwika*, song) is expanded to mean “Wixárika music” instead of just “Wixárika singing/song.” The situation is complicated, though, because basic musical concepts and definitions change depending on the place, person, and perhaps generation.

There are three main words that are usually invoked when talking about music making broadly: *kwikari*, *niawari*, and *xaweri*. The first two (*kwika-* and *niawa-*) are found in similar forms throughout Uto-Aztecan languages (Stubbs 2011). Both refer to song/singing, but only the first is ever used with an expanded definition in Wixárika to imply all music. The third, *xaweri* (violin), is also sometimes expanded to mean music, but usually of an instrumental nature, similar to the way the Spanish word *música* sometimes refers specifically to the instrumental accompaniment to a vocalist.

To address the nuances of these terms, one might start with the work of linguist Xitakame Julio Ramírez de la Cruz, originally from the community of San Andres Cohamiata, now a researcher at the University of Guadalajara. His publication entitled *Wixarika Xaweri* (2005) translates the word *xaweri* to mean song (*canción*). He later defines *kwikari* as “texts... composed to be musicalized and sung” (11), and *niawari* as “a general term for textual compositions destined to be sung and for the actual musical compositions themselves” (94).<sup>54</sup> We could contrast this to the definitions given to me by Ernesto Hernandez de la Cruz, a college-age musician who grew up in a Wixárika-speaking musical family in the same community. He agreed that, for example, one could say “*takwika*” to mean “he’s going to sing,” no matter what kind of singing it might be. He was dumbfounded, though, by the above definition of *niawa*, having always understood it to mean melody without text, such as humming and birdsong. He pointed out, though, that this was a point of linguistic variation, having noticed musicians from

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<sup>54</sup> The main problem with these definitions, in my opinion, is the word “text.”

other communities use the word *niawa* instead of *kwika* to mean “to sing [a song].” For example, Grupo Ausente de San Sebastian recorded a song for their fourth album with the title “Wikixi Waniawa” (“Canto de los Pajaros” / “Birdsong”) but in the following corrido about their hometown begin with the equivalent of “I’m going to sing about Wautia...,” using *niawa* as the word for “to sing.”

The birdsong distinction would seem telling considering the importance of birds in the origin stories of the xaweri (below), but it too is susceptible to regional variations. The above evidence shows birdsong to be *niawa* but an elder teacher from the southwest community of Guadalupe Ocotán told me that even though *niawa* and *kwika* are synonymous for human singing, birdsong is only *kwikari* (the exact opposite of the understandings above).

In the southern communities, especially Tuxpan de Bolaños, there is a subtle but important distinction where *kwikari* generally means song but *niawari* might best be translated as chant, incantation, or intonation because it usually implies the unaccompanied vocalizing of a mara‘akame in a ceremonial context. The subtle distinction between the two words was mentioned by locals and confirmed by Iřtemai Gabriel Pacheco Salvador who grew up in Xatsitsarie and earned a PhD in linguistics from the University of Guadalajara.

Beyond the sonic aspects, definitions might also hinge on origins, intent, or ritual potency of the singing. Felipe Serio Chino from the community of Tuxpan was introduced to me as a teacher and “Wixárika intellectual.” Serio Chino maintained, based on his own fluency and discussions with elders, that *kwikari* implied an original, newly-composed song through one’s imagination or through a dream. In contrast, *niawari* implied something already composed, an imitation or interpretation. Again, this confirms that *niawari* includes more of the ceremonial context in that the mara‘akame interprets epics and relives the singing of the ancestors.

The suggestion that *niawari* “imitates” or “interprets” does not make it less powerful or valuable—to the contrary. Its power was confirmed by Salvador Sánchez González, a mara‘akame from the locality of Tsikatia (Cerritos). Sánchez González agreed that the “cantos” (chants) of the mara‘akate could be considered a type of *nierika* (ritual mirror, visionary power<sup>55</sup>) but that songs associated with *xaweri* were only “*niuki*” (words/language). With *niuki* (i.e., less potent song/music such as *kwikari* or *xaweri*) you might “invite” the ancestor deities, he said, but cannot actually invoke or embody them as is done by the mara‘akame through epic song (more likely to be classified a type of *niawari* in that location).

In addition to the words *kwikari*, *niawari*, and *xaweri*, there are at least two other Wixárika words generally associated with music making.<sup>56</sup> These are *yuwaneni* (*sonar* / to sound) and *yuitia* (to move something / to play a musical instrument), which De la Mora translated as music itself (2011:273). In my investigations, I found that *yuitia* means literally to move something but can be applied to musical instruments. For example *kaitsa puyuitia* means literally “to move the *kaitsa* (rattle),” thus explaining why I heard Wixárika people speak in Spanish about the actions of the Tatei Neixa ceremony as “moving the *kaitsa*” (*moviendo la kaitsa*) rather than “playing the *kaitsa*” (*tocando la kaitsa*).

Such words are always up for renegotiation and creative conceptualization. Paly Enriquez López, the guitarist, singer, and leader of the popular music groups Innovación Sierreño and Legítimos Sierreños, translated his song “Hutse Xawerieya” variously as “Cumbia del Gorila” and “Canción del Gorila.” The word *hutse* is usually defined as bear or monkey, depending on the Wixárika dialect, thus he intentionally combined the animals in his own thinking to translate it as gorilla, something “in between the two.” In a similar creative fashion, he felt comfortable

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<sup>55</sup> See the glossary for a more complete definition of the word *nierika*.

<sup>56</sup> More specific types of singing are mentioned below in the section on the mara‘akame, particularly singing referred to as *tumuari* and *wawi*.

first translating xawerieya as *cumbia* (a popular dance rhythm) and then later as *canCIÓN* (song), leaving out kwikari and niawari all together even though he certainly knew those words.

In short, suggesting that there is only one word that means “music” in Wixárika is mostly a maneuver of expedience by the translator, be they academic or otherwise. Like statements about Wixárika culture and identity itself, such expedience ignores important and delicate intricacies based on regional, personal, and generational positionalities.

### *Defining and translating “tradition”*

Another problem with the idea of “traditional music” is the word *tradition*, which reveals a clear internalization of a concept also glossed by the Mexican state as *usos y costumbres* (uses and customs). The terms become mostly synonymous as the title “traditional” gets appended to the usual symbolic artifacts of life such as music, *fiestas* (i.e., ritual events), cuisine, clothing, and so forth. The word *tradicional*, though, when used by Spanish-speaking Wixaritari, is broader and more complicated than at first glance, especially because in the case of music they are often referring to recently-composed pieces and not simply music that has existed “since time immemorial.”

The word *tradicional* gets attached primarily, in my observation, to the idea of *fiestas tradicionales* (traditional fiestas / ceremonies) and *música tradicional*. When speaking with me, Wixárika people would usually simply say “*fiestas*” in reference to ceremonial events of the Wixárika communities and ranchos. It created confusion with many Mestizos, though, who were not “in the know” regarding the ceremonial or ritual practices of the Wixaritari, leading them to think that their interlocutor was referring to a “modern” dance with popular music. Again, the issue of translation is revealing.

In Wixárika, particular ceremonies can be referred to by their own names (as in the introduction to the dissertation) or in generalities. For example, the word *neixa* can be applied to no fewer than three of the rituals that take place in the ceremonial centers (*tukipa*). Specifically, *niexas* are the rituals that revolve around the solar year (rather than the Gregorian calendar) and are associated with *hikuri* (peyote), planting, and harvest. The term *neixa* is not applied to ceremonies of Catholic influence such as *Semana Santa*. To include those ceremonies, one might say *ixiarári* to mean a “traditional” event or *fiesta*.<sup>57</sup> That term, however, could also be extended to a “modern dance,” as does the term *neiya* (to dance).

My own work, and that of previous authors, has found that Wixaritari, when pressed to translate words like *customs* or *traditions* back to Wixárika, use the word *tayeiyari*. *Tayeiyari* could be translated to English loosely as “our way” but means more specifically “our path” or “our goings about,” coming from the root *yeiya* (Sp. *andar*, Eng. to go about / to walk). This is important because it puts the emphasis on peripatetic action, a practice central to Wixárika life and ritual.

“Traditional,” from this process-oriented and active Wixárika view, does not necessarily mean old or ancient. It can also mean something “original” or music newly composed. In one telling example, I once employed Ernesto Hernández Bautista to code my Wixárika/Huichol CD collection for entry into a database. We started with the popular music discs, noting the number of “originals” when a group performed their own compositions instead of just covers. When we finally got to the “traditional” music CDs, he began to mark all tracks as “originals” whether they were recently composed *xaweri* tunes or the epic chanting of the *mara‘akame*. His understanding of traditional music was that no matter the date of composition, it was “original” to the Wixárika people, unique and autochthonous.

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<sup>57</sup> This is the case in *Tateikie*, at least, but I cannot be sure that it applies in all communities.

Historically, anything that today gets categorized as *tayeiyari* or “traditional music” is associated primarily with the ritual realm, and is now increasingly staged for municipal fairs, school-related events, and special civic events. In one such case, I witnessed the visit of Jalisco’s governor, Aristóteles Sandoval, to the town of Makuhekwa (Pueblo Nuevo). It was a massive logistical event with gargantuan tents and PA systems set up in the middle of town. Before the governor arrived in a convoy of three military helicopters, an announcer warmed up the ample crowd of villagers and schoolchildren gathered from the entire community of Santa Catarina. “What does the word *tradition* mean?,” he asked the crowd. He approached a young boy, turning the microphone to him. “Costumbres,” the boy said. “Do you know of any traditions that come to mind?” “No.” “But surely you have traditions just like all children,” the announcer continued, walking away. “We all have traditions... simply put, in Pueblo Nuevo there are traditions. Isn’t that right?... [Tradition] comes from previous generations... from culture... our roots... it’s our ancestors... our roots.” He later continued, “Traditional music is a tradition. [Your clothing is traditional] because it’s part of the culture.” He continued:

“Being very clear, it’s important that we conserve traditions. It doesn’t matter that things change... the important thing is to conserve the traditions so that they be preserved and that we can transcend in the end as a group, because in the end that’s what makes us all Mexicans. And it’s important that you all learn to conserve [the traditions] and feel proud as we all do of our customs and of our ancestral races.” (Video 07)

The announcer invited Daniel Medina de la Rosa to play *xaweri* again as an example of a tradition. Three brave children got on stage and danced to the music at the announcer’s request and the urging of their teacher. We then waited longer for the arrival of the governor while *cumbia*, smooth jazz, and world music recordings played over the PA.

In such an instance, the naïve, well-meaning, yet coercive outside ideology of objectified tradition becomes patent. Tradition is not about “things that change,” we are told, but is to be “conserved,” “preserved,” and put on stage. Why? Seemingly for its own sake, though the

announcer's comments tended almost towards that of the cosmic race envisioned by José Vasconcelos—from the “roots” of our “ancestral races” to a group of “transcendent” Mexicans. However, from a Wixárika perspective that allows for new creations within the category of “traditional,” tradition can be not so much about negating change but about that which morally unifies despite its newness. A song composed this year to be sung with *xaweri* accompaniment can be immediately part of what is called “traditional music,” because it pertains to the uniquely unifying, even moralizing realm of *xaweri*. It pertains to *tayeyari* in the sense that new pieces are created in “our way” and on “our path,” not someone else's path. In that sense, the word *tradition*, when used by Spanish-speaking Wixaritari, might broadly mean that which has a perceived relation to the immemorial past, even as it is being born anew in the moment, up for discussion as one “goes about” being Wixárika.

### **Wixárika Musical Instruments**

For the reasons mentioned in the preceding two paragraphs, the following section treats Wixárika musical instruments individually with particular attention paid to when and how they are played. Thinking of musical divisions from an organological perspective seems to be acceptable from a Wixárika perspective as well, especially considering that *xaweri* is used in many contexts, as is the chanting of the *mara'akame*, and only a few instruments are (or were) used exclusively in only one or two ceremonies.

#### *Xaweri & Kanari*

The *xaweri* (pl. *xawerite*) and the *kanari* are perhaps the most iconic of Wixárika musical instruments. I treat them together in this section because they almost always form a duo and are

not usually performed solo. Perhaps even more than the chanting of the mara‘akame, the sound of the *xaweri* and *kanari* are more likely to be used to sonically invoke Wixárika “spirituality” or “mysticism” for the outside gaze (if that word can be applied to the sense of sound). Indeed, the word *xaweri* itself is often translated as “music,” as shown above. That fact is surprising considering that the words *xaweri* and *kanari* are likely loan words from Spanish. In studies to ascertain when certain words in the Wixárika language were introduced from Spanish, linguist José Luis Iturrioz made a strong case that *xaweri* and *kanari*, respectively, come etymologically from the Spanish words *rabel* and *canario* (Iturrioz 2002[1995], Iturrioz and Gómez López 2006). Of the two cases, *xaweri* from *rabel* seems the most convincing in light of the fact that the *rabel* was a widely used instrument in Spain and its colonies during most of the colonial era.





**Figure 13. Xaweri (right) and kanari construction common to the community of San Andrés. Notice fretless kanari and the small bag behind the xaweri to hold bow rosin. Photo by Elliot Warden.**



Figure 14. Xaweri (right) and kanari construction common to the communities east of the Chapalagana River. Notice moveable frets on the kanari. Photo by Elliot Warden.



Figure 15. Spanish rabel (left) from the 18<sup>th</sup> century on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The construction from a single piece of wood with a pear-shaped back is like that still seen in the community of San Andrés (above). This rabel had three strings, as was common.

That xaweri and kanari simply “are Spanish” is a common but erroneous perspective (even on the part of some Wixárika youths) that does not square with Wixárika origin stories about the instruments, the uniqueness of the music played on them, and the total integration of the instruments into Wixárika ritual. Though I agree with the suggestion that the instruments (in their current forms) and their names are Spanish introductions, it does not follow that the instruments are viewed as such in the Wixárika world, nor does it follow that there was no prior existence of stringed instruments that served a similar function to the xaweri and kanari.

A number of origin stories about the xaweri and kanari have been documented.<sup>58</sup> Early ethnographic data occasionally connect the xaweri to Catholic origin stories (see Zingg 1938 and 2004), but today the most common origin stories are unambiguously Wixárika-centric. In my own fieldwork, an interview with mara‘akame José Bautista Carrillo of the community of San Andrés revealed a straightforward description of not only the origin of the instrument but also a Wixárika-centric conceptualization of the violin and its music throughout the world. After stating that the first xaweri maker was Kauyumarie<sup>59</sup>, he continued:

The first xawereru [xaweri player]... the Fire [Tatewarí / Grandfather Fire]. It is he who played the first time. When he played, it sounded different [or: “different ones were sounded”]. Of the Yaquis, the Mexicanos, French, gringos, Huicholes. That same violin, it sounded Huichol the first time. Then later French, gringo, Italian, like that, different. I think because the violin was going to be known/seen in all places. That’s why I believe it sounded like that. (Bautista Carrillo 2013)<sup>60</sup>

Thus, a brief telling of the origin of the xaweri (and the entire history of the violin in the world for that matter) separates maker from player and flips the Eurocentric view completely. The first playing, he went on to explain, happened at a cliff (*peñasco*) with many birds (whose songs then may have been the inspiration for the “different” violin musics of the world).

The connection of the xaweri and kanari to birds and birdsong was confirmed many times in my own fieldwork and that of other researchers. In an origin story recorded by De la Mora (and illustrated magnificently in a yarn painting he commissioned), two different birds actually became the xaweri and kanari; they were the *kukaimaiari* and *tikari wiki*, respectively (De la

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<sup>58</sup> De la Mora (2011) does a good job of collating multiple origin stories.

<sup>59</sup> Kauyumarie (multiple spellings exist) is often called the “culture hero” of the Wixaritari by scholars. He is considered to be a deer (though Zingg referred to him as a wolf), and is also sometimes thought to be a trickster figure. He is commonly associated with music, especially the singing of the mara‘akate.

<sup>60</sup> “El primer xawereru... el Fuego. Es él que tocó a la primera vez. Cuando tocaba sonó diferentes. De los Yaquis, de los Mexicanos, de Franceses, de gringos, los Huichol. Esa misma violín como tocó pero de primera vez sonó como Huichol. Ya después como Francés, gringos, con Italianos, así, diferente. Yo creo que porque iban a ver [en] todo partes las violines. Por eso yo creo que así sonó.”

Mora 2011:118). The connection with the *kukaimaiari*<sup>61</sup> is widespread and is often mentioned even when not in relation to an origin story of the *xaweri*. The *xawereru* (*xaweri* player) of the *tukipa* at Tuapurie during my fieldwork years, Daniel Medina de la Rosa, stated that the word *kukaimaiari* itself was synonymous with “music of the *xaweri*.” Such a connection is understandable considering the sound of the bird’s song, full of trills over the course of a long, descending pitch run (Audio 02; 03). It seems, though, that any birdsong might be emulated (and appropriated in a way mentioned below) by a *xawereru*. Other songbirds mentioned by José Bautista Carrillo that are connected to the sound of the *xaweri* include *tsita* and *tikaipi*.

One origin story, mentioned only briefly in one of the earliest ethnographic accounts of the *Wixaritari*, seems to indicate a meeting of *Wixárika* and European scholarly origin stories about the *xaweri*. French ethnographer Leon Diguét ([1899] 1992) reported that:

The Huichols still conserve the memory of who introduced them to the violin and they give him the same title as the troubadour poets who compose the songs/chants; he was *Tearkayapa* (*tearka*, short for *tearucka*, scorpion; *yapa*, between/among, through); and his disciples are called *Makuaja*.<sup>62</sup> (Diguét 1992[1899]:132)

This statement is tantalizingly slim on details to the point of being cryptic. It points to a connection seemingly unknown today and undocumented directly by any other ethnographer, that of a connection between *xaweri* and scorpions. Diguét clearly writes about the scorpion as a person, referring to “him,” but at the same time reports the name with the suffix *-yapa*, usually used for place names.<sup>63</sup> Diguét, and later authors, failed to connect the dots to what seems to be a

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<sup>61</sup> Also spelled *kuka'imari* and *kukaimari*, among other variations. In Spanish it is known as *jilguero*, or probably in English as the brown-backed solitaire (*myadestes occidentalis*). De la Mora and I both came to this same conclusion independently, which seems to support that it is a correct translation for the same bird.

<sup>62</sup> “Los huicholes conservan todavía el recuerdo de quien les dio a conocer el violín y le otorgan el mismo título que a los poetas trovadores que componían los cantos; éste fue *Tearkayapa* (*tearka*, abreviatura de *tearucka*, escorpión; *yapa*, entre, a través); y sus discípulos se llaman *Makuaja*.”

<sup>63</sup> If it was a scorpion-man, why the *-yapa* prefix rather than a name like *Terika Tewiyari* (in the way that *Kieri Tewiyari* is the personification of the *kieri* plant)? Such questions make Diguét’s statement one of hair-pulling frustration. The only other indirect connection between *xaweri* and scorpions is that of the

clear, albeit speculative, connection to Colotlán, Jalisco, commonly called Terikayapa (or Teerikayapa) in Wixárika, both names meaning “scorpion place.”<sup>64</sup> Colotlán was the headquarters of the colonial territorial boundaries that included the Wixárika communities, and is thus likely the place where Wixaritari first saw and heard the rabel, or the place from which the instrument made its first journey to the sierra, in the hands of missionaries or other indigenous peoples.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the introduction of the current form of *xaweri* during the Spanish colonial era, its presence does not mean that it was simply added to Wixárika ritual with no preexisting model. While avoiding being overly functionalist, it is useful to consider the possibility that the *xaweri* eclipsed the use of a different musical implement. In doing so, one notes the importance of the *xaweri* in leading processions and pilgrimages. Much of its repertoire is associated with Wirikuta and the hikuri collected there, which in turn associates it with hikuri’s ritual equivalent, deer. Indeed, the pilgrimage to Wirikuta is often called a “hunt” and the first hikuri plants encountered are shot with small arrows from a diminutive bow. The association of *xaweri* with ritualized deer and hunting becomes increasingly curious when realizing that even though the word *xaweri* was taken directly from Spanish (rabel), the word for the bow that plays it—*arco*—was not localized as *arkuri* or some such, but was recognized and translated for what it was, using the same

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deity Tamatsi Paritsika, sometimes considered to be the source or creator of the *xaweri* (Ramírez de la Cruz 2005:107), himself a counterpart to Kauyumarie, but also “the lord of the scorpions” (Aedo 2003:238, Lemaistre 2003:309).

<sup>64</sup> The town that is today known simply as Colotlán was called Santiago Colotlán during the earliest days of colonial period and reestablished with the name San Luis de Colotlán by 1590 (Gutiérrez Gutiérrez 2010). Many places in colonial Mexico were given Nahuatl names whether or not they ever had Nahuatl people living there, as is the case with Colotlán (*colotl*, scorpion; *-tlan*, place).

<sup>65</sup> As with many places, the Spaniards brought indigenous Tlaxcaltecs to Colotlán to aid assimilation of local indigenous peoples. It is quite possible that instead of being introduced by missionaries, the rabel came to the Wixaritari via the Tlaxcaltecs since the rabel was already present in New Spain by the mid-1500s and being made by indigenous people by the 1590s (Turrent 1993:130). Thus, by the time it reached the Wixaritari, it might have already been considered an instrument of indigenous people.

Wixárika word for the hunting bow (*tupí* or *tuupi*) that was central to Wixárika life until being replaced by the rifle over the course of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The metaphoric associations are rife, then, when one considers, for example, the xaweri bow collected by Lumholtz in the late 1890s whose end had been capped with the casing of a Smith & Wesson rifle cartridge.



**Figure 16. Xaweri bow with bullet casing. Lumholtz Collection (65/4510B), American Museum of Natural History.**

Though these associations are speculative, and might always be a type of interpretive analysis, it is food for thought that the xaweri's role in ritual might be better comprehended if construed as a

ritual representation of the hunting bow and a replacement for the now-extinct musical bow described later.<sup>66</sup>

The xaweri and kanari form a gendered pair, with the xaweri usually thought to be a female and the kanari a male.<sup>67</sup> José Bautista Carrillo always referred to the xaweri in Spanish as “*la violín*” instead of the usual “*el violín*.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, the xaweri is sometimes adorned with ribbons and beaded pieces in the colors of blue and white to represent the waters, themselves female ancestor-deities. Salvador Sánchez González referred to the xaweri and its music as “the heart of our mothers” (*tateteima iyari*).<sup>69</sup> Despite this gendering, or perhaps because of it, all xaweri players are male, including the original male ancestor-deities who created and played it (Kauyumarie, Tatewarí, and Jesus Christ). No interviewees had an explanation for why women did not play the xaweri, and there seems to be no Wixárika oral histories that would explain the absence of female xawererus. To the contrary, Robert Zingg collected a story in which a woman was sent by the “great gods” to check in on Kieri Tewiyari (“Jimson-weed man”) in his rancho. In addition to other paraphernalia, she arrived with “her violin on which to play music” (Zingg 2004:18–19). The increased folkloricization of xaweri by putting it on stage and teaching it in some elementary schools might portend the appearance of female xawererus in the near future.

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<sup>66</sup> Another view—simultaneously insider and academic—that supports this link comes from Xitákame Julio Ramírez de la Cruz (2005) in his comments about *Kímikime* as the creator of music in Tateikie. *Kímikime*’s instruments “were not like those that we know now, but it was a large *bule* (gourd) with a bow on top... that’s how what we know today as violin was born” (107).

<sup>67</sup> De la Mora (2005) reported that some people claimed the reverse was true (i.e., that the xaweri was male and the kanari female).

<sup>68</sup> He also referred to the guitar (usually *la guitarra* in Spanish) as “*el guitarra*.”

<sup>69</sup> Though women do not play xaweri, they could potentially “dream” a song through hikuri visions that could then be transmitted to a male xawereru.





Figure 17. Elaborately painted xaweri with scroll resembling a human (deity?) head. Earring of blue and white beads suggests the xaweri (and perhaps the carved figure) is female. Lumholtz Collection (65/1316), American Museum of Natural History.

Even some of the best xawererus purchase their instruments, showing that there is some degree of specialized knowledge in the procurement of the materials and construction. A maker might sell a xaweri and kanari set to another Wixárika man for around 700 pesos (approximately \$60USD at time of fieldwork), depending on the quality.<sup>70</sup> The quality, however, is primarily about the craftsmanship, not the materials. The wood used for the table or belly (front face),

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<sup>70</sup> For outsiders, such as ethnomusicologists, the price can easily double.

back, and neck is almost always *kariuxa* (or simply *kariu*), translated variously in Spanish as *nogal* (walnut), *caoba* (mahogany), or *cedro rojo* (red cedar).<sup>71</sup> In contrast, the rib (i.e., the curved side connecting the front and back) is commonly made of *ayé* (Sp. *guácima*, Eng. West Indian elm or bastard cedar, *L. guazuma ulmifolia*). The use of *kariuxa* is of particular importance because it was, according to the origin story documented by De la Mora, the type of tree in which sat the birds that turned into the *xaweri* and *kanari*. The Catholic connection is never far, though, as multi-instrumentalist Maximino Hernández Carrillo once said that “*kaxiu*... is a type of wood, a tree, very special for the god who is Jesus Christ” (Hernández Carrillo 2012b).<sup>72</sup>

The glue used to hold together all parts of the instruments, including the bridge of the *kanari*, is an impressively strong mixture of organic material also used in the manufacture of the *mara‘akame*’s chair (*‘uweni*, Sp. *equipal*). The only word I found for the glue was *kwetsukwa*, possibly the root of the *chayote* plant (an edible species native to Mexico, sometimes called vegetable pear in English).

The *xaweri* strings today are commonly metal (for the two higher pitched, high tension strings), plastic, or horsetail. Instruments collected by Lumholtz in the late 1890s show that metal strings were known even in those days (but perhaps not common).<sup>73</sup> When speaking of a

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<sup>71</sup> The Latin classification of *kariuxa* is probably *juglans mollis*. However, some translate *kariuxa* into Spanish as *caoba* (mahogany), likely *swietenia humilis*. Both are hardwoods that would be attainable in the Sierra Madre Occidental. De la Mora (2011:118) says it is “red cedar.”

<sup>72</sup> “*Kaxiu*... es una madera, un árbol muy especial para el dios que es Jesús Cristo.” This statement was even more interesting in light of the fact that in the same interview Maximino spoke about how he flatly rejected the coercions of Jehovah’s Witnesses who urged him to become Christian. His rejection of Christianity, then, was not a rejection of Christ but of the suggestion that he should stop doing non-Christian *Wixárika* ceremonies.

<sup>73</sup> European violins, and thus probably some *rabeles* in Spain and the New World, had metal and metal-wrapped strings available by the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

time before metal strings were common, interviewees commonly mentioned the use of strings made of skunk intestine or goat tendon.

The bow for the *xaweri* is ideally made of *itsa* (brasilwood), the same wood used for *varas* (sacred staffs of the community authorities) and, in the past, for hunting bows.

Alternatively, the cheaper and more readily available bamboo is also sometimes used. In either case, rosined horsehair is always the material that makes contact with the strings, and the bow's stick is straight or slightly convex, curved away from the horsehair.<sup>74</sup> Unlike today's Euro-American violin bows, the tension of the horsehair on a *Wixárika* bow is produced by the player himself, usually by the thumb which is held between the horsehair and the bow itself, squeezing for tension. In previous generations, as evidenced by the bows collected by Lumholtz, it was common to have a type of tensioning bridge near the handle of the bow that provided a light tension on its own or could be lightly engaged further with the thumb for additional tension.

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<sup>74</sup> Concave bows did not become prominent in Europe until after 1750 (Randel 1986:105), and probably appeared shortly thereafter in the Spanish colonies.



Figure 18. Maximino Hernández Carrillo plays xaweri, creating the bow's tension with the thumb.



Figure 19. Bow from the 1890s showing a tensioning bridge. Lumholtz Collection (65/1319), American Museum of Natural History.

Despite their extensive use in Wixárika ritual, the xaweri and kanari do not usually undergo any standard or mandatory consecration that would prepare them for use in ritual settings. Interviewees tended to see the instruments as “sacred” (*sagrado*) but agreed that simply playing them did not necessarily indicate a ritual or sacred intent since they can also be used in non-ritual settings as entertainment. Still, the instruments themselves are often “bathed” or “blessed” with sacred water, adorned with yellow ‘uxa paint<sup>75</sup> as though they were human faces, and sometimes festively adorned with ribbons, beadwork, and tissue paper flowers used in rituals such as Tatei Neixa. Some luthiers also make xawerite with elaborately carved scrolls in the shape of human heads (see figure above), eagle heads (below), or the hikuri cactus.

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<sup>75</sup> ‘Uxa is a paint made of a root collected during pilgrimage to the desert of Wirikuta. It is primarily used to paint symbolic figures on human faces during Tatei Neixa and other rituals, but can be applied to musical instruments, rifles, and so on.



Figure 20. Xaweri of Ernesto Hernández de la Cruz revealing ‘uxa painting and scroll carved as “an eagle.” Scrolls are also sometimes carved as hikuri or deer.

Symbolic and powerful objects could also be placed inside the body of the instruments, such as parts of the kieri plant or beads as if making the instrument itself into a ritual offering (De la Mora 2005). In the case of the kanari, the presence of five strings lends itself to the symbolic. Specifically, the five strings can be related to the five cardinal points (*puntos cardinales*) of the Wixárika world: Xapawiemetsie (in Lake Chapala), Hauxamanaka (in Durango), Haramaratsie (in the Pacific Ocean), Wirikuta (in San Luis Potosí), and Teakata (in the center near Tuapurie). As Maximino Hernández Carrillo put it, “playing a song with this music, well it already speaks

of all the point of our gods” (2012b).<sup>76</sup> I found no such symbolism for the four strings of the xaweri, however.

Just as consecration and religious symbolism are mostly according to each maker and player, the process of learning to play the xaweri and kanari is equally open to variation. Generally speaking, there is no formal process of learning to play xaweri and kanari that occurs between a master and student, or even a father and son. It was highly common, even expected, that a xawereru would tell me something along the lines of “I learned on my own, nobody taught me.” This was usually just a way of pointing out that there is no formal apprenticeship system. Learning purely through personal initiative, however, is incredibly difficult. José Bautista Carrillo claimed that it took him five years just to learn to tune. In the face of such a difficult learning curve, a would-be xawereru will often seek out external aides along the way.

Beyond personal initiative, becoming a xawereru is often facilitated through genetic or family “inheritance” (*herencia*); visiting sacred sites (*lugers sagrados*), often making pacts with the sites’ associated deity or deities; and dreaming, a class of learning that can also be associated with sacred sites, hikuri visions, or common dreams in the night. In addition to these commonly stated processes that facilitate learning, there are also more mediated learning methods such as listening to commercial recordings or homemade field recordings, and the growing but still rare practice of teaching xaweri in public schools in the Wixárika communities.

Visiting sacred sites and their associated deities was the most frequently mentioned method of seeking assistance to learn the xaweri. As with most petitioning of greater powers, the assistance came from the commitment to the place or deity, not just being present in the place. One might stay awake all night (*velar*) at a sacred site, but one’s commitment to return for five

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<sup>76</sup> “Tocando la canción, una canción con esta música, pues ya habla de todos los puntos de nuestros dioses”

years (or whatever the pact might be) is usually an essential part of the process. It was often pointed out that one must make good on (*cumplir*) any pact or else risk misfortune, sickness, or worse. Miniature figurines of instruments sometimes would be constructed and left at the sacred spot to embody the pact. The potential sacred sites to be visited varied somewhat depending on the community or region. For example, in the community of San Andrés, the locality and “*santo*” San José (*Zakutse*) was usually mentioned as one of the most effective, though in other communities it/he was not usually mentioned.

Certain sites were always mentioned, regardless of the community or *xawereru*. The most common of all was Wirikuta, often mentioned only by reference to its nearby Mestizo town Real de Catorce, or simply “Real.” Daniel Medina de la Rosa attributed some of his skills specifically to “dreams” experienced in Wirikuta, stating that “Tamatsi [Kauyumarie] taught me,” a reference also to the visions experienced with hikuri. Similarly, José Bautista Carrillo recounted that “I went to Real de Catorce... we ate a few peyotes... I began to feel the effects and beautiful songs began to come from everywhere” (2013).<sup>77</sup> The dreams (and the beings in them) also might give further instruction on other sites to visit or actions to take for enhancing one’s skills. Xuturitemai Rafael Carrillo Pizano recounted that his first visit to Wirikuta was when he snuck into a group making the pilgrimage on foot in the late 1960s. In his dreams (*sueños, visiones*) there, beings told him to visit additional sacred sites to complete his learning process.

Other sites frequently petitioned for *xaweri* talent are those associated with the plant *kieri* (Sp. *toloache, palo loco, palo viento*; L. *datura*) and its deity equivalent known as *Kieri Tewiyari*

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<sup>77</sup> “Me fui a Real de Catorce... comimos peyotes... unas cuantas. Así me empeyotó y ahí salieron todas bonitas canciones de todos partes.”



(Kieri Person) and *Teiwari Yuawi* (Blue Outsider/Foreigner).<sup>78</sup> The name *Teiwari Yuawi* reveals that the plant/deity can be thought of as a counterpart to hikuri who is also known as *Maxa Yuawi* (Blue Deer). Whereas hikuri is known as a caring, forgiving “teacher” (*maestro*), kieri is known as an exceptionally strict, dangerous non-indigenous person.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, kieri is seen as a potent ally to become a successful xawereru, and can be used alone or in addition to hikuri.<sup>80</sup>

It was also common to visit sites with “*Cristos*” (Christs). Sometimes this meant physical Christ figures that had been adopted into the Wixárika world and physically kept in a Wixárika locality. These “Christs,” however, were not usually perceived as being Jesus Christ, but often had a Saint’s name (e.g., San José, Santo Domingo) and sometimes their own history about becoming Wixárika (explored in a later chapter). Still, others were Christs of the Mexican variety, outside the official Wixárika communities. Common ones to visit for musical prowess or simple genuflection included the *Nazareno* of Huaynamota, Nayarit and *Señor de Los Rayos* of Temastián, Jalisco. José Bautista Carrillo, a xawereru and mara‘akame, pointed out that one could go as far as Mexico City (“*hasta D.F.*”) to visit the “*Cristos*.” The emphasis on Christ may be the result of his oftentimes being connected to the xaweri itself in Wixárika histories, as documented by Zingg (1938, 2004).

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<sup>78</sup> The most common site, at least in the northern Wixárika communities, is near Bernalejo, Durango. Unlike hikuri, which grows wild only in Wirikuta, outside of the Wixárika political territory, kieri grows wild throughout the Wixárika territory and surrounding regions.

<sup>79</sup> Part of the reason for thinking of the plant/deity as strict is that the kieri plant is highly poisonous if used improperly. Wild plants are usually avoided and children are cautioned not to touch it or even come near it. Not to follow through (*cumplir*) on a pact with Kieri is to expose oneself and one’s family to serious illness, insanity, or death.

<sup>80</sup> Unlike hikuri, which is eaten, kieri does not seem to be ingested for reasons of learning xaweri. It seems there are few people, even amongst mara‘akate, who know how to prepare kieri for medicinal or hallucinogenic purposes. Whereas anyone—even children—can eat copious amounts of hikuri and have no long term ill effects, kieri’s extreme toxicity and room for error (i.e., its “strictness”) lead even its devotees to avoid partaking of the plant itself.



Figure 21. Members of Grupo Alucinantes de la Sierra visit Señor de los Rayos in Temastlán, Jalisco.

It bears mentioning that there are additional medicinal approaches to learning xaweri beyond hikuri. For example, José Bautista Carrillo mentioned that one could hunt a songbird and eat its heart as a way of attaining its melodic genius.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, I was once told that there was a type of lizard referred to as *kanari* that could also be applied to the hands to make them more musically agile.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> The songbird did not necessarily have to be one of those associated with the origin stories of the xaweri and kanari. It was not clarified whether one was to eat the heart of the songbird raw or cooked.

<sup>82</sup> The fact that the lizard is called *kanari* (like the Wixárika guitar) is curious but also slightly suspicious. No details were given about how the lizard would be prepared (or used while alive?) for the sake of musical dexterity.

Over the past two decades, with the advent of widespread media and recording technology (e.g., cassette tapes, compact discs, MP3 players, and cellular phones), it has become increasingly common for Wixaritari to augment their xaweri studies with homemade or commercial recordings. Ernesto Hernández de la Cruz, a teacher and former *comisariado* in the community of San Andrés, learned in such a way, applying similar methods that he used to learn popular music as a violinist in his youth. He mentioned this approach, revealing that some people saw it as an unusual or even less valuable way of learning:

Well, I learned to play traditional music... to share it with the people in fiesta. I learned on my own, listening. Listening, or I'd buy a cassette, or I'd buy a CD. [NW: Commercial recordings?] Yeah, they were commercial by that time, on cassette and later on CD. So... I learned to play, to imitate, that is. To imitate... and I don't get down on myself. There are a lot of people that tell you, 'no, but you have to play songs from Wirikuta'... of your own composition, right? But I listen to someone and I play it, you know? (Hernández de la Cruz 2013)

Despite some naysayers, elders approved of his playing and were proud of him for doing so since he was a teacher, or perhaps precisely because he was a teacher. The two paths (teacher and xawereru) seemed incongruous to some, and his learning methods unorthodox. And yet, he chose to do it for participatory purposes, to be Wixárika and support the community and its rituals. Unlike in previous eras, though, something done for participatory purposes can be learned from presentational and even commodity forms of the practice itself (in this case from commercial recordings of xaweri).

Before the advent of commercial xaweri recordings, the thought of making money as a xawereru was not much of a consideration. Though music as labor and commodity will be covered in another chapter, it bears noting that the primary role of a xawereru is to serve the community by accompanying ritual. The role usually goes without remuneration, though a xawereru might receive some “in-kind” gifts for his services and likewise benefit from the communal feeding that is a part of all rituals. At the tukipa level, the role of the xawereru is

codified as a specific type of five-year *cargo* (ritual charge or role) since xaweri is necessary for most rituals. These cargos, though they can serve as authentication of one's Wixárika identity and community participation, are not thought of as income-generating posts. To the contrary, they are oftentimes avoided at great lengths because the commitment entails significant expenditure.

Xaweri is played in various contexts, in ritual or for simple entertainment. Lumholtz mentioned that Christian "feasts" were called "feasts of the violin... because the instrument furnishes the music to the dancing" (1902, 2:187).<sup>83</sup> The instrument therefore seems to have become increasingly part of the Neixas and hikuri pilgrimage over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Avoiding the Christian-Pagan dichotomy altogether, Daniel Medina de la Rosa commented that he saw three types of occasions when xaweri might be played: (1) in playing for the gods (*canciones de dios*), (2) in peregrination, (2) and non-ceremonial "events" (*eventos*) for entertainment. All of these types of playing, though, can happen in the course of one weekend-long ceremony. For example, the xaweri can be played in a xiriki "for the gods," and during the same ceremony lead participants in ritualized peripatetic action around the *takwá* (circular space or patio in front of a xiriki or tuki). It then might be played during the final morning after the ceremony has finished as a sort of "coming down" or relaxing entertainment, either by the same musicians or "amateur" ones.

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<sup>83</sup> Lumholtz indicated that the Christian "feasts" are "considered proper occasions for licentiousness, and are far more disorderly than the pagan feasts" (1902, 2:187). Though the idea of seeing Christianity as "licentious" is intriguing, it did not hold true in my observations. Semana Santa is without a doubt the most restrictive of Wixárika ceremonies, calling for adherence to taboos against technology merrymaking. Perpetrators are subject to "arrest" by *judios* (Jews, shirtless young men covered in soot and brandishing wooden swords) leading to fines or even brief imprisonment. It is perhaps the only somber or even sanctimonious Wixárika ceremony.

The category of peregrination is one of the most extensive roles of the xaweri and kanari.<sup>84</sup> In addition to leading a procession of participants around the takwá during a ritual at the same time the mara‘akame is singing, xaweri and kanari usually accompany the entire pilgrimage to Wirikuta and the ritual processions of those *hikuritamete* (hikuri pilgrims) back in their tukipa.<sup>85</sup> One such case is illustrated in my field notes during Hikuri Neixa in Tuapurie on May 25, 2013:

11:30am. *Cuerno* [bull horn trumpets] to signal [as the hikuritamete leave the takwá in a single file]. Walking with xaweri to *tumbar leña* [ritually cut firewood]. 20 peregrinos [pilgrims]. 32 [total people] present. 3 extra jerks [iPhone autocorrect of *extranjeros* (foreigners)].<sup>86</sup> Had to avoid massive burning hillside to arrive. Slash and burn agriculture. Xaweri a few more times. Then someone played a recording of it that they recorded with cell [phone]. Sometimes hard to tell difference between bells on goats [on nearby hillsides] and sound of xaweri [being tuned].

Songs that are “for the gods” can be played, for example, in a xiriki that houses them and the ancestors (see Video 08). These are usually songs for dancing, outlining a *sesquialtera* rhythm covered more in depth below. Songs “for the gods” could also refer obliquely to the melodies used to accompany the sacrifice of bulls at sunrise. As Maximino Hernández Carrillo put it, the use of music at such moments “is so that our gods receive their alimentation with much pleasure, or so that it pleases them, or so that it makes them happy” (2012b). The moment of bull sacrifice is another in which the playing of the xaweri and chanting of the mara‘akame happen at the same time, their sounds overlapping in what would appear to be a *guerra de sonidos* but is perceived as entirely non-antagonistic and not apparently experienced as cacophony.

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<sup>84</sup> Peregrination with violin accompaniment is common throughout Mexico and other parts of the Americas (see Pacheco 2014 for another indigenous Mexican example).

<sup>85</sup> Xaweri is more likely to accompany *hikuritamete* (hikuri pilgrims) associated with a tukipa rather than those who go to Wirikuta as part of a family or personal obligation.

<sup>86</sup> In addition to myself, there were two young visitors from Spain who had been serving as teachers in Nueva Colonia that year. The iPhone I was taking field notes on autocorrected “extranjeros” to “extra jerks,” which is probably the way we felt, or at least the way I felt about our sheepish presence there.

Though a xawereru can compose a song entirely of his own volition, the main source of repertoire is unquestionably Wirikuta. More specifically, songs come from dreams/visions experienced in Wirikuta, sometimes as a means of receiving a song from the deities themselves. The songs taught in dreams can be ephemeral and one must have a certain degree of talent and dedication in order to “capture” or “record” them:

...Father Sun, and then Mother Earth, and Peyote... they give you songs... Grandfather Fire... they are going to sing to you, they are going to give it to you in the dream. If you record [it] well [then good], or if not, it's taken in the wind... a dream doesn't ever come back. (Medina de la Rosa 2013)<sup>87</sup>

Once received in a dream, though, the song still might take up to a year or two to be learned or remembered completely.

The songs also seem to have a certain “shelf life” and a repertoire should ideally be rejuvenated occasionally in Wirikuta or through other dreaming:

These songs are composed in the year 2005, 2004, something like that. They were born in Wirikuta... in that pilgrimage, in that fiesta they were played and now no longer... we haven't been there lately... it's been about two, three, four years or more, well we're playing the same ones. When one goes [to Wirikuta] again the songs are renewed, others are born for the fiesta and, well, now what we're playing are only from that time. (Hernández de la Cruz 2012b)<sup>88</sup>

The repertoire that comes specifically from Wirikuta or deals with hikuri in its lyrical content is called, according to Hernández de la Cruz, *tuutú xaweri* (flower xaweri), an allusion to hikuri, sometimes called a flower.<sup>89</sup> As the statement above notes, the songs are susceptible to losing their vitality or freshness over time and ideally should be replaced with new songs coming from

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<sup>87</sup> “...el Sol Padre, y luego la Tierra Madre, y el Peyote... te dan canciones... Abuelo Fuego... el Peyote... te van a cantar, te van a dar en el sueño. Si usted graba, bien, o si no, se lo lleva en el viento... un sueño ni, ya jamás ni vuelve.”

<sup>88</sup> “Estas canciones son compuesto en el año 2005, 2004, algo así. Nacieron estas canciones en Wirikuta... en esa peregrinación, en esa fiesta se tocaba y ahora pues que no...que ya no vamos pa' allá [a Wirikuta] ya tiene como dos, tres, cuatro años o más, pues tocamos los mismos. Ya cuando uno va de nuevo [a Wirikuta] pues renueva otras canciones, ya nacen otras canciones para esa fiesta y pues ahora lo que estamos tocando pues son de aquel tiempo nada más.”

<sup>89</sup> It could also be interpreted as “flower music,” as in the *xochitl sones* of the Nahua people (Pacheco 2014).

the dreams experienced in Wirikuta. Lumholtz also mentioned this sort of power depreciation in regards to physical objects, finding it much easier to purchase items for his collection if they were more than five years old and thus deemed to have lost their ritual or communicative value. In the case of Wixárika “traditional music,” it means that the idea of tradition is not entirely anchored to songs known since time immemorial, but to a musical process of regeneration and even newness.

Despite the predominantly hikuri-oriented repertoire of xaweri, there is a subgenre of sorts that might best be described as bawdy songs. Or, as put by some interviewees who do not usually play such songs, “erotic music” (*música erótica*) or even “porn music” (*música porno*). Perhaps the most well known composer and singer of such songs is the elderly xawereru and mara‘akame Rafael Carrillo Pizano from the community of San Andrés. The bawdy repertoire often consists of thinly veiled double entendre. On Carrillo Pizano’s government-funded CD entitled *Tsamainuri* (2010), the bawdiness shows through in titles translated as “Creo es Traviesa Pues Agarró mi Chile” (“I Think She’s Mischievous, Well She Grabbed My Chile Pepper”). Lyrics to the songs are not just “pornographic,” but might include subtle jabs at hypocrisy and possibly at Christian converts as in the song “Jesusi Nu‘aya” (“Daughter of Jesus”) by Carrillo Pizano, parts of which translate as:

*Daughter of Jesus, daughter of Jesus  
I gave you a wax candle  
Oh, my love, what are you doing?  
I gave you a loom  
'My love' you said to me  
You'll be such a liar  
Daughter of Jesus  
I've bought a baby bottle  
Because you know how to suck  
Like a little piglet  
I'm going to make you suckle  
I'm carrying around a baby bottle here*

(original translation to Spanish by Ramírez de la Cruz [2005:233–236])<sup>90</sup>

Carrillo Pizano’s CD carries the subtitle *Traditional Love Songs from Tateikie*, stretching even further any common definitions of the word *traditional*.

Despite the emphasis on newness and the potential for laughable lewdness in xaweri repertoire, there is rarely any intentional “hybridizing” or musical crossovers. There is no movement, for example, to put xaweri music on Western violin, nor do regional Huichol groups play xaweri songs on violin. Though there are exceptions, they are extremely rare and have not caught on in any broad way. Thus, xaweri, even at its extremes, stays anchored to a participatory Wixárika identity, glossed as “traditional,” but with an extremely broad definition of the term.

### *Tepu*

The *tepu* drum is often considered, by outside scholars and Wixaritari themselves, to be the oldest Wixárika musical instrument, and “the most sacred” (Zingg 1938:649).

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<sup>90</sup> It could be argued that saying “daughter of Jesus” does not necessarily imply Jesus Christ. In the case of songs whose primary joy comes from double entendre, however, it is likely that any reference to Jesus could be understood as such.





Figure 22. Tepu being performed during Tatei Neixa ceremony in Huilotita, Jalisco (2012–10–14).

Because of the shape of its trunk, particularly the triangularly notched legs and the hole on its side, there is often a rushed conclusion that it came to the Wixaritari “from the Aztecs.”

Henrietta Yurchenco simply referred to the drum using the Nahuatl/Aztec word *huehuetl*, furthering a popular but problematic view that the Wixaritari are the extant “country cousins” of the Mexicas (Aztecs).

The Mexica-origin view of the tepu is problematic, first, because the name for the drum in the Wixárika language is not related to the Nahuatl word *huehuetl* but more likely to a general

Uto-Aztecan word associated with drumming—*pon*, meaning to play a drum (Stubbs 2011). Another problem is that the closest word to *tepu* in Nahuatl—*teponatzli*—refers not to a membranophone but to a tongued idiophone (“log drum”) played with sticks rather than the hands. Furthermore, artifacts of the pre-Colombian peoples of Nayarit reveal that drums like the *tepu* existed in the region at least 700 years before the Mexica established their distant imperial headquarters in Tenochtitlan.



Figure 23. A 6.5-inch tall figure from Nayarit, dated 200BC–500AD, showing a drum that resembles the *tepu*. Courtesy Los Angeles Country Museum of Art (LACMA), [www.lacma.org](http://www.lacma.org), (M.86.296.26).

Nevertheless, the *tepu* *does* seem to be unique to the Wixaritari today, lending some credence to the view that they have been more successful than many indigenous groups in preserving some pre-Colombian practices. The Wixaritari also have their own ideas about where the *tepu* came from, and those ideas have nothing to do with the Mexica, nor do they hint about outside origins as in the case of the *xaweri*.

The earliest ethnographic documentation about the origins of the *tepu* comes, again, from Lumholtz:

The myth says that in the early days the drum used to make a noise of itself in the forest; that it was a walnut-tree, and the chief men of the temple did not know what to make of it till [sic] Grandfather Fire [Tatewarí] taught them how to use it in the temple. (Lumholtz 1900:181)

The connection to Tatewarí (i.e., fire) is thought provoking because the head of the tepu is made taut by holding a burning stick of the resinous and highly flammable *ocote* pine under it (lit from the main fire during a ritual). During such moments, the smoke collects inside the drum and puffs out of a small hole on the side of the drum.<sup>91</sup> In the sense of this relationship to tuning and visualized sound, the tepu needs fire before it can speak.

Salvador Sánchez González stated that the first drum came from a cave near Teakata (the birthplace of Tatewarí) called Tsixaitia. Others do not point to an origin in a cave since it was Kauyumarie who “chose” the log for the first drum, implying a forest origin:

The Huichol drum has been sacred since its inception in the first times because the mythology teaches that its sound simulates thunder. In another place the drum is specifically said to be sacred (“delicate”), and it is revealed that its sound communicates with the gods. This communication is assured both in the mythology and in actual Huichol practice by standing the drum on a god-disc which, of course, represents the god itself. *Kauymáli* was able to choose the log for the first drum because a whirl-wind had left nearby the god-disc on which to stand the drum when it was finished. The first drum had a head of deer-skin... the deer for the skin for this drum-head was obtained in a special sacred deer-hunt of the usual Huichol sort. (Zingg 1938:650–651)

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<sup>91</sup> Lumholtz called the hole on the side of the drum *mára ráva* (Catalogue of Ceremonial Objects Obtained by Dr. Lumholtz, 1898” [item 65/1290], American Museum of Natural History).

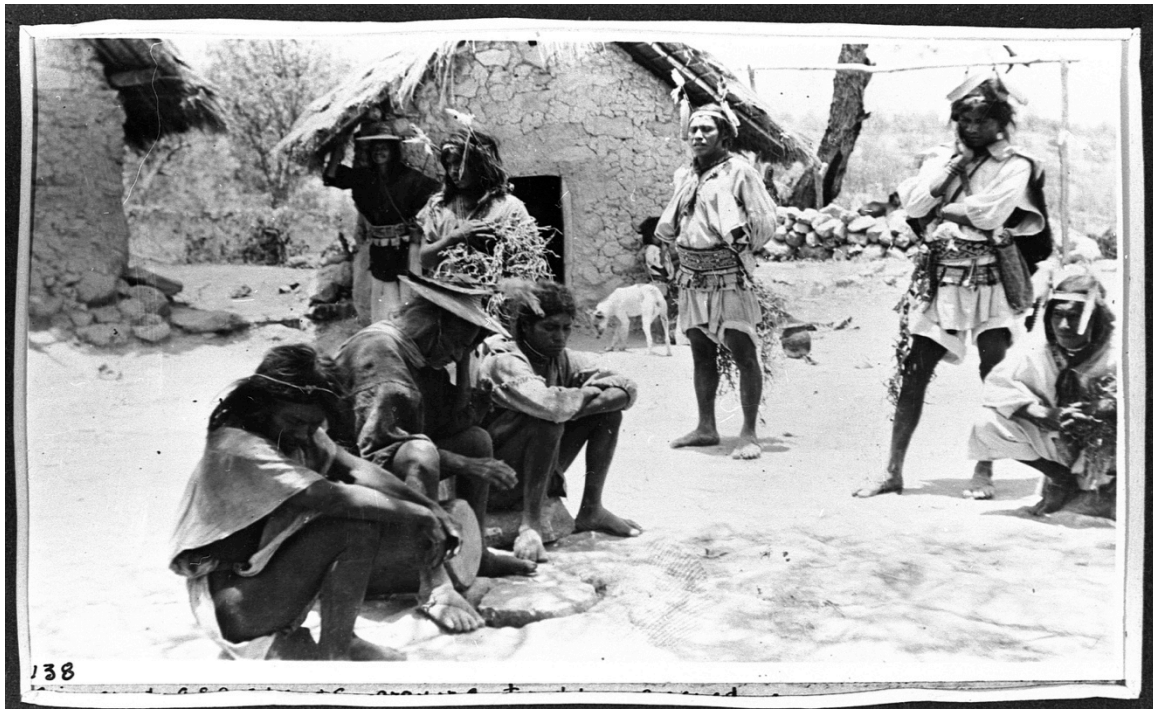


Figure 24. Tepu being played horizontally above a “god-disc” (*tepari*). Photograph by Robert Zingg (Z-H13-26---326). Courtesy Amerind Foundation.

Today, a “special sacred” deer hunt to obtain the skin for the drumhead might be ideal, but in practice any deer hide can be used.<sup>92</sup> In general, though, the tepu and its construction are still considered to be “*cosas delicadas*” (delicate/sacred things).

The tepu is usually made of oak (*encino* or *roble*) and always with a deerskin head. Like the “myth” of the “early days” mentioned by Lumholtz, the best drums are not sought but call out to their future players. The drum ideally finds you, not the other way around. Salvador Sánchez González described just such an instance that occurred within the past few years:

One time, there was a meeting in Cerritos and I was coming to my ranch, leaving the meeting... there were some *encinos*. I heard that... well I was listening and I turned around, I didn't know where or how. And I said “well I don't know... where is the fiesta?” Well, I started to listen closer and closer, until I found an *encino* that was getting wind from the top [*que le dio viento pa' arriba*; whirlwind?].... “ah, this is the *encino* that's meant for this” [i.e., to be a tepu]. So later we cut it down and now it's working in Tsikatia [his rancho]. (Sánchez González 2014)<sup>93</sup>

<sup>92</sup> In the case of one tepu that had been recently re-headed prior to a Tatei Neixa ceremony, one of the rancho's family members purchased the deer hide from a Mestizo.

<sup>93</sup> “Una vez, hubo una junta en Cerritos y yo venía a mi rancho, saliendo de la junta... había unos *encinos*. Yo oía que... pues escuchaba y me volteaba, no sabía donde ni como. Y yo dije ‘pues sabe... pero ¿dónde

The drum finding its player also indicates that the tepu would not need any further consecration.

Finding such a drum, according to others, is more likely after a period of fasting and prayer.

Today, though, drums are also commonly made from other types of wood and Sánchez González once remarked that a drum calling to you from the forest is the old way. Today, he said with a chuckle, one can use “a chainsaw and any old log.” He elaborated:

There are all sorts [of wood for the tepu]. There’s walnut, oak (*encino*). Or if not, there’s pinewood. Or if not, there’s oak (*roble*). [But] if it’s indicated [to be a drum], something very pretty comes out of it [*sale una cosa muy bonita*]. If it’s just because you came to it, or it seemed pretty to you, you can make it. But later, the cantador [*mará’akame*] puts that which is its sound so that it will work... Any old log can work but if it’s indicated for that [purpose] you don’t have to put anything in it. (Sánchez González)<sup>94</sup>

Today, unconsecrated drums of various woods can also be seen in museums and tourist shops, sometimes with an elaborate face carved into the side or with its body covered with a yarn painting or beadwork.

Consecrated drums for use in ritual, however, do not indicate a somber atmosphere or execution, and drumming in ritual is a chance for men, usually young men, to drink *nawá* (fermented corn drink). Zingg, with his penchant for hyperbole, described the effect of the drumming thus:

Despite the fact that the youths had been dancing all afternoon... one of the boys found a drum... the effect of beating of this old drum on the younger men was remarkable. The difference in behavior before and after is a revelation of the function of the drum in Huichol psychology... With its beat they could no longer restrain their steps to the somber pace around the dancers... Before the magic of the drum-beat, the fatigue of the day’s dance was forgotten... It was a mad scene of twenty youths dancing, stomping their sandals and kicking up all the dust possible. Some took hand and danced vigorously by pairs. Another grasped a half-grown boy head downward and danced with him thus. It was the same scene of wild confusion which I have seen often enough before, when the native beer was flowing plentifully... But this equally mad and confused

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será fiesta?’ No, pues empecé escuchar mas cerquitas, mas cerquitas, hasta que hallé un encino que le dio viento pa’ arriba... ‘ah, este es el encino que esta indicado para eso.’ Ya después lo tumbamos y esta jalando ahora... en Tsikat+a.”

<sup>94</sup> “... si está indicado para eso, sale una cosa muy bonita. Si no más porque se te vino o se te hizo bonito, tu lo puedes hacer. Pero después, el mismo cantador pone lo que es su sonido para que sí jala... Cualquier palo puede servir pero si está indicado para eso no se necesita ya ponerle nada.”

scene was the result of only the sound of the drum, without any liquor whatsoever. (Zingg 1938:82-3 fn12)

The connection of young men, drumming, and drinking is something that can be observed in the Tatei Neixa ceremony of many Wixárika ranchos. Though the mara‘akame would always begin the drumming in a ceremony, other men in attendance would take over for the remainder of the day or night. Usually, not being percussionists, the man doing the drumming would be assumed to tire after awhile and another man would come up behind him to take over, saying something to the affect of “let me help you out” as he sat down at the drum. The recently-relieved drummer might be offered a cup of nawá and he might stand around the drum or near the fire with other men, alternating occasionally as the drummer of the minute. Thus, some men would get superbly drunk after awhile of drumming and might have to be distracted or pulled away from the post if they became overly enthusiastic or could not maintain a steady or sufficiently audible beat.

Unlike xaweri, the tepu does not have a repertoire per se. It also does not seem to be conceived of as a human-like actor, nor are its rhythms a surrogate for language (as in some African and African diasporic drumming). Instead, its sound carries the message or facilitates communication. The rhythmic approach does not seem to vary from one community to another and is, within certain limits, highly personal in its interpretation. The most common approach was to strike with the dominant hand (represented here with an “X”) with a binary division of the beat at around 180bpm:

| | : XoXoXoXo : | | (“X” is sounded, “o” is not)

It was also common to switch to an accented variation of the above, eventually coming back to an unaccented stroke. The accent here is represented in bold:

| | : **X**oXo**X**o**X**. : | |

Some drummers would use accenting to outline or emphasize the chanting of the mara'akame. In both of the approaches above, the player would sometimes integrate his non-dominant hand for a “ghosted” stroke with varying degrees of audibility:

| | : SwSwSwSw : | |<sup>95</sup>

A less common approach treated the division of the beat in a ternary manner, pushing two strokes onto the first two of the three partials:

| | : XXoXXo : | |

In all locations where I observed tepu drumming, players would not attempt to maintain the exact beat or tempo during the transition to a new drummer.<sup>96</sup> Instead, the new drummer would usually intentionally rupture the tempo of the previous drummer, slowing down substantially with long, large blasts as he took over, and then slowly increase his tempo to match the mara'akame and his respondents.

### *Kaitsa*

The *kaitsa* is a spherical rattle pierced with a straight handle, similar to those played by indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. Amongst the Wixaritari, the *kaitsa* is played primarily during Tatei Neixa, and is the only Wixárika instrument played primarily by women.<sup>97</sup> Women and their children play the *kaitsa* during Tatei Neixa, accompanying the drum. Its sound “goes with the sound of the drum,” though it only accompanies the drum during the day portion of the ceremony and is not reportedly used in Namawita Neixa, the only other time the drum is

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<sup>95</sup> S = “strong” or dominant hand; w = “weak” or non-dominant.

<sup>96</sup> I observed Tatei Neixa at the xiriki level in Tuxpan and Santa Catarina.

<sup>97</sup> Mata Torres mentions that the *kaitsa* is also used by the eight “uainarori” [*wainarori*, dancers] of Holy Week and Cambio de Varas (1972b:85). I have also heard of its use during Cambio de Varas in the community of San Andrés.

played. Hence, its main association, beyond its sonic fit with the drum, is with women and children.<sup>98</sup>



Figure 25. Kaitsa made by Siliama Etsima near Tsikatia (community of Tuxpan), ranging from 8 to 11 inches in length.<sup>99</sup>  
Photo by Elliot Warden.

Unlike the tepu, the kaitsa has no apparent ritual consecration. Nor does it have well known origin stories like the xaweri and tepu.<sup>100</sup> When asked about its purpose in ritual, people would say “it’s just *costumbre*.” Like the xaweri and the drum, anyone could theoretically make one, but in practice its construction tends to be specialized. While mothers participating in Tatei Neixa make the *tsikiri* (“god’s eye”) and often the outfits for their children, they usually purchase the kaitsa from someone else. Like its execution in ritual, its construction is primarily the domain

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<sup>98</sup> The two elder men who flank the row of women and children assembled around the drum in Tatei Neixa also play the kaitsa along with the group. The only other time I observed a man playing kaitsa is during the nighttime dancing of Tatei Neixa in which the man leading the dancing carried one along with his bouquet of maize.

<sup>99</sup> The photo is not reversed. The “R” on the small kaitsa was written backwards.

<sup>100</sup> The lack of known symbolism might account for the use of mass-produced plastic rattles in some locations.



of women, and I was able to observe the process near the ranchos of Tsikatia and Tsakuxapa (community of Tuxpan), with a woman known for making kaitsa, Siliama Etsima.<sup>101</sup>

Siliama stated that it usually takes two days to make a kaitsa, but many could be made at once.<sup>102</sup> The main material, and the only one that could not be substituted with others, was the gourd-fruit body itself which emerges from the bark and branches of a tree known eponymously in Wixárika as kaitsa, or in Spanish as *cuastecomate* or *jícara* (*L. crescentia alata*). Though the tree can be found in the sierra, its fruit is often in short supply, necessitating reliance on Mestizo markets in places like Colotlán and Tequila, Jalisco.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Her legal mestizo name is Maria Rosa Martínez Sánchez.

<sup>102</sup> If making only one, it is possible to complete a kaitsa in one day.

<sup>103</sup> The tree seems to do better in tropical locales, which explains why I only saw it in the warmer, lower elevations in the Wixárika territory around Tuxpan de Bolaños. Even there, though, it was not common.



Figure 26. A future kaitisa begins to grow from the tree of the same name.

The handle of the kaitisa is often made of *itsa* (brasilwood, the same used for the staffs of community authorities and xaweri bows), though any wood would work. A kaitisa collected by Lumholtz shows a handle made of an *'iri* (arrow, in this case a diminutive one used in offerings). The handle pierces through the gourd with approximately an inch left at the top. To keep it from coming loose, the gourd is secured to the handle on both sides with beeswax and then yarn. At the top, an excess of yarn is usually left as a tuft of varying lengths.<sup>104</sup> The tuft of yarn is an

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<sup>104</sup> In Tuxpan today, the tendency is to use long, flowing tufts of yarn at the top. In Santa Catarina, the tufts are usually shorter, spikier, or left off entirely.

additional, soundless, aspect that is visually reminiscent of many gourd rattles throughout the Americas.<sup>105</sup>



Figure 27. Kaitsa with flower (*tuutú*) design for sound holes and “prayer arrow” (*‘iri*) for the handle. Lumholtz Collection (65/3066), American Museum of Natural History.

The fillings for the dried and hollowed gourd-fruit preferred by Siliama were small pebbles collected around a hill of red ants. To these could also be added a few small beads, the same as would be used in Wixárika artesanías. The smallness of the gourd’s contents gave the kaitsa high

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<sup>105</sup> Codices showing Mexica (Aztec) musical instruments, and the Bonampak murals depicting Mayan instruments, both include similar tufted rattles, though the pattern is also found much farther north and south.

pitched, piercing timbre, perhaps following an aesthetic that hears high pitch as more sacred (as described later).

Each child has his or her own *kaitsa*, usually using the same one for the entire five years they participate in *Tatei Neixa*. Following the five years, the *kaitsa* have little sentimental value, and no real use value for the children or their mother. They tend to collect dust in the home or can be given or sold to another family, though there seems to be a preference for new *kaitsa* no matter how solid a used one might still be.<sup>106</sup>

### *‘Awá*

The *‘awá* (pl. *‘awate*) is usually carved from the horn of a bull. It is used exclusively by the *hikuritamete* (*hikuri* pilgrims) of a *tukipa* and worn around their bodies, always at the ready. One *Wixárika* friend stated that the *‘awate* announce “the arrival” of the *hikuritamete*, but they are also sounded as they set off for any place during ritual. The horn is trumpeted at the beginning of peripatetic ritual actions such as going to collect firewood. *‘Awate* are also usually sounded before and after the sacrifice of any bull during ritual in which the *hikuritamete* are present as a group. Other than signaling these movements and the beginning and end of particular rituals within ceremonies, the horn can also be used to raise the spirits of the *hikuritamete* while dancing or to show their satisfaction with the energy of the dancing.

The size of the *‘awate* varies considerably, and they are not tuned in any way. Thus, their simultaneous sounding can be an intense sonic experience as the resultant cluster of pitches

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<sup>106</sup> *Siliama* made one *kaitsa* with me (the larger one in the photo above) and sold me another two (the two smaller ones). I told her the large one we made would probably be too large for my children to play in *Tatei Neixa*. Hence, she sold me the other two that her children had used. I was concerned they would have sentimental value for her but she convincingly denied it. In fact, she was more concerned that I might not want these two “because they [were] old.” This is another instance of tradition being about newness.

inevitably includes many “dissonant” intervals, sometimes only microtones apart.<sup>107</sup> In context, the sound can be rapturous, and is apparently experienced as such by the hikuritamate.



**Figure 28.** ‘Awá (bull horn). Lumholtz Collection (65/4490), American Museum of Natural History.

There is also a sort of children’s version of the ‘awá made out of a hollow, celery-like plant that grows in wet ravines in the sierra. When cut and played, the sound is almost precisely that of the adult version of the horn that it imitates (Video 09).

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<sup>107</sup> I use “dissonant” for lack of a better, less judgmental term. The word implies a negative or even disdainful evaluation of the experience, but no such judgment is intended.



Figure 29. After a long day of planting on the hillside with his family, Etsiekame (Wilfrido) amuses all present by playing a plant-based imitation of the ‘awá. (He is playing one and holding another in his left hand.)

### *Kíxa*

Like the ‘awá, the kíxa is a type of horn but made of a conch shell, reminiscent of those of the Mexica and myriad cultures worldwide. The kíxa is specifically associated with the person in charge of caring for the deity *Tamatsi ‘Eaka Teiwari* (Our Foreign Elder Brother Wind, also written *‘Eeka* and *‘Eka*). It seems to be primarily present in the ceremonial centers in the community of Santa Catarina, such as Keuruwitia, and perhaps Tateikie (De la Mora 2011:67, Neurath 2002:226). It does not seem to be used in xiriki rituals.

*Tampuxi or Tamborcito*

There is a type of small drum played in two Wixárika communities that has received little or no ethnographic attention. This drum is quite distinct from the tepu and was referred to in Spanish simply as a *tambor* (drum) or *tamborcito* (little drum), or given a Wixárika pronunciation as *tampuxi*. I observed the drum during Cambio de Varas in Tuapurie where it was used to lead the procession of incoming and outgoing authorities around town, especially between the xiriki on the northeast side of town, southwards to the *casa real*, and between there and the church. The drum was the first in line, even in front of the xaweri that usually leads any procession. A local *kawiteru* (elder community leader) told me that the drum was also used in the change of authorities in Pochotita and Keuruwitia (Las Latas), both in the same community, as well as to lead processions during Semana Santa in Tuapurie.<sup>108</sup> Its use in Semana Santa is also known in Wautia, but reportedly not used for Cambio de Varas there.

The only purpose of the drum, according to the same *kawiteru*, is to announce the procession itself, calling to those nearby who might need to be present, that they might approach the area of activity. Similar drums are seen in other parts of Mexico, some of them nearby in places such as in Huaynamota, a mixed town of Mestizos, Wixaritari, and Nayeri. In Tuapurie, it was worn with a strap around the player's neck and carried with the length of the drum parallel to the ground or at a slight angle. It was double headed but struck only on one side with two mallets marking a *sesquialtera* rhythm with the right hand slightly accented and the left hand “ghosted” or actually sounded, depending on the player (who is the “*tupil del capitán*” [deputy of the captain]):

**RRLRRLRLRL**

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<sup>108</sup> I was also told the drum is used when women sweep the takwá (dance patio) of the tukipa in Tuapurie.

I did not have explicit permission to photograph that day, but a similar drum can be seen in a video taken during Semana Santa festivities in Huaynamota (Video 10). In the video, a group of Nayeri (Cora) musicians also perform on flute. The flute, as mentioned below, is no longer played by the Wixaritari but the flute and tampuxi might have once been a specialized ensemble in places like Tuapurie, as they still are in some indigenous communities in Mexico.

### *Sympathetic rattles*

There are two types of sonic implements that might not be thought of as musical instruments by the Wixaritari per se, but still clearly have some sort of acoustic role in ritual. These are bells and rattlesnake tails that sometimes form part of a *muwieri* (“shaman’s plume/wand”), and rattles attached to the ankles of dancers in Hikuri Neixa.<sup>109</sup> According to Mata Torres (1972b), bells are used on a *muwieri* when it is for Tatewarí, and the sound is thus iconic of the crackling fire (61).

### **Wixárika Musical Instruments in Disuse**

There were at least three Wixárika musical instruments or acoustic implements that fell into disuse during the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the flute, notched deer scapulae, and the musical bow.

### *Pirikixa or ipa, the Wixárika flute*

The Wixárika flute was documented by Lumholtz, who also recorded on wax cylinder the only evidence of the sound and execution of the instrument (Audio 04). Lumholtz recorded the

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<sup>109</sup> I only observed these ankle rattles when I attended Hikuri Neixa in Tuapurie. It is unclear what sort of distribution they might have throughout the ceremonial centers of the sierra, but they do not seem to be used in Hikuri ceremonies in the xiriki-oriented territory of Tuxpan.



name as “piri kura” in his notes, but is probably better written *pirikixa*.<sup>110</sup> An elder woman in the rancho of Tuutú Maakawe near Pueblo Nuevo, Tikiema Xukurima Rosa Solís Carrillo, recalled that the flute was called *ipa*, and that it disappeared by the time she was around 20 years old, meaning that it was no longer played by the end of the 1950s.<sup>111</sup> On the other hand, Mata Torres wrote about the flute in the early 1970s without naming it, but as though it were still in use (1972b:85).

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<sup>110</sup> The spelling *pirikixa* was reported to me by Haiwinima Eliza Benítez, Wixárika radio host at XEJMN who received that pronunciation during interviews with Wixárika elders. Lumholtz often transliterated the sound of the Wixárika /ɨ/ as /u/, and the <x> as /r/.

<sup>111</sup> Rosa, as she is usually called, was officially 76 at the time she told me this information in 2014. However, when she was born, there was little effort made by the Wixaritari to register newborn children at the civil registry (*registro civil*) with any haste as it had little apparent benefit and involved a multi-day walk. Therefore, her son, Jorge López Solís, thought she might already have been in her eighties.

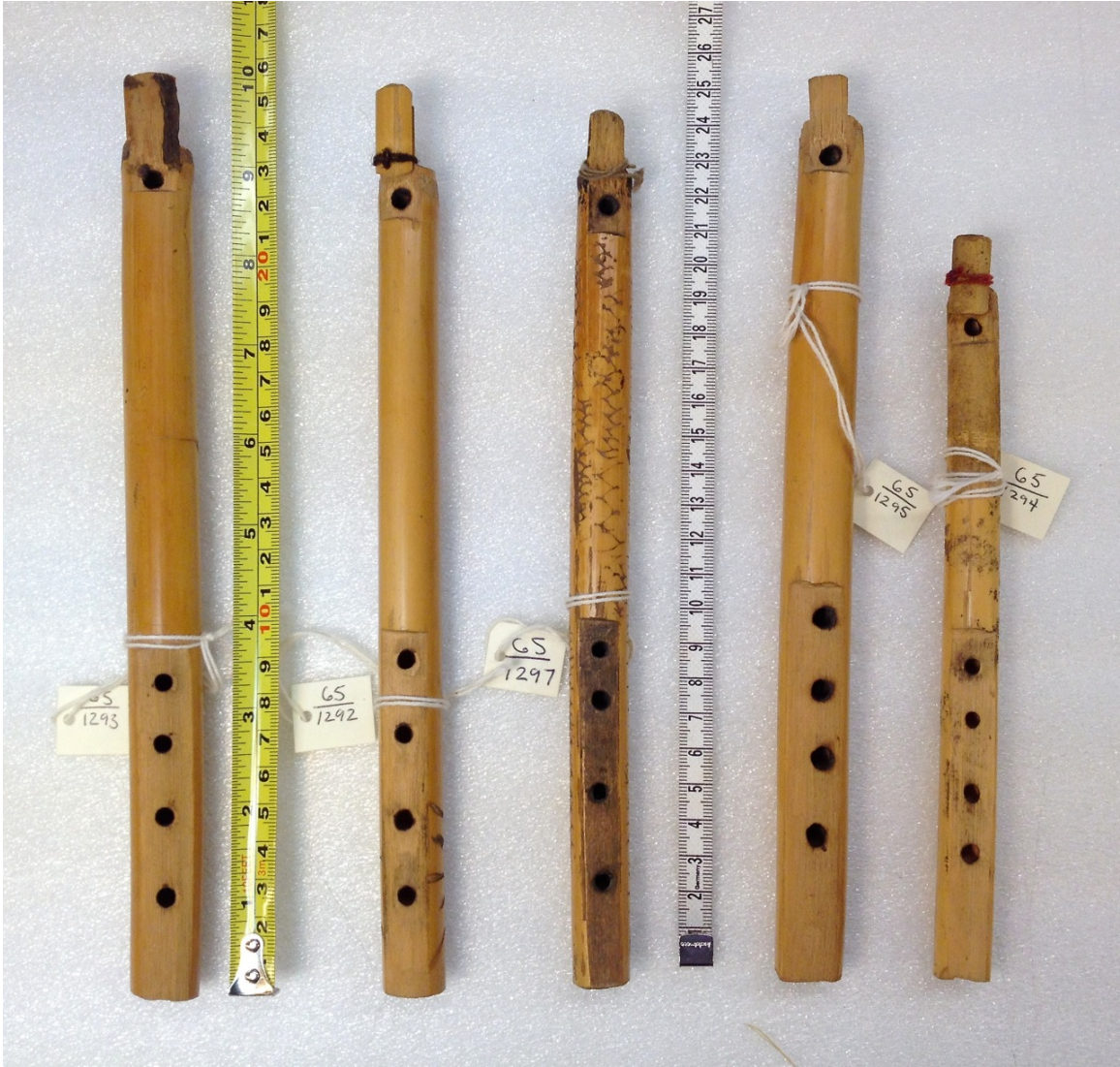


Figure 30. Wixárika flutes of the Lumholtz collection. All five flutes were collected in 1898 in the community of Santa Catarina. The etchings on the middle flute are, according to Lumholtz, intended to resemble the rattle of a rattlesnake (1902, 2:56). Lumholtz Collection (65/1293; 65/1292; 65/1297; 65/1295; 65/1294), American Museum of Natural History.



Figure 31. Detail of a *pirikixa* mouthpiece. Lumholtz Collection (65/1292), American Museum of Natural History.

The *pirikixas* collected in 1898 by Lumholtz in the community of Santa Catarina were all made of a type of bamboo called *haka* in Wixárika.<sup>112</sup> They vary in length between 20–25cm, approximately, and they all have a diameter of 1.5–1.8cm. I had the luck of finding an instrument maker in the community of Santa Catarina (locality of Tres Palomas) named Benancio who claimed his father had taught him how to make a flute.<sup>113</sup> Unfortunately, we were unable to locate the correct type of bamboo for the job as regular Mexican *otate* did not seem correct.

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<sup>112</sup> It is not clear how the word *pirikixa* would be pluralized in Wixárika (there are theoretically seven possibilities), hence I do so in English. Also, Lumholtz gives the word for the bamboo as *haku*.

<sup>113</sup> Unfortunately, I neglected to ask Benancio his last name, and our paths never crossed again.

Nevertheless, the type of flute he described to me—about the length of a forearm—was much larger than what Lumholtz collected in the same community almost 120 years before.<sup>114</sup>

Lumholtz was told that the *pirikixa* was an introduction from the Nayeri (Cora) to the northwest of Wixárika territory, but gave no further details. The Nayeri flutes today vary in size, but none seem to be as small as the *pirikixa* collected by Lumholtz. The Lumholtz collection at the American Museum of Natural History also includes flutes from the O'dam (Tepehuan) people to the near north of Wixárika territory, and flutes from the Rarámuri (Tarahumara) people farther north in Chihuahua. Both types are made of the same bamboo as the *pirikixa* and have identical duct and mouthpiece construction. The O'dam flutes in the collection range from 11.5–14.5cm in length, were approximately 2cm in diameter, and also had four finger holes. The Rarámuri flutes in the collection range from 18–22cm in length, were approximately 2–2.5cm in diameter, and have only three finger holes.

Considering the presence of Native American flutes throughout the Americas, and the similarity of flute construction throughout the Sierra Madre Occidental—Wixárika, Nayeri, O'dam, Rarámuri—the *pirikixa* was not likely a recent introduction in the time of Lumholtz. Today, however, the only wind instrument heard in the Wixárika communities are the mandatory cheap plastic recorders used in public elementary schools, filling the air of Mestizo and Wixárika towns alike—occasionally but sometimes incessantly—with painful renditions of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy."

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<sup>114</sup> Lumholtz strove to collect items in a manner that showed their range of possibilities, including both common constructions and exceptional ones. It stands to reason that he would have collected *pirikixas* of varying sizes if they had existed.

*Kalatsiki, notched deer scapulae and bone*

During his time in the sierra in the late 1890s, Lumholtz found the use of notched deer scapulae and bones to be quite common. He mentioned that “the rubbing of two notched deer-bones is considered efficacious accompaniment to the hunting song, and is often used, the noise being thought to decoy the deer into the snare” (Lumholtz 1902, 2:155).



Figure 32. Notched deer scapula. Lumholtz Collection (65/1531), American Museum of Natural History.

Robert Zingg, living in the community of Tuxpan in the mid-1930s, found their use to be “commanded” in the mythology:

Notched deer scapula [sic] are called *kalatsiki*. The mythology reveals that the people were told to use notched deer-bones so that the great gods of the sea might hear. To accompany the sound, the people were commanded to dance to the four points (of the dancing patio, which represents the world) so that all the gods could see. This is commanded for the dry-season cycle in the myth of the first temple where the peyote and the first-fruits ceremonies take place. (Zingg 1938:652)

Zingg also stated that notched deer scapulae were “in evidence during the peyote ceremonies and also during those of first-fruits,” but seems to mean they were present on an altar rather than actually sounded (Zingg 1938:652). In actual practice, Zingg did not find them to be used musically to the extent that Lumholtz mentioned, and in one instance observed a mara‘akame grab the bones from the altar and play them while dancing “facetiously” as a way to keep warm.

Thus, there is some evidence that the musical use of notched deer bones ceased to be a common practice and became more of a memory preserved in ritual, much as deer snares can be seen occasionally in ritual altars today but are never used for actual hunting as they were historically. I found no evidence of notched deer bones during my fieldwork, but it would not be entirely surprising to learn that they are still sometimes present on altars in some parts of the sierra.

### *Tupi, the musical bow*

There are apparently two types of musical bows known historically to the Wixaritari; one was a gourd-resonated bow and the other mouth-resonated. During his travels, Lumholtz found the first to be in use amongst the O’dam, Nayeri, and Wixaritari, stating that the musical bow “is intimately connected with the religious rites of the [O’dam], as well as with those of the [Nayeri] and Huichols, the latter playing it with two arrows” (Lumholtz v1:475). In the case of the O’dam, he described a contraption actuated by the foot to hold the bow atop a gourd resonator, itself on the ground, and seemed to imply that it was similar or the same amongst the Wixaritari. Elsewhere, he gave further description, again mentioning that it was played with two arrows, meaning it likely would not have been held in the player’s hands:

The musical bow is played by two thin round sticks of tough, heavy wood, each about 40cm long. It produces a loud sound, resembling, at some distance, that of the Huichol drum... The musical bow has the same name as the shooting bow... The Huichols call it topi' [tupi]... Among all

[neighboring] tribes, with the exception of the Huichol, it is used at religious ceremonies, when it takes the place of the drum of the latter tribe... Among the Huichols the musical bow is rare, but I heard of its use on the eastern side of the river. It is beaten with two arrows, one of Elder Brother, and another of the Setting Sun... The notched bones or the bow are specially used at the time before clearing the fields in the winter for the coming year. (Lumholtz 1900:207)

Lumholtz also mentioned that the bow, like the notched deer scapula, was used to accompany hunting songs (Lumholtz 1902, 2:155). Zingg did not find the bow to be in use, nor have other researchers found anything like that described by Lumholtz.

The hunting connection shows up again in the research of Peter Furst and Barbara Myerhoff who documented a mouth-resonated musical bow practice during a family-based peregrination to Wirikuta—i.e., a hikuri or “Blue Deer” hunt—in the late 1960s:

Ramón then placed one end of his deerskin<sup>[115]</sup> bow in his mouth, using his mouth for a sounding chamber and holding the other end between his toes, and began twanging rhythmically on the string with the side of an arrow. The sound emitted was telling Tatewarí that the *peyoteros* were leaving for Wirikuta, that everything was in readiness. He removed from his quiver a piece of cactus fiber cord, the *kaunari*, which he passed over and through his bow. Then resuming the rhythmic beating on the bowstring, he gave the end of the cord to Francisco. Everyone in turn grasped the cord as it came to him so that it passed first in front, then behind all the pilgrims. The cord was returned to Ramón who scorched it in the fire and replaced it in his quiver.” (Myerhoff 1974:136) “Ramón twanged on his bowstring as we arrived at each sacred place [along the pilgrimage route to Wirikuta]. (Myerhoff: 1974:136,139)<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Myerhoff did not clarify what she meant by “deerskin bow.” The bow in the photograph by Furst seems to be made of wood and common rope.

<sup>116</sup> The uses of the bow described by Myerhoff seem to parallel those of the *xaweri* and *awá* today.



**Figure 33. Ramón Medina Silva plays a mouth-resonated musical bow in 1968. Photo by Peter T. Furst (Furst 2006:87).**

Diminutive bows are still carried to Wirikuta to shoot the first hikuri plants found there. The use of the bow as a musical instrument, then, might still sometimes occur, though no one I spoke with was familiar with the practice today.

