

A Proposal on the Study of Mythologies, Applied to the Characters of Sun, Fire, Wind, an Rain

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Abstract. This paper concerns mythologies of the Yavapais, Maricopas, Pimas, and Huichols, all of whom live in, or at least visit, deserts and the related elements of sun and fire. This preliminary study of the impact of desert on tribal mythology stems from the following theoretical points: first that mythologies are interested in sun, fire, wind, and rain to the extent that they render those things as *characters* rather than as impersonal *elements*. Second that in what I call miniregions mythologies differ largely because of *parody* phenomenon. And third that a “mythology” comprises all of the texts that one tribal narrator tells in the order the narrator arranges them. In this manner, this paper both sets an agenda for measuring the impact of deserts on myth and introduces authorship and authority into the study of tribal mythologies.

Keywords: 1. mythology, 2. parody,
3. sun-fire, 4. indigenous people.

Resumen. Este artículo retoma el análisis de las mitologías yavapai, maricopa, pima y huichol, quienes viven en, o por lo menos visitan, desiertos, e incorpora los elementos relacionados de sol y fuego. Este estudio preliminar del impacto del desierto en la mitología tribal postula tres aspectos teóricos importantes: primero, que las mitologías se interesan en los elementos de sol, fuego, aire y lluvia, hasta el punto de que le son asignados el carácter de personajes más que el de elementos impersonales. Segundo, que entre las denominadas “minirregiones”, las mitologías difieren enormemente debido al fenómeno de parodia. Y tercero, que una mitología comprende todos los textos que un narrador tribal cuenta en el mismo orden en el que el narrador los organiza. De esta forma, este artículo establece una agenda para medir el impacto de los desiertos en los mitos e introduce las nociones de autoría y autoridad, dentro del estudio de las mitologías tribales.

Palabras clave: 1. mitología,
2. parodia, 3. sol-fuego, 4. indígenas.

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A Proposal on the Study of Mythologies

Introduction

The ideal title and topic for this paper would be “The Impact of Desert Living Upon Peoples’ Mythologies.” In fact, the present paper concerns mythologies in general more than it concerns deserts and it concerns sun and fire more than wind and rain. The authors of the mythologies — Yavapais, Maricopas, Pimas, and Huichols — all live in, or at least visit, deserts. But to be decisive on the effect of desert life on their texts we should compare their texts with those of peoples with moister habitats, a step here untaken. Thus, this is a preliminary to a study of the impact of desert on tribal mythology. My three main theoretical points are first that mythologies are interested in, or at any rate are interesting *about*, sun, fire, wind, and rain to the extent that they render those things as *characters* rather than as impersonal *elements*. This is because the texts we call myths are basically stories about persons dealing with other persons. The persons are characters, and elements are other and less than characters. The second point is that in what I call miniregions, that is, areas of uniform geography, mythologies differ largely because of *parody*, that is, because of a will to “make a play on” or “take a turn on” a neighbor’s myth, especially on the identities and doings of its characters.

Third and last, I use the word “mythology” in a somewhat special sense, namely “all of the texts that one tribal narrator tells in the order the narrator arranges and tells them;” a mythology is one narrator’s full oral book of ancientness. To me, this is a promising but largely neglected notion on tribal mythology. In two words, it introduces authorship and authority into the study of tribal mythologies. Thus, this paper says a fair amount about Sun and Fire as elements and characters; and about how neighboring Sun and Fire myths are parodies of each other; and it says a bit about Wind and Rain as characters; and it sets an agenda for measuring, or at least sensing, the impact of deserts on myth.

Theory on Mythologies and Parody

To my special sense of mythology we must add another and quite standard one: mythology as a people’s sense of their whole

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ancient past; their cosmology, cosmogony, their stories of the creation of anything and everything. This is a fine definition. It is simply more general and less “individual author centered” than mine — so my definition narrows but does not quarrel with this more general one.

The two leading scholars of New World myth, Claude Levi-Strauss and Alfredo López Austin, take slightly different positions on what is the key event in tribal mythologies in the broad sense. To Levi-Strauss the key is the human attainment of mastery over fire, especially fire for cooking (1990:624). To Levi-Strauss fire is something that tribal think has always existed. The essential tribal myth is how humans took possession of this thing that always existed. To López Austin the key is the birth of the sun and therefore the origin of years and seasons and the calendar (1993:38-48, including Table 1). Thus, unlike fire, the sun is something that humans or gods made. Once there was no sun, and then one, or more than one, was made. Levi-Strauss stated his conclusion on fire in a chapter called “One Myth Only,” which is the next-to-last chapter of the final volume of his four book series, “Introduction to the Science of Mythology.” López Austin stated his conclusion on the sun along with a table outlining the typical mythology in an early chapter of his “Myths of the Opossum,” a book subtitled “Pathways of Mesoamerican Mythology.”

Levi-Strauss did not study single narrator multistory mythologies of the sort that I commend to you. He did something more difficult but also more vain. He immersed himself in all of the myth collections of the hemisphere and constructed his own 813 myth (with “a”s and “b”s) mythology starting with “The Macaws and their Nest” from the Bororo of South America and ending with “The Putrified Man” from the Apinaye of the same continent. In short, he made his own megamythology by way of introducing his science. Shortly after giving the last myth he stated his judgement on the greatest importance of fire.

López Austin did consider mythologies in my sense, of which the two most important ones from Mesoamérica are probably the Aztecs’ “Legend of the Suns” and the Quiche Mayas’ “Popol Vuh.” Both give prominence to the origin of the sun, but I would not say that the origin of the sun is the central issue of either text.

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(Perhaps there is not central issue, perhaps to seek one is to commit the fallacy of essentialism.) Actually, in López Austin I miss the kind of reading of whole complex works that I advocate. Levi-Strauss gives such readings of single stories while presenting his megamythology, so I fault him only for overlooking his native colleagues, or rivals, the formers of multi-story oral books of ancientness. I regret that López Austin gave few detailed readings of any sort: he gives *interpretations*, he doesn't analyze enough stories as *stories*. (Nor, therefore, does he give a reading of the full *Legend of the Suns or the Popol Vuh*.)

And what is the sign of the analysis of story as story? In one word, it is attention to — preoccupation with — *character*, with the characters in stories. I say this, if I may put it this way, as a neo-Weberian, that is, an exponent of the reading of myths in that way that Max Weber read historical documents: to concentrate on the situations, motives, resources, and consequences of individuals' actions. Levi-Strauss did this splendidly in developing his megamythology, even though his "One Myth Only" conclusion on fire leaves those situations and characters far behind. López Austin with his avowed and quite respectable interest in cosmology lets character slip by.

I oppose letting character slip. We will find that fire is nearly always an element and rarely a character in the mythologies. By "rarely" I mean that Fire is a character only in the Huichol text that we will consider, and his interactions with other characters in that text are very limited — essentially they dare not touch him or, at the start, even look at him. Nonetheless he is a character and as we will see, his is a tender story on the wish — Fire's wish — to be tamed. Sun we will find is commonly a character and is sometimes is the source of fire. But in none of our texts is Sun the original, first time ever, source of fire. In one instance, again Huichol, we will find the situation that is famous from the *Legend of the Suns and the Popol Vuh*, when a character who is burnt in a fire (actually boiled in a pot in a fire) and becomes the sun.

We should explain those differences, but I feel that we are still learning to read mythologies. My main suggestion about how the differences can be explained is that neighboring peoples' mythologies are intended to be different from each other. In fact,

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contrary to the tradition of «diffusionist» and “borrowing” studies of myth, and keeping with the newer tradition of Levi-Strauss, I propose (I don’t recall that Levi-Strauss said this) that neighboring peoples never tell exactly the same story — simply never. Rather, for the sake of their feeling of distinctiveness — to create their “identity,” neighbors require that their individual stories and cumulatively their whole mythologies be different from each other. These differences, at least the most interesting of them, are not incommensurate. That is, they are not sheer, blunt, nothing-to-say-about-this differences. Rather, they are deliberately created through what I term parody. I believe parody in myth operates particularly upon characters, that is, upon the principal actors in myths and mythologies. Parody exists when one myth, or better one myth *author*, makes a deliberate, generally somewhat demeaning, play on a character in a myth of a neighbor. And, parody exists only within miniregions of nearly the same geography; and so, the best hope for geographic or environmental explanations of the mythic imagination is through jumping across geographical miniregions.

This paper is especially about parodies on Sun and Fire. Before we begin, however, let us consider what is an “element” and what is a “character?” An element in the first place is a thing that has no will of its own. A *character* has will. Characters accordingly are more interesting as stories than elements. Second and finally, an element is something that “always was there” throughout the history of the universe. I have in mind from our civilization the elements of old fashioned chemistry and physics, or the Greeks’ earth, fire, water, and air: things that characters use and that no one and nothing created or introduced into existence. Characters by contrast are works in progress. They are born, they die, they grow, they are uncertain what to do from one moment to the next. I grant that this dichotomy leaves out gods, that is, immortal and therefore eternal persons with disappointable wills; and it also leaves out artifacts, things made from other things. Thus, to recapitulate, Fire is generally an element, sometimes a character. Sun is sometimes a god but more often an artifact, sometimes a living one and therefore a “frankenstinian” character. This is roughly

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how Levi-Strauss and López Austin saw them and it is how they are in the stories we will discuss.