Lumholtz cast aspersions on claims by other (unnamed) scholars who suggested that the musical bow could have been an outside introduction by those of African descent in Mexico:

The assertion has been made that the musical bow is not indigenous to the Western Hemisphere, but was introduced by African slaves. Without placing undue importance on the fact that negroes are very rarely, if at all, found in the north-western part of Mexico, it seems entirely beyond the range of possibility that a foreign implement could have become of such paramount importance in the religious system of several tribes. (Lumholtz v1:475–476)



The musical use of a hunting bow amongst hunting-focused peoples certainly could have been a case of plurigenesis in many parts of the world. Still, the possibility that the musical bow was an instance of African influence on the Wixaritari and other nearby indigenous groups should not be so quickly written off. The fact that something is a “foreign implement” has been shown in the case of the xaweri not to preclude its assimilation into ritual by the Wixaritari.<sup>117</sup> Lumholtz also inaccurately downplayed the presence of people of African descent in Mexico, operating from a tri-racial evolutionist view of the Americas that tended to silence African presence in Mexico while ignoring Mexico’s ethnic complexity represented during the Spanish colonial period by the *castas* (“castes”). During that time, in some areas surrounding Wixárika territory, the combined presence of “Blacks” and “Mulattoes” was, at the very least, more than one third of the combined population of “Spaniards,” “Mestizos,” and “Creoles.”<sup>118</sup> Between the years of 1784–1803 in Huejuquilla el Alto, a town on the northern border of Wixárika territory, the total number of marriages between “*Indios*” and “*Mulatos*” far outpaced any other mixed-caste marriages (Torres Contreras 2009:237–238). In fact, they were so common as to be second only to marriages between “*Indios*” themselves, who have always been the vast majority of the population in the region. That Lumholtz did not see “negroes” in his journey a century later was because by that time they had become almost entirely mixed into what became the all-encompassing category of *mestizo*.<sup>119</sup> Thus, the possible influence of African cultural practices in the Wixárika world

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<sup>117</sup> Other foreign implements now central to Wixárika ritual include bulls (and other livestock) and candles. More recent additions include Coca-Cola, beer, and so on.

<sup>118</sup> A census in 1783 of Huejuquilla el Alto, a town bordering Wixárika territory to the north, showed the combined population of *Mulatos* and *Negros* to be 24. The combined population of *Españoles*, *Criollos*, and *Mestizos* was 29. There were 40 “unspecified,” which, if mostly taken to be Mestizos, still would mean that more than one third of the non-indigenous population was of African descent (Torres Contreras 2009:232).

<sup>119</sup> Today, the ethnic diversity of the colonial era in the regions surrounding Wixárika territory has been mostly distilled through intermarriage into a dichotomy: *indígena* and *mestizo*. Very few people in

during the colonial era, especially musical practices, should not be so quickly discounted, and should be entertained at least as a possibility, if even a distant one.

### **Vocal Musics of the Wixaritari**

#### *Chanting of the mara‘akate*

The role of the mara‘akame (pl. mara‘akate) is central to any conceptualization of Wixárika life and identity.<sup>120</sup> Even the most superficial mentioning of the Wixárika people will likely include reference to the “singing shamans.” Indeed, mara‘akate are often central to ethnographic studies to the point of being biographical, and their work and worldview can (and do) fill entire books (Lemaistre 2003) and dissertation chapters (De la Mora 2011). It would be amiss, then, to purport a more thorough coverage of the mara‘akate and their role in Wixárika society here. Nevertheless, the role of the mara‘akame in Wixárika society is crucial for understanding life in the Wixárika communities, Wixárika rituals, and in some sense the economic and cultural changes in Wixárika society over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until today.

The word *mará‘akame* is usually considered to be a combination of two words (mará + ‘akame), though it is always written as one word and definitions for the two separate words are usually unknown or unclear.<sup>121</sup> Cross-cultural comparison and the ethnographic record might shed some light on the meaning. First, in another Uto-Aztecan language, Yoeme (Yaqui), the

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northern Jalisco claim to be entirely “Spanish” or “Creole” (i.e., of pure Spanish heritage born in Mexico), partly because it became contrary to post-independence anti-Spanish sentiment and to the later indigenist national ideology of post-revolutionary Mexico.

<sup>120</sup> In this case, I mean primarily sonic aspects of participatory and presentational modes of identity. Commercial Huicholness is not sonically linked to the mara‘akame.

<sup>121</sup> Wixárika friends and acquaintances, when asked about this, considered the word *mará‘akame* to be derived from two words, hence the glottal marking, but were unclear about what the individual words might mean.

counterpart of the Wixárika *mara'akame* is known as a *moreakame*. The word *morea* implies “a type of power” (Shorter 2015:487). Another curious insight comes from Robert Zingg’s spelling of the word as *maSa'akame* [sic] (Zingg 1938:206). Zingg tended to write all Wixárika words such that they reflected a pronunciation of endearment or affection. Thus, the [s] likely reflects an affectionate way of pronouncing what is now written as an [x], meaning that today’s orthography would have written what Zingg heard as *maxa'akame*, with *maxa* meaning deer. Thinking of the *mara'akame* as connected to or even personifying the mythical deer is common, as pointed out below.

De la Mora defines the *mara'akame* generally as an “interlocutor between humans and deities” (2011:79). In a larger sense, they can be thought of as interlocutors between seen and unseen realms. *Mara'akate* are the primary keepers of epic oral histories (i.e., “myths”) known as *kawitu*, and usually serve a vital role as healers. Earlier scholars made much of the distinction between “singing shamans” and “curing shamans” (i.e., those who cured but did not sing), and the “singing shamans” have always been understood to have greater prestige (Zingg 1938:202). De la Mora cites four types of curing *mara'akate* who do not sing, their titles depending primarily on their ability to dream and the time of day in which they can cure (2011:79). On the other hand, he mentions there are also those who sing but do not cure (ibid). In my experience, these distinctions exist but they might be overwrought in the scholarly literature. For most Wixaritari, saying *mara'akame* seems to imply someone who can sing and lead a ceremony as well as cure.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> I never met or heard about a specific person who would be considered a *mara'akame* but could not sing or lead a ceremony at least at the xiriki level. These are usually hired positions, and a *mara'akame*, from a pragmatic view, would usually not be hired to lead a family ceremony if he did not have the ability both to sing and to cure.

In Spanish, Wixaritari always refer to the singing mara‘akame as a *cantador* (chanter, cantor), never as a *cantante* (singer), which would imply popular music.<sup>123</sup> In Wixárika, the word *mará‘akame* is usually enough to imply someone who will chant and lead a ceremony. De la Mora, who worked more with mara‘akame in the northern communities, states that a chanting mara‘akame can be called a *kwikame*, though in my research that term can mean any singer, not just of mythic texts or in ritual settings.<sup>124</sup> Within that designation, though, there are a number of specific titles depending on the chanter’s role and experience. Three primary titles of the singing mara‘akame are outlined by De la Mora: (1) *tsaurixika*, the primary chanter in a tukipa, a five-year post; (2) *‘irikwakame*, the director of the *jicareros* and a guide during peregrination to Wirikuta; and (3) *tatari*, an apprentice chanter, less experienced but able to chant at rituals of the “Christian” cycle such as Semana Santa (De la Mora 2011:80).<sup>125</sup>

The chanting itself is perhaps harder to define or name as they are further distinguished (or complicated) by type, intent, time of day/night, and dialect. De la Mora points to three “key concepts” regarding the *cantos* (chants) themselves: (1) *tunuiya*, the chanting “in the middle of the night;” (2) *kawitu*, the singing of epic texts that describe the purpose and history of particular rituals<sup>126</sup>; and (3) *wawi*, a vague category likely related to chanting inspired through dreaming or visions of the mara‘akame. These categories may vary, however, depending on the region and level of ritual knowledge of one’s interlocutor. For example, a teacher from Xatsitsarie told me that *tunuari*<sup>127</sup> was the general term there for the chanting of the mara‘akame. An elder

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<sup>123</sup> This point was also correctly pointed out by De la Mora.

<sup>124</sup> *Kwikame* seems to mean generally singer and chanter (from the verb *kwika* [to sing]), and therefore can apply to any type of singer, though it might tend toward a mara‘akame.

<sup>125</sup> Elsewhere, De la Mora also states that a chanter can be called *kwinaḡwame* and his *segunderos* (responders, seconders) called *kwinepuwame(te)* (De la Mora 2011:267).

<sup>126</sup> These are further divided by their relation to tukipa, xiriki, and the Christian/mestizo worlds.

<sup>127</sup> *Tunuiya* and *tunuari* are essentially the same word, in the way that *kwikarieya* and *kwikari* refer generally to “song.” The suffix *-ri* implies a more definite thing than a practice.

mara'akame from Tsikatia, Salvador Sánchez González, stated that tunuari was actually a type of wawi that marked a particular stage of the sun in its nighttime journey back to its place of reappearance, and that wawi was the word for all singing done at night.

Complicating the matter of definition and categorization is the issue that the ritual language of the mara'akate is a particular register of the Wixárika language not necessarily understood by all Wixárika speakers. As Jorge López Solís, a Wixárika student of telecommunications engineering, put it, the mara'akate use “scientific words” (*palabras científicas*), a reference to the cryptic vocabulary of the chants. Linguists have articulated three basic registers of Wixárika language. *Xatsika* is used for daily conversation, *ixatsika* is heightened or narrative language, and *teixatsika* refers to the ritual register used by mara'akate (Ramírez de la Cruz 2005:92). The *teixatsika* register requires training even for fluent Wixárika speakers, and is distinguished primarily by its specialized vocabulary and marked allusiveness. Thus, becoming a mara'akame is not merely about training the voice or learning rituals, but grasping an arcane vocabulary of the deities and ancestors.

The process for becoming a mara'akame has been mentioned by even the earliest authors, and their observations were generally correct. Lumholtz seemed to intuit the distinction between those who are born to be mara'akate and those who come to it later in life:

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... I have heard children no older than five or six years sing very well indeed temple songs caught as the street boys in our cities catch popular airs. In addition a young man may, of course, ask an older shaman for information, but there is no regular system of teaching... A man who wants to become a shaman must be faithful to his wife for five years. If he violates this rule, he is sure to be taken ill, and will lose the power of curing... (Lumholtz 1902, 2:236–239).

Zingg, having collected copious notes on the histories and stories of the Wixaritari focused on the epic stories a mara'akame would have to command:

[The singing shamans memorize] the entire mythology, a corpus of mystical lore which when written bulks to 400 [manuscript] pages. The parts of the mythology corresponding to the various ceremonies are sung in all-night sittings during the ceremonies of the annual round, during which the mythology is recited. . . . In each ceremony the singer sits all night. . . singing, while in [responsorial] chanting, phrase by phrase he is repeated by the two chanters who sit one on each side of him. . . . The mystical power of the shaman is individual and derives from his having eaten peyote and his ability as a singer and in directing the complicated ceremonies. . . . as Lumholtz said, half of the adult tribe are singing shamans and all of them have eaten peyote. This statement needs only the qualification that while most adults know the mythology, half of the men know it well enough to sing it for minor private ceremonies around the *ranchería*. But even so almost every Huichol prefers to impress his fellows and his gods and give his ceremonies special *éclat* by hiring certain individuals who professionalize their abilities. . . . (Zingg 1938:203)

Both Lumholtz and Zingg refer to the mara‘akate with masculine pronouns, though both acknowledged the existence of women mara‘akate, though they have always been rare. Unlike playing xaweri, though, being a *cantadora* (female chanter) is notable but not surprising. Indeed, Takutse Nakawé (glossed often as Grandmother Growth) is known as a cantadora.

A chanter’s abilities, though, are not merely from “eating peyote,” as Zingg mentioned above. He later picked up on the larger significance of the idea, pointing out the equivalence between peyote and the deer deity:

The Huichol culture-hero, *kauymáli*, is revealed in the mythology as having taught the art of the singing to the Huichols, just as Grandfather Fire taught it to him and even to the great gods. Both *kauymáli* and Grandfather Fire engage in the sacred peyote hunt before being qualified as shamans. Grandfather Fire tells the first peyote pilgrims after they have eaten peyote, “In five years you will know how to sing, cure and be a shaman.” (Zingg 1938:207)

Zingg did not, however, make explicit the ultimate conceptualization that hikuri is a “teacher” (*maestro*). Hikuri is not merely a plant, but a sentient deity, a teacher, a professor, and Wirikuta is his university.<sup>128</sup>

In addition to hikuri, a mara‘akame might turn to other plant-deities to enhance or expand his/her abilities. In particular, Zingg points to kieri as being associated with those mara‘akate

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<sup>128</sup> Referring to Wirikuta as a university came up multiple times in my research. It is very likely that this parallel has been drawn recently after the advent of near-universal education for Wixárika children and the fact that both an undergraduate degree (*licenciatura*) and a “degree” as a shaman both require five years to complete.

who may be seeking (or assumed) to use their powers for malicious ends or “sorcery.” Lumholtz mentions briefly the use of a “wolf herb” (*yerba de lobo*) that “singing shamans” would use five times “to make themselves into wolves; in that shape they would hunt deer, but on the sixth day they became men again” (Lumholtz 1902, 2:261). Ultimately, though, human apprenticeship seems more central than in the case of *xaweri* which is now sometimes learned with the aid of recording technology, an approach that apparently is yet unused as an aid to become a *mara‘akame*.

In choosing a *mara‘akame* to hire or with whom to apprentice, the *mara‘akame* is evaluated not only on their knowledge and ability to sing, but also their ability to cure, as curing usually takes part at some point during the course of a multi-day ceremony. Cleansings (*limpias*) performed on patients are striking corporeal performances, usually without singing or speaking. The *mara‘akame* works over the patient who is seated or recumbent and usually shirtless or seminude (especially in the case of children). The *mara‘akame* cultivates a molasses-slow nonchalance, looking off into the eastern horizon, inspecting the patient’s body for inner afflictions and analyzing them after sucking them out of the torso or other afflicted part. “A good shaman learns the nature of the disease through dreams, and advises the patient what to do to get well again... to make certain ceremonial objects... to hunt deer... or do something to reconcile the offended god who caused the illness” (Lumholtz 1902, 2:236–239). For this reason, even those who respect the power of the *mara‘akate* might avoid seeking out their services in fear of needing to make penitence beyond their financial means.

The economic and professional aspects of a *mara‘akame*’s services were noted early in the ethnographic record but have changed significantly in relation to *Wixárika* society over the

course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lumholtz directly addressed the economic value of these services and their remuneration:

The services of a Huichol doctor [i.e. shaman] are much valued, though the fee varies according to the patient's ability to pay. For singing all night and curing in the morning the charge is from ten to fifteen dollars, or its equivalent in *naturalia*, and a traveling shaman may return from a professional tour outside of his country with eight or ten cows as net profit, beside sheep, goats, and donkeys... (Lumholtz 1902, 2:236–239).

A fee of ten to fifteen dollars is an entire day's minimum wage in Mexico today, and was a substantial sum in the late 1890s when Lumholtz collected this information.<sup>129</sup> Today, for a multi-day fiesta in a rancho, a mara'akame could earn 1,500 pesos (\$125USD) as a base fee, but could additionally expect remuneration per-curing session and would receive additional gifts of money, food, beer, and so on, by the family and all participants. Thus, the mara'akame and spouse could return home with well over 2,000 pesos (\$165USD) in addition to other gifts.<sup>130</sup> It seems, then, that the mara'akate earn relatively more today than in the past, perhaps because there are fewer of them relative to prior generations.

The account by Lumholtz, above, also mentions that well known mara'akate were known for traveling beyond their "country" for professional engagements. In his day, that likely meant beyond Wixárika territory to nearby indigenous groups. Today, mara'akate often work in New Age communities in metropolitan areas around the world, especially in Guadalajara, Mexico City, Tepic, and various locations in the United States (but mostly in California). The expansion of their market, at least for the lucky few mara'akate who benefit from it, is in many ways the direct result of anthropological work, both legitimate and fabricated, during the 1960s and 1970s (explored further in the chapter "On Huicholistas and Huicholeros").

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<sup>129</sup> According to the budget from his 1898 expedition, Lumholtz could feed at least four men for two weeks with \$10.

<sup>130</sup> This information comes from Armando López of Tuutu Maakawe, who organized his rancho's Tatei Neixa ceremony in 2013. Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz, who helped organize many ceremonies for his family, claimed that the mara'akame did not charge per se, but he did agree that they are given gifts.



Zingg referred to the mara‘akame’s fees as “a much less mystical context of Huichol shamanism” (1938:203). I disagree with the assumption that what could be seen as “financial” or crassly “economic” is somehow separate from ritual. To the contrary, ritual and economy are inseparable, at least historically. In the Wixárika world, ritual is production. Separating “economy” and “religion” for analysis may be misleading. Successful ritual is directly related to the abilities of the officiating mara‘akame, and ritual ensures future crop growth and harvest (i.e., production of the means of subsistence). Not surprisingly, then, the mara‘akate were essentially the only titleholders in Wixárika society paid in cash by other Wixaritari until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>131</sup>

Today, to become a mara‘akame is not the economic boon that it once was when compared to other possible pursuits. Though in some sense still the only community title directly remunerated, the mara‘akate are no longer the highest cash-earning members of Wixárika society.<sup>132</sup> That position was probably first overtaken by teachers, and later by artisans, musicians, lawyers, ranchers, medical professionals and, increasingly, politicians.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps for that reason of lower income relative to other professions, the number of mara‘akate is perceived to be decreasing by many Wixaritari, with some fearing that the profession will disappear within their own lifetime.

Zingg stated that “half of the men know [the kawitu repertoire] well enough to sing it,” but that most hire professionals to keep up with appearances. Today, even some of the younger mara‘akate are impugned for not knowing the repertoire well enough to sing about the walked

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<sup>131</sup> Civil officers or “traditional authorities” do not usually earn a salary, but are now commonly reimbursed for expenses and might hold bailes as a way to raise funds for their work. Generally, though, such posts are considered to be a large personal expense to the titleholder.

<sup>132</sup> For some who begin training as a mara‘akame later in life, financial means is almost a prerequisite to enable the leisure time in which to pursue the training and craft, and to afford the inevitable peregrinations that will be necessary.

<sup>133</sup> One might also add *narco* to the list.

path to Wirikuta because no one makes the journey on foot today. Similarly, in my observations, the “scientific words” or teixatsika ritual language of the mara‘akate makes their profession increasingly esoteric and daunting to most Wixaritari. Recordings by Henrietta Yurchenco in Huilotita in the 1940s reveal the response singing to be nearly an exact reproduction of the text and melody sung by the mara‘akate (Audio 05). My recordings in the same location in 2012 and observations around the same area over three years revealed that responses are now nonsense syllabic replies to a melody approximating that of the mara‘akame.

The apparently decreasing numbers of mara‘akate coupled with an increasing population that still demands ceremonies means that the existing group of mara‘akate are tasked with exceptional amounts of work. During Tatei Neixa season, a mara‘akame could officiate multiple xiriki ceremonies back-to-back, not sleeping well for the better part of a week or more. As one mara‘akame, Leocadio Sánchez de la Cruz, sardonically quipped after I noted that he and I were attending one fiesta after another, being a mara‘akame is “a lot of punishment” (*mucho castigo*).



Figure 34. The mara'akame, Leocadio Sánchez de la Cruz, chants during the 2012 Tatei Neixa ceremony in Huilotita, Jalisco, one of many multi-day ceremonies he sang that year.

### *Quotidian and children's songs*

Quotidian songs of the Wixaritari have been documented and studied most extensively by Xitákame Julio Ramírez de la Cruz, a Wixárika linguist and researcher at the University of Guadalajara. According to him, he studied “the literature of [his] people not only to know it better, but also to spread it and even reinforce it in order to preserve it” (1993:np). His first work, *Wixarika Niawarieya: La Canción Huichola* (1993), was geared towards a general audience, including schoolteachers and those Wixárika youth who had grown up outside a context where they would learn such songs in daily life.

Ramírez de la Cruz divided Wixárika songs (not including the chanting of the mara‘akame) into four main genres: children’s songs (*canción infantil*), love songs (*canción amorosa*), religious songs (*canción religiosa*), and a catch-all category for other miscellaneous songs (*canciones variadas*) including funerary songs and those about quotidian topics. Though he states that any of these could be accompanied “by music” (meaning, with instrumental accompaniment of the xaweri and kanari), the children’s songs are rarely accompanied. He finds that “in some communities” the composition of children’s songs is the domain of girls, boys, or a balance of the two. In general, children only begin to compose their own songs at around the age of eight. The genre of love songs is further divided into two subgenres: happy (*alegre*) and sad (*triste*). These are composed and sung by both women and men, young and adult.<sup>134</sup>

The genre of “religious” songs is the most replete with metaphor and insider meanings. They are “solemn and respectful... mentioning nature and the different divinities with multiple metaphorical names” (Ramírez de la Cruz 1993:np). Furthermore, he tells us that these songs begin to be composed at around the age of sixteen when “the youths begin... to take part in the activities of the adults” (*ibid*). The principal themes of these songs are “the peregrination to

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<sup>134</sup> In this work, he did not make mention of the “bawdy” love songs often accompanied by xaweri.

sacred sites, that which the person experienced in the journey, the stories of the peregrinators, the animals associated with religious life, principally the deer and the eagle, the meaning of the sacred, etc.” (ibid). Within these themes, the topic of hikuri itself is the most common, making reference to it “with innumerable metaphors based in mystical analogies... it is called ‘flower,’ ‘blue flower,’ ‘deer,’ ‘eagle,’ ‘maize,’ ‘hummingbird,’ ‘dove,’ ‘blue bead,’ etc. (ibid).<sup>135</sup>

In a later work, Ramírez de la Cruz immensely expanded and refined his studies for an academic audience in a work entitled *Wixárika Xaweri* (2005).<sup>136</sup> In his updated analysis, Ramírez de la Cruz makes further distinctions within the realm of children’s songs, in addition to covering bawdy songs or “love songs” with explicit double entendre.<sup>137</sup> He points out the importance of age differences in children’s songs, noting the variable complexity of the songs for singers and composers of different ages, and making an important distinction between those songs composed *by* children versus *for* children. These distinctions, though, do not seem to have any social purpose like those of Kisêdjê (Suyá) songs which, when sung, mark the singer’s transition into a different age group (see Seeger 2004[1987]). Thus, these age distinctions in the Wixárika case appear to be a benign researcher imposition for the sake of analysis than they are clearly defined categories from a common Wixárika perspective.

For unexplained reasons, Ramírez de la Cruz does not mention Wixárika lullabies.<sup>138</sup> They are, however, covered endearingly if haphazardly and unsystematically in *Cantos de Cuna del Pueblo Wixarika* by Brenda Ileana Medina Castillo (2009). Unfortunately, the work of

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<sup>135</sup> These all overlap with the xaweri repertoire described above, but clearly Ramírez de la Cruz, as a linguist, is approaching song textually, describing it as “literature.”

<sup>136</sup> The publication is book-like, but published as a multivolume edition of the journal *Función* (2003–2004, numbers 27–30).

<sup>137</sup> Apparently the bawdy songs were acceptable in a more scientific treatment in an obscure academic journal, but not appropriate for a book publication whose intent was to give the general (i.e., non-indigenous) reader a greater appreciation for the “beauty of our songs” and sung Wixárika “literature.”

<sup>138</sup> Ramírez de la Cruz avoids lullabies altogether, perhaps because their primary function does not qualify them as “literature” or as a “text.”

Medina Castillo and Ramírez de la Cruz are all entirely textual, translating lyrical text to Spanish but not accompanied by audio recordings or notation to make any sense of the musical qualities of the songs.

In the initial conceptualization of this dissertation, much of the intent was to rectify the above problem, to seek out the melodic and sonic tendencies of quotidian Wixárika song. To my surprise, the abundance of books about quotidian Wixárika song did not match actual quotidian practices. That is, the publications give the appearance of copious songs being performed by children in daily life. In my observations, however, singing is not as common as one might expect after reading the aforementioned publications. I hasten to point out that my research and familial connections were extensive and centered on ranchos, homes, and schools. Time in the sierra with my own family, including a young child, provided ample potential to hear children's songs. And yet, I never heard any of the quotidian songs documented by Ramírez de la Cruz or Medina Castillo.<sup>139</sup> That is not to say that the songs do not exist or that Wixárika children do not sing. I am sure they do. But the representation of children's singing suffers a disconnect from actual practice and presents it as extensive when, in comparison to ritual and popular singing, it is almost unnoticeable. These are the disconnects that exist in a presentational mode of identity.

Wixárika children's songs are potentially suffering a general silencing, or are simply being usurped by institutionalized schooling where songs are learned as history lessons more than for the inherent value of composing one's own songs. The only songs I heard children sing in the Wixárika communities were the national anthem of Mexico (*himno nacional*) translated into Wixárika, "Las Mañanitas" (a birthday or anniversary song) in Spanish, a song about ex-

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<sup>139</sup> Clearly, as a man, I was less likely to be in a context to hear lullabies. When asking a friend's wife, for example, whether she might sing a lullaby for me to record (out of context), modesty won out, and most people around the fire at night, including men, just chuckled while trying unsuccessfully to think of common lullabies. Still, after years of visiting male friends and their child-rearing wives in the sierra, I never once overheard a lullaby in an adjacent room.

president Benito Juárez, and popular *música regional* songs. Other examples of children's music in the Wixárika communities might include the graduation ceremonies for public primary and secondary schools that take place annually. These graduations (*clausuras*) include musical presentations by all grades for the entertainment of parents and family. Rather than singing, though, the students almost always remain silent as they dance to recordings of popular music, "folkloric" music of the state folklore troupes, or, sometimes, *xaweri*. In one graduation, I witnessed young boys perform "Danza de los Viejitos" (Dance of the Old Men), a folklorized, nationalized, and tourist-oriented version of a dance associated with the indigenous P'urhépecha people of Michoacán (see Hellier-Tinoco 2011) (Video 11). Thus, rather than sing their own Wixárika children's songs, they danced to a soundtrack, masks covering their silent mouths, in imitation of a state-made model of indigeneity.

The schism between what is represented as "Wixárika children's music" and what is actually performed by children in the Wixárika communities is another clear disconnect between participatory and presentational modes of Wixárika identity. While the above-mentioned publications do not in any way reflect an intentional or coordinated effort to misrepresent Wixárika song—to the contrary, they are meritorious and valuable works—they nevertheless equally engender a similar reception for outsiders reading the publications; that the children's music of the Wixárika communities is stable, continuing, and abundant. In that light, they could be seen as being complicit in an uncoordinated, indirect manner in that, as publications of arts agencies and academic institutions, they give a picture of stability and organic vibrancy, when in fact the historical trajectory of the same system of arts agencies and the educational sphere is at the nucleus of silencing Wixárika children (sometimes literally with a pre-recorded soundtrack)

in deference to folklorized, federally homogenized, nationalistic, and Spanish-language repertoire.

### **Aesthetics, Tuning, and Modal Characteristics**

#### *Sonic aesthetics*

A notable aspect of Wixárika ritual in material form is the tendency towards small and diminutive objects. Some of the most powerful deities of the Wixárika world are, in material form, no more than a foot tall (e.g., Santo Domingo in Nueva Colonia). Shrines for ancestor-deities are covered with miniature chairs, mats, shoulder bags, etc. Similarly, a person who wants to learn xaweri might make offerings in the form of a miniature xaweri, and a hunter likewise with diminutive deer figurines. In a sense, the potency of the sacred is marked by smallness.

The acoustic correspondence to the Wixárika aesthetic of smallness is the preference for high pitch and register. That applies to instrumental music as well as the voice in song or emphatic speech. The notable smallness of Wixárika instruments is not just a matter of pragmatism for easier transport, though that is a benefit. The absence of bass instruments until the introduction of the *guitarrón* and *tololoche* reveals a historical preference for higher pitch. The *tepu*, which could physically produce low pitches, again affirms the high register preference because it was always tuned to the highest pitches allowed by its physical limits. Stories collected by Zingg reveal the connection between sacred smallness and high pitch, portraying the young Jesus Christ as a champion xawereru wielding a xaweri only six inches in length (Zingg 2004:202).<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> One could also mention the Wixárika flutes collected by Lumholtz that were exceptionally small despite the equal availability of larger bamboo.



The preference of high pitch does not seem to be merely the accidental result of making instruments physically smaller. Wixaritari, especially elders, make common use of falsetto in speech to show emotion or emphasize a point, particularly when conversing lightheartedly with peers. Both men and women use falsetto, but its use seems to be fading amongst youths. Falsetto can also mark heightened ritual moments, none more so than at a funerary ceremony I witnessed in Tsakuxapa in which the mara'akame, at the moment the spirit of the departed began to speak through him, switched almost entirely to falsetto.<sup>141</sup>

I noticed the use of falsetto in all Wixárika communities, but more commonly in Santa Catarina, and especially during the Hikuri Neixa ceremony in the locality of Tuapurie. That I noted falsetto being used more during the hikuri ceremony leads one to wonder whether the preference for high register is a result of it being a more pleasing stimulus than bass register during a hikuri moment for the Wixaritari. Though questions of “register” and “pitch” are difficult to assess when the terms apparently have no equivalent in Wixárika, falsetto here can be interpreted as the acoustic register of the divine. Falsetto is not, however, only heard when the speaker is under the effects of hikuri but also is heard in common speech and much musical practice. Superb musical examples include archival recordings of Ramon Medina Silva recorded by Donn Borchardt (Audio 06), and recordings from Huilotita and Tutsipa by Henrietta Yurchenco (Audio 07; 08; 09; 10).

In addition to falsetto, Wixárika speech often takes on striking melodic characteristics in both ritual and quotidian moments. In a quotidian example, high-spirited hollering across a large distance is often cadenced with a glissando-like falling pitch or preceded with a series of pitches

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<sup>141</sup> I was previously under the impression that possession trance was not practiced amongst the Wixaritari, but this particular ceremony seemed to confirm that it does exist. According to a family member of the deceased, the mara'akame “brings” the spirit of the deceased (“*lo trae*”). Unlike possession trance in the African diaspora, it was not marked by convulsive motion but primarily by falsetto voice.

beginning at a midpoint, rising as much as an interval of a fourth, returning to the midpoint, and then up a fourth again to initiate the final downward glissando. In a particularly memorable moment, as Jorge López Solís departed from his rancho to tend to business elsewhere, he called to his nephew Armando: “al rato, tsi...” [see you later, then], to which his nephew hollered back “au au” [fine fine]. The melodic contour might be visualized as such:



Al rato tsi // Au au...

The downward glissando in speech is also common in performance-like weeping commonly seen in ritual when one person gives thanks to another, and is likewise noted in the sounding of the ‘awá. These moments were difficult and touchy to record, but a sufficient example of melodic weeping appears in the film *Huicholes: The Last Peyote Guardians* (2014 [1:24:44]). With falling pitch (“glissando” or “portamento”) so prominent in Wixárika speech, it comes as no surprise that xaweri melodies are replete with the same technique.<sup>142</sup>

Another cultivated sonic aesthetic that should be mentioned is heterophony in responsorial singing. The chanting of the mara‘akame is usually accompanied in a call-and-response form. In large rituals, the mara‘akame is echoed by his two assistants sitting next to him. In smaller ritual settings, such as family healing sessions or in preparation for a ritual deer hunt, the mara‘akame might not have assistants and thus the responsibility of responding to his chanting falls to all present, especially elders. In such moments, there is no preference for singing in unison or to begin and end at the same moment. Instead, the response is extremely

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<sup>142</sup> Melodic speech was most common, in my estimation, in the community of Santa Catarina, where the word *au* (okay, fine) is almost always spoken with a falling pitch.

heterophonic, with each person beginning and ending at his or her own pace. The result makes the assembled group seem larger, the unaligned melodies seeming to bounce off each other in the darkness (Audio 11).

### *Tuning(s)*

Until some Wixárika musicians appropriated *música regional* and its standardized tuning practices, Wixárika music in its entirety had a highly personal, relative, and permissive approach to intonation. This can still be observed in the music of the xaweri where, even in the same community and with instruments of nearly the same size, two xawererus may tune their instruments as much as a fifth apart. As noted above, learning to tune is a crucial milestone when becoming a xawereru; the skill could easily take years to master. Not surprisingly, xawererus have excellent relative pitch but demonstrate a high degree of flexibility at the microtonal level of intonation.



Figure 35. Two kanarite showing size variation. The kanari on the right is the same as that in the first photo in this chapter.

My take on microtonal permissiveness in Wixárika music developed as I began to look for a “Wixárika tuning system,” starting with the premise that Western equal temperament and the tools to measure it are new to the Wixárika world but increasingly common. The search for tuning systems through measurement in cents might seem old fashioned in today’s ethnomusicology, but it reveals crucial data for studying the phenomenon of the *guerra de*

*sonidos* and its battles that sometimes take place on a subconscious or unarticulated level.<sup>143</sup>

Specifically, it speaks to the rigidifying intonation sensibilities—and general cultural orientations—of younger Wixaritari who have grown up hearing increasingly standardized tuning in the music played by their peers and in the Western pop music entering their listening preferences via YouTube and other media.

Previous scholars have generally overlooked the question of tuning and intonation in Wixárika music. When the topic is broached, it is usually only tangential, and only vaguely helpful in that xaweri tuning is given in Western pitches with no further comment. Said approach hides a great deal of inter- and intra-community variation and falls into the same musico-ideological trap in which many young Wixárika musicians operate today. Namely, it erroneously assumes Western equal temperament—represented by keys on a piano or an electronic tuner—to be *the correct way* to think about tuning, rather than *one possible way* within a wider range of acceptable tunings. Before addressing micro-level variations, though, I will address the “gist” of xaweri and kanari tunings.

There are two general approaches to tuning the xaweri and kanari. One is found in the communities of Santa Catarina, San Sebastian, and Tuxpan. The other pertains to the community

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<sup>143</sup> In studying intonation, it seemed ideal to focus on the voice, but then the premise mentioned above would be best researched by studying the singing of elders, a problematic endeavor for its own physiological [word?] reasons. Similarly, the singing of the mara‘akate was nearly impossible to isolate from a ceremonial context and raised questions about the effects of hikuri, nawá, and sleep deprivation on intonation. Originally, I planned to study intonation in lullabies, but plans were scrapped for reasons mentioned above. Furthermore, archival recordings that had better isolation of mara‘akate are unreliable due to early recording technology that introduced pitch variation and extensive noise. I was also not allowed to play the Wixárika flutes collected by Lumholtz as the museum deemed they might have been doused with toxic chemicals in the past as a means of preserving them.

of San Andrés.<sup>144</sup> They might be referred to as eastern- and western-tuning, respectively, reflecting their location in relation to the Chapalagana River.<sup>145</sup>

In the eastern communities, the xaweri is tuned in successive fifths from left to right when looking at the face of the instrument. The kanari's first two strings (again, from left to right) duplicate the first two strings of the xaweri. Similarly, the fifth string of the kanari is the same as the third string of the xaweri. The fourth string is in unison with the second, and the third string is usually a half step above the first string. The kanari is tuned to the xaweri, not the other way around. Simplistically represented from a hypothetical starting pitch of middle C, the eastern tuning would be:

|          |    |    |    |    |                                   |
|----------|----|----|----|----|-----------------------------------|
| (Xaweri) |    |    |    |    |                                   |
|          | C4 | G4 | D5 | A5 |                                   |
|          |    |    |    |    |                                   |
| (Kanari) |    |    |    |    |                                   |
|          | C  | G4 | C# | G4 | D5 (see footnote <sup>146</sup> ) |

The western tuning found in San Andrés has the xaweri's two left strings a fifth apart, likewise for the two highest strings on the right. The middle two, however, are separated by a fourth. In other words, the third and fourth strings, respectively, are an octave above the first and second strings. According to José Bautista, the highest (rightmost) string of the kanari should be

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<sup>144</sup> I never had the opportunity to interact with a xawereri in Guadalupe Ocotán, and thus cannot be sure about the tuning used there.

<sup>145</sup> I was unable to register tunings used in the localities of Cajones or La Laguna. These would be interesting places to continue the research as they represent oddities in the “Chapalagana divides us” thinking. Cajones is part of Santa Catarina but lies on the western side of the river. La Laguna is also on the western side but is contested territory; the division between San Andrés and Santa Catarina bisects the locality.

<sup>146</sup> I leave the C and C# without octave markings because it seems the octave might vary depending on the register of the xaweri tuning. The first and second string of the kanari usually duplicate the first and second of the xaweri. However, if the xaweri is tuned low for the size of the instrument, the hypothetical C4 of the kanari could become a C5 in order to achieve better resonance. Likewise with the C#, which is usually a C#4.

the same as the second string on the xaweri.<sup>147</sup> Hypothetically starting from C, the western tuning would be:

|              |    |    |    |       |
|--------------|----|----|----|-------|
| (Xaweri)     |    |    |    |       |
|              | C4 | G4 | C5 | G5    |
| <br>(Kanari) |    |    |    |       |
|              | F3 | F4 | C4 | D4 G4 |

I use “hypothetical” starting pitches above partly because the actual frequency is of little or no importance to the highly personal and relative tuning of the xaweri and kanari. Unlike previous scholars, I am not convinced that the absolute pitches in question are of much importance because tuning is meant to fit the size of the instrument and the personal preference of the player, not a standardized external reference. As seen above, even in the same communities, the sizes of the instruments vary greatly and therefore tuning will be adjusted to fit the instruments. More important, then, are the intervallic values, which have also been oversimplified by previous authors (and in my own approximation above).

The above representations with Western pitches imply equivalence to Western equal temperament, which is almost never the case. Not only are Wixárika pitches unrelated to Western standardized frequencies, the intervals—primarily fifths, fourths, and octaves—display a wide range of variation within and across communities. In analyzing the ways xawererus tune their instruments, it quickly became apparent that Wixárika fifths, an interval usually considered nearly “universal” in its intervallic ratios across the globe, were highly variable. They ranged from 30 cents wide and as much as 62 cents narrow compared to a fifth in Western equal

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<sup>147</sup> It should be pointed out that José Bautista, however, referred to the strings in reverse order, i.e., the rightmost and highest pitched string when looking at the face of the xaweri would be “the first.” This conceptualization seems to follow the performance practice of the xaweri where the highest string is usually where the melody begins. I have reversed the numbering here simply for easier left-to-right reading.

temperament. Even fifths *on the same instrument* could easily vary as much as 30 cents.<sup>148</sup> In short, these are significant discrepancies for the fifth and reveal a wide range of tunings that would be acceptable to most Wixaritari, even musicians.<sup>149</sup>

The fact that Wixárika tuning is mostly unarticulated might be what enables its high levels of variability, but also makes it susceptible to co-optation. Like the expanding Wixárika instrumental register (through the addition of bass instruments) and the general shift downwards in vocal register when youths stop using falsetto in speech and song, the oscillations of Wixárika tunings are being reigned in for younger generations. Slowly but surely, *música regional* groups have adopted Western equal temperament. While the earliest groups tuned entirely by ear, later groups often relied on a small one-note pitch pipe common throughout Mexico. The pitch pipe could establish a standard “center,” but would not have affected the intervals. Today, however, most groups, whether onstage or in the recording studio, use electronic tuners to set each string. While the “center” might be somewhat adjustable—groups commonly tune to A=445hz or higher—Western equal temperament becomes the unquestioned “correct” intervallic tuning. Intonation also becomes more immovable with the reliance on instruments with frets that cannot be adjusted, coupled with the increasing use of the accordion, electronic keyboards, and plastic recorders. Today, Wixárika children and youths are surrounded with a model for “correct” tuning based on equal temperament rather than the highly flexible but unspoken system of their

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<sup>148</sup> It could be argued that the intervals on the xaweri and kanari would best be measured in performed melodies, not on the individual strings as fine-tuning is difficult to say the least. That may be true, and the project will likely go that direction eventually, but in my experience, those players who tune their fifths extremely narrow compared to an equal tempered fifth also perform the fifth as narrow in their melodic interpretations.

<sup>149</sup> The Wixárika flutes in the Lumholtz collection at the American Museum of Natural History also seem to indicate a wide range of intervallic variation from one instrument to the next. The placement of the finger holes differs on each instrument, sometimes dramatically, again suggesting a wide range of acceptable tunings in Wixárika music. As mentioned previously, I was not allowed to play the flutes for safety concerns.



grandparents, the unbending strictness of Teiwari Yuawi gone unrecognized in the acoustic realm.

The unwitting acquiescence to the rigidity of Western equal temperament is a result of assuming, both by Wixárika musicians and their Mestizo models, that it is *the* way to tune, rather than *a* way to tune. Often, the choice is made for the Wixaritari without their knowledge. A case in point is the hit group Herencia Huichol (and probably other big label groups such as Huichol Musical). The Mestizo audio engineer who recorded Herencia's hit album, *Pasito Chicoteado*, confirmed that he used Melodyne, a pitch "correction" software, for the vocal tracks. Though he claimed he used "not much" auto-tuning to "correct" the intonation, he also did it automatically, apparently without informing the members of the group that they were doing so. Such is the Western ideology of correctness in the at-times-unconscious guerra de sonidos.

#### *On tonos, modos, and ritmos*

One day while listening to old Lumholtz recordings with multi-instrumentalist and neighbor Maximino Hernandez Carrillo, I asked if the "Matar vaca" recording was correctly labeled. He stated that it was, because it had a different "*tono*" (key/tone). I asked if he could show me what he meant and returned later to record some video of it. When asked to elaborate on what he meant by "tonos"—I was hoping to get some deep and heretofore secret Wixárika music theory—he said it simply meant that "sacred" music is played with only the highest two strings of the xaweri rather than all four. Specifically, only two strings are used when accompanying sacrifice and procession. In San Andrés, three strings are used but the additional string is retuned to double the second string an octave below (Bautista Carrillo 2013).

The use of only the two highest strings for important ritual moments reaffirms that high register is the sound of the sacral realm, but also might have to do with earlier colonial versions of the rabel. The Spanish rabel and its European counterpart known as the rebec had one to four strings, but most commonly only three (Randel 1986). Therefore, the earliest versions of the rabel that arrived in the Wixárika communities might have had only two or three strings, and they may have been slowly adopted into Wixárika ritual as such. It might be further speculated that the lower two strings of the xaweri were added or accepted later to enable a call-and-response melodic structure, which is more common in the continuously-renewing (and thus newer) repertoire associated with Wirikuta.<sup>150</sup>

Though “tonos” did not seem to refer to an actual key or mode, there are common melodic characteristics of xaweri music that lend themselves to entertaining the idea of a Wixárika mode of sorts. I hasten to add, though, that this mode is only a *tendency* of xaweri music, and to some extent the chanting of the mara‘akame. The mode is not a limitation to composition, as will be seen below. Two pieces can be used as examples to illustrate the mode. The first piece was played by Daniel Medina de la Rosa in a xiriki during Tatei Neixa in the rancho of Tuutu Maakawe in Santa Catarina. The vocal melody and its related mode are notated below and available in audio (Audio 12) and video (Video 08).



Figure 36. Vocal melody of song performed by Daniel Medina de la Rosa.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Call-and-response also already existed as a musical aesthetic in the ritual chanting.

<sup>151</sup> I have barred the eighth notes in a way that outlines sesquialtera phrases and places “the one” on the side of sesquialtera where the vocal melody starts. Some people feel sesquialtera the reverse of the way it is notated here, as I mention later. Nevertheless, these issues of rhythmic gestalt will make for fruitful future paths for this research.

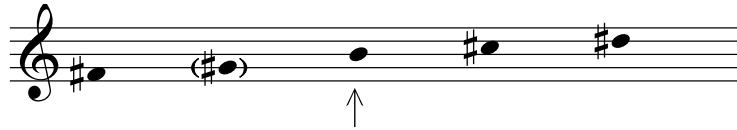


Figure 37. Mode discerned from above melody. The arrow marks the “tonic” or melodic center.<sup>152</sup> The G# in parentheses is played on xaweri but not sung.

The second piece comes from an interview given by Maximino Hernandez Carrillo to two anthropology students.<sup>153</sup> The mode is notated below and the recording is also available in audio (Audio 13) and video (Video 12).

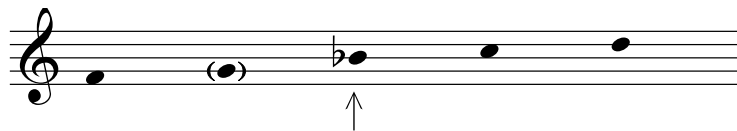


Figure 38. Mode discerned from song performed by Maximino Carrillo Hernández. Similar to above, the arrow shows an implied melodic center and the parentheses are around a note played on xaweri but not sung.

These pieces demonstrate a number of characteristics common to xaweri music. First, the vocals could be said to be tetratonic but the xaweri outlines a pentatonic mode. Many pieces share this trait, the voice using a subset of pitches—sometimes only two or three pitches—within those played on the xaweri. Specifically, the xaweri outlines an atritonic anhemitonic pentatonic mode, probably the most common of all Wixárika traditional music. The melodic phrasing clearly emphasizes a cadence towards a tonic but, as with many xaweri pieces, the tonic is in the middle of the total range of pitches, and is commonly (but not always) approached from below.

Rhythmically, the pieces are similar and demonstrate a ubiquitous rhythmic cycle or “timeline” called *sesquialtera* in Spanish. The rhythm can be textually represented where “**x**” represents a marked pulse of the rhythm (and “o” an unmarked pulse):

**x**o**x**o**x**o**x**oo**x**oo

Depending on where the melody starts, it could also be felt as:

<sup>152</sup> One could also say a tonic is implied by the harmonic accompaniment of the kanari.

<sup>153</sup> The interview itself is studied in a later interchapter.

X○○X○○X○X○X○

When present, sesquialtera is outlined in the voice and xaweri, creating a strophic base for the lyrics or “text” of a song and an atmosphere for dancing. In the eastern communities (Santa Catarina, San Sebastián, and Tuxpan), the sesquialtera rhythm is further emphasized with the downward strumming pattern of the kanari, the upstroke also sometimes being sounded. In Tateikie, the kanari strums six equitemporal pulses for each cycle of sesquialtera:

X○X○X○X○X○X○

Melodies follow the sesquialtera rhythm, usually spanning two or three cycles of the rhythm. The melody is repeated strophically to fit the text and then followed in responsorial fashion by the solo xaweri. In the example of Medina de la Rosa playing in the xiriki, the melody spans two cycles of sesquialtera and he repeats the melody eight to ten times with different lyrics before responding with the xaweri. In the case of Hernandez Carrillo, the melody lasts three cycles of sesquialtera and is repeated three to four times before responding with xaweri.<sup>154</sup>

Sesquialtera in xaweri music is exceptionally common and should not be underemphasized when interpreting the music’s place in Wixárika ritual. Like the xaweri itself, the rhythm was most likely adopted through outside influence, sesquialtera being found throughout Latin America and Spain and associated since the colonial period with Mexican *villancicos*, and later *sones* (Stanford 2015).<sup>155</sup> The rhythm is so central to xaweri music that it can appear in metric divisions other than twelve, even those called “odd” meters in Western terms. A piece performed by Ramon Medina Silva includes sections where the sesquialtera fits within a meter of seven beats (Audio 14):

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<sup>154</sup> One reason for the difference is that Medina de la Rosa was performing in ritual context, extending the songs to enable dancing. Hernandez Carrillo was performing as part of an interview session and therefore played them shorter than would be normal.

<sup>155</sup> For this reason, xaweri pieces based on sesquialtera are sometimes called *sones* (singular, *son*).

X○○○X○○X○○X○X○ (sesquialtera-like rhythmic emphasis)

X○X○X○X○X○X○X○ (septuple binary meter [i.e., 7/4])

Though we will never be able to ask Medina Silva, and I have never heard any other xaweri piece in an “odd” meter, the piece was likely *not* danced in seven per se, but on the five pulses of the sesquialtera rhythm. The sesquialtera rhythm is used for dance music, even in rituals, but rarely danced precisely “on the beat.” Indeed, one could theoretically dance it in two, three, four, or six. However, in my observations, and in my participation, the sesquialtera rhythm is usually outlined with the feet, not an equitemporal beat.<sup>156</sup> It would not surprise me to hear a xawereru say that the music is “in five,” given the supreme importance of that number in Wixárika life.

#### *Is Wixárika music pentatonic?*

The preponderance of the number five in rhythm, pitches, and Wixárika life in general might lead one to think of pentatonicism as a limit more than just a tendency. Robert Stevenson, after studying the Lumholtz transcriptions, claimed that Wixárika melodies were “pre-eminently pentatonic” (1952:41).<sup>157</sup> I argue, however, that while pentatonic modes predominate in Wixárika music, they are not totalizing or binding. Proof of this important caveat is not hard to find, and it can be heard in the melodies used for bull sacrifice in Wixárika ceremonies. Bull sacrifice is often a ritual zenith, coming at dawn after a night of chanting, and seems to necessitate the playing of the xaweri. As Zingg would put it, this was “commanded” in the mythology when the Christ child played his six-inch xaweri so that “with [his] beautiful music the people could now kill [sacrifice] the animals” (Zingg 2004:202).

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<sup>156</sup> During dance with tepu drumming, though, an equitemporal binary division of the beat is used. Specifically, the feet mark **RRL**L, where bold indicates the beat and the preceding pulse is something of a “pick up” note to the beat marked with the same foot.

<sup>157</sup> He maintained the conclusion later, without the hyphen (Stevenson 1968:131).

Comparing the melodies used during bull sacrifice over time and in different communities reveals that not all are pentatonic or “rhythmically free”, as suggested by Stevenson (1952:39). The first was recorded by Lumholtz in 1898 in the community of Santa Catarina and labeled simply as “Matar vaca” (Audio 15).



Figure 39. Mode of the melody heard in Lumholtz recording labeled “Matar Vaca.”

Considering this example, Stevenson understandably regarded Wixárika music as highly non-metric and pentatonic. A similar non-metric, pentatonic approach is still used in Tateikie today, as documented by Rodrigo de la Mora and released on the album *Taateikietaari Waxaweeri Waniawari* (2010), titled “Pieza para sacrificar al toro” (originally Track 20, here Audio 16).

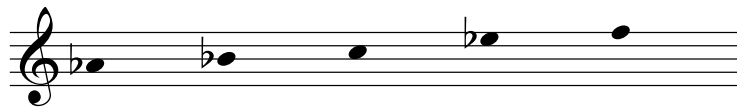


Figure 40. Mode of the melody heard in De la Mora recording labeled “Pieza para sacrificar al toro”

Both of the above examples are also atritonic anhemitonic pentatonic scales, which is not at all the case in the following two examples.

In my own fieldwork, I documented two very different melodies to accompany bull sacrifice. The first was recorded out of ritual context and demonstrated by Maximino Hernández Carrillo from the community of San Sebastián (Audio 17; Video 13).



Figure 41. Transcription of Maximino Hernandez Carrillo's performance of a xaweri melody for bull sacrifice.<sup>158</sup>

Hernandez Carrillo's version still uses only the highest two strings, but differs notably in that it uses a clearly metrical sesquialtera. Like the first two examples, this scale is also atritonic, but it differs in that it is hemitonic. Nor is it pentatonic like those above; it is hexatonic.

The final example is strikingly different. I recorded it during Fiesta Grande in Tsakuxapa, a rancho in the community of Tuxpan (Audio 18; Video 14). One could perceive "the beginning" of the melody in different places, therefore I bracket the final measure of the transcription to show its ambivalence:



Figure 42. Transcription of melody played on xaweri for bull sacrifice during "Fiesta Grande" in Tsakuxapa.

<sup>158</sup> The meter marking and barring of eighth-notes is primarily for ease of reading. Clearly, it could be felt in various ways

Sesquialtera is not implied at all in this piece to accompany sacrifice. Instead the piece is a clear quadruple meter with binary and quarternary division of the beat. Only the highest two strings are played but, unlike all previous examples, the scale is tritonic hemitonic heptatonic. In other words, the scale is identical to a “Western” major scale, though some of its contour could be said to be loosely reminiscent of the common pentatonic mode mentioned earlier.

These examples probably do not exhaust the melodic possibilities to accompany sacrifice. They likely vary considerably even within each respective community, and I do not present them here to suggest they are exclusively representative of their respective communities. They do show, however, that there is a wide range of variability and acceptable approaches to the music that accompanies a crucial ritual moment across the Wixárika communities.

## **Conclusion**

This lengthy take on Wixárika traditional music is meant to complement earlier scholarship by combining my own ethnographic data with archival materials and previous studies. It was my intention to further an ethnomusicological take on Wixárika music in a literature that is primarily anthropological and, thus, not always attendant to sonic and musical concepts in Wixárika life.

There were five main sections to this chapter. The first began with a consideration of the very vocabulary used to describe the topic of the chapter—the words *music* and *tradition*—and how those words can be semi-hegemonic concepts being adopted into Wixárika vocabulary but sometimes with very different meanings. The second and largest section was on current instrumental music, including the xaweri and kanari, tepu, kaitsa, ‘awá, and the rarely-mentioned



tampuxi. The third section combined various data on instruments in disuse, such as the musical bow and pirikixa.

The fourth section covered vocal musics of the Wixaritari, including the chanting of the mara'akame and quotidian song. Despite the importance of the chanting of the mara'akate for Wixárika life, its existence as a "profession" is felt by many Wixaritari to be in danger of disappearing as Wixárika youths are enticed by more lucrative pursuits. In the case of children's singing, I pointed out an apparent disconnect between the presentational and participatory modes of identity and considered the possibility that autochthonous children's songs and compositional practices are being slowly displaced by outside practices such as school songs.

The fifth section was the most ethnomusicological, covering sonic aesthetics in Wixárika life, tuning systems, and modal characteristics. In both the "small is beautiful" approach to high pitch and the permissiveness of xaweri tuning, a generational move towards Mestizo or Western sonic aesthetics can be observed.

In the case of certain melodic evidence, the sesquialtera rhythm, and instrumental practices, some outside influences can be said to have been successfully adapted and made meaningful in Wixárika life and ritual. But the disappearance of certain instruments, the move away from high-pitched aesthetics, and the mostly unconscious acceptance of outside tuning practices indicate that the Wixaritari, like all people, are certainly susceptible to outside influences that eclipse previous practices. For that reason, I am not in total agreement with previous scholars who have suggested the total ability of the Wixaritari to continue to successfully absorb or deflect outside influence. Previous multi-century processes are unlikely to be repeated when the context and premises are vastly different. I maintain that the guerra de

sonidos and its related socio-cultural processes have never been more immediate, intense, or crucial for the Wixaritari.

### **Chapter 3. Música Regional, Sierreño, & “Traditional Mariachi”**

*...la música no tiene fin, entre más le busque usted, más le encuentra.*<sup>159</sup>  
— *Julia Rodríguez García*

This chapter covers the history of the Wixárika appropriation of popular Mestizo music, especially acoustic violin groups that play what is usually called *música regional* (regional music) and electro-acoustic guitar groups that play *música sierrreña* (sierra music).<sup>160</sup> Scholars and those who work for state arts agencies also sometimes call the violin groups “traditional mariachi.” Though I intend to critique that genre assignation (and outsider genre assignation in general), the main evidence for it is the instrumentation of the violin groups which, in their most basic and common form, consists of violin, *vihuela* (a small five-string lute with a convex back common in mariachi), and *tololoche* (a.k.a. *violón*, an upright bass, smaller than orchestral basses but larger than a cello). The *vihuela*, which serves as the principal harmonic instrument, is sometimes doubled or replaced by the common 6-string guitar, and some rare but well-known groups use two violins (alternating or in counterpoint).

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<sup>159</sup> “...music has no end, the more you search for it, the more you find.”

<sup>160</sup> Violin groups are also called “Mestizo music” or simply “violin.” Sierreño can also be thought of as a type of *música regional*.



Figure 43. Violin group Alucinantes de la Sierra perform on (L-R) tololoche, vihuela, and violin during an on-camera interview with anthropology students from CUNorte (2012–10–10).

The other type of group, *música sierrreña*, or simply *sierrreño*, is known primarily for using a 6-string or 12-string electro-acoustic guitar (*docerola*) as its lead melodic instrument, and groups also commonly use another 6-string guitar and solid-body electric bass guitar for accompaniment. When played as a lead melodic instrument, the guitar is also commonly known as *requinto*, which has become nearly synonymous with the genre itself. Though violin and requinto groups are the most common, there are many alternative instrumentations within those formats that will be mentioned below.



Figure 44. Sierreño group *Dinastía de la Sierra* perform in Salazares, Zacatecas (2014–08–15).

The violin groups began to appear throughout the sierra in the 1970s and 1980s, becoming a noticeable force in the regional music scene by the early 2000s. The groups are often family-based, formed by brothers, uncles and nephews, cousins, or even nuclear families with female members and young children led by a father. Groups that have become more professionalized often form through mutual musical interests or estimations of each other’s talent rather than family ties. Hence, some groups today consist of members from separate Wixárika communities, having formed in Mestizo cities and towns. For both violin and requinto groups, the repertoire primarily consists of *corridos*, *rancheras*, *cumbias*, *románticas*, and to a lesser degree *zapateados* (a.k.a. “*guapangos*” or *sones*).<sup>161</sup> These song genres will be explained in more detail below.

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<sup>161</sup> Some groups also play *minuetes*, instrumental pieces used to honor Saints or Catholic deities, and to a lesser extent, autochthonous Wixárika deities. I do not focus on minuetes because I only heard them once, in Huaynamota, Nayarit during Holy Week. In my estimation they currently represent a minor part of the repertoire, and most groups covered here did not play them at all.

Beginning often as a pastime for families and friends in the sierra, Wixárika musicians increasingly professionalized their skills in Mexican popular music as a way to make money in their own communities and beyond. By the 1990s there were numerous groups performing in the Wixárika territory and its surrounding Mestizo towns. I should mention that I will use the terms *Wixárika* and *Huichol* to refer to slightly different aspects of the phenomenon. I always refer to the people themselves as Wixaritari—and the musicians as “Wixárika musicians”—but I employ the term *Huichol* in the same strategic way that the musicians themselves use it to distinguish themselves when performing for audiences beyond their own communities. In short, it distinguishes the music in its commercial form.

Huichol groups tend to perform in town plazas, during municipal fairs (*ferias*), for holidays, weddings, and dances of various sorts. They are often hired to perform in family homes for holidays or birthdays, and for many forms of drunken partying known generally as *la borrachera* or *la parranda*. Wixárika popular music groups also sometimes perform, however, in conjunction with or in addition to ritual observances and “traditional fiestas” in the Wixárika communities. De la Mora has done excellent work on analyzing where groups play and what type of repertoire is involved (2005). He should be especially commended for pointing out how these groups have become integrated into Cambio de Varas. I generally agree with his assessment of these spatial and temporal aspects, and thus do not need feel any need to expand upon or revise his take.

I do, however, think that De la Mora’s division of Huichol groups into three broad categories—“standard,” “neo-traditionalists,” and “innovators”—could use some refinement. By “standard,” De la Mora means groups that primarily perform in the sierra, know mostly just a basic repertoire of corridos, rancheras, and contemporary hits, and tend not to concern

themselves much with presentational issues such as dressing in Wixárika clothes. By “neo-traditionalist,” he means groups that usually play beyond the Sierra Wixárika, have often established themselves professionally in a Mestizo town, and almost always perform in expensive and eye-catching Wixárika finery.<sup>162</sup> By “innovators,” De la Mora means groups utilizing primarily electro-acoustic instruments, performing stage shows, and dressing primarily in Mestizo clothes or hybrids of Mestizo and Wixárika clothes.<sup>163</sup>

In the broadest strokes, De la Mora’s analytical categories are not without merit, but only when recognized *as* basic categories of interpretive analysis, not as categories or concepts from which musicians or audiences operate. My primary objections to De la Mora’s categories are that they do not arise from the way musicians and audiences understand this music, and they conflate many aspects of the phenomenon that are important for scholarly analysis. Hiding within and confounding his categories are issues of musician classes (i.e., talent as assessed by other musicians and audiences, but also relative financial leisure), instrumental and song genre orientations, identity and self-presentation (i.e., clothing), and labor vs. service performance (i.e., economic considerations). The categories are also highly synchronic, compressing and conflating the historical trajectory of El Venado Azul and other groups that could be seen to start out as “standard” but become “neo-traditionalists.”<sup>164</sup>

This and subsequent chapters, then, involve different analytical approaches that problematize De la Mora’s categories. In this chapter, I analyze with an ear towards concepts of genre and the historical trajectories at play, outlining distinct historical periods in the

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<sup>162</sup> This category was embodied most clearly by El Venado Azul.

<sup>163</sup> The pioneer in this category was Werika Yuawi, but it was characterized most strikingly by Los Amos’s de la Sierra.

<sup>164</sup> It could also be said that many sierreño groups (but not all) are *not* using Huicholness as part of their image or selling points. In fact, it would be entirely possible for a Mestizo fan of the group not to know that the musicians were Wixaritari. In that way, even grouping them as “Huichol music groups” is not without its problems.

development and appropriation of Mestizo music by Wixárika musicians. In subsequent chapters, I will analyze the phenomenon with a mind towards classes of musicians, issues of identity, and both music and identity as commodities.

In this chapter I also address the assertion that the Huichol group phenomenon can be thought of as “traditional mariachi” (*mariachi tradicional*) or as a “mariachi tradition” (*tradición mariachera*). The concept of “traditional mariachi” was defined in contrast to “modern mariachi” by Jesús Jáuregui (1986), and later connected to Huichol popular music groups (Jáuregui 1993b, 2003; Chamorro 2007; et al.). In addition to the instrumentation that includes violin and vihuela, the concept of a Wixárika/Huichol “mariachi tradition” is usually based on the assumed but unproven connection between the Ríos family lineage in Nayarit and the Huichol group phenomenon at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As shown below, Inés Ríos and his descendants probably played more for Mestizo and Wixárika audiences in Nayarit, outside of the five main Wixárika communities. My research has focused more on the phenomenon *in* Wixárika territory, a history of which cannot be entirely accounted for by the Ríos family.

In pointing out this distinction, I do not mean to disparage the Ríos family as lesser in Wixárika identity, though I am sure many of my contacts and interviewees from the five main Wixárika communities would have done so.<sup>165</sup> I simply point out a distinction between Jáuregui’s work and mine, the latter being focused more on the history of Mestizo music in the five main Wixárika communities, especially in Santa Catarina, which dominates the Huichol music scene today and is both the ritual and geographic center of the Wixárika world. Unlike Jáuregui, I am also interested in the issue of polygenesis, where popular Mexican music, no

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<sup>165</sup> Some of my contacts were so strict about their definitions of who was Wixárika that they spoke only of “the three Wixárika communities,” excluding Tuxpan de Bolaños and Guadalupe Ocotán. Many also denied that Wixaritari from Nayarit were “true” or “100%” Wixárika, even when they spoke the language and participated at least to some extent in “el costumbre.” Much of the issue might relate to the population’s lesser integration into the *tukipa* system.



matter what genre name is assigned to it, arrived in the various Wixárika communities at different times and via distinct inroads.

In this chapter, then, I focus on the history of Wixárika musicians playing popular Mexican music, situating it first within the various ways genre is understood in the region. I first outline the problems of genre definition via various means: instrumentation, song repertoire, rhythmic/musical characteristics, music industry influences, and sundry subjectivities and biases in genre assignment. I also use the opportunity to take music scholars to task for not utilizing a shared analytic vocabulary to talk about such issues, resulting in terminology whose use amongst musicians and scholars can be directly contradictory.

For the history portion, I synthesize the work of Jesús Jáuregui, Robert Zingg, and Ramón Mata Torres to take up the early history of Mestizo music in the sierra beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through approximately the 1980s, at which point there were Huichol groups in all five Wixárika communities. I follow that with the recent history of “música regional huichol,” focusing on a handful of specific influential groups and utilizing extensive quotes from interviews to give insight into the explosion of Huichol groups at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the rise of música sierraña. I specifically feature influential groups such as Los Teopa, El Venado Azul, Los Amos’s de la Sierra, and Huichol Musical. That is followed by an inquiry into the centrality of the community of Santa Catarina for this phenomenon today, specifically the towns of Nueva Colonia and Cajones. The focus on those two towns reveals the centrality of Santo Domingo, Nueva Colonia’s “Catholic God” who “became Wixárika,” similar to Mestizo music itself. I finish by considering musical developments in the Wixárika communities that occurred during the fieldwork period for this study.

## Aspects and Problems of Genre

The musical world of northern Jalisco and its surrounding regions is an oftentimes-chaotic encounter of many genres. The chaos is at times intentionally cultivated in municipal fairs (*ferias*) and other times of celebration in a sort of guerra de sonidos (see first interchapter and Videos 01, 03, 04). Most people of the region hold “live music” in high esteem, with DJs and recorded music seen as inappropriate or less than ideal for most celebrations. In the mix are certain genre preferences of both the musicians and their publics. Though genre is often taken for granted as being easily recognized and defined, upon closer investigation it is a complex matter that feeds into questions of identity, ideology, and cultural change (to name just a few areas of its relevance). Before addressing the Wixárika encounter with popular *teiwari* (outsider/Mestizo) music, then, one must understand the larger realms of musical genre in which Huichol groups operate and have found niches. I will address these questions of genre first by analyzing instrumentation, song repertoire, rhythmic aspects of genre, and the music industry’s influence on genre assignation.

### *Instrumentation as genre*

Genre is most commonly assigned, ascribed, and understood through instrumentation. Without even playing a note, a group’s potential repertoire can and will be intuited by other musicians and potential clients simply by observing the instruments they carry (and in this context they are all at least semi-portable).<sup>166</sup> From an international perspective, one might

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<sup>166</sup> I focus here on music that is most commonly found in plaza-based celebrations and private family events. Though genres such as classical music, pop, rock, heavy metal, and bachata clearly exist in places like Colotlán, they are comparatively rare. Another type of group called *grupos versátiles* (versatile groups) is making inroads for weddings and events held by well-to-do families with would-be cosmopolitan leanings. In my experience, though, these groups are relatively unsuccessful at getting crowds to dance until they start playing pieces that come from the genres covered in this chapter.

expect a rural region like northern Jalisco to celebrate to the sounds of “modern mariachi,” trumpets blaring, *charro* outfits sparkling, and singers belting *rancheras*. Such a scene almost never happens in rural plazas or private events.<sup>167</sup> The reason is that “modern” mariachi music is not thought of as highly participatory dance music.<sup>168</sup> In the plazas, and in most celebrations, the most common groups are those called *tamborazo*, *banda*, or *norteño*.

Tamborazo (or sometimes simply *tambora*) is the most common ensemble type found in ferias, but is also common in *charreadas* and private events (e.g., weddings and birthdays). In some sense, they are “traditional” ensembles of the region, including southern Zacatecas.<sup>169</sup> Tamborazos are usually instrumental ensembles without any singing, with trumpets and saxophones typically carrying the melody of popular tunes. As the name suggests, it also typically includes two drummers, one playing a large bass drum with two concussed cymbals atop it, and the other playing a large set of timbales called *tarola*, also usually with a snare drum and suspended crash cymbal to complete the set. In addition to performing in plazas and events, tamborazo groups are sometimes hired to perform from the back of a truck as its owners and friends walk through the streets in a private parade of sorts.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> When “modern” mariachi is played in a place like Colotlán, it is usually on stages for a seated audience. When occasionally used in weddings and other private events, mariachi is not the dance portion of the event, but performed during the meal when people are seated. Mariachis are also one of the most expensive musical groups one might hire and therefore not “popular” in the Spanish sense of the word as “most common,” “of the people,” or “financially feasible for all.”

<sup>168</sup> Dancing to mariachi, if done at all, is more likely to be performed by specialized and choreographed “folklore” troupes, whether they are amateur or professional.

<sup>169</sup> Jerez, Zacatecas—an hour north of Colotlán—has been holding an annual tamborazo festival.

<sup>170</sup> These used to be impromptu instances of drunken revelry during holidays and ferias. In Colotlán, at least, they now technically require permits. Playing from the back of a truck is also a way for tamborazo groups to advertise their services, driving through the streets during or before holidays and ferias in hopes of garnering clients for private events.



Figure 45. Tamborazo Universal perform in La Mesa de Flores, Colotlán, Jalisco (July 2004).

A related genre, sometimes nearly undistinguishable from tamborazo on a small scale, is known as banda. In the plazas during ferias, these groups are often just oversized tamborazo groups with small amplification systems for singers. In that way, some see banda as a subgenre, outgrowth, or variation of tamborazo (Simonett 2001). For full-scale banda performances, the ensemble will also include clarinets and tuba. The number of ensemble members is usually in the teens, though large groups can be nearly twenty members in total, more than double the size of the largest tamborazo groups. The genre's presence in the transnational music industry and the mass media has its geographical roots in Mexico's northwest coastal states, especially Sinaloa. That connection has also associated its success with the drug business there, influencing a corrido-oriented repertoire (Simonett 2001; Wald 2001). Today, its massive popularity has aided a parallel repertoire specialization consisting of slower, mostly un-danceable love songs known

as *románticas*. Major groups include the historic Banda el Recodo, Banda Jeréz, Banda Limón, Banda MS, among countless others.



Figure 46. Banda Tierra Zacatecana perform in Salazares, Zacatecas (2014–08–15).

The other contender for most-popular genre in rural Mexico is *música norteaña*, or simply *norteaño*. As the name suggests, its origins are associated with the northern states of Mexico bordering the United States. Historically, the genre has always crossed that border, connecting it to what is called *conjunto* or *música tejana* in the southwestern U.S. The word *conjunto* (ensemble/group/band) is thus most commonly associated with groups today that take their repertoire cues from *norteaño* music. Indeed, “conjunto” is usually synonymous with “*música norteaña*” (Peña 1999:14). That fact becomes important later when considering how Huichol groups position themselves within or in relation to specific genre categorizations.

Instrumentation of *música norteaña* usually hinges on (1) accordion (usually button accordion); (2) *bajo quinto* or *bajo sexto*, guitars with 10 strings in five courses or 12 strings in

six courses, respectively<sup>171</sup>; and (3) *tololoche*, an upright bass smaller than an orchestral or jazz bass, also called *contrabajo* or *violón*.<sup>172</sup> Major norteño groups whose songs figure prominently in Huichol repertoire include Los Tigres del Norte, Los Tucanes de Tijuana, and Ramón Ayala, among others. The genre is also common at the plaza level with small conjuntos that charge per song and, at least in northern Jalisco, often use vihuela in place of the bajo sexto, and commonly add snare drum and other small percussion instruments. Such groups are usually still called “norteño” because of the accordion, though some people also call them *chirrines*. Like banda, norteño has become associated with *narcocorridos* (drug ballads), but neither as much as their hybrid progeny known as norteño-banda.

Upon my arrival in Mexico for my main fieldwork period, the instrumentation of norteño-banda had become a hit throughout Mexico and in Mexican communities of the United States. Using the tuba from banda as its bass, and accordion or 12-string guitar as the lead, groups such as Gerardo Ortiz, El Komander, Calibre 50, Jesús Ojeda, and the Mayitos de Sinaloa have had a major influence on the repertoire of Huichol groups and to some extent, as mentioned below, their instrumentation.

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<sup>171</sup> Though bajo sexto is most associated with norteño and tuned differently than the common 12-string guitar, many norteño groups use common six-string acoustic guitars.

<sup>172</sup> Many norteño groups that play on large stages use electric bass in place of tololoche.



Figure 47. Norteño-banda Adolfo y su Kush from Tepechitlán, Zacatecas. Instrumentation is (L-R) bajo sexto, tuba, drumset, accordion (source: the group's YouTube site).

Norteño-banda is also known for being exceptionally narco- and brand-oriented, speaking not only of running drugs but doing them, and mentioning brand-name luxury goods to an extent that is not likely only coincidence but actual product placement.<sup>173</sup> Such themes have earned the genre and its repertoire the moniker *música pesada* (heavy music), as well as the industry-encouraged title *movimiento alterado* (altered/high movement). When played with 12-string guitar (*docerola*), the instrumentation is sometimes called *sierreña-banda*, a reference to earlier guitar duos known as *música sierrreña*.

Since it became a transnational hit in the 1990s, the genre known as *música sierrreña*—or simply *sierreño*—has had a large impact on the instrumentation and repertoire of Huichol groups. The dual leaders of the genre were the duos Bertín y Lalo, from Guerrero, and Miguel y Miguel, from Sinaloa. Both groups used electric bass and electroacoustic guitar, but the lead instrument that improvised melodies between verses was the six-string guitar (Bertín y Lalo) or

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<sup>173</sup> This will be explored more in the chapter on music as commodity and labor, but it is worth mentioning that much of the hype (and branding) of this “movement” comes from El Komander’s record label, Twiins Enterprises, based in Los Angeles, California.

the 12-string guitar (Miguel y Miguel). The lead guitar part is usually called *requinto*, a Spanish term for the role of a high-pitched instrument—usually plucked—that carries the melody or improvises solo moments.

Before the advent of *música sierrreña*, the other genre that had come to be dominated by Huichol groups in northern Jalisco, surrounding areas, and (inter)national markets, is that of violin groups. Outside observers—and now a small number of Wixárika musicians—sometimes draw a connection between violin-based Huichol groups and early mariachi based on the instrumentation already mentioned above: violin, vihuela, and tololoche, sometimes with guitar in place of or in addition to the vihuela and, in rare but well known instances, with two violins.



Figure 48. Los Diamantes de Santa Cruz perform at the wedding of Hilda Torres Urista and Nolan Warden in Casallanta, Colotlán, Jalisco (2004–12–29).

Huichol groups do not have a monopoly on the violin instrumentation; they still compete to some extent with Mestizo violin groups in the region. They also entered the music industry well after



the earlier national successes of violin groups such as Los Luceritos de Michoacán, Conjunto Michoacán, and Alma de Huetamo, the first even adding norteño-style drumset in some recordings. These violin groups from Michoacán, though, were never mentioned as influences by any of the Huichol groups interviewed for this project, though some Wixárika musicians were aware of them.

That Huichol groups have come to dominate the violin instrumentation, and a large part of local music markets, is seen in the number of groups in towns near the Wixárika homelands. For example, the musician's union (*syndicator*) in Colotlán, Jalisco, a town of fewer than 15,000 people in the entire municipality, reported in 2014, six tamborazos/bandas, three "modern" mariachis, and two Mestizo violin groups, which probably represents the vast majority of professional groups in the town with those particular instrumentations (i.e., most would be registered with the union).<sup>174</sup> At the same time, there were five to six Huichol groups in town, two doing requinto-based música sierrreña, two purely violin, and one that switched between requinto and violin depending on the setting.<sup>175</sup> None of those groups, despite playing extensively throughout the region and even having music videos in some cases, were registered with the union.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> The union also included "a few" soloists (usually piano players) and "versatile" groups. In addition to the union's numbers, there were likely a handful of ad-hoc groups that formed to busk (*talonear*) during holidays and ferias, commonly tamborazos or norteño-like groups with accordion, vihuela, and tololoche.

<sup>175</sup> During my time living in Colotlán, Huichol violin groups included Sueño Musical Huichol and Pasión Huichol. Requinto groups were Dinastía de la Sierra and Innovación Sierrreña. Innovación later became Legítimos Sierrreños, a sierrreña-banda with a mestizo tuba player, following the short-lived success of Presencia Pesada, a sierrreña-banda led by Kawi, formerly of the group Los Amos's. The other main group in Colotlán was Grupo Alucinantes de la Sierra, led by Maximino Hernandez Carrillo who switched between violin and requinto, depending on the setting.

<sup>176</sup> Reasons for this will be explained in the subsequent chapter.

Instrumentation is usually enough to guess a group's repertoire and how they might refer to their music, but not always. In northern Jalisco, it was common to see small Mestizo groups that combined accordion and violin as lead instruments, accompanied by vihuela and tololoche.



Figure 49. Norteño or "traditional mariachi?" (La Mesa de Flores, July 2004)

In those cases, audiences and musicians alike could be heard referring to a group as “*un conjunto*” (i.e., *norteño*), “*un mariachito*” (i.e., a small “traditional” mariachi), or avoiding the issue altogether by saying “the group” or “the musicians.” A case that exceptionally confounds classification by instrumentation is the group Los Cantaritos from Salazares, Zacatecas, twenty minutes from Colotlán. Promoting themselves as a “*norteño*” group, they play accordion, guitar, vihuela and, more surprisingly, *guitarrón*, a large bass guitar usually associated with mariachi. Further complicating the issue, some members would switch to Cuban *bongó* and *cumbia*-style metal *güiro* depending on the song.

Instrumentation can also be highly circumstantial. It often depends on what instruments a musician's friends or family members already play, not preconceived notions of what is quintessential according to genre limits. Similarly, instrumentation can change spontaneously depending on whoever might be available to fill in for a member who is ill or out of town. Such exceptions prove instrumentation to be a useful but not perfect way of thinking about genre. What is sometimes more important than the particular instruments is the repertoire they play.

### *Song repertoire as genre*

The above instrumental categorizations share, almost completely, the same potential repertoire. Indeed, many famous soloists sing the same songs with different instrumental accompaniment, be it *norteño*, *banda*, or even *mariachi*.<sup>177</sup> With instrumentation sometimes capricious, genre is also associated with the lyrical content of songs. Presented here approximately in order of commonality amongst Huichol groups, the song genres include *corridos*, *canción ranchera* (or simply *rancheras*), *cumbias*, *románticas*, and *polkas*.

Corridos (ballads or story songs) are a mainstay of Mexican popular music, considered a “lyric-narrative-epic genre” derived in part from the *romance castellano* (Mendoza 1984:103). They are usually strophic and with rhyming couplets (Ragland 2009). Corridos are historically associated with the Mexican revolution but more recently—since the 1970s and especially during the 21<sup>st</sup> century—with drug trafficking, resulting in the subgenre sometimes known as *narcocorridos*. Their subject matter usually pertains to *el valiente*, a macho man with a heroic nature. That previously meant revolutionary figures, martyrs, or other persecuted heroes, but now they focus more on drug kingpins and first-person narratives of greatness. Other subjects include

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<sup>177</sup> Soloists such as the late Chalino Sánchez or today's Gerardo Ortiz perform the same repertoire with different instrumentations.

romance, historical events, narratives, cautionary or exemplary tales (*ejemplos*), tragedies, horses, cities and towns, and so on (Mendoza 1984:104).

Few of the “old” corridos are heard in the repertoire of Huichol groups today. Two notable but rare exceptions include “La Toma de Zacatecas,” recorded by Los Diamantes de Santa Cruz (Audio 19), and “Los Dos Amigos,” recorded by Sueño Musical Huichol (Audio 20). Corridos composed by Huichol groups tend to focus on people from the Wixárika communities or sing the praises of a hometown or rancho. Examples include the corrido of Jaime Carrillo (Audio 21) by Samuel González of Los Teopa, and the corrido of Gabriel Pacheco (Audio 22) by Jacko Chelioz (Nicasio de la Cruz Velazquez).<sup>178</sup> Place-praising corridos composed by Wixaritari are numerous. Some notable examples include “Adios San Andrés” by Aurelio Carrillo (Audio 23), “Corrido de la Yesca” by Conjunto Ocotán (Audio 24), and “El Corrido de Mi Rancho” by Evaristo Torres de la Cruz of JB Sierreño (Audio 25).

Because physical places are also sometimes sacred sites (*lugares sagrados*) and associated with deities (*santos, yutsiri*), some Wixárika-composed corridos are equally about the ritual or “miraculous” powers of a place or its associated deity. Exemplars include the “Corrido de Teopa”<sup>179</sup> by Samuel González (Audio 26), the “Corrido de Temastián” by Rosalío González<sup>180</sup> (Audio 27), and the “Corrido de Nazareth” by Anaky Musical (Audio 28). A yet-

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<sup>178</sup> Jaime Carrillo is a former *comisariado* (community land authority) who prevailed in land claims brought against Mestizo ranchers who had encroached on Wixárika lands. The corrido of Gabriel Pacheco is one of the few examples of what might be called an anti-narcocorrido, praising financial success through legitimate means, in this case that of an academic linguist from the community of Guadalupe Ocotán.

<sup>179</sup> Teopa (also spelled Teupa) is a sacred spring and rock formation perched above the Chapalagana River, southwest of the locality of Cajones.

<sup>180</sup> Temastián is the home of El Señor de los Rayos, a pilgrimage site for many Mestizos and some Wixaritari. Being from the northern Wixárika territory, Rosalío was unfamiliar with the region and recounted how he investigated the names of surrounding pueblos and the powers of Señor de los Rayos in order to make his corrido convincing.

unrecorded corrido for Santo Domingo (Ximianame), also by Rosalío González, is presented later in this chapter.

The other song genre that contends for top place with corridos is that of the canción ranchera, or simply “ranchera.” Like the corrido, the ranchera has received ample scholarly attention but seems to be the subject of more scholarly and class-based disdain due to its more emotive singing style and unapologetic rural themes. Mendoza, referring to the structural changes of ranchera songs since their origins in Italian opera stated that, “due to the constant use of the genre in the lips of the populace [*pueblo*], it has suffered mutilations and additions that upset exact measurement” ([1961] 1982:44). The rural themes, however, struck a chord with many Mexican musicians and audiences alike, including the Wixaritari. Commonly requested rancheras include “Arboles de la Barranca” (Audio 29), “Por las Calles de Chihuahua,” “El Corral de Piedras,” “Cruz de Madera,” “Cielito Lindo,” “Dos Botellas de Mezcal” (Audio 30), among many others. Today, rancheras are sometimes nearly indistinguishable from canciones románticas (usually just called *románticas* or *romanticonas*). The two share common themes of love but románticas are often slower and may not have the decidedly rural references to agriculture, livestock, landscape, flora and fauna, and so forth. Románticas are also more commonly performed by “modern” Huichol groups such as Huichol Musical, and groups with sierrreño instrumentation.<sup>181</sup>

Both rancheras and románticas are distinguished from the corrido by the presence of choruses or refrains, which work especially well for popular music of the mass media that thrives on “hooks” or the “earworm.” Not to be left behind, *corridistas* (corrido composers) have also

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<sup>181</sup> In the Mestizo music world, románticas are more associated with bandas and synthesizer-heavy *música grupera*.

begun writing corrido-like songs with catchy or “sticky” (*pegajosa*) refrains about tough, brand-name-wearing, luxury-vehicle-driving men, and sometimes women (Ragland 2009).

Though corridos and rancheras comprise the majority of recorded songs by Huichol groups, the actual time spent performing in live stage shows reveals *cumbias* to be an indispensable and major element of the repertoire today. Originally from Colombia, the cumbia’s rise to becoming a pan-Latin American and pan-Latino form coincided precisely with the emergence of the Huichol group phenomenon in the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>182</sup> The cumbia is known more as a rhythm (addressed below) than a song form per se. In fact, cumbia lyrics are distinguished more by their simplicity or even silliness, sometimes simply regaling the audience with exhortations to dance or get drunk, albeit with superbly catchy melodies (e.g., “Sungi Rungi” (Audio 31). Early cumbias often repeated verses in patterns such as AABB, AABBA’A’, AABBCCA’A’, or similar variations.

Unlike other song genres, cumbias are more commonly strung together in live performance to keep people on the dance floor for extended times, a practice that sometimes makes it way into recorded medleys (“*popurri*”) with multiple cumbias on a single track (e.g., Audio 32). Notably, the two biggest (inter)national hits recorded by Huichol groups were both cumbias, first recorded by José López Robles (“Cuarru Mautorra” [Kwaxu Matuxa] [Audio 33]; and “Cumbia Cusinela” [Audio 34]).<sup>183</sup>

One “song” genre that is not actually sung is the all-instrumental “polka” (*polka* or *polca*). Unlike the word *polka* in English (and much Spanish scholarship) which means an “oompah” band rhythm, “polka” amongst all of my interviewees (including even xaweri players)

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<sup>182</sup> On the cumbia in Mexican and Mexican American music, see Madrid (2013) and Peña (1999:180).

<sup>183</sup> The title “Cuarru Mautorra” translates as “White Crane” and is often known in Spanish as “La Garza y el Venado” (“The Crane and the Deer”). The word *white* in Wixárika is variously written as *meutuxa*, *mautuxa*, and *matuxa*.

meant simply an instrumental piece without singing. Theoretically, any tune could be done as a polka, though there were some that were known only as polkas, including “El Remolino,” “Payaso del Rodeo,” and “Corazón de Texas” (i.e., “Deep in the Heart of Texas”).<sup>184</sup> These seemed to be preferred by older musicians and violin players (because it allowed them to showcase their skill). It was extremely rare to hear requinto groups doing polkas.<sup>185</sup> The discrepancies regarding the assumed definition of polka between English-speakers, Mexican scholars, and musicians interviewed for this project raises questions about the scholarly vocabulary (or lack thereof) surrounding rhythmic aspects of genre distinctions.