Yavapai, the Burning of the World

Around 1930, Jim Stacey of near Mayer, Arizona, told via his interpreter son Johnson a twenty-six story, three cycle history of the world from the earliest of things (1933:347-415) to in effect the night before the return of the whites to the land in which they were created in story nine. The cycles end with world, or population, destroying cataclysms and they begin with the fresh creation of new people, such as the whites.¹

I have discussed the organization of Stacey's mythology twice before (1981, 1998), but without going into detail on the story we are now interested in. Here it is, in an abstract made by me:

1. Coyote gambled with Sun who lived as a chief with a wife and children and various followers, apparently nearly all human. His two storey house was of stone. They had a corn garden.
2. They gambled with the hoop and pole game (a homely variant I think of the Mesoamerican ball game). Coyote lost toss after toss. He lost all of his material wealth (baskets, dolls, beads, his wife), down to one of his legs which Sun cut off. Coyote replaced it with a wooden one,² and went off.

¹ A remarkable feature of the Stacey mythology is that it never states the origin or creation of the Yavapais. Thus, whites are created, and so are the Pimas, but the text is mute on the creation of the Yavapais' tribal ancestors. I don't think that was a detail withheld from the recorded Gifford, because two other Yavapai mythologies also lack this event. I have speculated that it was deliberate omission to counteract the Pimas and Maricopas who gave large attention (especially the Pimas) to how their ancestors came into being.

² With characters named for animals, like Coyote, it is never easy, and it is sometimes seems to be a bit of an intentional game, to guess how much of the character's nature was animal and how much was human. Stacey gave us a nice problem. If Coyote walked on two legs, the loss of one would be worse than if he went on all fours. Typically, the text doesn't say how Coyote walked, and I imagine that Stacey would have said that he does not know.

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3. He went to the highlands where pine trees grow to the house of Tree Squirrel, the chief of a band of mainly rodent-people. Squirrel and his people agreed to help Coyote regain his losses.
4. The revenge seekers came to the vicinity of Sun's house. Several rodents failed to get close enough by tunneling to inspect it. Hummingbird however succeeded in seeing it from above, and he ignited one of Sun's eyelashes.³ Hummingbird also learned that Sun enters his house from below the ground.
5. Badger dug a tunnel through which the visitors entered Sun's ground-level room. Sun sensed from the room above that they had come and he sent his own Coyote below to observe them. That Coyote reported that they had brought much property to bet.
6. Sun sent that Coyote to offer water, corn, and squash to the visitors. They received them but wisely and secretly threw them away.
7. Squirrel learned from the Coyote of his party where Sun had sat during the previous gambling. Squirrel sat there. Sun came down and asked for his usual place, but Squirrel did not yield it.
8. Rabbit, not Squirrel, began to gamble with Sun, in a buried root guessing game. After half of the night, Sun made the first wrong guess.
9. Sun rid himself of this opponent by ordering his two daughters to take him to their corn garden and make love with him for the rest of the night. Meanwhile by morning Rabbit's animal replacements had won the rest of Sun's known property including his wife and daughters. Sun said that the victors could kill him. Squirrel however had learned that Sun had some sons. Sun was permitted to rise in the sky and make daylight, and Sun's sons and the Rodent people, except Rabbit (gone) and probably Coyote (disabled) and Squirrel (too dignified), started a long kickball race.

³ We are not told whether this was accomplished by reflecting the sun's light and heat or by emissions from Hummingbird.

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10. Roused by Sun's wife from the corn garden, Rabbit ran to find Squirrel alone at Sun's house. Rabbit learned of the race and created some obstacles on the path, including a high place. Then he followed the course and caught up with Sun's sons who were then in the lead. These sons failed to kick their ball over the height obstacle, while Rabbit (cottontail), aided by Jackrabbit, succeeded.
11. Sun returned to learn who won the race. He accepted death by a stone axe blow from Squirrel. Squirrel then tore off one of Sun's arms and threw it into the sky to become today's sun. Sun's people all ran away. Squirrel's people flayed Sun's body and tried to collect and contain and transport all of his bones, innards, and meat. The wooden-legged Coyote, however, absent mindedly left a piece of Sun's stomach on a pile of rocks. As the visiting party departed the scene, they looked back and saw smoke rising. This was the start of a fire that burned the whole world and transformed all who survived into red ants.

We see that today's sun is but the arm of an original Sun who, once killed, might have been kept safely by the killers. The story does not say how they planned to keep or dispose of the body, only that the piece they forgot to carry off became an all-consuming fire. We are left thinking their plan was illogical, there was no hope for safe-keeping.

Nor does Stacey's mythology say that all fire originated in this episode. Indeed, there is a mention of fire in the very first story of the mythology, a story quite like the Maricopa one we will next discuss; and fire figures into a few other stories between that first one and the one we are interested in. Fire, as will be seen later, was an available and known element, and is not a character in Stacey's mythology/history of the world. Thus, this was a fire, cataclysmic, formed from the residue of a violent character, Sun. The text testifies to what I think is an elementary rule on fire: it burns what it touches.