#### *Rhythmic aspects of genre distinctions*

Rhythmic aspects of genre are essential for the audience to connect songs to dancing. Despite the importance of rhythm, the vocabulary for rhythm used by musicians interviewed for this project was usually not extensive. Problematically (for scholars), when there was rhythmic vocabulary employed, it often did not correspond to the vocabulary used by dancers or scholars, and was sometimes contradictory to those uses.

One of the biggest differences in rhythmic vocabulary between many Mestizos and Wixárika musicians is the use of the terms *corrido* and *ranchera* in relation to rhythm. As one young Wixárika musician told me, the *corrido* rhythm is “*cuando va corridito*” (“when it goes a bit fast”). He went on to explain that it meant a rhythm without “a pause.” The same idea was clearly explained by Ernesto Hernández Bautista of Sueño Musical:

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<sup>184</sup> “Deep in the Heart of Texas” has become somewhat “traditionalized” in the region. Most people are not familiar with its origins or that it has lyrics in English. Nevertheless, it is commonly played by violin and tamborazo groups.

<sup>185</sup> One notable exception was a requinto group that recorded the hit “Cumbia Cusinela” as a polka, likely because they did not know the lyrics.

**EHB:** Rancheras are songs that go slowly [*van lentas*]... un chen chen un chen chen [singing the vihuela pattern  $\circ XX \circ XX$ , where X is a marked pulse].

**NW:** But it's... un chan chan un chan chan [ $\circ XX \circ XX$ ]?

**EHB:** Uh huh [agrees]. It has a pause.

**NW:** Or is it un chan un chan [ $\circ X \circ X$ ]?

**EHB:** No... un chen chen un chen chen [ $\circ XX \circ XX$ ]. Ranchera. Corrido is when it goes faster [*va acelerado*]: un chen un chen un chen un chen [ $\circ X \circ X \circ X \circ X$ ].

**NW:** So, for you it doesn't have to do with the lyrics?

**EHB:** More with the rhythm, with the rhythm.

He went on to clarify that the two words could also indicate lyric content, adding that they could be combined to refer to both lyrics and rhythm. For example, he pointed out that the song “Gabino Barrera” was a corrido in lyrical content but usually played in a rhythm he would call ranchera (for him, meaning  $\circ XX \circ XX$ ). It could then be classified as a “corrido ranchera.” Conversely, the song “El Sauce y la Palma” (Audio 36), a classic ranchera (by lyrical content) was, to him, a “ranchera corrido” because the rhythmic accompaniment was  $\circ X \circ X \circ X \circ X$ .

The above understanding of rhythm, though common amongst Wixárika musicians I interviewed, is the exact opposite of how many Mestizos and scholars understand the rhythms, and contrary to the most common rhythm-lyric pairings. For example, “El Sauce y la Palma” is usually just called a “ranchera,” which for many Mestizos means a faster dance with a binary division of the beat (i.e., strumming pattern:  $\circ X \circ X \circ X \circ X$ ; dancing pattern:  $\circ L \circ R \circ L \circ R$ ).<sup>186</sup> To further the confusion somewhat, scholars such as Manuel Peña would refer to the same piece as a “polka-ranchera,” where “polka” means a binary division of the beat that emphasizes the upbeat, and “ranchera” the rural lyrical content. In other words, he is referring to a *song* sung to a *binary* division of the beat. For many Wixárika musicians, Peña’s terminology would instead mean an *instrumental* piece with a *ternary* division of the beat.

Some of the terminology, of course, depends on the musician. Maximino Hernandez Carrillo referred to “Gabino Barrera” and similar corrido lyrics with ternary division of the beat

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<sup>186</sup> This would be the man’s step, the woman’s being the reverse:  $\circ R \circ L \circ R \circ L$ .



as “*corrido valseado*” (waltzed corrido). Other musicians I interviewed had never heard of the terms *vals* (waltz) or *valseado* (waltzed). The lack of extensive rhythmic vocabulary was common. For example, a certain strumming pattern increasingly common in norteño-banda and the so-called Movimiento Alterado is ↓ . R↑ . ↑ (where arrows indicate strumming direction, R = slow downward “*rasgueado*” strum, and “.” = unmarked pulse).<sup>187</sup> Despite its uniqueness and ubiquity today, I could not find one person who had a name for the rhythm or strumming pattern.

Similarly, other terms for dance rhythms commonly employed in scholarly literature on popular Mexican music (and its appropriation by the Wixaritari) were often unknown. None of my interviewees or contacts had heard of the terms *chotes / chotis* (schottische) or *mazurka*, though the terms are sometimes used by scholars to describe this music. The dance associated with the chotis is characterized as such:

||: 12341234 :||  
 ||: L○RLR○LR :|| (where ○ = pause while on preceding foot)

Though the chotis is a dance done by some Mestizos (usually over the age of fifty), I did not see it once in a Wixárika baile.<sup>188</sup> Similarly, when scholars talk in passing of waltzes and mazurkas in this music, it is not clear how they distinguish them. Basic reference works describe the European versions of both dances as being “in triple meter,” without elaborating much. Of what use are the words, then, if they are used in scholarly literature without definition, and mostly or entirely unknown by the musicians?

It would seem as though the aforementioned terms—*chotis*, *mazurka*, *waltz*, *polka*—were being used in scholarly works as if they were technical descriptors when in fact their descriptive

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<sup>187</sup> The rhythm can be heard in songs like “Gente Batallosa” (Audio 63) and “Aguila Blanca.” Though it has some characteristics of a waltz, the rhythm is too slow to dance a regular “corrido valseado” (i.e., L○○R○○ or R○○L○○). Instead, it is often danced in two, stepping on the first downward stroke “↓” and the first upward stroke “↑,” creating a polyrhythmic resultant rhythm between dancers and musicians.

<sup>188</sup> Even amongst Mestizos, the dance pattern is often *not* used for a schottische per se, but slower, early cumbias.

potential is paltry or nonexistent for ethnography. Even if music scholars shared an understanding of the distinction—and I doubt they all do—scholarly definitions would not necessarily be respected or even known by musicians or audiences. Thus, employing the terms without elucidation or clear ethnographic data is a nonstarter for works that aspire to give historical insight or to document ethnographic details for posterity. Clearly, a shared systematic vocabulary—in this case metrical—even if only simple variations on TUBS<sup>189</sup> notation like those used here, is necessary to ensure we are not talking past each other or, worse, not even having a legitimate discussion.

Despite these major differences and challenges to scholarship, there were a couple of rhythms about which there was no confusion: *balada* and *cumbia*. These terms usually imply both a rhythm and general lyrical content or approach. *Balada*, for example, is associated with *románticas* (e.g., “Soledad” as performed by Huichol Musical [Audio 37]) and characterized by a *vihuela* and/or guitar pattern marking a binary division of every beat:

||: 1 . 2 . 3 . 4 . :|| [beat in *balada* rhythm]  
||: ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ :|| [*vihuela* and/or guitar rhythm with direction of strumming]

*Cumbia* is the other rhythm about which almost everyone concurs on its characteristics. By stringing together many *cumbias* and using them as background rhythms in which to issue greetings to audience members (*saludos*), they often take up more time in *Wixárika* bailes than any other rhythm. The genre is characterized primarily by the *tololoche* or bass, and the metal *güiro* (scraper), as shown below. Alternatively, the *vihuela* and/or guitar sometimes mark the upbeat in place of the *güiro* in slow *cumbias* (e.g., “Mar de Emociones” as performed by Herencia Huichol [Audio 38]).

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<sup>189</sup> “Time Unit Box System” (TUBS) notation was developed by Philip Harland in the 1960s for use in the study of African music at UCLA, and later outlined by James Koetting (1970). I employ something similar here but use a monospaced font instead of actual boxes to align the text.

||: 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . :|| [beat in cumbia rhythm]  
 ||: C . . . E . G . g . . . b . D . :|| [tololoche or bass guitar<sup>190</sup>]  
 ||: ↓ . ↓ ↑ ↓ . ↓ ↑ ↓ . ↓ ↑ ↓ . ↓ ↑ :|| [güiro rhythm with common hand motion]

Older musicians and community members recall that cumbias during the early days of Mestizo music in the Wixárika communities (1970s) were much slower than today. Pieces like “Rosa Maria” as performed by Los Diamantes de Santa Cruz (Audio 39) are indicative of the early cumbia tempo at approximately 90 beats-per-minute (bpm). Today, cumbias can easily be nearly twice that speed, with the hit “Pasito Chicoteado” as performed by Herencia Huichol at around 170bpm.

Despite there being general agreement about the meaning of the words *balada* and *cumbia*, it does not mean everyone knows where they come from or has some organic idea of their history. Once, while taking some musicians to a performance, the requinto player sitting in the front seat next to me browsed my iPhone to see what songs I had on it.<sup>191</sup> He cooed at my meager collection of reggae, but did not bother to play it. Later, he asked me “where does cumbia come from?” Though genres might have local uses, it does not entail local knowledge of their origins or histories.

Despite any discrepancies about genre definitions and their generally unknown histories, genre associations go a long way in defining a group’s identity in the music scene, be it local, regional, national, or beyond. Sometimes they also define the people playing the music. In listening to recordings with musicians from other groups, they would often make comments

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<sup>190</sup> Here, lowercase notes are those just below the starting C, so that G is an octave above g. The chosen notes are hypothetical and meant only to demonstrate common intervallic relationships and a common chord progression (I-V) as might be found in a slow to medium tempo cumbia.

<sup>191</sup> I often used this technique to learn about people’s genre preferences and interests, handing them my iPhone that was connected to the truck’s stereo, showing them how to navigate by genre and artist, and saying something like “choose whatever you want.” Despite an abundance of available genres, we almost always ended up listening to what they themselves played (i.e., Huichol groups or música regional in general).

about their colleagues like “they didn’t put any románticas on this album... I guess they’re not like that.” Or, “that guy seems tranquil, but he sings a lot of corridos,” implying that the singer might have a nefarious side that comes through in his choice of repertoire. These genre associations—often expectations—are not whimsical or meaningless. In addition to defining a group’s identity or image, they can be a strategy for creating economic value within the music industry.

### *The influence of music industry genres*

Instrumentation and song genres are the way most interviewees spoke about genre in their own musical worlds. When reflecting on their own musical genre in a broad sense—in comparison to other genres in Mexico and the world—they tended to call it “música regional.” This category seems to be a music industry creation, probably originally devised as a way of distinguishing a nostalgic category for Mexican immigrants in the U.S., setting it apart from an undifferentiated “Latin” music.<sup>192</sup> The category includes all instrumentation and song genres mentioned above, but also usually includes mariachi. That diverges from the way many Wixárika violinists categorized their music, sometimes pointing out very clearly that their music was not mariachi because they did not play “mariachi songs.” This industry-created category is worthy of mention here, however, to the extent that many Wixárika musicians use the term, likely revealing the influence of the transnational music industry in how they conceptualize and present their music.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Unlike the industry-created genre “World Music,” the history and creation of the genre “Música Regional” apparently has not been studied closely. Huichol Musical is listed on iTunes as “Regional Mexicano,” a subcategory of “Latin.”

<sup>193</sup> The “Regional Mexican” genre (as it is sometimes called in U.S. locations) also tends to conflate ethnicity, nationality, and geographic relationality (i.e., ruralness). Some Mexican labels and smaller U.S. labels owned by Mexican immigrants divide their collections further to distinguish between

Another common industry-oriented category mentioned by Wixárika musicians when asked about their music was *grupera*, though it was primarily those in requinto-based groups that mentioned the term. Such a self-categorization surprised me at first because *grupera* is usually characterized by a specific strain of synthesizer-heavy Mexican pop music from the 1980s and 90s, especially groups like Los Bukis and Los Temerarios. In the musicians' view, though, it simply meant "groups" of approximately four or five members, often with electric instruments. Clearly, the term has expanded since its earlier years, now understood by some to be a meta-genre that encompasses not only "grupero" proper, but also rock, bachata, merengue, and all of the instrumental genres mentioned above, including banda.<sup>194</sup> This expansive categorization has allowed not only requinto-based Huichol groups to be considered *música grupera*, but allowed the violin-based super group Huichol Musical to be nominated as "Grupera Artist of the Year" for Premio Lo Nuestro, a U.S.-based awards show produced by the Univision television network.

### *Subjectivity of genre and interstitiality*

Assigning genre is a highly subjective action, oftentimes replete with ideological positions and value assumptions. Perception of music is based on the observer's background, values, and expectations for the music. At a combination *jaripeo* (bull riding) and baile event at Hacienda Acayapan in Tepic, Nayarit, the announcer introduced the upcoming performers—Huichol Musical and Venado Azul—as "traditional Mexican music" (*música tradicional mexicana*). The Wixárika artist Álvaro Ortiz López, perhaps the only Wixárika composer trained

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instrumentation, song genres, and even gender of the singers. Online stores such as Alazan Productions ([www.zacatecasrecords.com](http://www.zacatecasrecords.com)) use a keyword approach to put groups into multiple categories, including violín, bandas, duetos, saxofón, cumbias, guitarras, mujeres, and so on. Huichol groups are categorized as "Violin" (not mariachi) along with violin groups from other states. It is also common to see smaller record labels using geographic distinctions: Michoacán, Guerrero, Tierra Caliente, etc.

<sup>194</sup> See, for example, the website Portal Gruperio ([www.portalgruperio.com](http://www.portalgruperio.com)).

in the Western “classical” lineage, referred to the difference between his Western art music compositions and the music of the bailes as “intellectual music” (*música de inteligencia*) versus “party music” (*música de convivencia*).

Other forms of talking about the music combined various genre distinctions based on ethnicity, instrumentation, group size, and repertoire. Many, including José López (of the group El Venado Azul), generally referred to the music as “música regional,” or distinguished it ethnically with the suffixes “Huichol” or “Wixárika” (i.e., “*música regional huichol*”). Julia Rodríguez García of the group Los Diamantes de Santa Cruz referred to their music simply as “violin music” (*música de violín*) or by the size of the group (*trío*). Some referred to it through synecdoche as “música ranchera.”

Despite these contrasts and variations, Huichol groups are always considered to be interstitial as a result of being associated simultaneously with Wixaritari and Mestizos, equally “música wixárika” and “música mestiza.” I often would conclude interviews with a sort of cognitive approach, peppering interviewees with questions about their own classificatory schema regarding music genres.<sup>195</sup> As one might expect with so many potential methods to classify— instrumentation, repertoire, ethnicity—the result was often messy and less than helpful. Though some interviewees had very clear ideas about their music’s classification within larger categories, many found it confusing or convoluted. One point that was clear in most cases, though, was that popular Mexican música regional played by Wixárika musicians could be called both *teiwari kwikarieya* (Mestizo music) and *wixárika kwikarieya* (Wixárika music), categories that were otherwise separated. This applied primarily to violin-based groups, but many also

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<sup>195</sup> I often used the words *genre* (*género*), *type* (*tipo*), and *style* (*estilo*) in the same questioning. In most cases for this part of the interview I asked directed questions about strict inclusions (e.g., “is música grupera a type of música regional?”).

included groups with requinto.<sup>196</sup> Going beyond interstitiality, the music was understood within both categories equally, questioning linguistic understandings of the terms *teiwari* and *wixárika* as dichotomous or even diametrically opposed. Music, then, does serve as a “bridge” between the two worlds, especially for the Wixárika musicians who have adopted it as their art and occupation, the history of which I will now outline.

### **Early History of Mexican/Mestizo Music in Sierra: The 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

It should not be forgotten that the history of the Wixárika encounter with outside music did not begin with the phenomenon that is known today generally as “música regional huichol.” The *xaweri* and *kanari* are clear examples of earlier *teiwari* influences that were adopted to the point of being understood as autochthonous. The differences pertaining to the phenomenon currently at hand, however, are found in the role of music as labor and self-representation beyond Wixárika communities. There is also almost no genre overlap in terms of the repertoire of the two, and the history outlined here is that which corresponds to Wixárika appropriation of the song genres mentioned above.

#### *Inés Ríos*

The early history of popular Mestizo music in the sierra, and Wixárika musicians who perform it, has been given excellent scholarly attention by anthropologist and mariachi historian Jesús Jáuregui. Covering slightly more than the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jáuregui has done a tremendous historical service by documenting the musical groups of the Ríos family legacy in Nayarit. These groups are descended from Inés Ríos (approximate dates, 1850–1920) who,

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<sup>196</sup> In an extreme example unrelated to popular music, I asked the Wixárika composer Álvaro Ortíz López whether Gregorian chant—his specialty—could ever be considered “música wixárika.” He replied quickly, “well, at a certain point, it has to be.”

according to “oral tradition” from the Huaynamota River and Santiago River region, was “the first Huichol mariachero” (1993b:311).

Descendants and acquaintances of Inés Ríos told Jáuregui that Ríos was the “son of a Spaniard and a Huichol woman,” that he was “light skinned” (*guiro*) and pink/red faced (*colorado*), and some even said he had blue eyes. He “played in any and all [*cualquier*] fiesta that the Mestizo people did,” and played “*sones de tarima*, polkas... *jarabes*, *sones*, *bules*, *cuchillos*, *mazurkas*, *chutes* [sic]...” (313). Despite his fair complexion and the likelihood that he could or did “pass” as Mestizo or even Spanish, his descendants claimed “he grew up [*se crió*] amongst Huichols, he was able to speak Virrática [sic],” and partook of Wixárika fiestas (314). Multiple versions of the story include the detail that Ríos learned to play the Mestizo (i.e., European) violin by calling on and encountering “the devil.” A great-grandson of Ríos told Jáuregui a variant of the story that referred not to “the devil,” but to the plant known as *kieri*, and an encounter with *kieri*’s human form, *Teiwari Yuawi*.

### *The Guadalupe Brothers of Tuxpan de Bolaños*

Around the same time that the sons of Inés Ríos might have been playing in Nayarit to the east of “official” Wixárika territory, Robert M. Zingg documented a group in Tuxpan de Bolaños that did not seem to be connected to the Ríos lineage. The Guadalupe Brothers (Zingg wrote it as “Guadalupe”) were “famous” in their community in the early- to mid-1930s, but probably did not have musical *carte blanche* when it came to repertoire. Instead, they were capitalizing on a preexisting interest in popular Mestizo songs amongst the Wixaritari. As Zingg put it:

The Huichols appreciate the lively, colorful folk music of the Mexicans much more than their own. This is one of the few Mexicanisms esteemed by the Huichols. Mexican minstrels make it a business of traveling through the sierra for the money the Indians pay them for playing in the



drunken feasts that follow the ceremonies. This is sufficiently lucrative that two Huichol brothers learned to play the harp and violin in Mexican fashion to perform the same service for the same fees. (Zingg 1938:397)

Wixaritari in that time period were not only exposed to Mestizo music by traveling Mestizo minstrels in the sierra, but also through their own travels to labor in the coastal regions where the young men would “pick up snatches of garbled Mexican songs which they render in drunken feasts to their more provincial companions” (Zingg 1938:398). These outward-looking and appropriative musical inclinations of the Wixaritari led the Guadalupe Brothers to learn Mestizo instruments from their Mestizo neighbors to the east (i.e., *not* in Nayarit or from the Ríos family, but from the opposite side of the sierra in Jalisco). Jáuregui makes a convincing claim that they learned from musicians in Chimaltitán (a Mestizo municipality to the east of Tuxpan), specifically the group Los Bautista from the locality of Tepizuac (Jáuregui 1992; 2003:355)

About the origins of the Guadalupe Brothers and their ingenuity in maintaining their instruments in a rugged environment, Zingg added:

[They] learned to play the Mexican harp beautifully. Their teacher was a Mexican trader, and from him they purchased an instrument for fifteen pesos. When the strings break, they make new ones of deerskin carefully and cleverly twisted. The shorter strings are made of sinew and seldom break. With a wooden key the instrument is kept in excellent tune. (Zingg 1938:653)

About their name and success, Zingg informs us that:

The remove [of the brothers Guadalupe] in kinship is greater and so remote that the Huichols themselves were not clear about it... [both brothers are] named Guadalupe [sic], which indicated how imperfectly the Spanish system of personal names works among the Huichols... The brothers Guadalupe are famous in the community because they alone can play the Mexican harp and violin in Mexican fashion. They are in great favor because of this ability and are often hired by the other Huichols to play at the feasts which follow the ceremonies. The pair charge as much as a shaman for their services... about the Mexican scale of payment for musicians; and they deserve it because they play quite as well as Mexicans, which is a phenomenal thing in as isolated a place as Tuxpan. (Zingg 1938:108)

I will emphasize that because they were “famous in the community,” they were able to charge as much as a mara‘akame. As noted in the preceding chapter, until that time the mara‘akate were

probably the only Wixaritari paid directly in cash by other Wixaritari for their services.<sup>197</sup>

Despite their fame amongst their own people, though, there is no evidence to suggest that the Guadalupe Brothers traveled beyond the sierra to perform for Mestizos.



Figure 50. The Guadalupe Brothers perform in an unspecified rancho near Tuxpan de Bolaños. Photograph by Robert Zingg, c.1933 (Z-H17-18A---449). Courtesy Amerind Foundation.

The novelty of Mestizo music in the region of Tuxpan de Bolaños was documented in silent film reels taken by Zingg in 1933–1934 (musical portions excerpted in Video 15). The Guadalupe Brothers are seen performing on harp and violin, in addition to Mestizo groups in separate scenes.<sup>198</sup> As pointed out in the interchapter on bailes, it seems that not all Wixárika women were comfortable dancing to Mestizo music in those years. Segments of the film show a few women dancing—likely with their husbands—but others show men dancing with other men,

<sup>197</sup> One possible exception might have been Wixárika ranchers who sold livestock, though then they were selling “goods,” not services, and historical evidence from Lumholtz suggests livestock was primarily sold to Mestizos.

<sup>198</sup> Zingg filmed a number of scenes outside of Wixárika territory, including what appears to be mule loading in Bolaños and the distant pre-Hispanic ruins of La Quemada in Zacatecas. Hence, it is not clear whether his scenes of Mestizo musicians show groups visiting Wixárika territory or in their own Mestizo ranchos.

probably out of necessity, but also to some extent for the sake of the camera.<sup>199</sup> A man dancing with another man is a strict but unspoken taboo in today's bailes.

The Guadalupe Brothers might not have had any musical progeny or apprentices. Henrietta Yurchenco, traveling and recording music in the same area a decade after Zingg did not mention or document any such groups.<sup>200</sup> The next mention in the historical record of a group in the Tuxpan region was not until the 1970s, a time when groups began to appear throughout the sierra (covered below). Therefore, the only evidence of Wixárika groups from the 1940s through the 1960s is that of the Ríos lineage in Nayarit documented by Jáuregui.

#### *The Ríos family of Nayarit during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century*

One mid-century group, known simply as Los Ríos, was founded in the locality of Carretones de Cerritos (municipality of Tepic) and existed from 1947–1957 (Jáuregui 1993b).<sup>201</sup> Unlike most musicians today, they learned first on xaweri and kanari, retuning them in Mestizo fashion.<sup>202</sup> The group played not only in their own locality but also in other parts of Nayarit such as Ventanas, Jazmines, Huaynamota, Guadalupe Ocotán, Jesús María, and Gavilanes, only one of which is within official Wixárika territory (i.e., Guadalupe Ocotán).

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<sup>199</sup> The first men to dance together in the scene begin to do so only after they see the camera pan towards them.

<sup>200</sup> Of course, Yurchenco was looking to record “survivals” of Pre-Columbian practices and might not have been as interested in groups like the Guadalupe Brothers.

<sup>201</sup> Jáuregui calls them “Mariachi Los Ríos” but it is not clear whether that is his application of the term *mariachi* or whether the group and its audiences also used the term.

<sup>202</sup> The fact that they did not have mestizo instruments in the family with which to learn suggests that the musical lineage of the family was not without its ruptures and intermittencies.

Another of the Ríos lineage, a group from San Rafael, Nayarit (1958–1973) was probably the first to perform in Mexico City, revealing the novelty with which outsiders viewed such groups.<sup>203</sup>

So we took advantage [of going to Mexico City on land-related business] and we took the instruments and Wixárika outfits. We stayed more than fifteen days and we said: ‘Let’s go to Garibaldi, where all the mariachis are.’ We were there chatting them up. We played a bit... it moved the guys there to see the Wixárika outfits; many stopped playing and requested songs from us. They didn’t even believe that we were Huicholes... they said they’d never seen a Huichol mariachi... later we had the opportunity to go with the President of the Republic, Luis Echevarría; on that occasion we solicited instruments from him... and they did give us [money] to buy instruments... (Rufino Ríos, quoted in Jáuregui 1993b:29)<sup>204</sup>

It seems the use of Wixárika clothing to perform might have been done more for special, government-related events, a strategy of self-representation that became common in the 1990s and 2000s, especially in Nayarit. In the same interview, Rufino Ríos also pointed out that the group began to seek out work more in the coastal regions of Nayarit and larger cities such as Compostela and Tepic, Nayarit’s capital. Like the other Ríos groups, it does not seem they performed much—or at all—in the five main Wixárika communities.

### *Huichol groups appearing throughout the sierra (1970s–1980s)*

The phenomenon of Huichol music groups began to gather momentum during the 1970s and 80s, with groups apparently in all Wixárika communities by the end of the 1980s. Both the existence of the groups and their documentation were no doubt aided and indirectly tied to the

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<sup>203</sup> Specifically, they were from the *ejido* (communal farm land) called El Vicenteño, which seems to have been the name of the group as well.

<sup>204</sup> It is not clear in which exact year they went to Mexico City. If they met president Echevarría, it would have been between 1970 (when he became president) and 1973 (when the group disbanded). Original Spanish: “Entonces aprovechamos y llevamos los instrumentos y vestidos como virrática [sic]. Duramos más de quince días y dijimos: ‘Vamos a Garibaldi, donde están todos los mariachis.’ Por allí anduvimos ‘echándole l’ebra.’ Tocamos algo... les conmovió a los muchachos de ver los trajes de virrática; muchos dejaron de tocar y nos mandaban tocar ellos. Ni creían que éramos huicholes... decían que nunca habían visto un mariachi huichol... Luego tuvimos oportunidad de ir con el presidente de la República, Luis Echeverría; esa ocasión le solicitamos instrumentos... y sí nos dieron para comprar instrumentos...”

construction of airstrips and vehicular roads in the Wixárika communities under the auspices of the INI (see chapter *On Huicholistas and Huicholeros*). In particular, the phenomenon was well documented in the community of San Andrés by Ramón Mata Torres. Writing about events he witnessed in the early 1970s in Tateikie, he commented:

Frequently in the fiestas of Cambio de Vara and Holy Week, above all at the end of the latter, one can see circling around San Andrés [Tateikie] two, three, and up to four mariachis that, music to the wind, follow the steps of some happy Huichol who spends, on drinks and *sones*, even [the money] he doesn't have... (Mata Torres [1987] 1993:255).<sup>205</sup>

These groups, however, were Mestizo ones that arrived to perform for the locals, just like those mentioned by Zingg forty years earlier. The Mestizo groups early on realized the advantage they would have amongst the Wixaritari if they were to compose corridos for places like San Andrés and some of its inhabitants. Hence, the composition of what is perhaps the first corrido about a place within Wixárika territory, the “Corrido de San Andrés” (Audio 40), composed by Serapio García of El Zapote, Zacatecas.<sup>206</sup>

But where did the demand for Mestizo music come from that would support up to four Mestizo music groups at one singular fiesta in the sierra? In addition to working in the coast, the Wixaritari by that time were hearing recorded popular music on a daily basis via the radio, LP records and, later, cassette tapes. Mata Torres continued:

The Huichols love *música ranchera* and at almost all hours of the day and night they have their radios turned on. When a Huichol goes to the city or to a town where there's a radio station where you can dedicate songs, he doesn't let the opportunity pass. (Mata Torres [1987] 1993:256)<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> “Con frecuencia en las fiestas del Cambio de Vara y Semana Santa, sobre todo al final de esta última, se ven circular por el caserío de San Andrés [Tateikie] dos, tres y hasta cuatro mariachis que, música al viento, van siguiendo los pasos de algún huichol alegre que gasta, en bebidas y sonos, hasta lo que no tiene...”

<sup>206</sup> Serapio García was the uncle of Julia Rodríguez García, vihuelist and singer in Los Diamantes de Santa Cruz. She was perhaps the most successful Mestiza to perform with a Huichol group, wearing female Wixárika clothes in performance and even in daily outings.

<sup>207</sup> “Los huicholes gustan mucho de la música ranchera y casi a todas horas del día o de la noche tienen sus radios encendidos. Cuando un huichol va a la ciudad o a algún pueblo donde hay alguna estación de radio de las que dedican canciones, no deja pasar la oportunidad.”

He also added that a Wixárika person would sacrifice just about anything for the pleasure of owning “a radio or a pistol” (256).



**Figure 51. Wixárika man with an unholstered radio as his cargo. (Photo by Max Brandt c.1974)**

Mata Torres also informs us of the successes, or lack thereof, of groups formed by Wixárika musicians in an attempt to make money with Mestizo music. As of the early 1970s, he had heard of only two.

One time the older students of the [Catholic] mission in Santa Clara, in the community of San Andrés, formed a mariachi and went to play in San Andrés [Tateikie] during Holy Week. They

didn't earn much money because they didn't have a large repertoire of songs, but they certainly were the novelty of the fiesta. (Mata Torres [1987] 1993:256–257)<sup>208</sup>

Elsewhere he gave specifics about the instrumentation, pointing out that the four students played two violins, one vihuela, and one guitar, performing publicly as early as 1969 (Mata Torres 1970:52).

The influence of Catholic schooling—and institutionalized schooling in general—in the formation of these groups is a common theme even today. Schooling in the Spanish language would be essential for the development of the Huichol group phenomenon, as demonstrated in the case of another group mentioned by Mata Torres, in the southern reaches of Wixárika territory.

Also in the rancho El Novillero which pertains to the community of Tuxpan de Bolaños, Jalisco, the Huichols from that location formed a mariachi and went to play as professionals in various towns, and they even came to the very city of Guadalajara, but after awhile the conjunto came to an end because when the Mestizos requested songs they didn't know them or when they sang them they garbled the words, that is to say, they interpreted the songs poorly [*mochas*] or unintelligibly and, of course, the Mestizos became disgusted with them. (Mata Torres [1987] 1993:257)<sup>209</sup>

The struggle to properly—or passably—sing in Spanish was an obstacle to the early desire of some Wixaritari to make money through music. Even in early commercial recordings of Huichol groups, there is an occasional garbling of words and a noticeable accent.<sup>210</sup> Jáuregui's did not mention to what extent the Ríos lineage sang in Spanish, or whether they ever sang in Wixárika.

The Guadalupe Brothers might not have sung at all. Though the Zingg film of them is silent,

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<sup>208</sup> “Una vez los alumnos grandes de la misión de Santa Clara, en la comunidad de San Andrés, integraron un mariachi y fueron a tocar a San Andrés en una Semana Santa. No ganaron mucho dinero porque no tenían un gran repertorio de canciones, pero eso sí, fueron la novedad de la fiesta.”

<sup>209</sup> “También en el rancho El Novillero perteneciente a la comunidad de Tuxpan de Bolaños, Jalisco, los huicholes de ese lugar integraron un mariachi y fueron a tocar en plan de profesionales a distintos pueblos, e incluso vinieron a la propia ciudad de Guadalajara, pero después de algún tiempo el conjunto se acabó debido a que cuando los vecinos [another word for Mestizos] o mestizos les pedían canciones o no las sabían o cuando las cantaban se comían las palabras, es decir, interpretaban las canciones mochas o ininteligibles y, claro, los vecinos se disgustaban con ellos.”

<sup>210</sup> It is also plausible that the group from the Santa Clara mission was converting its language study into an entrepreneurial venture.

their mouths do not move the entire time the camera is on them, which might also explain why they apparently did not travel beyond the Wixárika territory in search of work.

Mata Torres did not give the instrumentation for the group from El Novillero. It seems, though, that group instrumentation in those early years was exceptionally ad hoc and did not necessarily include an instrument in the bass register. Importantly, in terms of genre inclinations, one documented Mestizo group in Tateikie in the mid-1970s shows the influence of norteño music. In a National Geographic photo taken in 1976, a Mestizo trio plays for local authorities. The group is comprised of a guitarrón—usually associated with mariachi—but is outnumbered by the quintessential norteño instruments: button accordion and what is clearly a bajo quinto, if not a complete bajo sexto. Rather than playing a *son*, the group was probably just as likely, if not more likely, to be playing hit corridos by Los Tigres del Norte or other groups who were not only filling the airwaves since the early 1970s but whose songs had also been converted into multiple hit films (Ragland 2009).





Figure 52. A mestizo group plays in Tateikie in 1976 with (L-R) guitarrón, bajo quinto or bajo sexto, and button accordion. Detail of photo by Guillermo Aldana E., *National Geographic* 151(6):834 (June 1977).

*A musical snapshot of San Andrés, 1975–1980s*

An illustrative glimpse into these formative years of the Huichol group phenomenon was given to me by Ernesto Hernández de la Cruz, violinist, teacher, and former *comisariado* (territorial authority) of the community of San Andrés. Hernández de la Cruz described the role of early groups, adding that his mother purchased a guitar for him by selling artesanías. He first joined a “*conjunto regional*” led by his uncles in 1975, and later formed his own group in 1980. His brother, Miguel Hernández de la Cruz, was the violinist in the group Tateikie San Andrés,

perhaps the first group from Tateikie to record commercially. His sons and nephews comprised the groups Sueño Musical Huichol and Dinastía de la Sierra. I quote Don Ernesto in extenso in order to give an evocative snapshot of the Huichol phenomenon in its nascent years.<sup>211</sup>



Figure 53. Ernesto Hernández de la Cruz at his home in Tateikie (2013–08–10).

**EH:** [My uncles and I are from Las Guayabas.] They would play in the afternoons, evenings, and they played in the fiestas. There were always people that liked that, music in the fiestas.

**NW:** Traditional fiestas, or which?

**EH:** Yeah, traditional, in the traditional fiestas. You know, [they'd say] 'play music for me.' 'Play me some songs.' 'Play some for my buddy here,' you know? Or just to play, to give it some

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<sup>211</sup> I have edited down the interview for brevity. The translation from Spanish is my own.

ambience. And then [the musicians] would leave the guitar there for a little while, right? So, one could get close to it, grab it, you know? With permission, of course. So I was starting to play a little like that. That's how I learned to play. I always liked to play música regional. Then, later, like in 1980, my friends and I put together a group, a conjunto, that is, regional. I played the violón [tololoche, upright bass]. Rigoberto [Sotero Hernández] played the violin. Enrique [de la Cruz González] also played violin. Two violinists. Rogelio [de la Cruz Carrillo] played vihuela, and there was a guitarist. There were five of us. We learned, we practiced, and we went to the fiestas. We played here in San Andrés. We went to a fiesta, for example, [we'd hear] 'there's a fiesta in Cohamiata,' right? So we went there to play, you know? The people invited us, [saying] 'well, play for me.' And I was mostly the one who sang. I knew about eighty songs. Like rancheras. Well, back then one would play more música ranchera, you know? Like "Mira Luisa," "Teresita," "Mi Casa Nueva," "Corrido de San Andrés," all of those, right? "Corrido de Pancho Villa," "[Corrido de] Huaynamota," that's to say pure corridos. And then our music started to sound good you know? And the people started to like it a lot. They held dances also. For example, we went to Santa Bárbara, Nayarit. There they had a fiesta on January 1<sup>st</sup> and they danced to our music. We also used, what's it called? That instrument you played with [my son's group]. What's it called? The one you scrape.

**NW:** The güiro?

**EH:** The güiro. Yep, but made of wood.

**NW:** For cumbias, or for which?

**EH:** Well, just about in everything. The person played it in corridos, in cumbias sometimes.

**NW:** What was the group called?

**EH:** Well, just "The San Andrés Group." That's it, just like that. [Well, they'd say] 'the musicians from San Andrés.'

**NW:** There weren't a lot of groups, then.

**EH:** Nope. Not that I recall.

**NW:** [How did you learn songs?]

**EH:** Just listening, listening to the music. Or writing a song, you'd have to copy it.

**NW:** The lyrics?

**EH:** The lyrics. I learned fast, with just two times through. I learned it fast because I had a good memory, but now, well, not so much.

**NW:** But was it just [learning] with other musicians or also, for example, with records, cassettes, or something like that?

**EH:** Well, in that time, on discs [LPs], on [cassette] recorders. I bought discs, the large ones [LPs], and later I bought a record player and I'd put them on to listen. And later there were the cassettes. One would buy the cassettes, and we would even record ourselves with the [cassette] recorder to listen to our own music.

Hernández de la Cruz's method of learning Mestizo songs was aided by Western education (to speak Spanish and write down lyrics), and access to the cash-based economy to buy both an instrument and music players. He was also aided by Western electronic technology that allowed him to learn even more songs. The songs he mentioned by name, except for the two corridos specific to the region, were popular at the time on records, cassettes, and radio. Some might have been learned from other musicians, but in either case they ultimately came from the mass media,

directly or indirectly. But mass media was not a one-way channel for him and his group. They used it rhizomatically to record themselves, enabling them to listen and compare themselves to commercial recordings. Their one-off cassette recordings were also used as gifts, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

In the years described by Hernández de la Cruz, groups were so few that they did not need to distinguish themselves in the market with a specific name. Groups were not choosing brand-like names as they do today, but were known simply by their hometown or personal names. Though playing in a group may have been an enjoyable way to earn cash, it was mostly an amateur pastime, not yet professionalized in the sense that one would earn a living from it as a fulltime or primary pursuit. Anecdotal accounts from other locations suggest similar situations. As mentioned to me by one of the first INI-educated teachers (*promotores*) from Xatsitsarie, that community had “a few” groups in the 1970s but none were professional, working instead as ad-hoc or leisurely groups.

#### *A time of transition in the heart of Wixárika territory*

By the 1980s, groups were forming in the community of Santa Catarina that would position that community to be not only the center of the Wixárika world, as it has been since time immemorial, but also to become the center of the Huichol music group phenomenon. This shift seems to have occurred primarily in the localities of Nueva Colonia (*Iniakwaxitia*) and Cajones (*Tsinata*).<sup>212</sup> The latter location was the site of a particular family lineage that reveals the shift from the early, formative years of Huichol groups, towards a phenomenon that became increasingly commercial, linked to the recording industry, and eventually visible on an

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<sup>212</sup> Nueva Colonia and Cajones are about 3.5–4.5 hours apart, walking, which was usually considered relatively close by sierra standards. Cajones in Wixárika is also spelled *Tsenetá* and *Tsinitia*.

international scale. Specifically, it is the history of Grupo Los González, and the more famous group that was born directly from it, Grupo Los Teopa, or simply Los Teopa.



Figure 54. Brothers Alejandro González (L) and Samuel González (R) of Los Teopa, with their uncle Rosalío González (center) of Grupo Los González (Cajones, Mezquitic, Jalisco; 2014–03–15).

### *Los González*

Grupo Los González was the first group in Cajones, and possibly the first in the entire community of Santa Catarina. It was formed by three brothers: Anastacio, Benjamín, and Rosalío, all with the last names González Minjares. Rosalío González Minjares, the group member interviewed, was only around eight years old when he began to perform with his brothers. According to his recollection, the group first performed publicly in 1982, “more or less.” According to Samuel González, Rosalío’s nephew who was a later member of Los González and eventually formed Los Teopa, the actual date of the first performance was in 1977.

As Samuel put it, “I remember well when [Los González] started. I was seven years old because I started school here in Cajones. It was the founding of the school, it was in 1977.”

Regardless of the exact year, the group’s performance amazed those gathered. When I asked whether people in Cajones already knew about música mestiza, Rosalío responded:

No, well I think it took them by surprise the first time when we played here in the school. Yeah, the people bunched up next to us wherever we went. In Pochotita also [another town in Santa Catarina] because there wasn’t anyone who played guitar like this... música regional. Lots of people came over to see us. And now, well, they don’t even bother. It’s old news [*ya saben*]. (González Minjares 2014)

However, Rosalío’s recollection referred to the performance of live music by local musicians. Samuel González elucidated the matter by telling where the instruments originally came from and how people heard Mestizo music in Cajones before Grupo Los González:

**Samuel González:** Look, there was a first cousin of Anastacio and Rosalío who was called Rogelio. He was a curer.

**NW:** He was a mara’akame.

**SG:** Exactly. In those days he went to cure over here with the Tepehuanos. But you know the Tepehuanos couldn’t really fork over the moola [cash, *entregar la lana*]. Sometimes they’d give him an accordion. He would come [back] with a violin. Sometimes he would come carrying the tarola [timbales] or whatever they offered him. Pistols. Belts. Well, whatever he would get. Rosalío and Anastacio [of Los González] taught themselves because the instruments were already there in the house. If it weren’t for those instruments the groups Los Teopa and Los González would have never existed.

**NW:** So before that there weren’t other groups [in Cajones]?

**SG:** No, no, there weren’t any. We only listened to record players that you’d hear in those years. They were the large discs [LPs], but it was just pure songs [*rolas*], that is to say nobody played lyrically [live].

Los González were apparently a hit, or at least good enough to make money traveling beyond the sierra to play in plazas and cantinas as itinerant musicians. Rosalío tells the rest of the group’s story:

**Rosalío González:** [We played] in other states, in Aguascalientes, Zacatecas, Nayarit. We went from town to town, from city to city.

**NW:** And you went busking on foot [*taloneando*] in the plazas, or how?

**RG:** In the plazas. Sometimes in the cantinas with the drunks. [laughs] Yeah, that’s where we really caught on.

**NW:** Did you play in Wixárika clothes or in Mestizo clothes?

**RG:** Mestizo. In the plazas, mestizo clothes.

**NW:** And how did you learn to play?

**RG:** Well, lyrically [by ear]. We didn't have any methods or anything, just by ear. First we started with *sol* [G], *re* [D], just the basics. Later we realized that there were various keys and we started out, we went playing just like that.

**NW:** Were your parents musicians also?

**RG:** No, [music] caught our attention because we went to work in the coast. Many Coras came down on Sundays [to the coast] to play. It caught our attention, and we even bought the instruments from them there and brought [the instruments] back here. But from this community, I think we were the first. From there, El Venado Azul and all the rest started. But there were [other groups] before in other communities.

**NW:** Then there were others in San Andrés or Tuxpan? San Sebastián?

**RG:** Yeah, I'd seen some playing.

**NW:** But did you learn something from the musicians, then, or how did you learn the songs? On the radio, on records, or how?

**RG:** Just written down. We copied them down, we wrote them, and later we learned [to play] them

**NW:** But where did you hear them, then? In the streets, or where?

**RG:** No, we bought cassettes. It was the time of Antonio Aguilar. That was a hit here in that time. Antonio Aguilar and the other. What's his name? Vicente Fernández, actually, I think. Las Jilguerillas you'd hear around here.

Rosalío affirmed that their instrumentation included tololoche from the start, not guitarrón. He also claimed to have taught Miguel Hernández de la Cruz of Grupo Tateikie San Andrés while they were studying together in San Andrés. Rosalío and his brothers also found some success as local corridistas (corrido composers), writing “Corrido de Cajones” by 1980. Rosalío later wrote “Corrido de Temastián” (Audio 27) and “Corrido de Santo Domingo” (below). After about a decade, though, he left the group to pursue further academic studies to become a teacher, though he continued to play occasionally. His nephews, Alejandro and Samuel González took over vacant spots in Grupo Los González and eventually renamed it to become Grupo Los Teopa.

### *Los Teopa*

Like many musicians in the region, the brothers who formed Los Teopa learned by following around their musician uncles. As Samuel González put it:

My brother and I were little, so to hang out, and to mess around, we'd grab the violins even though they didn't allow it. They'd reprimand us. You know, 'these kids are gonna break the instruments.' But even still, we continued to insist because we had the confidence that someday we'd learn música regional. (González 2014)

He continued:

**SG:** I came back [to Cajones after working in the coast] in 1986 and I already knew how to play. But I never imagined that my brother would also already know how to play. So, [it was] Alejandro [second violinist] and Ernesto, the primary vocalist. At that time, my uncles were already starting to renounce and leave the group [Los González]. So we became members, we joined up as brothers, and we were still [Grupo Los] González at that time. It was [myself], Alejandro, Ernesto, Agustín, Higinio. Well, with our crew we got into it even though my father, may he rest in peace, didn't want it. He would throw us out of the house. You know, it looked like a cantina!

**NW:** [Laughing] So he didn't want it?

**SG:** Right, well here, in reality, the old timers at that time didn't like música regional. Yeah, it was 1990—on New Year's—when I started to play with Grupo González, in public performances, that is.

**NW:** Before forming the group as Teopa?

**SG:** Before forming Grupo Teopa. In 1991, I was elected to serve as the local authority [*agente local*] in Cajones. So it wasn't until 1995 when I thought 'well, now that we know something [about music] we can do this, yes we can.' I thought about it and that's when I told my brother 'how about we form a group that would have a name more or less meaningful [*válido*] for the community, or for the region.'<sup>213</sup> 'Well, sounds good,' he said. So we started practicing more, and in the end the people loved it, because it wasn't too often that you'd hear música regional. So it was in 1995 when we had the [first] presentation in San Miguel Huaixtita, when we broke records [*rompimos récord*] with the people to the point that—you know how the people are—they would fight just to hang out with us. The people became disillusioned [*se agüitó*] with the other musicians that existed because they didn't equal the group that we had, the talent that is.

His statements clearly have a healthy amount of braggadocio, but the remarks might not have been totally unfounded. Younger musicians often told me that Los Teopa was a major influence on their formation, standing out because they were the first Wixárika musicians to become known for playing exceptionally well with two violins, instead of the more common single violin. In addition to the lucky coincidence that he and his brother Alejandro both learned violin independently, Samuel had the following to say about the reason for using two violins:

There were lots of groups that played with just one [violin]. They still do. And I told my brother, let's do something that nobody has been able to successfully achieve [*nadie lo ha podido echar las ganas*] in two violins, to see how it comes out. I'll do counterpoint to your part, and you do counterpoint to mine [*yo te segundeo y te primereo también y tú me segundeas*]... he went up and I went down. He went down and I went up. So it was a type of whirlwind [*remolino*]. (González)

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<sup>213</sup> Teopa (also written Teupa) is a sacred spring and rock formation near their rancho just outside of Cajones.



Drawing a sonic equivalence to a whirlwind—an uncontrollable and even fearsome force in Wixárika worldview—reveals that despite seeing themselves as somewhat “Wixañol” (bicultural) they derived their musical ideas and success more directly from Wixárika culture. Choosing their group’s name, for example, was a conscious decision *not* just to let people refer to them by their place of residence, as was common then, but to reference a nearby sacred site that imbued the group itself with the essence or idea of the site.<sup>214</sup> Similarly, their success was due in no small part to their abundance of original compositions in Wixárika. Their first recording was almost entirely in Wixárika. Their most successful songs in the Wixárika communities were all in Wixárika: “Kíye Japaí Nekuapamore” (Audio 41), “12 Nenayetuitia” (Audio 42), “Mukajeiwyíkí” (Audio 43), and “Jaiwi” (Audio 44).

The father of the brothers in Los Teopa was a “cantador,” and they grew up in the Wixárika *costumbres*. Their fame eventually took them as far as the United States in 2006. Though they primarily worked as agricultural laborers, they played music on the weekends, but not in Wixárika clothes as they did in Mexico. Eventually, alcoholism threatened the health and well being of Samuel and he returned to Cajones where, when I interviewed him, he and his brother were serving as *xukuritamete* for a nearby ceremonial center (*tukipa*).

Though Los Teopa were the second group to record commercially—doing so only a matter of months after El Venado Azul—their fame lives on amongst today’s musicians. Despite their fame, they are already seen as the old guard and almost provincial. One younger musician told me a story about Los Teopa in which the operation of a fog machine onstage for one of their performances led one of the brothers to think the stage was on fire, diving off the side so as not to burn to death. Whether or not it’s true, the story adds to their status as regional legends.

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<sup>214</sup> For listeners not already in the know about the sacred site, their song “Corrido de Teopa” (Audio 26) revealed the significance of the name.

Perhaps most importantly for their historical significance, they helped usher in a new millennium of groups who played in Wixárika clothes in and beyond the sierra, and were willing and often proud to sing in Wixárika.

### **Recent History of Huichol Groups: Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

For having taken place approximately within the last twenty years, the recent history of Huichol music groups is exceptionally hard to track down.<sup>215</sup> At the beginning of my research, lacking any scholarly writing on the recent history of such groups, it was imaginable that the first group to record, El Venado Azul, had no real contact with earlier groups or lineages such as the Ríos family, the Guadalupe Brothers, or even groups far off in Tateikie (El Venado Azul started in Nueva Colonia). It was plausible that the group formed entirely on an external Mestizo model without local references or predecessors. The founder of the group, José López, was happy to allow or even encourage outsiders to see him as the first of the Huichol music groups. In my first interview with him, he told me that “in 1997 I started to [perform the music], the music that I started with the song ‘Cuarro Mautorra’” (López Robles 2012). In another interview with me, he went further, saying “[before me] there were no other Huichol groups... I am the founder of Huichol music... I am the pioneer of all the musicians that exist today, I am the one that directed all of that” (López Robles 2014).

Indeed, Xitakame José López Robles, whose name has become synonymous with his group, El Venado Azul, has been and continues to be one of the biggest forces in Huichol music. He certainly did put Huichol music on the map for most outsiders by being the first to record the hit “Cuarro Mautorra” (Audio 33), a song that could be heard blasting on car stereos in Mestizo

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<sup>215</sup> There is little to no record of the music scene through regional or local publications. None of the towns in the region had local newspapers. The main regional publication, the *Voz del Norte* newspaper, did not contain anything like an arts section.

towns years after its initial release, and is still probably the most commonly requested song of Huichol groups busking in town plazas. But the ego that made him the first to record commercially also led him to overstate his role in the formation of the music. It was a revelation, then, to peruse the archives of the radio station XEJMN in Jesús María, Nayarit, a government-run station that documented Huichol groups throughout the Wixárika territory beginning in 1992.

Even in their first two years of operation, XEJMN workers, recording in the field and in their studios, documented enough groups to prove that by the early 1990s, the Huichol group phenomenon had reached all parts of the sierra. Some of the earliest groups and their recording dates from the station's archives include:

- Hermanos Chino, a.k.a. Conjunto Regional, from Tuxpan (1992)<sup>216</sup>
- Gonzalo y Su Grupo from Santa Rosa, Nayarit (1993)<sup>217</sup>
- Grupo de Chalate from the community of San Andrés (1993)
- Grupo Los Guayabos recorded in San Andrés (1993)

Even in those days, the influence of norteño hits was clear, moving strongly towards narcocorridos by the end of the 1990s.<sup>218</sup> Songs in Wixárika were not common until the late 1990s, probably a result of the influence of Los Teopa, El Venado Azul, and Grupo Enero 97. Until that time, even corridos about local Wixárika communities were in Spanish. Almost all groups had instrumentation that included violin, vihuela and/or guitar, and violón/tololoche. Most importantly for the influence on the formation of El Venado Azul, all of these recordings would have reached Nueva Colonia on the airwaves. At the same time, there were two groups

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<sup>216</sup> It seems this is the same Conjunto Regional that later recorded under the Fonorama label. Their specific locations were listed as the ranchos El Mirador and Vallecitos.

<sup>217</sup> According to Rosalío González from Cajones, Gonzalo y su Grupo might have existed as early as the 1970s.

<sup>218</sup> The only *son* in these early recordings was “La Negra,” recorded by Conjunto Regional who worked extensively in Mestizo locations like Puente de Camotlán. Their performance of it was during the meeting of a political organization (“UCI”) in which the XEJMN workers were present to record.

documented by XEJMN in the community of Santa Catarina. They were Trio Estrellas from Pueblo Nuevo (1992) and Grupo Bilingües recorded in Nueva Colonia (1992).

When asked about these groups, López Robles was forced to clarify that what he meant when he said he was “the first” was that he was the first to record “in audio, with the big labels.” He admitted that he was aware of Trio Estrellas from Pueblo Nuevo and Gonzalo y su Grupo, but not Grupo Bilingües. He also mentioned that the group that had the most direct influence on the formation of El Venado Azul was “a family group that was called Los Terreros, from the community of Santa Catarina, from Nueva Colonia, a little rancho where they played, that’s where the idea occurred to me” (López Robles 2014).<sup>219</sup>

*Xitákame José López Robles (El Venado Azul)*

El Venado Azul might not have been the first group from the community of Santa Catarina, but it was one of the first, along with Los Teopa, to put Santa Catarina on a path towards dominance in the genre. The early influence and fame of El Venado Azul went a long way in establishing Nueva Colonia as “the cradle of Huichol musicians,” creating a hometown hero and a model to be emulated by younger locals that continues today. The group El Venado Azul has had a continuously-changing roster of sidemen and sidewomen, but the career of director, José López Robles, is unquestionably the longest and most established in the business, lasting more than twenty years, consisting of more than fourteen full-length albums, touring in Mexico and the U.S., and now continuing into a second generation with his young son, Yuawi.

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<sup>219</sup> “...un grupo de familia que se llama de Los Terreros de ahí de la comunidad de Santa Catarina, de Nueva Colonia, hay un ranchito, ellos tocaban, ahí es donde me nació la idea a mí...”



**Figure 55. José López Robles of El Venado Azul (Source: the artist's promotional Facebook page).**

By his own account, José López began performing in the sierra in 1993 with his wife at the time, Yusiema María de los Ángeles García de la Cruz, usually known as María de los Ángeles. He performed violin and in the early years she performed on guitarrón, as documented in a photo from 1996.



Figure 56. El Venado Azul perform for the graduation of the Benito Juárez primary school, Nueva Colonia, in 1996 (photo by Totupica Candelario Robles, used with permission).

The presence of guitarrón would suggest “traditional mariachi,” and López now encourages the vocabulary, often referring to his group as such.

**NW:** How would you refer to your music? You said something about *música regional* as the genre, but could we also say it’s “*música huichola*,” or “*música wixárika*?”

**José López Robles:** More or less. You could say you could put a tag [*etiqueta*] on it. It’s ethnic Wixárika *música regional* [*música regional étnica wixárika*]. Because it’s traditional mariachi, but we combined it. We play the vihuela from mariachi. The violin is from mariachi. Guitarrón also. It was like a type of traditional mariachi but later we weren’t having any fun [with it], so we changed, we put a nortño tololoche. It sounded different and I liked it and so that’s how I started. When we started we put the tololoche and it changed the sound: the vihuela, the violin, and the nortño tololoche.

As seen above, however, nearly all of the groups that existed at the time El Venado Azul began to play were already using tololoche (“violón”). In a later interview, after I learned that he had been hired multiple times to be in the festivals (*encuentros*) of “traditional mariachi” in Guadalajara and a theater show called “I Am Mariachi” (*Soy Mariachi*), I asked what he called the music when they were starting.

**NW:** When you started, did you use or did you hear those words—traditional mariachi—for this music? Or did you use other words, another genre name, something like that?

**JLR:** Well, we always said *grupo*. Grupo huichol. Grupo such-and-such [*grupo el que sea*]. But I've always said that what we do is *grupo regional étnico huichol*.

Despite the use of guitarrón in the early days of the group, he saw his music as a subgenre of música regional, norteño-izing, perhaps even grupera-leaning with the extensive use of cumbias. He clearly adjusted his nomenclature recently to fit (and target) a new market with the label “traditional mariachi.”

He describes his rise to regional stardom and the birth of his industry career as something he originally did to make money after serving as a *xukuritame* for five years in the tukipa of Keuruwitia (Las Latas).

**JLR:** I recorded my first disc [cassette<sup>220</sup>] in 1997. I recorded it in San Luis Potosí, and from there I began.

**NW:** With a label?

**JLR:** With a label.<sup>221</sup> There was a guy who always went to Las Latas, a place where I was a *jicareros* [*xukuritame*]. He went to visit. So, he met me and he invited me to San Luis Potosí... and one day the opportunity presented itself and I went. Well, he was the one that helped us, came up with the money to record. And they charged us like 15,000 pesos for the recording. We didn't want to record because for us it was—wow!—we'd never even seen that much money. So we didn't want to, but he convinced us. He told us, ‘if you don't sell the cassette, don't pay me, but if you sell it, little by little you can pay me back. In a month the disc [cassette] came out. We went out to sell in the street. In three days we sold 1,000 cassettes.

**NW:** In three days? Where did you sell them?

**JLR:** In three days. We sold them in San Luis Potosí. On the street. We set up in the street to play and we had our cassettes there. And the people gathered around. They liked it. In that way, it grew each day, since 1997.

Despite their sales success, they continued to work the streets, even playing on busses as small music groups commonly did in those years. A representative from Fonorama, a Guadalajara-based label, heard them playing in Tepic, Nayarit. The owner of Fonorama, Manuel Contreras, described the revelation.

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<sup>220</sup> Like the term “traditional mariachi,” the use of the term “disc” when interviewees really meant to say cassette shows a tendency to project the current nomenclature into the past.

<sup>221</sup> The “label” was Discos Imagen in San Luis Potosí. It was not a label by contract, nor did they have distribution. They were a recording studio for hire, not a label per se. The person that invited them to San Luis Potosí was not from the recording studio but likely a NGO worker. The first recording was funded by the group Desarrollo Rural de San Luis Potosí, A.C.

...my brother found him in Tepic and he [José López] gave him a little cassette, and my brother brought me the cassette. And I told my brother, 'bring me this guy.' 'I want this.' And he brought him to me and we started to record various times. But from the beginning he sold. He really sold, but it was a small region, the sierra and Nayarit. Later, he started to sell in McAllen [Texas] and he showed up [*se perfiló*] even in Canada. (Contreras 2013)

Fonorama originally released new material from El Venado Azul beginning in 1999 and later re-released songs he had recorded on the original cassette in San Luis Potosí, including the song “Cuarru Mautorra” (Audio 33)—a regional hit if not also a national one—on their fourth recording with Fonorama in 2004. The song was not exactly an original, though. As José López put it:

It's traditional music, original to the entire Huichol community. But we play it with time, it's rhythmic. That song is really old. I don't know who composed it. It's from a long time ago. (López Robles 2014)

The song “Cuarru Mautorra” (Kwaxu Matuxa, “White Crane”) is known amongst Spanish-speakers as “La Garza y el Venado” (“The Crane and the Deer”). It has been recorded in various versions by other groups, and was documented in audio by XEJMN in Santa Catarina as early as 1992, played by Trio Estrellas in Pueblo Nuevo. The lyrics, or at least a portion of them, were documented as early as 1982 (see Núñez, Valdés, Ramírez [1982] 1993). It may never be known who composed the song.

The fact that El Venado Azul was the first group to become known through commercial recordings in the sierra and beyond should not be understated. Seeing Wixárika musicians on a recording came as a shock for many other Wixaritari. My main contact in the community of Santa Catarina, Jorge López Solís, was around fifteen when he first saw El Venado Azul and their recordings. He recounted that he found it hard to believe that they were actually Wixaritari because they were on a recording. He and others never imagined that the two things could go together. But more surprising than the recording was the woman playing tololoche.



From the start, El Venado Azul stood out as a group not only for their talent and by beating other groups to the recording studio, but because they had a female musician. As mentioned before, it was an unspoken rule that xaweri and kanari were not for women. Similarly, Mestiza women were discouraged or outright denied the possibility to pursue música regional as it was associated with cantinas, and thus questioned their honor. Jorge López recounted what a shock it was for everyone when they saw María de los Ángeles playing Mestizo music. She would be helping to make tortillas one minute and then wipe the *masa* (dough) off her hands, pick up an instrument, and sing a song with the group. She is unquestionably a pioneer, having paved the way for other women and family-based groups. However, according to José López, she was never exceptionally excited to play music, but did it to earn money for the family.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Unfortunately, I could not locate María de los Ángeles for an interview. According to two accounts, including that of José López, she moved to Tijuana after the two separated and took to selling artesanías instead of pursuing music.



**Figure 57. Early promotional photo of El Venado Azul with José López and María de los Ángeles.**

Following in the footsteps of María de los Ángeles came other female Wixárika musicians, though the number is still few. Another who got her start with El Venado Azul was Suimali, the mother of the now-becoming-famous Yuawi, and one of the first to lead her own group as a female soloist.



Figure 58. Suimali billed in a solo show as La Venadita (photographer unknown).

During my fieldwork, I heard of only one Huichol group with all female members, a group that apparently played for tourists in Real de Catorce, the town bordering Wirikuta.

Despite having some success with the Fonorama label, El Venado Azul continued to work the plazas and small events until the massive hit, “Cumbia Cusinela” (Audio 34) in 2006, a cover version of which became an even bigger international success for the group Huichol Music in 2008. As José López described it, the success of the song changed his career.

Well look, I was showing my music everywhere. In the streets, in the towns. Zacatecas, Durango, Torreón, Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, Michoacán, Nayarit, everywhere. Eight years [playing in] the streets. Taloneando. To spread my music as El Venado Azul. And later I made the song called

la ‘Cumbia Cusinela,’ [on] the tenth recording that I had. I went out [to play] daily, and the first stage [show] that I had was in Tepic, Nayarit. Now I have [been playing] another eight years [since ‘Cumbia Cusinela’] and only on stages. I don’t work in the street much anymore. I don’t got out much like that now, only stages, because [of] la ‘Cumbia Cusinela.’ (López Robles 2014)

Because of “Cumbia Cusinela” and other hits covered both by Huichol and Mestizo groups, José López has become known as a hit writer of sorts. His hits used by Mestizo groups will be covered in the chapter on identity, but suffice to say that his hits have greatly aided the (inter)national interest in Huichol groups, what might be called *la onda huichola* (the Huichol wave/surge).

#### *La onda huichola (The Huichol Wave)*

After Venado Azul, a veritable explosion of groups began to record with Fonorama and other regional labels. It was the first major wave of professionalizing, commercial groups, beginning in 1999, but really taking off in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Other landmark groups began to record commercially, including Los Teopa, Enero 97, Los Diamantes de Santa Cruz, Conjunto Regional, Grupo Tateikie San Andrés, El Bronco de Jalisco (later known as Zamurawy), and Conjunto Paraíso Jalisciense.

A second, mostly younger generation began to emerge and overlap with those groups up until 2010, including Lobo Negro, Encinos, Nubes de la Sierra, Hiriipa, Nuevo Amanecer Huichol (later known as Huichol Musical), Inundación, El Venado de la Sierra, Los Artesanos, Los Ausentes de Nueva Colonia, Grupo Ausente de San Sebastián, Los Hermanos Carrillo (later, Carrillos Musical Huichol), Xurawe de la Sierra, Conjunto Robles Musical (later known as Abrazo Musical), Torrente Huichol, Viento Huichol, Tatei Haramara, Conjunto Teemari, Tatewarí, and many others.

The groups mentioned above are only those violin groups that had some success with recording commercially, were known for certain hits, or were known as song writers. They represent groups that, for the most part, were moving out of the sierra to pursue music, only rarely to return for good. It also seems that this is when they started to outnumber Mestizo violin groups around the region, becoming more visible in town plazas and ferias. The list would likely more than double if it were to include all of the groups that never recorded professionally or did so on labels that were too obscure to make it into my collection or the memory of those interviewed for this project. It also does not include a separate but related wave of Huichol groups taking up *música sierreña*.

#### *The Huichol appropriation of música sierreña*

Like their musical models—Bertín y Lalo, Miguel y Miguel, and others—Huichol *sierreño* groups took up 6-string or 12-string electro-acoustic guitar (*requinto*) as the lead instrument. Some early groups (like El Bronco de Jalisco) simply replaced violin with the *requinto*, keeping *vihuela* and *tololoche*. Others, and most of today's groups, accompanied the *requinto* with another electro-acoustic guitar and solid-body electric bass guitar. Because the genre arrived in the Wixárika sierra almost entirely by “border blaster” radio and other mass media, a number of Wixárika musicians took it up around the same time, a case of polygenesis with each group initially unaware of the others.

The first *requinto* group I could find documented was Grupo Rondalla from Potrero, Mezquital, Durango, recorded by XEJMN in 1993. According to notes in the radio's archive, they played two 6-string guitars and *tololoche*, and performed a number of *norteño* songs and

corridos for local towns.<sup>223</sup> Oddly, a year later, the same group switched its instrumentation to that of a violin group, including vihuela.

Soon after, in Guadalajara and the community of San Sebastián, two other groups began playing *sierreño* style. The first of these to record commercially was Werika Yuawi, formed by Jesús Carrillo and Maximino Hernández Carrillo around 1998.<sup>224</sup> They released a cassette in 1998 or 1999 that was recorded as part of an interview they did at the University of Guadalajara, and followed that recording with CDs in 2000 and 2002.

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<sup>223</sup> My time at XEJMN was extremely limited, leading me to photograph more archive materials than I had time to hear. Grupo Rondalla was listed on a container that I photographed but I did not have time to hear, nor was I aware at the time that it was a relatively early instance of such instrumentation. The term *rondalla* usually refers to guitar ensembles or “orchestras” with more romantic repertoire (e.g., boleros), but the repertoire of this group makes it relatively safe to assume that one of the two guitars was playing melodic lead between verses. The musicians listed for Grupo Rondalla were Eligio Ramírez de la Cruz, Aristeo Medina Ramírez, and Raymundo de la Cruz Lerma.

<sup>224</sup> My information on Werika Yuawi comes from Maximino Hernández Carrillo, the requintero for the group, a main contact for this study and, during most of my fieldwork period, my neighbor in Colotlán, Jalisco. By that time, well after the disbanding of Werika Yuawi, he had taken up violin in order to *talonear*. For recordings and stage shows, though, the group used both requinto and violin.



Figure 59. Werika Yuawi with Maximino Hernández Carrillo (L) and Jesús Carrillo.

Around the same time, Ceferino Carrillo López, better known in the musical world by his stage names El Bronco de Jalisco and Zamurawy, had been pursuing his own solo career as a guitarist since around 1994. Playing what he usually called just “regional” or “Wixárika genre” [*género wixárika*] as a solo guitarist in restaurants and in the streets, he eventually worked with Conjunto Pueblo Nuevo to record a CD in 2002 that used his requinto playing on some tracks and violin on others. It seems he was aware of Werika Yuawi, covering some of their originals in his first CD such as “Tamatsi Kahuyumalie” (Audio 45).

Also in 2002, in the Wixárika neighborhood of Zitakwa in Tepic, Nayarit, a family originally from Guadalupe Ocotán started the group known as Los Artesanos. Pedro Pereyra, a violinist, formed the group with his three sons, including Gustavo Pereyra who would become the requintero for the group in 2005, the same year they recorded their first album with Fonorama in Guadalajara. Gustavo Pereyra also composed a number of songs for the group,

some of which were in the rhythm he referred to as *son* and zapateado.<sup>225</sup> He later left the group to become a soloist in 2010, leaving behind the Wixárika-oriented look of Huichol groups to form *sierreño* and *norteño-banda* groups with Mestizos, performing primarily outside of Wixárika territory.

### *Los Amos's de la Sierra*

Until 2006, the repertoire and look of the Huichol *sierreño* groups was not much different than that of the violin groups. *Sierreño* groups still tended to focus on common corridos and rancheras that were equally common for violin groups. Even the zapateado “Pavido Navido,” popularized by Chalino Sanchez, was recorded by Werika Yuawi, though such songs would mostly disappear in the *sierreño* repertoire over time. The repertoire, and the look to go along with it, changed course significantly with the appearance of the young group Los Amos’s de la Sierra. Even the orthography of the group name—Los Amos’s—reveals a more urban, worldly, even would-be cosmopolitan leaning. The use of the apostrophe, which does not exist in Spanish, gave a pseudo-English and even global feel to the group’s name.

Los Amos’s was founded by three brothers: bass player and elder brother José de la Cruz Velazquez (“Kawi”), requintero Nicasio de la Cruz Velazquez (“Jacko”), and guitar player Inocencio de la Cruz Domínguez (“Dracko”). Because their mothers were from different locations and their father’s work as a teacher caused them to move around the sierra, they today do not see any one location in the sierra as their main home.<sup>226</sup> In fact, they formed the group in

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<sup>225</sup> These are some of the only *sones* that I encountered that were composed by a Wixárika musician. Interestingly, it occurred in Tepic, Nayarit where by that time there had been a long focus on the history of mariachi and *son* in the region.

<sup>226</sup> The mother of Kawi and Jacko was from Bajío del Tule in San Sebastián, and their father from San Miguel Huaixtita in San Andrés. They grew up primarily in San Sebastián, San Miguel, Tateikie, and Colotlán.



Colotlán around 2005, recording a cassette demo in 2006 and a full album in 2007, both recorded in Colotlán. They later recorded with Fonorama, but only after the group had already achieved some regional fame in both Wixárika and Mestizo lands.

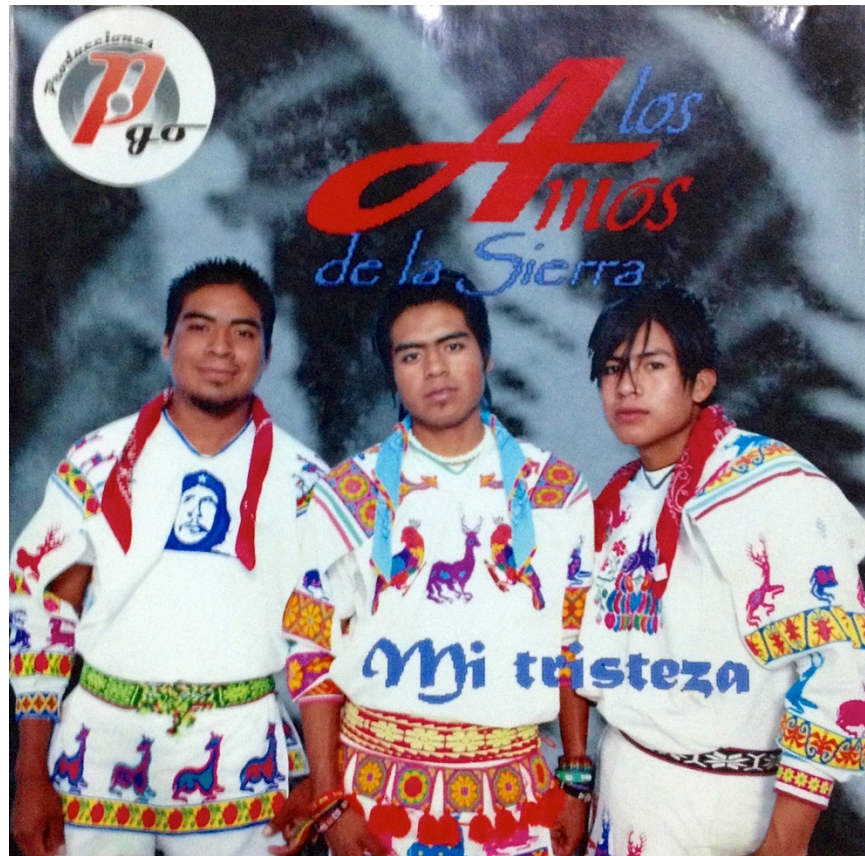


Figure 60. Los Amos de la Sierra in their first CD release (2007). (L-R) José (Kawi), Nicasio (Jack/Jacko), and Inocencio (Drack/Dracko). José later designed a logotype for the name that changed the orthography to Los Amos's and added a marijuana leaf for a "sierra" feel.

In separate interviews, both Kawi and Jacko referred to their music as “música grupera.” Their style of dress on album covers, addressed more in the chapter on identity, was a hybrid of Wixárika and urban Mestizo styles. The “look” of Jacko and Dracko, referred to as “emo” by Kawi, was highly influential with boys and young men in the Wixárika communities. Most importantly for the group’s success, their repertoire was unlike any other Huichol group, and remains exceptional today. In addition to the influence of famous sierrero groups, Los Amos’s were influenced by Los Nietos, Grupo Samuray, and other groups with more “pop” sensibilities.

In addition to corridos and rancheras, their repertoire included more románticas, but also drew from pop, rock, and even *bachata*.

Kawi's history of how they learned music reveals the dual influence of individual musicality combined with mass media influence, and music as a trade skill.

...ever since we were [young], my brother [Nicasio] and I sang in the house [and] when we went to gather firewood, or whenever we were doing something we were singing. And we would listen to the radio. You know in that time it was only radios. So we listened to music there and we liked it... Grupo Samuray, Los Temerarios. We're talking around the 1990s. So when we came here [to Colotlán] for high school [*la secundaria*], I started music classes, because they gave optional music workshops. In those days you could choose [music or] *talabartería* [leatherworking], and I chose music. (De la Cruz Velázquez 2012)

Jacko also remembered the time fondly, adding the experience of their first unofficial recording session, showing the new influence of electronic technology on personal musical development.

Well, I think [our musical ability] is in our blood because I was told that my father played for a church choir, and I think some of that stuck with us. I remember that my brother and I sang since we were little, when we went for firewood... or to get water, we always went singing. ...One time [while traveling] it occurred to my father to record us on cassette, you know how they record. We were in a hotel and we were embarrassed. He said, 'come on, sing so I can record you.' We didn't want to, and we told him to turn off the lights, right, so that in the dark so we wouldn't be embarrassed. I remember we started to sing a song by Joan Sebastián. So I believe that's how, little by little, [our musical interest] began to awaken, and later we listened to music by Bertín y Lalo, a duet. (De la Cruz Velázquez 2013)

The influence of mass media and technology was not just unidirectional, a source to the masses.

Technology, if not entirely "democratized," was being used in intimate, personal levels of music making. They were hearing their own voices in electronic media as easily and as early, if not earlier, as the voices of the super groups and mega stars.

The grassroots level of music recording is also what aided the success of Los Amos's.

They recorded a cassette demo in 2006 with a person known for announcing local events with his car-based sound system.<sup>227</sup> The short demo was disseminated through dubbing in the sierra, with

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<sup>227</sup> Lacking a reliable television station, radio station, or newspaper, events in Colotlán are announced via sound systems attached to the roofs of cars by drivers who charge to drive through the town's streets with the announcements blaring.

the aid of their father in San Miguel Huaixtita, and they soon had their first engagement there, hired to perform for five hours even though they knew only fifteen songs at the time. They later recorded their first full-length album at another Colotlán studio, PGO Productions, a CD in 2007, and two albums with Fonorama in 2008 and 2009.

The origins of the songs that constitute the repertoire of Los Amos's were remarkably diverse and unusual for any Huichol group at the time. Songs included rock "oldies" like "No Señor Apache," from Larry Verne's 1960 "Please Mr. Custer," originally recorded in Spanish by Los Apson (Audio 32). Other exceptional choices include "Y Ahora me Voy a Salir" by Spanish hard rock group Mago de Oz; "La Guitarra" by Argentine ska group Los Autenticos Decadentes; "Enseñame a Olvidar" by bachata group Aventura; and "Amar a Alguien," the Spanish version of "To Love Somebody" by the Bee Gees.

Other than some reunion shows, Los Amos's had their last performance in 2012. Kawi has occasionally performed as Los Amos's with other sidemen, but apparently without intentions to make new recordings under that name. Each brother moved on to other musical projects, Jacko perhaps being most successful with the hit "Ekĩ Xeikĩa" (Audio 46), a translation of "Solo Tu," performed with his group R5 Sierreño. In addition to feeling that the group had run its course, the brothers were also perhaps a bit tired of their regional fame and its responsibilities. Once I was with Jacko in the *parranda* hours of Colotlán's feria when a fan of Los Amos's approached us and chided Jacko for letting the group break up. "I'm tired of being famous," Jacko retorted, only half serious; he later joined the super group Huichol Musical. The influence of Los Amos's continues, though, with young men throughout the sierra often styling their hair in the "emo" style of the group's early days, and a veritable explosion of younger sierreño groups, shifting youthful musical tastes significantly away from violin groups.

### *The influence of sierrreño on violin groups*

The shifting musical taste of youths towards sierrreño groups influenced some violin-based groups to find ways to incorporate requinto into their sound and image. Maximino Hernandez Carrillo, originally of Werika Yuawi, learned violin in order to talonear in plazas, but primarily plays requinto in recordings and stage shows. Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz briefly formed a group in 2014 called Kwikari Musical, incorporating violin and requinto onstage simultaneously. An exceptional example was the dual recording session of Abrazo Musical with R5 Sierrreño in 2013, splitting the song “Trato de Muerte” instrumentally in half, the first half of the song played by R5 Sierrreño, the second half played by Abrazo Musical with violin, vihuela, and tololoche (Audio 47). Even when not necessarily played as a requinto, melodic use of guitar is now more prominent in many groups, most notably in the internationally famous Huichol Musical.

### *Huichol Musical (a.k.a. Nuevo Amanecer Huichol)*

According to many Wixárika musicians, Huichol Musical is the quintessential “modern” Huichol group, and they are certainly the most successful on an international scale. They were nominated for a Grammy, a Premio Lo Nuestro award, and toured throughout Mexico, the U.S., and Europe. The use of the word *modern* by other musicians to refer to Huichol Musical distinguishes them from groups that De la Mora called “standard” or “neo-traditional.” The assignation of modern is due somewhat to instrumentation, but also to musical prowess and complexity. Huichol Musical, since its early days as Nuevo Amanecer Huichol, has focused on violin as the lead instrument, sometimes playing with two violins, and using both vihuela and

guitar. Over the course of their career, they increasingly used guitar for some lead melodies and switched to electric upright bass for a slightly different sound and a more “modern” look.

Being a “modern” group, though, in the eyes of other musicians, also means the group employs a greater range of harmonic progressions. Specifically, and partly because of their incorporation of románticas, they move beyond the common major-key harmonic progressions of the tonic, subdominant, and dominant (I-IV-V), chords that are the extent of most corridos and rancheras. Maximino Hernández Carrillo used the group’s first hit as Nuevo Amanecer Huichol, “La Carta” (or “La Última Carta”), to teach me chords on the vihuela beyond “the fundamentals.” Though in the key of G—a beginner’s key—it also includes A minor and E minor (ii, vi), in addition to G, C, and D7 (I-IV-V). The group also utilizes less common keys, including minor keys.

The history of Huichol Musical and its musicians is a long one, and much of it will be more applicable to later chapters on issues of identity, music as labor and commodity, and piracy. I present here, then, a portion of my interview with Domingo López, lead violinist, singer, and the main “face” in the Huichol Musical videos.<sup>228</sup> This particular section covers some of his personal history and the group’s history through the first five-year contract with Latin Power Music, a Monterrey-based affiliate of Universal Music Group. So that he can tell the group’s story in his own voice, albeit translated, I quote him in extenso.

**Domingo López:** Well, I’m originally from Pedernales, municipality of Mezquitic, Jalisco. [Pedernales] pertains to [the Wixárika community of] Santa Catarina. I learned music when I was about 17 years old.

**NW:** You learned to play violin?

**DL:** No, first I learned to play the guitarrón, that of the mariachis. Later, I learned to play guitar. About a year later, when I was 18, I learned to play violin. As time went on, I liked singing. And like that, like most [groups] I think, we started playing in the streets, or in the ferias, or in the fiestas in the sierra. About two years later, I left [the sierra] with my brother and I formed my first group, which at that time we called Nuevo Amanecer Huichol.

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<sup>228</sup> The interview was conducted in Tepetongo, Zacatecas on June 21, 2013.

**NW:** How did the group form, or how did you meet?

**DL:** I first met my buddy [*compañero*] Ismael González [the tololoche player of Nubes de la Sierra] in Plateros, Zacatecas. So I invited him to form a group. He accepted, and he recommended [another player] who was his brother, Librado González, to play vihuela. From there, we went to the sierra. We lasted about a year as a group, and then everyone went their own way, but I stayed with the name of Nuevo Amanecer Huichol. That's when I invited Julián Carrillo [to play vihuela]. From there, we invited Rodolfo Robles "El Kwitsi" to come play the tololoche.

**NW:** Where did you meet? In the sierra or elsewhere?

**DL:** We had already met in the sierra. Actually, we knew each other since we were kids because their parents and my parents were jicareros in Las Latas. When we were older, we met up again and he [Julián] already knew how to play, and so did I. Julián was part of the group Venado Azul, but around the time that I had parted from my buddies [from my first group] he had also parted from Venado Azul. So we gave ourselves a chance to form, again, the group Amanecer Huichol.

**NW:** So you already knew each other in the sierra but you formed the group anew. Where?

**DL:** In Huejuquilla el Alto, Jalisco. That's when we met up with Julián and later with Kwitsi on the tololoche. We formed [the group] and we went around for some three or four months. And then we met up with Marciano [who would play] guitar.

**NW:** In which year are we talking?

**DL:** Like 2004, around there. And I commented to them about leaving from Huejuquilla... that we should come to live in [Fresnillo] Zacatecas. And that's where we [have] lived until today. And that's where they gave us the opportunity to record the first disc of Amanecer Huichol [with] Discos Victoria Internacional. The first disc was in 2004 or 2005, something like that... and from there we went around working like always, giving out our telephone numbers and the whole thing.



Figure 61. Nuevo Amanecer Huichol's first album (2005). From top left: Rodolfo Robles (“Kwitsi”), Marciano González López, Domingo López (lower left), and Julián Carrillo.

**NW:** And Victoria International had distribution in the [record] stores?

**DL:** Yes, in the stores, almost all of the state of Zacatecas. All of the bandas, all of the groups in the state of Zacatecas recorded there.

**NW:** Did you record the video “La Carta” when you were with Victoria Internacional?

**DL:** Yes, but [before recording it] we were four members. [Before] that, one member left, the guitarist Marciano.<sup>229</sup> He left before recording the [second] disc. And afterwards, we met Samuel [López], well known as “El Brujo” [The Witch]... we explained the project to him, and that was around 2005, I believe. In the same year, we also invited Julian’s brother, Víctor Manuel [Carrillo], “El Karutsa.” And that was we recorded the song “La Carta” [in 2005] [Video 16].

**NW:** What was the role of that video in the group’s career?

**DL:** Well, it was a big opportunity. [There’s] a person who I hold in high esteem called Lalo Rodríguez, the [radio] disc jockey from Fresnillo, Zacatecas. He helped us out with that and he promoted the song “La Carta” in the radio. So it was already becoming a hit [*pegando*] when we made the video, and that’s when the group became known in all of the Sierra Wixárika, like San Miguel, San Andrés, Santa Catarina, all of that. San Sebastián, Tuxpan de Bolaños, to Guadalupe [Ocotán], Nayarit, everywhere there were Wixárikas.

<sup>229</sup> Marciano González López would become a member of Torrente Huichol and, later, Herencia Huichol.



Figure 62. Nuevo Amanecer Huichol's second album (2006). From top left: Domingo López, Julián Carrillo, Victor Manuel Carrillo (“Karutsa”), Rodolfo Robles (“Kwitsi”), Samuel López (“El Brujo”). This same membership would become Huichol Musical.

NW: So, before, the group didn't have so much success or recognition in the sierra?

DL: Not yet. Because with the first recording we made, it didn't get much attention. We were getting known little by little. But with the song “La Carta,” we grew more [*nos extendimos más*]... we worked in all of the sierra, and all of Zacatecas, parts of Durango, and Jalisco. And that's also when the representative arrived from Huejuquilla el Alto, called Federico Cabrera. There, they gave us the opportunity to get in with large groups... to alternate [*alternar*]. I'm talking about with [Banda] La Arrolladora, Conjunto Rio Grande, La Fe Norteña, with bigger groups, with sound [systems], with huge equipment. And then, in 2006 or 2007, we had the surprise that a big label was calling us. We had the opportunity to play with a group Aliados de la Sierra at the time when the Duranguense [genre] was a bit hit. And at that time, the label where we're at now was called American Show Latin. Well, we went to play with [Los Aliados] in a place in Zacatecas. At that time, the owner of the label was there in person and [we] caught his attention. When we went on stage, lots of people were [there] supporting us, and the song “La Carta” was really strong then. So the people were singing it when we played it.