I believe that Stacey knew that rule perfectly well, and he or the story's ultimate author defied it without trying to explain how

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the visiting party would keep the Sun's body. The story says in effect, "I like the idea, don't bother me with the details."⁴

Maricopa, the Cremation of Cipas

The first story of a ten story mythology told by a man named Kutox ends with the death by sorcery and the cremation of a man-god named Cipas (Spier, 1933:348-352). Cipas had furnished an abused Rattlesnake with poison fangs, with which the snake bit and killed its abuser, Rabbit. To punish Cipas the members of his small band (the first society in the world) decided to have Frog drink all of the water in a pond where Cipas went swimming each morning. The pond contained the washed-off essence of Cipas, and so the drinking caused him to sicken and die.

The survivors cremated Cipas who had earlier provided them with an axe with which to cut wood. The narrator states that in their happier days "they had enough fire to make them happy" (Spier, 1933:348). Fire then was not new to society, axes were; and this defies Levi-Strauss's rule of the importance of the attainment of fire.

⁴ Let us note as an aside that this story has two motifs present in the Popol Vuh, namely gambling, in fact betting one's life, on a competition over balls; and the origin of today's sun. In the Popol Vuh two boys kill themselves by jumping into a fire after having defeated the Lords of the Underworld in a ball game; then after causing the destruction of the lords (the boys' unburnt bones regenerate them) the boys destroy the lords and finally they become the sun and the moon.

The Popol Vuh and the Stacey story differ in what takes place around those motifs. In role of the defeated gambler, Stacy has the villainous Sun who prior to igniting the world involuntarily provides his arm to form today's sun. In place of the Popol Vuh's aggrieved twins (whose father was earlier killed by the lords), Stacey has the sequence of Coyote (aggrieved), Squirrel (sympathetic chief), and Rabbit (gambler, lover of girls, race winner). The Popul Vuh's ball game becomes the Yavapai sequence of hoop and pole, bury-the-root, and kickball, all with cosmic overtones since all are games of the sun. Last, a corn field that the Popul Vuh twins reject to become ball players is Rabbit's loving ground.

The elements of ball game and sun origin are probably present in other New World texts. We should see: (1) where each such text stands in its teller's overall mythology, and (2) whether there are counterparts, parodic or not, in neighboring texts.

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The defiance is intentional. According to the Maricopa story the survivors feared that Coyote, who lived among them, would eat Cipas's flesh as it cooked. Therefore they lied to him that they had no fire. He went to the sun to get some. On reaching the sun (not treated as a character) he looked back and saw that the cremation had already begun. He ran home, jumped over the shortest mourners, and ran off with the cooked but unincinerated heart of Cipas.

The story has many of the characters of Stacey's the Burning of the World, but where the latter story has the singeing of the earth and the burning down of its creatures to the condition of red ants, this story has the burning of a chief murdered by the drinking of his bathwater. In both stories Coyote steals an internal organ, and most interestingly each story breaks one of the above-stated rules: my common-sense rule of fire's dangerousness in the Stacey story and the Levi-Strauss rule on the need to obtain fire in this one. Thus, I think that Levi-Strauss is correct. Mythologies *do* generally have a story about the obtaining of fire, *elemental* fire. It is just that some mythologies scoff at the idea.

Let us now see how Stacey handled his cremation story, the mate to this Maricopa one (1933:349-352). Stacey has a chief Frog in the place of the Maricopa's fully human-formed chief, Cipas.⁵ His human-formed daughter, not a frog-woman as in the Maricopa, sickens the chief. (She is a shaman, the text says.) In both stories the dying chief orders that he be cremated. In Stacey, he orders that his heart should be carefully buried. In both stories the people fear that Coyote will eat the roasting body. In Stacey a man shoots eastward a fire drill (stick) from a hunting hunting bow (fire-making bows are smaller and their strings are not taut). In both stories Coyote is sent to get some of the fire. He leaves, and he discovers the cremation has started without him. He runs back, snatches the heart, absconds with

⁵ I follow a simple convention: if a character has the name of a natural species or object, such as "Frog" or "Sun," I assume this character fuses, or mixes, the qualities of humans and that natural object. If the character has a name which is not that of a species or object, I assume the character is entirely human in appearance. In New World mythologies the former kind of names, and characters, usually far outnumber the latter.

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it, and eats it. In Stacy the people put dirt where the heart had been and the first corn sprouts from that.

That Stacey changes the chief to a Frog and makes the chief's killer his own human daughter, and that the killing is motivated by a complaint of the daughter (about incest in other versions of the story), in contrast to the Maricopas' public outcry over the death of Rabbit, makes the two stories different enough so that each tribe could consider its version to be distinctly its own. When it comes to fire, both stories defy Levi-Strauss's rule: the journey for fire is a ruse. But they defy differently: journey to the sun (Maricopa) versus journey to get an eastern fire caused by the sparks (not the rotational friction of actual fire drills) made by a fire arrow (Yavapai).

The Pimas, who did not practice cremation like Maricopas and probably the Yavapais,⁶ have another version of this story (Russell, 1908:215-217): a man-god named Elder Brother gave fangs to an abused rattlesnake who bit and killed Rabbit the abuser. Elder Brother was not punished for this. Rather, Rabbit suffered a slow death and was cremated.

The Pimas normally buried their dead, but in this instance cremation was selected, it is said, for fear that Coyote would make short work of a buried rabbit. The Maricopas, said to be coresident then with the Pimas, proposed cremation. Coyote was sent to the sun for fire. Meanwhile Blue Fly invented the firedrill, thanks to which the pyre was ignited. Coyote discovered that he was tricked, and he came back, and snatched the heart and ran away with and ate it.

The Pimas' Elder Brother (their equivalent to the Maricopa Cipas and the Yavapai Frog-chief) is eventually killed by an arrow shot from Sun's bow. This event is well established in all versions of Pima mythology. What we have in their cremation episode is a Pima appropriation of a story that is central to their neighbors. They appropriated it and made a place for it in their mythology by working it into the career of their god Elder Brother. Interestingly, of the three peoples (Maricopa, Yavapai, Pima), only the Pimas give us a story of the invention of the fire drill, that is, a

⁶ Yavapais buried their dead through the twentieth century. Perhaps they cremated their dead earlier.

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story of the origin of human mastery over fire. The other peoples' stories assume the existence of that tool.⁷

Levi-Strauss was probably too inattentive to fire drills. After all, the drill is a means to make fire where there was none, in fact to create it, without bringing the fire from somewhere else (the sun, a cave in the earth, etc.). Levi-Strauss indexes fire drills only in the fourth volume of his "Introduction to a Science of Mythology," and there he gives only four references for the instrument. One passage mentions the drill without comment (1990:102); two place the drill in the order of "culture," not "nature" (1990:102, 159) — which is to acknowledge that whoever makes fire with a drill does not need to obtain fire from nature; and one reference speculates that the use of the drill is like incest in requiring "intimate contact between closely related pieces [of wood in this case]" and in resembling coitus (1990:149-150).

The incest remark is fanciful, but so is mythology fanciful. We do not yet know much about how Native Americans fancied the fire drills that mock Levi-Strauss's concern with the importation of fire.

*The Pimas: Mythology with Little Fire
and Little also about Sun*

From the Pimas we have something too rare in mythological studies: three independently told, well recorded, single narrator versions of the whole of ancient time. They were taken down between 1900 and 1935. Pimas are still interested in these matters, so the reason that additional texts were not recorded was more because of anthropology's uninterest than because of that of the Pimas. Still, it seems that there may be no Pima today

⁷ Actually, two Pima texts have the origin of the fire drill. The other is from a version of 1927 (Bahr *et al.*, 1994:53). In that text the fire drill is made by the man-god Earth Doctor at an early point in the chronicle of ancient times. Immediately after creating people, he invented the fire drill by using two sticks that he had obtained. At this time he also demonstrated that fire could be made from sparks struck from rocks.

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who knows the stories as well and savors them as much as the narrators who were recorded three generations ago. It is a great help to have the three old versions because with them we can see what is constant and what varied, and what was major and what minor, and, important to us now, what was of hardly any account at all in this peoples' mythology.

We have just considered the one important story about fire in the three Pima mythologies: that of the first cremation. It is present only in two of them. The other version of it is in Bahr, ed., 200:24.⁸ This story is generally considered by the Pimas to be Maricopa. The Pimas have no sun-or-fire-based burning of the world, and no story either about how fire first came under human control, or of any other important ancient action by or about fire (but see note 6). Thus, the Pimas have a basically fireless mythology. The reason for this is probably not that they were uninterested in fire, it is probably that they had no story distinctly their own to put up against the Yavapai and Maricopa stories about fire. Thus, they let themselves be mythologically fireless except for the small borrowing with modification that we have noted. Yet in their modification they gave the sole known local account of the origin of fire drills.

The Pimas say somewhat more about the sun which, or who, however is hardly a character in their mythology. They say that the sun was created by Earth Doctor, who froze ice in a bowl and threw the resulting disc into the sky (Russell, 1908:207; Bahr, ed., 1994, and Bahr, ed., 2001:7). The Maricopas by contrast have Cipas make the sun from a hair plucked from below his ear (Spier, 1933:346). The Yavapai mythology puts off the creation of the sun until "The Burning of the World," although daylight and sunshine are mentioned from the first story onwards.

Otherwise, about the sun in the respective mythologies the Pimas have a story in which a man named Sun Meeter sends a

⁸ In that version the killed and cremated person is the Pima man-god Earth Doctor, a person different from the Elder Brother of the other story. As is explained in a note on p. 27 of the version now under consideration, there is reason to believe that the story, like the one discussed above, was "stolen" from the Maricopas.