The owner of the label, José “Pepe” Serrano, recalled the moment like this:

Check it out... at that time, the Duranguense music was really strong. I had an event in Zacatecas... what was the name of the town? [tries out some names] I don't remember! I was going to see one of my artists. When I arrived, I got out of the truck running because I heard lots of screaming. I thought my group was already playing. And what was my surprise? It was a group of Huichols playing. I went crazy. I got excited, and right there I told them that I wanted to sign them. (Serrano 2014)



In López's telling of the story, the process was a bit more drawn out, including an intermediary called Mario Mata who helped them negotiate with American Show Latin, which at the time was becoming Latin Power Music after an agreement with Universal Music Group.<sup>230</sup> López continued:

**Domingo López:** Then, well, they changed our name when we signed on with the [label]. Now [we're] known as Huichol Musical.

**NW:** Why the change? Why that name?

**DL:** What happened is that in Fresnillo, it turns out a person already registered the name Nuevo Amanecer Huichol before we registered it. So when we wanted to register the name it was already registered. It didn't belong to us. The idea for the name [Huichol Musical]... [came from] Pepe Serrano, the owner of Latin Power Music. He helped us out [*nos apadrinó*] with the name Huichol Musical. Why Huichol? Because we're Huicholes, Wixárikas. And [also] he said it would be easier to pronounce Huichol Musical than Nuevo Amanecer Huichol... And it stuck. We recorded the song "La Cusinela" [by José López, El Venado Azul]... and [the label] took it to the United States to promote it in all the radio [stations].

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<sup>230</sup> On their first two discs (2008 and 2009), however, it is listed as American Show Latin.



Figure 63. The group's first release under the new name Huichol Musical (2008).<sup>231</sup>

**NW:** Was the idea to record that song yours or the owner's [of Latin Power Music]?

**DL:** Both. Actually, the song "La Cusinela" was already famous here in Mexico. But in the United States it wasn't known [*publicado*]. So we went to the United States where we made it famous. There, they know the song "La Cusinela" by Huichol Musical.

**NW:** With that song you started to [tour] more internationally.

**DL:** Yes... it was he [José López and his song] who opened the doors in various parts of the markets [so that] we could enter. Actually, we were nominated for the American awards... I don't remember if it was in 2008 or 2009<sup>232</sup> ... those American nominations...

**NW:** The Grammys?

**DL:** The American Grammys! And in 2010 or 2011<sup>233</sup> ... I don't remember that well either... we were in the Premio Lo Nuestro.

**NW:** The Grammys it was "Best Regional Album," something like that, regional. And the Premio Lo Nuestro was different, right?

**DL:** Best Grupero of the Year.

**NW:** Is that how you all talk about your music? That it's música grupera?

**DL:** Well, I think we call it more like música regional.<sup>234</sup> Really, regional is what we always play.

<sup>231</sup> This disc was first released with the title *Desde México... "Sonido Huichol"* without the song "Cumbia Cusinela." It was then re-released with the title track.

<sup>232</sup> Their first release with American Show Latin, "Desde México... Cumbia Cusinela" was in 2008, the same year as the Grammy nomination. The awards show, which they attended, was in 2009.

<sup>233</sup> They were nominated for "Best Grupera Artist of the Year" in 2010.

**NW:** El Brujo told me a genre, a style, something called *con flor*.

**DL:** It can also be called *con florica*. But *florica* has more groups that play more like in an orchestra. But [this] is like *música regional* because what we play is only two violins, vihuela, guitar, and tololoche.

**NW:** Some people have told me that you started with that idea to play with two violins. Is that true or does it come from other groups?

**DL:** Before us there was already another group that played with two violins. Actually, it's where the idea occurred to me also to play with two violins... a group I admire greatly called Los Teopa. But they were in the time when El Venado Azul started. There were like four or five groups, and in that time Los Teopa were around also.

**NW:** When you all were starting to learn to play, did you already know about other groups? Or who were your musical idols... what did you listen to when you were young?

**DL:** Yes, well, me, for example, what caught my attention a lot when they played violin was Los Teopa, El Venado Azul. There was another group called Conjunto Regional. That's where I learned to play violin.

Huichol Musical's biggest hits, at least as measured by Billboard charts, were covers of preexisting hits ("Cumbia Cusinela" and "Quiero Que Me Quieras").<sup>235</sup> As I address in another chapter, most of their early repertoire as Huichol Musical was a repeat of what they had already recorded as Nuevo Amanecer Huichol. They also added some original compositions in Wixárika, bringing the language more mass media exposure than ever before. The Wixárika-language songs were not only on display for the outside world, though. The song "Eki Uka" ("You, Woman"), for example, had a tremendous amount of success in the sierra during my fieldwork period, heard blaring on portable USB-based stereos carried on busses to the sierra and frequently requested during the group's shows in Wixárika communities.

Huichol Musical is the only Huichol group that has had a large part of its repertoire created for them by their label's professional songwriters, including songs like "El Punto Com" and "Bailen Huichol." A good deal of their success can also be attributed to the label's

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<sup>234</sup> In the case of Premio Lo Nuestro, "Grupera" is a subcategory of "Regional."

<sup>235</sup> According to Billboard, the album *Desde México...* "Cumbia Cusinela" was on the "Top Latin Albums" chart for 42 weeks, peaking at number 21, and on the "Regional Mexican Albums" chart for 12 weeks, peaking at number 11. The album *Quiero Que Me Quieras* charted for 10 weeks, peaking at number 11 on "Top Latin Albums," and charted for 5 weeks on "Regional Mexican Albums," reaching number 5. The individual songs charted on "Regional Mexican Songs," each lasting for 7 weeks. "Quiero Que Me Quieras" reached number 28, "Cumbia Cusinela" reached number 34 ([www.billboard.com/artist/303690/huichol-musical/](http://www.billboard.com/artist/303690/huichol-musical/)).

unabashed willingness to piggyback on the musical, cultural, and political zeitgeist. In addition to their first hit, which was already a hit in Mexico, almost every album has attempted to connect with and harness larger phenomena for commercial benefit. The title track from the second album, *Quiero Que Me Quieras* (2009), was already popularized in Mexico by the film *Rudo y Cursi* (2008), starring Gael Garcia Bernal.<sup>236</sup> The third album, released around the time that strict anti-immigration laws were being passed in Arizona, was titled *Orgullo Mexicano (Mexican Pride, 2011)* and featured “La Visca,” a song written by the label’s songwriters regarding “the fight” against the Arizona laws. The title track of their most recent release as of this writing, *Cielito Lindo* (2015), was released online as a single early in 2014 to correspond with the World Cup, the song “Cielito Lindo” being associated with the Mexican soccer team, sung after each goal.

In 2013, during the celebrations for Santo Domingo in Nueva Colonia, I witnessed what was the group’s final show with El Brujo, and what might be considered the “original” Huichol Musical membership.<sup>237</sup> Their five-year contract with Latin Power Music was coming to an end and rumors circulated that they would disband. Though the unimaginable details of what would transpire in the following year will appear in another chapter, suffice it to say that the group did go through massive changes and for a while was almost completely defunct, and at least one member would literally be on life support. The fallout of the group, however, led to a sort of musical power vacuum in the sierra that led to numerous groups breaking up, reforming, and trying to fill the spot unoccupied by Huichol Musical. The newly-formed groups Herencia

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<sup>236</sup> “Quiero Que Me Quieras” is the Spanish version of “I Want You to Want Me,” originally by Cheap Trick, and covered extensively in English.

<sup>237</sup> To say the show included El Brujo is a stretch. He was present for the festivities but was only onstage for the first few groups, wreaking drunken havoc until being escorted offstage by one of the local *topiles* (deputies). He was incapacitated by the time Huichol Musical took the stage in the wee hours of the night. Clearly, it was the end of his run with the group, with semi-mutual feelings of discontent.

Huichol and Renovado Huichol took most of the spoils, with the former having more commercial success but nothing compared to the (inter)national scale of Huichol Musical. During the writing of this chapter, Huichol Musical released the album *Cielito Lindo* with Jacko of Los Amos's on guitar, filling the void left by El Brujo. The history of the group, then, continues to be made.

### **Aprendizaje (learning) and the salience of Nueva Colonia (Iniakwaxitia)**

The process of learning música regional for Wixárika musicians is remarkably similar to that of xaweri and kanari in the sense that it is usually initially described in “ordinary” or quotidian terms but can also benefit from the intervention of deities or ritual methods.

Most Wixárika musicians learned música regional “on [their] own, just listening.” At least since the 1970s, as seen above, that means not only listening to live musical performances of fellow musicians but also recordings of the mass media, especially radio, records, and cassettes. In many cases, learning was facilitated from fathers-to-sons or uncles-to-nephews. To these methods can also be added more formal instruction in Catholic mission schools and, more recently, public schools.

In addition to ordinary human-to-human methods, Wixárika musicians sometimes seek assistance in their pursuits from powerful non-human or ancestral entities. As with xaweri, and as seen above with the Ríos family stories, learning música regional is often done with the aid of Kieri (Teiwari Yuawi). Though sometimes thought of just as the plant kieri, in deity form he is sometimes considered an ancestor: Tamatsi Teiwari Yuawi (Dark Blue Elder Brother Mestizo) (Neurath 2005). A number of my contacts referred to Teiwari Yuawi as being a “saint” for

musicians, but also generally for learning anything of the Mestizo world.<sup>238</sup> Jáuregui has also correctly pointed out the importance of the Christ figure in Huaynamota, Nayarit, known variously as “El Señor de Huaynamota,” “Jesús Nazareno,” “El Nazareno,” and “El Huaynamoteco.” Jáuregui stated that “today, the majority of the Huichols solicit musical ability from El Señor de Huaynamota” (2003:365). That might have been true in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it is no longer correct to say “the majority,” or to suggest that he is as central today as he was then. If there is any one “santo” in particular who is currently most associated with the impressive success of Wixárika musicians beyond their homelands, it is Santo Domingo of Nueva Colonia.

Nueva Colonia’s current reign as “the home of Wixárika musicians” (*la cuna de los músicos*) is commonly attributed to the town’s patron saint, Santo Domingo, known in Wixárika as Ximíaname or Xaturumi. My introduction to Santo Domingo (as he is usually called), happened during my first trip to Nueva Colonia for a fundraising baile. As I inscribed the details in my fieldwork journal for February 5, 2013:

Jorge [López Solís] said the xiriki was for a “very jealous saint” [*santo muy celoso*], according to the locals, so we entered to ask his blessing. The wall with the Santo had a long string of flickering, multicolored Christmas lights... the only light in there. Jorge lit a candle he had just bought at the store, grabbed [a muwieri] from in front of the Santo, passed [it] around his [own] head, then mine, presenting the both of us to him, asking for no problems while in town and mentioning my desire to learn Wixárika. We put pesos into [Santo Domingo’s] *bolsita* [a Wixárika-style shoulder bag (*kítsiuri*) in miniature draped around the diminutive Christ figure crucified in Wixárika clothes]. Jorge took photos of him, and we headed to the baile.

Before long, I started to hear stories about the power and importance of Santo Domingo, despite the fact that he had been amongst the Wixaritari for less than two full generations. Tidbits were mentioned occasionally to the affect of “he’s no longer a Catholic God... he’s become Wixárika

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<sup>238</sup> One Wixárika friend who was studying to be a lawyer attributed his success in the Mestizo educational system to his personal patron “saint,” Teiwari Yuawi. Like a musician who might take his instruments to a sacred site for blessings, this student took textbooks and class notes to be blessed by Teiwari Yuawi.

(*se hizo wixárika*),” in that sense making him like música regional itself. Some simply said he was “loaned” and then “donated” to Nueva Colonia by priests in the nearest Mestizo town of Tenzompa.

Despite his recent arrival in the sierra, divergent but fascinating histories about him already abound. One such story was told to me by Rosa Solís Carrillo, an elderly woman currently of Tuutu Makawe, near Pueblo Nuevo. She grew up in the rancho Taymarita, where she says Santo Domingo first arrived after leaving Tenzompa. A man named Sandoval, the father of the current caretaker, Jaime Carrillo, brought Santo Domingo to Taymarita.<sup>239</sup> Rosa Solís met Santo Domingo when she was six years old (c.1940). According to her, Santo Domingo was given to the Wixaritari because the priests of Tenzompa became deathly afraid of him when he began to chant in Wixárika like a mara‘akame. The father of Rosa Solís, Wereme Antonio Solís, a mara‘akame known for being able to “resolve” natural phenomena and bring rain, often involved Santo Domingo in his ceremonies. Santo Domingo also commonly visited the rancho Los Espejos, but relocated to Nueva Colonia soon after arriving in the sierra.

Another version of the story came from a musician originally from Las Latas (a tukipa near Nueva Colonia) who was not sure whether he wanted to be personally identified, but displayed a vast knowledge of the topic.<sup>240</sup> His version was as follows:

**Local Musician:** [Santo Domingo] first appeared in San Nicolás [a rancho near Tenzompa]. [The story has to do with] a man named Agustín Carrillo Sandoval, but he’s known by the name “Sandoval.” He [was] from Nueva Colonia, and he was also the first person [there] to learn to speak Spanish. To write and read, also.

**NW:** When was that? When did he live?

**LM:** I’m not sure about the exact years, but this happened, we could say, around 1920. He was also the first to teach classes, he put the school there in Nueva Colonia. As he was also a mara‘akame, he also knew that side [of things]. He walked the path of the ancestors.

Peregrinated. He knew how to talk with the Gods. Well, since he was in touch with [*se comunicaba*] with the Mestizo people that lived in Tenzompa, he would walk there and pass by [the rancho] La Soledad. The people there had problems with that Saint, Santo Domingo. So [the

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<sup>239</sup> This is the same Jaime Carrillo of the corrido by Los Teopa (Audio 21).

<sup>240</sup> His knowledge was partly the result of being a relative of the caretakers of Santo Domingo.

people of La Soledad] asked Agustín Sandoval whether he could communicate with Santo Domingo.

**NW:** They had problems with the saint?

**LM:** Not so much with the Saint, no, not really a problem. But the faith that all the people had [in Santo Domingo] wasn't reciprocated [*no se les cumplía*]. They figured that he didn't function, that he wasn't working [for them]. And from La Soledad they took him to Tenzompa, but it didn't work. So Agustín Sandoval put himself to work on that, why it was, the question, that is, to solve the problem. So [Sandoval] started to communicate with [Santo Domingo], and he figured it out. Santo Domingo said to Sandoval, "no, well, I'm not from here, and furthermore I'm Wixárika." So Agustín Sandoval only had to tell them [the Mestizos] that "this one doesn't speak in... well, yes, he speaks your language, Spanish, but rather he wants people like us, Wixárika." So that's what Sandoval explained to them and they gave him Santo Domingo. He brought him to Nueva Colonia. There they made him his chapel [*capilla*], they brought and sacrificed bulls and everything that a Wixárika does to accommodate his life. And they did ceremonies when they brought him, and Santo Domingo was installed [*se asentó*]. Now lots of people go to him with their petitions and, yes, he follows through. So that's how Santo Domingo became famous. He was miraculous.

Later, I asked the same musician whether he thought Santo Domingo had something to do with the success of the musicians from Nueva Colonia.

Yes, yes, he has something to do with it because I asked [one of the members] of Huichol Musical. I asked him, "why are you so famous... where did you go, or which Saint did you go to?" "Well, there we have Santo Domingo," he told me. "Haven't you thought about going there?" he told me. So I think that, yes, because all the musicians, since they're from there, they ask him, they make a petition to Santo Domingo. He who seriously asks him for something has a pact [*tiene compromiso*]. And it's going to go well for him in his work. That's what Huichol Musical, Venado Azul, and Los Teopa did.

Many are quick to connect musical success with Santo Domingo in this way, assuming that any famous musician has a pact with him. In my interviews, though, it varies from a direct pact, to success by association (being from there), to mere respect, to outright denial (rarely). As one member of Huichol Musical told me, "I believe in only one God" [*un sólo Dios*], an allusion to his more evangelical Christianity. Others were clear to point out the connection whether or not they had made any direct pacts or promises with Santo Domingo. When asking Samuel González of Los Teopa about whether Santo Domingo aided their success, he said:

Why would I deny it? In reality, that's how it was in our trajectory... [it's] thanks to that Saint, and I'll say to you 'thanks to Teopa' also, because I'm from [Cajones]. Santo Domingo does have something. It was the faith [in him] that we had and which supported us... in all the recordings... and we haven't lost that faith... but we didn't make any promises [to him]. (González 2014)



José López of El Venado Azul referred to the use of the Christ image for Santo Domingo as Jesus representing the “reincarnation of the deer.” Asked whether musicians from Nueva Colonia had success thanks to Santo Domingo, he said:

Oh, of course, yes... because many groups of the best musicians come from Nueva Colonia. And we’ll thank Santo Domingo. We give him thanks before and after working, and we go there [to him]. I believe he’s powerful. And, really, he’s powerful because he’s demonstrated it. Many famous groups have come out of Nueva Colonia. [NW: When you started to play did you go to him to ask for luck?] No. What happens is that since the time we’re young, our grandparents take us there. So we were already born with that... with that guide. (López Robles 2014)

Others draw a connection directly between Santo Domingo and Teiwari Yuawi, seeing them as the same thing, successful in similar realms (i.e., music and “outside” things). Both are seen as fast acting, but incredibly strict and thus potentially dangerous if one were not to make good on a promise. The extent of this connection or equivalence, though, is debated, and some are unaware of it or deny it.

Naturally, a deity so deeply connected to music will be honored musically. His feast day is celebrated on May 19 with an all-night baile full of top groups from Nueva Colonia and beyond (documented in the interchapter on bailes). Santo Domingo has also been referenced in song, at least as early as the “Corrido de Teopa” (Audio 26) by Los Teopa. The lyrics refer to him as “the image of our Sun” (*la imagen de nuestro Sol*), which connects him to Jesus and Tau (Father Sun), and explains why his feast day is during the dry season. Rosalío González has also written a corrido specifically for Santo Domingo, which has yet to be recorded as of this writing, but whose first verses are as follows:

“El Corrido de Santo Domingo”  
by Rosalío González

Nueva Colonia dios huichol se le venera  
Mayo 19 es su gran festividad  
Santo Domingo es un santito muy bonito  
tiene poderes asombrosos de verdad

Nueva Colonia venerates a Huichol god  
May 19 is his big festival  
Santo Domingo is a pretty Saint  
He has amazing powers, it’s true

Se le adora con cantos de esas sagradas  
Sangre de toros, venados, y águila real  
Y a las fiestas todos rezan sin parar  
Y los huicholes lloran de felicidad

They venerate him with those sacred songs  
Blood of bulls, deer, and golden eagle  
And [in] the fiestas everyone prays without end  
And the Huichols cry from happiness

Desde Colonia [undecipherable] y manantial  
Donde te esperan darte todos tus deseos  
Por San Andrés, San Sebastián, y San Miguel  
manda sus rayos de luz a corazones

From Colonia [undecipherable] y spring  
Where they wait for you to grant all your wishes  
To San Andrés, San Sebastián, and San Miguel  
he sends his rays of light to hearts

Recalling the shifting relationships Wixárika musicians have had with patron deities and “Saints” over the course of the past century might speak to the increasingly internalized and naturalized place of Mestizo music (and worldviews) in Wixárika life. The origin myth, as documented by Jáuregui, portrayed a singular musician—Inés Ríos—as having made a pact with “the devil.” Later accounts rightly mention the importance of the Christ figure—El Nazareno—in the Mestizo-Wixárika-Cora town of Huaynamota, Nayarit. Though El Nazareno maintains some importance today, the centering of the Huichol music group phenomenon in Nueva Colonia has shifted the explanation to Santo Domingo, a Christ figure seen as a Catholic Saint who “became Wixárika.” If the original stories about “the devil” could be interpreted as the fetishization of the growing conflict of indigenous peasants with capitalism (Taussig 1980), then Santo Domingo represents the taming of—or acquiescence to—that conflict through song and dance.

### **Recent genre developments (during the fieldwork period)**

During the main fieldwork period for this dissertation (July 2012—January 2015), a number of musical developments occurred that reveal the quickly-changing musical preferences of Wixárika youths and the expanding Huichol music scene overall. The three most significant changes, in semi-chronological order, were the appearance of Wixárika musicians playing

norteño-banda (a.k.a. sierrreña-banda), the appearance of a successful group that utilized all three lead instruments (violin, requinto, accordion), and the still-nascent phenomenon of Huichol groups using Duranguense instrumentation (including electronic keyboard and drumset).

One of the more talked-about developments on the scene was the influence of norteño-banda. Because the Huichol version uses requinto instead of accordion, some call it sierrreña-banda or sierrreño-banda. In addition to repertoire influences for all groups, the key feature of norteño-banda—using tuba instead of electric bass—has been the source of inspiration and experimentation for at least three Huichol groups. I hesitate, though, to refer to them as “Huichol” groups because none of them has made an extensive effort to capitalize on Huicholness as part of their image, dressing entirely in Mestizo/Western clothes and necessarily relying on Mestizo tuba players.<sup>241</sup>

It seems the first Wixárika musician to take up sierrreña-banda and norteño-banda was requintero and composer Gustavo Pereyra, doing so in 2011 in Tepic, Nayarit after he left the group Los Artesanos to become a soloist.<sup>242</sup> He was the only Wixárika musician in the group, though, and performed primarily around Tepic and other urban areas. The first sierrreña-banda with mostly Wixárika musicians was led by José de la Cruz Velazquez—“Kawi”—of Los Amos’s. His “norteño-banda project,” *Presencia Pesada* (Heavy Presence), played a number of engagements, the first being in Xatsitsarie in 2012 (Video 17). Third, and apparently the only Wixárika-led sierrreña-banda so far to compose songs in Wixárika, is *Legítimos Sierrreños*, led by Paly Omar Enriquez López. Based in Colotlán, the group has had some success with

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<sup>241</sup> Despite the use of cornet by some Wixárika students in early indigenous boarding schools (*internados*) and, today, in the military, wind instruments in general have never caught on with Wixárika musicians. Thus, as of this writing, there are no Wixárika tuba players to fill these positions, which are currently in high demand.

<sup>242</sup> Pereyra’s recordings released in 2011 featured variously requinto or accordion as lead instrument. He called them norteño-banda.

compositions in the Wixárika language (“Hutse Xaweríeya” [Audio 48] and “Tutu Chimu Ane” [Audio 49]), and with its endearing homemade music videos (Videos 18, 19).<sup>243</sup>

Another notable group made its debut in 2013, incorporating the two main lead instruments up to that point (violin and requinto), but also demonstrating a strong preference for accordion. Though based in Tepic, the name JB Sierreño is a reference primarily to their hometown rancho, sometimes known as Juana Burra. Previous scholars have suggested that Wixaritari were less fond of the accordion, though Mestizo groups have played with accordion in San Andrés at least since the 1970s. In my fieldwork I came across three Wixárika accordionists: Manuel Sánchez of Tsikatia (Tuxpan), Evaristo Torres of JB Sierreño, and another I observed after Semana Santa in Tateikie. In all cases, they were piano accordions.

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<sup>243</sup> Paly is in some sense from a new generation of musicians greatly influenced by Los Amos’s. He has worked with former Los Amos’s member Dracko and, like Los Amos’s, has ties to Bajío del Tule but is now based in Colotlán.



Figure 64. JB Sierreño audition for Ukeme in Tepic (2013–07–26).<sup>244</sup>

Towards the end of my fieldwork period (in early 2015), two young groups of Wixárika musicians appeared in Durango performing in the Duranguense instrumental genre, with electronic keyboard leading, accompanied by electric instruments and drumset. The groups were called Juvenil Huichol and De la Cruz Musical, the latter of which did a song they called “Pasito Wixa” (Video 20), a play on the dance called the *pasito duranguense* (Durango step). It seems the keyboard was not used for live music in the Sierra Wixárika until the appearance of these groups, and the same could be said for the drumset.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Ukeme was auditioning the group because he had heard their CD but wanted to hear them perform live before recommending them for a performance in a Wixárika locality.

<sup>245</sup> The electronic keyboard did make at least one prior recorded appearance in the Huichol music scene, on a version of the hit song “Tsinari” as performed by Conjunto Teemari (Audio 56). The group did not perform live on keyboard, though.

### *Beyond música regional*

This chapter is primarily about música regional, widely defined, but the extent of the Wixárika musical world is certainly not confined to chants of the mara‘akame, xaweri, and música regional. Musical performance practices in and near the sierra in which Wixaritari have been involved have historically included church choirs, military bands, and even Gregorian chant.<sup>246</sup> Musical listening preferences are also much wider than what is represented in this chapter. In terms of music as labor and in social events, however, there is currently little beyond música regional. Still, changing listening preferences might affect musical labor and social events in the near future.

Surprisingly, despite their acceptance in many Indigenous communities throughout the world, rock and rap music have not caught on in any significant way amongst the Wixaritari. There are some exceptions in the sense that there are some rock songs that have made their way into the repertoire of música regional groups, but musicians and audiences do not think of them in performance as “rock music.”<sup>247</sup> Rock music is known, but I searched fruitlessly for a Wixárika rock group. In other indigenous communities in Mexico, especially in Veracruz, Guerrero, and Chiapas, there are some rock music performers and audiences, and even moshing or “slam” dancing has caught on to some extent (López, Cedillo, and Zebadúa 2014).

Rap has not entered the Huichol repertoire, and I could find only one young Wixárika man who claimed to be learning it and writing his own rap lyrics in Wixárika. He was unsure of

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<sup>246</sup> The Wixárika artist and artesano Álvaro Ortiz López received his bachelor’s degree (*bachillerato*) with a specialization in Gregorian chant from the Escuela Diocesana de Música Sacra (Diocese School of Sacred Music) in Aguascalientes.

<sup>247</sup> These exceptions in the repertoire include the following songs: “Jambalaya,” originally by Hank Williams, performed by Wixárika soloist Zamurawy after learning it from Los Felinos and K-Paz de la Sierra; “En Un Café,” the Spanish version of “Under the Boardwalk,” performed by many Huichol groups, especially Abrazo Musical; and “La Guitarra,” by Argentine rock/ska band Los Auténticos Decadentes, performed by Los Amos’s. The only “rock” song composed by a Wixárika musician is currently “Rock Unetsi” by José López of El Venado Azul (Audio 65; Video 38).

his abilities, though, and deflected or ignored my requests to hear what he was working on or read some of his lyrics. Not surprisingly, he was originally from Nueva Colonia.

The absence of rock and rap in the Wixárika world might have to do with rural-oriented listening preferences, but is also probably mostly ignored by musicians because there is currently no money in it. Though Colotlán, for example, sometimes had visiting heavy metal tours, I knew of only two local Mestizo rock groups, and no rap groups. There simply was no audience for either genre. As such, anyone with an interest in them does them for amateur, artistic pursuits, with little or no hope of professionalizing the interest or starting a music scene around those genres. It would likely prove difficult to start a scene in such regions where almost all popular music has a social dance component to it. Therefore, young Wixaritari currently show more signs of being likely to take up electronic dance music (EDM).

Wixárika university students tend to be relatively open to EDM, widely and generically defined as synthesizer- and sample-based musics for nightclub dancing. While attending a home recording session once with Abrazo Musical and R5 Sierreño, I noticed a teenage Wixárika roommate in another room learning Virtual DJ software on his laptop. I later saw him assisting and looking over the shoulder of a Mestizo DJ hired to perform between sets of *música sierrreña* at a temporary street-bar (*terrazza*) during Colotlán's 2014 feria. The audience—about fifty percent Wixárika students from CUNorte—were extremely enthusiastic about the DJ's EDM set.

The Wixárika social-music world, however, is not necessarily forever tied to dance music. Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz, musician, teacher, and director of PuebloIndigena.com, often remarked to me about his desire to start a group or solo act with piano or keyboard music (*música del teclado*). He envisioned it as appropriate music for dinners (*comidas*) associated with small, semi-formal family events such as *quinceañeras*, increasingly common in the Wixárika

communities of Tuxpan de Bolaños and Guadalupe Ocotán. Ukeme's dream was not so much for artistic vision, but for the recognition of an emerging musical market, linked to a nascent Wixárika middle class with increasing professional ties to the Mestizo world.



Figure 65. Ukeme decides to buy a keyboard for use in Tuxpan de Bolaños. (Photographer unknown.)

### **Conclusion: Is it Traditional Mariachi?**

In this chapter, I have focused primarily on the history of Mestizo popular music in the Wixárika territory, and the Wixárika musicians who have appropriated the music for use in the sierra and beyond. I began by situating the history with a backdrop of genre classifications within



the region as seen through today's taxonomies (instrumentation, lyrical content, and so on). I then covered the history of the early entrance of Mestizo music in the sierra, followed by its more recent "wave" of groups playing in and beyond the sierra. As shown above, Nueva Colonia and Cajones, in the community of Santa Catarina, have been major forces in the most recent wave of groups, aided no doubt by the model set by Los Teopa and El Venado Azul, but also seen as the result of Nueva Colonia's *patrón*, Santo Domingo.

The history of the phenomenon begins to problematize De la Mora's categories of "standard," "neo-traditionalist," and "innovators." My ethnographic findings did not lead to these frames of analysis. For example, El Venado Azul was classified by De la Mora as a "neo-traditionalist." A more complete historical understanding of the group, though, reveals that even under De la Mora's categories, he could be understood as having started out as "standard," but has also been an "innovator" by being the first to record, being a composer of hit songs, and by including women in his groups. Under De la Mora's categories, Huichol Musical might be seen as "neo-traditional" and Los Amos's as "innovators." But Huichol Musical also started out as "standard" violin group, and are now "innovators" because they, like Los Amos's (when they existed) are seen as "modern" due to musical prowess and fresh, boundary-pushing repertoire. Thus, De la Mora's categories, at least from an historical and genre-based analysis, are too slippery to be of exceptional heuristic value.

In this chapter, I did not represent the music at hand as "traditional mariachi" or even as a remnant of early Mexican *son*. The reason is simple; the ethnographic evidence did not support it. Usually, the evidence did not even hint at it, or it pointed in an opposite direction. The assignation of "traditional mariachi" to today's Huichol group phenomenon comes almost

entirely from outside the Wixárika understanding of the music in question, primarily by scholars and state arts agencies, and was only adopted afterwards by some Wixárika musicians.

As shown above, the existence of an unbroken, unilinear “mariachi tradition” amongst the Wixaritari is debatable. To begin with, there are clear examples of polygenesis in the history of the phenomenon. Similarly, there has been an undeniable mediation (if not also inspiration) by the mass media at least since the nascent days of the sierra-wide phenomenon in the 1970s. The only instance of anything resembling an early lineage was that of the Ríos family, and even then it displayed obvious fits and starts, and was not necessarily well known beyond its own region in Nayarit.

To give a concrete example as to the fanciful thinking behind the idea of Huichol “traditional mariachi,” one could consider the group Nubes de la Sierra which has performed numerous times in the annual Encuentro de Mariachi Tradicional in Guadalajara, Jalisco. The group is led by Ismael González, already mentioned above in the history of the group Nuevo Amanecer Huichol, which later became Huichol Musical. In that sense, the origins of Nubes de la Sierra is the same as Huichol Musical, and the type of repertoire essentially the same. The former is considered “traditional mariachi” by outsiders, and the latter “grupero,” which for many is antithetical to the essence of “traditional mariachi.”

One might be tempted to think of Nubes de la Sierra as “traditional mariachi” by assuming some unbroken lineage of instrumentation and repertoire, preserved in a remote indigenous mountain refuge. In reality, Ismael González learned from his uncles in Cajones, the brothers who started Los Teopa. As shown above, Los Teopa was originally Los González, perhaps the first group in the community of Santa Catarina. Of course, early groups in Santa Catarina were aware of other groups in nearby communities and on the coast, perhaps even

sharing songs, but the phenomenon was already inseparable from the hit songs of the mass media. Thus, the “tradition” historically disappears back into the mass mediated ether, not a mythologized encounter with Kieri *à la* Ríos. Most importantly, Ismael González, like all musicians I interviewed, never considered his music to be traditional mariachi, at least not until it was suggested to him by workers from the state culture agency (González González 2015).<sup>248</sup>

For some, the issue of “traditional mariachi” has to do with the presence of *sones* and the associated *zapateado* dance. I did not cover these extensively in this chapter because they are almost nonexistent in the Huichol group repertoire today. The few exceptions are songs like “Pavido Navido” and “La Loba del Mal,” which almost all of my interviewees referred to as *huapango* or *zapateado*. The problem with using these songs as evidence that Huichol groups are “traditional mariachi” is twofold. First, they come to the repertoire via Chalino Sanchez and the mass mediated norteño genre, not the *sones* (like *son jalisciense*) at the heart of the musical definitions of “traditional mariachi.” Second, the *zapateado* dance, though still done by some Mestizos, was not observed once in Wixárika bailes, even when the above songs were played. If Huichol groups are “traditional mariachi” because of such repertoire, then they are also traditional American popular music, because there are as many or more songs in the Huichol repertoire that originated in rock “oldies” and country music of the U.S.

Considering the previous chapter on traditional Wixárika music, the music of the *xaweri* and *kanari* actually fits the definitions of “traditional mariachi” better than today’s Huichol groups. *Xaweri* is used in both “religious” and “secular” settings, it includes the *sesquialtera* in the vast majority of its compositions, and it includes *zapateado* almost as a requirement. The instrumentation fits the definition to the extent that early mariachi in the sierra was usually only

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<sup>248</sup> They were invited to perform in the Encuentros in Guadalajara by the Secretaría de Cultura Popular de Jalisco. In the lead up to their first participation, they were advised not to bring any “metallic” instruments (i.e., trumpet) (González González 2015).

played on violin and guitar (Cruz Medrano, quoted in Jáuregui 1993b:318). The instruments are also made locally, by hand, as was the case with the instruments used in early mariachi witnessed by Aleš Hrdlička in Huaynamota in 1902 (Hrdlička 1902:744). Xaweri and kanari were also commonly accompanied by zapateado dance on a *tarima* (wooden dance platform deeply associated with early *son* in multiple regions), seen in at least some Wixárika tukite until recently (Mata Torres 1972b:86). Indeed, at least one xaweri group has played in the Encuentros of traditional mariachi, but years after Huichol groups had been featured. So why the central focus on Huichol groups and not xaweri?

Answering the above question would be mostly speculative without interviewing those involved in defining “traditional mariachi” and those who hire Huichol groups for the Encuentros. Indeed, it might be better not to worry about the matter at all because any genre categorization is an ideologically weighted assignation, an identification not so much based on a self-evident historicity as much as a subjective and even capricious operation that reveals as much or more about the assigner as it does the assignee. Along those lines, “traditional mariachi” is an invented tradition in the sense that it seeks to inculcate certain values through “implied continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 1983:1). That is not to disparage the concept of “traditional mariachi” as worthless or a fraud, but there is something deeply unsettling about defining Huichol groups as “traditional mariachi” because it names and defines an “Other.” Doing so is especially ideologically fraught to the extent that the Other is named to serve the ends of those doing the naming, and this is the real heart of my critique.

The real problem with calling Huichol groups “traditional mariachi” is not a question of the historical veracity of the statement. The issue is not whether they “are” or “are not” “traditional mariachi.” The problem is the spirit of the assignation, and perhaps its symbolic

power. As Bruno Nettl put it, “each society divides the world it knows into areas, domains, and categories” (1983:25). To the extent, though, that Wixaritari and Mestizos come from different cultures or societies, they view the same music of the Huichol groups differently, and the Mestizo view does not square with the Wixárika view. In fact, the two takes are exact opposites.

“Traditional mariachi,” as defined by Mexican scholars and state arts agencies, is constructed as an ideated core and origin of the “modern” mariachi, which is seen as a central part of Mexican national identity. If mariachi is the “roots” of Mexican music, then “traditional mariachi” is the roots of the roots, an authenticating and enriching ideation about the soul of “modern” mariachi and, by extension, the nation itself. The implication is about oldness, approaching “extinction,” in no small part an urban Mestizo nostalgia for imagined pastimes on the remote rancho. “Traditional mariachi” is construed in the present as a former center, one which is now marginalized and almost forgotten in the face of the “corrupting” forces of the mass media. It is thus a moralizing, deep force in an otherwise superficial musical landscape. This is the concept of “traditional mariachi” into which the Huichol groups have been inserted.

By contrast, the Wixárika perspective of Huichol groups and their music, as shown above, is strikingly different. The Wixaritari, from their perspective, already have a traditional music (i.e., *xaweri* and *kanari*), and the Huichol groups often did (and sometimes still do) represent an affront to Wixárika tradition.<sup>249</sup> The history of Mestizo music in the sierra is one of outsider music (*teiwari kwikarieya*) becoming adopted from the periphery and being made central (*wixárika kwikarieya*). It has, since its earliest days, always been about newness, the latest hits, and *grupos del momento* (groups of the moment). It has come into its own and continued to thrive because of its utilization of the mass media. The reluctance on the part of

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<sup>249</sup> As seen in the previous chapter, *xaweri* music can be seen as a part of Wixárika *tayeiyari* (our way/path, customs, tradition). I never once heard anyone refer to Huichol music groups in that way. They are increasingly integrated into Wixárika “customs,” but not to that extent.

some Mestizos to see this as “modern” music is likely because Wixárika musicians playing modern popular music—and being exceptionally successful in doing so—is a case of “Indians in unexpected places” (Deloria 2004). The only recourse is to see them as “traditional,” preserving the Mestizo’s music for them in indigenous “regions of refuge.”

Kofi Agawu, in a critique of ethnomusicological proclivities to emphasize difference over similarities, stated that, “by constructing phenomena, objects, or people as ‘different,’ one stakes a claim to power over them” (2003:156). In other settings, I have agreed with Agawu and taken up his claim (Warden 2010). What has occurred here, though, is the reverse. Urban Mestizos, by assuming sameness—that “they” preserve “our” Mestizo traditional music—have staked a claim over indigenous people and their music that fundamentally misrepresents the Wixárika understanding of the phenomenon.

And yet despite the misunderstanding, Wixárika musicians are sought out in the plazas of Western Mexico more than ever. What that shows, perhaps, is differing degrees of liquidity or tenacity of “ethical value” and “economic value” as they transfer between socially bounded regimes of value (Appadurai 1986; Lambek 2013). The Guadalupe Brothers could be seen as a Wixárika embrace of a monetized exchange value for musical labor, spilling over from a Mestizo regime of value. But in the Wixárika context, the music did not become “tradition” (because they already had that). Instead, the Wixaritari saw it then, and today, as modern music. On the way back out—being “exported” from the sierra to Mestizo places—the economic value stayed the same because of increasingly convergent economic systems but the ethical value had transmogrified as a result of divergent musical histories. Despite the evidence in the repertoire and histories that show the Huichol group repertoire to be at the cutting edge of musical

modernism, Mestizos saw the instruments as a musical throwback, Indigenous others preserving Mestizo national tradition.

To avoid the same mistake, I have attempted here, as best I can as an outsider, to portray the phenomenon from a Wixárika perspective by presenting the words and thoughts of Wixárika musicians. I have attempted to represent the histories and understandings as they were represented to me, and to have it remain recognizable and fair to the musicians and their Wixárika audiences.

**(Interchapter) ¡Que no se Acaben Los Bailes! (Don't Let the Bailes End!)**

*Nueva Colonia — Fiestas Patronales de Santo Domingo — May 2013 & 2014*

After five hours of driving in sweltering sun, Jorge and I reached the cool, dusty sierra and the town of Nueva Colonia, an end-of-the-road town nestled in a remote dell of the community of Santa Catarina. It would be a brief weekend visit for the purpose of celebrating the Day of Santo Domingo, the “patron saint” of Nueva Colonia. The Santo Domingo of Nueva Colonia is represented in physical form as a diminutive statue of a crucified Christ dressed in Wixárika clothes, but he is not understood to be the biblical Christ, nor is he significantly related to his Catholic namesake. Known in Wixárika as Ximíaname, Santo Domingo is the adopted patron deity of Nueva Colonia and is known as an exceptionally potent *santo*, but also strict and jealous. Because a preponderance of Huichol music groups and musicians—including famed groups such as El Venado Azul and Huichol Musical—had their start in Nueva Colonia, Santo Domingo is often seen as the reason for the town’s success in the music world. Once a year, in late May, musicians return to the town to pay homage to Santo Domingo during a full weekend of *bailes*, ritual, and sports tournaments.





Figure 66. “Modelo & tejuno [nawá] invite you” to Santo Domingo’s baile.

We parked across from Santo Domingo’s shrine, referred to by locals variably as a *xiriki*, *caliwey*, church (*iglesia*), or even parish (*parroquia*), and greeted Jaime Carrillo, Jorge’s godfather, a former *comisariado*, and head of the family charged with caring for Santo Domingo’s shrine.<sup>250</sup>

The area around the shrine had a quiet tranquility as most of the residents of Nueva Colonia were across town at the soccer tournament already in progress. Tall pines bowed in the wind, their scent mixing with the smoke of cooking fires. Recorded *xaweri* music was projected from the town hall’s PA system, drifting on the cool breeze to absent listeners. From the other

<sup>250</sup> This is the same Jaime Carrillo of the corrido by Los Teopa (Audio 21).

side of town came the distant sound of recorded corridos providing an ambience for the soccer games and revelry around the field's periphery. We made our way to the soccer field where norteño-banda hits were heard over a mobile PA system. Calibre 50, Voz de Mando, and Gerardo Ortiz recordings accompanied the games of men's soccer and women's basketball, the latter played in long skirts and *huarache* sandals or barefoot. An hour later, the recorded music changed to Huichol groups after a momentary segue with xaweri. On the opposite side of the field, a music group on foot (*taloneando*) played for groups of drinking men, some walking around proudly with their musicians trailing behind, belting their favorite corridos and rancheras. They were inaudible to us, their sound drowned out from most vantage points by the recorded music of the PA system.

After multiple games, the semi-finals were complete and the spectators dispersed to prepare for the small *baile* that would be happening that Saturday evening at the same time the *mara'akame* would be chanting for Santo Domingo. The *mara'akame* had been unable to return to Nueva Colonia in time to chant on Friday night, meaning the obligatory ritual activities would be in direct competition with the Saturday night baile for the attention and attendance of the townspeople, especially the youth.

After sunset, as the *mara'akame* began his night's work by outlining the scale in front of the fire facing Santo Domingo's shrine, the sounds of the baile drifted over to our location. Jorge and I were the youngest attendees around the fire, joined only by a handful of elders and a few of their yawning grandchildren in tow while their parents danced at the baile or sold drinks and snacks to revelers. "Where is everyone?" some of the elders pretended to wonder, visibly perturbed by the poor turnout around the fire. As if in response, distant shrieks of merriment from the baile could be heard through the night air, reaching our ongoing ritual where fewer than

fifteen people were present. The mara'akame, himself the father of a well known regional musician, seemed tired and even sad in comparison to the sounds of the baile across town. He yawned as he sang. His assistants, ostensibly there to respond to his chanting, slumbered in their woven reed chairs (*ipari*).

Only two regional musicians accompanied us at any point around the fire; Ismael Candelario de la Rosa (a.k.a. “El Monstruo”) from Abrazo Musical, and Ismael González of Nubes de la Sierra. Both had been involved in organizing the weekend festivities for Santo Domingo’s celebration and considered their attendance to be spiritually and communally obligatory for two or three years more in order to complete a five-year commitment (*compromiso*). In the darkness of a power outage—a common occurrence in the sierra—we heard a young man’s nearby voice call to another unseen youth: “¡vamos a los Modelos!” The reference to Modelos, the cheaper version of Corona beer, reminded those within earshot that for many attendees the weekend was not entirely or even primarily about honoring Santo Domingo.

The mara'akame’s chanting was quiet, allowing us to enjoy the sounds of the fervent fire in front of us, but also leaving a sonic space for the sound of a jet airplane passing a mile above our heads as the moon came up over the horizon behind the shrine of Santo Domingo. The blinking lights of the plane’s wings could barely be made out against the inky black night and the crystalline shimmer of the Milky Way. With the electricity out around town, there was no light pollution to disappear the stars, and the travelers in the plane would have seen only a few distant fires beneath them. Often, when in the sierra, I would notice jets in the air and have a distinct desire to be in them, a subtle aching to be with people thought to be headed to important places to do important things. But this time, gazing up at my flying aluminum *nierika*, I felt content. I

felt it was the jet setters who were missing out this time, but I also knew that the youths across town at the baile probably would have felt differently.

As Sunday sunrise approached, those who had been around the fire all night made their way to a freshwater spring (*ojo de agua*) on a nearby hill slightly overlooking the town. A bull was to be sacrificed and the number of people present more than tripled to observe the ritual climax of the night's chanting. The xaweri melody for bull sacrifice emanated through the gathered crowd. The spring was almost invisible to the extent that it had been tapped as an infrastructural water supply for the town. Other regional musicians had gathered with their instruments and began to play songs for Santo Domingo immediately after the sacrifice as the crowd made its way down the hill and began a procession that circled the town as skyrockets were launched from brave hands and exploded high above us to announce the procession with deafening effectiveness. Town residents slowly joined the procession so that by the time we returned to the shrine of Santo Domingo there were nearly one hundred people, including some youths who had wandered over after the end of the baile.

A xaweri musician led the procession alongside or slightly in front of Santo Domingo himself whose effigy was carried aloft by a local musician. Multiple regional music groups joined along the route, creating a barrage of songs played at once, each music group only steps from the next. Most groups left as Santo Domingo returned to his shrine. As we finished the procession, a local leader thanked everyone, reminded us of the larger baile that would take place in the night, and made a plea for good, clean fun (*sana diversión*) in an attempt to prevent bloody tussles that had marred previous iterations of the annual event.

The soccer finals began around 10am, with announcements for beer sales beginning early. "*Para todos los ukitsi y ukari*" (for all men and women). Drunks along the sidelines voiced

their displeasure at calls by the referee. “*Arbitro joto*” they yelled before turning and doing a little dance to the music over the PA system. The recently-recorded “Trato de Muerte” as performed by Huichol groups Abrazo Musical and R5 Sierreño came over the PA (Audio 47). The corrido included a *saludo* for me: “*y nos vamos hasta Indiana compa Nolan... no se me agüite viejón.*”<sup>251</sup> Only a few people hearing the recording in this location knew me, and thus the *saludo* was a type of inside gift, probably requested by El Monstruo, the violinist for Abrazo Musical who was busy selling beer from an ice-filled cooler near the PA. An announcement advertising the upcoming “ten-hour dance” made me realize that it would be another straight night with little or no sleep. Such events, as one friend put it, are *del grillo al gallo* (from the cricket to the rooster). The longer the event, the better, the more impressive and significant. Bailes in the sierra, like Wixárika rituals, go all night long as a matter of course.

The final soccer game ended with dramatic penalty kicks as all onlookers crowded the penalty area. Most were happy to witness the hometown team from Nueva Colonia keep the trophy. A music group walked behind their patrons along the sidelines, playing old and new corridos. Such music groups were the only ones that stood to make any money this weekend. All of the groups slated to play onstage during the “ten-hour dance” would be donating their time in deference to Santo Domingo and, for most groups, to give back to their hometown of Nueva Colonia.

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<sup>251</sup> “and we’ll go all the way to Indiana, buddy Nolan... keep it up.”



Figure 67. The author (foreground) and Ernesto (seated left) enjoy music hired by Kawi (left) and Jacko (seated center) near the shrine of Santo Domingo (background with white door). Photo by Jorge López Solís.

I walked the town with Jorge in the evening, navigating the uneven dirt streets, three musics sounding simultaneously in the twilight. A group of young women blasted pop music in English and Spanish from their house as they prepared for the night's baile. From across town, groups began to soundcheck, sonically bathing the town in guitar and violin riffs with incomplete renditions of recent regional hits. Unexpectedly, the scent of burnt copal tickled our senses as we approached a house where a group of *hikuritamate* from the nearby ceremonial center of Keuruwitia (Las Latas) was dancing to *xaweri*. The *xawereru* of the group, Uriel, a one-time student at CUNorte in Colotlán, had invited us to stop by to see the private festivities.

The *hikuritamate* stomped, swayed, and spun in the rustic courtyard of a private home, forming a circle with the *xawereru* as the central point of concentration. Uriel's specialty was *vihuela* and had only recently taken up *xaweri*. His playing was not as proficient as that of his elders but it was sufficient to animate the group to dance enthusiastically. He was only in the first

of five years as *xawereru* for the group, and thus would undoubtedly improve by the final years of his commitment. At the moment, though, his melodies were difficult to discern against an aural backdrop of groups conducting full-volume soundcheck on the stage a few blocks away. Even only five feet from him, we saw his mouth open, but all we could hear were electric instruments sound checking with the song “Llorando Se Fue,” the lambada theme re-popularized in countless Latin American genres in the early 2010s with help from YouTube.

We took our leave of the drowned-out fiesta and headed towards the area of the weekend’s main event, the baile referred to variously as a *grandioso baile*, *bailazo*, *baile de lujo*, even a *bailongo*. The degree of vocabulary to describe the activity seemed to reveal its importance, and it was indeed important not only for honoring Santo Domingo, but for raising the funds necessary to honor him well in future years. To that end, the baile was held in an area also used for community assemblies (*asambleas*), one of the few walled-off areas in town that could be used to charge admission.

In previous years, the price for entry to the baile was 40 pesos in advance or 50 pesos at the door (approximately \$3.50 and \$4USD, respectively). The official tickets the prior year were small Post-it notes with a Hello Kitty stamp and a handwritten “II aniversario Santo Domingo” to note the second iteration of the event at its current proportions. In 2014, entry was 60 pesos and the only “ticket” that proved you had paid the admission fee was a smudge of black ink rubbed on your wrist by a man pressing his finger into an inkpad. More costly than admission itself was the all-night dancing ticket (80 pesos). The dancing ticket allowed the bearer—almost always a man—to avoid paying 15 pesos for each *tanda*, a sequence of three songs during which a rope would be passed across the dance area to collect money from each couple as they danced. In this way, dancing to live *música regional* becomes prohibitively expensive for many,

explaining the fact that in most such events in walled-off areas of the sierra, spectators often stand on trucks parked adjacent to the wall or atop nearby buildings to observe the festivities they cannot afford to enter.

As Innovación Sierreña performed, Jorge and I wandered the premises looking for late-night dinner (*cena*). Multiple fire pits for warmth and cooking had sprung up around the periphery of the field, a rectangular area slightly smaller than a U.S. football field. The fires also provided light, which otherwise came only from the stage itself and a few incandescent bulbs strung hastily over cooking areas. While devouring tacos made with blue corn tortillas on a portable wood stove, we took advantage of the new Wi-Fi signal from the town hall (*agencias local*) to slowly post Facebook photos of the baile.

The stage and lighting was on par with regional standards, but impressive compared to others stages I had seen in the same place. In another dance in Nueva Colonia, the stage was the bed of a flatbed truck with only a few lights barely clearing the heads of the performers. Proving the significance of the event, Santo Domingo's baile had a true stage with professional colored lights and massive stacks of speakers supporting a deafening degree of amplification. The entire setup had been rented in a nearby mestizo town, and Magdaleno López, the young Wixárika proprietor of MGD Records, recorded each set on his laptop from behind the stage.

The lineup was enough to impress, always consisting of a veritable “who’s who” of Huichol groups. Between the first and second year of my attendance (2013 and 2014), the baile’s changing lineup reflected the breakup of Huichol Musical—the most popular group at the time—and its struggle to stabilize with new members. The first year advertised El Venado Azul (a no show), Huichol Musical (the final gig with mostly “original” members), Nubes de la Sierra, Abrazo Musical, Torrente Huichol, Viento Huichol, and Pasión Huichol.



By the 2014 celebration, Huichol Musical had temporarily disbanded, allowing El Venado Azul to retake the spotlight. The end of the “original” Huichol Musical led to an upheaval in music group membership around the region. The rearrangement of groups and their members resulted in new groups with familiar faces, but also opened up the scene to newcomers such as Innovación Sierreña and Dinastía de la Sierra, both of which were from other communities and not previously acquainted with Santo Domingo.

The fact that most groups and musicians were originally from Nueva Colonia is important, but not an indication of exclusivity in the event nor continued allegiance to the town on the part of the musicians. I was once privy to a conversation between a musician from Nueva Colonia and another who was visiting to perform. The visitor asked lightheartedly whether the local musician would be able to find him some dance partners (*bailadoras*) for the baile. The local told him, “supposedly this is my *pueblo* but I never come here... I don’t know anyone.” This was not simply a way to avoid finding local *bailadoras* for an outsider, but seemed to be a sincere admission that despite having a family house in Nueva Colonia, the musician was disconnected from social life in town. His work, after all, had led him many years ago to take up residence in a mestizo town six hours away.

The night progressed with mostly predictable repertoire. Standards like “El Centenario” and recent hits like “Estilo Italiano” were heard multiple times, despite Jorge’s claim that the people of Santa Catarina (to which Nueva Colonia pertains) were not as fond of corridos as other Wixárika communities. Lesser known groups stuck with well known hits while more established groups tested audience reactions to less famous tunes or their own takes on classics. Torrente Huichol started with the lambada theme and continued with “El Alacrán Tumbando Caña,” a decades-old Cuban *carnaval* song revived through Mexican banda. Pasión Huichol, a younger

group, played a few Huichol Musical songs, showing the general trickle-down nature of repertoire depending on a group's degree of fame. Huichol Musical played its own hits, some of which were written by their record label, others by the members themselves. Importantly, "Las Mañanitas," a birthday serenade, was begun right at midnight to mark the beginning of Santo Domingo's day.

At one point during Pasión Huichol's set, they broached a topic almost never heard in Huichol *música regional*—current socio-cultural and political events. The singer, Pascual, offered a shout out to the local authorities as a couple of them walked near the stage. "We've got to fight [*luchar*] for Wirikuta," he continued. After two and a half years of fieldwork and an innumerable number of bailes witnessed, this was the only instance in which I heard anyone onstage mention Wirikuta. Indeed, the Huichol music scene was generally apolitical in nature, and unreflexively so. Though some groups at Santo Domingo's baile spoke their introductions in Wixárika at the beginning of the set—an act that could be vaguely construed as political—politics were rarely a topic for frank commentary onstage. At one point during the baile, I thought I had witnessed another political commentary when Abrazo Musical performed a translation of "Rivers of Babylon," a Jamaican hit from the 1970s with Old Testament biblical imagery recast in Rastafarian style as civil rights commentary. To my disappointment, it was a cover of a banda version with a translation that stripped the song of its civil rights significance in favor of a love-lost theme in which the Babylon River becomes merely the site where the protagonist's lover drowned in an apparent rowing accident (Audio 50). I remembered the rants of an inebriated elder earlier in the night as he railed in Wixárika against the insipid ills of "modern" music of the "outside" world. Huichol groups might not broach politics directly, but

even playing the music is understood by some to be a political act in itself, whether or not it's embraced as such by the musicians.

The baile was becoming another all-nighter, with all groups on rotation and ready to continue until sunrise. It became slightly like a jam session after midnight as members from one group sat in with others. The manner of dress also was less formal with at least one group wearing mestizo clothes instead of their usual Wixárika performance outfits. One well-known musician wore a black leather jacket and a baseball cap, revamping his de rigueur and “pure” Wixárika look when performing in mestizo settings. Feeling proud but comfortable in one's hometown seemed to trump presentational concerns.

Jorge and I decided to catch a couple of hours of sleep before departing at 5am for Mezquitic so that Jorge could be at work at 9am. We hunkered down in one of the few available buildings that could accommodate visitors, the shrine of Santo Domingo. We found dusty old cardboard mats to spread on the dirt floor as sleeping pads. The adobe walls and thatched roof were not entirely joined together, allowing the cold night winds to slip into the ample shrine as we lie there. Santo Domingo's silent presence at the opposite end of the structure was punctuated by blinking Christmas lights, a warm but unnerving contrast to the otherwise bitter chill.

We awoke just before sunrise to distant amplified sounds of another round of “Las Mañanitas” for Santo Domingo. We packed our things and boarded the Explorer with a gaggle of young hitchhikers (*raiteros*) headed back to public boarding school in Mezquitic. On the way out, Pasión Huichol was back onstage, bundled in coats and scarves. The road out of town passed behind the stage, which faced eastward towards the shrine of Santo Domingo and the rising sun beyond that. The musicians played for Santo Domingo, Ximíaname, addressing him almost directly with the breath that left their mouths in visible vapors. The musicians and their

remaining audience had conquered the night, the darkness, and greeted the dawn as it warmed their hands and faces.

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*Colotlán — EICUN Baile — May 24, 2014*

The student group known as EICUN, from Colotlán's regional campus of the University of Guadalajara, organizes at least two bailes per academic year. For most attendees, of whom the majority are Wixárika students, the EICUN bailes are relatively convenient compared to attending bailes in the sierra which require exceptional transportation time and cost. EICUN uses private event spaces (*salón de eventos*) for their bailes, sometimes renting sports center gymnasiums to accommodate the large number of attendees. Though they have no explicit ritual aspect, as was the case a weekend earlier in Nueva Colonia, the bailes in urban centers like Colotlán serve a vital role in Wixárika youth social life. Specifically, they help create an inter-community space to interact as a semi-unified Wixárika population in Mestizo lands rather than as members of distinct and sometimes divided communities.

As I walked from home towards the baile at 9pm, I knew I would be arriving early even though the online announcements for the baile claimed a start time of 8pm. I was one of the first to arrive and watched as other attendees trickled into the gymnasium. Renovado Huichol, the first group to perform, began their set around 10pm. By 10:30 only about 70 people had arrived. Many attendees were visiting from outside Colotlán to participate in the soccer tournament that coincided with the baile. Others were prospective university students who had come from the sierra and other nearby urban centers to take the entrance exams.



Figure 68. A poster in a general store in Nueva Colonia announces the EICUN baile.

The entry fee of 150 pesos (\$12.50USD) was high by most standards, and even pricier if you also wanted a guaranteed place to sit down the rest of the night. Renting a table, a common option at larger urban bailes, cost another 100 pesos. Ukeme, visiting to document the day's activities for PuebloIndigena.com, went in on a table with me, though some tables remained unoccupied for the entire night. Other tables were loaded with occupants who stacked their finished Modelo cans in the center of the table, a castle-like testament to their ability not only to drink but also to afford the drinks.

EICUN bailes often follow a day of sports or academic activities. In the case of the latter, students commonly attend campus events in elaborately embroidered Wixárika dress clothes. This was not only personal preference, but also an explicit expectation of EICUN and also to some extent by the Mestizo university leadership. By evening, the only people in Wixárika dress clothes were the five candidates (*candidatas*) for EICUN queen (*reina*) in a combination pageant and fundraising competition. Rather than change into less formal Wixárika clothes, though, men changed into the latest Mestizo fashions for the baile. Exceptions were rare. A few *artesanos* visiting from larger urban areas such as Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta sported fancier Wixárika clothes for the baile. Only one younger man proved an exception, my neighbor Prisciliano who was of university age but not a student. In fact, he was one of only a few men his age in town who continued to wear Wixárika clothes on a daily basis. I suspected it was not so much out of ethnic pride but because he did not yet feel comfortable in Mestizo clothes, unlike the overwhelming majority of his peers who were seen at the baile with glittering cowboy shirts, fancy jeans, and even New York City baseball caps.

Unlike the men, the women were more likely to wear what were considered “traditional” Wixárika clothes, most importantly the long skirt. There were notable exceptions, however. One young female musician who had recently recorded a music video in which she played electric bass in full traditional outfit now attended the baile in jeans with a plethora of zippers, an angular faux-leather jacket, and 1980s-style retro sunglasses despite being in a dim gymnasium at night. Others intentionally melded Wixárika and mestizo fashions, such as a woman who wore a long traditional skirt with a black leather motorcycle jacket, complete with pointy metal studs along the shoulders, the only time I ever saw a punk rock Wixárika look. With the attention to clothing

central to the baile as a social event, it's no wonder that it was common to cover the song "Ando Bien Arreglado."

*Que no se acaben los bailes  
porque se acaba mi vida  
no importa que me desvele  
son mi mayor alegría  
mañana duermo si puedo  
si no será otro día  
ando bien arreglado  
ando bien arreglado*

Don't let the bailes end  
because it would end my life  
it doesn't matter if I stay up late  
they're my greatest joy  
tomorrow I'll sleep if I can  
if not it'll be another day  
I'm well dressed up / I go about really put together  
I'm well dressed up / I go about really put together

After Renovado Huichol's first set, the candidates were brought to the stage to introduce themselves and see who would be crowned "Reina EICUN 2014." For months, the candidates had been collecting money that would count as their "votes" for the title of queen. This year, I had been convinced to be the official photographer for the candidates, meaning that they traveled the sierra selling key chains containing my photos of them. They and their friends also peppered Facebook with my photos to which they had added phrases like "vote for Tanya" or "Cynthia EICUN 2014." Unlike a beauty pageant that would involve judges, the phenomenon of *candidatas* throughout the region, whether Wixárika or Mestizo, was more a contest of popularity and the financial power of the candidate's families and communities. Not surprisingly, then, the winner was from Mesa del Tirador, a locality more socially and economically connected to Mestizo labor markets than some areas of the Wixárika communities. Runners-up were given the title *princes* and they all promptly changed out of their embroidered Wixárika dresses into Mestiza fashions after the coronation and photo sessions with friends.

The music groups performing onstage were considered some of the latest, most popular groups whose recent hits had made their way through Facebook, cell phones, and the sierra. They were also well connected to EICUN either directly as students or as friends of members. EICUN usually hired nearby groups and those with members around college age. The headliners,

Herencia Huichol and Renovado Huichol, consisted mostly of musicians from Nueva Colonia and had appeared on the scene with grand force after the post-Huichol Musical rearrangement of groups across the region. Also making an appearance was Dinastía de la Sierra, one of whom was an EICUN leader.

Between live sets, a DJ played *música regional* hits by mestizo groups such as Calibre 50 and El Komander. DJs had made slight inroads in the Huichol baile scene, but their presence was mostly filler to pass the time from one live group to another. In the *regional* genre, widely defined, live music was a mark of prestige unchallenged by the financial advantages of hiring a single DJ. Time will tell whether that remains to be the case for future generations.

The repertoire performed by the groups consisted primarily of covers released on their own recordings. New covers appeared quickly in the live repertoire, sometimes within only a matter of weeks. “El Inmigrante” by Calibre 50 was released on YouTube on January 21, 2014. By late March, it was being played by Herencia Huichol. Other songs in the repertoire were much older but with impressive staying power. “Cumbia Cusinela” had slowly disappeared while “Tsinari,” its sierra counterpart, continued to be performed in many locations. In Colotlán, though, “Tsinari” seemed to take on a different meaning since it celebrates the knowledge to prepare traditional cuisine, something that many of the young Wixárika women present had let fall by the wayside in order to pursue their academic studies. Nevertheless, it filled the dance floor with people of all ages.

Recorded repertoire had the ability to affect social relations in the baile even when the recorded songs weren’t played. Often, when Ukeme or others introduced me to a new acquaintance, the person would respond, “Oh, so *you’re* Nolan... I wondered who those *saludos*



were for” (Audio 47, 51, 52). Recorded saludos often precede the receivers in their social relations.

Herencia Huichol began its first set at 1am after the sports awards were bestowed upon winning teams. They started with their YouTube hit, “El Pasito Chicoteado,” getting cheers from the crowd that had grown to over 200 people. Despite the fact that the vast majority of the crowd—easily 95%—spoke Wixárika, Spanish was primarily the language of choice. Modelo Especial and tequila, the only drink options, were ordered in Spanish and enjoyed at the rented tables in the same language.

Unlike sierra bailes, the EICUN bailes did not operate on the *tanda* system, nor did they participate in the “renting” of female dancers (*bailadoras*) as a method of fundraising.<sup>252</sup> Dancing could still be a complicated business, though. Men usually outnumbered women, forcing many men to stand somewhat dejectedly near the walls of the gymnasium, drinking with buddies while trying to spot an unoccupied woman. Women feared being invited to dance by men they deemed unworthy, and the real possibility of public rejection kept many men from asking for a dance. Still, there was enough (liquid) courage to go around, resulting in a packed dance floor by 2am.

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<sup>252</sup> In some dances to raise funds, unaccompanied men could buy tickets to dance with *bailadoras* (female dancers), who were also often the candidates for *reina*. The tickets were good for one *tanda* (three songs) and the bailadora usually had the option to decline.



Figure 69. An EICUN baile around 2am (2014–05–24).

The dancing strictly obeyed Western norms of gender and sexuality. Gay men and lesbians, mostly closeted, danced with members of the opposite sex so as not to arouse suspicions. The only exceptions to this rule were when women, often elderly and sufficiently inebriated so as to be considered un-leadable by most men, would dance with each other. In other cases, young women would dance giddily and acrobatically with each other almost as a means of attracting suitors. Conversely, men would never dance with each other in a baile, even though in some ritual contexts in the sierra it would be acceptable for men to dance with men. In this way, in just under a century since Robert Zingg filmed early Mestizo music in the sierra, the gender roles had almost completely flipped. Zingg's film shows men, likely those who had learned Mestizo dances during their migratory labor on the coast, dancing with other men. Most women sat by in embarrassed giggles, likely uncomfortable attempting foreign (*teiwari*) dances. At

today's Wixárika bailes, women sometimes dance with other women, but with the implication that they just cannot find the right man to keep up with them.

At 3am, with the smell of cigarette smoke, beer, and limes in the air, the baile began to wind down. Despite fights that were beginning to break out as a result of the baile being exceptionally large and inebriated, the baile did not shut down out of choice; it shut down out of duress. Colotlán ordinances and event licensing agreements keep bailes from running all night, and police arrive promptly to shut things down. They are not, however, your friendly neighborhood bobbies, instead dressed for the level of violence seen in the region's recent drug wars. Cops arrived in ski masks that hid their identity, carrying worn out assault rifles as they mutely waved flashlights at tables to signal that it was time to disperse. The crowd slowly moved outside into the street that was lit with silently swirling red and blue lights atop police trucks. By 4am, most milling about had concluded and baile-goers left to sleep it off or continue drinking in private afterparties, as much of an all-nighter as possible.

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Why have bailes at all? As might be expected, those who attend bailes (and that's almost everyone in this context) say they are just to "have fun" or "to party." For many, it's really about the dancing itself, and the courting that goes with it. Unlike for some of their North American counterparts, dances are not painful memories of awkwardly chaperoned middle school events, but cutting edge happenings where the latest songs, music styles, and fashions play out as an integral centerpiece of modern Wixárika social life. But the importance of bailes and their centrality to Wixárika life today, especially for Wixárika youths, allows their analysis to illuminate certain themes of political economy and identity.

The most pragmatic reason to organize a baile in all cases is to raise funds. No matter the setting or cause, bailes are seen as a primary method of fundraising, and an enjoyable one at that. In the cases described above, money was being raised to maintain specific entities (i.e., Santo Domingo and the EICUN student group). In this way, bailes serve as a sort of massive rent party that maintains the financial needs of a given group, usually one already in some sort of position of power. The fact that bailes are also sometimes used to raise funds to cover the political duties and travel of community authorities reveals the necessity of cash in today's Wixárika world, and a mostly-accepted means of raising that cash without resorting to a blanket internal tax system. In that sense, bailes are to the Wixaritari as casinos are to some Native people in the U.S.

Despite the large amounts of money gathered through bailes, however, they are not yet exceptionally capitalistic. That is, they tend to be a stopgap for immediate and near-term needs rather than creating significant surpluses. Examples of entrepreneurial Huichol bailes for private financial gain are few, constituting perhaps less than one in ten bailes in any given year, and then only in urban centers such as Guadalajara or Tepic. Such numbers may be growing in larger urban centers where there are fewer social organizations that help to unite Wixárika people. Private, entrepreneurial bailes in Colotlán are few, probably because EICUN already monopolizes the best dates for such events. Bailes in the sierra purely for the financial gain of private individuals are unknown as of this writing.<sup>253</sup>

Wixárika/Huichol bailes give a glimpse into the interrelated nature of changing economic practices and the various modes of identity at play in such settings (i.e., participatory, presentational, commercial). Bailes also clarify that the distinctions between participatory and presentational modes are not self-evident simply by parsing spatial relations and the presence or

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<sup>253</sup> Private or invitation-only bailes in the sierra exist but they are rare and usually for *quinceañera* celebrations. They are not for financial gain, however, because the hosts usually cover all expenses.

absence of a stage. In the cases of the EICUN and Santo Domingo bailes, one might classify the roles of the musicians as that of presentational action, albeit primarily for a Wixárika audience. Knowing the reasons for the bailes and their related economic practices, though, is more telling in that regard. The fact that the musicians were volunteering their time for the Santo Domingo baile shows that it was primarily a participatory event for everyone involved. The EICUN baile, while slightly more presentational, was almost exclusively by-and-for Wixaritari, thus it was a form of participating as Wixárika youths for the sake of a Wixárika student group.

One unexpected area in which varying modes and degrees of participation and presentation can be observed is in the production of tickets (*boletus*). The figure below (Figure 70) is a selection of tickets, each displaying certain approaches and design methods that reveal distinct identity modes. As mentioned in the case of the Santo Domingo baile, the second year's "ticket" was not a ticket at all, amounting to merely a smudge of ink applied with a finger. The previous year's ticket was a yellow sticky note with a handwritten description and a Hello Kitty stamp, all likely done at the last minute as a means of doing advance sales, and then primarily to locals and others who were already "clued-in" about the event.



Figure 70. Tickets (*boletos*) for Wixárika/Huichol bailes, graduation, and a museum.

The two tickets surrounding that of Santo Domingo’s Hello Kitty ticket in the above image are for an EICUN baile and a graduation baile of the Wixárika students of the regional campus of the National Pedagogical University (UPN). The details on the tickets are few, but obviously advanced thought was put into the design. Students were representing their Wixárika student groups to their fellow Wixárika students, hence unexplained references to Tamatsi Kahayumarie, hikuri, a prayer arrow (*ih̄*), and a “god’s eye” diamond (*tsikiri*).

The largest ticket is for one of the rare entrepreneurial Huichol bailes in Colotlán, taking advantage of the sudden success of the group Herencia Huichol. Organized by Wixárika entrepreneurs in Colotlán, the ticket addresses the assumed audience of Wixárika and Mestizo people bilingually and with a clue-in that Herencia Huichol is “the hit Wixárika group of the moment.” The ticket itself shows the musicians themselves, auto-authenticating in their Wixárika clothes, but contextualizes them in an atmosphere of cutting-edge graphics. Techno-culture

friendly and colorful, the graphics include a tidbit that resists analysis but nevertheless seems to speak to the modernity-and-tradition hybrid theme of the graphics: a disco ball with angelic wings listens to headphones, upon which is perched a parrot, all atop a line of speaker cones.

Contrast that to the final ticket (top right) for entrance to the oldest Huichol museum, that which is part of the Catholic Basilica of Our Lady of Zapopan in the greater Guadalajara area. Entrepreneurial like the previous ticket, it is in full color but lacks the presence of any real people. To the contrary, its sole image is that of a mask, a colorful and tourist-friendly stand-in (or cover up) for real people that simultaneously shifts the focus away from living people to the material products that supposedly define them (*artesanías*). The word “Huichol,” long-out-of-date but still valuable, is emphasized with a font that implies a prehistoric or Stone Age aesthetic. Floating next to the text is an inexplicable codex-like speech scroll, perhaps to suggest to visitors a connection between Huicholness and the ancient Mayans or Aztecs. The word “Wírrarika” is spelled semi-phonetically for Spanish speakers and set in a smaller typeface with quotation marks as if to whisper reluctantly, “this is what they actually call themselves.”

The tickets pertain to different subjects, audiences, and contexts. They are, respectively: Wixárika to Wixárika in the sierra (Santo Domingo), Wixárika to Wixárika in a mestizo town (EICUN), Wixárika to a mixed audience in a mestizo town (Herencia Huichol in Colotlán), and non-Wixárika to Mexican and foreign tourists in a major Mexican metropolis (Museo de Arte Huichol). Thus, a continuum can be observed from primarily participatory, to presentational, to a commercial mode of identity that becomes increasingly detached from Wixárika people and places. These modes and realms overlap and inform each other, but despite having differing motivations they show that the commodity-form of identity is not the only one with a price tag attached to it.

As in the case of the Santo Domingo and EICUN bailes, participation was clearly monetized (unlike the case of the Museo Wixárika and the Casa Wixárika in another interchapter). Even in the case of the baile for Santo Domingo, the musicians had to pay their own way to get to Nueva Colonia in order to participate. One might say that the musicians are expected to work for free in that case because there is a ritual purpose, and thus custom dictates that the musicians use their skills to serve the community (as would a *xawereru* at a traditional ceremony). But even in the EICUN baile, where the musicians are being paid for their services, they would unlikely ever be accused of “selling culture” because the vast majority of the audience is Wixárika, and thus they are still participating for group solidarity outside the sierra. Hence, being paid to represent Wixárikaness is not necessarily the same as invoking or utilizing a commoditized Huicholness.

Monetizing participation does not mean that those who cannot afford to participate are less Wixárika as a result. The bailes described are assuming Wixárikaness, embracing it through group effort, and attempting to better the financial situation of the group through collective cooperation. Not surprisingly, then, many posters for Wixárika bailes encourage the reader to “come, chip in” (*ven, coopera*). The statement addresses a group and suggests communal action, but also a monetized responsibility. Bailes, then, seemingly allow for a certain degree of financial autonomy by funding essential entities in a relatively communal manner. But such autonomy does not exist in a vacuum, entirely separate from the surrounding Mestizo (i.e., Western) world.

The bailes are the epitome of the integrated nature of today’s Wixárika and Mestizo worlds. In addition to the musical repertoire that displays a direct path from the Mestizo world to the Wixárika sierra, places like Nueva Colonia are themselves the result of Mexico’s



modernistic, ongoing projects of “development.” Through the bailes, the Wixaritari embrace and perpetuate the outside influence of a tiered class system whose divisions are defined by monetary resources. The first tier includes those who can afford entry into the bailes, followed by those who can afford a few tandas or an all-night dance ticket, and culminating in those who can afford all of the above and a reserved table at which to drink beer and tequila. One result is that those who might benefit the most from the bailes as a psychological release from modern Wixárika economic realities are precisely those who cannot afford to enter.

Lurking behind these issues is the *guerra de sonidos*, shorthand for the ongoing conquest of Mexico and the processes of external and internal colonization. In Mestizo places, this process is ritualized in Catholic processions that are commonly led by *danzantes* playing the part of the indigenous population, followed in procession by a priest and a holy image of some sort, and concluded with a mariachi or a group singing Catholic songs. In Nueva Colonia, xaweri players led the procession with the figure of Santo Domingo being carried behind them, trailed by townspeople and *música regional* groups playing polkas. The xaweri opens the path, representing, as do the mestizo *danzantes*, all that which came before. Santo Domingo serves as the pivot point, the go between who seemingly engineered his own success by empowering the local music groups, but also his own undoing at least in the changing manner of veneration.

What effect does this have on the changing concepts of community and Wixárika identity for the Wixaritari themselves? They will ultimately be the ones to answer that question, but the phenomenon of Wixárika/Huichol bailes gives some clues as to the advantages and obstacles that lie ahead. Increasingly, one hears talk of a Wixárika Nation (*Nación Wixárika*), especially in metropolitan protests and international settings. A Wixárika Nation does not really exist as any sort of governing or cultural entity, but the concept clearly exists in the prospective imaginations

of many youths. In academic gatherings of Wixárika student groups, it is common to hear hope that one day inter-community conflicts will decrease as the future leaders from different communities might be less likely to start or maintain conflicts with their former classmates. Though rarely explicit, *bailes* serve a very real social action towards unifying ideals beyond the academic and political rhetoric.

And yet despite their unifying capacity, *bailes* in the Wixárika/Huichol world might have a form of socio-political energy that is more potential than kinetic. Though some metropolitan Wixárika youths and outsiders can imagine a Wixárika Nation, my contacts in the local university law program found the idea literally laughable. I once asked a Wixárika law student whether there might someday be something like a Wixárika license plate, as there are in many Indian reservations in the United States. He could barely control the laughter and assumed I was joking. Wixárika *bailes* also embrace Spanish as the *lingua franca*, despite the fact that almost everyone present speaks Wixárika fluently. Members of one Wixárika community expressed to me that their accent was considered too backwoods by other students and thus defaulted to Spanish. Here, Native language can divide, and the colonist's language might be used to unite. Considering also the nature of Wixárika youth fashions, it could be said that there is an unspoken assimilative aspect of the *bailes* that cannot be easily ignored.

The *bailes* are a cultural bridge, a path that runs both directions, just like the “cultural breaches” (*brechas*) of the assimilatory strategies of Mexico's National Indigenous Institute (INI). Unlike the INI breaches that were mostly foisted upon indigenous peoples from the outside, the *baile* is a type of cultural breach that was self-developed and mostly internally encouraged. The methods used to fortify a stronger, more unified ethnic or even “national”

Wixárika identity, however, originated paradoxically from the outside world, becoming a potent double-edged sword.

## Chapter 4. Music as Labor and Commodity

As the title indicates, this chapter has two main foci: musical labor and music as a commodity. Therefore, there is not one thesis per se, but two main interrelated ideas that begin an arc towards thinking about both music and identity as virtual objects or intangible commodities. The present chapter considers the fact that said intangibles are not entirely or permanently linked to the people who create or embody them. In other words, they are subject to alienation. Musical labor of Wixárika musicians, despite potentially enhancing the presence and reception of Wixárika people, simultaneously and by necessity draws the musicians out of the Wixárika communities, often precluding cultural practices considered (by themselves and others) central to what it means to be Wixárika (e.g., speaking the language and participating in “*costumbre*”).

At first, the Huichol music group phenomenon seems to reveal the development of exchange value for Wixárika/Huichol music, shifting (or expanding) from an economy where music is an act of reciprocity linked to rituals of production, to a capitalist or semi-capitalist economy where Wixárika musicians are paid for their labor and sell musical commodities. At one time (say, in the 1990s or early 2000s), such a telling might have been more straightforward because original cassettes and CDs were commonly sold as mementos after performances and on store shelves.<sup>254</sup> The advent of piracy and file sharing, which in this case means the sharing of digital audio files via music listeners’ Bluetooth-enabled phones and other electronic devices, has made the idea of music as a physical commodity increasingly archaic. The thing being exchanged, duplicated, and accessed, is not a physical object but a virtual one, subject to being

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<sup>254</sup> In this way, the process was not always or entirely commodity-based capitalism as conceived in an orthodox Marxian sense. It could be seen as both a merchant and capitalist economy with some products (CDs) being sold face-to-face and others distributed as proper commodities.

precisely and infinitely duplicated, supply instantly accommodating demand, and often without any money being exchanged.

But the need of physical, tangible things does not disappear. Value of and desire for intangible goods or “virtual objects” enables and facilitates the flow of other intangible and tangible objects (Lash and Lury 2007). Just as bottled air still requires a bottle (and the labor to produce it), so do people still need instruments to perform, and listeners need tangible devices with which to utilize the virtual objects, to actualize them. But from there the idea—the song and its essence—becomes intangible yet again as sound waves or memories. At many points in these processes, there are opportunities to exact or enhance economic value.<sup>255</sup> In the same way, musicians sell their labor, and what they can charge is based on how they are perceived as a result of their recordings and other intangible factors. Clearly, the issue of value eventually feeds into questions of identity (as defined in the introduction).

To address these issues, I begin with a summary of music’s “traditional” role in Wixárika ritual and its generally unremunerated existence as a service to the community. The chapter then focuses on Wixárika musicians who labor in Mestizo towns. I explain the types of musical labor in which they participate, the classes of musicians that develop as a result, and a patronage system in which regional music groups are often sponsored or financially supported by relatively wealthy and influential men. I then take a “breather” by way of an ethnographic vignette that gives a glimpse into a recording session during the early days of what is probably the first Wixárika-run recording studio, MGD Records.

Switching gears, I then refocus the ethnographic lens towards Huichol music as a commodity. I cover pertinent studios, record labels, and their business models, segueing to their

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<sup>255</sup> Unless otherwise specified, in this chapter I generally use “value” to mean economic value in a monetary system, not ethical value (Lambek 2013).

(former) distribution practices that are now becoming more about intangibles, the result of changing practices of listening to music (e.g. with MP3-based portable music players rather than CD players). The issue also becomes one of piracy, and how musicians and their recording studios have dealt with decreasingly tangible containers for their music by adding sonic brands as a way of maintaining and enhancing the recognition of a music group by listeners. Sonic brands are partly the outcome of a growing presence of commodities and brands in música regional in general, but they also throw into question the very concept of ownership of music and songs in a mostly cover-based repertoire. Promotional practices are then considered to the extent that they extend a music group's identity and value through association with a certain repertoire of hits.

Ultimately, and to conclude the chapter, I consider the effects musical labor has on cultural practices of Wixárika musicians and their families. Here the paradox of “Ethnicity, Inc.,” as Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) called it, is that those who are the most visible representation of an identity for outside consumption are also those who are most rapidly shedding the cultural practices upon which said identity is based, especially in a multi-generational perspective.

### **Music in Wixárika Ritual Economy**

Though this chapter focuses on popular music as labor and commodity, music of the Wixárika communities—specifically xaweríeya and chanting of the mara‘akame—is often part of ritual, which in turn is indivisible from economic practices. Music was considered a semi-specialized and essential practice in that regard, but not necessarily remunerated, and commonly

done without expectation of any payment.<sup>256</sup> As Maximino Hernández Carrillo put it, “[playing xaweri] is free because it’s something very sacred, very cultural... one doesn’t charge, nor pay... for example, if they invite me [to play], I’m not going to charge” (Hernández Carrillo 2012). In the same interview, he confirmed that even though xaweri playing was not remunerated, it was usually thought of as specialized. “Some of them are specialized, they bring their [kanari player] and they’re always sought out like a [popular music] group here... they have a career you could say.”

The ritual service that a xaweri player provides was often thought of as a ritual *cargo* (service role) that would last five years. Though that service might not be directly remunerated in cash, there is some expectation of reciprocity on the part of the organizers of a ceremony and attendees. A xaweri player often returns home after a weekend of ritual musical service with more food than he had before. Similarly, the *cargo* is entwined with a concept of reciprocity from the ancestors that ensures health and abundant crops.

The main source of xaweri songs is usually not thought to be a solo process of composition. Wirikuta and the ancestors are the source for most songs, revealing an almost nonexistent or at least nonexclusive concept of musical ownership. Songs are revealed in dreams or visions, often with the aid of hikuri. Daniel Medina de la Rosa, xawereru for the tukipa of Tuapurie during this study, denied that a xawereru could be an “owner” of a song that came in a dream. Instead, he stated that the songs are “given” to humans from deities like “El Padre Sol” [Tau], “Tierra Madre” [Tatei Yurianaka], and “el Peyote” [Hikuri]. He saw a song as a “message” from ancestor deities that would come and go “in the wind” (2013–06–12). Thus, the xawereru, who still might make much effort to “take out” [*sacar*] the song, completing one that

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<sup>256</sup> In the case of the mara’akate, clearly some were paid, though it was also remuneration for non-musical ritual labor. In other cases, people told me that even the mara’akate were not paid, except that they are then given gifts in kind during and after ceremonies.

might have been only partially revealed in a dream, is still not considered an owner in the sense of intellectual property.

The ancestral origins of songs, either since time immemorial or revealed more recently, also entails their diffusion. A composer or *xawereru* would be remiss to jealously guard “their” song or to chide others for playing it. “To the contrary,” Ernesto Hernández de la Cruz said, “it should be spread to be stronger [*para que se fortalezca*]” (2013–08–09). He added that, “what you learn in *Wirikuta*... you have to spread [*difundir*] here in the community, according to our deities... it’s an obligation to share it.”

Over the past decade, such sharing has come to include a number of commercial recordings that were released by *mara’akate* and other *xaweri* players, though the recordings are mostly sold outside of the communities to tourists. Though the discs include the usual copyright (*derechos autores*) verbiage, claims to song ownership or authorship are usually not made.<sup>257</sup> Thus, the commercialization and commodification of music is not necessarily antithetical to *Wixárika* “customs.” Indeed, it could be seen as furthering it by “spreading” the music. *Xaweri* music, however, is not something people pay to enjoy in the sense of it being popular “dance” or “concert” music.<sup>258</sup> The music can become a product in the form of commercial discs, but such recordings are usually seen as souvenirs (*records*), novelties, or cultural documents, not the subjects of fandom as popular music is. Therefore, *xaweri* playing is not musical labor in a technical Marxian sense. Musical labor in the *Wixárika* world is primarily the domain of Huichol popular music groups.

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<sup>257</sup> On the disc, *Mari T̃iki* (LEMA c.2013), the songs were referred to as “inspirations of” (*inspiraciones de*) the *mara’akame-xawereru* Alfredo González Velazquez. The word *inspiration* in Spanish, like English, is semantically less authoritative than “composed by.”

<sup>258</sup> Some well-known *xaweri* players are asked to play for *Wixárika* secular events, though it seems much less common than popular Mestizo music, and it is hard to say for how long that has been going on. Still, the point is that *xaweri* does not share the popularity amongst Mestizos that Huichol groups enjoy. It is not an attraction for ticketed events.



## Mestizo Music as Wixárika Labor

*“Y que vete ya a ver si encuentras empleo...”*

Unlike traditional music of the Wixárika communities, Huichol groups charge strictly by the hour or per song, depending on the setting. As musical labor intended to please an audience rather than the artistic preferences of the musicians, the repertoire is often dictated completely or partially by those hiring the musicians. Similarly, the musicians often take up music not only because they like it, but “by necessity,” as a way to make money. Time and again, the musicians I interviewed described their personal histories in music as aesthetic inclinations combined with financial necessity or convenience. Musical labor is not always fun for the musicians; success means more and lengthier gigs (*tocadas*) that can leave a guitarist’s fingers bloody and a singer’s vocal chords frayed, sometimes night after night. Given the opportunity, many musicians abandoned the lifestyle to take up safer or more lucrative pursuits. Being a musician might be considered a sort of mid-range labor pursuit, more enjoyable than working in agricultural fields, but usually less lucrative and more dangerous than, say, being a teacher.<sup>259</sup> Many Wixárika musicians, however, did not have the Western education or financial capital necessary to pursue other avenues.

Musical labor usually would take place in plazas, homes, bars, event salons, and bailes in rented spaces with stages of various size. In northern Jalisco, and most of rural Mexico, live music is still today highly valued in comparison to prerecorded music or DJs. Musicians could commonly be found performing during holiday celebrations, birthdays, weddings, ferias, or any evening in a town plaza, especially after Sunday Mass (*misa*). Music would commonly be

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<sup>259</sup> Being a musician also usually meant more dependable payment for services rendered. In my observations, both agricultural workers and lower-level professionals often were shortchanged or not paid at all by Mestizo farmers and even government institutions. Usually, there was no worthwhile legal recourse for Wixaritari who were cheated by Mestizo employers in that way.

associated with drinking, and thus some groups would play for drunken partying (*la borrachera*) and in bars (*cantinas*). Those groups that would play in the plazas and in cantinas were conducting what might be thought of as a bedrock of musical labor in Mexican popular music, that of *taloneando*.

### *Taloneando y Tocadas (Busking and Gigs)*

To *talonear* (literally, to heel around) is a basic and common type of musical labor in rural Mexico, and amongst Huichol groups in particular. It is peripatetic musical labor also referred to as *taloneando* (heeling, hoofing) or *al talón* (on foot). *Taloneando* is unlike busking in that the English word generally refers to musicians in a stationary performance in a heavily trafficked spot with an open instrument case or hat for donations. *Taloneando* instead refers to mobile musicians, often in plazas or around town during ferias, charging a set price per song. Though their repertoires are usually extensive and include both classics and recent hits, most groups carry a list (usually handwritten) of the songs they know in order to jog the memory of clients.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> A newly-constituted group of seasoned musicians might be able to scrape together a repertoire list of eighty songs after just a few rehearsals. A group of experienced musicians that has played together extensively could have a repertoire of over 140 songs.



Figure 71. Sentimiento Huichol taloneando with Mestizo clients in Temastlán, Jalisco (2014-01-14).

Groups who perform *al talón* in Mestizo towns today can commonly charge 25–30 pesos (\$2.00–2.50USD<sup>261</sup>) per song. As mentioned in the chapter on *música regional*, most groups working *al talón* are made up of male extended family members, though integrating women and

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<sup>261</sup> During the main fieldwork period, the exchange rate fluctuated between 11–13 pesos per one U.S. dollar. It was most commonly around 12-to-1, and I have used that exchange rate for calculations throughout this work.

young children into groups was a way of standing out. Many groups take up semi-permanent residence in Mestizo towns, but travel frequently throughout the region to talonear in ferias or other town celebrations. Taloneando is not glamorous work. It can even be embarrassing or compromising. Clients are sometimes drunk, which can lead to disrespectful offhand remarks revealing naïve but deep racism. In what must have been one of the most embarrassing moments I saw of taloneando, a group of young Wixárika men were walking behind even younger horse-riding Mestizo clients. It was not clear whether the group was more embarrassed to be playing for kids younger than they, or that they were forced to do so within tail-swat distance of a horse's behind. Taloneando, by its nature, displays and enforces a relationship of financial inequality. The vocabulary for the clients' position does nothing to assuage the relationship, the action being referred to as *mandar música*, loosely translated as “to order music,” but in the sense of the word *order* as “to command.”



Figure 72. Mestizo men hiring two Huichol groups at once during Colotlán's feria (2:30am, 2013–05–05).

Though the client-musician exchange is usually cordial, the musicians' role is to play the songs requested, only offering their own recommendations if asked. "It's not because we [the musicians] like it, right?... it's what the people like... and when you ask us, we play it for you" (Hernández Carrillo 2012).

According to a longtime leader in Colotlán's musicians' union (*sindicato*), Alfredo Meza, the Huichol groups are now usually the only violin groups that work *al talón* in the plaza and during feria, and for that reason the union did not charge itinerant Huichol groups for the right to play in their town as outsiders.<sup>262</sup> He believed that the Mestizo violin groups were more likely to work by contract (*por contrato*), another type of musical labor also called gigs (*tocadas*).

Tocadas are a step up from taloneando, and refer to work that takes place in a private setting such as a home or an event salon for weddings, birthdays, a dinner, or any type of festivity. Most groups taloneando in a plaza are also hoping to obtain such work, which is usually more comfortable, pays better (by the hour), and usually includes a meal. In fact, a family that is looking for a group to perform for a holiday dinner in their home might go to the plaza to search for a group, auditioning them by requesting a few songs in the plaza.

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<sup>262</sup> Music unions reserve the right to charge visiting groups (for any type of work) if they are perceived to be competing with local groups. For larger groups, like a banda, it might be around 200 pesos (around \$16USD).



Figure 73. Carrillos Musical Huichol playing for a poolside birthday party in Puerto Vallarta (2014–04–26).

A slightly more formal and more lucrative type of *tocada* involves performances that are large enough to warrant a stage, such as more luxurious weddings, school graduations, fundraising events, commercial *bailes*, and government-sponsored public events (see interchapter on *bailes*). Such work is often referred to as *por contrato* (by contract), and commonly includes commercial ventures intended to profit from ticket sales and alcohol (meaning that musical labor is meant to sell both itself and other commodities). Though a “by contract” event does not always involve an actual written contract, it might require a down payment by the client. It also opens up the possibility for groups to charge additional fees related to travel expenses, lodging, and sound systems. While most groups do not own their own sound systems, a few do, and others often work in conjunction with the owner of a sound system to offer package deals.

Pricing for a *tocada* depends on the location and the sound system details. A Huichol violin group might charge a base rate of 600 pesos (\$50USD) per hour for a small event in a Mestizo town, but only 500 (\$42USD) in a Wixárika community. In comparison, a *tamborazo*, which would have more musicians, could easily charge 800 pesos (\$67USD), while a successful “modern” mariachi could charge 3,000 pesos (\$250USD) per hour. For larger events, a Huichol group could charge 1,000 pesos (\$83USD) per hour. If traveling is involved, an average group could charge 8,000 pesos (\$667) total, including four or five hours of playing, and another 8,000 to bring their own sound system.<sup>263</sup> Pricing also depends on fame. Various reliable sources told me that Huichol Musical charged 10,000 pesos (\$833USD) as a base price in Wixárika communities (if accommodations and meals were provided), but it could easily go up to \$20,000 (\$1,667USD), even without bringing their own sound system.<sup>264</sup>

Huichol music groups are notably successful in northern Jalisco and the surrounding region, even in Mestizo populations—or probably *particularly* in Mestizo populations. As such, they have somewhat displaced Mestizo violin groups in the region, at least for *taloneando* and stage-based events. Mestizo violin groups, during my fieldwork time, were observed only in small events in family settings. It was uncommon to see them in the plazas, and I would have been extremely surprised to see them in a large stage performance (which I never witnessed or heard about). One Mestizo violinist, quoted by Jáuregui, claimed the success of Huichol groups was because Mestizo clients were “tired of hearing the same old Mestizo musicians [from their town]... a Huichol group comes and they prefer them... and the Huichols want to hear their own

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<sup>263</sup> There are always exceptions that can be made based on location and clients. I knew one Mestizo group in Puente de Camotlán that charged the nearby Wixárika clients in Cerritos 7,000 pesos (\$583USD) for five hours of music but included the sound system.

<sup>264</sup> For comparison, an 18-member *banda* traveling to a wedding in a rancho for which they needed to bring their own stage, sound, lighting, and electricity generator, could charge 35,000 pesos (around \$3,000USD).

musicians” (Antonio Reza quoted in Jáuregui 2003:357). If Huichol music groups are popular, they are not all equally so, and there are noteworthy differences—even *classes* of musicians or groups—that correlate with the types of performances mentioned above.

*Classes of musicians, and class influence on musical labor*

Where and for whom a music group plays depends on how the musicians are perceived by clients, what might be called musician classes. These classes of musicians relate to—but do not depend entirely upon—issues of socio-economic class more broadly. Even purchasing the instruments to begin a group requires significant economic capital, and thus buying or receiving instruments was usually a major milestone mentioned in interviews with Wixárika musicians. In general, musician classes correlate to parameters of experience, perceived talent and/or fame, economic capital, and social capital.

A group with limited repertoire, little experience playing in Mestizo towns, and no name recognition or local contacts would have to begin by *taloneando* in plazas or *ferias*. If a group intended to establish themselves as musicians in a Mestizo town, rather than just make some quick cash while passing through, they would need to expand their repertoire, secure some small *tocadas*, and likely supplement their music income with other forms of day labor and, often, *artesanías*.<sup>265</sup> From there, the group might make business cards, probably a self-produced recording, and try to expand their contacts in the Mestizo population. Such a trajectory would be the only way for a violin group to arrive with no musical career and hope to someday perform in events with stages.

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<sup>265</sup> Music and *artesanías* often went hand-in-hand. Even Huichol Musical took *artesanías* to sell during their international tours.



Other groups, especially younger musicians and those in the *sierreño* genre, rarely gave serious consideration to *taloneando*. In the case of *sierreño* groups, part of the reason has to do with the use of electro-acoustic instruments, but such groups also usually arrive from the sierra for reasons other than music. Specifically, they arrive as students, often from families who are more financially secure. Thus, many younger groups use music not as a primary means of income but as a supplement to educational grants for indigenous students. Such musicians are reluctant or entirely unwilling to *talonear* in plazas, though they might be forced to do so from time to time to make rent payments or get experience performing with a new group after the breakup of a previous group.

A good example was the case of Ernesto Hernandez Bautista, law student at CUNorte and violinist for Sueño Musical Huichol. After his group disbanded, I accompanied him with two new musicians, recently arrived from the sierra, at a nearby feria. The group intended to *talonear*—something he never did with Sueño Musical Huichol—and hoped for a *tocada*, which they quickly found, hired by a Mestizo contact of Ernesto's who ran into them in the plaza. He later agreed that *taloneando* was something that separates groups, and those that were more successful did not have to lower themselves to such subservient work. He was not worried about his situation. "In a few months," he said, "we're going to be on stages [*estar en el escenario*]."



Figure 74. Ernesto (black jacket), violinist for Sueño Musical Huichol, and fellow CUNorte students hire Grupo Alucinantes de la Sierra during Colotlán's feria (2013–05–05).

Even groups who play on stages, though, are of distinct classes of musicians. In 2012, I traveled with Kawi (previously of Los Amos's) and his new group Presencia Pesada to Guadalupe Ocotán for the feast day celebrations of the town's patron saint, La Virgen de Guadalupe (December 12). We arrived at night, road-weary after driving our own vehicles for about eight hours, mostly on dusty mountain roads. Upon arriving, the group hastily changed into performance clothes and went onstage to play without resting, and not having eaten for about four hours. They eventually had time to visit a taco stand sometime after midnight. It was during that same night when I first met Huichol Musical. They, in contrast, had arrived with their chauffeur in a large white van, the type often used by government agencies. I was introduced to them in the ample house where they were being accommodated. They were napping, showering,

and enjoying a hearty home-cooked meal with blue tortillas and coffee to prepare for a long night.

These musician classes are not exclusive to Huichol groups. Mestizo groups are a part of this regional musician class system, and thus can be (and are) compared to Huichol groups in terms of perceived talent, charisma, and so on. Though Huichol violin groups often dominate the *al talón* work in the plazas, Mestizo norteño groups are still common in plazas, cantinas, and markets. The somewhat pejorative term used to describe such groups—*chirrines*—would not usually be used to refer to norteño groups who play stage shows. In fact, one Mestizo norteño group, performing in the Wixárika town of Wautia, introduced Huichol Musical, the headliner, as “direct from the United States.” They had recently returned from their U.S. tour, and resided in Fresnillo, but when they took the stage they announced themselves as “direct from Santa Catarina.” Thus, the prestige of a music group—and therefore what they can charge for their labor—is directly related to their perceived talent, social connections, and fame. In short, the economic value of musical labor is linked to the identity of a group and its musicians.

The tiered nature of musician classes also directly affects repertoire. In short, Huichol groups have what might be called a trickle-down repertoire. An example of this was noted in my field journal during a trip to Puerto Vallarta in which I saw the group Carrillos Musical perform for a birthday party:

“When I requested [the song] ‘Ekì Uka’ [by Huichol Musical]... they mistook it for ‘Ekì Tsi’ by Pasión Huichol [a younger, less established group]. They declined, saying it was ‘*una canción propia*’ de Pasión Huichol [a song particular to Pasión Huichol]... But when they realized I meant ‘Ekì Uka’ by Huichol Musical, they played it, even though it also could be considered ‘propia’ of Huichol Musical.”

The tiered nature of musician classes leads groups of lesser renown to play the hits of more famous groups, while groups on a higher tier almost never play songs by groups on a lower tier, even when those songs are a well known hit.

Unlike Mestizo groups, Huichol groups, regardless of their fame or type of musical labor, were never part of a musicians' union. It seems the main reason was because most Wixárika musicians assumed they would have to know how to read music (which was not true, according to the union in Colotlán). Most groups probably saw no benefit to being in a union because they would have to pay dues, an illogical expense for ad hoc groups that sometimes would last no more than a few months or form intermittently. Violinist Aurelio Carrillo dreamed of one day starting a union specifically for Wixárika musicians, but the prospects of it coming to fruition or being accepted by the musicians themselves are not great, in part because of the mostly-unsponsored musician classes described here which often preclude a strong sense of common cause.

### *Patrons and patronage*

Many Huichol music groups today are intertwined in a unique system of patronage that seems to hark back to Mexico's pre-revolutionary *hacienda* system or even its *caudillo* regional strong men. On the surface, most groups state that they are only trying to please "the public" or "the fans." This is especially true in the higher echelons of musician classes, such as when Los Tigres del Norte in a mega-concert told the crowd, "you all are our bosses." At a local and regional level, though, many groups benefit from financial relationships with wealthier, well-connected supporters, both Mestizo and Wixárika, known variously as *patrones* or *patrocinadores* (sing. *patrón* and *patrocinador*).<sup>266</sup>

A *patrón* (patron/benefactor/boss) or *patrocinador* (sponsor) was understood by Jacko of Los Amos's in the following way:

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<sup>266</sup> Most patrons were Mestizos, though Huichol groups did occasionally have some Wixárika patrons. The system, then, was unlike the popular music patronage system described by Christopher Waterman (1990) in the case of Nigeria where financial relationships tended to correlate with ethnic affiliations. Also unlike the Nigerian case, Huichol groups did not seem to be literally in debt to their patrons. They were not expected to repay their patron for, say, instruments or outfits.

Well, he's the one who buys... the set of [performance] outfits, whatever the group lacks... you could say [he's] a donor of things. [He's] someone that facilitates things because he has access, because he has the key, and the key is always money, right? (De la Cruz Velázquez 2013)

In an example of the influence of patrons, the group Los Rayos de Puente de Camotlán was originally called Los Rayos de Huajimic but moved to Puente de Camotlán because patrons there convinced the group to move. Puente de Camotlán is often thought of as a bastion of drug traffickers, and the influence seems to carry over into the musical patronage system. As Lupe “Rayo” Vazquez said it without actually saying it, “well [my patrons] are ranchers... actually, they are... they're also in the... well, in that there.”

In all cases, musicians referred to *patrones*, not *patronas*, indicating a very gendered and even paternalistic conceptualization of the relationship. In other instances, however, the patron was not merely a benefactor, but also acted as a manager of sorts. Ernesto Hernández Bautista commented on Sueño Musical's benefactors, who he variously referred to as *representantes* (representatives, managers) and *patrones*:

Well, we met Catalino Montoya here. He also was studying at CUNorte, [majoring] in Administration, two years ahead [of us]. And he had a lot of interest [in the group], right? So we got excited, we got motivated, ‘let's do a project... let's give it a go.’ And he started to work here in [the state government offices] and he helped us out with the money. And another guy... Bernardo Carrillo, he also helped with a certain amount. [They helped] with the recording, with the traveling. They helped us out with everything. We didn't have to pay anything on our own, so that's why we put [Catalino] on the [CD] cover. Well, he was part of the group. He always went with us when we went to play. Yeah, well he's the one who's responsible for everything, right? Actually, he would tell us... ‘well, it needs this, do it that way.’ He would direct us. (Hernández Bautista 2013)



Figure 75. Sueño Musical Huichol with the CD’s “producer,” Catalino Montoya (center) (LEMA LR-0045/2012).

Most musicians assumed that patrons helped them for reasons of supporting local music and to enhance their own prestige. Patrons have a strong influence on the repertoire when a group records. Most importantly, perhaps, as outlined in further detail below, patrons receive live and recorded greetings (*saludos* or *saludazos*) that enhance their image and notoriety. Musicians benefit from this patronage system to the extent that it establishes bonds that assuage financial insecurity. Not only are expenses paid and instruments purchased for the group, a patron will also frequently hire the group and put the group in touch with other clients. This patronage system, however, is not always necessarily benign or compassionate, as I pondered in a field journal entry from February 27, 2013.:

As [Sueño Musical Huichol] were getting ready to start, a guy approached from the side of the stage, handed them a slip of paper request-style, and said “empieza con esta canción” [start with this song]. No “please” or “could you” to soften that [demand]. I don’t know what he was requesting, so I don’t know if they paid it any attention, but it did get me thinking about the dangers of being a musician in Mexico. What if they don’t play that song? What if they offend the wrong drunk? What does that mean for me as their driver?

Later, in the same trip, I was forced to acknowledge my own inadvertent role as a semi-patrón or *patroncito* of sorts.

After chatting with Domingo [of Huichol Musical about my research], I invited [my travel companions who'd come to San Sebastián with me from Colotlán] to a *torte* and a *churro* being sold by a mestiza at a nearby *puesto* [stand]. It seemed they'd never had a churro before. I really didn't want to buy them everything, but they claimed to be running short on cash as they hadn't intended to stay the extra day [as I convinced them to do]. I also, then, had to buy tickets to the baile for them as one of the organizers was walking around selling at the still-discounted rate. A [local] acquaintance noticed this from afar and caught my attention from atop his burro. "Are you a sponsor [*patrocinador*] of the music groups?," he asked. "Or are you helping out the youths?," he continued, confused about my relationship to them. His entirely genuine question made me realize that I was serving as a sponsor of sorts... acting as driver but [usually] not charging, helping to pay their way around the events. In return, they could only afford to buy me a few rounds of *nawá* (around five pesos [\$0.40USD] per cup). Agency and role of researchers?

It was not the first or the last time I was mistaken for—or accurately identified as—a patrón. My semi-patrón status had an unusual financial base—grant money. The real patrons, then, were the taxpayers of the state of California (UCMEXUS) and the United States of America (Fulbright-IIIE). In other words, the largesse of the U.S. was, in a small but very personal way, furthering a cash-based patronage system of Wixárika musicians. My semi-patrón status seemed to be confirmed, as it was for regular patrons, through live and recorded *saludos*.

### *Saludos (greetings / shout outs)*

Saludos, also called saludazos, are greetings or "shout-outs" made to individuals, groups, and places in a recording or from stage in a live performance. Their primary purpose is to acknowledge and establish relationships between the musicians and the people and places being named. As such, they connect with questions of patronage (here) and identity (in a subsequent chapter).

Saludos were a primary aspect where being a patrón paid off. To the extent that saludos can enhance prestige and notoriety, they are excellent mediums for would-be politicians and other leaders. Jacko explained it as such:

It's the fame. They [have] influence. One has to have, to be a patrocinador, an idea, a reason to do it. Many do it to influence politically and, yes, it helps them. Through a group—I don't know how they do it—but they're always the ones who come out shining [*salen a relucir*], those who are known everywhere... the group [of the patrón] sends a saludo... and lots of people are left to wonder 'who is that?' And [the patron] even goes with the group onstage and they give him a saludo. '*Saludos para mi compadre, el mero jefe, el mero patrocinador.*' [Greetings to my buddy/companion, the very boss, the very sponsor.] And [the patrons] raise their hand and everyone's like 'wow, man,' and like 'who's that?' And I tell you, that lifts them up. And later, they're into politics and all of that and somehow they come out winning. Well, you also need a good head, brains, to do that. (De la Cruz Velázquez 2013)

Saludos are not all business, though. They can be done in loving jest like when Ukeme was called “Kwikeme” (“Fucker”) from stage, or when Pasión Huichol dedicated the narcocorrido “El Centenario” to “all the mara‘akate” (not) present. Live saludos like these are given liberally and frequently. Recorded saludos, however, are by necessity more limited, becoming a coveted gift. Non-patrons might implore a group to give them recorded saludos, and even rebuke them if it does not happen. Those who are lucky enough to receive them, though, cherish them and let others know. I was once driving with Ukeme while he incessantly played the latest Abrazo Musical song with a saludo to him. It was not just for his own pleasure; he clearly intended to impress an ex-girlfriend riding with us.

Saludos can also raise the notoriety of a person even before they are personally known. While attending my first Wixárika baile in Guadalajara, I was introduced to someone sharing a table with us. “Oh, so *you're* Nolan,” he exclaimed, having clearly wondered about the owner of the unusual name heard in a recorded saludo by the group R5 Sierreño (to be described in the ethnographic vignette below). Similarly, in familiarizing myself with much of the recorded output of Huichol groups before beginning fieldwork, my knowledge of well-known regional



personalities preceded actually meeting them in person or through Facebook. Having heard their names in recordings and wondered “who is that?,” I was even more interested to learn more about them in person. In this way, the *saludo* functions much like a corrido written for a particular person, but without the need to actually write the corrido.

Not only those on the receiving end of a *saludo* enhance their prestige as a result. The musicians, by sending *saludos*, also potentially enhance their own image by associating themselves with certain leaders or powerful people, or even just an out-of-place *teiwari* who everyone is wondering about.

*Saludos*, greetings, and shout-outs seem to be a feature of much popular music throughout the world, and yet apparently there are no publications that take them as a primary subject of individual or comparative study. They seem to be most common in the former Spanish colonies of the Americas and in West and Central Africa.<sup>267</sup> In the case of Africa, though, popular music recontextualizes a preexisting practice of praise singing (Waterman 1990; Charry 2000; White 2008). In the Americas, its genesis might be more specific to popular music, though judging by the fact that the practice appears in many former Spanish colonies, it also could have Iberian origins.

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<sup>267</sup> Discussions with colleagues on the Society for Ethnomusicology email list revealed greetings and shout-out practices in Huayno and Andean genres, Dominican bachata and merengue, Colombian champeta, Congolese rumba, Nigerian juju, hip-hop, and minor occurrences in Cuban *son* and Hawaiian music. There are surely others, but these were some of the most notable and frequently mentioned. Huayno was the only case where there was evidence of *saludos* or shout-outs being used for product placement or commercial sponsorship (as opposed to personal sponsorship).

## **An afternoon recording session with Abrazo Musical Huichol and R5 Sierreño**

2 mayo 2013 (jueves)

“Do you have an iPhone charger?” the vihuela player asked me. “El Pez” (Constantino Carrillo López) of Abrazo Musical held up his phone to indicate his battery was running low. It wasn’t the only proof that the days of Lumholtz were long gone. The musicians had just finished recording a guide track (*guía*) for an internet-only promotional release that they were making in what was probably the first Wixárika-run recording studio.<sup>268</sup> MGD Records was named after its founder, Magdaleno “Magda” López Díaz, the fresh faced bass player for R5 Sierreño, and former requintero for Dinastía de la Sierra. Though Magda became more serious about investing in the studio after later moving to Guadalajara, these early days in Colotlán were humble and rudimentary.

The two groups present—Abrazo Musical Huichol and R5 Sierreño—were recording with only one microphone, which was also probably the most expensive piece of equipment in the makeshift studio. The entire setup was crammed into the corner of an apartment bedroom with egg cartons covering the walls as sound dampers. The one microphone was connected to a four-channel USB interface, in turn connected to an undersized “netbook” laptop computer. The miniature laptop was just barely running Pro Tools, the software that made Magda’s setup, at its core, like that of any professional studio in the world. The glare from the window behind him, though, betrayed the different context, revealing the computer screen’s heavy layer of dust, as though it were just back from a trip to the sierra. It probably was.

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<sup>268</sup> As of this writing, it was still the only Wixárika recording studio.



Figure 76. The early days of MGD Records. Jacko Chelioz (Nicasio de la Cruz Velázquez [left]) and Magdaleno López record vocals for "Trato de Muerte" with help from lyrics downloaded to a smartphone (2013–05–02).

Using the guide track in the way its name implies, El Pez was the first to begin recording individual instrumental tracks, a way of isolating instruments for future mixing when recording with only one microphone and no isolation booths. Tololoche first, then vihuela. El Pez was followed by “Susui” (Lucio Carrillo Solís) on guitar and “El Monstruo” (Ismael Candelario de la Rosa) on violin. As they recorded, Jacko sat on the couch behind Magda, watching eagerly while cracking open a beer. We unsuccessfully tried to connect our smartphones via Bluetooth so that he could share some of his recent recordings with me. Apple’s proprietary and protectionist leanings thwarted the effort.

It wasn’t my first time attending a Huichol group’s recording session, but it was probably the most relaxed and jocular one yet. The home court advantage, as it were. The guys mentioned this, too, pointing out that at the nearby LEMA studios they felt too rushed, and Fonorama in Guadalajara was “worse” because the elderly owner was irascible (*corajudo*). “Plus, there’s no

bed in those studios,” said Monstruo with a grin as he sprawled out. Pez, Jacko, and Magda began to add vocals to their dual recording of “Trato de Muerte” (CD#, Track#). “Yeah, and you can’t get drunk (*pistear*) in those studios,” added Susui to chuckles and raised beer cans.

“¡*Salúd!*”

Jacko looked up lyrics online with his smartphone, a practice that was common in recording sessions. At one point, the screen turned off automatically and recording had to stop. Pez wondered whether they were singing one of the lyrics properly. “Here it says...” Jacko began, looking at a version online. “No, but it goes like this,” said Pez. The crowd-sourced lyrics database online seemed official or authoritative, but proper grammar and local negotiation won out. The recording continued, surrounded by a stack of cowboy hats (*tejanas*) on a nearby dresser. On the opposite wall there was a crucifix, Christ’s face partially covered by a framed image of Aztecs in battle.

“Is it okay if I record this?,” Magda said, shooting Jacko and the others a playful, reprimanding glance. Their chatting was bleeding into the microphone as the atmosphere became increasingly lax and slap-happy in the comfy home studio. I had been given a good number of beers since arriving, and was feeling it, but I was shamefully behind count. The final track was that of the greetings (*saludos*), shout outs to friends and hometowns. They were somewhat improvised, but involved copious discussion beforehand and often required multiple takes to achieve perfect pronunciation and ear-catching diction. “De siempre para siempre... Abrazo... Muuusical.” “I like that,” Jacko said in response to Abrazo’s on-the-spot catch phrase. “Always and forever.” It was original. “Nobody says that,” Jacko continued, “until they pirate it.”

“Now just my saludo for Nolan,” said Jacko. “And mine?,” Monstruo said in jest. “And what about mine?,” added Susui, poking more fun. After many hours of men recording and

drinking beer, the place was starting to smell like a victorious locker room. Luckily, Pez's girlfriend had arrived, keeping our increasingly inebriated shenanigans (somewhat) in check. A younger housemate had been avoiding us altogether, learning Virtual DJ on his own laptop in the adjacent dining rooming. In the end, the musicians congratulated each other for a long but successful session. Everyone was excited about the way the songs had come out. We packed up our things and began to head to the plaza where the people of Colotlán were preparing for another night of feria. Picking up his violin, Monstruo added with an exhausted sigh, "*la música no es sencilla.*" Music's not easy.

### **Huichol music as commodity**

The very first recordings made by Huichol groups were not commodities at all, but one-off recordings made with basic cassette recorders at home. Ernesto Hernández de la Cruz described the situation in the 1980s:

At that time, we didn't even think about where to go to record. Nothing. There was only the [cassette] recorder. You'd put a blank cassette, and you'd record yourself there. But it didn't sound good. [It was just] to listen to it [or] for a friend. 'Here you go, so you can listen to it,' right? People didn't record [commercially]. It was never sold. [It was] to share with the family... one wasn't going to sell it, it was just to share. (Hernández de la Cruz 2013)

The situation described by Hernández de la Cruz was something akin to a musical gift economy, where musicians enhanced their standing with potential clients to ensure future employment or other favors.<sup>269</sup> Therefore, each copy was an original, and there was no reification involved in the sense that reification is the "process of making music something apart from the social and apart from one's own labors... masking the social labor that produced it" (Taylor 2007:295). For Wixárika musicians, then, Mestizo music and audio recording technology did not immediately

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<sup>269</sup> Each recording had near parity between its physical existence and the time spent making it. One could still say, though, that there was some alienated labor involved in the process insofar as the blank cassettes and the recorder embodied anonymous labor.

entail commodification but fit into a hybridized local economy of social reciprocity combined with a Mestizo regime of value that saw music as labor.

*Studios, record labels, and their business models*

Commercial recordings of Huichol music began in 1997 with recordings made by El Venado Azul, Los Teopa and, later Grupo Enero 97, in the San Luis Potosí recording studio Discos Imágen. These recordings were almost entirely entrepreneurial as the studio offered only recording and duplication, not distribution or sales that would involve a contractual relationship. Notably, the very first recording by El Venado Azul was funded by a rural development NGO, evidenced by the logo and statement on the cover that says “*grupo apoyado por* [supported by] Desarrollo Rural de San Luis Potosí, A.C.” The business model allowed the groups to sell their own recordings however they saw fit, which in the early days meant only while *taloneando* or after *tocadas*. Because of this common business model, the recording industry has had less direct influence on Huichol music than might be expected. Unlike, say, the industry surrounding genres like *Huayno* (Tucker 2013), the majority of groups recorded what they wanted, with little or no interference from intermediaries or gatekeepers.

Today, the only “major” label involved in Huichol music is Latin Power Music, an affiliate of the transnational Universal Music Group. Their only Huichol act, Huichol Musical, is listed on the artist roster on Universal’s website but the group only interacts with Latin Power Music in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon. This example, though, is unique and unrepresentative of the whole. For example, Huichol Musical is the only group that has had its repertoire influenced heavily by their label. In discussions with former member Samuel López and current leader Domingo López, it was clear that the group itself might choose (or suggest) five songs for an

album, and Latin Power Music would choose six. Many of the label's choices were songs written for them by professional in-house lyric writers. Huichol Musical is also the only group that has had multiple music videos of professional caliber. Also unlike other labels, Latin Power Music is involved in arranging (inter)national tours and performances for the group, and promotional appearances on major television shows.

Latin Power Music, however, is a newcomer to the Huichol group phenomenon. Until their arrival, the main label that offered Huichol groups their only chance of (inter)national exposure and a promise of regional distribution was Fonorama in Guadalajara, Jalisco. Fonorama started in the 1970s with a range of artists, but focused on *música regional* and later made a name for itself by being the first to record *technobanda* (Simonett 2001). The label started its Huichol specialization when the owner, Manuel Contreras, sought out El Venado Azul after hearing the group's cassette recorded at Discos Imágen. On the surface, the opportunity for Huichol groups was excellent when compared to the entrepreneurial self-funded model. Fonorama did not require its artists to pay for their studio recording time (until recently). In exchange, they signed distribution contracts that allowed Fonorama to distribute recordings to record stores (when such things still existed in Mexico) and, now, on iTunes via a licensee in Southern California. The only cost to the groups, then, was the quantity of cassettes or CDs that they wanted to buy to sell on their own.

Based on interviews with musicians, Fonorama's contracts varied greatly depending on the group, but none of them could be characterized as favorable to the musicians. Part of the reason was that groups generally signed the contracts without any sort of business or legal representation. In no case did I hear of an independent lawyer who read the contracts before the group signed. In some cases, the groups arrived at Fonorama with a manager, but they seemed to

be managers who were likely aligned with Fonorama and probably did not see themselves as having any fiduciary responsibility to the groups. None of the interviewees who had recorded at Fonorama had copies of the contracts, usually because they were never given any.

Even the most successful Huichol groups on the Fonorama roster had complaints about their treatment. José López of El Venado Azul mentioned their relative lack of promotional effort.<sup>270</sup>

Everything changed [when I went with Fonorama] because I believe that when we recorded on our own, we sold on our own. It was much better because you can sell; you make [the recording] on your own and you sell it on your own. But there [in Fonorama] it wasn't like that. They started to sell, that is to say with royalties and who knows what... it didn't work for me. What happened is that they said they would do promotion but they didn't. They never did promotion, not in video or anything. (López Robles 2012)

For other groups, the problem had to do with royalties (or lack thereof). “He took advantage,” said Samuel González of Los Teopa said of Fonorama's owner. He continued:

He is still taking advantage, probably because we haven't made any withdrawal... he takes ninety percent. So, ten percent for the indigenous [man]? What's the point? At ten percent, it doesn't benefit any worker who's working and wracking his brain [*quiebra su cabeza*] as a composer and everything. That's when [the situation] stopped pleasing us, and we renounced being a group [with Fonorama]. (Samuel González 2014).

Kawi, of Los Amos's, was actually unsure of the percentage but clearly never expected to see any royalties:

Really quickly, then, we arrived there [at Fonorama], we signed the contract, and it was for ten discs, but we only [did] two. We're missing eight, but we don't want to record anymore because it's not agreeable to us, and besides they're not fulfilling their part of the contract. We just recorded and [then] nothing. No sort of support with publicity. Well, supposedly once the contract ends, from each disc sold there's a percentage that's written there [in the contract], as a royalty, right? ...I don't know how much, but some percentage that they give us at the end of everything. (De la Cruz Velázquez 2012)

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<sup>270</sup> Despite his position on not receiving any promotion, other groups mentioned to me that he was actually the *only* Huichol group to receive promotional materials such as posters and advance copies of the discs. Other groups did not receive even that. Part of the discontent José López had was probably a result of the relative ineptitude Fonorama had with his hit “Cumbia Cusinela,” in comparison to the success of Latin Power Music and Huichol Musical with the same song.



This seemed to be a common contractual approach for Fonorama. They signed groups to contract lengths that would never be completed, but stipulated that royalties would only be paid after successful completion of the contract. The contract for Los Artesanos reportedly required them to be with Fonorama for fifteen years, a length of time that even El Venado Azul, which has existed longer than any other group, only just recently achieved. The negative reactions many musicians had to this might be partly the result of their disillusionment with the shifting economic conceptualizations of what music is or is supposed to do. A CD that could have been used by the musicians as a gift to patrons or a product to sell on their own was, with the addition of a commodity form, less useful to them financially. On the other hand, it enhanced the image or identity of the group to be “big label” artists, yet at the same time their image was not entirely under their control.

Manuel Contreras, the owner of Fonorama, also tried to influence the recorded repertoire of Huichol groups, with only some success and to the general annoyance of most musicians who encountered it. In his words, he did it to project a “healthy image” (*imágen sana*). According to members of Los Amos’s, that meant that he tried to prohibit them from recording corridos, even though El Venado Azul eventually released a compilation of corridos all recorded at Fonorama. Los Amos’s also mentioned that he told them not to give saludos to anyone, removing a significant gift aspect of recording.<sup>271</sup> When Nuevo Amanecer Huichol became famous with the song “La Carta,” he pressured Abrazo Musical Huichol to record it. He even reportedly chose some songs for El Venado Azul to record. Fonorama’s heavy-handed approach led many of its

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<sup>271</sup> This request was possibly in response to the level of narco-violence during the years in which Los Amos’s was recording. Saludos are sometimes related to the drug business, but in localized ways that others might not comprehend. The group’s use of a marijuana leaf in their logotype for the Fonorama discs likely exacerbated the label’s fears.

artists to return to the entrepreneurial model. As of this writing, there are no longer any Huichol groups recording at Fonorama, and the label has almost ceased to function as a result of piracy.

Picking up the spoils was LEMA Records in Jeréz, Zacatecas. The owner and sole employee, Lionel de Haro, opened the studio in 1996 and began catering to Huichol groups as early as 1999. By his count, he had recorded over 70 albums by 2013, almost 40 of which were of Huichol groups. Unlike Fonorama, he also offered Huichol groups music video services, albeit with a low-budget but playful aesthetic. His studio is in the historic (read: old) section of Jeréz and always seemingly a rainfall away from a roof collapse. Indeed, the roof had partially collapsed when I arrived to interview him, but despite the studio's adversity, it is clearly a part of a transnational music industry. In the interview, De Haro peppered his responses with English words, calling the bass guitar "el bass" and mentioning his visits to California and the groups from there that would travel to record with him.<sup>272</sup> He was happy to show off his modern equipment: a massive mixing board connected to a hard disc recorder. Groups had the option of using a click track (*marcapasos*), and could correct minor errors in a recording by "punching in" (*ponchar*) or "patching" (*poner un parche*) small sections.

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<sup>272</sup> Apparently some groups based in the U.S. find it more cost effective to travel to Mexico and record there rather than record in a more expensive studio in the U.S. That was especially true for soloists who could hire their accompaniment locally at Mexican rates.



Figure 77. Members of *Dinastía de la Sierra* record a guide track (*guía*) at LEMA Records (2013–04–12).

De Haro usually charged around 7,000 pesos (\$583USD) for two to three days of recording (i.e., not by the hour). He would then charge 30 pesos (\$2.50USD) per CD for duplication. Part of what made LEMA an attractive package for Huichol groups was the ability to do small duplication runs instead of the regular minimum of 1,000 discs required by most duplication services. Instead, LEMA could duplicate as few as 50 discs, making the process more feasible for groups just starting out. De Haro's success with Huichol groups, however, is also likely due to his kind and respectful treatment of his clients, always using the more formal *usted* (you) when many Mestizos are too quick to use the informal *tu* (you) when speaking to Wixaritari. His experience with Huichol groups has also made him somewhat of an expert in the

Spanish vocabulary Wixárika musicians use to describe sound.<sup>273</sup> Thus, Wixárika musicians tend to appreciate not only the sound of the final product, but his hands-off approach. As he put it, he's just the one who "pushes the buttons."

### *Distribution and shifting practices of audio access*

Both business models—Fonorama and LEMA—today are suffering from the dwindling market for "original" discs, coupled with changing preferences for audio player technology. Only five years ago, physical distribution of CDs was extensive throughout the region and even internationally. CDs of some Huichol groups could once be found as far away as Walmart in Indiana and purchased online. Today, distribution of physical music commodities such as CDs is nearly nonexistent. As of this writing, Huichol Musical's latest recording has only been released in digital format for purchase via online music vendors. At least two groups—Herencia Huichol and Viento Huichol—have started selling digital downloads via CD Baby. Even if people would pay for original recordings, most of the fans of Huichol groups today no longer have CD players (if they ever had one). I never saw one CD player in the sierra. The only CDs I ever saw were pirated discs sold by itinerant vendors, and others that were used as shiny objects hung from trees for decoration. During my fieldwork period, the vast majority of recorded music was heard on mobile phones and other MP3-enabled audio devices, sometimes with unexpected combinations of cassette tape technology with USB and SD slots, skipping CDs altogether.

The appeal of memory card-enabled audio players is not hard to understand. For the price of three "original" compact discs (around 300 pesos), one could buy a portable USB-enabled audio player in the shape of a sports car, beer can, or a pistol, buy a small memory card on which

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<sup>273</sup> For example, he mentioned that some groups would say they wanted less *agudos* (highs, sharps) when they meant less reverb or echo.

to load audio files, and pay for an hour or two of internet access at a cyber café to convert YouTube videos into audio files.



**Figure 78.** An acquaintance shows off his USB-enabled portable music player in the form of a sports car.

To be sure, despite the shift away from tangible music commodities (i.e., cassettes and CDs), some Huichol groups were still making CDs during my fieldwork period. The small print run capabilities of studios like LEMA allowed groups to make smaller batches of CDs for a dwindling market. A group could still quickly deplete a small print run of 50 or 100 discs, selling some and giving away a substantial number as gifts to clients and patrons. Oddly, even when a CD sold quickly, groups rarely duplicated additional copies of the same disc. Instead, they would almost always opt to record a new disc, partly as a way to record the very latest hits, thereby getting the jump on other groups.

Despite the prestige of having an “official” recording on CD, successful groups were increasingly going direct to online distribution, burning only a few CDs on their own if necessary. As requintero and composer Gustavo Pereyra put it in 2013, distribution had already shifted mostly or entirely to online social networks. “Today, I think [people] are already

forgetting about discs... it's just pure downloading on the internet and all that" (Pereyra 2013). For record labels like Fonorama, any sales and distribution that remain today are almost entirely online. Much of the Fonorama catalog is available via third party licensees from vendors like iTunes. Not surprisingly, the Wixárika musicians represented there were, according to my interviews, completely unaware that their music was being sold online.

For musicians operating independently, the shift to online distribution meant uploading their songs to Facebook or YouTube, or both. Those I spoke to about the issue had no idea how they might go about selling music online, and even if they did, there was not much hope that they would actually make money. Thus, recorded music served primarily as a promotional tool, described below, and had ceased to be a commodity. That is not to say that it did not have value of some sort, but for many musicians recorded music no longer could be considered to have exchange value. The potential to commoditize music in an intangible form depended on one's command of technology and ability to access consumers who were not part of the actual, offline social networks where audio files flowed freely between mobile phones and other digital extensions of embodied social connections. As I show in a later chapter, the same could be said of the ability to commoditize Huicholness to the extent that it does so with technological means that enable sellers to operate in markets where consumers have little or no connection to actual Wixárika people.

### *Piratería (Piracy)*

"Piracy"—taken to include "counterfeiting"—is a difficult practice to define, and the word itself is not without problems and biases (Johns 2009, Stobart 2010, Eckstein and Schwarz 2014). I use it here, usually without scare quotes, because it was an important part of the lexicon

and discourse of Wixárika musicians. In the Western world, piracy is usually framed in the globally dominant “logic of property,” with a “distinct local history... from British utilitarian legal models and German idealist notions of personal authorship...entangled, since its inception, in the imaginaries of imperialism and an emerging capitalist world system” (Eckstein and Schwarz 2014:2).

In my research, though, I found that Wixaritari commonly used the words *piratería* (piracy) and *de pirata* (pirated) beyond questions of legality or personal authorship. For example, the album *Tamatsi: Mariachi Tradicional Wixárika* (c.2010) was the only self-produced commercial disc I ever found in which a Huichol group used the words “traditional mariachi” and “Wixárika” as part of their image. One Wixárika musician I asked about the recording referred to it as “de pirata,” but not because of the physical disc itself (it was an original). Instead, he objected to the use of the terms “mariachi” and “traditional,” because “it [had] nothing to do with mariachi” and it was “not traditional Wixárika music.” No part of his objection was about legality or authorship. It was, instead, about issues of entitlement and legitimacy, specifically with regard to acts and products with commercial intent. My use of the word piracy, then, is in reference to the way the term is used to criticize or impugn uses, entitlement, and legitimacy in a commercial context, irrespective of legal ownership or authorship.

The word *piracy* in the English language has been used to assail illegitimate copies at least since the early days of the European printing press (Johns 2009). In Mexico, the word flourished in the lexicon beginning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when, much like in the U.S. and other countries, anti-piracy campaigns began to ingrain phrases like “say no to piracy (*di no a la piratería*).” Today, that phrase itself has become part of the popular culture, being used even in

sarcastic rejection of transvestitism. The most common use of the term *piracy* in Mexico, of course, is in reference to the practice of selling illegal copies of commercial media (primarily CDs and DVDs, but also software, and cassette tapes before digital media). In the intangible realm, however, piracy as defined above has been going on in Mexican popular music for nearly a century. Jáuregui, for example, has mentioned the practice of early metropolitan mariachis “robbing” the repertoire of rural groups, copyrighting songs when their composers were unknown or unable to defend any legal rights they might have had (Jáuregui 1986).

Before beginning fieldwork for this project, the massive scale of media piracy had already decimated the Mexican music industry. The Association for the Protection of Film and Music reported that in 2013 pirated CDs accounted for around 75% of the entire market (IIPA 2014). In Colotlán and other small towns around the region, pirated media are often 100% of the market. The media piracy trade is often thought to be entirely homegrown (i.e., made in Mexico), but I saw evidence in the sierra to suggest both localized and global versions.<sup>274</sup> The owner of Fonorama, Manuel Contreras, summed up the deathly effects music piracy had on his record label:

Here we sold a lot, sales were good... [for] everything [not just Huichol discs]... but piracy came in really strong in 2000 and [the industry] went into decline... in terms of not selling anything. The business is no longer a business for anyone. There were discs of which they would [sell] 60,000. Now, not even 60 [laughter]. In almost all the towns one sees the stalls [*puestos*], those of piracy of discs, of DVDs. Oh well, everything has its end. [NW: So you believe that piracy is finishing off businesses like this one?] Yes, it's already finished. It's not finishing, it already finished. It's been four years since it finished [i.e., since 2009]. Right now, what hasn't finished is the internet [sales]. In a little while longer, who knows. (Contreras 2013)

Fonorama was hit particularly hard compared to smaller studios that did not deal in distribution.

Members of Abrazo Musical Huichol stated that they saw pirated versions of their albums

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<sup>274</sup> I once visited a house in Pueblo Nuevo where a young boy was watching a pirated movie on the family television. It was a Hollywood movie, the audio in English, bootlegged with a camcorder in a Chinese theater (judging by the Chinese subtitles), and with additional Spanish subtitles later overlaid. Such instances prove that Mexican piracy is not entirely insular but a globally connected industry.



available in plazas before the official discs were even released by Fonorama. In fact, it was one of the reasons they left Fonorama for LEMA and MGD Records.

The face of media piracy in Mexico is what are sometimes known as *fayuqueros* (bootleggers, counterfeiters), ubiquitous vendors who commonly sell their wares from rickety stands in street markets and town plazas alongside vendors of produce, plastic wares, dishes, tools, clothing, and so on.<sup>275</sup> Others are more established, renting storefronts and acting essentially as a type of unofficial distribution. Such businesses are not “under the radar.” Like other vendors in the plazas, they pay town governments for the right to set up their stalls and law enforcement officials generally condone or ignore the practice.<sup>276</sup>

Not all pirated CDs are simple copies of the official release.<sup>277</sup> Indeed, there is often much labor and design involved in their production. Repertoire is curated in original ways, putting together “greatest hits” or “two-in-one” compilations that had no “original” equivalent. Other discs group songs based on content (e.g., equine corridos) or instrumentation, such as combining Huichol violin groups with those from Michoacán and titling it *Violin War*. Such productions require original cover designs, and some pirated discs even had their own labels or “brands” listed on the back cover that linked their designs and compilations while distinguishing them from competitors.

The piracy trade is also somewhat regionalized, just like the music scene itself. The Huichol recordings available in Colotlán, the northern side of Wixárika territory, and the southern side of Wixárika territory, are noticeably different. Judging by the “look” of the discs

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<sup>275</sup> The word *fayuquero* is informal and slightly derogatory, not unlike *pirate*.

<sup>276</sup> This is not new or particular to Mexico. Pirated sheet music was sold in the streets of New York City in the 1930s by vendors with official “peddler’s licenses” (Kernfeld 2011:29).

<sup>277</sup> Many or most, however, are simple copies of official releases, sometimes with laughable copyright statements from “Time Warm Music,” complete with FBI warnings not to illegally duplicate discs and to “say no to piracy.”

and the groups represented, the pirated CDs were not coming from the same producers.<sup>278</sup> Pirated discs for sale during a community assembly in Mesa del Tirador (southern edge of Wixárika territory) included more groups from the southern communities and Nayarit (e.g., Guadalupe Ocotán). Discs for sell by a fayuqueros in Tateikie (northern edge of Wixárika territory) focused more on groups from San Andrés and surrounding areas. In Colotlán, the only Huichol recordings available were those by El Venado Azul and Huichol Musical.<sup>279</sup>

The popularity of Huichol groups could also be ascertained to some degree to the extent they were represented in the stock of the fayuqueros. El Venado Azul was usually first and foremost, and the only one who was ever the subject of a MP3 disc (instead of a regular audio CD). Huichol Musical was on par with El Venado Azul in both the Wixárika communities and Mestizo towns. In the sierra, though, it was more common to find discs of Los Teopa, Abrazo Musical Huichol, Encinos, Los Amos's de la Sierra, and Dinastía de la Sierra.<sup>280</sup> One fayuquero told me that he sold more Huichol discs in the sierra itself, but that occasionally immigrant Mestizos visiting from the U.S. would buy massive quantities of Huichol albums to take back with them, to sell or give away to friends.

Wixárika musicians were generally perturbed by piracy but never did anything to contest the practice. In Tateikie, I once observed a number of Mestizo vendors who had arrived to take advantage of the local Oportunidades<sup>281</sup> payout. One stand was selling pirated CDs of Dinastía

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<sup>278</sup> They were likely coming from Puente de Camotlán (in the south) and Huejuquilla el Alto or Mezquitic (in the north).

<sup>279</sup> That fact, despite the presence of many Huichol music groups and Wixaritari consumers in Colotlán, suggests that Colotlán's fayuqueros were not localized in the same way. Their stock likely came from farther away, such as Zacatecas or Guadalajara.

<sup>280</sup> Even groups who had never released an "official" CD (such as R5 Sierreño) were represented amongst the pirated CDs, physical actualizations produced by the fayuqueros from recordings posted by the groups on YouTube.

<sup>281</sup> Oportunidades, later renamed to Prosperá, was a massive welfare program that paid citizens (especially women) for community service and attending educational workshops.

de la Sierra, only a few steps from the house where one of the members lived. When I mentioned it to the musician, he smiled and said laughingly “Oh, really?” He certainly did not confront the vendor, and why would he? In a way, the fayuqueros were advertisement and affirmation of regional fame. Still, musicians did regret the effects piracy had on their options for making money, as mentioned by requintero and singer Jacko:

...[piracy] affects us economically because since discs no longer sell, well, there’s no reason [to make them]. To record and release discs, well, not anymore. To the contrary, I believe you invest and you loose. Today [releasing discs] would just be to give them away as gifts, but no longer for selling. It would be more for promoting. (De la Cruz Velázquez 2013)

Jacko’s statements were confirmed by his actions, releasing recordings for free on YouTube and promoting them on Facebook. He once gifted me a burned copy of an album he released online, but never tried to sell discs at shows.

Samuel “El Brujo” López undertook an entirely different and unique response to piracy when he was still with the group Huichol Musical. During a show in Puente de Camotlán, he announced from stage that they would be selling CDs afterwards. I approached, wondering whether it was the most recent release, which I had only been able to find in pirated form in Mexico.<sup>282</sup> To my surprise, he was selling his own pirated discs, essentially self-pirating his label’s CD. In fayuquero fashion, though, he added extra songs that were not part of the “official” release. He sold them for the same price as a regular pirated disc—20 pesos (\$1.67USD)—but did not bother to put any production into the look of the disc. He simply sold them in the paper Sony sleeves of the blank discs he bought at Aurrera, a subsidiary of Walmart. In a later interview, he explained his reasoning behind the self-piracy:

...when we were starting to make it big, the new disc had just come out and we went to Veracruz [to perform] and we didn’t take any discs... and [the fans] were asking for discs. [So] this guy came up... and he had a book bag full of pirated discs. And there was already the [cover] photo of

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<sup>282</sup> The album *Mañana Que ya no Estés* was a hit, but it was impossible to find an original version of the disc in rural Mexico.

us there. Yeah, he took advantage and sold everything. So, who's the one who won? (López 2013)

El Brujo's recollection reveals the speed and brazenness of piracy, but also the ineffectual (or nonexistent) "merchandising" support by record labels.<sup>283</sup>

For music fans—often no longer "consumers" per se—the normality of piracy and file sharing has clearly altered their expectations and understandings of the commercial intent of most popular music. Jacko, commenting on piracy's influence on audience expectations, recounted that "now, you arrive to play somewhere and they say 'do you have your songs on your cell phone? Give them to me, yeah?'" (De la Cruz Velázquez 2013).<sup>284</sup> One problem with such intangible distribution, however, is increased difficulty in identifying groups vis-à-vis extensive sharing of songs as audio files.<sup>285</sup> How is a group, especially a new one, to be recognized by name—and thus potentially hired—if songs float around in mobile phones and USB cards? Without a CD and its cover, there are fewer identifiers to put a song with a group name or a face.<sup>286</sup> The solution has been in-song audio identifiers that could be thought of as sonic brands.

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<sup>283</sup> As those schooled in music business are taught, the real money is not in record sales but in merchandising, especially at live shows.

<sup>284</sup> "Ahora es solo tocar y si alguien te pide tus canciones pues, antes... '¿traes discos? Vendeme uno o dos.' Y ahora ya no más llegas a tocar a una parte y dicen '¿traes tus canciones en tu celular? Pásamelas, ¿no?'"

<sup>285</sup> It seems metadata identifiers in the digital files are sometimes lost in the transfer between devices. The first time I heard R5 Sierreño's hit "Ekí Xeikía" (a translation of "Solo Tu"), it was on the cell phone of a hitchhiker (*raitero*). I asked who the group was, to which he quite confidently but erroneously responded "Sierreño Sierreña."

<sup>286</sup> Almost all Huichol CDs include photos of the musicians for identification. Leonel de Haro, owner of LEMA Records, specifically mentioned that he always tried to take clear and close photos of the musicians so their faces would be easily identifiable in person by anyone familiar with the disc.

*The 5<sup>th</sup> track: saludos and sonic brands*

The concept of the “fifth track” is not one that was mentioned by musicians in my research, but my own reference to a practice observed in multiple recording sessions. In a multi-track recording session with standard instrumentation (i.e., tololoche, vihuela, violin) and one vocalist, the fifth and final track to be recorded is exclusively for saludos and what I will call sonic brands.<sup>287</sup>

Though the fifth track is usually spoken by the singer(s), it is separated from the melodic vocal tracks and always the last to be recorded, the icing on the cake, so to speak. From a recording standpoint, then, it takes up the same space and importance as an instrument. But unlike an instrumental part, the material for the fifth track is often written down. Most of the fifth track is used for saludos, but increasingly it has also come to be the place for sonic brands. In this case, sonic brands are the group’s name and related catch phrases, usually spoken with notable affectation of rhythm and timbre. While self-reference in lyrics was known in música regional before the 21<sup>st</sup> century, today’s practice of using the fifth track for sonic brands seems to have become standard practice over the past decade.

The musicians’ view of this practice was usually straightforward. “It’s for the people who don’t know the group, that they have some idea of who [the group] is,” said Domingo López of Huichol Musical. In fact, Huichol Musical’s catch phrases are some of the most known, including “*iyari, iyari*” (heart, heart) and “*hay que mover la semuchi*” (you gotta move the butt), using Wixárika words for *heart* and *buttocks*. These sonic brands are simultaneously about group identification and a response to the fact that audio files of the songs will be pirated and shared with no external reference as to the identity of the group or performers. Revealing the practice as

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<sup>287</sup> With more instruments or a second vocal track, the track for saludos and sonic brands becomes the sixth or seventh track, but I call it the fifth track partly in keeping with the importance of the number five in the Wixárika world.

a response to piracy, the group Renaciendo Iyari had a particularly memorable catch phrase and sonic branding of the group's name. On their recording of "Cumbia Morena" (Audio 66), the catch phrase "*di no a la confusión*" is a play on the popular anti-piracy phrase "say no to piracy," followed by the group's name with large amounts of reverb.

Though sonic brands are partly a response to piracy and have a purpose similar to product placement in movies and television, like any brand, they themselves are subject to being pirated. As mentioned in the ethnographic vignette above, Jacko's response to Abrazo Musical's creation of the catch phrase "*de siempre para siempre*" (always and forever) was "I like that... nobody says that... until they pirate it." A good example is Huichol Musical's phrase "*hay que mover la semuchi*," which is now used in multiple variations by other groups both in live performances and recordings.

In a musical world where the repertoire consists primarily of covers, sonic brands are a useful method of distinguishing a particular group's version of a song. The sonic brand is a type of appropriative mechanism used even by groups of lesser fame. For example, the song "Tsinari" became a hit with the group Conjunto Teemari, even though it was originally written and performed by the group Tatei Aramara. Part of what allowed Conjunto Teemari to receive the spoils of the song's viral popularity on the internet among Wixárika youths was their recording that prominently featured the group's name as a sonic brand (Audio 56), thus linking the group to the song itself. By contrast, I was never able to find a version by Tatei Aramara online.

Similarly, on a more international scale, one could consider the case of El Venado Azul's song "Cumbia Cusinela." The song was recorded by many artists, including Mestizo artists, and was made most famous by Huichol Musical, leading many to refer to it as "their" song, rather than the property of its author and legal owner, José López of El Venado Azul. An important

distinction between the recorded versions is the presence and type of sonic brands. Notably, and unfortunately for the composer, the version by El Venado Azul uses “the fifth track” only to send generic saludos to “all the women of the world,” and so on (Audio 34). Not once is the group name mentioned. In contrast, Huichol Musical rode their version of the song to international fame (Audio 35). Besides some minor stylistic and arranging differences between the two recordings, Huichol Musical’s version begins not with the melody but with the statement “*de México para el mundo, iyari iyari, Huichol Musical.*” It begins, then, with a saludo that reveals source and intended audience (i.e., from Mexico for the world), the group’s catch phrase, and the group’s name. It also contained the “semuchi” catch phrase later in the song. Of all the recordings I could find of “Cumbia Cusinela,” El Venado Azul’s was the only one that did not use the group’s name as a sonic brand.<sup>288</sup>

Huichol Musical’s statement at the beginning of “Cumbia Cusinela” shows the importance of sonic brands for today’s major players in música regional. The label Latin Power Music developed the group name Huichol Musical, was primarily responsible for the catch phrase “iyari, iyari,” and likely made sure to put both of the group’s main catch phrases in the recording that was intended to be their breakthrough hit. The practice is certainly not unique to Huichol groups, but is part of an industry-wide practice (at least in música regional).

The use of sonic brands in today’s música regional is an example of the importance of audio and sonic elements in today’s brand-centric global capitalism. These practices are known variously as audio branding, sound branding, sonic branding, acoustic branding, sound identity, acoustic identity, and audio logos (Bronner 2009:78; Spehr 2009:27). They refer to branding

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<sup>288</sup> Almost all other groups to record the song inserted their group name as a sonic brand. The group Agresivos de la Sierra put their sonic brand in the song twice. Banda Maguey used an electronic-sounding name at the beginning in the manner of “off voice.” Grupo Massore used a reverb-heavy utterance of the group name. All versions were available on YouTube as of this writing.

practices that form “an emotional connection between transmitter and receiver through sound, an associative anchor for recognition, communication of messages, image transfer, and image consolidation” (Spehr 2009:27).

To the extent that music itself is used as an “anchor for recognition” and “image consolidation,” it becomes part of the brand, not just the vessel for a brand. A song like “Cumbia Cusinela” becomes part of the brand of Huichol Musical to the extent that it simultaneously draws from and creates—“consolidates”—the entire “image” of the group. The utterance of the name, then, is a way to connect the song and its performance to the image of the group as whole. To do that, Mestizo música regional groups often use what is called “off voice” (Lehman 2009), a voice that is not readily identifiable as the singer and often has a timbre reminiscent of a movie trailer narrator, booming, low pitched, and authoritative. The sonic brand of the group Voz de Mando is indicative of the “off voice” approach.<sup>289</sup>

Most Huichol groups do not use off voice, but they do affect their own uttering of the group name. In my observation of recording sessions, there is a great deal of thought that goes into how the group’s name is performed as a sonic brand, with particular importance given to rhythm and intonation. The approach follows the same corporate audio branding logic that recognizes that the voice “can lend uniqueness to a brand and enhance its recognition” and that “the particular expression of [the] voice can dramatically change the overall impression of a brand, and therefore how it is perceived as a whole” (Lehman 2009:90). Because the voice of the sonic brand and the voice of the group are usually the same (i.e., the singer does both), the entire song and its “style” more easily become part of the group’s brand, not just the utterance of the group name itself. The identity of a music group, then, is referenced or encapsulated in the sonic brand but the substance of the identity is its particular stylistic approach to a carefully

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<sup>289</sup> For example, at 1:22min in “Levantando Polvadera” (<https://youtu.be/Ye1ogD1OaKI>).



constructed repertoire. By being the voice of the brand and the voice of the group, the singer becomes something of a walking, talking embodiment of the group's brand. It was not surprising, then, when Domingo López of Huichol Musical once finished a conversation with me at a baile by saying “hay que mover la semuchi.”

A music group's sonic brand, though, is often not the only brand or branding operating in the repertoire of *música regional*. Paralleling the rise of the sonic brand on a separate track is the proliferation of in-song references to other brands, especially luxury vehicles, brand name clothing, and alcoholic beverages.<sup>290</sup>

### *Commodities and branding in música regional*

Brands, especially those associated with luxury goods, played an increasingly noticeable role in *música regional* during the course of this research. The influence of artists such as Gerardo Ortiz and El Komander were exceptional in that regard, their lyrics peppered with references to Dolce & Gabana, Armani, Rolex, Ferrari, Cheyenne (trucks), and other vehicles. Behind the scenes, and probably most likely compensated for what amounts to product placement, is Twiins Enterprises, the Los Angeles-based label responsible for the so-called “Movimiento Alterado.” Though their artists frequently mention brands in their songs, none is more prominent than Buchanan's whiskey. The brand was mentioned in the first hit by El Komander—“El Katch”—and appears regularly in his songs. His song “Fiesta en la Playa,” which also mentions Buchanan's, was part of the Huichol repertoire during my fieldwork period (Audio 67), as were others that mention the beverage. The prevalence of this brand in *música*

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<sup>290</sup> The presence of multiple brands in a single virtual object might be called “co-branding” except that co-branding seems to imply that the legal owners of the brand trademarks were coordinating efforts for their benefit. That is not usually the case here.

regional has even led to a banda on the Twins Enterprises label called Buknas, an orthographic variation of Buchanan's, commonly spelled *Bukanas* in Mexican Spanish.



Figure 79. A compilation CD of corridos shows the commonly intertwined images of narco violence, luxury vehicles, and other branded commodities (especially Buchanan's whiskey).



Figure 80. Graffiti on a wall in the Wixárika locality of Tateikie. The linkages of narco violence with branded commodities found in today's corridos are not lost on Wixárika youths, though orthography might be localized. The tag "COBRA" seems to be word play on the serpent and the Spanish word for "charge (money or a fee)."

The presence of Buchanan's is most likely the result of an actual advertising arrangement between Twiins Enterprises and Buchanan's.<sup>291</sup> If true, the move was brilliant on the part of Buchanan's advertising executives. Unlike product placement in a movie or television show, hit songs have a trickle-down affect in the repertoire. The mention of the brand in a song is not just an advertisement but *becomes* part of the brand. The brand becomes associated with the content of the lyrics (partying, sex, guns, and so on) and the fame of the performers. The associations repeat themselves (without further remuneration) in the mouths of groups who are taloneando and performing in tocadás. Importantly, while artists in the lower musician classes are certainly not further remunerated for coincidentally singing product placements, the value of those brands increases with each iteration. It could be said, then, that through the discussion of the brands—in this case their melodic evocation—they gain value through association with times, events, practices, and famous people.

Brands mentioned in song lyrics may be even stronger and less contestable than the sonic brands mentioned above. For one, they remain part of the song no matter the performer, unlike a sonic brand that will change for each group. Thus, they are also potentially more difficult to contest or displace compared to a sonic brand. In what was perhaps the final performance of Los Amos's with all original members, I kept hearing the sonic brand "Los Amos's," though none of the brothers onstage was saying it. For a while I thought they had requested that the sound person play a recorded version of the sonic brand while they performed. After a while, though, I also started to hear another sonic brand—Ecstasis—being interjected, juxtaposed with that of Los Amos's. Eventually, the sonic brands started to vary, and even occurred with catch phrases in Spanish-accented English: "Los Amos's een da house." It soon became clear that the soundman was actually speaking these sonic brands over the live performance with his own microphone, a

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<sup>291</sup> A show by El Komander in Guadalajara was also sponsored by Buchanan's.

type of live fifth track. Unfortunately, the soundman became increasingly drunk during the set so that the sonic brand for Ecstasis, the name of his sound company, became featured more prominently than that of Los Amos's. As the night progressed, his sonic branding and shouts of encouragement devolved into hoots, hollers, gritos, and inexplicable horse whinnies that made many in the audience laugh awkwardly, looking at each other as if to ask "what's going on?"

Multiple brands can be sonically at play in any given performance, but they do not all succeed equally simply by being present. In the case of the Los Amos's performance, it was a question of controlling sonic space that would enable them to successfully project their brand without it potentially suffering from the actions of others. As the value of sonic brands, like brands in general, can only be established in comparison to others, their co-operation and contingency can become a war of sonic brands, so that the *guerra de sonidos* becomes a *guerra de marcasonidos*.

### *On Ownership of music and songs*

Many of the hits that Huichol groups use to become famous become known as "their" songs, even though they often did not compose them. This has already been mentioned in the case of "Cumbia Cusinela" (by El Venado Azul, made famous by Huichol Musical) and "Tsinari" (by Tatei Aramara, made famous by Conjunto Teemari). The same was true of the song "Pasito Chicoteado," the video of which helped spring the group Herencia Huichol into one of the region's most well-known and frequently hired groups. Most assumed the song was "theirs," and were surprised to learn (when I mentioned it) that it was actually originally recorded by the Mestizo group Nuevo Noreños. In fact, that group had also previously ridden the

songs popularity for some short-lived success in a different regional market (mostly in Sinaloa).<sup>292</sup>

The ability for Herencia Huichol, Huichol Musical, and Conjunto Teemari to make hit songs seem like “theirs” was enabled by the separation of time (usually a year or two after the original) and space (in a different market or regional music scene). Still, even when a song’s external origins were known and it was obvious that a group intended to usurp a hit for commercial gain, such covers were never referred to as “piracy.” Part of the reason might seem like it would have to do with royalties. If the groups that made the songs famous were paying royalties to the composers, it would not legally be considered piracy. In reality, though, almost none of the Huichol groups who perform covers on their recordings pay any royalties to do so.<sup>293</sup> Certainly, of the cases mentioned above, Conjunto Teemari did not pay Tatei Aramara to use the song “Tsinari,” though they used it to make a good deal of money, touring extensively as a result of their recording of the song.

One response might be that since ownership and copyright does not really exist in a Wixárika conceptualization of music, and therefore Wixárika musicians are operating from an approach that encourages sharing and promulgation of songs. Another explanation might be that would-be consumers in the Western world are shifting their view of music’s role in society to be something similar to the Wixárika model, where music exists in a “sharing economy” that should not be subject to exchange value. Neither of these arguments would hold up. Songs in música regional do not become “traditional.” Instead, Wixárika musicians forcefully participate in a process that intends to re-associate songs with their performance of it, aided by sonic brands in a

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<sup>292</sup> Herencia Huichol’s producer was also associated with Nuevo Noreños, hence the use of that song.

<sup>293</sup> I assume that José López received royalties for Huichol Musical’s use of “Cumbia Cusinela,” but knowing Fonorama’s past history of (not) paying royalties, I would not be surprised if he has not received anything. The point remains, though, that the vast majority of Huichol groups record primarily covers and do not pay anything to do so, and yet it is not deemed “piracy.”

move to assert their ownership if not of the entire song, then at least their “style” of performing it. The question becomes, then, one of public estimations of originality and a group’s success in authoritative actualization. Through successful mass-diffusion (accompanied by a sonic brand), a particular actualization can surpass and even silence its source which is, in a sense, only another actualization equally subject to structured consumer preferences. The originality of a source—an “original”—and its entitlement to be considered as such, hinges on appeals to legality, historicity, and public opinion.

*Getting the word out (promocionar)*

No matter who records it, a song does not become a hit entirely on its own, nor can a group hope to be associated with a particular hit just because they record it. Success necessitates promotion, no matter how basic. The old model for promotion primarily meant getting a recording played on the radio. For most of the early period of commercial Huichol music groups, that meant XEJMN, the Voice of the Four Pueblos (*La Voz de los Cuatro Pueblos*), a government station run by the CDI in Jesus María, Nayarit. As its name states, it was intended to be a station catering to the four indigenous groups in the region—Wixárika, Nayeri (Cora), O’dham (Tepehuan), and Mexicanero. A review of the station’s archives shows that many Huichol music groups would send promotional copies of their CDs in hopes that they would get airplay. Many also visited the station to perform live.

Since its founding in 1992, and still today, the problem with XEMN for music promotion is that it only reaches a limited portion of the Wixárika population. I did notice people listening to it in higher elevations in northern communities (like Santa Catarina and San Andrés), but the signal usually did not reach places like San Sebastián or Tuxpan, much less the Wixárika

populations in urban centers like Colotlán, Guadalajara, or Tepic (where much of the potential audience lives, studies, or works). Such a situation has made radio increasingly irrelevant as a promotional medium for Huichol groups.

The newer promotional model is online, enabled by internet service widely available in urban areas and increasingly common in Wixárika communities. Benefiting from and contributing to the shift early on was the website PuebloIndigena.com, founded and run primarily by Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz, a teacher and musician from the communities of Guadalupe Ocotán and Tuxpan de Bolaños. Though the site includes news on all topics, its beginnings were focused on promoting Huichol music groups:

The first things on our page...were to spread [*difundir*] the music of our communities. In that time, [around 2006] there weren't as many recordings of traditional music, just regional, like violins, those things. And it's with that type of music that we started to spread/promote [*difundir*]. And the [streaming] radio was principally for that, to promote [*promover*] the music of our communities. (Bautista Muñoz 2013)

Unfortunately, the streaming radio suffered fits and starts, but music groups were still frequently featured on the website.<sup>294</sup> Groups usually appeared in the photos from community events and a number of groups would send recordings of songs to be put on the page for free downloading.

The most common promotional approach, though, was putting videos on YouTube and then promoting them on Facebook, or simply uploading them directly to Facebook. The videos were not usually music videos per se, but were simply an audio recording paired with a photo collage and/or the group's logotype as the video. Record labels were sometimes involved in this approach, especially LEMA which commonly created promotional videos for a new recording by giving snippets of each song. They also offered, as part of the recording package, the option of

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<sup>294</sup> During my fieldwork period, PuebloIndigena's streaming radio service had some notable successes. At one point they had a show every evening with a different host, sometimes broadcasting "on location" from a student gathering or the residence of an ethnomusicologist. At other times, the service would be nonexistent for months as a result of lack of access to computers or internet on the part of the hosts.

doing true music videos, usually filmed in settings near the studio in Jeréz, Zacatecas. Some groups even used Facebook to release entire albums that they never intended to release on CD.

Beyond online song releases, many groups used Facebook as a promotional tool, issuing saludos from the group or announcing their next performance. Sometimes, when cellular data service was available, groups would even post photos from an event as it was happening, creating something akin to digital postcards that might be seen as aiding a feeling of community and connectedness despite separation by large geographic distances.

Groups would not only use their own material to promote themselves, but would borrow from outside sources to enhance their “brand” as they saw fit. Latin Power Music’s control of the Huichol Musical Facebook account was a useful example, using anything they could find that was even remotely connected to Huicholness to enrich the image of the group. They were also remarkably successful in using Facebook to gauge the audience for Huichol Musical, often asking for responses to certain posts such as “what types of Mexican foods do you like?” or “do you like Huichol artesanías?” In that way, they continued a marketing practice developed since the early days of radio meant to gauge an otherwise unknowable mass audience (Taylor 2012). A number of groups used my fieldwork photos and videos of them, including Latin Power Music which linked to my YouTube videos of live performances by Huichol Musical and then subscribed to my “channel” in hopes of more videos to come.<sup>295</sup> Such outcomes further imbricate the ethnographic endeavor into the global capitalist moment from which it is inextricable.

The decline of CD production and the rise of online promotion and distribution reveal that distribution and promotion are now commonly one in the same. Promotion, though, is no longer about selling the recording, but using the recording to promote the group and its “brand,”

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<sup>295</sup> I posted (poor quality) videos of the songs “Ekî Uka” and “Cumbia Cusinela,” as performed by Huichol Musical in Xatsitsarie, as a way to gauge the comparative popularity of the two hits.



to enhance its value. Indeed, the entire process of recording, distribution, and promotion can now occur on the same machine. In the case of MGD Records, promotion often begins before a recording is even finished, releasing video snippets of the computer screen in the studio as the Pro Tools software plays back a yet-to-be-mastered recording. Latin Power Music and others commonly promote new releases by posting photos to Facebook of the recording session in which the new release is still being created. Thus, value is created by “spreading the word” before the thing that is being promoted even exists. The trick, then, is to reap that value somehow, converting it into financial capital for the musicians, which then has significant effects on their personal and social lives.

### **The cultural effects of musical labor and being a musician**

*“Las distancias aparten las ciudades  
Las ciudades destruyen las costumbres”  
–Miguel y Miguel*

In many interviews with musicians, students, and other Wixaritari, the phrase “*salir adelante*” was often mentioned. The phrase could be roughly translated as “to get ahead,” but also means much more. When asked for explanation, many struggled to define what it meant to *salir adelante*, but it generally came down to socioeconomic advancement, as described by

Ukeme, a one-time undergraduate economics major:

Today, *salir adelante* is understood more in the economic [sense]. To have a new truck [*troca del año*], to have a house, to have money to go here and there. I think that’s the concept that it has more today because that’s the life we live today. It’s the system in which we already live now... we live in capitalism which is also individualism. (Bautista Muñoz 2013)

Interpreted from a literal translation, the words are even more revealing. *Salir* means to leave, to go out, to come out, while *adelante* means forward, or ahead. The phrase then is highly relational and comparative. A more literal translation brings out the semantic richness but leaves one with

the questions “Salir” from where? “Adelante” compared to whom or to what? Under the surface of a seemingly benign maxim is acquiescence to a hegemonic belief whose perniciousness should not be underestimated. The latent assumption in the phrase *salir adelante*, which is contextually axiomatic, is that the Western world and the Wixárika world have identical or reconcilable economic systems. That thinking allows people, including many or most Wixaritari themselves, to conceive of the Wixárika people as at the bottom rung of that economic system, “poor,” and with “nothing.”

Under the ideology that makes *salir adelante* an unassailable phrase, “subsistence” is not enough. Whether working your own fields as a subsistence farmer or laboring in the fields of Mestizos, neither is considered sufficient to *salir adelante*. In the Wixárika world today, professional jobs like being a teacher, bureaucrat, lawyer, or medical professional are ideal. Lacking Western education, or in the meantime while pursuing it, the most common forms of labor to *salir adelante* are artesanías and music.

As the phrase *salir adelante* suggests, becoming a fulltime musician requires one to leave the sierra. Some musicians who had moved to Mestizo lands to pursue their labor and craft claimed that it *would* be possible while living in the sierra these days. But I did not meet or hear about any Wixárika musicians who actually did that. To the contrary, they moved out of the sierra in order to be professional musicians. Members of Abrazo Musical Huichol chose to live in Tlaltenango, Zacatecas specifically because it was halfway between Guadalajara and the sierra (*a mitad del camino*). Domingo López of Huichol Musical also used logistical reasoning for taking up residence in a Mestizo town:

Nowadays, I’m becoming more accustomed to living here in Fresnillo, Zacatecas with the *teiwaris* [Mestizos] than with my people. Every now and then I go to the community. Sometimes, for example, when they ask us to support something, to play or whatever, we go [to the sierra] and then we come back. [In the sierra] there’s nowhere for [clients] to call you... there’s no [cell

phone] signal... in questions of work, well, where there's signal is where you have to be at the time they call you. (López 2013)

Taking up residence in Mestizo populations is common both for well known and medium tier Huichol groups. In all cases, though, it limits the participation Wixárika musicians have with their communities. When asked whether he had “left” anything of his culture to be a musician, Maximino Hernández Carrillo responded:

Well, yes... I don't forget [it], but sometimes I don't follow through now [*no complot ya*]. For example, my parents do their fiesta... our fiesta... well, sometimes I'm not there because I'm here working... and sometimes I'm left to wonder, “well, what am I doing here,” right? And if there I'm dropping the ball [*estoy faltando*]... well, I don't forget. Always when I have time, I always go. (Hernández Carrillo 2012b)

Being out of the sierra to be a musician, student, or professional, leaves most wanting to manage the two locations, but doing so is extremely costly and difficult. As one government worker told me, “When you're here [in the sierra], you want to be there [in the city], and when you're there, you want to be here.” In such conversations, people would often mention “social networks” (i.e., internet access), news, and television, which they enjoyed in Mestizo populations but from which they felt disconnected in the sierra.

Being part of a Wixárika community was fraught for such people because as adults they would be expected to take on unpaid community service roles (*cargos*). Thus, serving in the community is the exact opposite of the reason to leave (i.e., to make money). The matter was a constant struggle for students and professionals. One recent university graduate did not want to travel with me to a community assembly because he had heard he might be elected for a cargo. “It's not convenient for me,” he said, “I'm working.”

Though some struggled to maintain community contact while not actually living in the sierra, others cut ties completely. Samuel “El Brujo” López, formerly of Huichol Musical, did

not restrain his thoughts on the matter, drawing a clear distinction between what musicians do and “the culture” of the Wixárika communities:

If we dedicated ourselves to that which is the culture, we would be there in the sierra. But there we're not going to earn anything. So, we're coming out above [*saliendo sobre*]... to survive [*sobresalir*], right? When the people ask us to record a song, it's for the people, and we please the people, but in the end they pay us. That's how we earn/win [*ganamos*]. That's how we're living, to maintain the family. So, if we dedicate ourselves to that which is the culture, well, we'd be there in the sierra. And also they [the community authorities] aren't going to permit us to come here [to the city]. Just being there [in the sierra] and maybe [making] some trips [to the city]. One has to be at the foot of the law [*al pie de la letra*] there. But since we're not there... we're free. There with *cargos*, go ahead. [But] I... my group... we're free. So, if we weren't free, well, we'd sing the [traditional] songs from there... but we wouldn't earn anything. [We'd just be] there with the community. And the goal that we have is [*salir adelante*]... because the Mestizo people here support us more. You've noticed that there are lots of students... they want to salir adelante, right? And if they were there in the sierra, well, there they'd be and they're not going to learn anything other than the culture. That's fine with the culture... it's something you have to learn from within [*desde abajo*], that's all fine, right? But the problem is the cargos that they give to people. So, you're going to be there like a slave. (Lópes 2013)

El Brujo's take might be extremely forthright, but it nevertheless speaks to the conflicting ideologies at the heart of the matter, and at the same time flips some of the usual assumptions of capitalism's relationship to slavery on its head. To him—and it is probably fair to say it applies to many Wixárika youths—participating fully in “the culture” is to be restrained, in bondage, but selling your labor makes you “free.”

The inspiration to salir adelante is not hard to locate. Much of it is tied to expectations of family and friends in a growing Wixárika bourgeois class, as it were. For others, aspiration is born through observation, finding Wixárika role models who become relatively well-to-do by becoming teachers, lawyers, politicians, and so on. Many look at their Mestizo neighbors and, increasingly, adjacent Wixárika communities and localities, and desire the “civilized” (*civilizado*) life achieved through government services and modern luxuries.<sup>296</sup> It would also be

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<sup>296</sup> Many Wixaritari defined the Wixárika communities by the degree to which they were considered to be “civilized” (*civilizado*). That meant the degree to which they had electric light, water infrastructure, roads, medical services, schools, and other amenities. In other words, it meant the degree to which they were integrated into “the grid.”

hard to deny the influence of the mass media. In addition to the aspirational luxury goods and big spending mentioned in many of today's corridos, the influence of television is undeniable. In addition to broadcast signal that can be received in higher elevations, even some of the most remote homes had satellite television service.



Figure 81. A proprietary satellite dish on a wooden pole in the community of Tuxpan de Bolaños.

Though Huicholness and Wixárika people do occasionally appear on television, it was not always fulfilling. After witnessing a visit from the governor of Jalisco, who arrived in (and then promptly left) Pueblo Nuevo in a swarm of helicopters, I noted the following in my field notes on June 11, 2013:

Watching Burger King commercial on fuzzy TV signal from Fresnillo while sitting on car seat [serving] as sofa. Supposedly to see “ourselves” and event today [on TV news].<sup>297</sup> Never wanted Burger King so badly before. To paraphrase Proust: “When faced with suffering and injustice, I do what all grown men do, I prefer not to see it and go running away to cry.” Perhaps leaving in a helicopter. But then paraphrasing Proust gets [me] perilously close to being a Monty Python sketch. Now I’m being asked to translate Power Ade commercials [on TV] that are in English for some reason, and asked how I might find work for someone who goes to the U.S. as a “wetback” [*mojado*]. And this from someone who’s deeply involved in politics [here], taking calls from the [mayor] of the municipality.

<sup>297</sup> As it turned out, the event was not featured on the news, at least not on the signal we could receive from the adjacent state.