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kickball to a rival village. The ball impregnates a girl there who gives birth to a female monster (*e.g.*, Russell, 1908:221-224). This story is present in every known Pima mythology and indeed the way to say “mythology” or “ancient history” or “old time story” in Pima is “*Ho’ok A:ga*.” “Ho’ok” is name of the monster and “a:ga” means “telling,” thus, “Monster Telling.” The monster we may say was very indirectly fathered by the sun, via the kickball put into play by Sun Meeter. Sun per se is not given any role in the story. He, or it, has no stated interest in human affairs.

The Yavapai mythology has no stories on the sun other than the ones we have discussed. The Maricopas have none on the sun explicitly but they have a story that mentions a house made of ice in the sky (with a fire inside it) — Spier, 1933:407) and another about a feud that involved the shooting of a boy who could fly, and the killing and decapitation of a man from the boy-killing group (1933:409-414), conceivably remotely solar.

The Huichols: Fire as Character

The Huichols make fire a far more interesting character than do the three peoples just discussed. The remainder of this paper observes and praises how they do so, for they may have the best characterization of fire in the New World. We will examine three stories: one from a full mythology, one with no known context (at least none known to me), and one from a partial mythology.

The first is in fact the first story of a forty-six story mythology told by Juan real to Robert Zingg in 1934 (published, 1938:515-516). Here is my abstract of Zingg’s rendition, which he explained is itself an abstract of Real’s full telling, which was in Spanish not in Huichol:

1. In the beginning neither Sun nor Fire existed, at least not as they now do. What would become normalized as Fire came from a rock near the [western] seacoast. Each night

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- [as if there was a diurnal succession prior to Sun] Fire grew slightly larger, reaching the size of a god-disc [said by Zingg to be about 20 centimeters in diameter].
2. The man-god Kauymali told other existing ancient people, or god-people, that virgin children must take cautious care of the still and ever dangerous Fire. The children were sent and were stunned on seeing Fire. Then they dreamed how to “tame” [Zingg’s word] him.
 3. Fire told the children to bring a censer, a pouch, a gourd bowl [with water?], and four small rocks. They should wet their hands with water, and the rocks were for Fire to sit on in the form of glowing coals.
 4. Actually the colas jumped on the rocks and destroyed them. Fire said, “I am indeed the most delicate of all the gods. I cannot move without destroying<check if this word is used> everything in sight.”
 5. Fire then told the children to bring five stone discs with feathers. On praying to the the discs [now separated from Fire] the feathers would ignite and people would have fire whenever they wished [the prayerful or magical equivalent of a fire drill. No such actual drill is mentioned in the Real mythology].
 6. But Fire still ignited the world. To stop the threatened cataclysm the ancient people prayed for the help of the woman-god Nakawe who responded by loosening her hair to pour out rain. Only a small fire remained. This [which was also the person of Fire?] was put in a newly built small house [a “god-house”]. The people hung a bunch of feathers from the rafters.
 7. The girl child then made an offering bowl and the boy trapped a deer whose blood was offered to Fire in the bowl.
 8. That tamed Fire who nonetheless needed watching for five nights “as he could not go in all parts as of yet” [it is not clear what this means: that he would later go to them in a tamed condition, or that his going now would mean his loss to the ancient people]. On the fifth night Opossum stole the fire [to deprive the people of it?]. The people caught Opossum, killed him, and removed the fire [not

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Fire?] that was in his heart. Opossum revived, but the hole from which its [her?] heart was removed remains. There the opossums now give birth to and carry and feed their young, and therefore opossums now revive after being killed.

The important point to make about this story is simple: Real put a contrary version of a standard myth about the origin of elemental fire at the end of this text, and he led up to that story with an account of how the *character* Fire volunteered to be tamed by virgin children. Real's contrary version has Fire almost become lost to the people due to theft by Opossum. The normal version has Opossum obtain fire for people by stealing it, e.g., from a male Fire Master (*e.g.*, Neurath and Gutiérrez, 2003:298-302 for the Coras, and for Mesoamérica in general, López Austin, 1990:7). So, normally Opossum gets fire for people, but in Real he/she almost takes it from them. And this is the "punch line" of a text whose real interest and probably real originality, comparatively speaking, is "Raising Fire:" how people followed Fire's directions to change him from a blazing destroyer to a warming enlightener. And although Real's mythology does not say so, Fire is also that with which the Huichols cook food. The beauty of the story is that Fire wanted this outcome: benevolent but dangerous fire, that is his character.