Watching television in the sierra is one thing. Leaving the sierra for good to become proletarians is something quite different. In the end, the question becomes one of assimilation, but not necessarily within just one lifetime. The reasoning put forth by Kawi was common:

We're going to continue on [here in Colotlán] I think, because... thinking about the education of our children, we're thinking sometimes it would be better for us to stay here. The plan is to stay here, buy some land, a house... because I think [to return to] the sierra, no. That is, *to live*, to live, not really. I'm not thinking about that. Well, since I left there, it was another era... I lived there, grew up with my grandparents... there we lived how it really is to live that which is Huichol, Huichol, Huichol. Super Wixárika. Planting. What you get [out of the ground], you live from for the year. You leave to work, just during [one] season, to the coast of Nayarit. You come back, buy the basics... only that. So, at that time, I was happy, really. Now, having left there, knowing another life, well... I go there [to the sierra] for two, three days and I'm already missing even the late night food [*cena*] that they sell here, or the things that one does here. Basically, one feels almost, you could say, asphyxiated, sort of closed in, and with difficulty to leave. Even though here everything is all money... you pay rent, electricity, now even to go to the bathroom they charge you! Yeah, here it's difficult but even so, I think it's better that we stay here. (De la Cruz Velázquez 2012)

Many musicians would bring their families with them when they left the sierra to pursue musical labor, but stayed primarily for their children's education, thus creating a multi-generational question of cultural assimilation. Wixárika children were less likely to speak Wixárika well (or at all), many would soon cease to wear Wixárika clothes in favor of Western fashions that allowed them to feel less outcast, and community involvement in their homelands became even less frequent than their parents'.

The multi-generational nature of the effect of musical labor upon identity and cultural practices means that this study must be exceptionally longitudinal. The phenomenon is too recent to draw definitive conclusions, and many of the children of musicians who formed the first wave of Huichol music groups have not yet reached adolescence. Even the children of some of the earliest musicians to leave the sierra are only just now graduating college and forced with the decision as to whether or not they will return to their Wixárika communities. Early indications,

though, do not seem hopeful for the progeny of those musicians and others who managed to salir adelante.

In many ranchos in the sierra today, there is a striking difference between the children who have grown up in the sierra and those who are visiting from their residence in Mestizo towns. Those who are visiting are often inept at even basic ritual practices, looking around sheepishly, unlike their local cousins, for someone to tell them what to do. Wixaritari are aware of such matters, and many are concerned about it. Domingo López of Huichol Musical stated that his children, who have grown up outside of the sierra, speak “little” Wixárika. I asked him about musicians and artesanos who are in the business of “presenting” Wixárika culture to outsiders but at the same time possibly “destroying” it by raising their children outside of the culture they seek to represent. I asked the question, afraid he might take offense to it, and finished by giving him an out. “Or am I totally mistaken?” I asked...

No, no, you’re right [*estás en lo correcto*]. Well, really, I think in various occasions the parents are at fault. As you say, we bring them to the city... they go to school... well, you know that in the school they teach them very differently, and they forget sometimes about our pueblo, our community, and the culture... the fiestas. We [the parents] know that it was our grandparents, our parents, who taught us, but for questions of opportunity... one does it... you know that there isn’t much [opportunity] in my community... to salir adelante. (López 2013)

Many parents do try to mitigate the loss of cultural practices and Wixárika language, sending their children to Wixárika language classes (where they exist) and, when possible, taking them to the sierra for vacation. However, the effort is not always pragmatic or successful, as I noted in a journal entry:

[A local Wixárika musician] went to the sierra because his mother was ill, but used the time to attend fiestas... did not take children because they had school... We encountered the children running around the streets on our way to a favorite burger joint... their elder brother was “taking care” of them and thus had not eaten much... we invited them to dine with us. During the meal, we realized that the older daughter [age 12] was taking Wixárika lessons on Saturdays but

couldn't count past 20, but we also realized that the younger brother [around six years old] could not count past three in Wixárika.<sup>298</sup>

The degree to which such evidence points to heightened assimilation of Wixaritari into the Western world remains to be seen. The phenomenon is relatively new, at least at current proportions, and the process is ongoing.

### **Conclusion: Saints with bank accounts and deer who drink Coca-Cola**

Once, during the fundraising weekend for Santo Domingo in Nueva Colonia, my friend Ernesto from Tateikie turned to another friend, Jorge, a local more or less, and asked, “Does Santo Domingo have a bank account?” There was no irony intended; it was a common way to keep track of funds donated in honor of a local deity. Later that day, I saw a xukuritame in full regalia try to purchase beer with a twenty-dollar bill from the U.S. The bill was accepted with minimal discussion about the exchange rate. I, of course, was surprised. Jorge called it “normal.” At another time, only a few hours' walk from Nueva Colonia, I once saw a sacrificed deer fed a sip of Coca-Cola. And why not? If the deer is Tamatsi—Our Elder Brother—he would enjoy a Coke as much as any of his Wixárika brethren.

Both deities and musicians are taking up capitalism and its branded commodities. But the locations and practices in which the process takes place make all the difference. Its incursion in ritual in the sierra is usually a *fait accompli*, and one that might not necessarily foreshadow its destruction. Santo Domingo continues to exist, and having a bank account would only make honoring him a process with more fiscal transparency. Those who leave the sierra to *salir adelante*, though, become less active in ritual practices and could be seen to be beginning a

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<sup>298</sup> Numbers are not the best way to judge language proficiency. Even Wixárika elders who have lived their entire lives in the sierra commonly use Spanish for numbers. Still, children who grow up in the sierra these days are taught to count in both languages.



process of multi-generational assimilation. Even those who leave for only a short while, such as students attending university, are said by some elders to be “traumatized” (*traumados*) upon their return (if they ever do return). Not only their identity, but also their very wellbeing, perhaps their total existence, is thrown into question by rupturing geo-social ties. These, of course, become questions of identity, but they are enabled, or instigated, by practices and ideologies such as those covered in this chapter.

To lay the groundwork for questions that merge identity and value, this chapter has explored musical labor and music commodification of Huichol music groups. As explained above, Wixárika musicians and the music industry in which they operate(d) were only able to exact an exchange value for music when they had a technological advantage and could control the actualizations of music through scarcity and distribution, in a sense commoditizing *access* and the *means* to hear a song rather than the song itself. Over the course of the Huichol music group phenomenon, such control diminished as music became more easily and precisely “pirated,” and relatively liberated from physical media. But even the fayuqueros have to charge, and therefore the labor theory of value explains a good deal of *this part* of music as labor and commodity.

There is a bare minimum a label can charge for a CD, and that bare minimum will always be less for the fayuqueros because there is substantially less labor involved. But there is still something beyond labor because not all musical labor is the same. For that matter, not all physical actualizations are the same (e.g., the quality of the discs used by fayuqueros is always suspect). In addition to different classes of musicians, there are issues of taste and the seemingly infinite and immeasurable factors that underlie the perception of a group by their (consuming) public. Innumerable groups with various instrumentations can play the same hit song, but the

perceived talent and fame of any group is also judged as part of its value, not just the number of hours they labor in a performance. Thus, the question of the economic value of music and musical performance leads to questions of identity of a (music) group.

As recorded music loses exchange value and often technically ceases to be a commodity, its main value (for those who produce it) is the extent to which it creates a brand-like identity for its respective group, allowing them to engage in additional musical labor, in other words to extract some form of capital from the virtual object. The brand, as Adam Arvidsson put it, becomes a type of “immaterial capital,” or, following André Gorz, it becomes a type of “crystallized knowledge” about the group and their repertoire (Arvidsson 2006:7). It is not merely the *existence* of the virtual objects (i.e., the songs, especially the hits, marked with sonic brands) that imbues them with value, but their use and evocation that is the generative source of value for the group (Foster 2013; Tarde [1902]). Capitalizing on that value, though, is not without sociocultural repercussions, as was shown in the final section of this chapter. For that reason, the value of objects, even virtual ones, should be understood as inherently connected to the field of human activities and their meanings (Graeber 2001; Lash and Lury 2007; Lambek 2013; Taylor forthcoming).

A subsequent chapter focuses on how identity itself operates as a valued commodity-like virtual object. But like a music group whose identity is defined by promotion and distribution of its recorded repertoire, the value of an ethnic identity must be created through definition and promulgation. Before the chapter on identity as virtual object, then, it is necessary to understand how Huicholness was created and defined for outside consideration and consumption. The next chapter—Of Huicholistas and Huicholeros—does so by studying the century-long creation of the presentational and commodity-forms of Wixárika identity with a critical take on the role of the

ethnographic disciplines in simultaneously plugging the Wixaritari and Huicholness into a transnational or even global capitalism.

## **Chapter 5. Of Huicholistas and Huicholeros**

This chapter, though not particularly musical, is crucial for a transition to thinking of Huicholness as a virtual object or intangible commodity, and the role of ethnographers and other non-Wixaritari in that process. Previous chapters established bases for understanding music—inherently intangible—as a special type of commodity. The subsequent chapter studies identity itself—another intangible—as a commodity. This chapter, then, acts as a bridge linking these lines of thought. Following similar methods of analysis from previous chapters that studied music as an intangible commodity susceptible to being produced and actualized in various forms, this chapter begins with a historical look at the production of Huicholness for outside audiences (and consumers), primarily by ethnographers.

Studying ethnographers' roles in the formation of intangible commodities is not to suggest that such an outcome was always the intention of said ethnographers. But their (or our) ethnographic pursuits take place in a system that often leads to the production of commodities in the form of books and audio recordings, and other commercial or ideating devices such as curricula and museum exhibits. Like the piracy of music, more crassly commercial representations of Huicholness that invoke (or simply plagiarize) ethnographic work are almost impossible to control, much to the chagrin of academics and the sighs of many Wixaritari.

Central to this chapter as well are the historical effects of anthropologists *inside* Wixárika communities as a result of direct intervention supported by *indigenismo* ideology in Mexico, as administered by the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (INI) in the mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> century. Through the INI, anthropologists administered the creation of numerous “*brechas*” (breaches) meant explicitly to penetrate indigenous communities and assimilate them into Mexican “modern civilization.” Efforts included the introduction of government schools, clinics, landing strips,

roads, and a brigade of Western-educated Wixárika teachers. Such activities hastened the arrival and proliferation of Western ideas, goods, urbanism, and services, while simultaneously increasing the possibility for Wixaritari to leave their homelands in search of Western education and monetized labor. Thus, one might say a dual front of assimilation into national (and global) capitalism was taking place as ethnographic work structured a market niche for Huichol identity (Huicholness) abroad and Mexican anthropologists pursued assimilatory maneuvers within Wixárika territory.

This chapter is also about researchers themselves, and the contexts and relationships in which they worked. What were their personal motivations for doing what they did, and have such motivations changed over the years? By studying their lives and the products of their scholarly endeavors, what might current ethnographers learn about their relationships to their predecessors? How have relationships between ethnographers and their “subjects” changed? Giving attention to such relationships is inspired by the work of Shawn Wilson in *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008). Though I remain skeptical about some of his cultural assumptions, much of his approach is taken to heart here, especially his core theme of “relational accountability.” He defines this succinctly as “reciprocal and respectful relationships within the communities where [we are] conducting research” (Wilson 2008:40). Similarly, he suggests, “what is more important [than value judgments in research design] is fulfilling a role and obligations in the research relationship—that is, being accountable to your relations. The researcher is therefore a part of his or her research and inseparable from the subject of that research” (77). In other sections of this dissertation, I mention my roles and relations as they pertain to Wixárika individuals, Wixárika communities at large, and, as Wilson suggests, to the environment, the cosmos, and ideas themselves. Here, I take up Wilson’s suggestion that the

researcher is inseparable from the subject of research. Researchers and a litany of other outsiders are, after all, a part of the Wixárika world, if only peripherally so. For example, a study of *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) in Tateikie would be incomplete if it did not take into account the hordes of tourists and researchers who annually crowd the sierra town to partake in the festivities. In my case, a study of Huichol identity construction would be incomplete without also studying the people who construct and/or mediate forms of identity for foreign audiences, myself included.

Relational accountability, however, is not just about expanding the scope of research to include yourself and others like you. The approach is intended to create and maintain relationships through research. Through the archival and textual research that has informed this dissertation, I have formed odd sorts of relationships with my non-biological ancestors (i.e., those of the scholarly community), and feel myself accountable to represent them as human beings, not just as names behind a text. Similarly, I am accountable to my readers. As Wilson says, addressing his readers directly, “you need to form your own relationship with me... you need to understand some of the factors that go into my side of things: how and why I decided to research this topic, where it fits into my life and some of the factors that have influenced my point of view” (22).

With Wilson’s suggestions in mind, this chapter is about furthering my own relationships with my predecessors and readers, and vice versa. I intend to be simultaneously critical and empathetic towards earlier researchers, but also the chapter as a way to analyze my own work in a continuum of scholarly production related to the Wixaritari. For this reason, I take an unusual and experimental approach of representing my own place in this milieu through the use of third person. The reason is to analyze my work in a historical continuum, thinking of the tone more as

an imagined future past tense rather than typical third person reminiscent of earlier ethnographic writing that assumed objectivity by disappearing the author. My approach is also an attempt to inscribe my own view of my work and myself such that it might be judged from future epistemological positions in the way I wish previous scholars had revealed more of their own personal beliefs and socio-cultural positions.

Throughout this chapter, I use the terms *huicholista* (Huicholista) and *huicholero* (lit: Huicholero). The former, *huicholista*, refers to academics, scholars, ethnographers, and applied anthropologists who have made the Wixárika people central to their career and/or research, similar to the way others are called “Africanists,” “Americanists,” and so on. The latter, *huicholero*, is decidedly broader, encompassing a range of personalities who identify with or have an affinity for “Huichol” people and practices (primarily *artesanías* [commercial crafts] and consuming peyote rather than, say, subsistence farming or animal sacrifice). The Huicholeros are often “hippies” or New Age seekers from urban areas of North America (including Mexico) and Europe, but I take the word to mean anyone who actively affiliates with their own concepts of Huicholness through consumption, tourism, or other association. I surmise that within every Huicholista is a Huicholero, some more latent than others. The realms are not exclusive, and there is a great degree of overlap in instances where academic Huicholistas use their research to inform Huicholero consumption, such as turning dissertation research on yarn painting into a non-academic book on how to evaluate and purchase yarn-paintings. Other Huicholero inclinations by Huicholistas are more latent, such as anthropologist Robert Zingg who said he would have chosen to be Wixárika if given the choice at birth. Similarly, my own boyhood membership in Order of the Arrow (which is now rather embarrassing to admit) might have signaled an interest in Native American studies in later years. Because of such overlaps,

ethnographers might learn a good deal by turning the lens around as a matter of course rather than as detached methodological inquiry. Reversing the gaze might enable further insight into what academics and ethnographers are doing and, more importantly, why.

### **Chronicling the Huicholistas**

*Carl Sofus Lumholtz (1851–1921), explorer-ethnographer and comprador*

The first researcher to live with the Wixaritari was Carl Lumholtz, a Norwegian who had come to pursue world exploration-ethnography as a way to escape the bourgeois life in which he was raised and groomed for the ministry. His father was a military officer who forced young Lumholtz into studies of the family's choosing rather than his own, leading to a nervous breakdown. To escape a world that had broken him, he began a life of world exploration with a trip to Australia where he lived with "the blacks," funded by a university museum.

After finishing and publishing about his time in Australia, he undertook four trips to Mexico funded by the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), trips enabled by the recent militaristic conquest of the areas where he traveled. As one of his colleagues put it, "the bands of Apaches, which had formerly made traveling [in northern Mexico] dangerous, were now for the most part shut up on reservations and the open spaces they had formerly roamed lay empty and unexplored; this district was virgin land" (Solberg, quoted in Zingg 1938:xvii). His first trips (in 1890–1891 and 1892–1893) were massive multi-disciplinary affairs characterized by 19<sup>th</sup> century expeditionary mindset. Led by U.S. guides, the team of thirty men and over 100 equines undertook not only ethnography, but also research in archaeology, geography, botany, and zoology (aided by the expedition's taxidermist).



His later trips (1894–1897 and 1898) were the only two that involved time in Wixárika territory. They also reveal a shift away from expeditionary ventures—he called them “campaigns”—towards more modern-day ethnographic methods. Lumholtz did away with foreign guides and his team of researchers, preferring to travel with local guides and translators, and apparently spending some time alone once reaching a destination. The change in method was probably also a way to speed up his work, though the logistics of travel in his day are impressive. Trips that now take twenty minutes on a paved highway took five hours by mule for Lumholtz.

Such logistical feats were not without a hefty price tag. Lumholtz was funded primarily by AMNH but, as his book (1902) reveals, he successfully courted a number of wealthy donors from New York and other metropolitan areas. Among others, he specifically thanks Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, George W. Vanderbilt, William C. Whitney, and brewer Adolphus Busch. Most of these patrons he met personally, having gained modest fame through publications about his explorations. He may have also convinced some that exploration was a financial investment. Writing in his autobiography about a planned expedition: “...we hope to make a valuable contribution... some of our discoveries may even prove of great economic value” (1921:243).

His budget for the 1898 trip speaks to what he deemed as important for the excursion.<sup>299</sup> His first line item: “Pistols \$28.” His second line item: “Rifles \$30.” He was not the last person to do fieldwork armed, a practice that continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Beyond hunting and protection against robbery, his guns served social purposes. He learned this fact in Australia, stating, “my gun exercised great powers over [my native companions]” (Lumholtz 1921:229). He would shoot it off at night when he was unhappy with their behavior: “It was like my ‘good

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<sup>299</sup> References to Lumholtz diaries, itineraries, budgets, and expedition reports come from information gathered in the archive of the Anthropology Division of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH).

night' to them" (ibid.). Also of understandable importance in his budget was the cost of buying and borrowing mules. The necessity meant renting mules from his non-indigenous "friend" Vicente Medrano in Mezquitic, Jalisco, the only person near the Wixárika territory who owned the necessary quantity. The Medranos continue to be a family dynasty in Mezquitic with a long line of sons who have become municipal presidents. As a researcher, Lumholtz benefited from local elites at the same time he financially aided their elite status.

Lumholtz needed a large number of mules from Medrano in order to fulfill his primary objective: hauling a massive museum collection out of the sierra. His emphasis was on ethnographic items such as ritual implements and clothing, but also included musical instruments, sound recordings, photographs, archaeological items, and human remains. The evolutionary framework from which Lumholtz was working meant collecting bones and taking measurements of living humans. He was briefly accompanied by the now-infamous physical anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička, whose work received comment in Lumholtz's diary. "Dr. H went with Luis and Angel to see about the muertos [dead]. The mayordomo brought a good skeleton of a child, having yesterday been persuaded by Dr. H to do so" (Lumholtz diary May 3, 1898). Lumholtz also participated in the endeavor. In 1898 alone, he "succeeded in securing 15 skeletons of modern Huichols" (Lumholtz 1898 expedition report to AMNH).<sup>300</sup>

Conducting his research in fewer places also meant re-revisits and more time with specific people, even calling them "friends" when not referring to them as "barbarous" people in his publications. But he tended to elide places in publication, not drawing much distinction between Wixárika communities. His book *Unknown Mexico* (1902) has musical transcriptions placed rather randomly as he mentions particular communities, giving the impression that the song was recorded in the community being discussed in the text. After studying his papers at

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<sup>300</sup> These human remains are still a part of the AMNH collection.

AMNH, though, he clearly made wax cylinder recordings only in 1898 when he visited just one community, Santa Catarina.<sup>301</sup> Lumholtz's approach to research reveals reliance upon high technology of the day, but the manner of publishing the results shows a tendency to singularize a concept of Huicholness for outsiders.

Lumholtz also took liberties with the way he represented himself, possibly to promote an idealized image of himself as an explorer. An early photographic studio portrait shows a young Lumholtz in colonial exploration gear with a rifle and his dog. A later illustrated portrait shows a similar but more romantic image of him in an idyllic setting with a statuesque pose.



Figure 82. Carl Lumholtz in an illustration from *Among Cannibals* (1889).

A more candid photograph from his time in Mexico, however, shows a very different Lumholtz on a mountain trail. Gone are his explorer accouterments in favor of a necktie, an odd choice for the sierra, though his rifle is still at the ready. His posed portraits, then, were likely intended to suggest a heroic explorer image to his patrons and audience in the United States and Europe.

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<sup>301</sup> His transcription of a “Huichol Rain-Song” (1902, 2:20) says “transcribed from graphophone,” meaning from his 1898 Santa Catarina recordings, but is placed in the text so as to seem to be from San Andrés.



Figure 83. Lumholtz in the Sierra Madre Occidental, 1892 (#CL1221, American Museum of Natural History Library).

In addition to his fieldwork fashion choices, Lumholtz almost certainly left a lasting impression on his Wixárika contacts in other ways. Though the Wixárika knowledge of other countries and peoples at that time was limited, he dazzled them with magazines of well-dressed society women in the resorts of Bar Harbor, Maine. A “music box” that was inexplicably included in his 1898 budget fascinated some: “[Gertrudes] took great interest in la música, at once learned how to stop and start it. Sat down in admiration next to it. Wanted to buy it for a toro [bull]” (Lumholtz diary May 7, 1898). Perhaps his greatest influence throughout Wixárika territory was that he was probably the first *comprador*, a term that literally means “buyer” but in this context specifically refers to those who buy Huichol artesanías. And, of course, he *did* buy most everything he took back to the museum:

It requires an inexhaustable [sic] amount of time and patience not only to buy from Indians, but to find out what they are in possession of... It is here where—if I may be allowed to say so myself—I have my strong point. I get everything that these people yet have... [The boxes I am sending] are all from the Huichol Indians. When these boxes arrive in New York, you will have

an entirely complete collection from a barbarous people... Of course, every specimen I have sent and will send has to be bought. An Indian does not give anything gratuitously. (letter to Morris K. Jessup, Feb. 21, 1896, quoted in LaFarge 2012:229;233)

The idea of a Mexican, much less a foreigner, arriving in the sierra to buy anything other than livestock was probably completely unheard of at that time. It must have been baffling to the Wixaritari that a stranger would arrive to buy mule-loads of quotidian objects. Perhaps these early encounters were what led to Huichol artesanías as they are known today, leaving some Wixaritari pondering whether there might be more buyers where Lumholtz came from.

Though he was not a professional anthropologist, Lumholtz created an impressive amount of scholarly material for future researchers and the general public. Publications geared towards scholars such as *Symbolism of the Huichol Indians* (1900) and the more popular *Unknown Mexico* (1902) helped his fame in the U.S. and his home country Norway. His travels had also been reported by Scribner's Magazine, often reprinted in newspapers around the country, making his exploits well known before they even finished. His fame earned him a one-hour audience with Mexican president Porfirio Díaz (Lumholtz 1902, 1:viii) and led to later expeditions in Asia funded by the King and Queen of Norway, among others. An obituary referred to him as a "discoverer" (Solberg, quoted in Zingg 1938:xiv). Perhaps that title was due to his penchant for naming flora and fauna after himself (e.g., *dendrolagus lumholtzi*, *pinus lumholtzi*), but it also grants him an aura of Colombian proportions.

Though exact records do not exist in the AMNH Anthropology Division, it seems that some of his Wixárika collection was displayed in the museum for a while during the early-20<sup>th</sup> century and perhaps later. "I brought back all the ethnological material necessary for representing in the Museum an arrow-maker, as well as a shaman playing a drum" (Lumholtz in

an expedition report, AMNH 1898-37).<sup>302</sup> He also took photographs and measurements of specific Wixárika people, supplementing that documentation with facial molds. The methods gave literal meaning to ethnography as people were literally graphed and reproduced in life-like museum dioramas, using the clothes and artifacts collected *in situ* to lend vestimentary realism to the frozen, reproduced bodies playing a silent drum and never quite finishing an arrow.

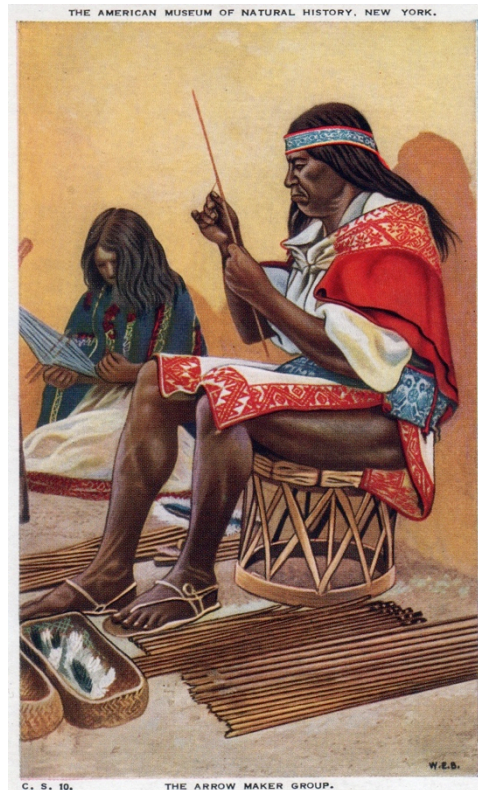


Figure 84. “The Arrow Maker Group” postcard from the American Museum of Natural History. The 1-cent postage suggestion on the reverse side means that the card was produced before 1917.

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<sup>302</sup> Little is known about the extent to which the Lumholtz collection was exhibited to the public at AMNH. However, in addition to Lumholtz’s assumptions about the exhibition of his collection, my research at AMNH revealed a handwritten note amongst the Lumholtz papers that alludes to mannequins dressed in Wixárika clothes collected by Lumholtz. These mannequins were found in storage in the 1960s, dismantled, and their clothes and objects were returned to the Lumholtz collection. While it does not give us much detail about the exhibition of Wixárika artifacts, it does suggest they *were* exhibited, perhaps long after Lumholtz himself was around to see them.

*Robert Mowry Zingg (1900–1957), anthropologist, comprador, merchant*

Robert Zingg was the first professionally trained anthropologist to live with the Wixaritari. He graduated from the well-known anthropology program at the University of Chicago at a time when cultural anthropologists were still comfortable calling themselves scientists, as Zingg did. Of modest family background himself, a wealthy second cousin, Annie Pfeiffer, financially backed his graduate studies. He had the misfortune of earning his PhD during the Great Depression, a time when anthropology jobs were scarce even for graduates of the Chicago program (Furst 2010). Thus, upon completing his PhD, he pulled the necessary academic and social strings to put together a Wixárika “expedition.”

Zingg’s time in Mexico (1933–1934) was funded by the University of Chicago, the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the same well-to-do family members who supported him during graduate school. Of the spoils, the university came out on the short end. The entire ethnographic collection was deposited at the Laboratory in Santa Fe and the very title of the research, displayed prominently on his later publication of the results, was given to his family sponsors: the “Mr. and Mrs. Henry Pfeiffer Expedition for Huichol Ethnography.”

Zingg decided to shift away from the northern Wixárika regions already visited by Lumholtz and German ethnographer Konrad Theodor Preuss.<sup>303</sup> He took up residence in Tutsipa, on the southeastern side of Wixárika territory. At that time, he estimated there were around 4,000 Wixaritari in all and perhaps 400 in Tutsipa, a number that must have included all nearby *ranchos*. Zingg’s fieldwork period was an interesting time in the history of the locality as it was in the process of shifting from being a temporary place for Wixárika civil authorities to conduct business to a permanent “Mexican village” (Zingg 1938:8). Zingg’s research approach further

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<sup>303</sup> I am skipping some of the chronology to focus primarily on ethnographers whose work appeared in English and/or Spanish.

embraced modern ethnographic practices, living primarily in Tutsipa and visiting nearby ranchos for intensive *in situ* studies with a relatively small number of informants. He maintained, apparently, the practice of conducting fieldwork while armed.

Biding his time and making social contacts, Zingg strove to ingratiate himself and distinguish himself from other outsiders intending to “locate mines or steal tribal lands” (xxi). To make his utility apparent, he opened a store where he sold goods such as sugar, coffee, and beads at-cost. Surprisingly, his store was located in a *xiriki*, a family shrine usually only occupied by ancestor-deities and ritual paraphernalia (Powell 2010). Though *xirikite* are often used to this day to house visitors—and Lumholtz also slept in them—housing what was essentially a convenience store in a *xiriki* is bizarre by today’s standards. Such a thing would probably never happen now, revealing a shifting commensurability of cosmos with commerce.

Eventually, Zingg was able to “flatter, bribe, and cajole” people into serving as his cultural informants (xxi). Though he used old-fashioned pen and paper to take down myths recounted to him, he also used relatively high technology for the time. His films are the first made in the Wixárika communities and show numerous rituals and social events, including early documentation of popular Mexican music being performed and enjoyed by the Wixaritari. Unfortunately, he did not record audio, but he did carry a phonograph into the mountains and played music for his friends and acquaintances (133). He noted the Wixaritari of Tutsipa particularly enjoyed “collegiate music” with many “rah rahs,” and Southern religious folksong, though he never explained exactly why he even bothered to haul such audio equipment into the sierra.<sup>304</sup> Perhaps it aided his endeavor to gain confidence with the locals: “Men, women, and children would sit for hours listening to [the music] in high spirits... For a whole year those records never failed to cause a laugh, though everyone had heard them dozens of times” (397–

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<sup>304</sup> It seems the phonograph did not have a recording capability.



398). Eventually, his efforts led him to state, “how simple are primitive people and how easy to handle when one knows how and has won them over as completely as the community of Tuxpan was mine at last” (lviii). Some braggadocio is understandable for any ethnographer after a trying period of exclusion, but his word choices in publication also reveal the way he conceptualized his relationship to his “informants.” The vocabulary reveals intertwined feelings of ownership and control, also referring to his host community as “my Huicholitos,” the Spanish diminutive still considered a gray area between affection and racism depending on the context.

By the time Zingg arrived, Mestizo vendors commonly visited the Wixárika communities during ceremonies to sell their wares. Therefore, Zingg was not the first *comerciante* to sell Western goods in Tutsipa (although selling them at-cost likely encouraged more sales than usual). His effects in the region beyond serving as a merchant were probably larger than even he realized. Again, like Lumholtz, he was almost certainly the first *comprador* in the region. The realization, by the Wixaritari, that someone might want to buy large quantities of their bead- or yarn-covered offerings and other ritual implements should not be underestimated. In fact, Zingg actually commissioned some of the collection that made its way back to the Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe (Furst 2010). In that way, anthropology was, in effect, serving as a proto-patron for the development of artesanías. But beyond being patrons only of tangible objects, Zingg and his sponsors were showing people the value of intangible “culture” itself. In this case, Zingg’s main informant, Juan Real, was a paid consultant, receiving an unknown amount for his hours regaling Zingg with the (hi)stories of the Wixaritari, almost as though he were on salary.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> I do not mean to say Zingg should *not* have paid his informant, but simply point out that the interaction revealed a new sort of economic value for objectified “culture” and cultural practices that were previously not understood as labor or something to be remunerated.

Like Lumholtz, Zingg collected some human remains, but by that era there was clearly less emphasis on that approach in anthropology. It was, in fact, more of an afterthought, almost a habit of anthropologists that Zingg probably felt he *should* do, even if he personally did not intend any such biological research. As he explained it, he once observed the burial of a recently deceased person in the cemetery (*campo santo*). The area was apparently so densely populated with previous, unmarked graves that other bones were removed to make room for the new occupant. Zingg kept two skulls from that day, and they likely remain in Santa Fe.

Compared to Lumholtz, Zingg's long-term presence in the sierra led him to a greater degree of community participation and integration. He calls informants by first and last name, sometimes giving family information about them that is helpful for historical and genealogical research to this day. He apparently participated in a number of ceremonies, contributing food and liquor as would be appropriate for any participant (Furst 2010:27). His sponsors later reimbursed him for the expenses, however, suggesting it was not a personal sacrifice as it was for the Wixaritari. Nevertheless, his research hinged on such community participation no matter how pragmatic. His main informant, Juan Real, only agreed to contribute after Zingg sponsored a trip to Mexico City for the *tatuwani* (governor) of Tutsipa (Furst 2010). The community participation left a psychological impression upon Zingg that he might not have experienced with old-fashioned survey-type ethnography. In his publications he outright bemoans the "logical limit" of "civilization" (Zing 1938:384) and, although he always saw the "primitive Huichol" as a polar opposite of civilization, he claimed that given the choice at birth he would have chosen to be born Wixárika.

One cannot ignore Zingg's reaction to his concept of "civilization" and its "diametrical opposite" that he finds in the "primitive Huichols." After all, he was writing soon after the

depression and with the backdrop of a recent resurgence in Primitivism in Western elite art (e.g., the work of Gauguin and Picasso). Not surprisingly, then, he sums up his book of nearly 1,000 pages with the subtitle *Primitive Artists* (1938). To Zingg it was “in art that the Huichols as primitive artists approach the primitive pole of mystic participation” (xlili). His tautology doubly impresses the concept of primitiveness but linked it to “art,” though the Wixaritari would not have used that word to describe their quotidian production. Zingg, in his main publication on the Wixaritari, imbued almost everyone with artistic and shamanistic qualities. “Every adult is an artist,” he claimed, and “every man is a shaman of sorts” (383). He also pointed out “the Huichols were deliberately chosen for this study because it was clear from Lumholtz that Huichol art is one of the world’s most significant primitive arts” (573). This interest in “primitiveness” extended even in the Wixárika relation to other indigenous peoples, referring to the Wixaritari as “the Aztecs’ country cousins” (574), as though they were the hillbillies of Mesoamerica.

Zingg seemed to embrace popularization, even bringing a group of Tarahumara people to perform at a Sun Bowl football game in Texas (Campbell 2001:viii). When it came to the Wixaritari, though, his main scholarly product had little effect during his lifetime. His massive ethnographic tome based on his time in Tutsipa mostly disappeared when the ship carrying it from the printer in Germany sank to the bottom of the Atlantic (Furst 2010). The incident left only thirty surviving advance copies plus a limited reprint in 1977, long after Zingg’s passing. Thus, his book was relatively ineffective in popularizing Huichol arts and culture during his lifetime. His archived papers, though, have been mined in recent years, leading to the publication of *Huichol Mythology* (Zingg 2004). Similarly, his ethnographic collection continues to pay dividends for the Laboratory of Anthropology, now part of the Museum of Indian Arts and

Culture in Santa Fe. Zingg's collection there was brought out of storage for a one-culture-and-one-man show beginning in 2010, extended due to popularity through 2012. The exhibition also led to myriad commodity sales, primarily the exhibit book, but also related books on the Huichols, Huichol posters, CDs, Huichol magnets, shirts with yarn painting images, and anything else that caught the consumer's eye in the museum gift shop.<sup>306</sup> Throughout the exhibit, Zingg was venerated front-and-center, not hidden behind the objects. His photo loomed, literally larger than life, next to museumgoers. The exhibit book claimed he "vaccinated hundreds in the [Wixárika] community against smallpox" (Powell 2010:5). Oddly, Zingg himself admitted that the batch had spoiled on the trip from Bolaños and was entirely ineffective, but we look for our heroes where we can find them, and perhaps create them when needed.



Figure 85. Robert Zingg's image looms large over us in Santa Fe.

*Henrietta Yurchenco (1916–2007), folklorist and song hunter*

The research trip through the Gran Nayar (including the Wixárika territory) headed by Henrietta Yurchenco was remarkable for a number of reasons. She was the first person to make

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<sup>306</sup> The use of the word *Huichol* was maintained for the show and the book: *Huichol Art and Culture: Balancing the World* (Powell and Grady 2010). As mentioned before, the continued use of the term *Huichol* is primarily for commercial purposes.

audio recordings on behalf of a Mexican institute in almost all of the regions where she traveled. More impressive, especially for the era, was that she led this project as a woman through an area where, even today, some of the most “macho” men are reluctant to travel for fear of its rugged remoteness and trumped up stories of “indigos bravos” (fierce Indians).

Her path to such adventures was unexpected, being raised in a family of Ellis Island immigrants who, by her assessment, were poor and of radical politics (Yurchenco 2003). Her dedication to music and the arts, rather than ethnography, is what opened doors for her. She studied piano in her teens, eventually taking classes at the Yale School of Music, but developed stage fright that led her away from performance. Still wanting to dedicate herself to music, she jumped at the opportunity to host a radio show in New York City after moving there from New Haven with her then-husband. The radio show, “Adventures in Music,” aired on WNYC, an initiative of mayor LaGuardia (27). She played any type of “international folk music” she could obtain in the late 1930s and invited musicians to perform live in the studio. Her work as radio show host gave her unparalleled connections to the artistic world of New York, moving deftly through circles of vanguard composers, academics, and musicians of the early folk music revival in Greenwich Village. Through one such connection with the up-and-coming Mexican painter Rufino Tamayo, she and her husband started visiting Mexico. Tamayo had impressed them with tales of indigenous “pagan ceremonies” that existed in his home country, and Yurchenco soon moved to Mexico City (43).

Her impressive network of academics, artists, and professionals led to an offer from the Library of Congress to head a folk music collection trip through Mexico. Gilbert Chase, musicologist at the Library, organized the trip, writing first to Manuel Gamio at the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI), and eventually co-sponsoring Yurchenco’s journey with the

Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP). She entered the “Cora-Huichol” area in 1944 with over 200 pounds of recording equipment and a team that included musicologists, a photographer, and an armed military escort.

The fieldwork process of Yurchenco’s team was a Lumholtzian logistical feat motivated by the prospect of collecting songs and melodies unknown beyond their immediate surroundings, and finding “survivals” of ancient musical practices. Hence, Yurchenco was delighted to observe the *tepu* drum amongst the Wixaritari for its resemblance to the Aztec *huehuetl*, leading her to call it by the Aztec name rather than use the Wixárika term. The salvage ethnography impulse was combined with an explorer impulse, by then a part of American culture itself. As she put it, her “dream to discover unknown lands was coming true” (76). She referred to meeting Wixárika *mara’akate* (shamans) as their “discovery.” The survey approach to collecting, however, precluded much contextualization of the music being recorded and did not allow for the sort of confidence that Tutsipa locals had for Zingg. In Jesús María, one of Yurchenco’s first stops, the Cora locals accused her of “stealing” their music, a suspicion perhaps not far from the mark, though all musicians were apparently paid some amount for their contributions.

Yurchenco’s productions related to Wixárika music were considerably more exoteric than previous researchers, geared towards a general public as much as scholars. Though she did not publish any monographs or articles related to Wixárika music or culture, she did do much for its popularization. Upon returning to Mexico City from her collecting trip, articles were published about her and her work because she was the first person to record in those regions on behalf of a Mexican institution. The recordings were deposited in archives in Mexico and at the Library of Congress, but they were also commercialized for more than one Folkways record label release, still available for purchase through Smithsonian-Folkways (FW04413 [1952]; FW04542 [1975]).

Though the performers were probably paid something for the original recording, there was no further financial relationship in the form of royalties, no matter how small.<sup>307</sup>

One of Yurchenco's Wixárika recording sites, Huilotita, a rancho a few hours east of Tutsipa on foot, still exists almost exactly as it did when Yurchenco visited. A dirt road was created some years ago to reach it but was cut short by destructive rains. One still arrives as Yurchenco did, on foot (or by donkey) to this village without electricity or running water. My visits to Huilotita revealed that no one there remembered Yurchenco's visit, nor did they recognize anyone in the photos. In the nearby village of Tsikatia (Cerritos), though, one elder did recognize his grandmother and a few others in a group photo that includes Yurchenco and her team with the residents of Huilotita in 1944 (Video 21).<sup>308</sup> Although Yurchenco's practices of selling these recordings could be included in what some Wixaritari call the *saqueo* (sacking, stealing) of their culture, through repatriation it has perhaps created, seventy years later, enhanced (or at least repaired) relationships between researchers and a number of families in the Tutsipa region including Huilotita and Cerritos.

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<sup>307</sup> My attempt to investigate whether royalties are owed was briefly entertained and then ignored.

<sup>308</sup> My "repatriation" of Yurchenco's recordings and photos to Huilotita was documented in my fieldwork blog (<http://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/content/dispatch-northern-jalisco---return-huilotita-ethics-documentation>) and by Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz on his indigenous news site PuebloIndigena.com (<http://www.puebloindigena.com/albums/galerias-de-jalisco/bolanos/se-regresan-grabaciones-y-fotografias-antiguas-de-huilotita-bolanos-jalisco.html>). Ukeme's grandfather, Salvador Sánchez González, in Tsikatia, can be seen identifying people in the photos (Video 21).



Figure 86. Yurchenco with a mara'akame in Huilotita in 1944. Photo: Agustín Maya. (Yurchenco 2003:87)<sup>309</sup>

*Mexican “applied” anthropology and the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI)*

While foreign ethnographers constructed a concept of Huicholness for outside audiences, Mexican anthropologists were implementing what could be seen as a much more insidious and direct mechanism for assimilating indigenous people into the Mexican nation and the Western world at large. In a word, this mechanism was the ideology of *indigenismo*. Any understanding of indigeneity and the struggles of indigenous people in Mexico must include an understanding of *indigenismo*, “the revolutionary state’s fifty-year effort to diminish Indians’ cultural differences and assimilate them into the modernizing peasantry” (Liffman 2011:47).

*Indigenismo*’s policies were administered by the federal Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) and its state and regional coordinating centers, all directed by anthropologists. As put by one national director of the INI, “the clear and terminal end that we propose is to accelerate the evolution of the indigenous community in order to integrate it... into the economic, cultural, and

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<sup>309</sup> A photograph of my “repatriation” in the same location appears in the introduction.



political life of Mexico” (Alfonso Caso, quoted in Reed 1972:30).<sup>310</sup> Today, even Mexican anthropologists have done a complete 180-degree turn from this path, stating that indigenismo “should be considered a fundamental part of the diverse forces... that came together in search of the dissolution of the [indigenous] communities as such... indigenismo is not the solution to the problem; it is part of the problem to be faced” (Díaz-Polanco 2009:26).<sup>311</sup> With such antipathy coming from academic anthropologists, combined with constitutional reforms and the rise of the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, the INI was dissolved at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and folded into the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, CDI). Whether the CDI is all that much different from the INI is up for debate, but what is undeniable is the profound cultural effect the INI efforts had (and continue to have) in indigenous communities.

The pioneer of modern indigenismo was Manuel Gamio (1883–1960), also considered the founder of Mexican anthropology (Díaz-Polanco 2009:27). Though a student of Franz Boas, Gamio and his followers never moved much beyond an evolutionary framework for understanding indigenous people and their relationship to Western culture (Horcasitas 2007). Gamio saw the Gran Nayar (which includes the Wixárika territory) as one of eleven indigenous enclaves in Mexico to be assimilated (Liffman 2011). From an early *indigenista* view, diversity was not something to celebrate, but an obstacle to national identity and the integration of indigenous people into “modern civilization” (Díaz-Polanco 2009:27). The belief was not a socially conservative view but a revolutionary one, supported equally by leftist leaders of the time. Vicente Lombardo Toledano, a labor leader and one-time presidential candidate for a

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<sup>310</sup> “El fin claro y terminante que nos proponemos es acelerar la evolución de la comunidad indígena para integrarla... a la vida económica, cultural, y política de México.”

<sup>311</sup> “Debe ser considerado parte fundamental de las diversas fuerzas... que se conjugaron para buscar la disolución de los pueblos como tales... el indigenismo no es la solución a los problemas; es parte de los problemas a encarar.”

socialist party, stated his ideal “to incorporate the Indians, not into the culture... but in the material life of the Mexican nation (Lombardo Toledano 1973[1944]:156–157). That economy and culture were distinct and could be separated was, and continues to be, an unshakeable assumption for many development-minded Mestizos. Lombardo Toledano believed it “necessary also to incorporate indigenous enclaves into the economic life of the country through land, modernization of agriculture, and the organization of the production and sale of popular art objects, for better economic yield”<sup>312</sup> (156). Not surprisingly, then, Huichol artesanías began to be sold in Mexico’s National Museum of Popular Arts and Industries in the mid-1950s (Liffman 2011:50).<sup>313</sup>

The INI was officially founded in 1948, headed by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, a student of both Gamio and Melville Herskovits (Díaz-Polanco 2009; Liffman 2011). Not following his U.S. teacher’s lead, Aguirre Beltrán was against sociocultural pluralism, developing a model for indigenismo that “guided Indian policy throughout Latin America from the 1940s until the neoliberal retrenchment of the 1990s” (Liffman 2011:49). The model, which he proffered well into the late 1970s, was based on accessing and assimilating “the intercultural regions of refuge” (Aguirre Beltrán 1976:27). Such an effort required numerous regional “Centro Coordinadores” (coordinating centers), run by professional applied anthropologists educated in Mexico City. These anthro-administrators were tasked with “the induction of change, not the obligated acceptance,” a sort of soft assimilation, as it were (Aguirre Beltrán 1976:28).

The Centros were not tasked with being the actual economic “development” of their respective regions but rather opening up the region, allowing access to further municipal, state,

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<sup>312</sup> “Es menester también incorporar a los núcleos indígenas en la vida económica del país, mediante [tierra], [modernización de agricultura], [and] la organización de la producción y de la venta de los objetos de arte popular, para su mejor rendimiento económico...”

<sup>313</sup> Museo Nacional de Artes e Industrias Populares

and federal actions. These included four main principals: *vial* (roads and airstrips), *crediticia* (commerce), *sanitaria* (sanitary), and *educativa* (educational) (Aguirre Beltrán 1976:35). At the top of the list, roads and airstrips, were “penetrative breaches destined to break the isolation of the communities, linking them to the governing city” (ibid.).<sup>314</sup> As Aguirre Beltrán himself put it with an unblinking cold calculation...

...in the moment in which the breaches of cultural penetration acquire economic importance and become channels of entrance and exit for products and people—fracturing the self-sufficiency of the region of refuge and its geographic immobility—the Coordinating Centers no longer implement direct action and turn it over to specialized federal and state agencies. These are charged with the expansion, alteration, and maintenance of the old breaches that already fill a defined function in the expansion of the market and in the monetary economy. (Aguirre Beltrán 1976:35)

The strategy sounds almost like a premonition, and he was correct. His prediction has already come to pass with the dissolution of the INI and the continued maintenance of the roads and airstrips by municipalities and state governments, but also, in my experience, by the Wixaritari themselves.<sup>315</sup> Aguirre Beltrán also made it clear that these “breaches” were meant to expand capitalist markets for the West by “fracturing self-sufficiency” and replacing “obsolete” indigenous economies (36).

The INI’s assimilatory project began to play out in the Wixárika communities in the early 1960s with the establishment of the Centro Coordinador Cora-Huichol, led by Salomón Nahmad Sittón. Its work was documented and observed in-the-moment by U.S. researcher Karen Barbara Reed who published *El INI y los Huicholes* (1972), giving fascinating detail into the workings of the INI. The center was originally established in Mezquitic, Jalisco (on the northwest edge of the

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<sup>314</sup> “...brechas de penetración destinadas a romper el aislamiento de las comunidades ligándolas a la ciudad rectora.”

<sup>315</sup> For the arrival of the governor of Jalisco to Makuhekwa (Pueblo Nuevo), the men organized themselves to clear the airstrip so his helicopters would be able to land easily. In San Sebastian, community members charged vehicle owners a one-time tax to improve the dirt road that links them to the rest of the world. These are exceptions, though, to the expected road maintenance that now comes (usually late) from the municipality and state.

sierra) but soon relocated to Tepic, Nayarit (western side of the sierra) for easier access to other metropolitan areas and airports. Sittón was in charge of more than 25 employees, though only he and one other sub-director were anthropologists. Reed stated that the center had only two ethnographies related to the Wixaritari—Lumholtz (1902) and Alfonso Fabila (1959)—but that most of the people at the center had never read them. The center worked on multiple fronts: communication, economy, livestock and agriculture, and education.

The first order of business, communication, was another word for the “breaches” intended by the INI. Though roads were the most important aspect of this approach to “acculturation,” their expense led to the creation first of airstrips for flying in people and goods. At the time of Reed’s study (1967–1968), the runway was being completed in Tateikie, and under construction in San Miguel Huaixtita, Tutsipa, Ocóta de la Sierra, and Guadalupe Ocotán. At the same time only some “intermediary” roads were nearing completion. These “breaches” allowed the Centro to focus on what it considered the most important aspect of its plan: economy.

Economic change was understood to have the most ample ramifications in other areas of life, though the INI claimed they could alter the economy and all other principal areas of assimilation but somehow leave “the culture” unchanged. Though economic work spread into land rights and legal assistance, much of it had to do with the creation of stores in the Wixárika communities. Like Zingg before them, they sold at cost, thinking they would “liberate” indigenous people from Mestizo vendors, yet likely also increasing consumption levels as a result. Transport costs for the goods sold were subsidized, therefore selling below cost. Though Reed did not document the stores’ merchandise, she mentioned that a similar government store

she observed in Michoacán was found to be selling Gerber baby food, Corn Flakes, and Kotex hygiene products.

On the other side of the economic coin, the Centro's offices in Tepic began to sell artesanías from the Wixárika communities to tourists and the people of Tepic.<sup>316</sup> The prices were set by the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City, suggesting they were also being sold there by the 1960s. The process had begun as early as the 1950s, and anthropologist Alfonso Soto Soria has claimed he was the “guilty one” who began to convert ritual offerings into artesanías (MacLean 2012:85). In his initial efforts, he used books by Lumholtz and Zingg as guides for buying. The first commercial yarn paintings were apparently made in Tuxpan, utilizing its new INI airstrip for export.

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<sup>316</sup> Reed mentions they sold beadwork, bags and belts, yarn paintings, embroidered clothing, musical instruments, bows and arrows, reed chairs, and “symbolic feathers” (89).



Figure 87. The government- and anthropologist-induced commodification of Huichol artesanías continues today. “Rediscover Mexico in FONART,” the government-run artesanías store. An advertisement in the Mexico City airport fetishizes the “Huichol” behind the beadwork. The beading is done not through hours of arthritic labor but by magically floating the beads, forming the artesanía out of thin air. Today, exploration and “discovery” occur through curated consumption. Across the hall from this advertisement, the latest anthropological book on “Huichol art” was prominently placed for sale (Neurath 2013) (2014–12–02).

Though Wixárika “culture” was supposedly untouched by the Centro’s work, even livestock and agricultural efforts directly contradicted the claim. Pre-historic beekeeping methods were replaced with Mestizo hives and practices. Maize seeds “of better quality” were distributed to replace (or at least augment) the five types of sacred maize planted by the Wixaritari. Flying a tractor into Tateikie, piece by piece, was meant to encourage the agricultural production of surplus. The logic of tractor farming in the sierra seems limited since most

Wixaritari plant on mountainsides where tractors are entirely useless, and where the planting of seeds by hand is ritualized. Nevertheless, Wixaritari who live on mesas now do use tractors and commonly petition the government for more.

The most obvious attempt at cultural assimilation was the introduction of Western education. Unlike the United States, acculturative education was mostly brought *to* the sierra rather than taking children out of their communities. The INI recognized, however, that bringing Mestizo teachers from outside would be a failure because the “coercion” would be too evident. Instead, the Centro oversaw a brigade of 28 Wixárika educational “promoters” (*promotores*) to instruct in their own communities. Some of the schools built included dormitories (*albergues*) so that children from remote ranchos could attend school in another locality but within their general community. Any ideal of democratized public education for all, however, was undone by poor attendance, often by parents who simply did not want their children to attend school. Reed reported that a school with 56 enrolled had only fourteen students actually attending. Furthermore, the Centro’s efforts to promote “cleanliness” through education were not exactly led by example; a boarding school for 90 students had not one latrine.

Tateikie was chosen as a model for the INI primarily for its topography—a high mesa that would allow for an airstrip—but also for its ceremonial center. The INI’s administrators assumed that visitors coming for ceremonies would be impressed by the development projects and more easily accept the changes in their own locales. Reed concluded that it wouldn’t work because the people in San Andrés were ostensibly the most resistant to change of all the communities, not realizing, perhaps, that the same thing is said of every community, usually by residents of another community.<sup>317</sup> Today, one can see that Tateikie integration into the Western

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<sup>317</sup> Traveling with musicians hired to play in a community other than their own allowed me to hear their perceptions of the communities from an “outside” Wixárika perspective. Almost inevitably, when arriving

world began earlier and with greater force than in other communities. The community is the only one of the main five that has embraced a semblance of ecotourism (spelled “eculturismo,” perhaps a play on culture tourism, not just ecology). The community is also comprised of more Western-educated people, and perhaps with more artesanos and musicians who leave their communities (on the roads planned by anthropologists) in search of work, many never to return. After all, at the same time that the INI was literally making inroads into Wixárika communities, foreign anthropologists were encouraging markets for Huicholness in Mexico and abroad.

*The “golden years” and popularization (Benitez, Furst, Myerhoff)*

At the same time that INI anthropologists were building roads in the sierra, on the other end of those roads the very concept of Huicholness was being further developed for both academic and popular audiences. An efflorescence of publications about Huichol people began in the late 1960s and continued through the 1970s, and much of the ethnographic data collected during those decades has been reread since the 2000s. The fact that these publications struck a chord with the “hippy” countercultural movement—and their attendant interest in hallucinogenic substances like peyote—should not be overlooked. The authors in question often came from that countercultural milieu, at least in their early years, and were simultaneously contributing to it. The result had notable deleterious effects, spurring a wave of New Age seekers and naïve youths into the sierra, sometimes disrupting rituals, or simply foregoing the sierra altogether in search of peyote in the desert as a form of drug tourism that continues to this day. The Huicholista “golden

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in another community for a gig (*tocada*), musicians from a neighboring community would tell me how conservative the people in the host community were, marked by their ostensible tendency to wear Wixárika clothes instead of Western clothes. They usually did not consider that people might be putting on these clothes as “dress clothes” for the event in which the musicians were hired to perform.



years” produced a certain celebrity status for individual subjects of ethnographic work and furthered a market for all things Huichol.

The wave of Huicholista publications during the counterculture period began with *En la Tierra Mágica del Peyote* by Fernando Benítez (1968). The book was an excerpt from a multi-volume work on indigenous people of Mexico, the second volume being devoted solely to the Wixaritari. Benítez, who was more of a journalist than an anthropologist, was apparently the first non-Wixárika person to accompany a pilgrimage to Wirikuta where hikuri is collected. He soon learned, however, that two scholars from the U.S. had also accompanied another pilgrimage and intended to publish about the experience. Benítez rushed his excerpt to press in order to get the jump on his counterparts. One can imagine the reception such a book would have had in 1968 with a title that translates as *In the Magic Land of Peyote*. The “hippy” movement was also strong in Mexico at the time and Benitez spent an entire chapter talking about LSD, clearly linking scholarship and popular culture. The common refrain amongst Huicholeros that peyote is like LSD but “more spiritual,” likely started with Benítez.

In the U.S., Benítez’s counterparts were anthropologists Peter T. Furst and Barbara G. Myerhoff, both UCLA graduates and affiliates. The two had followed a “peyote hunt” in 1966 with Ramón Medina Silva, purportedly making his fifth trip to Wirikuta to complete his training as a mara‘akame. The two filmed and released a documentary of the pilgrimage—*To Find Our Life: The Peyote Hunt of the Huichols of Mexico* (Furst 1969). The experience in the pilgrimage and their work with Ramon Medina Silva, and his wife Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, supported directly or indirectly a number of books, including *Flesh of the Gods* (Furst 1972), *Peyote Hunt: The Sacred Journey of the Huichol Indians* (Myerhoff 1974), *Hallucinogens and Culture* (Furst 1976), plus numerous articles with similar emphases. Though Ramón Medina Silva, the principal

informant for these studies, was killed in 1971, publications about him continued to be produced long afterwards, including *People of the Peyote* (Schaefer and Furst 1996) and *Rock Crystals and Peyote Dreams* (Furst 2006).

Researchers held sway not only in their own academic worlds but also in their research sites and in the popular culture of their homelands. The very presence of researchers, with their unusual and sometimes incessant questions, is sometimes enough to induce change in a research locale or in specific individuals. Peter Furst recounts how his questions about yarn painting influenced their very production.

One day we inquired if [Ramón] had ever considered using the yarn painting to tell a story, making a picture of what he was dictating into [our] tape recorder... Ramón listened intently and looked puzzled. Then he asked how one would do such a thing. We told him that he was the *artist* and how he did it was entirely up to him. A couple of days later he arrived from his rancho with a striking two-dimensional yarn painting... instead of a nice symmetrical arrangement of unrelated motifs, it told a story... a narrative he was just then dictating to us over a period of several days. So that is how Ramón entered the history of Huichol art as the pioneer of a creative tradition that has since graduated, if that is the word, from a “folk” art to one of the “fine” arts. (Furst 2006:17, emphasis added)

Medina Silva was giving his foreign patrons what they wanted, but he was also entering a world of “art” rather than simply making religious offerings or small tourist artesanías. In that way, the shift towards a commercial mode of identity for outside appreciation (and consumption) was again assisted by ethnographers.

At the same time, Huicholness for consumption was gaining popularity in the United States, especially in California. Furst’s documentary, *To Find Our Life* (1969), and Myerhoff’s *Peyote Hunt* (1974) had as much of a New Age and “hippy” audience as they had an academic audience, perhaps even more. In one personal encounter I had with a man from Southern California who was in his twenties when Furst’s film came out, he told me that he had been “into the Huichols” for a long time as a result of a “film by an anthropologist.” In personal conversation with Tom Pinkson (2013), a psychologist and longtime student of Huichol

shamanism, he stated that the works of Furst and Myerhoff were highly influential, spreading in an “underground” way in the 1970s California counterculture in which he was involved. Pinkson said frankly that at that time it was not so much about “culture” or “shamanism” for most people, but the main interest was simply “getting high.” Myerhoff, Furst, and others associated with UCLA at the time also brought Medina Silva to UCLA and other U.S. campuses for presentations. After his death, his wife, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, continued visiting, leading ritual-like workshops in the U.S. and at her home in Nayarit (not in Wixárika territory).

The work of Furst and Myerhoff, it must be noted, occurred with the controversial backdrop of the work of another UCLA graduate, Carlos Castaneda. While Furst and Myerhoff were publishing their academic-oriented work, Castaneda was making a fortune off of his best-selling books ostensibly about a mysterious Yaqui shaman he called Don Juan. His first book, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (1968), also served as his MA thesis and was released to anthropological and popular acclaim. Released soon thereafter were sequels *A Separate Reality* (1971) and *Journey to Ixtlan* (1972), the latter accepted as his PhD dissertation in anthropology at UCLA.

Suspicious began to arise about the veracity of Castaneda’s work, however, as he was unable to prove the existence of Don Juan, and simple ethnographic elements about Yaqui life simply did not match what Castaneda was describing. Eventually, Richard de Mille (1976) and others exposed Castaneda’s work as fiction, albeit well written. That brought the matter to a close for some, though Castaneda continued to publish and became even more controversial later in life.<sup>318</sup> However, between his first book in 1968 and his exposure as a fraud in 1976, his books were generally accepted as anthropological fact and were read together with the works of Furst

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<sup>318</sup> After mostly withdrawing from public life in the 1970s, Castaneda went on to lead a cult-like group of followers.

and Myerhoff, among others. The fact that Castaneda wrote about the ritual use of peyote (not a Yaqui practice but a Wixárika one) likely did much to further popularize Huicholness. Into this mix came the English translation of Benítez, *In the Magic Land of Peyote* (1975). In Furst's introduction to the translation, he admitted the influence of these publications and the deleterious effects they were having in the Sierra Wixárika:

Indeed, the mere trickle of visitors of former decades has at times threatened to turn into a flood—not always, one fears, to the benefit of the Indians... there has been a veritable pilgrimage to Huichol-land of alienated middle-class romantics, who, though ignorant of the meaning of 'being Huichol,' come in search of gurus comparable to Carlos Castaneda's don Juan and of instant religious revelation via the peyote trip... we [anthropologists] must plead guilty at the very least to having helped inspire with our published work the minor plague of would-be mystics that have of late imposed themselves on the Huicholes and other Indians. (Furst 1975:xvii–xviii)

The deleterious effects in “Huichol-land” caused by the popularity of Huicholness abroad did not keep anthropologists from publishing further on the topic. Indeed, most of Furst's publications with the words *hallucinogens* and *peyote* in the titles came after the above admission. He was also involved with—as were Myerhoff and Phil C. Weigand—in the book *Art of the Huichol Indians* (Berrin 1978), the exhibit book for a traveling museum exhibition. At the very least, this situation questions the agency (or lack thereof) of academic ethnographers who must weigh the effects of their work against their own world of “publish or perish.” Skepticism grew, though, in an academy entering an age of critical theory, with the most virulent charge being led by self-proclaimed “hybrid anthropologist” Jay Courtney Fikes.

Fikes impugned the very intentions of Furst and Myerhoff, labeling it “academic opportunism” and charging, along with Mexico-based American anthropologist Weigand, that they had gone so far as to “fabricate” Medina Silva as a shaman (Fikes 1993). He further charged that Furst and Myerhoff were acting as publicists to make Medina Silva into a “psychedelic celebrity,” a living version of Castaneda's fictional don Juan, while creating a caricature of Wixárika culture (78). There is plenty of criticism to go around. While Furst and Myerhoff

presented a rather singular notion of Huicholness through one informant with little or no integration into an orthodox Wixárika ceremonial center (*tukipa*), Fikes continued to refer to the “Chapalagana Huichols” as if such a thing really existed outside the imaginations of anthropologists. He shares that tendency with Furst, referring to people not by the names they use for themselves but by foreign words given to nearby geological features for colonial maps. Not once have I ever heard a Wixárika person use anything like the phrase “Chapalagana Huichol.” Often, Wixaritari do not even know the word *Chapalagana*, referring instead to the river in the Wixárika language. Even then, however, they do not associate any particular identity with the river, seeing it instead as “the river that divides us” (i.e., that divides the particular communities with which people are more likely to identify).

### **Considering the Huicholeros**

Before continuing with the chronology of Huicholistas, it is useful to consider the rise of the Huicholeros for their role in the commodification and consumption of Huicholness. The previous section treated Huicholistas (academics) and Huicholeros (“fans” and aficionados) as though it were a simple matter to distinguish between them. While career pursuits and level of romanticization of Wixárika people usually makes the distinction easy enough, exceptions do exist. In addition to aficionados of Huichol artesanías or those who participate in expensive “Huichol shamanism” retreats led by non-indigenous Americans, some people also bridge the worlds of academia and shamanism, or academic work and direct popularization.

Huicholistas did not create the Huicholeros, though they did and do encourage them, as Furst admitted. The interest in indigenous pharmacopoeia has existed for almost as long as the contact between Indigenous Mexicans and Spanish colonizers. Even as early as 1620, the

Spanish Inquisition found it necessary to address the “diabolical herb or root” peyote, issuing an edict outlawing its use for prophecy and judging crimes, denying its ability to induce hallucinations and insinuating that it was not only indigenous people to whom they were issuing their warning (Leonard 1942). Clearly, there might have been Huicholeros without Huicholistas, but the explosion of Huicholeros in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and the ability to conceptualize Huicholness without ever meeting a Wixárika person is most directly connected to the ethnographic production of the Huicholistas.

Not all of the Huicholista “trickle-down” is within their control. For example, scholars like Furst cannot control that their books are sold on Erowid.com, a website dedicated to information about recreational drug use. One can say, though, that book content and titles that emphasize peyote over, say, corn or deer hunting, or anything else that could equally characterize the Wixaritari, does encourage such connections. Similarly, during the countercultural heyday, Barbara Myerhoff was lecturing at Esalen, a New Age retreat of sorts on the California coast, alongside Timothy Leary and others, thus blurring the lines between scholarship and popularization.

Such lines, if they ever existed at all, are further blurred by those who intentionally straddle both worlds; they studied and continue to serve as scholars to varying degrees but also directly further the commercialization of Wixárika artesanías. One example is Susana Valadez who came to study Huichol arts through her early countercultural interests in “ethnobotany,” code at the time for peyote. As a graduate of UCLA, she arrived in Tateikie in the 1970s to study yarn painting and weaving at a time when the INI was pursuing its idea of “development” in that locale. She eventually left academic pursuits, married a Wixárika artist, and started the Huichol Cultural Center as a form of culturally-relevant development. While Valadez occasionally

publishes still, more of her work now consists of marketing and selling Huichol artesanías in Mexico and in foreign markets.

Another example is the work of Hope MacLean Smith, a student of Furst. Though she earned her PhD in anthropology, her first book was not geared towards an academic audience but to art collectors in the market for Huichol yarn paintings. The book *Yarn Paintings of the Huichol* (2005) guides the reader in how to evaluate, purchase, and conserve yarn paintings. Apparently self-published, the book is advertised on her personal website with the statement “If you have visited Mexico... seen the Huichol yarn paintings... Now learn the story behind the stunning yarn paintings of the Huichol” (<http://www.hopemaclean.com/index.htm>, accessed Feb 9, 2014). In this case, she directly engages the tourist and art markets but with an air of anthropological authority.

Huicholeros differ in practice, but perhaps not in naïveté. As most Huicholistas know, once their subject of study is revealed to a Huicholero acquaintance, they will be regaled with stories about trips to Wirikuta to “hang out with the shamans” and, of course, eat peyote in the desert. These might be called the earthy Huicholeros, ostensibly less commercial or superficial compared to Huicholeros who embrace Huicholness through consumption abroad but rarely or never travel to Mexico, and certainly never to Wixárika territory. A subset of the earthy Huicholeros could be called the Semana Santa Huicholeros, those who use Easter vacation time to leave their metropolitan homes and head to Tateikie where they match or possibly outnumber the regular population.

Despite better judgment, I traveled with some Wixárika CUNorte students to Tateikie for Semana Santa 2013.<sup>319</sup> I went primarily to interview Huicholeros about how they ended up there. Though few revealed a direct interest as a result of reading anthropological work, many admitted

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<sup>319</sup> I call it “Semana Santa 2013” because it does have a sort of “hippy” Spring Break feel to it.

to being recreational drug users that decided they needed to take a more “spiritual” turn. One, a UCLA professor (but not an anthropologist), suggested to me in the middle of the night and in a very clearly altered state that I should try the peyote: “vale la pena” (it’s worth the grief) he muttered to me as he staggered away into the darkness. Others brought massive quantities of *dispensas* (giveaways of clothing, food, and other objects) in what one young woman said was essentially their entrance fee; that they (the outsiders) bring “everything the Huichols need to do their ceremonies.” To her, that meant candles and foodstuffs, not sacrificial sheep or bulls. Most Tateikie residents were ambivalent to this *teiwari* (non-indigenous) invasion. The visitors were seen as an opportunity to sell artesanías and snacks, and some young men joked about going to secretly listen in on the “*santa chingadera*” (loosely: holy fuck fest) going on in the *teiwari* tents at night, despite sexual relations being ritually prohibited during Semana Santa.<sup>320</sup>

To be fair, the Semana Santa Huicholeros do at least see Huicholness as rooted in specific places and people, which they themselves visit in order to experience it in their own way. Such cannot be said of many Huicholeros in the U.S. and abroad. Indeed, in the U.S, Huicholness is often effectively disconnected from living, known Wixárika people and self-bestowed upon “shamans” of non-indigenous heritage. Though the phenomenon is analyzed in greater depth in the subsequent chapter, it bears consideration when thinking about the formation of identity as an intangible commodity. In that way, one can observe the unintended yet direct linkages between Huicholistas and Huicholeros.

During the initial wave of Furst, Myerhoff, and Castaneda publications, early New Age figure Prem Das traveled to Mexico to find Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, the widow of Ramón

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<sup>320</sup> Alejandra Aguilar Rios (2012) has pointed out that not all outsiders in Tateikie’s Semana Santa are gawking onlookers. In fact, many have been incorporated at least nominally through their participation as *danzantes* (Aztec-revival dancers). Still, the romanticization of Huichol people and the promise of peyote, if even in small quantities, must not be discounted in the desire to participate as a *danzante*.



Medina Silva (Furst and Myerhoff's main informant). He soon was introduced to José Matsuwa Rios, Guadalupe's adoptive father. "Don José deeply impressed me on first sight... He was the exact image of Carlos Castaneda's don Juan..." (Das 1976:129). Despite the fact that there never was a literal image of the fictional don Juan, Prem Das went on to describe Matsuwa Rios as a very small, even diminutive man, yet with "nobility," in an almost Victorian throwback to the "noble savage." One sees the virtue supposedly born of ignorance of modern scientific facts as Prem Das described to Matsuwa Rios that the world was round, etc. Prem Das decided to call him simply "Don José Matsuwa," conveniently similar to Castaneda's imagined "Don Juan Matus," and the connection was not lost on later seekers.<sup>321</sup>

Soon after, similarly influenced by Castaneda, Brant Secunda headed to Mexico in search of a Huichol teacher. In an interview with "Conscious Media Network," he stated that, "I wound up in the town of Ixtlan, which has now been made famous by the don Juan books written by Carlos Castaneda" (<http://youtu.be/paBomgY2LYc>, accessed Feb 12, 2014).<sup>322</sup> As Secunda tells it, after some help from a Wixárika INI teacher, he wandered into the sierra in search of Huichols. He became exhausted, passed out, and was "found" by a group of Huichols who had been advised by Don José to search for Secunda after having a dream about him. As one article about Secunda put it, he "hadn't found Castaneda's Don Juan, but he had found someone just as good (and, arguably, more factual)."<sup>323</sup> In Secunda's business website, shamanism.com, he says that Matsuwa left a "message" before he died in which he told Secunda "I leave you in my place." His website title suggests in one-word sentences that we should "Explore. Learn. Discover.," and

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<sup>321</sup> The Spanish title "don" is similar to "mister" or "sir," but is used as a sign of respect for an accomplished, important man ("doña" in the case of a woman). The title is usually used in regard to someone's wealth, education, or community influence. In the absence of those qualities, impoverished elders are sometimes called "don" merely as a sign of respect.

<sup>322</sup> Castaneda's Ixtlan was a metaphorical place, a "sorcerer's" spiritual home. Of the many Ixtlan's in Mexico, Secunda seems to be speaking of Ixtlan del Rio, Nayarit, far to the south of Wixárika territory.

<sup>323</sup> <http://www.metroactive.com/papers/cruz/03.20.97/hometown-9712.html>, accessed Feb 12, 2014.

characterizes the “Huichol” people as living life “much as [they have been] for thousands of years,” without water or electricity. One can easily imagine Wixárika youths reading Secunda’s website in English from any number of internet connections in the sierra, or on their smartphones, and wondering what he means when he says the Wixaritari were once known as a “Nation of Shamans.”<sup>324</sup>

In addition to numerous international workshops that apparently provide the main income for Secunda’s Dance of the Deer Foundation, he has also published a self-help fitness book entitled *Fit Soul, Fit Body* (Secunda and Allen 2008), the cover of which lists him simply as a “Huichol Shaman and Healer.” As an ostensible charity operation, he and his foundation also sell Shaman Chocolates. A YouTube interview about the operation sums up the concept: “If you love chocolate and want to eat an organic, great tasting bar, plus keep a whole tribal culture alive, buy some chocolate from Shaman Chocolates!” (<http://youtu.be/paBomgY2LYc>, accessed Feb 12, 2014). An anonymous host of the interview explains that “the Huichol are thought to be the last remaining pre-Columbian indigenous tribe,” and that the non-indigenous Secunda is “*the* keeper of the tradition.”<sup>325</sup>

In a similar example, Eliot Cowan often leads healing workshops in the Catskill Mountains in full Wixárika garb at his Blue Deer Center. Similar to Secunda, the Blue Deer Center’s website tells us in one-word sentences to “Retreat. Discover. Heal.” ([www.bluedeer.org](http://www.bluedeer.org)). The site tells us Cowan is a “fully initiated shaman in the Huichol Indian tradition.” An article on the Indian Country Today website simply describes him as a “Huichol

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<sup>324</sup> A few Wixárika activists now use the term *nación* (nation) for political affect. In my experience, though, even Wixárika law students find the idea of a *nación wixárika* literally laughable.

<sup>325</sup> My requests via email to interview Secunda about the use of music in his retreats were ignored, but I was added to his promotional email list.

shaman.”<sup>326</sup> Bluedeer.org also invokes José Matsuwa on its entry page: “The teachings are for all, not just for the Indians.” Cowan studied with Guadalupe González Rios and, in a story now archetypal, Cowan’s biography states that upon the “retirement” of “Don Guadalupe,” Cowan was “ritually recognized” as a “guide to shamanic apprentices in the Huichol tradition... an unprecedented honor for a person of our [Western] culture” (<http://www.bluedeer.org/teachers/eliot-cowan>, accessed Feb 11, 2014). In addition to his workshops, Cowan has also published a book about his own trademarked “shamans’ way with plants” called *Plant Spirit Medicine* (Cowan 1995).

Prem Das, Brant Secunda, and Eliot Cowan are not the only people representing (and selling) Huicholness through their own practices, though they have achieved more fame than others in doing so. Those in Native American studies are painfully familiar with this pattern that appears in many variations, not only in relation to Huicholness. Lisa Aldred (2000), put the contradiction succinctly, “...as products of the very consumer culture they seek to escape, these New Agers pursue spiritual meaning and cultural identification through acts of purchase” (329). But they are not just (or primarily) purchasing tangible objects such as artesanías. Instead, many Huicholero consumers associate themselves with an idea or concept of Huicholness, not by seeking out or visiting Wixárika people, but through a non-indigenous intermediary who actualizes Huicholness as an essence or virtual object in their own practices.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2009/10/14/blue-deer-center-home-ancestral-traditions-and-teachings-83566>, accessed Feb 11, 2014.

<sup>327</sup> The Huicholero phenomenon in the U.S. is ethnographic evidence of what historian Philip J. Deloria has said in *Playing Indian* (1998), especially regarding the “certification archetype” of apprenticeships with elder Indians (170–71) allowing followers to embrace “Indianness, not Indians” (90).

## Contemporary Huicholista Work

*The 1990s & 2000s: Jáuregui, Chamorro, Luna, De la Mora, Liffman*

While writing about today's living Huicholistas is necessarily less biographical—they have not yet written memoirs or left their notes and papers to archives—the products of their work and how they differ from previous eras can be studied. As mentioned above, U.S.-based Huicholistas in the 1990s and 2000s generally tended to generate new works from ethnographic data already decades old. In Mexico, however, a renaissance of Wixárika studies was taking place, already mentioned in the literature review of the introduction. Important to recall here from a previous chapter is the work of Jesús Jáuregui and Arturo Chamorro to connect popular *música regional* played by Wixaritari with the revival (or invention) of “traditional mariachi,” itself now linked to the UNESCO declaration of mariachi as intangible cultural heritage.

The infusion of state funding through concepts of cultural patrimony also influenced the discographic production of Wixárika music. For example, Xilonen Luna Ruiz, who earned her *licenciatura* (bachelor's) in anthropology with a thesis on *xaweri* and *kanari* and now works for the CDI, produced a state-sponsored commercial release of the archival audio recordings of Carl Lumholtz. These “relics,” as Iturriaga (2010) called them, are controlled by the American Museum of Natural History, housed at Indiana University, and were subsequently released by the CDI (the restructured INI). The case shows that the work of the ethnographer can retain or gain value long after their own lives.

Two other state-sponsored releases were produced by Rodrigo de la Mora, an anthropologist who wrote his masters thesis and doctoral dissertation on Wixárika music. These recordings perhaps represent a move away from thinking of ethnographic recordings going straight to audio archives, instead moving directly to popular release. The fact that the CD was a

“popular release,” however, might lead one to conclude that they are widely available and, thus, safeguarded for generations (just like in an archive). Such is not the case, though, as a result of Mexico’s inefficient distribution networks and general unavailability of such goods. In fact, I found it much easier to request and receive digital copies of most archival recordings for this research than it was to find the commercial and state-sponsored releases. There seems to be, then, a general move away from archiving audio generated through ethnographic research, despite the potential risks of non-preservation and lesser long-term availability.

Perhaps the most important and timely Huicholista work in recent decades is that done by Paul Liffman, an anthropology graduate of the University of Chicago, but of a much different stripe than his U of C predecessor, Zingg. Liffman, who is on faculty at the Colegio de Michoacán, has focused on issues of territory at a time when Wixárika sacred sites are under renewed threat. In addition to being one of the few Huicholistas to speak the language fluently, he served for a time in the non-governmental Jalisco Association to Aid Indigenous Groups (AJAGI). Though publishing books and articles like any other scholar, his work refuses to romanticize peyote ritual and portrays the Wixaritari not as living time capsules but as fully modern members of the Mexican state with deeply legitimate political claims and contributions. In this way, he seems to be the exception to the scholarship-to-popularization circuit.

*Nolan Warden (1979—?), ethnomusicologist, musician, patroncito*

Like many Huicholistas before him, Nolan Warden’s path to studying Wixárika culture was unexpected but indicative of the era in which he worked. Like Yurchenco whose path began with music, Warden’s original interests lay in percussion. Like Lumholtz, it could probably be said that he was running from what he saw as a restrictive, and “white” worldview when he left

his music conservatory studies to take up “hand percussion,” code in those days for “non-Western” percussion or “world music.” His musical explorations led him to discover people and places about which he was previously ignorant, and these musical explorations eventually led him to marry into a Mexican immigrant family.

During visits to in-laws in western Mexico, Warden became aware of the Wixaritari. Until then, his upbringing would not have presaged an interest in indigenous culture. Despite being born in a state called Indiana, Native American culture was not heavily present. According to early diary entries, Warden’s childhood knowledge of “Indian” culture was imaginative play at best, attending historical reenactment festivals such as Feast of the Hunter’s Moon, but dressing as a French trader rather than Miami Indian. His successes in Boy Scouts led to initiation into Order of the Arrow, a classic American modernistic “playing” of Indianness (Deloria 1998). Around the same time, Warden set an early life goal to live “in a primitive way” for an extended amount of time.<sup>328</sup> Whether or not he achieved that goal according to his own standards is unknown, though such things are relative. What is clear is that he did often go long periods in the sierra with little to eat, and more than once had to sleep under the stars with only a sleeping bag. As his field notes ironically point out, the only time in his life when he had done such a thing before was during initiation into Order of the Arrow. Thus, playing as a “fake Indian” was the only thing in his upbringing that prepared him to live with “real Indians.”

At first glance, Warden’s research funding was less about wealthy patrons convinced in-person—a la Lumholtz and Zingg—and more about endless assessment by anonymous grant committees. His fieldwork journal entries reveal large unexplained gaps of time when he was writing additional grant or fellowship applications. On closer analysis, he and others during his time can also be said to have had individual patrons of sorts. In Warden’s case, he was able to

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<sup>328</sup> “Primitivism and progress defined the dialectic of the modern...” (Deloria 1998:100).

live comfortably with his family in Mexico as a result of his wife's savings that cushioned their time between grant payments, and generous donations from in-laws that included living rent-free in their house and fulltime use of a four-wheel-drive SUV. Along with an apparent rise in the bureaucratization of funding since the days of early Huicholistas, one also notes the increasingly personalized nature of funding fieldwork. Like previous researchers, his relative grant-based wealth compared to most of his Wixárika and Mestizo companions allowed him to hire at least five Mestizo research assistants, at least one long-term Wixárika research assistant, and two additional assistants (one based in Suriname, the other in Los Angeles) who did the work of putting his manuscript transcriptions into notation software.

Warden's fieldwork methods were not entirely unlike earlier Huicholistas, often only distinguished by degree of technological advances. Unlike Yurchenco's 200 pounds of recording equipment, Warden carried a relatively light bag that included a digital SLR camera, hand-held digital audio recording equipment, a high-definition digital video camera, and portable solar panels to recharge batteries while in the field. Usually, he left the full bag in the SUV in favor of carrying only the necessary devices in a Wixárika *kítsiuri* (shoulder bag). The use of the *kítsiuri*, in addition to Huichol beaded bracelets linked his fashion choices to both the Huicholistas and Huicholeros. Both Zingg and Yurchenco had used *kítsiurite* while in the field. His fieldwork photos reveal that one of his favorite shirts at the time had epaulets, suggesting that past semi-militarized expeditionary dress had become mundane fashion by his day.

Like previous researchers, he carried a notebook but its entries reveal that many of his notes were originally taken on a cellular phone and later transcribed to the notebook. Given the time and the technological proclivities of young Wixaritari by that decade, Warden took notes on his phone to give the appearance he was "texting" rather than writing field notes, thereby better

fitting into his social surroundings. Though technology for fieldwork had advanced, the ability and need to do fieldwork while armed decreased. The era was not any safer than before, but criminals had become so well armed as to make defense impossible with a mere rifle or pistol. Not yet being a Mexican citizen during the fieldwork period, Warden could not even legally carry a gun when invited on ritual hunting trips. But he was still wary of attending ceremonies with his wife and daughter where drunkenness was ritually encouraged, and took to concealing pepper spray during such events. The fact that he *was* attending rituals with his family, though, speaks to the dramatic changes in Huicholista practices during the century preceding his work. On the other hand, Huicholeros also sometimes took their families to the sierra, and in that way participant observation may have been just another form of “playing Indian” (Deloria 1998:93).

Beneficial to Warden’s work and other contemporary researchers were the “breaches” created by INI anthropologists for assimilatory purposes. Specifically, the roads, no matter how terrible, made it logistically feasible to visit and work in multiple communities. The vast majority of Warden’s work, and his usefulness to some Wixaritari, was predicated on his vehicle, a four-wheel-drive 1998 Ford Explorer. “The Explorer” served not only as his means of transportation but also as his home in the sierra.<sup>329</sup> Such dependable transportation made him more useful to his Wixárika contacts as much of his fieldwork was done while he was serving as a driver (*chofer*) for musicians traveling to performances or families on pilgrimages to sacred sites. The very name of Warden’s vehicle—Explorer—said much about the changes over the course of the preceding century. The idea of exploration in the style of Lumholtz was no longer the domain of actual explorer-ethnographers but had become a romanticized ideal of modern suburban American life. Warden and his contemporaries did not need to *be* explorers so much as *own* one.

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<sup>329</sup> As earlier researchers found, few people in the sierra had extra space for visitors. Thus, the SUV’s rear seats, folded downwards, created a bed and allowed the vehicle to serve as a mobile home of sorts.



Ethical considerations in fieldwork had become much more central by Warden's time. Or, put another way, the notion of what was ethical had changed. At least one of his grants stipulated that he design a community service project to give back to the communities in which he worked. For that reason, Warden conducted a good amount of repatriation of archival documents and recordings to their source communities. Similarly, he worked with the Museo Wixárika in Mezquitic, Jalisco to compile documents and recordings from other international archives in order to create a collection in Mexico of otherwise unavailable historic recordings. His experiences in this endeavor also revealed the continued influence of colonial thinking associated with archives and ethnographic collections, with at least one European archive refusing to allow him to return copies of their archival recordings to source communities or the Museo Wixárika. "Repatriation is our business," they said in an email to him.

Warden encountered certain expectations about his work that reveal much about the economic purpose of research in his era. In conversations about his work with non-academics in Mexico, they assumed that the purpose was to *comercializar* (commercialize/commodify) Wixárika music or perhaps to use it as source inspiration from which to compose his own music. In the academic community, the expectations were not much different for Warden's work, with the expectation, like those who came before him, to publish articles and preferably a book or two on his Wixárika research. He kept an email from the Society for Ethnomusicology email list that stated a dissertation was "goldmine." He was advised that a book "had to be done," and it should be on his dissertation topic. The assumption that the research was to *comercializar* was not far from the mark.

Warden claimed to be influenced by Shawn Wilson's work but paid little direct attention to his own relationships with "the cosmos" and "the environment." His journal notes reveal he

once intended to cite Hikuri as one would an author, but it did not appear in his dissertation. Similarly, his intense dreams in the thin air of the high sierra occupied his thoughts during fieldwork, and he noted how Wixárika friends interpreted his dreams in ways he did not expect due to important cultural dissimilarities. He even dreamed his anthropological ancestors giving him dissertation advice, but in general his outlook on “the cosmos” went unrevealed.