Next we take up a text taken down, probably in Spanish, by Konrad Preuss early in the twentieth century, and abstracted by me from a Spanish summary by Neurath and Gutiérrez (2003:303-304). It is a story of how an old man, at first slumbering, came to embody elemental fire that had been separate from him, and how he was raised as Grandfather Fire to some ancient humans who lived above where he had been:

1. Some ancient people lived in the underworld. They desired light.
2. The moon, their grandmother, was born [came into existence], gave limited light, and tricked them by produc-

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- ing heat and light inside some red and blue rocks. Then this light stopped.
3. The people went to investigate. One went to the edge of [an underworld] canyon. At the bottom lay an old man. Near him was a blue rock of horrible [humanlike?] appearance, with feathers, an armband, sandals, and a feathered shining stick.
 4. The investigator reported. The light-seeking band decided an arrow shot was needed. They aroused some small snakes that became the target and were hit, with no effect [pequeñas serpientes que fallaron el blanco y cayeron, sin resultado alguno]. Then the “Child of the Star” went to a peak above the rock and shot an arrow that dislodged the rock so it fell. Much smoke appeared.
 5. The old man [he of the canyon] circled below [rodo cuesta abajo], where the stones were now wet [regadas — means “wet?”]. Deer from the south and the north raised him [from the canyon]. They called him their grandfather and made chairs for him of four kinds of wood. He sat on one and flamed with a brilliance that enabled the people to see and recognize each other, “Our grandfather [Fire] is born.”

In this text arrows fired from above are the key to turning fire into the future Grandfather Fire. This idea was lacking in Real. As in Real, deer are also involved in getting Fire to the people, but in this text as transporters and in Real as sources of blood that is administered by humans. Unlike Real, this story has the practical provision of wood at the end, for Fire to sit on (and ignite). Real on the other hand has the longer set of provisions with god-discs, ceremonial containers, a god-house, a rain storm, and the deer blood. The main difference, though, is that this shorter text makes Fire mentally and physically passive, while Real has him mentally and physically active: Confine me and offer to me, or I’ll burn you all up!

Our final testimony on Fire as a character is pictorial. It comes from a series of “yarn paintings” with verbal commentary, both made by Tutulia Carrillo and published by Juan Negrín

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(1975:38-59). The publication is an art museum catalogue and therefore Carrillo's remarks are keyed to what he put into the paintings, including remarks on where a character, such as Fire, is located in a picture. This was appropriate, but it sacrifices the narrative of time ("this happened and then that, because of so-and-so") for the exposition of things that show in a single pictorial space.⁹ In any case my use of Carrillo is entirely pictorial: within his paintings are pictures of the character Fire, always with a headdress (but then all the characters except birds have either headdresses or antlers or upright ears). Fire's head is always in profile (this is true of most of his characters). The headdress like a chicken comb of four or five curving filaments, perhaps feathers or flames. These rise upright from the head and bend backward in parallel. They end at the level of the shoulder blades. Fire sometimes stands and sometimes sits in a chair. He has arms with hands and fingers and legs with feet; and he has other details the text does not explain but that Carrillo or persons schooled in his work could probably interpret. I am indebted to Carrillo for establishing what few may have doubted but about which I wanted to be certain, that Fire looks like a man in Huichol mythology.

Now Sun: very briefly, Real treats the "taming" of Sun in the second, fifth, and sixth stories of his mythology. Like Fire, Sun first existed in the ocean underworld, but his "family" of parrots, eagles, hawks, turkeys, rattlesnakes, and jaguars were either formed spontaneously from ocean spray or from Sun's

⁹ The paintings as tangible and lasting statements are like the songs of Pima mythology. Most of a Pima ancient-times-telling performance is in oral prose and therefore must be summoned from memory for the occasion. The oral prose medium does not permit word for word reproduction from performance to performance. But the mythology is interspersed with songs which are perfectly memorized, down to the last sound. These unlike the oral prose portions are considered to be the very words, and syllables, of the ancients. They are also very short, usually just a few lines, or sentences, long.

The yarn paintings are as permanent as the songs, but they are permanent in externalized form. A song must be brought out from «internal» memory in order to be communicated, a yarn painting is already outside. It appears that Tutukila's paintings have far more things (characters and objects) in them than the Pima myth-telling songs.

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spit. Sun's taming required the services of the man-god Kauymali, the woman-god Nakawe, and Fire. Included in the taming process was anointment with deer blood, as in the taming of Fire. But Sun's taming and entry into the sky were finally accomplished by the discovery and eating of peyote (formed miraculously from deer) by rival parties of ancient people led by Fire and Nakawe.

Thus, to Real the origins of Fire and Sun were both questions of the taming of something already in existence, and the stories run parallel courses. But Fire entered into Sun's taming,¹⁰ and that taming required the eating for peyote, an act and a thing not present in Fire's story.

Here is Carrillo's simpler version of Sun's origin: in the eighth story of this twelve-story mythology, a boy, persecuted by the ancient people, is boiled to death in a pot. As he he dies, blood spews from his mouth. This becomes the sun. Carrillo's ninth story tells that the boy's blood-becoming-Sun found a boy on earth to be his means of communicating with people, and the tenth story tells that the earth-living boy caused a bull, then a deer, to be sacrificed on Sun's behalf, partly to establish Sun's daily journey through the sky, partly to cause rain to fall, and finally to cause plants to sprout so that people would no longer need to eat people (Negrin, 1975:50-52).