Regarding his relationship with the environment, Warden seemed more concerned in thought than in practice, and even had major oversights regarding his own environmental practices. Warden noted in his journal how Wixárika friends, despite having the image of being “in touch with nature,” would not think twice to throw an empty soda or beer can out the window of the SUV as they drove through the sierra. He neglected to apply the same criticism to himself. He noted that his largest budgetary expense was gasoline, but it never occurred to him that the littered soda cans paled in comparison to the many metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>e) his driving and flying caused over the course of his fieldwork.

### **Convergence: Comparing the Huicholistas & Huicholeros**

As seen above, distinctions between the Huicholistas and Huicholeros are not always clear. On a surface level the two are often indistinguishable, with tendencies to wear Wixárika *kítsiurite* (shoulder bags) and beaded bracelets. Analyzing their consumption patterns might show distinctions only by product category: Huicholeros likely buy more artesanías and fewer books, Huicholistas the reverse. Even their personal reasons for seeking out Wixárika people are sometimes similar; commonalities include an early discontent with the “ills of modern civilization” or a search for pre-capitalist spirituality and ritual. Even in terms of commodity production, the preeminent Huicholistas and Huicholeros are identical: they lecture and give

workshops, they publish books and CDs, they often have students, and they further their careers at least partly through Huicholness, sometimes while working at “centers.”

Perhaps more fundamentally, though, Huicholistas and Huicholeros have a commonality in that they were raised in capitalist society and are mostly unable to extricate themselves from it. As a “structuring structure,” capitalism permeates the actions of both from the outset, sometimes unnoticeably by those involved. What follows, then, is a brief comparative vignette of two events that highlight these similarities that structure Huicholero and Huicholista interactions with—and assumptions about—the Wixaritari. The events show surprisingly similar mediations of Wixárika/Huichol identity.

#### *A Huichol music video*

The first vignette is the production of a music video by the group Innovación Sierreña (Video 39). The video was shot by Rick Goodwin, a California native somewhat known in the Huichol music scene for helping groups make studio recordings and music videos. Goodwin learned of “the Huicholes” (as he usually calls them) through a tourist book for off-the-beaten-path types of adventures, and through vacation trips to Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, a tourist destination on the Pacific Ocean with a large presence of Huichol artesanías. On a journey to Colotlán, Goodwin agreed to shoot a video for Innovación Sierreña, a group fresh off their first video hit “Mandilón/La Leona.” On September 22, 2013, three hours later than our planned departure time, we all piled into my Ford Explorer to head to the main set location: the San Pedro Waterfall, twenty minutes west of Colotlán. We were entering the dry season but there was enough water in the waterfall to make it an ideal backdrop for the love song crooning of Paly, the young lead singer. Such videos are almost always shot outdoors in a “natural,” verdant

setting, with the musicians normally in Wixárika clothes. Goodwin had no compunction about framing the music group for the shots. After all, the group had invited him after having already planned their storyboard for the video. They chose the location but Goodwin, having more experience in music video production, gave them direction for each shot, suggesting hand motions of the singers and the placement of musicians in the frame. Goodwin does not think of himself as a *patrón* (patron/sponsor), though he donates his time for the video shoot and editing, not charging the groups anything. Instead, he prefers to think of himself as an “activist,” lending a hand to make the world around him a better place.



**Figure 88.** Rick Goodwin shoots a video with *Innovación Sierraña*.

#### *A Huichol ethnographic video*

Almost a year prior to the above event, on December 10, 2012, I accompanied two undergraduate anthropology students from CUNorte on an assignment for their ethnographic methods course. Coco and Pancho (their actual nicknames) were the two students tasked with

doing an interview.<sup>330</sup> Coco, a teacher from nearby Villa Guerrero, had a previous interest in “los Huicholes” as a result of her employment as a teacher in a region with many migrant Wixárika families. Therefore, she was also taking a class on Wixárika language in order to have some vocabulary to use with her younger students, many of them having arrived from the sierra with their families speaking little or no Spanish. Coco decided to do her ethnography project on “Huichol music,” and we had already done one interview and performance session with Grupo Alucinantes de la Sierra. During the first interview, Coco realized that *música regional* was not the only music of the Wixaritari, and that they had their own “traditional” music with different instruments. Assuming that she should have been studying the “traditional” music, we all agreed to do another interview and “documentary” performance. On the day of the interview, a location had not yet been chosen, though it was clear that Maximino did not want it to appear as though they were in the city. Pancho, an enthusiast of visual anthropology who Coco had invited to help with the recording, suggested a well known picnic place twenty minutes west of town: the San Pedro Waterfall.

Conducting true participant observation as an ethnographer observing ethnographers, I loaned my equipment and helped with the audio recordings. I reluctantly helped Coco “correct” her interview questions at her request. The entire music group and their family went with us, all dressed in full Wixárika clothing for the photos, though only two of them played and sang in the recordings. Coco, for her part, did well but made what might be considered “undergrad” mistakes. She conducted the interview on-camera with the musicians, lobbing them questions like a television reporter. Though the anthropology students learned more about their Indigenous “neighbors,” and the musicians received video and audio recordings they could use for self-

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<sup>330</sup> I do not give the students’ full names because this section is somewhat of a critique and not intended towards them personally, but at ethnographic assumptions in general.

promotion, the idea of “documentation” was nonetheless an idealized presentation negotiated by Wixaritari and their non-indigenous collaborators (Video 12).



**Figure 89. Coco and Pancho shoot video with Grupo Alucinantes de la Sierra.**

In both cases above, the participants on both sides of the lens felt that they “had” to do what they were doing, or that it was at least in their best interests. In the case of the Wixárika musicians, the musician intended to promote their careers. For those doing the video recording, the purposes were to make the world a better place, “document culture,” and better understand people of different cultural backgrounds and musical practices. Though we might critique the assumptions and methods of inexperienced anthropology students, from a standpoint of commodity production, professional ethnographers would have been less naïve at the outset but likely more successful at turning their research into commodities. While students only “have to do” the research as a class exercise and subsequently provide the products to the musicians as a token of gratitude, professionals “have to do” the research in order to publish. From what some

Wixaritari tell me, many advanced researchers never return any documents to the communities that were the subjects of the research, even though doing so could be considered a basic form of professional ethical reciprocity at this point, not to mention simple courtesy.<sup>331</sup> It should also be considered that from the ideals of de-colonized methodologies (Smith 1999) and indigenized research (Wilson 2008), the Huicholero approach was perhaps more ethically sound because it was work done at the behest of the Wixaritari, meeting their own needs and desires with the help of the person behind the lens, not the other way around.

## Conclusion

The Huicholista and Huicholero experiences are obviously not central to the Wixárika world. To the extent, however, that they commoditize and consume an idea of Huicholness that then has the potential to affect actual Wixaritari, they are influential and important to consider in almost any study of Wixárika life. Over more than a century of Huicholista work outlined here, we can observe a shift of certain practices previously considered the realm of exploration-ethnography into popular culture. Indeed, “exploring” and “discovering” have become almost mundane, suburban practices of driving SUVs and attending spiritual retreats. The old-school anthropology of creating ethnographic collections for museums now has its popularized analog in the consumptive practices of tourists buying artesanías for their homes, armed with knowledge about how to evaluate the object thanks to guides written by academically trained scholars.

Because Huicholista and Huicholero practices are often inextricable and so similar, either side could be the subject of Philip J. Deloria’s critique when he said that “Indianness—even when

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<sup>331</sup> After asking permission at a community assembly in San Andrés Cohamiata to conduct my research, the hundreds of *comuneros* (official community members) seemed generally pleased that I had even asked permission. They expressed concern, however, because despite the fact that countless books and research projects had been written about that very community, “no one” had ever returned to an assembly to present the findings (and hardcopies) of their research.

imagined as something essential—could be captured and marketed as a text, largely divorced from Indian oversight and questions of authorship” (Deloria 1998:169–70).

The literature on “decolonizing methodologies” and creating “Indigenous research” paradigms is helpful in that regard, but it seems the majority of researchers have been disinterested in pursuing projects that take the needs of the Wixaritari as the first question in research design. Researchers are probably even more reluctant to place themselves under “Indian oversight” in research design and implementation, though such things are increasingly common and required in the U.S. as some Indian nations now exercise veto authority over research. Going forward, the same mechanisms designed for assimilatory policies in the Wixárika communities might hopefully be utilized more consciously by researchers and their Wixárika interlocutors to establish not only longitudinal studies but also longitudinal relationships for the wholesome benefit of both parties.



### (Interchapter) A Tale of Two Tukite

An intense July storm rolled in after dark last night, lightening creeping towards us from behind the mountain ridge east of Mezquitic, the cool, electrified clouds closing in until we were deluged. We had just arrived from Tuutu Makawe, a rancho near Pueblo Nuevo, community of Santa Catarina, and home of Jorge and Armando, students at CUNorte.<sup>332</sup> I was serving as chauffer again, but not in the usual capacity of transporting musicians to a performance. In this case, Armando had invited me to drive him, his father, his uncles, and a couple of friends from Pueblo Nuevo during their ritual deer hunt in early preparation for the Tatei Neixa ceremony.

Our place of accommodation—the Casa Wixárika—was an unusual dormitory (*albergue*) for indigenous school students in the town of Mezquitic. Unlike the long, barracks-like rooms of most CDI-sponsored dormitories, this one was made for two students per small room, though each room was also its own structure with a circular footprint meant to emulate old-fashioned Wixárika houses. The dorm was normally used by Wixárika students who came from the sierra to study at the local campus of the National Pedagogic University (UPN), but it was unoccupied when we arrived for our summer hunting trip.

Central to this government-funded dormitory is what resembles a *tuki* (temple or ceremonial house). Like the true *tukite* of the Wixárika communities, the circular construction is covered by a grass thatch roof and has only a single door-less entryway facing east towards the rising sun.<sup>333</sup> Unlike its sister *tukite* in the sierra whose oval footprints are built up with earthen tones of mud and irregularly-shaped stones, the walls of the *tuki* at the Casa Wixárika are uniform, gray industrial cinderblock. The structure isn't intended, though, for much ceremonial use, certainly not by the students who live there during the school year. Primarily, the *tuki* serves

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<sup>332</sup> Jorge and Armando are mentioned in the introduction.

<sup>333</sup> The word *tukite* can be (and is) used as a plural for *tuki*, though some Wixárika speakers feel there is no acceptable way to pluralize the word *tuki*.

as a place of temporary accommodation for groups like ours on ritual hunting trips or in peregrination to Wirikuta, evidence of the financial support provided to Wixárika communities by the municipality for ritual purposes.

All of the individual rooms in this dormitory complex have a circular footprint, meant to evoke the construction of some Wixárika houses from a bygone era. In fact, the brothers on this hunting trip, ranging from around forty to sixty years old, grew up in a one-room circular stone house, a house whose stones were later used as foundation for the newer rectangular adobe houses with corrugated tin roofs. Despite the Casa's nod towards historic construction, the local and state governments that financed and oversaw its construction opted for steel-supported brick roofs on the dorm rooms rather than the grass thatch of circular structures in the sierra. The uniqueness of the hybrid architecture seemed, to me, to be undone by boring uniformity through the use of industrial materials. In the early morning, before the hunting party left, I stood in the cinderblock tuki, examining it and finding it rather ugly, when Armando entered. "This tuki is badass, huh?" he said with a smile. Maybe my preference for the tukite in the sierra was a bourgeois predisposition for difference-making through labor-intensive design and construction (Garcia Canclini 2002; Lash and Lury 2007). I saw a cheap aping of what are usually entirely handmade Wixárika structures. A Wixárika perspective saw decreased maintenance needs through precision construction and uniform materials.

Still fasting, the brothers had head off into the damp morning brush for their first day of hunting, the earth under their huaraches and boots still wet from the night's storm. As a semi-participant in the hunt, I would follow the group into the scrubland on some days, but not the first day as I hadn't been fasting with them in preparation. It was a type of preparation that I should have anticipated, self-sacrifice being central to achieving much of anything in Wixárika

life and ritual. As Lumholtz put it more a century ago, “no man gets sustenance from the gods without effort, without ceremonies and fasting, personal sacrifice and labor” (1902, 2:49).

I stayed behind to guard what the hunting party left at the Casa Wixárika. The sun had not yet risen, and I briefly explored the premises left unoccupied by students on summer break. The almost random placement of rooms around the tuki did give the place a rancho-like family feel, with the exception of a cinderblock wall around the perimeter. Each dorm room had built-in concrete desks, lit by a single, bare incandescent bulb hanging from its own electrical wire from the center of the circular vaulted ceiling. One men’s dorm room had the corners of magazine pages left behind, just enough to reveal that they were from something akin to a swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated. One concrete desk had what appeared to be gang graffiti scrawled on its side. These future teachers were coming of age in a world vastly different from that of their grandparents.

I found a discarded bed frame and used it as a ladder to ascend to the roof of one of the circular dorm rooms. Surveying and photographing from the higher vantage, the Casa Wixárika’s purpose and relevance became clearer through its juxtaposition to the grounds of the Museo Wixárika, a new museum to the immediate west meant to showcase Wixárika life and culture. Like the Casa, the Museo was also a local- and state-funded complex meant to architecturally evoke a Wixárika ceremonial center, though with much more money spent on its construction. Like the Casa, the Museo also had as its central architectural feature a building meant to resemble a tuki, though it was far larger than any ceremonial tuki in the sierra. The similarities between these two tukite—the Casa and the Museo—exist only at a superficial level. Their names reveal opposite intentions: one is meant to house Wixaritari, the other to represent them.

Though both are “Wixárika” in appearance, they encapsulate the divergent nature of participatory and presentational modes of indigeneity in western Mexico.



Figure 90. Sunrise over the Casa Wixárika (foreground) and the Museo Wixárika (middle ground) in Mezquitic, Jalisco. The eastern edge of the Sierra Madre Occidental, home to the Wixárika communities, rises in the background.

The Museo Wixárika is in many ways the zenith of presentational Wixárikaness, based primarily on ethnographic work but intended for a non-academic audience. Contributions to its conceptualization and execution on the part of the Wixaritari were limited mostly to providing the objects that would be displayed in the exhibit rooms. The impressive tuki building serves as the largest exhibit hall, displaying aspects of the annual ritual cycle. Surrounding the tuki in a perfect circle are the other exhibit halls, each a freestanding rectangular structure, all of which are connected by a covered, circular walkway. The complex is intentionally reminiscent of a *tukipa* (ceremonial center) with a tuki at its western edge facing a group of *xirikite* (shrines) for individual deities. Unlike the relatively cheap cinderblock construction of the Casa Wixárika, the Museo is an expensive, labor-intensive hybrid construction of large, milled pine beams sustaining walls of fine adobe bricks. The roofs are covered with grass thatch, but really serve to put a traditional face on the functional wooden roofs hidden underneath.

The museum's registry testifies to tourists from around the world, though at most times the place is empty except for a few workers and occasional government functions and school fieldtrips. The exhibit rooms' track lighting is usually turned off, and perhaps most importantly, the fine wood floors have no hearth in which to stoke Tatewarí, Grandfather Fire. During my first visits to the museum, there were no Wixárika employees, and thus the only Wixárika people "present" in any form were those in the larger-than-life photographs hanging on the walls behind the exhibits. These photographs had a certain phantasmagoric presence, printed not on photographic paper but on translucent corrugated plastic sheets meant to give them a "3D" look, reminiscent of the three-dimensional representations of P'urhépecha people in museum exhibits documented by Ruth Hellier-Tinoco (2011). In my estimation, the translucence didn't look exceptionally three-dimensional but served as a reminder that the photographs' semi-transparent subjects were evoked but not really present.

Most questionable, in terms of representational accuracy, was the museum's gallery on Wixárika economy. The exhibit concerned itself primarily, almost exclusively, with what might be called the historical horticultural economy of farming, hunting, fishing, and livestock. Absent from the economy gallery were artesanías (housed in a separate gallery), music, wage labor, and professional employment. Their absence was surprising since those four practices combined could eventually surpass horticulture as the primary economic sustenance for the Wixaritari. As such, presentational Wixárikaness seems to be more valuable—certainly more presentable—when it has an idealized, historicized form presented as current. The presentation idealizes not the world of the Wixárika students at the Casa next door, but that of their grandparents (and even that in an idealized form). And yet, exceptions that contradict these historicized presentations are often right in front of us, even in the museum itself.

From my photographic perch atop one of the dorm rooms, I noticed Magdaleno getting ready to leave the Casa Wixárika and head to work next door at the museum. Magdaleno was the Casa's only permanent resident. He was also the museum's new hire, though it would be more accurate to say he was the municipal government's new hire to work at the museum. Like many jobs, those at the museum turned over when the government changed political parties after an election. Out with the old appointees installed by the prior party, in with your campaign supporters. Unlike previous workers at the museum, though, Magdaleno is actually Wixárika, a relief since prior directors and guides were mestizos often incapable of pronouncing or remembering Wixárika words for objects on display. "Off to work?," I called down to Magdaleno from the roof, camera in hand. "Off to work," he affirmed, adjusting his gelled hair and finely embroidered Wixárika outfit, barely resembling the Magdaleno I met earlier in athletic wear. Similar to his place of employment, he embodied a fine, clean-cut and cleaned-up projection of Wixárikaness for contemplation by others.

He headed out the front gate of the Casa grounds and walked a short jaunt west to the entrance gate of the museum. The aromatic Sunday morning air on the edge of Mezquitic was still cool and damp from the night's storm. From farther down the valley, towards the center of town, came the sounds of Spanish-language Christian pop music on an impressive PA system. The source of the church music was at least a mile distant but it filled the valley and reached the Casa Wixárika as though it were only a hundred yards away. Soft rock and "easy listening" songs proclaimed the "Lord of Lords" for all within earshot, listening willingly or otherwise, and the songs likely became the Christian soundtrack of the hunting party as they continued with their "pagan" activities in the Mezquitic foothills.

The view of the countryside from atop the dorm room roof reminded me of the countryside of the Southwest U.S. In particular, Santa Fe came to mind, a place where many Huichol artesanías produced here in the municipality of Mezquitic are sold to tourists and collectors. One Santa Fe gallery in particular, the Xanadu gallery, specializes in “Huichol” artesanías, its ample square footage full of massive yarn paintings and beaded statuettes. I remembered the beaded Huichol masks at Xanadu that had an unusual shape and an uncharacteristically muted color palette; dark hues and even iridescent beads took the place of bright primary colors more common in Huichol artesanías. I inquired about the unusual shapes and palettes of the masks. “Oh, we get the wooden masks from Bali,” the proprietors told me, “and then we ship them down to Mexico to have the Huichols bead them.” “Did they choose those colors?,” I wondered. “No, that’s just something that the interior designers here in Santa Fe like.” “How much are you asking for those José Benitez yarn paintings?,” I further interrogated. “Those aren’t for sale, they’re just part of our collection that’s on display.”

Commerce and collecting meet in Xanadu. Collecting, as museums do, and commerce, as befits a store, coexist in this large “gallery” with a decidedly orientalist name. Though it could be said that commerce and collecting were always intermingled—the items in the Lumholtz and Zingg collections were all purchased in the field—this mixture is of a newer nature. The commerce here is not the purchasing of objects that already existed as votive or quotidian objects, but as globalized commercial objects from their inception, intended for a global market. The objects are often conceptualized by non-Wixaritari, and Wixaritari make none of the materials, but Huicholness is still central to their aura and value even though Wixárika people become merely bead-applying laborers in the equation. Other Huichol works are set apart at

Xanadu as “display-only,” though nothing really marks which are museum-like displays and which are for sale, bringing a museum-like aspect to a store intended for commerce.

The Casa Wixárika, the Museo Wixárika, and Xanadu represent three realms of Wixárika-Huichol identity, a continuum of participatory, presentational, and commercial modes, respectively. But they do not operate entirely independently of one another except perhaps at the extreme ends of the continuum. The Museo Wixárika depends on a source material, a participatory Wixárikaness from which to craft a presentational mode of Wixárika identity, a process which often involves Wixaritari themselves, especially those with Western educations who can serve as cultural interlocutors. Selling Huicholness at Xanadu depends upon Wixárika laborers, but equally or more so it relies on non-Wixárika authors and museum exhibits (like Zingg’s collection down the road from Xanadu in Santa Fe) to provide valuable “backstory” for the Huicholness being sold. Presentational and commercial modes also sometimes come full circle when Wixaritari happen to visit the Museo Wixárika or point to the worldwide popularity of artesanías and Huichol popular music to prove the value of Wixárika “customs.”

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Armando returned to the Casa Wixárika in the early afternoon after getting separated from the rest of the hunting party. He turned on his cell phone to listen to music: a few homemade recordings of Tatei Neixa from the tukipa of Keuruwitia, then all Spanish-language pop, including some banda, but mostly singers like superstar Shakira and rocker Julieta Venegas. “Si tu quieres andar conmigo-o, oh-oh-oh.” His father and uncles returned a short while later, tired and hungry, and without a deer. They carried small branches with them to ritually feed the fire, Tatewarí, circling counterclockwise as they placed the branches on him. They began warming water for coffee in a plastic Coke bottle placed near the fire. One of the brothers had



shot a rabbit on the way back to the Casa Wixárika, and they went to work on skinning and roasting the creature on a stick.

Our food situation was more dire than anticipated. Armando had forgotten a pan for cooking and there was certainly no refrigerator to preserve anything, though the latter was normal for most of the brothers whose houses were off the electrical grid. The rabbit didn't go far between the eight of us, leaving only dehydrated tortillas of blue maize sent by the wives of the hunters, a few cans of tuna, and some mayonnaise. "This is how we would suffer in the sierra if we didn't have Mezquitic. Nothing but blue maize tostadas," Armando explained about the food situation, being a bit pessimistic about the Wixárika people's potential for autonomous sustenance despite centuries of evidence to the contrary.

On the third day of hungry hunting, deep in the rain-soaked hills near Minillas, Mezquitic, we got lucky. Lorenzo, who was not one of the brothers but was apparently brought in as a young "ringer" to assure a successful hunt, snagged a doe with a hit in the hindquarters. We wasted no time in literally bagging her up so as not to attract flies or stain the back of the SUV. Bagging also provided some cover from the snooping eyes of authorities since deer hunting and a vehicle full of men with rifles might have seemed suspicious in a region known as a source for drug trafficking. For that reason, the group had official letters from their community and old laminated letters from the now-defunct INI explaining their officially sanctioned "custom" of hunting for ritual purposes. Official approvals like these, however, were not always respected by the sometimes overzealous and ignorant municipal police, so we kept everything as covert as possible.



Figure 91. Maxa, bagged.

We returned to the Casa Wixárika to pick up our things, stopped at a grocery store to stock up on food and celebratory tequila, and then we were off on the three-hours of dirt road back to the brothers' sierra rancho, Tuutu Makawe. On these long road trips, I often handed over my car-stereo-connected iPod to my passengers to see what they might choose. Despite a wide range of musical genres, my Wixárika travel companions always gravitated to Huichol music groups. I did away with the formality this time and went straight to the song "Hiripa" by Huichol Musical, an original sung in Wixárika to a slow cumbia rhythm. The song describes a hunting party in the hills returning to their homes hungry but successful. I thought the song might generate some interesting ethnographic comments from my travel companions. No one really seemed to care. We journeyed on, drinking, dozing, and stinking after days without bathing.

The women of the rancho were waiting for us upon our return, the ceremonial fire still burning as it had been since our departure days ago. Armando had notified them of our pending return while we were still in Mezquitic, calling his sister in Pueblo Nuevo, one of the only places

nearby the rancho that gets cell phone signal, and then depending on the square meter in which you stand. Armando's father, the eldest brother, wrapped the deer around his back and carried it to the ceremonial patio (*takwá*) in front of the rancho's xiriki, placing it to the west of the xiriki and fire, feet towards the fire, head pointing south. The extended family went straight to the task of ceremony, this time without singing or the aid of a mara'akame as in the night before our departure.

The hunters placed their rifles under the legs of the deer. The small ritual gourd bowls (*xukurite*) containing the local ancestor-deity stones were brought out, along with offerings for the deer. Armando, a law student at CUNorte, put his copy of the Mexican constitution at the head of the deer. His mother offered the dead doe a sip of Coca-Cola from a bottle cap. Elements like the constitution and Coca-Cola were conveniently not mentioned in the didactics at the Museo Wixárika, but they demonstrate the dynamic, personal touches of ritual. Armando pulled out his cell phone and snapped a photo of the beautiful setup of ritual paraphernalia. I did the same right behind him. Rhythmic, performative weeping began by some present as Lorenzo, who shot the deer, gave thanks for the sacrifice, wiping away tears from his face.



Figure 92. Armando's mother offers the doe a capful of Coca-Cola.

The ritual space was taken down almost as fast as it was put up, and the brothers began butchering the doe on the north side of the xiriki, racing the setting sun. Lorenzo stood by and watched, listening to music on his cell phone: a bit of xaweri, then mostly Huichol Musical and Hermanos Carrillo. Each man went to work on his own task, the same brother who skillfully skinned the rabbit now skinned and gutted the deer, taking precaution not to spill any blood, keeping it in the body cavity so that the women could collect it for later offerings. Armando's father began preparing the tail, one of the most important ritual elements of the deer's body. He left for a moment to sharpen his knife and the other men, busy with their own tasks, didn't notice one of the sly ranch dogs sneak up and eat the deer tail. Accusations ensued once everyone realized what had happened, each blaming the other for the loss of such an important object.

The quick, skillful butchering continued with numerous family members observing, including all the children of the rancho who helped whenever possible. As the shadows of sunset

covered us, everyone gasped when it became obvious that the female deer had been carrying two fetuses in late gestation. Armando gently cut open the semi-transparent amniotic sac on a nearby stone and two limp fetuses rolled out. The sight saddened all present, especially the women who spoke to the fetuses in a mournful baby talk. The tails were taken nevertheless, almost as a consolation for the larger one digesting in the stomach of the dog who had been tied to a nearby pole.

Thoughts about the fragility of the deer population came to (my) mind as we stood there transfixed by the site of the lifeless fetuses. As the Wixárika population in the sierra continued to grow, the number of deer in the sierra had dropped almost to zero, necessitating a ban on hunting there. Hunting took place in the foothills and valleys of Mezquitic because it couldn't occur anywhere else. But it had to occur somewhere. Every major Wixárika ritual is preceded by a hunt, and to be unsuccessful in the hunt precludes the ritual. Ours was a bad season to hunt, or at least to take a female, but not to do so might have been even worse, disappointing many more people than were involved in the hunt itself. It would disappoint the extended family that, without a deer, would be unable to perform the Tatei Neixa ceremony in October. Without Tatei Neixa, the children would essentially remain uninitiated into Wixárika society and the harvest would be ritually unclean for consumption, inviting illness to the family and community. Today's pressure on the deer population partly as a result of the ritual hunting practices of a growing Wixárika population threatens to undermine the viability of Wixárika ritual practices, but not to continue the ritual practices likewise undermines Wixárika life.

We ate at twilight. It was not just communal eating but communal feeding. The women of the rancho all participated by presenting their cooking to everyone else present. Everyone ate a little of everything, and the hunters ate the most, not just because they were hungry but because

ritualized feeding demonstrates appreciation and they were therefore given more to eat. Armando's father, the eldest hunter, began to thank those present in a very formalized, presentational voice. Slowly, the presentational speech morphed into a performed conversation and from there into regular conversation, though the presentational speaking never negated a fully participatory presence on the part of the orators. The switch to a presentational mode of speech was both a way to participate and simultaneously acknowledge the participation of others. In this sense, a presentational mode of being Wixárika does not necessarily preclude a legitimate participatory Wixárika identity. After all, Wixárika ritual is always a type of presentation, though primarily for the ancestors and other participants rather than outsiders.

I walked back to the SUV that night to convert the back seats into a bed for some much-needed rest, thinking about social theory, modes of identity, and cultural sustainability. My mind shot back to the Casa Wixárika when I descended from the roof of the circular dorm room after taking photos of the two tukite. I reached the ground and passed through a thicket of tall grass and plants that had grown up in the rainy season. The greenery, seen from the distant vantage point of the roof, had seemed verdant, lush, whole, even idyllic. But passing through them at ground level resulted in a sonic flickering swoosh of a hundred grasshoppers pattering away from me, evidence of a multi-year plague. Upon closer inspection, the leaves were shot through with holes, edges compromised and desiccating, their prognosis questionable. Like many things, their prognosis, their integrity, their coherence, indeed their very identity, depended upon the closeness and manner of observation. And yet despite the assault on their very being, their existence, they persevered and continued to grow, even though by growing, by continuing to exist, it seemed they simultaneously assured their own destruction.

### **(Interchapter) Pirating the Intangible: A Counterfeit More Original than the Original**

Huicholness can be disconnected from the Wixaritari themselves and become self-referential. In that way, as a virtual object, it can also be pirated. To move towards that point, this interchapter covers the piracy of another virtual object, the identity of a music group itself.

I first met the members of Huichol Musical in late 2012 and soon became a regular at their performances in and around the sierra. In June 2013, I secured interviews with the two main singers and “faces” of the group, Samuel “El Brujo” (The Witch) López and Domingo “Mitsu” (Cat) López. I was anxious to interview them at that time because rumors were circulating in the sierra that the group was nearing the end of its contract with Latin Power Music and might split up or simply cease to exist.

I first met with El Brujo who confirmed the rumors. In an interview about his upbringing and career, he announced to me that the other members of Huichol Musical would be leaving and that he would be taking charge of the group. To my surprise, Huichol Musical’s other front man, Domingo López, stated to me in an interview the following day that *he* would continue with the record label as Huichol Musical and El Brujo was actually the one who was leaving.



Figure 93. El Brujo’s Bugs Bunny moment in the video “Que Feo se Siente” presaged his future relationship to the record label Latin Power Music, that of the trickster.

In the ensuing months, El Brujo mounted an impressive campaign to become Huichol Musical despite no longer being affiliated with the record label. He reunited with one of the

original members of the group, Victor Manuel “Karutsa” Carrillo, a charismatic violin player who had left the group after their first international tour. The two members cherry picked some of the best Wixárika musicians from around the region, splitting up other groups when their members jumped at the chance to sign up for what they thought was the official Huichol Musical. El Brujo and his business manager had the new members sign contracts under the name Huichol Musical and began the process of getting passports and visas for the new members.<sup>334</sup>

El Brujo’s group began touring in Mexico in a van with impressive graphics promoting a “2013 Tour,” far better looking than any transportation the official group had used before. They performed for a number of major events with audiences of impressive sizes, duped like most of the band members into thinking they were witnessing the official Huichol Musical. After all, El Brujo was leading the group, the musicians dressed the part in their indigenous Wixárika clothing, and (importantly) they performed only Huichol Musical repertoire.



Figure 94. El Brujo's van for the “2013 Tour” of the counterfeit Huichol Musical.

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<sup>334</sup> The information here comes from interviews with El Brujo, Domingo López, the former members of El Brujo’s “pirated” group, and El Brujo’s promotional Facebook account.



At the same time, the official Huichol Musical—that is, the group that had a new contract with Latin Power Music—toured sporadically without label support. On one fateful day while driving to Guadalajara after a show in Tepic, Nayarit, the group suffered a catastrophic car accident, leaving its road manager dead and their bass player, Rodolfo “Kwitsi” Robles, hospitalized for many months. The group eventually returned to the stage without Kwitsi, leaving Domingo López, the vocalist, as the only original member from the group’s “Cumbia Cusinela” days. Thus, the Huichol Musical led by El Brujo, at least for a few months, had more original members than the original (or official) Huichol Musical, in a sense making the counterfeit or “pirated” group more original than the original.

Despite having more original members, El Brujo’s group was referred to by some Wixaritari as “Huichol Musical *de pirata*.” But what exactly is being pirated in this case? El Brujo’s group was not dealing primarily in material objects like CDs.<sup>335</sup> After all, Huichol Musical’s fame (in rural Mexico at least) was not advanced through CD sales, but through live performances and unofficial song distribution, as discussed in a previous chapter. Even Huichol Musical’s label, Latin Power Music, would point fans towards iTunes as the main form of official distribution. Hence, the things being traded (and “pirated”) were not primarily tangible.

Clearly, what El Brujo was thought to be pirating was the group Huichol Musical itself, a group whose identity encapsulates an essence, a feeling and history intentionally constructed and projected for a (music) market. That group identity encapsulates a few primary intangible things that El Brujo was obliged to follow in order for his piracy to be successful. First, he traded to a good degree on his own fame, benefiting from the record label’s high degree of personal promotion they did for him, and his own musical prowess and stage antics that earned him favor

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<sup>335</sup> Although, as mentioned in a previous chapter, El Brujo was already known to self-pirate by selling his own pirated copies of his discs at Huichol Musical performances.

amongst many fans. Also of great importance for El Brujo's group is the adherence to the Huichol Musical repertoire. After all, what is a popular music group if not the readily identifiable performers of a carefully chosen and crafted repertoire?

Another intangible that El Brujo's Huichol Musical traded on was the indigeneity of its musician members, confirmed for audiences by the occasional use of the Wixárika language and the routine use of Wixárika clothes onstage. The focus on indigeneity and ethnicity is so strong that in many ways it trumps the individual identities of the musicians. For example, the frequently changing lineup of the record label's Huichol Musical—after El Brujo left—led them to begin a Facebook campaign to introduce new members by name and instrument. While some fans responded with encouragement and personal greetings to the new members, others could not have cared less about the individual musicians. In a response to a post introducing the violin player Jorge “Mantaraya” Carrillo, one fan unabashedly commented, “what does it matter what his name is? What matters is that they carry high the traditions of Mexico and that they feel proud to have Indian blood.”

El Brujo had learned the hard way about the importance of identity for claims to ethnic authenticity and capitalizing upon it. His professional identity on Facebook, which through international touring had garnered thousands of followers, was deleted by the record label after he left the group, taking him from online star to nonexistent overnight. He quickly began his own Facebook account, managing it promotionally in a way similar to the record label, being successful enough in promoting his group's shows that the record label eventually had to announce that El Brujo was no longer a member of the group, seemingly as a way to alert the public that El Brujo's group was counterfeit.

El Brujo also struggles with questions about his ethnic and personal identity, including that he may not be quite as Wixárika as he leads on, and that he is not at all a *brujo* (witch) as his nickname suggests. I was present once when another Wixárika musician told El Brujo to his face, “you’re totally pirated, you’re not even a witch [*brujo*],” meaning he is not actually a *mara’akame*.<sup>336</sup> Nor is El Brujo completely fluent in the Wixárika language, and his hometown of Huaynamota is a mixed mestizo and indigenous town outside of official Wixárika territory, leading some from the Wixárika communities to question his legitimacy. Indeed, rumors surface occasionally that El Brujo is actually Guatemalan, leading some to judge his use of Wixárika clothes as *de pirata*.<sup>337</sup> Such accusations group him with non-indigenous outsiders whose use of Wixárika clothes—to the thinking of some Wixaritari—is also *de pirata*. This accusation points towards a commodity form of identity that, like music, is inherently intangible but intended for a marketplace. Music and identity (in various forms) are intertwined, mutually proffered and purchased through association, accessed rather than controlled, ineffable but nevertheless constructed and always under construction.

The identity of the music group Huichol Musical—multivalent and intangible—was the thing being “pirated,” but language is capable of playing tricks here to the extent that it urges one to take sides, to establish legitimacy or authenticity by speaking of “piracy,” “originals,” and “copies” as if these intangibles were physical objects being mechanically reproduced. Assumptions about terms like *original* and *copy*—which are hiding under accusations of

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<sup>336</sup> “eres puro de pirata, ni eres brujo”

<sup>337</sup> El Brujo confirmed to me that his father is Wixárika but his mother’s side of the family is Guatemalan. He gave me permission to reveal this in my dissertation and claimed that the other members of Huichol Musical were aware of it, but he asked me to turn off the recorder when he began to talk about it. Even though his mother is also indigenous, such a fact would make him less than “100%” in the eyes of some Wixaritari and reviled by some Mexicans who see Guatemalans in the way some people in the U.S. see Mexican immigrants. In any case, by generally concealing this fact he seems to reveal that Huicholness can only be capitalized upon when it is actualized convincingly, and the scrutiny applied to said actualizations might be more intense for actual Wixárika people.

“piracy”—become slippery, sometimes synonymous, and even contradictory depending upon the context, one’s subject position, or the language being employed. Opening up the terms “original” and “copy” to further analysis reveals that they are not as clear-cut as they initially appear to be in English.

To begin with, the record label’s claim to have the original or official Huichol Musical is on shaky social and legal ground. As shown in a previous chapter, the group existed as *Nuevo Amanecer Huichol* long before they signed with Latin Power Music. Furthermore, the repertoire presented on the first two discs by Huichol Musical had already been recorded by the same group under their previous name. The major difference, and their biggest hit, was the song “Cumbia Cusinela,” which the label suggested was an original song by Huichol Musical, though it was actually a cover, as were most of their hits.<sup>338</sup> The label’s legal claim to the group is also precarious, and here the story takes a bit of a turn.

Latin Power Music has struggled to launch another U.S. tour with Huichol Musical because El Brujo and his business manager trademarked the name *Huichol Musical* in the United States.<sup>339</sup> Therefore, the so-called pirated group became the legally registered group in the U.S. But here the story also takes a twist because the business manager who trademarked the name in the U.S. was the manager of *Nuevo Amanecer Huichol* before the group was spirited away from him to become Huichol Musical. From his perspective, he was likely just stealing back the group and repertoire that was stolen from him in the first place.

The history of the two Huichol Musical groups disrupts common understandings of the original and its copy or counterfeit. Originality seems to become more subjective in the shift

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<sup>338</sup> In this case, I mean their international hits. Some of their hits in the sierra (like “Eki Uka”) are originals composed by Domingo López and Rodolfo Robles.

<sup>339</sup> During the final drafts of this dissertation in September 2015, the “official” Huichol Musical finally began another tour in the U.S.

towards intangibility because intangible things—like a song or an identity—are more difficult to control. Audience members at a live show of El Brujo’s Huichol Musical had no way to establish or judge originality other than by El Brujo’s presence, the group’s repertoire, and the apparent indigeneity of the musicians. Originality would also technically depend on the place where El Brujo performs; an audience in Mexico would be hearing a pirated version of Huichol Musical, but an audience in the U.S. witnessing the same show would be hearing the legitimate Huichol Musical according to the U.S. trademark registry.

Wanting to take an ethnomusicological approach, I hoped to find terms like *original* and *copy* in Wixárika. As one might expect, there is no simple way to translate the word *copy*, which mostly implies mechanical or written reproduction. Instead of literal translations, I looked for concepts related to the control of sounds and songs in Wixárika life but, as shown previously, there is little in the way of song ownership or control in the Wixárika communities, partly because much of the repertoire is imparted to humans in dreams or visions. An individual can also compose songs entirely from scratch, but in both cases, the promulgation of songs is encouraged or at least not explicitly controlled. “We’re a calm people,” one Wixárika musician and law student told me as I grilled him with hypothetical situations of one musician using compositions from another without permission.

The same musician, Ernesto Hernández Bautista, also led me to an unexpected way of defining “original” when we worked together to create a database of my Wixárika CDs. He began to code all “traditional” Wixárika music as “original,” using the same coding we had used to distinguish between “originals” and “covers” amongst popular music groups. To his mind, traditional music was “original,” because it was unique to the Wixárika people, autochthonous, coming from ancestors and/or the divine rather than outsiders. Thus, reproducing or reenacting

ritual music or recently composed songs was, in a sense, “copying” but also simultaneously original. Such thinking seems to confirm comments from anthropologists Johannes Neurath and Paul Liffman who ponder a Wixárika concept of originality when observant Wixárika people consider themselves to be their own ancestors in times of ritual. As Liffman put it, “the temporality of chants and images is simultaneously repetitive and originary” (Liffman 2014:520).

It would be erroneous, though, to suggest that all Wixárika youths today (such as El Brujo) think in this way about owning and controlling intangibles. Often, when pressed on the concepts of originals and copies, they switch to Western terms and rationales. In conversation with Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz, the word *yuri* (also spelled *yurie*) came up in reference to “truthfulness,” “authenticity,” and “originality.” *Yuri* *’iku*, for example, refers to “true maize/corn” that is specific to the Wixárika people, as opposed to second-rate Mestizo corn, grown in abundance as animal feed. “Can *yuri* be applied to other things?,” I asked. “Yuri compact disc?” “Sure,” Ukeme said. “Yuri music group?,” I continued. “That too.” “How would you refer to El Brujo’s group?,” I questioned. “Well, pirated!” (*Pues, ¡de pirata!*) Linguist José Luis Iturrioz Leza similarly documented a song about Wirikuta that referred to it as a copy machine that makes hikuri “copies,” but simply used a Wixárika pronunciation of the Spanish word for copy: *kupia* instead of *copia* (Iturrioz Leza 2002:90).

Relying too much on the idealized Wixárika worldview found in some ethnographies would not accurately represent the thoughts and practices of most Wixárika musicians who play popular music. As shown earlier, these are often musicians who trade on Huicholness but have increasingly weakening relationships to the communities into which they were born, living outside of the communities to labor as musicians, and sometimes outright rejecting Wixárika

“customs.” Even if there were a unique Wixárika way of understanding “originals” and “copies,” it does not follow that Wixaritari who represent Huicholness actually embrace that way of understanding.

El Brujo’s “pirated” Huichol Musical could lead this argument down many pathways as it potentially informs various theoretical questions around piracy/counterfeiting, authenticity, and music in the age of mechanical reproduction. The group’s legitimacy and originality hinged almost entirely on the various frames of reference from which it would be understood. Though questions of “originals” and “copies” are not central to this work, El Brujo’s experiment in piracy shows the Benjaminian sense of originality to be mostly irrelevant when it comes to questions of intangible things. Instead of a singular original that has an “aura,” here it seems that the aura—a knowable essence or identity constructed through repertoire, image, and promulgation—can be actualized in multiple originals and/or copies. Furthermore, the “aura” itself is not necessarily singular. There are various identities, essences, or auras operating within and valuating the idea of “Huichol Musical,” including their songs, their individual personas, and their indigeneity, which when commercialized in this way could be called Huicholness.

## Chapter 6. Music as Identity, Identity as Commodity

*[La imagen del Huichol] es una imagen vendida, y se vende muy bien.*<sup>340</sup>  
— Jacko (Nicasio de la Cruz Velázquez)

“I have a vision,” said Ukeme. He gestured to the throngs of dancers undulating on the outdoor basketball court in Xatsitsarie. “Imagine it,” he continued, “everything the same, but dressed as Wixaritari.” Of course, almost everyone there was Wixárika but Ukeme, a neo-traditionalist of sorts, was probably the only man under the age of 60 wearing Wixárika clothing. Everyone else was dressed in popular Mestizo fashions, with flashy shirts, jeans, and cowboy hats. Even the women, usually more conservative, were experimental with their baile-going fashions in Xatsitsarie, many foregoing the long Wixárika skirts for jeans or revealing skin-tight outfits with miniskirts, what the men called “sexys.” I pointed out to Ukeme that the musicians, Huichol Musical, were performing in Wixárika finery. He was unconvinced, turning his head to one side and glancing away, revealing his dismay. “I feel very alone,” he said with a sigh.

Two years later, Ukeme and I were back in almost the exact same spot on the same concrete basketball court. He had chosen to go with a rancher look that night, something increasingly common for him at the time as he had been forced to take over the family ranching operations—and the attendant business connections in the Mestizo world—after his father passed away. He wore a sharp “Tejana” cowboy hat and black leather jacket. The few elder men who attended the baile in Wixárika clothes two years before were now nowhere to be found. Only a few women were wearing traditional skirts. The musicians onstage were about the only people wearing Wixárika clothing. The striking difference, though, was that this year the headlining group was Banda Cohuich, a group comprised entirely of Mestizos who perform in Wixárika

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<sup>340</sup> “[The image of the Huichol] is a sold image, and it sells really well.” The Spanish is more poetic because “imagen vendida” sounds like “imagen bendita” (blessed image), which is used to describe images of the saints like La Virgen de Guadalupe.



clothes. Ukeme and I watched silently, wondering who was performing whom, as Mestizo musicians dressed as Wixaritari played for a sea of dancing Wixaritari dressed as Mestizos (Video 22).



**Figure 95. Banda Cohuich performing in Xatsitsarie (2014-12-12).**

This chapter approaches the question of music’s relationship to identity, and the use of identity as a virtual object that has qualities like those of a commodity or brand. Of the three modes and forms of identity described in the introduction to the dissertation—participatory, presentational, commodity/commercial—I will focus on the commodity and commercial form (“Huicholness”) to outline a nascent theorization of its relationship to participatory and presentational modes/forms of identity in regards to music. Naturally, there are many ways to be Wixárika, or many identities within or in relation to that identity (e.g., Wixárika woman/man, elder or younger, bilingual or monolingual, rich or poor, Western educated or not, etc.). Considering all of those adjuncts to “ethnic identity” would be overwhelming, and therefore

must be delimited to the broad concept of “Wixárika identity,” in its various modes. How being Wixárika is defined by the Wixaritari themselves is, naturally, the first section of the chapter.

Part of the thesis here is related to an observation made by sociologist and member of the Cherokee Nation, Eva Marie Garrouette in her book *Real Indians* (2003). Studying in minute detail the issues surrounding biological, cultural, and self-identifying definitions of Indianness, she stated that,

Those who cannot establish meaningful identities within cultural definitions may lose not only their visibility but also their control over their cultural patrimony. That is, if it is concluded that certain tribes have changed so much from their authentic past that they are considered “extinct”—no longer “real Indians”—their cultural property becomes public. (Garrouette 2003:70)

In the case of Huicholness, I agree that “cultural property” (or its essence in a brand-like form) can certainly become public and be used for myriad ends, especially commercial ones. I intend to show, however, that the separation or alienation of that cultural essence from the people it supposedly represents *does not* depend on the extinction—real or perceived—of said people. Nor does it necessarily depend on a real or unique “cultural property” because the process is often one of making things already familiar to outsiders seem different by associating them with a hazy or totally invented concept of another people. As public “cultural property,” though, even those supposedly being represented can make use of the commodity/brand form of “their” identity, consuming it, actualizing it through production (of music, artesanías, and so on), and to some extent reinscribing and (potentially) altering it.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first covers definitions of indigeneity in Mexico and notions about what makes someone Wixárika. The second section considers the extent to which traditional music—the musical core of participatory Wixárika identity—is silenced in commoditized Huicholness despite being sometimes visually present under a rubric of multiculturalism.

The third section of the chapter, on musical aspects of identity, is itself divided into five shorter sections. Broadly, they are language use in music, repertoire, *saludos* (greetings), musical devices, and Wixárika music (or its absence) in Euro-American “whiteshamanism.” The section also problematizes previous uses of Peircian semiotic analysis to study “Indianist” music in the U.S., revealing it to be less useful or obfuscatory compared to the identity modes proposed here.

The fourth section shows how visual aspects inform identity in concert with or in place of musical and sonic aspects, especially in commodity forms of identity. The visual realms analyzed are the use of Wixárika clothing, album cover design, and music videos.

The final section of the chapter covers “Huicholness” more generally, not just in the realm of music.

### **What makes someone Wixárika?**

Being indigenous in Mexico is defined more by social positionality and cultural practices than in the United States or Canada. The concept of blood quantum, the problematic yet ingrained biological “racecraft” (Palmié 2007) that often partly or totally defines indigeneity in the United States, was almost entirely unknown by the Wixaritari I met in the course of my fieldwork.<sup>341</sup> That sort of terminal reductionism mostly disappeared in Mexico along with the colonial *castas* taxonomy of racial mixing. Today, the definition of indigeneity in Mexico is problematic because of the historical reality of *mestizaje* (miscegenation and cultural mixing) and the resultant overlap of cultural practices between Mexico’s Indigenous and (primarily

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<sup>341</sup> With that said, some Wixaritari I met did like to use numerical percentages to describe who was a “real” Wixárika person. Some might be “100%” (usually the speaker making the judgments), or “75%,” or “50%.” These were *not* biological calculations, however. They were numbers assigned more or less randomly based on what the speaker perceived to be the *cultural* qualifications of the person being described.

peasant) Mestizo populations. The problem was outlined well in the CDI publication, *Pueblos Indígenas de México*:

...the [Mexican] constitution, reformed in 2001, defines indigenous people as those descendants of the populations that lived in what is now known as Mexico before the arrival of the Spaniards in 1517. However, as this criterion of origin could apply to many other Mexicans, it goes on to clarify that indigenous people are only those that conserve totally or partially the cultures, institutions, and forms of life of those pre-Hispanic peoples. Because this factor also would not be sufficient to distinguish indigenous people from other Mexicans [hence the term Mestizo], a third determining criterion is added: the awareness of indigenous identity, that is to say, that a person, group, or community consider themselves as such. (Navarette Linares 2008:13)

The author later specifies:

Each member of an indigenous community shares with their neighbors a series of cultural elements such as language, territory, religious practices [*cultos religiosos*], forms of dress, beliefs, history, all which allows them to say that they are similar to [their neighbors] and that they share a common identity that distinguishes them from other human beings, whether they be the next closest community, the non-indigenous inhabitants of their region or city, or foreigners. (Navarette Linares 2008:19)

Wixaritari were often reluctant to speak directly about what would qualify someone as Wixárika or not. Some would make clear that they could only speak for themselves and not anyone else. A common response was simply that you are Wixárika if you “feel it in your heart” or “if your heart tells you so.” As Ukeme put it:

...to be Wixárika, for me, the most important thing is that you feel it... [it] depends on ‘*aiyari* [your heart]. To me, [my heart] tells me that I should always honor my ancestors... and when there are ceremonies they’re there, because the ceremonies are fiestas for them. And [it means] dressing in a Wixárika way... So primarily it’s that... and I have to speak my native language [*lengua materna*]... with the children primarily. And that’s what has guided me. (Bautista Muñoz 2013)

In less guarded discussion, without audio recorders, the criteria were like those mentioned by Navarette Linares above. They revolved around a combination of language, geo-social ties, heritage, and “customs.” Religious practice was often a point of contention, especially as a result of recent Christian conversion efforts, and was handled differently in each community. For example, Catholic missionaries were historically thrown out of all communities except for Guadalupe Ocotán. In Tuxpan, there never was a mission church, but today there are reportedly

at least four groups of Christian converts.<sup>342</sup> Some argue for converts to be thrown out of the community but it has yet to happen in Tuxpan. In Santa Catarina, which has a reputation for being more culturally zealous, a group of converted Jehovah's Witnesses were reportedly elected to serve as *xukuritamete* and then thrown out of the community when they refused to do so.

Estimations about whether someone was Wixárika or not often revolved around birthplace, language, and customs, but were made on a case-by-case basis. For example, one man I met, whose parents were Mestizo, grew up in Guadalupe Ocotán, spoke Wixárika, and even held some temporary civil *cargos* in the community. He was generally not considered Wixárika per se but was an accepted member of the community. Another case is that of the late Pedro de Haro who was born Mestizo but became a Wixárika hero of sorts, the “most Wixárika of the Wixaritari,” as Ukeme put it only half joking. The factors that led Pedro de Haro to be considered Wixárika were his fluency in the language, his practicing of *costumbre* (he was a *mara'akame*), and his crucial role in fighting to regain Wixárika land stolen by Mestizo ranchers.

Being an active member of an official Wixárika community was often considered a major part of being Wixárika. Musicians and artesanos who were born and raised in a Wixárika community and spoke the language perfectly were sometimes considered “half disqualified” (*medio descalificado*) if they lived outside of Wixárika territory and did not participate in community affairs. A crucial aspect for deciding community belonging was regular participation in community assemblies. Community members (*comuneros*) in all five Wixárika communities were required to attend assemblies regularly or risk falling off the rolls, and thus losing the right to control a parcel of the community-owned lands.<sup>343</sup> For that reason, many musicians and

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<sup>342</sup> Catholic, Evangelical, Adventist, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

<sup>343</sup> Details varied but absence at an assembly usually resulted in a fine. Many consecutive absences (sometimes technically as few as three) would result in losing *comunero* status.

artesanos—those who most visibly represent Huicholness for outsiders—are no longer actual members of a Wixárika community.

Being considered Wixárika or indigenous by Mestizos and other outsiders is usually based on outside definitions. The blood quantum approach allows some people to claim “Huichol” identity (and thus be “Native American”) in the U.S., but they are not usually recognized as such in the Wixárika communities. In Mexico, where some educational scholarships require one to be indigenous, a letter from an official indigenous community authority must confirm the person’s indigeneity based on community belonging and, often, language proficiency.

In areas around the Wixárika communities, Mestizos recognize someone as indigenous primarily by their clothing, and to some extent language. This allows many Wixaritari to “pass” as Mestizos (if they speak Spanish) by simply putting on Mestizo clothes. That does not necessarily mean they want “to be” Mestizo, but sometimes prefer to avoid stares and racist treatment. Even Ukeme, who was a strong proponent of wearing Wixárika clothes at all times, admitted that...

...sometimes when I go to the city, I want to pass unperceived. I dress [Mestizo] so that they won’t be stopping me, looking, because wherever I go, “there he is,” or “he’s got a hat [with] feathers.” I get on the bus and people are always looking at me... in the plaza, the movie theater... I go to those stores where supposedly all the rich people go... everyone’s always looking at me. Instead, I dress [Mestizo] and I pass like any other person... because one has to rest from all the stares. (Bautista Muñoz 2013)

For musicians, then, actually being Wixárika on individual and communal levels can be based on many things, but proving one’s Wixárikaness to outsiders—and actualizing Huicholness—depends primarily on looking the part in Wixárika clothes and being able to sing in Wixárika. It does not follow, however, that Wixárika musicians can talonear with traditional Wixárika music

in Mestizo plazas. Huicholness comes foremost in visual doses with music that is already familiar to the consumer, resulting in the general absence of xaweri in Mestizo regions.

### **Xaweri goes global?**

The use of xaweri beyond the Wixárika communities occurs in both staged and recorded performances. As pointed out by De la Mora, though, such instances are infrequent (2011:137). Commercial recordings of xaweri number at least a dozen, some produced under the auspices of government cultural agencies, others more entrepreneurial, but none enjoy the commercial success of Huichol popular music groups, and are often explained as a way to “preserve” xaweri music rather than capitalize on it.



Figure 96. *Maxa-Keta*™ (c.2010), a CD of xaweri by José López of El Venado Azul.

Xaweri is currently becoming increasingly folklorized in Mestizo towns surrounding the Wixárika territory. For example, Wixárika students at CUNorte in Colotlán had begun to present choreographed dances inspired by particular ceremonial practices, but did so primarily amongst themselves. During Mezquitic’s *feria*, specifically during its “Wixárika Day,” Wixárika children

of different ages would dress traditionally and perform onstage in xaweri exhibitions. The practice seems to be growing as xaweri is increasingly taught as an extracurricular activity in public schools in the sierra, channeling the educational setting to the stage as much or more than ritual practices.

Xaweri and kanari have also made brief appearances in popular culture over the past few years. Though perhaps seen as a coup for Wixárika culture by some, I believe it is another instance of the *guerra de sonidos* mentioned in the first interchapter, one in which the xaweri and kanari (and the Wixaritari by association) suffer a silencing.

One example is the music video “Para No Pensar en Ti,” by Argentine-turned-Mexican crooner Diego Verdaguer (Video 23). The video begins with xaweri and kanari as a brief introductory soundtrack to accompany establishing shots of the flight into the verdant, mountainous sierra. The xaweri is combined with sounds of birds but is quickly silenced, never to return, by a true *sonido de guerra*, the trumpet. The love song unfolds with images of Verdaguer and CDI representatives partaking in Wixárika “rituals” staged for the camera, including the distribution of peyote, of which Verdaguer seems to partake while in full Wixárika clothing. The lyrics seem entirely unrelated to the images of the Wixárika people unless one were to interpret drastically lines like “I don’t need you to love me” and “To be close to you, I’m going to hide what I feel,” to be oblique references to the outsider encounter with the Wixaritari. For that matter, one might wonder why the Wixárika setting was chosen when the song begins, “So as not to think about you, I’m going to anaesthetize my soul.” Verdaguer croons the phrase “to make you happy” while creepily caressing the face of an indigenous girl who, like the xaweri by that point, is sometimes seen but not heard.



Another example of the place of traditional Wixárika music in popular media (or lack thereof) is a promotional video made by Latin Power Music for Huichol Musical (Video 24). The label referred to the piece as a “documentary,” a loose use of the term. In the video, Domingo López describes on camera the “Fiestas de Octubre” (Tatei Neixa), interspersed with shots of the musicians walking around a zoo, (almost) inexplicably. While describing the “maize god,” the video cuts to a scene of a non-Wixárika urban curer wafting smoke over a client, apparently to visually cue “ritual” and magical practices. When López makes reference to the fact that the Wixaritari “have to play music all night,” the video cuts to a scene of the Huichol Musical playing the beginning of a corrido on an urban street corner at sunset. Therefore, the only musical element in the “documentary” suggests that the music of Wixárika ritual is not the xaweri, the tepu drum, or the chanting of the mara‘akame, but the already-familiar popular music of the Huichol groups seen in plazas and onstage. Instead of making difference familiar, it makes the familiar seem different.

Another example, slightly more hopeful but not without room for critique, is a version of the song “Tiempo de Híbridos” (Video 25) found in the filmic homage to Mexican music and culture called *Hecho en México* (2012). The song was originally composed and performed by Rodrigo González Guzman, a sort of Mexican Bob Dylan, and describes global technological modernity in a prophetic tone of both amazement and disillusionment as it decries cultural imperialism and the “vulgar lack of identity.” Onscreen, it was performed by rock star and consummate Huicholero, Rubén Albarrán, famous as the vocalist for the group Café Tacuba. Accompanying Albarrán onscreen are xawereru and mara‘akame José Bautista, and kanareru Antonio Carrillo.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> This is the same José Bautista who has been quoted numerous times in this dissertation.

Xaweri plays a larger role in “Tiempo de Híbridos” than in Verdaguer’s video, but in the style of the movie the xaweri is sonically intermixed with myriad musical groups and instruments recorded around Mexico and later assembled in editing. The result is that the xaweri and kanari, which begin this version of the song, become increasingly buried under the sonic overlays of other genres and instruments. (The director and editors might say xaweri is “accompanied” rather than “buried,” but its sound becomes indiscernible amongst the fray.) The xaweri becomes momentarily central again during a “breakdown” section spliced with images of other (unnamed) indigenous groups, including the Yoeme (Yaqui) deer dance.<sup>345</sup> The xaweri is slowly overtaken again by drumset, and eventually overwhelmed by the trumpets and blaring brass of Banda el Limón. The final shot, which is also the end of the movie, shows the Wixárika musicians walking off into the darkness of twilight, recalling the filmic device of “Spaghetti Westerns” whose Indians ride off on their horses into the sunset, symbolizing their noble and silent slippage into oblivion.

If xaweri has not fared well in the modern commercial mediascape, state-sponsored and academically influenced presentations might do it more justice. Rodrigo de la Mora’s CD productions for CONACULTA and the state of Jalisco are an example, self-analyzed in his own dissertation (De la Mora 2011:139). However, not all state-sponsored uses of the xaweri are as sophisticated as De la Mora’s. In a 2010 event called “Mexico Multicultural” in Guadalajara, only steps from where the famous “Vochol”<sup>346</sup> was being beaded, the main exhibit’s introductory video began with the unmistakable sounds of solo xaweri but quickly devolved into a stereotypical pastiche of “tribal” world music with large doses of didgeridoo.

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<sup>345</sup> Indigenous groups are also competing amongst themselves to be heard in the guerra de sonidos. Here, the Yaqui, whose deer dance has been the central to state folklore troupes, get drowned out by the xaweri, at least momentarily.

<sup>346</sup> The word *Vochol* is a portmanteau of Vocho (the word for Volkswagen Beetles) and Huichol. The car, covered in Huichol bead style by a team of artesanos, has toured internationally.

Xaweri's role in evoking Huicholness is minimal compared to Huichol popular music groups. Even in Mestizo areas with large Wixárika populations, educated people are generally unaware of xaweri and kanari, assuming that what Wixárika musicians play while *taloneando* in the plazas is the extent of Wixárika musical life.<sup>347</sup> Perhaps my analyses above are too cynical and such instances may beneficially raise awareness of traditional Wixárika music. Nevertheless, when the xaweri is seen, it is primarily a visual indicator of permissible difference, often assumed merely to be a rustic "imitation" of Western violin.<sup>348</sup> Its visual presence is accommodated in an ideology of ostensible multiculturalism, but the evidence suggests there is actually little or no room to hear the xaweri on its own terms. Unlike the Wixárika response to colonial hegemony, which was to ritualize and incorporate the *guerra de sonidos* itself, the Western response was to silence xaweri literally and symbolically while espousing multiculturalism.

### **Musical aspects of identity**

Though traditional Wixárika music does not play a large role in forming Huicholness, there are some musical approaches to forming and actualizing Huicholness that are worthy of note. In studying "Indianist" compositions in the United States, Tara Browner (1995) and, later, Michael V. Pisani (2005), used Peircian semiotic models to categorize and analyze musical representations of Native America in Western music. Specifically, Browner "grouped musical works based on Native American subjects into three categories: symbolic (merely native-inspired), indexical (attempting to approximate native sounds), and iconic (using materials from native music)" (Pisani 2005:12).

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<sup>347</sup> I once met an anthropology student from the region who was amazed to learn that the Wixaritari had their own musical practices that were not just rancheras and corridos.

<sup>348</sup> Even some Wixaritari think of the xaweri as an "imitation" of "real" violins.

I agree with Browner and Pisani that the semiotic approach can be helpful, but it becomes less so when moving beyond European-derived classical music. For one thing, such an analysis here would require a definition of “Native music” as being dichotomously opposed to “Western” music, an untenable approach when much “traditional Wixárika music” has clear Spanish and Mestizo elements. Similarly, Mestizo popular music played on violin is now dominated in the region by Huichol groups and plays an essential social and ritual role in the Wixárika communities. The problem lies with whether one considers the Huichol popular music groups to be “Wixárika music” (*wixárika kwikarieya*) or “Mestizo/Western music” (*teiwari kwikarieya*). As explored in a previous chapter, many Wixaritari consider it to be both. Parsing the distinctions becomes more about semantics, and for that reason I find the three modes of identity, already mentioned, to be a more useful framework in this context, even when considering issues of language, which could be oversimplified as “iconic” musical references to indigeneity.

### *Language*

Singing popular music in Wixárika can (sometimes) be seen as an “iconic” political act in an otherwise apolitical music.<sup>349</sup> As Harris Berger put it, “native language or regional dialects may be iconic of the colonized peoples or marginalized groups that speak them; songs set in such languages may function as a powerful affirmation of identity for their singers or listeners” (Berger 2003:xiv). Under the semiotic vocabulary, use of the Wixárika language might potentially be classed only as “iconic.” But that hides vital particularities of context and intent,

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<sup>349</sup> Even in Wixárika, songs rarely comment upon political problems or social conflict with Mestizos, even though it seems like it would be an obvious place to do so. Those songs that do broach such topics have never been notable hits. When asked why Huichol groups did not sing about, say, the mining threat in Wirikuta, one group leader seemed to have never thought about the issue and surmised that “maybe people wouldn’t like it.”

and perhaps ignores distinctions between production and consumption. Thinking about the modes of identity proposed here might shed more light on the processes at work.

When a Mestizo or foreigner listens to Huichol Musical or R5 Sierreño sing the song “Eki Xeikia,” they hear an incomprehensible but iconic translation of “Solo Tu” in the “Huichol” language (few would say “Wixárika”). For many, the language is a novelty. It is Huicholness consumed through iTunes or a pirated CD bought in the plaza. But those fluent in Wixárika also hear regional accents and dialects in such songs. They might not have purchased the song—recorded music has little or no exchange value in the sierra these days—but the version on their phone or MP3 player has deep value for participatory and presentational identity. Specifically, the accent of the community of Santa Catarina—sometimes considered by others to be an accent of country bumpkins—potentially becomes reevaluated by other Wixaritari, its prestige enhanced by being the Wixárika dialect most audible on an international scale. Here, Huicholness could be said to affect the presentational identity of those from the community of Santa Catarina in relation to other Wixárika communities, and perhaps the participatory identity of individuals from Santa Catarina who might become less ashamed of their way of speaking. Similarly, musicians from other communities might perform a Huichol Musical song but alter its pronunciation to fit their own way of speaking, functioning as Huicholness for a Mestizo audience but as presentational identity for a Wixárika audience.

The use of the Wixárika language has had fits and starts in the overall repertoire of Huichol groups, but most of the major hits by Huichol groups in the sierra and beyond have been in Wixárika. In the early days of the Huichol group phenomenon, groups were sometimes embarrassed to sing in Wixárika for Mestizo audiences.

...it made me ashamed to sing in my language... because we weren't accustomed... there was only traditional music [in Wixárika]... so it made me ashamed... to sing for the Mestizos [in my language], [but] every so often they asked for the song “La Garza y el Venado” [the Spanish title

for “Cuarru Mautorra”]. So, the people liked it, even though they didn’t understand [it], it was more pleasing to them to hear us sing in [our language]. (López Robles 2012)

The early Huichol groups quickly realized the success of their language as a novelty for outsiders. Groups like Los Teopa, Enero 97, and later Ausentes de San Sebastian, recorded extensively in Wixárika. Today, songs in Wixárika are common but there are no groups that perform exclusively or predominantly in Wixárika. Also, despite my expectations, there was little difference in the amount of Wixárika songs performed in Wixárika or Mestizo locations. The only minor exceptions were performances for events such as Indigenous Language Day (*Día de Lengua Materna*).<sup>350</sup>

In everyday speaking, bilingual Wixaritari often switch extensively between Wixárika and Spanish as a way to show they know both languages, but also to find the best way of expressing a thought or feeling. That practice is almost never observed in songwriting or singing, to an extreme that might be interpreted as a miscegenation taboo made patent in musical practice. There is little or no “codeswitching” like that found commonly in other global settings (e.g., Berger 2003; Summit 2000). There is not yet extensive musical “Wixañol,” as Wixaritari sometimes referred to their quotidian linguistic artistry. The minor exceptions are Wixáricized pronunciations of Spanish words such as *cusinela* for *cocinera*, or *kupia* for *copia*. Similarly, Huichol Musical sometimes translates its group name as Wixárika Kwikarieya and Viento Huichol has recently referred to itself occasionally as ‘Eka Wixárika. Despite these rare

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<sup>350</sup> Another exception was a set by Dinastía de la Sierra in the temporary Tukipa bar constructed by Wixárika entrepreneurs for Colotlán’s feria in 2013. Dinastía, which rarely sings in Wixárika and always dresses in Mestizo clothes, sang five Wixárika songs in about one hour. They did not claim to have a particular reason for the change, though.

instances, the language of Huichol groups generally promotes an idealized presentational identity instead of being an extension of participatory, quotidian speech patterns.<sup>351</sup>

Lyrical portrayals of Wixaritari in the Wixárika language are notably distinct from their counterparts in Spanish (covered below). A telling example is “Tradición Huichol” (Audio 53) by Grupo Musical Encinos from the community of San Andrés. Despite the title, the song is sung entirely in Wixárika, a presentation of Wixárika identity for and by Wixaritari. (Lyrics for this song and others are available in the Appendix.) The word *Huichol* is only used in the title, opting for *Wixárika* in the lyrics. The song begins by mentioning, rather generically, the “many traditions” of the Wixaritari, but quickly points to the importance of ritually sharing *nawá* (corn beer). The lyrics mention the ritual architectural structures of the *xiriki* and *tuki*, and the dancing done in front of them around *Tatewarí* (Grandfather Fire). The speaking of the *mara‘akame* is referred to as beautiful, pointing out particulars such as his *muwieri* (“feather wand”). The song ends with multiple verses making reference to maize and the planting of crops. The composer specifically mentions the connection between maize and deer, but leaves out their other ritual avatar, the internationally famous *hikuri*. The musician who helped me translate the lyrics, Paly Omar Enríquez López, suggested the composer focused on maize and deer because planting and hunting are practices of all Wixaritari. *Hikuri*, on the other hand, is part of specialized ritual practices in which not all Wixaritari participate.

Much more common than the use of Wixárika, the use of Spanish by Huichol groups today shows the extent to which the language has become part of the Wixárika world. Beyond being a showy means to display a Wixárika man’s familiarity with the outside Mestizo world, it has become almost an afterthought to Wixárika musicians who learned Spanish in school and

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<sup>351</sup> Original popular songs composed in Wixárika often seem to be in *teixatsika* register when speaking of *costumbre*. However, it does not seem to be exclusive. This is an ongoing part of the research.

daily life. Songs in Spanish and the love many Wixaritari of all ages now have for popular Mexican music also links them to national, regional, and class identities similar or identical to those of their Mestizo counterparts. A timely example, extremely popular during the end of my fieldwork period, was the song “Soy de Rancho” by Alfredo Rios, better known as “El Komander.” The song describes pride in rural upbringing, recounting an imagined transition from humble peasant to international wage laborer (and drug trafficker) with a flair for fashion. The verse “Yes, sir, I’m from the ranch!” is sung with the same volume and gusto by Wixaritari as Mestizos, and the meaning becomes mostly undifferentiated.

The portrayal of Wixaritari in Spanish is markedly different than in Wixárika, and is done not only by the Wixaritari themselves but also by Mestizos. Remarkably, the vast majority of corridos about Wixárika places and people are in Spanish, even when composed by Wixaritari. Perhaps the oldest corridos with Wixárika subjects are those written by Serapio García, documented by Ramón Mata Torres ([1987] 1993), including the “Corrido de San Andrés,” which pleasantly but inaccurately describes the locality known in Wixárika as Tateikie.

As Mata Torres points out, the “Corrido de San Andrés” has an “unmeasured eagerness” to show Tateikie in a good light—as defined by Mestizos—with the result being a description of the place and its activities that does not align with reality (259). The lyrics describe what could be any municipal seat in Mexico, replete with a quadratic plaza and garden. The corrido mentions a *presidencia* where a municipal mayor (*presidente*) would hold office. It mentions the fiestas in December. The problem is that none of those things exist. There is no plaza with a garden, no *presidencia*, no major fiestas in December. The corrido seems to be describing Tateikie as outsiders thought it *should* be, rather than how it was (or is). Perhaps that also explains why an entire verse honors then-president of Mexico, Luis Echevarría, and references



local “development” projects. The corrido is almost in the future tense, imagining a day to come when Tateikie would be simply a replication of Mexican towns throughout the nation, its people an extension of the national labor force. With many corridos now written by Wixaritari themselves, this particular one is now rarely heard (except on recordings of the state-funded festivals of “Traditional Mariachi”).

García’s portrayal of Tateikie from a Mestizo perspective is not necessarily deleterious to the image of the Wixaritari, but the author seems to have assumed certain things that are off just enough to be disorienting. A similar approach can be seen in the more recent “Real de 14” by Raul de la Torre (Audio 55). The song tells of a “Huichol” man who tells his “Huicholita” wife that they must go to “Real de Catorce” (not “Wirikuta”) to collect “peyote,” in order to withstand the travails of rural life. Though some Wixaritari do consider hikuri to be a stimulant, its use for that purpose is not common (as, say, *coca* leaves in South America). The song seems to be more a Mestizo fascination with hikuri as a potentially escapist stimulant, ignoring or ignorant of its ritual use, meaning, and collection. It allows the Mestizo listener to believe—or continue to believe—something along the lines of “Huichols have to use peyote to forget about their otherwise unbearable lives.”

Another song written in Spanish about “Huichol” people, and still performed today (even by some Wixárika musicians), is the corrido “El Dios Huichol” (Video 26).<sup>352</sup> The corrido tells the story of a bloodthirsty and tyrannical “Huichol” villain who, thinking himself to be godlike, takes control of part of the sierra with “well armed Huicholes” and terrorizes the region until the governor of Nayarit receives word of the trouble and sends the military to finish him off. Some Wixaritari believe this to be a true story “documented by the CDI,” but I have yet to find proof of

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<sup>352</sup> The author of this corrido is not listed in U.S. or Mexican sources (SACM, ASCAP, BMI). BMI lists José Alberto Sepulveda (a.k.a. Juan Llamedo) as the author of “Dios Huichol,” but the composer confirmed that it was a different song with the same title.

the corrido's historical accuracy.<sup>353</sup> That is *not* to say the story false, but to question the degree to which the details have been sensationalized. The portrayal of the “Huichol God” as “cruel and bloodthirsty” both confirms and furthers common Mestizo beliefs about the Wixaritari as fierce (*bravos*), untrustworthy, and violent. A amateur video for the song on YouTube combines ethnographic and commercial photographs of Wixaritari juxtaposed with images of violent but colorful exoticism from the Mel Gibson film *Apocalypto* (2006) (Video 26).

When Wixárika composers represent “Wixárika” or “Huichol” people in Spanish, the result is markedly different from Mestizo composers, but still not as particular as when Wixárika musicians write in Wixárika. One of the best examples is the song “El Huichol 100%” (Audio 55), composed by Luciano López of the group Lobo Negro. The song was well known in the mid 2000s and remembered still today. The lyrics are clearly written by (or at least narrated from the perspective of) a young man, focusing on finding a musical career, drinking in cantinas with permissive women, and remarking on the beauty of women from specific Wixárika localities. The narrator's “Huichol” identity is mentioned in relation to putting on a Wixárika outfit when he goes to spend time in his “capital,” Guadalajara. The “Huichols” are “pretty” (*bonitos*) when they drink in their fiestas, but the narrator does not mention *nawá* or specific rituals. The lack of specificity allows Mestizo listeners to assume he is talking about common “parties” or *bailes*.<sup>354</sup> When written by a Wixárika composer, the presentation of Wixárika identity in Spanish is not notably different from songs composed by Mestizos, forming a non-descript Huicholness primarily based on visual identifiers (i.e., clothing).

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<sup>353</sup> The lyrics portray the events happening in the “Nayarit Sierra,” and a governor named “Emilio.” It probably refers to Nayarit's governor Emilio M. González (1981–1987).

<sup>354</sup> Jorge López Solís mentioned this as a common misunderstanding by Mestizos. If Mestizos happened to be visiting for government duties and were invited to a “fiesta” (meaning a traditional ceremony), they usually mistook that to mean a *baile* with popular music and a stage.

## *Repertoire*

Repertoire is a major factor in the construction and representation of identity for music groups, their members, and the ethnic group they often seek to represent (Kartomi 1981; Trimillos 1986; Witzleben 1987). As pointed out in a prior chapter, most Huichol groups today perform corridos, rancheras, cumbias, and románticas. Some of the more experimental sierrero groups have moved beyond those categories to incorporate popular songs and melodies from around the world. Los Amos's de la Sierra, for example, reworked songs from genres such as rock, ska, and bachata. Innovación Sierrero performed the stereotypical Andean classic "El Condor Pasa," perhaps the only piece in the entire Huichol group repertoire to be connected (albeit loosely) to another indigenous popular music. Such songs—in Spanish but originating well beyond rural Mexico—are rightly taken to be actions and expressions of cosmopolitan leanings. Conversely, repertoire in the Wixárika language is sometimes automatically assumed to indicate the musicians' degree of belonging to a Wixárika community. More important in that regard, however, is the question of *which* Wixárika songs are part of a musician's repertoire.

Fortunately, there are enough popular songs composed in Wixárika that no musician can know them all. Their abundance allows some to be more popular in Wixárika communities than in Mestizo populations, and vice versa. A case in point involves the songs "Cumbia Cusinela" (Audio 35) and "Tsinari" (Audio 56) (lyrics and translations are found in the Appendix). Both are up-tempo cumbias in Wixárika, and both speak fondly of the food preparation skills of Wixárika women. One subtle but important difference is that *cusinela* is a Wixárika pronunciation of *cocinera*, a title given to the women who are hired to prepare food in a government school or dormitory (*albergue*). "Tsinari," on the other hand, speaks of a woman who, despite being unattractive, is cherished by her companion (the narrator) because of her

ability to make traditional foods such as the sour *atole* drink known in Wixárika as *tsinari*, commonly consumed in the morning after an all-night ceremony. For that reason, “Tsinari” was appreciated by women “of a certain age” in the Wixárika communities, but sometimes seen as an upbraiding of younger Wixárika women less likely to have such skills.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, both songs were commonly heard during bailes in the Wixárika communities. Ukeme referred to “Tsinari” as “the ‘Cusinela’ of the sierra.” At the time, I took the comment to be braggadocio because he was in the band that popularized “Tsinari.” After the “Cumbia Cusinela” craze died down, though, “Tsinari” was still heard in the sierra bailes, showing it to have greater staying power there. But “Tsinari” was never requested by Mestizo clients of Huichol groups. The song was mostly unknown to Mestizos because, unlike “Cumbia Cusinela” which was heard on TV and radio, “Tsinari” circulated on social networks and MP3 players, keeping it primarily within Wixárika social circles. “Cumbia Cusinela” remained a popular request by Mestizos, probably because they enjoyed hearing songs “in dialect” (as they often called it), but were not familiar with other songs in Wixárika. This important difference between otherwise similar songs resulted in a revealing distinction in the repertoires of Huichol groups. Groups that lived in Mestizo towns and primarily labored *al talón* in the plazas or in events for Mestizo clients usually were unable to play “Tsinari” and were only vaguely familiar with it. By contrast, musicians who commonly played bailes in the sierra usually knew “Tsinari” and performed it regularly.

Both “Tsinari” and “Cumbia Cusinela” are “iconic” referents to Wixárika culture and identity, but only “Cumbia Cusinela” could be said to be unquestionably part of Huicholness, while “Tsinari” serves only in a participatory and presentational mode of Wixárika identity. Indeed, many Mexicans (in Mexico and abroad), and others around the world, only know of the

“Huichol” people *because of* the Cusinela craze. Of course, the larger themes here are that Huicholness is not necessarily iconic, and that it can be “lifted” (or “pirated”) from the Wixárika people themselves. The case of “Cumbia Cusinela” is central to those arguments insofar as it has been performed by numerous Mestizo music groups to enhance their own value in the minds of Mestizo clients.

I will focus on just two of the many versions of “Cumbia Cusinela” performed by Mestizo musicians, none of whom actually speak Wixárika. The first is by the group Agresivos de la Sierra (Audio 57), a group originally from Valparaiso, Zacatecas, currently based in Colorado. The singer for Agresivos, Francisco Recendez, first started to learn “Cumbia Cusinela” and other Wixárika songs phonetically from recordings. Later, he contacted the composer, José López of El Venado Azul, to ask permission to perform and record the songs, and for assistance to learn the lyrics properly.<sup>355</sup> In stark contrast to that approach, the group Armanix, operating primarily in northern Jalisco, has performed “Cumbia Cusinela” but not bothered to approximate the Wixárika lyrics. Instead, the singer would sing the melody to the song but use the lyrics of “Tin Marín,” a children’s choosing song in Spanish akin to “Eeny Meeny Miny Moe” in English (Audio 58) is a field recording of Armanix performing this way in Casallanta, Jalisco). Clearly, there are various ways to “play Indian,” some more respectful than others. For Agresivos, one notes an ideology of indigenismo when the singer claimed to “feel more Mexican” when singing in an indigenous language. By contrast, Armanix gives indigenous language the Vaudeville treatment.

With a semiotic analysis, Agresivos might be seen as an “iconic” use of “native material” by utilizing Wixárika language, while Armanix is indexical. The problem with that analysis is

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<sup>355</sup> According to Recendez, José López gave them permission and sent written lyrics of his songs to the group via email. López’s nephew, “Susui” of Abrazo Musical, tutored Recendez on pronunciation.

that they could *both* be considered iconic to the extent that a Wixárika composer wrote the song and its melody. “Cumbia Cusinela,” even when lyrically aped by Armanix, is still “Native material.” The semiotic approach adds more problems than it solves in this case. To my mind, one could think of both instances as actualizations of Huicholness in a music group’s repertoire, albeit with differing degrees of seriousness and respect. Agresivos’s clients are reportedly “amazed” and “thrilled” when the group starts to sing in Wixárika. The group has had notable success with their Wixárika-language recordings on U.S. radio. Armanix took a more racist approach, equating Wixárika language with children’s play, but they similarly benefit from it nonetheless by being seen as “playful” (*juguetones*), an important quality for music groups that hope to be hired to perform live events. Therefore, both groups are using Huicholness to enhance the monetary exchange value of their musical labor.

### *Saludos*

As covered previously, *saludos* (greetings) often figure into the patronage system in *música regional*. Another salient aspect of *saludos* is the way in which they simultaneously reflect and establish both participatory and presentational identity for the musicians and their audience. An unexpected personal example was when I briefly visited my hometown in Indiana during the 2½ years of fieldwork in which I lived in Jalisco. A Mexican friend in Indiana was excited to show me a pirated compilation CD of Huichol groups he had recently purchased. As a Mestizo, he was unfamiliar with the Wixárika territory and was not personally acquainted with any Huichol musicians. As we listened, then, the recorded *saludos* to people and places meant nothing to him. I, on the other hand, had a profound longing to be back in Mexico. I remembered fondly the times I had been spending with the Wixárika musicians heard on the CD. I recalled

specific times I spent with those musicians in the very places they were mentioning in their saludos. Saludos, then, can create and reaffirm meaningful non-capitalist geo-social ties in an otherwise alienating mass media commodity.

Saludos also reveal that even when Huicholness is at play it does not necessarily preclude evocations of participatory and presentational identity. Two recordings of the song “La Cumbia del Conejito” illustrate the point. The recording of the song by its composer, José López of El Venado Azul, begins with saludos in Wixárika (Audio 59). Then, in Spanish, López calls out an unusually long list of Wixárika localities, naming them from north to south. He first focuses on his own community, naming numerous localities that pertain to Santa Catarina. He then zooms back and moves southward, mentioning localities in San Sebastián and Tuxpan, ending in Puente de Camotlán, the Mestizo town on the southern edge of Wixárika territory. He does *not* mention places on the western side of the Chapalagana River, the river “that divides us.”<sup>356</sup> He then pulls the lyrical lens upwards and much farther south, mentioning “El Temu de Vallarta,” using the Wixárika word *temu* (frog) to refer to the recording studio Sonido Rana (Frog Sound) in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco.<sup>357</sup> He then zooms out further, sending saludos to “the people” (*la raza*) in the United States, meaning Mexican immigrants living there. Later in the song, he issues another litany of saludos to specific people in Wixárika localities.

A recording of the same cumbia by the Mestizo group Agresivos de la Sierra maps a very different geo-social knowledge (Audio 60). Though the group is originally from Valparaiso, Zacatecas, they currently live and work in Colorado where they perform not only for Mexican immigrants but those from Central America. They begin the song with saludos “from Valparaiso, Zacatecas” to the countries of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and “our beautiful Mexico.”

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<sup>356</sup> Later in the song he mentions places on the western side of the river, but does so only while issuing personal saludos to specific people.

<sup>357</sup> Sonido Rana is where López recorded his traditional music disc, *Maxa Keta*.

Like El Venado Azul, they specifically call out to “the countrymen” (*los paisanos*) in the United States. Later, their saludos zoom in to specific locations around their place of origin, including Colotlán, Valparaiso, Huejuquilla el Alto, San Juan Capistrano, Santa Lucía, and “all the sierra all the way to Nayarit.” Someone unfamiliar with the territory would hear these as random towns or “ranchos,” but the saludos actually map the towns along a specific highway that traverses the region generally east to west, up the Sierra Madre mountain range, passing the northern edge of Wixárika territory, and back down into Nayarit. Their mention of “the sierra” could be taken generically or as a specific reference to Wixárika territory.

These two recordings of the same song map geo-social ties with evocative specificity that would be exciting for listeners from those places (including friends and family of the musicians). Thus, in yet another recording of the same song by Grupo Vibra, a Yaqui music group from Pótam, Sonora, the localities mentioned in other versions of the song are forgone in favor of mentioning two people and one place, which I can only assume is in Sonora (Audio 61).

Saludos do not preclude the actualization of Huicholness, but they are not particularly useful for creating it either. The reason is that they do the opposite of what is needed to create Huicholness. Instead of disassociating an idealized commercial concept of “that which is Huichol” (*lo Huichol*) from actual Wixárika people and places, it inscribes and (re)affirms geo-social ties, resisting the alienation that would usually accompany commodification. But once separated from Wixárika people in other ways (e.g., learning Wixárika lyrics), Huicholness can be grafted to the participatory identities of other people and places.



### *Musical devices*

Amongst Huichol popular music groups, there are few or no musical devices used to evoke traditional Wixárika music. Exceptions might be the use of sesquialtera, but then there is little to distinguish that from Mexican *son* in general. There are some Wixárika violinists who hear a more “xaweri-like” way of playing Western violin in early Huichol groups, primarily by emphasizing downward glissandi between pitches. Thus, there might be some inner participatory cues for those already in the know, but it would be incorrect to say that Mestizo listeners interpret those sounds as more “Huichol.”

The attempt to capture or represent a musical Huicholness, or Mexican indigenusness more broadly, is easier to find in the classical music realm where Mexican composers could be said to have an “Indianist” streak similar to that in the United States (Browner 1995; Gorbman 2000; Pisani 2005). Like the process north of the border, Mexican composers have also mined ethnographic documents to create everything from simple piano arrangements to full symphonies. An early example is the recording and transcription made by Lumholtz, which he titled “Song at the Feast of eating cakes of unhulled corn” (Lumholtz 1902, 2:39). The transcription was used to create a piano arrangement for children in *Para los Pequeños Pianistas Mexicanos (For the Little Mexican Piano Players* [1939], reproduced in Jáuregui 1993:8, 49–50). The arrangement was renamed “Canción de los Tamales” which, along with the title of the collection, give a nationalistic familiarity to the piece while simultaneously framing indigenous music as child’s play.<sup>358</sup> These tendencies continue today in the state-funded youth music program called ECOS, based on Venezuela’s *El Sistema* and defined in Jalisco as “music for

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<sup>358</sup> Wixárika tamales are used in ritual but are notably different than those made by Mestizos in both flavor and form.

development.” The program reached the elementary school in Tateikie in 2013 with harmonized choral arrangements based on Indigenous melodies from around Mexico.

In larger orchestral works, Indianist devices like those in the U.S. are not exceptionally common. The stereotypical “tom-tom” beat (XxxxXxxx), descending thirds, parallel fourths or fifths, the “Scotch snap” (or Lombard rhythm), and “war whoops” are known in Mexico but probably because of Hollywood films more than Mexican musical indigenismo. There are few musical conventions that characterize “the Huichols” per se, being primarily pentatonicism and, to a lesser extent, the use of sesquialtera as would be done on xaweri and kanari.

Large early works include Carlos Chávez’s *Sinfonía India* (1935), which supposedly begins with a “Huichol melody,” though one might be forgiven for not identifying it by sound alone. Notation of the melody appears in Robert Stevenson’s *Music in Mexico* (1952:44). Stevenson’s comments reveal a good deal about the worth of “Huichol” music for Western art music acolytes.

Objectively considered, this particular Huichol melody seems as limited in expressive content as either of Lumholtz’s rain-songs; its musical substance is even thinner than that of the hikuli songs already presented. Not the melody itself, but rather Chávez’s treatment of it, impresses the international music public. (Stevenson 1952:45)

Avoiding the question of how anyone could “objectively” consider “musical substance,” Stevenson’s grammatical portrayal of Lumholtz as a possessor of a rain-song property is notable. That raw material was then “treated” by Chávez, as if to sanitize it or subject it to a process that intended to preserve it in musical formaldehyde, as it were. But the treatment also turned it into something else, not unlike the use of xaweri in “Tiempo de Híbridos” or the Latin Power Music “documentary” mentioned above. They all make something “different” seem familiar by making the familiar seem different, harnessing a muse and injecting it with worth in a distinct and dissimilar regime of value.

About a similar “treatment” of a “Huichol” melody—in Candelario Huizar’s *Sinfonía 4* (the “Cora” Symphony, 1942)—Stevenson seems to have defined the Indigenista approach in Mexican composition. Indigenous music of Mexico, he said, “may not seem very promising raw material for a symphony, but since Chávez and others less well known have shown it can be done, this music deserves to be highly regarded if not for its intrinsic qualities, at least as a convenient totem” (Stevenson 1952:45). In other words, Indigenism has value in a different context by becoming an emblem adopted for its essence or “spiritual” significance.

The “convenient totem” of Huicholness in the years of Chávez and Huizar was more suggestive than sonically self-evident. Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mexican composers have incorporated more obvious references to Wixárika music, focusing on xaweri and kanari over the chants of the mara‘akame. A well-known piece performed by Kronos Quartet and others is *Altar de Muertos* (1997) by Gabriela Cruz. The fourth movement of the piece, “La Calaca” (Video 27), reproduces a melody in a pentatonic mode common to xaweri but makes it contrapuntal, giving it a Steve Reich-ish ostinato treatment rather than reproducing a Wixárika form of call and response. Like the xaweri music it is based on, the fourth movement includes the sesquialtera rhythm, making it the most danceable moment of the piece. Audiences in auditoriums and recital halls contemplate the piece while seated, a serious faux pas for such melodies in their original context. The composer’s notes for the piece include the following:

IV. La Calaca

[...]This movement reflects a musical world full of joy, vitality and a great expressive force. At the end of “La Calaca” I decided to quote a melody of Huichol origin, which attracted me when I first heard it. That melody was sung by Familia de la Cruz. The Huichol culture lives in the State of Nayarit, Mexico. Their musical art is always found in ceremonial and ritual life. Optional: Each musician can put a Mexican mask on.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> <https://www.eamdc.com/psny/composers/gabriela-ortiz/works/altar-de-muertos/>

As is the case with many examples of Huicholness, the composer's notes use pseudo-specificity, geographical haziness or half-truth, and reification. Referring to a Wixárika "de la Cruz family" has the specificity of saying "the Smith family from New England." Huichol culture becomes not just reified but animate. It "lives" not primarily around the border of four states, but in Nayarit, the state that has most visibly hitched its star to Huicholness for tourism purposes.

Demian Galindo, a composer from Guadalajara, has also used Wixárika music as a muse and source material. Like Cruz, Galindo borrows a good deal from xaweri music. In his guitar compositions "Pequeño Preludio Wixarika (Huichol)" (Video 28) and "Aforismo Wixarika," he makes extensive use of the sesquialtera rhythm, sometimes doing so on the guitar's strings between the nut and tuning pegs to approximate the high-pitched sound of the kanari. Other pieces incorporate Huicholness in the titles—e.g., "Cuadro de Estambre" ("Yarn Painting") and another simply called "Huichol (Wixarika)"—but the musical references are less obvious.<sup>360</sup>

In contrast to Western art music composition, popular Mexican music primarily uses Wixárika language and clothes as the main indicators of indigeneity. There are, however, some notable exceptions in which devices of musical exoticism are used to indicate indigeneity through generic othering. One example is that of Banda Cohuich, the Mestizo group that dresses in Wixárika clothes during shows. During their performance in Xatsitsarie mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the group played one of their better-known songs, "Son Kora" (Audio 62). The lyrics were changed for the location from "come dance the Cora *son*" to "come dance the Wixa *son*" (*ven a bailar el son del wixa*) (Video 22). As one of their only songs with an indigenous reference in the title and lyrics, it is important to pay attention to the melodic and timbral devices meant to evoke the essence of the indigenous other. Specifically, the melody is

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<sup>360</sup> Stevenson early on realized that "even an Indian name [for a Mexican composition]—whether Indian themes are actually used or not—guarantees a certain type of success" (1952:44).



in simultaneity with their participation in the ritual or religious practices. Such does *not* seem to be the case for Euro-Americans interested in “Huichol shamanism,” a phenomenon also covered in a prior chapter and sometimes referred to as “whiteshamanism” in American Indian Studies.

In the United States, I know of three main people or groups of people who claim to have done some sort of “apprenticeship” with a mara‘akame and use it as a basis to conduct workshops and “healing” in the U.S. In order of entrepreneurial spirit and notoriety, they are Brant Secunda in Santa Cruz, Eliot Cowan in New York, and Tom Pinkson in northern California. Secunda and his office staff, who run shamanism.com and Shaman Chocolates, did not respond to requests for a telephone interview about the use of music in their workshops or retreats.<sup>364</sup> They did, however, sign me up for their promotional email list but I was unable to afford the thousands of dollars it would have cost for that level of participant observation. Photos on shamanism.com of retreats led by Secunda show the use of a number of Native American-style drums (but not tepu) and kaitsa rattles by attendees who are sometimes dressed in Wixárika clothing.

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<sup>364</sup> Secunda’s business dealings, which clearly capitalize on Huicholness and seem to frame Secunda as a Carlos Castaneda for the internet age, are the most suspicious of the bunch. In the coauthored book *Fit Soul, Fit Body*, Secunda, who grew up in New Jersey, is simply referred to as a “Huichol shaman.” As critiqued by Diana Negrín (2014), the Shaman Chocolates venture sells bars of “sacred” chocolate as a way of “saving” an indigenous culture “on the brink of extinction.” They purport to be saving the profits to fund “the first” “Huichol” female university student. After Negrín informed them that she knew of hundreds of Wixárika university students, they cut off communication with her. My own attempts to establish where exactly Secunda and his followers go in Mexico (via comments on their website) were initially entertained (“to the sierra”) and later ignored when pressed for details about a specific locality. It is clear that Secunda’s businesses represent the extreme lengths to which Huicholness, as a virtual object untethered to participatory Wixárika identity, can be commoditized.



Figure 98. A group led by Brant Secunda using *kaitsa* and Wixárika clothing in the United States (source: shamanism.com).

Cowan and Pinkson both granted interviews, Pinkson through direct contact, and Cowan after I arranged a time through his office assistant at the “Blue Deer Center” in the Catskills.

Both Pinkson and Cowan use music in their workshops and “ceremonies” but with slightly differing approaches. In the past, both have hosted Wixárika *mara‘akate* in the United States, but the descriptions they gave to me of those events was not anything like the music-based rituals found in the Wixárika communities. Sometimes chanting was not done at all by visiting *mara‘akate*. In other cases, chanting was associated with “medicine” ceremonies (reading peyote), but apparently with limited relation to actual hikuri rituals done in the Wixárika communities. Pinkson, who has a doctorate in psychology and does various kinds of therapy, uses what might be called Wixárika-inspired (“symbolic”) music. He has even recorded an album called *Wirikuta Blues*. For more ceremonial contexts, he described the approach in this way:

I'd say half of the songs and music that I do are either in Huichol or Spanish or English. And the rest [is] just chants. I've also spent some time in the Amazon and worked with Ayahuasceros and so [I use] song and music to call in certain spirits, certain energies to help people do their work... And the chants... are like what I've been [given] by the spirits... they just come out kind of spontaneously given the need and the situation. [NW: I'd be curious to hear that. Do you have recordings of those?] No, cause those are all in ceremonies... but [it's] just like chanting "Wirikuta, Wirikuta, Wirikuta"... "Wirikuta wakupuri"... "Wirikuta watukari"... "Wirikuta waiyari"... "Wirikuta my energy"... "Wirikuta my life, my life power, my mana, my chi"... "Huichol Holy Land." It just comes out spontaneously with the rhythm and energy that's coming through me in the moment. (Pinkson 2013)

Pinkson also uses a Wixárika tepu, a "Lakota drum," and other instruments depending on the situation. "Different songs, different energy" (Pinkson 2013).

Eliot Cowan's form of shamanism has two sides. One is with a group of "around twenty five" similar devotees called the "Tatewarí Group," who sometimes travel to study with mara'akate in Mexico. The other side includes "healing camps" that he conducts with "patients" at his Blue Deer Center. Regarding the "Tatewarí Group"...

...Almost all of the ritual songs for our group are sung in English. So this is a real novelty. It's a way into something very traditional through a slightly non-traditional door, I guess you'd say... There's a few of [the Huichol] melodies, that are considered as important for the effect of the song as the words, and for those few we still use the traditional Huichol melodies. But for most of them... there's a way of finding a melody that will carry the cadence of the English language with the same resonance... Those ritual songs, they are power objects and have very powerful spiritual effects. And it's not just something that can be sort of randomly put together out of personal inspiration. (Cowan 2013)<sup>365</sup>

Thus, it could be said that Cowan's inner group of students and practitioners approximate Wixárika melodies to a minor degree, but primarily sing in English. In "healing camps" at the Blue Deer Center, the musical approach is slightly different.

...in the healing camps there's two uses of Huichol music. One is that there's an opening ritual in which I sing... one of the songs that uses the traditional Huichol melody. And then I have I guess what you'd call a personal healing melody, which is also traditional that I often use in the healing session. It's something that also carries medicine... There's a marvelous musician who's a friend of mine, and also a [Euro-American] mara'akame... I asked him to play sacred music as an adjunct to prayer first thing in the morning and last thing at night... It's a wonderful addition to the whole thing but it's not specifically Huichol. (Cowan 2013)

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<sup>365</sup> Cowan calls songs "power objects," which is also an excellent way of understanding what I call Huicholness. Like music, Huicholness is a virtual object, intangible, but it has power and value that can be "made commensurable with money."



For the most part, Wixárika music does not transfer when Euro-Americans try to approximate “Huichol spirituality.” That conundrum is significant because in some transplanted religious practices, precise reproduction of the music is vital to the legitimacy of the practice itself, even when practiced by people of a different racial or ethnic background.<sup>366</sup> In this case, however, neither Pinkson nor Cowan utilize xaweri in the U.S., and their chanting is, by their own explanations, only an inspired approximation of what they have observed in Wixárika communities. Musical components are mostly removed for outside contexts, as are other components considered to be central to efficacious ritual in a Wixárika context.<sup>367</sup> In their stead are musical essences, perhaps symbolic (“Native-inspired”) references to the absent Wixárika. Similarly, Secunda, Cowan, and Pinkson all regularly wear Wixárika clothes in their activities, as do some of their associates and workshop attendees. In that way, the practices are not unlike the ostensibly multicultural practices mentioned above which purport to embrace “Huichol culture” but simultaneously silence (or at least avoid) the xaweri and other traditional Wixárika musical practices. The musical practices, then, in this case, mostly do not transfer when Huicholness is separated from the Wixárika people, but visual aspects remain.

### **Visual aspects of identity**

In a promotional video made by Latin Power Music for Huichol Musical (Video 24), the label makes clear the main reason a Huichol music group is important: “...above all else, groups like this maintain [música regional] as the most income-earning [*redituable*] genre of the musical

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<sup>366</sup> One good example is Afro-Cuban *Regla de Ocha*, a.k.a *Santería*, whose complete practice necessitates a ritual drumming competency adequate for spirit possession.

<sup>367</sup> Xaweri, for example, is considered essential for bull sacrifice, which is another element removed in “Huichol-inspired” practices in the U.S. Other vital components left out of the equation abroad are deer hunting and farming.

world.” They are important because their music makes money (but not only for the musicians). The video’s narrator tells us that Huichol Musical has created a “new genre” because of their “capacity to offer new rhythms.” This claim is dubitable, to put it mildly, because all of the rhythms and musical genres offered by Huichol Musical existed well before they did. What is more likely happening is a case of people hearing with their eyes. As the narrator points out, “one of the principal attractions” of Huichol Musical “is their fine dress of different showy colors.”

### *Clothing*

The clothing of Huichol music groups was the main marker of authenticity in the eyes of Mestizo clients and audiences. Sierreño groups, who tended to perform less frequently in Wixárika clothes, were often thought to be more “acculturated.” As one undergraduate Mestizo anthropology major put it, violin groups that dress in Wixárika clothes are more “original” and “clean,” in the sense that they have not been sullied by Westernization.<sup>368</sup> The reality is that some musicians play in both types of groups, putting on Wixárika clothes when playing in a violin group and Mestizo clothes in a sierreño group. Still, clothing is an assumed indicator of cultural authenticity to which Mestizos turn to evaluate Huichol music groups.

For that reason, presentation in Wixárika clothes was occasionally written into contracts with the Fonorama label and used strategically in live performances, as described by Gustavo Pereyra (2013), former requintero for Los Artesanos.

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<sup>368</sup> The student was not reporting on “what people think” but was actually stating a belief about the nature of clothing’s relation to cultural beliefs and practices. The same biases can be seen in other academic levels. De la Mora’s definition of “innovator” popular music groups (like Los Amos’s) included dressing in Mestizo clothes. In my experience, it was not hard to find Huichol violin groups that dressed the part but were less connected to Wixárika cultural practices and communities than some sierreño groups.

**GP:** [Dressing in Wixárika clothes] is a requirement that the label asks of you. Because it is that which is indigenous, that is to say, us... And it's in the contract that it says that, and one respects that.

**NW:** And when you were playing in bailes or events, did you dress in Wixárika clothes or Mestizo?

**GP:** We would decide how we would go... in Huichol outfits or dressed Mestizo [*de civil*]. We usually dressed Mestizo. There were events, like [for the] government, where we would go dressed in Huichol clothes, to be a little more, how to say it, well, like we were on the disc.

**NW:** So what was the reason to play one event in Wixárika clothes and another event in Mestizo clothes? What was the motive or reason to change?

**GP:** Well, the way we did it, when it was a baile, where people [*la raza*] went to dance, we didn't take Huichol outfits... but [played in] Mestizo outfits. And when it was another type of event, for example private events or government events, we dressed in Huichol outfits. That's how we managed it.

The interpretation of Wixárika clothes by Mestizos and Wixaritari is also sometimes reversed. Mestizos often think that the use of indigenous clothes is more authentic because they see it as the result of poverty. The reverse is actually true, as pointed out by Ukeme:

Many [Wixárika] families don't have [money] to buy a [Wixárika] outfit, or order one to be made because it's expensive these days, in this economic system, to dress Wixárika. [My Wixárika] sombrero cost me almost 1,000 pesos [\$83USD], the embroidered outfit another 2,000 or 3,000 [\$250USD], the belt that I have here another 600 [\$50USD], the huaraches 200 [\$17USD]. That is to say, when I dress like this I have [spent] some 5,000 pesos [\$417USD] or more... And I always say, with those 5,000 pesos, How many Levi's [jeans]... could you buy? Many [Mestizo] people don't know that... they think that [we are] dressed in Wixárika clothes [because] we're poor. But it costs a lot, right? (Bautista Muñoz 2013)

The cost of Wixárika clothing might be part of the reason many musicians see it as a “uniform” (*uniforme*). More than one interviewee referred to Mestizo clothes as “normal” clothes. Many interviewees wanted to know whether the interview would be video recorded so as to put on Wixárika clothes in preparation. Wixárika clothing has become so central to the image of many groups that they simply cannot wear anything else onstage without alienating Mestizo fans and clients. Domingo López of Huichol Musical believed the group would never be able to wear Mestizo clothes without changing the group's name, implying that the clothing is so essential to the identity of Huichol Musical that the group would cease to exist without it. One musician who has performed with El Venado Azul told me that he saw Wixárika clothing only as “a uniform”

and did not even enjoy wearing it. And yet, when he and I went with friends to a bar after he performed, he refused to enter because he was the only one wearing Wixárika clothes and did not want to fit the stereotype of a drunk Huichol.

As with Wixárika musicians, the use of Wixárika clothes by Mestizo musicians has various motivations, only some of which are the crass commercialization of Huicholness. Two cases illustrate more complicated Mestizo use of Wixárika clothes in musical settings. The first I observed while spending time with the group Los Rayos de Puente de Camotlán. They had come to Colotlán to perform for a graduation of Wixárika education majors and were getting ready in a hotel across the street from the auditorium. The group sometimes played in Wixárika clothes but were unsure which “style” they should go for because they had recently added a mestizo accordion player to the lineup. They eventually decided on “Wixárika style” (*estilo wixa*) at the urging of the Wixárika teacher who had driven them to Colotlán. As he put it, Wixárika style was “more badass” (*más chingón*). The group called local friends to bring them items of the outfit they had forgotten. Another had to buy new huaraches. Almost symbolically, the Wixárika outfit barely fit the Mestizo accordion player. Meanwhile, the teacher who suggested “Wixárika style” was more badass went to buy a new cowboy hat to go with his Mestizo clothes. The accordion player had never dressed in Wixárika clothes before and only did so at the group’s request. He pretended it was no big deal but later admitted to me that it felt “strange” (*raro*).

Another case was Julia Rodríguez García, one of the few females in the genre and a Mestiza who married a Wixárika man. She had taken to wearing female Wixárika outfits whenever she left her house. It was not just something for the stage, but had become a way of life, and a means of solidarity with the family and friends into which she had married. However,

her actions were not without negative reactions from some Mestizos in her town of Huejuquilla el Alto, and thus signaled a changing individual identity more than commercial strategizing:

I deeply love my [Wixárika] people... they always greet me with a lot of affection... and the Mestizo race [*raza mestiza*], tons of them know me, [and] they greet me... [But] I have seen that [wearing my Wixárika clothes] makes the Mestizo race angry because there was an occasion, a woman told me, “hey... why do you go around daily dressed like that? How is it that you go around in those outfits?,” the woman told me. “Why do you put that on? You don’t look good at all with that outfit... no... no. Put on clothes like us here.” She almost scolded me. And later she told me again, and I felt sorry for her. She was always insulting me like that. (Rodríguez García 2013)

Cases like the two above are rare, and usually would not be considered “Huichol de pirata.” In contrast, the constant use of Wixárika clothes by Mestizo groups like Banda Cohuich is more controversial amongst Wixaritari. Another is Oscar Padilla who recorded the song “El Catre” by El Venado Azul, and used the occasion to dress “estilo wixa” in the music video (Video 29). The video was filmed, apparently without ironic intent, on the shores of the Aguamilpa Dam which displaced hundreds if not thousands of Wixárika people, leaving their homes and sacred sites at the bottom of the resultant lake.

Putting on Wixárika clothes can be about actualizing Huicholness for both Wixaritari and Mestizos, but clearly not all uses of the clothing are examples of said actualization. Arguably, even a single instance of wearing a Wixárika outfit could involve all three modes/forms of identity, though one might predominate from the wearer’s standpoint, and another from the perspective of the observer. Such is the case when Wixárika musicians use Wixárika outfits as part of their music group identity—their “image”—on their album covers.

#### *Album covers*

Huichol music groups that use(d) Wixárika clothes on their album covers utilize Huicholness as much or more than they embrace participatory or presentational Wixárika

identity. CDs are, of course, presentational by nature, but they are also sold. If there were only a presentational mode of identity in operation, one might expect Huichol music groups to produce album covers in a semi-ethnographic manner in the sense that they would represent their “real lives” or the lives they left behind in the sierra. We could expect to see their sierra homelands, the group performing in a baile, or even photos of them in an urban setting. Instead, the extremely rare instances of urban settings on album covers are usually pseudo-colonial, in front of a centuries-old church or on a horse-drawn carriage of the type hired by tourists.

The most common album covers are meant to give an impression of a “natural” setting, though many were taken in urban parks and doctored afterwards to remove signs of urbanity. Many were supposed to be representations of “the sierra” but were stock photos of waterfalls or snowcapped mountains. The latter, of course, are not part of a presentational Wixárika identity because snow almost never falls in the Wixárika sierra and thus does not play a significant role in Wixárika life or worldview. The album covers generally function, then, to frame the musicians and the music with idealized and modernistic concepts of nature. In short, Huicholness means being rooted in “the past” and “in nature,” however contrived.



Figure 99. Abrazo Musical Huichol's album *Te Amo* (2012) (LEMA LR-0042).

Huichol groups are certainly not alone in presenting their products in an idealized manner. Like their mestizo counterparts in many genres, they do not intend to present their lives in a semi-ethnographic mode, but instead utilize an idealized image of Huicholness that would accommodate and encourage consumer concepts and desires. In some cases, album design was done by the record label, but I found that many musicians supplied their own photographs or requested certain types of images for their album covers. When Maximino Hernández Carrillo of Grupo Alucinantes de la Sierra requested that I do a photo shoot for his group, he made clear that even though we were shooting in Colotlán, there should not be “any houses” visible in the photos; Huicholness does not include urbanity.

One of the notable (and disconcerting) things about Huicholness is that, even though it is somewhat or entirely detached from the actual lived experiences and practices of the Wixárika people, it can be used to represent them anyway. One example is the album by Los Rayos de Puente de Camotlán. In my interview with the group's director, Lupe “Rayo” Vázquez (2013), I

asked about an odd image used on the disc and back cover of a flying horse beaded in Huichol style.

**NW:** Who chose the flying horse?

**LRV:** Well, the guy [from the recording studio] put that. He made the cover for us. We asked that he put something and, well, he put a horse.

**NW:** You asked for something like artesanías?

**LRV:** Well, no, no, actually we don't really get involved in [design] stuff... not really.

**NW:** So what did you think of the cover when it came out like that? Did you all have to go to approve the design or... it just came out like that, and that was it?

**LRV:** Right, it came out like that and that's how it stayed.

**NW:** He didn't ask?

**LRV:** No, no, it just came out like that. Well, the name "Rayos de Puente de Camotlán," we chose that and [all the rest] it was the designer. And, well, he put that horse there representing that it's a Wixárika disc.



Figure 100. Back cover of a CD by Los Rayos de Puente de Camotlán.

In this case, Huicholness was used to represent the people without their approval or input. It could be assumed that a Wixárika artesano made the flying horse figure, but did so to please his or her customers without any clear connection to Wixárika worldview. Thus, a photo of an item apparently made to satisfy the capricious and somewhat random desires of outsiders was then applied to the people themselves.



## *Videos*

Another integral element actualizing and re-defining the visual cues of Huicholness are those found in music videos. I will consider both professional music industry videos and amateur consumer-created videos on YouTube.

Huichol Musical is, again, perhaps the most visible example of music-oriented Huicholness today. The group has six professional videos made for television and online promotion, and another six lower budget videos made by the label primarily for online promotion.<sup>369</sup> Though a detailed analysis of all of them is unnecessary here, I will point out some salient themes.

One of the main themes in the Huichol Musical videos is the interplay of rural ranch life and urban globality. Their biggest hit, “Cumbia Cusinela” (Video 30), shows them performing in front of a massive metal globe sculpture, as if to suggest the importance of the group in projecting indigenous language to the rest of the world. Similarly, the video “Cumbia Napapauny” (Video 31) begins with the group performing outdoors near a row of international flags, but also shows them in a park and street market as though they were *taloneando*. Passersby look on nonchalantly. By the end of the video, the Mestizo crowd has been convinced, and the group finishes the song to the applause and hollers of the gathered crowd. In contrast, “Que Feo Se Siente” (Video 32) is the only video that shows them in a rural setting, lightheartedly singing the travails and suffering of life on the rancho. The settings reinforce, intentionally or by happenstance, an ideology in which rural life is humorously hopeless and sad, and globalization through urban laboring is success.

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<sup>369</sup> These are only official videos made by Latin Power Music. Huichol Musical has a much larger YouTube presence, though, as a result of videos made by fans, videos of their TV appearances, and videos of live performances.

Another theme in the group's videos is subservience to and desire for light-skinned Mestiza women.<sup>370</sup> In the highly successful cover "Quiero Que Me Quieras" ("I Want You To Want Me") (Video 33), the group's lead singer, Domingo López, is attracted to a Mestiza model and begins to follow her around Monterrey. He is always just a few steps behind her, almost stalking her as she boards the bus and enters a subway tunnel. The attraction apparently goes unrequited. Similarly, in "Qué Chulada de Mujer" (Video 34), Domingo López serenades a Mestiza model in shots of the group performing. In the "plot" elements of the video, he plays a lowly Latin Power Music lackey falling for the model as he opens doors for her, pours her water, and serves as her chauffeur. She completes a photo session and goes into the recording studio, as if she were a star singer recording a vocal track. Of course, in real life, the reverse is true. López is the star who recorded the vocal tracks heard in the video and the model is serving his career. But it seems easier and more believable on Mexican television to portray López as a working class indigenous underdog rather than the star that he is.

Another type of production that marshals and re-inscribes Huicholness is that made by (apparently non-Wixárika) amateur producers who post their works on YouTube. One telling example is a video made to accompany the third movement of Candelario Huizar's *Symphony Number 4* (Video 35).<sup>371</sup> Titled the "Cora" symphony, it purports to use both Cora and Wixárika melodies in the composition (Stevenson 1952:254). The video, made by YouTube user "acuario1002," makes more use of Huichol imagery than Cora. The video includes images of rural villages, peyote, yarn paintings, illustrated xaweri players from old postcards (again seen but not heard), and stills from Huichol Musical music videos. It also uses touristy snapshots of

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<sup>370</sup> In Huichol Musical's video corpus, the only appearance of Wixárika women is briefly in "Que Feo Se Siente," after a line about women left behind in the rancho, looking for love, but finding only sadness. The desire for light-skinned Mestizas is also something occasionally replicated in amateur and semi-professional Huichol music videos.

<sup>371</sup> <https://youtu.be/CQvrf58nIUE>

nature scenes, Wixaritari themselves, and artesanías apparently for sale by Wixárika vendors. The snapshots of Wixaritari are posed or voyeuristic, and even include photos of museum exhibits with mannequins dressed as Wixaritari in frozen “ritual.”

In this video, Huicholness becomes circular. Presentational identity (such as the photo of a museum exhibit) is only a partial source, not a necessary one. Here, Huicholness becomes self-sustaining, unmoored to participatory Wixárika identity. The consumer—who in this case is also the producer—seeks to represent “the source” (i.e., the Wixárika people) but focuses the lens (or the video editing software) primarily on other actualizations of Huicholness, giving old productions renewed value in a new context (e.g., the symphony itself, old Nayarit postcards, previously-produced photographs). But the lens is also focused on the consumer’s own brief transactional interactions with Wixaritari when purchasing artesanías or taking snapshots, making Huicholness as much about the consumer’s thoughts and experience of the thing as it is about the thing itself.

### **Huicholness**

The musicians of Huichol Musical contribute to the value of their music group, but they do not own the group as an intangible concept, brand, or “virtual object.” In the same way, Huicholness has value but it is not owned or entirely controlled by Wixárika people. While few people could attempt, as El Brujo did, to pirate the essence of Huichol Musical (as covered in the preceding interchapter), Huicholness is actualized by a seemingly endless number of people, Wixárika or not.

In non-musical tangible commodities and products, examples of the use of Huicholness are innumerable: Salsa Huichol, Shampoo Huichol (with romanticized Plains Indian image),

tequila packaging with yarn painting motifs, peyote pomade from an “authentic Kora formula” but with a Wixárika xaweri player on the label.<sup>372</sup>



Figure 101. The tequila packaging reads “This original and limited edition is a respectful homage to OUR CULTURE: Inspired by HUICHOL ART” (emphasis in original).

But Huicholness is not just an image on tangible products. It is also used as an essence to construct or enhance other essences, actualized intangibly or tangibly. The state of Nayarit and its capital, Tepic, use motifs from yarn paintings to form their visual aesthetic, primarily for tourism and place-branding purposes. For the 2011 Pan-American games in Guadalajara, three cartoon-like mascots were created, one of which was a pink female deer creature named

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<sup>372</sup> Mestizos, especially in Nayarit, are often not very skilled at distinguishing between Nayeri (Cora) and Wixárika people. Many people in Nayarit like to believe they “are Cora,” apparently because the state’s name is a reference to the Nayeri people. Facebook comments on the Huichol Musical page often ask things along the lines of “I’m Cora, could you tell me the difference between Cora and Huichol people?” In Jalisco, some people refer to all indigenous people as “Huicholitos,” using *Huichol* as a synonym for *indigenous*.

“Huichi.” Huichi’s official web page described her as enjoying a number of specific sports in addition to “posing.”



Figure 102. Huichi posing (source: <http://mascotas.guadalajara2011.org.mx/huichi>).

Huicholness can even be actualized without the usual visual motifs. Consider, for example, a cocktail called “Huichol Smoky Spirit,” created by a bartender in an upscale bar in Moscow. In a YouTube video promoting the bar (Video 36), the bartender performs a “mystical ritual” by burning woodchips and serving the smoke as an aromatic accompaniment to his tequila-based drink. He describes the “main message” of his cocktail as the “mysterious culture of Huichol people and the wonderful imagination of one’s myths.” He urges us to drink his creation as a way to “get in touch with ancient culture.” The wonderful imagination of our myths, indeed. But Huicholness is not just consumed by outsiders. Salsa Huichol can be found in the homes of many Wixárika people without irony of any sort. Huicholness can circle back and inform participatory Wixárika identity, at least to some small but important degree.



Figure 103. Levels and circularity of the gaze.

In the musical realm, Huicholness is used to enhance the image of many Mestizo music groups. The actualization is usually not musical sound per se, but visual and associative, with Banda Cohuich being an extreme. Some Mestizo music groups utilize Huicholness in their very name, such as the rock band La Wixárika or the electro-experimental group Wicholly Broders from Mexico City. The groups often use Huichol visual motifs in their promotional efforts, as is also the case for the Guadalajara-based progressive rock group Movus. The group used both Wixárika and English for their album title *Maxa Firekeeper* (2010) and used Wixárika-themed designs in both their album cover and stage shows, including fog machines that gave a misty, mystical feel to the tree branches and deer props onstage.



Figure 104. Website and album art used for *Maxa-Firekeeper* (source: [www.movus.com.mx](http://www.movus.com.mx)).

Huicholness also enhances the value of Huichol music groups, whether by their own choice or otherwise. Huichol Musical’s description on iTunes and allmusic.com, which is replicated on numerous websites and promotional materials, claims that the Aztecs called the “Huichol” people “the Ancient Ones,” erroneously framing them as the rootsy forebears of one of the world’s most famous Others. In another unusual example, Renovado Huichol created a promotional video for their group with a booming movie-trailer-style voiceover describing Huichol culture (Video 37). Not until the very end of the video does it become clear that its purpose is to promote Renovado Huichol. As with the Latin Power Music “documentary” mentioned above, the “Wixárika musical culture” was represented entirely by popular music, leaving out “traditional” music altogether.

The use of Huicholness by Wixaritari is often a conscious and strategic decision, but can be accompanied by profound misgivings or downright guilt. Even for those who would prefer to avoid the commercial use of the “Huichol image,” its pull can be unavoidable. The heart of the matter came up in discussion with Jacko of Los Amos’s de la Sierra. At the time I interviewed

him, he had left Los Amos's and was finding success with his group R5 Sierreño (pronounced Requito Sierreño), performing only in Mestizo clothing.

**NW:** For me, what's interesting is that your group R5 Sierreño... you can't say that you're selling the Wixárika image... you don't use the image of the culture in that way. But both groups [R5 Sierreño and Huichol Musical]... live outside of the sierra.

**Jacko:** Yeah... probably Huichol Musical's label thought things through well... in that case what sells, what creates earnings, is... the name and the outfits. That's the biggest attraction there. We could say it's like a circus, right? ... Because [my group R5 Sierreño], we don't go around dressed like that. It's as if we were to say that we don't value our culture to generate income. But to generate earnings, if we wanted to, we could also do it, right? Dress in [Wixárika] outfits, and even put it in the logotype: R5 Sierreño Huichol or Grupo Huichol R5 Sierreño.

**NW:** A logo with beadwork.

**Jacko:** Yeah, with beads and all that, but I don't know. It's as if it would be a little... what would be the word? Well, betrayal of our... I don't know. It makes me uncomfortable [*me da cosa*]. It's a huge issue. And not to opt for that, one also loses. One loses, well, lots of income. Whether we like it or not, it's something that allows you to earn. I say [when you embrace that] it's not so much that the people like your music or that they like the way you sing. It's more like a circus. They go just to see you and see your outfit and how you play, but not to listen. It's really odd. I prefer that there be few people who listen to my music and little by little they realize that I'm Wixárika than [say] "I'm Huichol"... to be forced to fit myself to the pleasures of the people, dressing in my nice [Wixárika] outfit... in the end, I'd know that it's that which attracts them, right? And not what [I'm] singing, or the music. But I am going to do it in the future. I'm going to go out [onstage] with our outfits, so that you see how it's that which lifts it up more... in the market, and it opens more doors. Just like other things, it's a sold image, and it sells very well. [laughter] (de la Cruz Velázquez 2013)

Approximately six months after our interview, Jacko made good on his prophetic words. He became a full and prominent member of Huichol Musical, signing with Latin Power Music. He put on his Wixárika clothes again, not in an experimental, hybrid way as he sometimes did with Los Amos's, but to join "the circus," as he put it. Today, he is the face of that "circus," the center of the "sold image" he earlier critiqued, and who could blame him?

One danger of trading on Huicholness, especially leaving the sierra to do so, is that one's individual participatory Wixárika identity potentially becomes indistinguishable from—or replaced by—a commodity form of the identity. Yuawi López, the young son of José López of El Venado Azul, competed on the televised talent show "Academia Kids LALA," something like an American Idol for Mexican children. Each contestant, after singing a number of songs on the



show, was presented with a CD compilation of their performances with a title meant to portray something about the participant. The producers named Yuawi's CD *Huicholeando* (Huicholing), which implies the creation of the verb "to Huichol" (*Huicholear*). Ukeme took the verb to mean something like "playing" (*jugando*), as in "playing Huichol." Unlike the usual "playing Indian," in this case the "Indian" plays himself. But the verb *huicholear* also seems a lot like *talonear*, implying labor. Unlike labor as a commodity, though, which is sold in chunks of time partitioned from the rest of the day, the labor of Huicholing can become coterminous with one's very being, and thus the self becomes the commodity, and the commodity the self.

## **Conclusion**

A common point of confusion in the literature on identity is whether it is about interpretation or representation. It must include both, and my definition and tripartite model of identity have attempted to account for that by showing how identity has different interrelated modes, which imply differing subject and context positions of representation and interpretation. The definition of identity here is concept-based and thus, like the identity of a music group, the identity of a people is repertoire-like, composed of numerous elements. Just like musicians and their fans have different preferences for particular parts of the repertoire, and some parts of the repertoire more readily represent the group to outsiders, so do the different modes of identity emphasize certain elements over others. In other words, the particular elements that constitute a concept of Wixárika/Huichol identity, will depend upon the positionality and context of the person doing the interpreting and/or representing. Not all representations and interpretations of Wixárika identity are commodities, but some elements of participatory and presentational identity have what Appadurai (1986) called "commodity candidacy," which can be extracted or

distilled to form part of Huicholness. But in identity's commodity form, the production knowledge "read into" the commodity versus the consumption knowledge "read from" the commodity can be distinct (Appadurai 1986:41).

The elements that constitute an identity concept will depend on its mode, and generally a decreasing number of elements are included when moving from participatory to presentational to commercial modes of identity. There is a distillation across the modes. The participatory mode might include elements like particular dialects of Wixárika, clothing variations particular to a certain community, specific participatory actions in rituals, participation in community assembly, and maintaining land in a Wixárika community. The commercial mode, on the other hand, loses detail and elements to focus on flattened "Huichol language" and clothing, artesanías, peyote, generic "ancientness," and nondescript "ritual." In the commercial mode, such elements are actualized within the normal practices of the interpreters, giving a suggestion of difference from a firm base of comfortable familiarity (e.g., música regional, Western music harmony, spirituality, cocktails). For that reason, then, the sonic element of Huicholness for Mestizos is not primarily the xaweri which, when visibly present at all, is often silenced. Instead, it suggests Huicholness within música regional.

The "treated" and partial essence of a people is much easier for outsiders to comprehend and "appreciate" than actual cultural practices, instead indulging "a-critically in mild difference" (Taylor 2007:126).<sup>373</sup> The importance of music for *participatory* identity might be part of the reason. In music, non-capitalist social relations might be harder to hide. Only El Brujo could pirate Huichol Musical as a concept because he was already seen as a member. He fit visually, but was also musically competent. But someone considered "Huichol de pirata" actualizes Huicholness with limited components (colorful clothing and "spirituality") more than the cultural

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<sup>373</sup> Taylor's quote was in reference to a similar take by Guillermo Gómez-Peña.

practices that constitute participatory Wixárika identity (deer hunting, subsistence farming, playing *xaweri*, *teixatsika*). Huicholness as public essence more readily obviates non-capitalist social relations, maybe by necessity. Anyone can put on Wixárika clothing, but only some people have a family member make the clothing for them or put in the order for it by using the Wixárika language. In the way that alienation must be built into the commodity (Tsing 2013), so does the commercial mode of identity get separated from the people it ostensibly represents.

And yet, there is still the option to critique, if not veto, Huicholness from the participatory mode of identity to which it is only scantily linked. A person who operates entirely or primarily in the Huicholness mode is “Huichol de pirata” if they cannot convincingly claim a participatory Wixárika identity. In that way, accusations of piracy or illegitimacy can be made against outsiders (“whiteshamans”) as well as those who could be considered insiders (El Brujo and “half disqualified” artesanos). Conversely, one whose “biology” or “race” might seem to disqualify them can become Wixárika if they are perceived to be legitimately operating in its participatory mode of identity (Pedro de Haro).<sup>374</sup>

The Wixaritari who financially capitalize on Huicholness, as seen in the previous chapter, are often those who are most rapidly losing their connection to *tayeyari*, the “customs” that determine participatory Wixárika identity within the Wixárika communities. By separating themselves from the practices deemed ethically valuable in the Wixárika communities, what comes to be central is the economic value of the ethnic identity (*ethnic value?*). In some cases, the people themselves can cease to represent participatory Wixárika identity and instead embody Huicholness, becoming not the source so much as a living representation of the representation.

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<sup>374</sup> The late Pedro de Haro was born Mestizo but grew up as a Wixárika. He was involved in the artesanías trade, but no one called him “Huichol de pirata” because his participatory mode of Wixárika identity was unassailable.

## Chapter 7. Conclusion

*There is a stereotype about the “savage” who is afraid that a camera  
will steal his soul. It will, indeed, and much more—as will the tape  
recorder, the typewriter, and the video cassette.  
—Wendy Rose (1984)*

*It could be a bomb or a bullet or a pen  
Or a thought or a word or a sentence...  
I don't know why I say the things that I say  
But I say them anyway  
—Brett Dennen*

Being the first to write extensively about Wixárika/Huichol music in English has come with a number of challenges and responsibilities. While introducing a “new” musical area in the English-language literature, I also strove to contribute to the excellent Spanish-language scholarship that preceded my work. My theoretical tack, however, brings a different set of considerations into a Huicholista corpus that has primarily focused on the ritual domain, broadly construed. My approach has been instead to focus on the intersections of identity and political economy, and the role of ethnographers and other outsiders in that milieu.

The first two main chapters (Chapters 2 and 3) were admittedly lengthy presentations of “traditional Wixárika music” and popular Huichol music groups, respectively. Chapter 2 focused on current musics called “traditional” by Spanish-speaking Wixaritari, and investigated some of the nuances of Wixárika vocabulary surrounding musical practices. Though the Wixaritari are often thought to be “tenacious” or “zealous” in guarding their “customs,” they, like all people, are susceptible to outside influences that can either enrich or eclipse previous practices. That premise makes me, unlike some previous authors, reluctant to issue proclamations about the unquestionable survival and sustainability of unique Wixárika cultural practices in perpetuity. The *guerra de sonidos* is alive and well.

Chapter 3 historicized today's popular Huichol music group phenomenon, looking especially at the histories of highly influential groups such as Los Teopa, El Venado Azul, Los Amos's de la Sierra, and Huichol Musical, among others. I tried, as much as possible, to give the histories with the (translated) words of the musicians themselves. I ended the chapter with a rejection of the term "traditional mariachi" for such groups or, for that matter, the uncritical scholarly use of genre names in general. Though I did not explicitly bring the question to the foreground, the chapter is evidence of the different regimes of value operating behind acts of genrefication.

Chapter 4 highlighted aspects of musical labor and commodification. Musicians leave the sierra not just to pursue their "art," but also to make money "to survive" and feed their families. Like artesanos and students, musicians often leave the sierra in an attempt to *salir adelante* (get ahead), acquiescing to a strong ideology of capitalistic accumulation, what in the U.S. we might call the "American Dream." The terms *salir* (go out, leave) and *adelante* (ahead, forward, onward) also have seemingly tragic nuances that reveal the musician's path as one of leaving behind a sierra upbringing in an attempt to have a "better" life than those who stay in the sierra as peasant farmers. By their own standards, they sometimes succeed, but like many migrant workers, it is not entirely without remorse for the unexpected severity of multi-generational cultural change.

Wixárika musicians and artesanos have benefitted from waiting markets at the other end of the roads that now reach them in the sierra. Both the markets and the roads are partially the result of the work of anthropologists and other ethnographers. Chapter 5 therefore investigated the formation of a commercial mode of identity over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, what I call Huicholness. The formation of Huicholness was not just "for science" but also so that outsiders

could know and consume it. Eventually unlinked from the ethnographic presentational mode of identity, Huicholness also becomes about knowing *through* consumption. In addition to those researchers who were forming Huicholness for outside audiences, professional applied anthropologists in Mexico were opening up the sierra itself through intentionally assimilative “breaches” (*brechas*) meant to end the relative economic independence of the Wixárika people. Chapter 5 also compared Huicholistas with Huicholeros, showing some of their differences in production to be mostly a question of taste. In their books and the “centers” where they might profess alternative modes of thinking, the Huicholistas and Huicholeros might aspire to a critique of capitalist culture, but both actively participate in it.

Chapter 6 was a culmination of the concepts of identity and its commodification, showing how Wixárika/Huichol identity means different things from different subject positions and in different contexts. The chapter focused on musical and non-musical elements that are removed, replaced, silenced, or simply invented in a move from participatory to presentational to commercial modes/forms of identity. Identity, like music, is *not always* a commodity, but both have “commodity candidacy” (Appadurai 1986). The move towards true commodity status is primarily a process of distillation, often making familiar music seem different through forms of suggestion, especially visual. Ultimately, an “essence” is easier to separate from a people than actual cultural practices, but once separated that essence becomes public and up for the associative whim of anyone wishing to actualize Huicholness in any product or commodity.

Throughout this dissertation, I have relied on a tripartite model of identity that moves beyond thinking of the identity of a people as singular and solely based on the people and their cultural practices. I have attempted to draw out some primary differences in the modes/forms of identity and how they interface and overlap. The advantage of this tripartite model is that it

moves away from a particular obstacle within the paradox outlined by John and Jean Comaroff (2009). By considering different modes of identity, one does not fall into the trap of thinking that the mediated and commercialized “image” of a people is the same as the people themselves. That is the heuristic value of my model, I believe, because it facilitates an analysis of the types of interactions between the modes/forms of identity, how they differ, and who is responsible for those differences.

One problem with any model is that it can be perceived as too static. The act of describing the elements of identity modes—their repertoires—potentially ossifies them. That is not my intent. To the contrary, I agree that identity is “prospective” and that “the ruling symbols of our [modes of] identity derive not only from our present and our past but also from our expectations for the future” (Ricoeur 1986:311). For that reason, I have tried to show that elements taken for granted as “historical” (like “traditional music”) are often newly composed. Conversely, I have presented historical data regarding the formation of today’s Huichol popular music “of the moment.” Huicholness has not always included popular music, but today it is one of its major elements, revealing forms of identity to be actualizations within larger, shifting, and “prospective” modalities.

Since the first page, I have shown that commercial forms of identity are often predicated upon presentational forms, especially ethnographic ones. At the risk of introducing new data in a conclusion, I would like to sum up the thrust of that argument with one final, exceptional example.

The upscale mall in Guadalajara known as Andares is more impressively luxurious than any mall in the richest enclaves of Southern California. In that mall there is a store called El Nierika, taking its name from Wixárika ritual implements and “visionary powers” that connect

seen and unseen realms. El Nierika sells accouterments for urban hipster fashion, focusing especially on footwear like Vans skate shoes (a simple pair of which could sell for around \$90USD). Occasionally the store sells Vans shoes and other fashion items with one-off embroidered or beaded flare in the Huichol style, but they do not sell “Huichol” things, and especially not artesanías, which could be seen as “low brow” in that context. Nevertheless, the branding of the name evokes Huicholness.



**Figure 105. Detail of El Nierika’s store window in the Centro Comercial Andares. In addition to deer-people who wear fashionable sweaters, the window paintings once included the above. In place of a deer face—a highly potent nierika often used in desiccated form in Wixárika ritual—is branded footwear (2010–09–03).**

In early iterations of El Nierika’s website (c2010), they defined the word *nierika* (and their brand by extension) as such: “Nierika means to see, to be awake, to be alive, to be conscious. Nierika is the knowledge that transcends the superficial perception of things.” Their definition was plagiarized directly from longer definitions written by linguist José Luis Iturrioz Leza. Iturrioz Leza’s writing itself had two prior actualizations from which the owners of El Nierika might have lifted the text. The most likely source of the store’s “inspiration” was the didactic that accompanied the massive Huichol yarn-painting mural by José Benítez Sanchez, “La Semilla del Mundo,” in the Juarez subway station in Guadalajara. The same text also



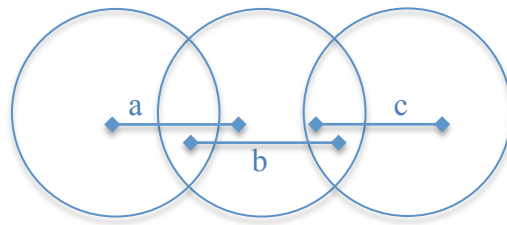
appeared in a book meant to accompany the installation of the mural (Pacheco Salvador and Iturrioz Leza 2003). The book included an introduction by the Secretary of Culture of the state of Jalisco. As she put it, “La Semilla del Mundo is a clear example that to foment... the appreciation and promotion of popular and indigenous cultural expressions, permits us to strengthen and rediscover ourselves as Mexicans, in that... they constitute the deepest root of our identity” (González Luna 2003:12).

Here, state apparatuses commissioned Benítez to draw from his participatory identity as a Wixárika person and mara‘akame to create a massive presentational form of Wixárika/Huichol identity. The effort also marshaled intellectuals to further enrich the presentational form through explication (the book and didactic placard), all framed not so much as something to further the cause of the Wixaritari but to enrich an indigenist ideology of national identity. But through definition, translation, and presentation, the concept also became public (in public spaces and *publication*). It was only a short, easy move for it to become Huicholness, hijacked from its presentational form in public spaces for private ends. The surplus of ethical value created via participatory and presentational modes was pirated to enhance the economic value of the store’s brand.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> It might also be fair to say that the scholarly action itself is the act of piracy, not just the plagiarism for commercial purposes. Legal proceedings in the U.S. show that it is not just those who download illegally produced recordings online who commit an act of piracy, but also those who make them available for public access. The analogy fits with the exception that, ideally, all researchers should be getting permission to do what they do from the Wixárika communities. The reality is that even when they have permission for fieldwork, not every single publication will go through a process of prior approval.

### Participatory / Presentational / Commercial



**Figure 106.** A visualization of the modes/forms of identity where (a) represents “La Semilla del Mundo,” (b) the scholarly presentation of it through books and didactics, and (c) the “pirated” definition of *nierika* by the store El Nierika. The presentational form serves as the essential bridge between worlds, itself a *nierika*.

When ethnographers look at a store like El Nierika, in some sense they are actually seeing a *nierika*. The store is a visage that shows them another realm, the essence of which exists only because they do. The store literally took its definition—the substance of its brand (if it can be called that)—from scholarly works. In that way, ethnography and other practices that pertain to the realm of presentational identity *are themselves* *nierikas*, with potent visionary abilities to mediate realms. They are science and sorcery (Palmié 2002). But upscale fashion stores are not the only ones who sell Huicholness. Ethnography might be a presentational mode of Wixárika identity, but ethnographies are candidates to become commodities. I have heard dissertations referred to as “goldmines” that “must be published” (for tenure, of course). Ethnographic books, perhaps like all capitalist commodities, “come into value by using—and obviating—non-capitalist social relations, human and non-human” (Tsing 2013:21). According to Tsing, that happens through assessment in the commodity chain, a notion familiar to anyone passingly knowledgeable about the process from dissertation proposal to published book.

But what does it matter? Some Wixaritari are already participating in global capitalism, and those in the ethnographic fields have long known that what we do in the field affects “the field” itself. That we as outsiders introduce change, if even slightly or accidentally, is almost expected. But what sort of change are we really talking about, and to what degree?

Most people who do ethnography have come to terms with the likelihood that they induce minor changes in the lives of their collaborators simply by being present and taking (or sharing) some of their time. I think most people who do ethnography believe that they are no longer pawns of colonial imperialism simply because colonialism does not officially exist in the way it did before. We are not answering to administrators of a colony in which we are working.<sup>376</sup> But the long-term effects of the presence of ethnographers and the various, sometimes uncontrollable uses of their work have not been sufficiently investigated to the extent that they can be seen as a “soft power” for cultural imperialism of a capitalist bent, especially when it comes to historically non-capitalist indigenous peoples. That is not to say we ethnographer-types are always directly or solely responsible for the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into a capitalist system, but our actions are inextricable from that system.

My own work has already become involved in the inadvertent connection of ethnography with commercial processes. Latin Power Music, the record label of Huichol Musical, has used my YouTube videos (uploaded to compare the popularity of two different songs) as part of their online promotions. They subscribed to my YouTube “channel” in hopes of more Huichol Musical videos that they could use in their social networking promotions. Once or twice, they contacted me to see when I would be completing my dissertation and whether I might send them a copy. In short, my work, despite my intentions and preferences, has been and probably will be used in the future to add economic value to Huicholness.

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<sup>376</sup> Many scholars who embrace critical thought would agree that English teachers and business people sent out to work in the rest of the world by the U.S. government could easily be thought of as serving the strategic interests of the U.S. and its place in global capitalism. The Fulbright-IEE program sends those two types of people abroad and one other. The third type is people like me. That is not to say that all Fulbright scholars are unwitting tools of U.S.-centric global capitalism, but if they were directly and efficaciously working against it, they probably would not be there.

At the same time, my work might also have some historical value for the Wixaritari. Measuring and comparing the potential economic and ethical value of my work in order to ascertain “who I’m really working for” is probably impossible. Over the long run, to what degree might my work support the Wixaritari and their desires compared to my own personal desires and those of various “markets” (of ideas, artesanías, music)? Likewise, to what extent would teaching my findings in an educational setting advance the sovereignty and political power of the Wixaritari versus the economic value of Huicholness? To come to a decision about these matters, it feels as though one would need some metric with which to better understand the totality of what is really happening. Of course, no such metric exists, and it could probably never be created. However, without it, I am left with an awful ambivalence regarding the nature, results, and purpose of work like this.

Many with a development mindset say they want “to help” others. In the case of Huicholness, the logic is that you can ostensibly “keep an entire culture alive” by purchasing [insert commodity here]. Many with academic training in critical thought, myself included, see that approach either as naïve complicity with the assimilation it purports to resist or, worse, as an active participant in it. It is worth entertaining the idea that ethnographers and their ilk are equally duping themselves, at least sometimes, into thinking that our actions are a net good for the Wixaritari. We, like the Huicholeros, are incapable of extricating ourselves from the capitalist system in which we operate. Indeed, many scholars have already made the critique that research is rarely designed with the desires of the “subjects” of that research in mind, much less with their collaboration in the research design. Instead, researchers generally follow their own intellectual fancies, acting primarily on their own social motivations, with one central pragmatic being career advancement. Such is not a recipe for helping anyone other than ourselves.

Ultimately, what I mean to suggest is that the means and the ends are at least partially complicit. The products of our labor, which are often commodities, are complicit. Put less allusively, *we* are complicit.<sup>377</sup> For that reason, the subtitle of this dissertation is *Construction and Commodification of an Indigenous Identity*. Construction and commodification of identity are not only the subjects of the study, but also likely part of its results.

Some scholars in Native American Studies have referred to the commodification of Indigenous identities as a form of cultural imperialism, playing a “diversionary role” that extends the oppression of indigenous peoples while simultaneously diverting attention away from it (Whitt 1995). While those critiques are usually lodged against the “whiteshamans” and New Agers, I suggest they might also sometimes be directed at ethnographers. The difference, though, is the potential for self-critique, as I am obviously trying to draw attention to the issue here. I agree with anthropologist Stephan Palmié who cautioned that scholarship is “deeply misguided unless we are willing to cultivate sufficient awareness of just what exactly it is that we may bring into the world by doing so” (Palmié 2013:260). Here, identity as a commodity is about the coalescence of an essence, but it does not coalesce on its own, in a vacuum, free of outsider and insider influence. The essence is coalesced, but the verb must be active for critical cut. Myriad people coalesce the essential concepts behind identity, and for myriad reasons, but in a capitalist system their actions and outcomes, intentionally or otherwise, are permeated from beginning to end with capitalist structures and expectations.

In non-technical terms, this conclusion might seem like a real downer so far. And yet, I still hold out some hope. The presentational and commercial forms of Wixárika/Huichol identity might potentially be harnessed by the Wixaritari to support their own participatory Wixárika identity, political agendas, and sovereignty. In other words, the popularity of Huicholness might

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<sup>377</sup> By “we” I mean just about everyone who might ever read these words.

have its own surplus value that could be rerouted to rejuvenate participatory Wixárika identity. Winning municipal elections and the protection of sacred lands are just a couple of instances where it might not hurt to have a well-known presence in the mass media. On the other hand, the elections could be simply the result of majority-rule, and the increased aid to communities could be merely a state strategy to avoid another Zapatista-like crisis. The “publicity” can also backfire, creating racist reactions. One Mestizo businessman neighbor in Colotlán casually expressed his opinion that the “Huicholes” were “the most spoiled people of Mexico” because, in his view, they received so much “support [*apoyo*] for their customs.”<sup>378</sup>

The reality is that the state’s embrace of Huicholness often masks the disenfranchisement suffered by actual Wixaritari. In places like Tepic, the “hypervisibility of the Wixaritari as targets of ethnic tourism” hides their “simultaneous restriction from spaces of quotidian visibility like city plazas” (Negrín da Silva 2012:144). Something similar exists for the musicians in this study. Along with artesanos, musicians are the most visible Wixaritari in the Mestizo world, but their presence means they are often “lacking” (*faltando*) in their commitments in the sierra, leading some of their brethren in the sierra to denigrate them as “half disqualified” Wixaritari. But the musicians are not simply duped into embracing new ideologies. Many are remorsefully aware of the conflict playing out in their alliances and in their hearts. They are aware of their predicament in the same way I am aware of mine. The question seems to become one of agency, though that topic is best left for the sequel.

What is a Wixárika musician to do if he or she recognizes the conflict inherent in their pursuits? The same could be asked of the ethnographer. The Wixárika musician could pull up their urban roots and return to the sierra to become subsistence farmers again, practicing fully

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<sup>378</sup> The government support of “customs” is patent in instances like Mezquitic’s municipal support of peregrinations to Wirikuta. Such support pales in comparison, though, to the number of government pesos poured into Mestizo “customs.”

their ritual customs. It would entail less income and a rejection of the comforts of urban “civilization.” It would mean taking their children out of the schools that were one of the main reasons to stay in an urban location to begin with. The ethnographer could choose *not* to publish, and therefore “perish.” In fact, the ethnographer could choose, like the Wixárika musician, to become a subsistence farmer and reject the whole mess. In that way, the ethnographer shares the predicament of the Wixárika musician. They realize their predicament but feel incapacitated to change course. After all, they might be good at what they are doing. Despite any room for a modicum of resistance, both will likely keep doing what they are doing, along for a ride on the riptide of social expectation and the urge to salir adelante.

## Appendix of Songs

### “Cumbia Cusinela” by José López Robles (Audio 34)

#### Performed by El Venado Azul on *Viejo Pero no Espoleado* (2006, Discos Fonorama CD-307)

(Transcribed by Jorge López Solís and Ernesto Hernández Bautista. Translated to Spanish by Ernesto Hernández Bautista and Nolan Warden, and to English by Nolan Warden.)

(Akusi akusi kusinela, ne ne kwewiet̃ kusinela...  
J̃j̃j̃iu)<sup>379</sup>  
(Saludos para todas las mujeres del mundo)

(Wait, wait *kusinela*, wait for it/me kusinela... Yoo  
hoo)<sup>380</sup>  
(Greetings to all the women of the world)

[1]  
Ay kusinela kwipetemaik̃ kwitemalime pemuyemate  
tsal̃ papat̃ warikari ‘ima kwitarai tsuira.

[1]  
Ay, pretty kusinela, you know how to make those  
cooked, stuffed, thick tortillas by hand

[2]  
Yeumieme nekwametsitaunie ‘atsulitsie pe  
‘anukwaxiyat̃ niwa ‘ikam̃ ‘a ‘ima kataku ‘utixere

[2]  
That’s why I want you all to myself, your nose is  
sweating [from chili pepper]; come and have some so  
that they don’t get cold

[3]  
pemutaine yeumie nekwametsitaunie nekusinela *tsita*  
*tsita tsita pine pine pine* petiupine yeumieme  
nekwametsitaunie nekusinela

[3]  
That’s why you say, that’s why I don’t want to let go  
of you, my kusinela [sound of *torteando*<sup>381</sup>] that’s  
how you *tortear*, that’s why I don’t want to let you  
go, my kusinela

(He... he... hetse kusinela. Paparios. J̃j̃j̃iu)

(Ah... ah... achoo kusinela. Thanks. Yoo hoo)

[coro]  
Kusinela, kusinela, kwitemaik̃  
Kwitemaik̃, kwitemaik̃, kusinela [5x] (J̃j̃j̃iu)

[chorus]  
Kusinela, kusinela, pretty  
Pretty, pretty, kusinela (Yoo hoo)

(Saludos para las panaderas y panaderos del mundo...  
akusi, akusi kusinela...)

(Greetings to all the bread bakers of the world... hold  
on, hold on kusinela)

[1]  
Ay kusinela kwipetemaik̃ kwitemalime pemuyamate  
tsal̃ papat̃ warikari ‘ima kwitarai tsuira

[1]  
Ay, pretty kusinela, you know how to make those  
cooked, stuffed, thick tortillas by hand

[2]  
Yeumieme nekwametsitaunie atsulitsie pe  
‘anukwaxiyat̃ niwa ‘ikam̃ ‘a ‘ima kataku ‘utitsinare

[2]  
That’s why I want you all to myself, your nose is  
sweating [from chili pepper]; come and have some so  
that they don’t get sour

[3’]  
pemutaine yeumie nekwametsitaunie nekusinela ek̃  
ts̃i pe ‘axãta *pine pine pine* t̃x̃ t̃x̃ t̃x̃ petiupine  
nekusinela

[3’]  
That’s why you say, that’s why I don’t want to let go  
of you, my kusinela, you’re a unique one, [sound of  
*torteando*] grind it, grind it, grind it like that my  
kusinela

(He... he... hetse kusinela. Pamparios. J̃j̃j̃iu...)

(A... a... achoo kusinela. Thanks. Yoo hoo...)

<sup>379</sup> *J̃j̃j̃iu* is Jorge’s orthography, though Wixárika does not technically have the <j>.

<sup>380</sup> The word *kusinela* (and its orthographic variant *kusinela*) is a Wixárika pronunciation of the Spanish word *cocinera* (female cook).

<sup>381</sup> *Torteando* is pounding out tortillas in the hands.



## “Tsinari (Pemumate)” (Audio 56)

Performed by Conjunto Teemari.

(Transcription and Spanish translation by Ukeme Oscar Bautista Muñoz. English translation by Nolan Warden.)

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Tsepa tsipeka ane<br>Ne nekametseu taunie<br>Ne nemetseu kwuerie<br>Tsepa peka kwaiwa | Aunque digan que no estas bonita<br>yo no te deajo<br>yo te quiero solo para mi<br>aunque no sea comible | Though they say you're not pretty<br>I won't leave you<br>I want you all to myself<br>Even though you're not edible |
|---|--|---|

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Pemika airaxie<br>Meripai pemu keka<br>pemiwara iwa<br>naime petimate | Tu no eres floja<br>te levantas muy temprano<br>tu les ganas (a las otras mujeres)<br>sabes todo | You're not lazy<br>You get up very early<br>You outshine them (the other women)<br>You know it all |
|---|--|--|

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Tsinari pemumate<br>hamuitsi pemumate<br>chipetiu xakwitsa<br>chipetiu tetsuta | Sabes hacer <i>tsinari</i><br>sabes hacer atole<br>haces bonito nixtamal<br>haces bonitos tamales | You know how to make <i>tsinari</i><br>You know how to make <i>atole</i><br>You make pretty <i>nixtamal</i><br>You make pretty <i>tamales</i> |
|--|---|---|

[requinto]

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Tsepa pemeu mamawe<br>nekametseu taunie<br>ne nemetseu kwuerie<br>tsepa peka kwaiwa | Aunque andes descalza<br>yo no te deajo<br>yo te quiero solo para mi<br>aunque no seas comible | Even though you go barefoot<br>I won't leave you<br>I want you all to myself<br>Even though you're not edible |
|---|--|---|

[repeat 2nd and 3rd verse]

[requinto]

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Tsepa memuhehewa<br>memes xanierie<br>ne nemetseu kwuerie<br>tsepa pekwa kwaiwa | Aunque algunas hablen<br>celosas de ti<br>yo te quiero solo para mi<br>aunque no seas comible | Even though some speak<br>jealous of you<br>I want you all to myself<br>Even though you're not edible |
|---|---|---|

[repeat 2nd and 3rd verse]

**“El Huichol 100%” by Luciano López (Audio 55)**

**Performed by Lobo Negro on *La Flor de Bancos* (2004, Three Sound Records, TSRC491).**

Cien por ciento soy huichol  
Nacido en la pura sierra  
Uso vestido huichol  
Cuando yo me voy a pasear  
A mi lindo capital  
que es lindo Guadalajara

I'm 100% Huichol  
Born in the pure sierra  
I use Huichol dress [clothing]  
When I'm going out on town  
In my lovely capital  
Which is lovely Guadalajara

Desde joven fui muy pobre  
Pero lleno de ilusiones  
Cuando cumplí los diez años  
Ya cantaba mis canciones  
Por diferentes estados  
Paseándome en los camiones

From a young age I was very poor  
But full of dreams  
When I turned ten years old  
I was already singing my songs  
In different states  
Going around in the busses

A la edad de dieciocho años  
Me encontré un buen amigo  
Pasamos los cinco años  
Disfrutando de la vida  
Parrandiando en las cantinas  
Con mujeres consentidas

At the age of eighteen  
I found a good friend  
We spent five years  
Enjoying life  
Partying in the cantinas  
With spoiled women

Que bonitos son Huicholes  
Cuando toman en sus fiestas  
Como fiestas patronales  
Bailamos con candidatas  
Que bonitas son las reinas  
Cuando se ponen malditas

How beautiful are the Huichols  
When they drink in their *fiestas*  
Like patron saint feasts  
We dance with the candidates  
How pretty are the queens  
When they get a little bad

A las Huicholas morenas  
Yo las traigo en mi memoria  
Como San Miguel Huaixtita  
Tu tienes muchas morenas  
También San Andrés Cohamiata  
Me he paseado con La Blanca

The dark-skinned Huichol women/girls  
I carry them in my memory  
Like in San Miguel Huaixtita  
You've got a lot of dark-skinned ones  
Also San Andrés Cohamiata  
I've gone out with La Blanca

Ya con esta me despido  
Disfrutando de lo bueno  
Que me toquen mas canciones  
Para irme en el camino  
Con La Blanca y Rosita  
llevaré bien mi destino

With this I take my leave  
Enjoying the good stuff  
That they should play me more songs  
To hit the road  
With La Blanca and Rosita  
I'll carry my destiny well

**“Tradición Huichol” by Felix García B. (Audio 53)**

**Performed by Grupo Encinos on *La Mucura* (2009, Discos Fonorama CD-388).**

(Transcribed and translated to Spanish by Paly Omar Enríquez López. Translated to English by Nolan Warden.)

(1)

***Kwikari tsi neta niawa tsipatsi xe ke neu eni***

*Voy a cantar una canción, escúchenla*

I'm going to sing a song, listen to it

***Wixárika tsi ti tewati aixi waikawa rayexeiya***

*Algun(os) llamado(s) wixárika tienen muchas tradiciones [waikawa rayexeiya = creen muchas cosas]*

Those named Wixárika have many traditions / believe many things

***'ixiarari tsi pu wewixime nawá pumawarime***

*va(n) haciendo fiestas repartiendo el nawá ['ixiarari = fiestas tradicionales]*

They're doing fiestas, distributing nawá

***'ixa kiyari pexeiya mikiita payekukutsu***

*tiene una casa de paja donde ahí duerme ['ixa kiyari = puede ser xiriki]*

There's a house [xiriki] of grass thatch where one sleeps

(2)

***Yu kiepa me pexeiya 'ixa haka kitsiekame***

*Tiene en su comunidad una casa hecha de paja y bambú*

In their community, they have a house made of grass thatch and bamboo

***Tukitsi me te iteriwati muwatsiri me tiye e***

*Le llaman tukitsi y ahí es donde toman*

They are called *tukitsi*, and there is where they drink

***[Ketiiti] Kiekatari wawaite hixieme me tiye a***

*Comuneros se ponen a bailar en frente [del tuki]*

*[me tiye a = bailar] [ti kaneine = va bailar]*

Community members dance in front [of the *tuki*]

***Tatewatsi[e] matieniere wariena me hakikati***

*Dando vueltas / danzando alrededor de donde está el fuego*

Spinning / dancing around the fire-place

(3)

***Tetsipana tsi mahane ya xeikia tsiri plane***

*Así son las cosas que vienen de [Tetsipana?]*

That is how things are that come from [Tetsipana?]

***Yu xiriki tsi mepexeiya ki titi mititewa***

*Tiene su xiriki que en realidad se llama casa*

They have their *xiriki*, which in reality is called house

***Meripa me meukunaixia tsie tsi miki ane***

*Ellos [de antes] son los que prendieron su fuego [desde antes]*

Those [from before] are the ones that lit the fire [early on]

***Kewa tsi me kiekametini nawá pu mawarime***

*Del lugar de donde sea va regalando/repartiendo nawá*

From whichever place(s) they're giving / distributing *nawá*

(4)

**Mara'akame tsì tewatì aixì tsì putatiuniuwe**  
*Alguien llamado mara'akame es muy buen hablador*  
Someone called *mara'akame* is a good speaker

**Yu muwieri a hurieti mìkì kitsì wakuhiawe**  
*Su muwieri, lo trae, con eso les esta hablando*  
He carries his *muwieri*, with that he is speaking to them

**Manatsìri 'utikaiì yu tewatsi tsì kìhiawe**  
*Ahì sentado le habla a su tewatsi*  
There, seated, he speaks to his *tewatsi* [spirit guide/deity/mentor/maestro]

**Werika tsì mutimie yu kakaìma me mauhane**  
*El aguila está bailando, esta saliendo su [kakaìma = sabiduria?]*  
The eagle is dancing, its [wisdom?] is coming out

(5)

**Ya xeikìa tsìri pì ane yu kwiniya tsì pexeiya**  
*Asì no más es esto, también tiene sus enfermedades / debilidades*  
But not only that, they also have their sicknesses / debilitations

**Yu 'umieme pu mawarime wixárika tsì tewatì**  
*Por eso regalan/reparten tejuino el llamado wixárika*  
For that reason they give / distribute tejuino [nawá], the people called *Wixárika*

**A yu 'umieme pu tuaxime kakaìyarite manuhane**  
*Por eso va dejando [kakaìyarite = ofrendas?]*  
For that reason, they leave [offerings?]

**Kewa tsì memaitìka naitari[e] tsì me manuhane**  
*Dónde digan ellos. Ellos están en todas partes [los wixaritari / santos]*  
Wherever they say. They are in all parts.

(6)

**Nierika tsì pu maxime wìtari tsì manyeyeika**  
*Nierika va asustando, va pasando la lluvia*  
*Nierika* is scaring, the rains pass

**Watsìwa titerìwatì mana tsìri puka 'etsa**  
*Watsìwa se le llama, ahì es donde siembran*  
*Watsìwa*, it is called, where they plant (seed)

**Manatsì putayìyìra manatsì puta nunuiwa**  
*Ahì es donde crece, ahì es donde nace*  
There is where it grows; there is where it is born

**Xeniutsì mate kawì 'iku tsì tete 'iterìwa**  
*Estamos agarrados de ahì, maíz le llamamos*  
We are taken hold of from there, we call it maize

(7)

**Kewatsìri me ka 'eni ya xeikì pimaririme**  
*Donde va a sembrar, no más lo va escuchando*  
Where one is going to plant (seed), they just go listening

***Puyunenewixime manatsi ya titahiawe***

*Se va aguantando, y ahí le dice*

One withstands, and there they are told

***Ya ti watahiawemeri ta tsie tiri pumaiyane***

*Ya cuando les dice, ya empiezan a desmontarlo [la milpa]*

When given the word [permission], they start to harvest [likely allusion to Tatei Neixa]

***Ya xeiki pu weiyarime maxa tsi ti teriwati***

*Van al mismo tiempo, llamado venado [y el maíz]*

They go at the same time [are one?], the deer and the maize

(8)

***Yu niwetsika pexeiya 'imiari titeriwati***

*Tiene su hijo, le llaman elote*

They have their son; they call it corn

***Taxawime tsi yawwime, tuxame tsi t̄arawime***

*Amarrillos, azul, blanco, rosa*

Yellow, blue, white, pink

***Tsimarime [tsimawime] tsi yimaxi waikawa tsiri pexeiya***

*Pinto, morado, tiene muchos*

Speckled, purple, their are many [types of corn]

***Mume tsi imiariyari hatsi naime tsi rexeiya***

*Semillas de frijol [para el proximo año], semillas de calabaza, tiene todo*

Bean seeds [for next year], squash seeds, they have everything [one has everything]

## **Formal Interviews**

Anonymous. 2014-07-30. Vihuela player from the community of Santa Catarina. In-person interview with the author in Colotlán, Jalisco.

Bautista Carrillo, José. 2013-08-14. Mara'akame and xawereru from San José, community of San Andrés. In-person interview with the author in Tateikie.

Bautista Muñoz, Oscar "Ukeme." 2013-05-09. Founder and director of PuebloIndigena.com, teacher, and former vihuela player for Conjunto Teemari. Primarily from the communities of Guadalupe Ocotán and Tuxpan de Bolaños. In-person interview with the author in Barranquillas, community of Tuxpan de Bolaños.

Candelario de la Rosa, Ismael "Monstruo," Lucio "Susui" Carrillo Solís, and Constantino "El Pez" Carrillo López. 2013-05-02. Members of Abrazo Musical Huichol. Originally from the community of Santa Catarina. In-person group interview with the author in Colotlán, Jalisco.

Carrillo López, Ceferino. 2013-06-11. Requintero, guitarist, and solo vocalist known by the stage names "Zamurawy" and "El Bronco de Jalisco." Originally from the community of San Sebastián. In-person interview with the author in Pueblo Nuevo, community of Santa Catarina.

Carrillo Pizano, Rafael. 2013-08-13. Mara'akame and xawereru from the community of San Andrés. In-person interview with the author in Tateikie.

Contreras Covarrubias, Manuel. 2013-04-19. Founder and owner of the Fonorama record label. In-person interview with the author in Guadalajara, Jalisco.

Cowan, Eliot. 2014-02-27. Founder of Blue Deer Center in New York and author of *Plant Spirit Medicine*. Telephone interview with the author.

de Haro, Leonel. 2013-06-19. Owner of LEMA Records in Jeréz, Zacatecas. In-person interview with the author in Jeréz, Zacatecas.

de la Cruz Velázquez, José "Kawi." 2012-12-08. Bassist and vocalist for Los Amos's de la Sierra and Presencia Pesada, and later briefly a member of Huichol Musical. In-person interview with the author in Colotlán, Jalisco.

de la Cruz Velázquez, Nicasio "Jacko." 2013-09-17. Requintero and vocalist for Los Amos's de la Sierra, R5 Sierreño, and Huichol Musical. Originally from the communities of San Sebastián and San Andrés. In-person interview with the author in Guadalajara, Jalisco.

Furst, Peter T. 2011-06-19. Anthropologist from the United States. Telephone interview with the author.

- González, Rosalío. 2014–03–15. Member of Grupo Los González, originally of Los Cajones, community of Santa Catarina. In-person interview with the author in Los Cajones.
- González, Samuel. 2014–03–15. Violinist for Grupo Los González and founding member of Grupo Los Teopa. Originally from Los Cajones, community of Santa Catarina. In-person interview with the author in Los Cajones.
- González González, Ismael. 2015–06–07. Director and tololoche player for Nubes de la Sierra, and at one time for Nuevo Amanecer Huichol and Huichol Musical. Telephone interview with the author.
- Hector [surname not given]. 2014–08–13. Recording engineer for Herencia Huichol at Olea Studios, Los Mochis, Sinaloa. Telephone interview with the author.
- Hernández Bautista, Ernesto. 2013–06–26. Violinist for Sueño Musical Huichol. Originally from the community of San Andrés. In-person interview with the author in Colotlán, Jalisco.
- Hernández Carrillo, Maximino. 2012–10–10. Requintero and violinist with Werika Yuawi and Alucinantes de la Sierra. Originally from the community of San Sebastián. In-person interview with Socorro Pereira in Colotlán, Jalisco, recorded by the author (used here with permission).
- . 2012–12–10. In-person interview with Socorro Pereira in Colotlán, Jalisco, recorded by the author (used here with permission).
- Hernández de la Cruz, Ernesto. 2013–08–10. Teacher and musician originally from Las Guayabas, community of San Andrés. In-person interview with the author in Tateikie.
- López, Samuel “El Brujo.” 2013–06–19. Former guitarist and vocalist for Huichol Musical. Originally from Huaynamota, Nayarit. In-person interview with the author in Fresnillo, Zacatecas.
- López, Domingo. 2013–06–21. Vocalist and violinist for Huichol Musical. Originally from the community of Santa Catarina. In-person interview with the author in Tepetongo, Zacatecas.
- López Robles, José. 2012–12–30. Violinist and vocalist for El Venado Azul. Originally from Nueva Colonia, community of Santa Catarina. In-person interview with the author in Mezquitic, Jalisco.
- . 2014–08–15. In-person interview with the author in Salazares, Zacatecas.
- Medina de la Rosa, Daniel. 2013–06–12. Xawereru for the tukipa in Tuapurie during the time of the interview. Resident of Pueblo Nuevo, community of Santa Catarina. In-person interview with the author in Pueblo Nuevo.

- Meza, Alfredo. 2014–12–24. Leader of musicians’ union in Colotlán, Jalisco for many years. In-person interview with the author in Colotlán, Jalisco.
- Ortiz López, Álvaro “Puwari.” 2013–05–13. Artesano, artist, composer, and specialist in Gregorian chant. Originally from San Miguel Huaixtita, community of San Andrés. In-person interview with the author in Bucerías, Nayarit.
- Pacheco, Francisco. 2014–08–12. Producer and promoter of Herencia Huichol. Telephone interview with the author.
- Pereyra, Gustavo. 2013–06–28. Requintero, vocalist, and composer for Artesanos de la Sierra. From Zitakwa (Tepic, Nayarit) with ties to Guadalupe Ocotán and Huaynamota, Nayarit. Telephone interview with the author.
- Pinkson, Tom. 2013–09–26. Author of *The Shamanic Wisdom of the Huichol*. Telephone interview with the author.
- Recendez, Francisco. 2013–10–16. Director and singer for Agresivos de la Sierra. Telephone interview with the author.
- Rivas Flores, Mario. 2013–08–14. Director of ECOS, a “music for development” project in Jalisco. In-person interview with the author in Tateikie.
- Rodríguez, José Guadalupe. 2014–12–11. Director and vocalist of Banda Cohuich. In-person interview with the author in Xatsitsarie (Guadalupe Ocotán).
- Rodríguez García, Julia. 2013–04–05. Vihuela player and vocalist for Los Diamantes de Santa Cruz, and niece of corridista Serapio García. In-person interview with the author in Huejuquilla el Alto, Jalisco.
- Sánchez González, Salvador. 2014–10–13. Mara‘akame from Tsikatia (Cerritos), community of Tuxpan de Bolaños. In-person interview with the author near Tuxpan de Bolaños.
- Serrano, José “Pepe.” 2014–04–03. Owner and president of Latin Power Music. Interview via intermediary with questions submitted by the author.
- Valadez, Susana. 2013–08–15. Graduate of UCLA and director of Centro Indígena Huichol in Huejuquilla el Alto, Jalisco. In-person interview with the author in Huejuquilla el Alto, Jalisco.
- Vazquez, Lupe “Rayo.” 2013–05–10. Guitarist and vocalist for Los Rayos de Puente de Camotlán. In-person interview with the author in Puente de Camotlán, Nayarit.



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- Kupuri: Huichol Songs and Music*. CD. 1990. Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos. Four Winds Circle.
- Maxa-Keta™: Huella de Venado*. CD. c2010. Dueto Huichol (Yauxari Marcelino Ávila Robles and Xitakame José López). Sonido Rana.
- Música Huichola*. CD. 2006. Hilario López de la Cruz.
- Música para los Dioses: Testimonios Musicales*. MP3. Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas.
- Música y Canto Ceremonial Huichol: Mother Eagle Kaili: Huichol Sacred Music*. CD. c1995. Sauleme de la Cruz Santiago. No-CD Rekords.
- Música y Cantos para la Luz y la Oscuridad: 100 Años de Testimonios de los Pueblos Indígenas: Música y Cantos Huicholes Grabados por Carl Lumholtz*. CD. 2005. Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas. [Liner notes by Xilonen Luna Ruiz.]
- Musiques Mexicaines*. LP. n.d. Ocora 73. [Recordings by Jose Raul Hellmer.]
- Taateikietaari Waxaweeri Waniawari: Canciones de Xaweeri y Kanari de Taateikie*. CD. 2010. CONACULTA; Secretaría de Cultura, Gobierno de Jalisco; Programa de Apoyo a las Culturas Municipales y Comunitarias (PACMYC) del Estado de Jalisco. [Recorded and produced by Rodrigo de la Mora.]
- Tamatsi Kahauyumarie Nierikapa*. CD. 2012. Grupo Mari Tiki. LEMA Records LR-0047/2012.
- Tamatz Kayumari [vol. 2]*. Cassette. n/d.
- Tsamainuri: La Venada de la Madre Tierra: La Canción Amororsa [sic] Tradicional de Tateikie*. CD. 2010. Rafael Carrillo Pizano and Guadalupe Hernández Carrillo. CONACULTA; Secretaría de Cultura, Gobierno de Jalisco; Programa de Apoyo a las Culturas Municipales y Comunitarias (PACMYC) del Estado de Jalisco..
- Xaweri, Kanari Niawari Wixárika*. CD. 2005. CONACULTA; Secretaría de Cultura, Gobierno de Jalisco; Programa de Apoyo a las Culturas Municipales y Comunitarias (PACMYC) del Estado de Jalisco. [Recorded and produced by Rodrigo de la Mora.]
- Zakutse: Música Tradicional Huichol (Wixarika)*. Cassette. 2002. Grupo Zakutse (José Bautista Carrillo and Marcos Navarrete Bautista).

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<sup>382</sup> Research and collection also included over 130 commercial CDs of Huichol groups, including the vast majority of the Discos Fonorama and LEMA Records catalogs.

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<http://huicholesfilm.com/>
- Mara'acame: Cantador y Curandero*. VHS. 1982. Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas.
- Sol Huichol: Preparación y Ritual de la Fiesta del Tambor en una Familia Huichol*. DVD. n.d. [c.2010]. By Roland Pellarin and Ulla Straessle.
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- Volar Como Pájaros: Las Fiestas del Tambor y del Elote Entre los Huicholes*. DVD. 2006. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.
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- [Research and collection also included over 120 professional, homemade, and amateur Huichol music videos, mostly available on YouTube.]

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