Conclusions: Miniregions

It is proper to study myths in the context of whole individual mythologies, and to see those wholes as making plays on neighboring wholes. Such was the procedure in this paper as between Yavapai, Maricopa, and Pima myths and mythologies on fire and sun. We then took up Fire among the Huichols.

This program of study is infinite. One can exhaust the references to fire that are contained in one telling of a mythology, but the narrator might say more or differently in another tell-

¹⁰ In the Carrillo version, below, too: the boy who becomes Sun is cooked in a pot heated by Fire.

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ing. Mythologies are the size of small books, and who of us who has written a book can remember and tell it the same way twice?¹¹ Mythologies are not permanently fixed. They are probably under continual modification (we actually know little about this) due, I think, to a desire to answer back to neighbors. Each tribal small nation has, or had, three or four contiguous neighbors (plus local variations within itself), and each nation had a different set of neighbors. The striking thing about them is that they did not tend toward uniformity, or mythological unity, but rather they maintained diversity – through parody.

Now, how are the stories of the northern miniregion — Yavapai, Maricopa, and Pima — neighborly and parodic on the subject of fire? Let me first state the opinion that this paper has dealt with two stories of unusual interest and originality. These are Real's Birth of Grandfather Fire and Stacey's Burning of the World. The Grandfather Fire story I will not comment on farther. We need more texts from the "southern" miniregion, texts that I hope are already published. On Stacey's story, I have stated in a footnote that the plot of this text shares motifs with the Popol Vuh, good company for any story. I will not pursue that enticing comparison farther because those two are not actually company, that is, are not from neighboring peoples. I have also commented on how Stacey's Burning of the World resembles the opening story in his mythology, with the cremation of Frog: the world versus a frog-man are burned, and Coyote steals an organ in each text (Sun's stomach and Frog's heart). Moreover, the cremation story ends a cycle in Stacey's mythology, with a flood, while the burning of the world ends a cycle with fire. This is the proper comparison for us now.

Let us add the Maricopa cremation story to the set and consider all three parodically. A total of six important characters appear in one or more of the stories. One of those, Coyote, is in all three; three characters, Frog, Sun, and Rabbit, are in two stories; and two of the six, a human-man-formed-god (named

¹¹ Mythologies are told in oral prose, that is, in normal speaking voice. They are memorized at the level of the event, not at the level of the sentence or word. Other kinds of text of the region — songs, prayers, chants, and orations — are memorized at more minute levels.

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Cipas) and Squirrel, occur only in one story, both times in the role of chief of a band. Thus,

	<i>Burning of World</i>	<i>Maricopa Cremation</i>	<i>Yavapai Cremat.</i>
Frog	0	+	+
Sun	+	+	0
Man-god	0	+	0
Squirrel	+	0	0
Rabbit	+	+	0
Coyote	+	+	+

The above cold actuarial summary establishes the interlocking nature of the principal characters. This is one criterion for what I mean by parody. Parodic texts must have characters (or let us say subjects, or topics) in common. The next criterion is that the characters (etc.) must be rendered differently; and, third, the differences must be understandable such that one version can be read as the “established” or “target” or “butt” or “stimulus” text for the parody and the other can be read as the “demeaning” “attacking” or “response” text, that is, as the actual parody.

The problem is in establishing intent. How can we be sure that the narrators of old texts appreciated the difference between their version and the versions of others: not only appreciated but *created* the difference in parody? The evidence can only be circumstantial. We will read the texts for interlocking generic characters with contrasting realizations; and we will fancy whether one version could have “put down” or “attacked” another. The mythologies of neighbors should yield many such readings, the mythologies of remote peoples should yield few.

Here are the my readings of our three “dual” characters:

Frog: established in the Maricopa, where Frog drinks the bath water of her human-formed father; demeaned in the Yavapai cremation where Frog is presented as chief. The message: “Your chief is a frog to us.”

Sun: established in the Maricopa as a source for fire; demeaned in the Yavapai (world burning) where Sun is a

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delicious villain, a piece of whom makes a cataclysm.
Message: "Your sun is paltry compared to ours."

Rabbit: established in the Maricopa as a pitiful victim; demeaned in the Yavapai (world burning) where Rabbit is a great, smart gambler and lover-boy. Message: "And your rabbit is infantile."

Here are some supporting mythological facts. On Frog, the Yumas, Mojaves, and Maricopas all have a Frog daughter eat the feces, dropped in a river, of a man-god equivalent to Cipas (but with different names). It seems that the Maricopa version is a more modest form of those others. But at the same time the Maricopa narrative attacks one of the names of the Pima man-man referred to above as Elder Brother. Another name for this god is "Drink-it-all-up," which is what Cipas's daughter did to the bather water. (I don't know the Maricopa name "Cipas" has any literal meaning.)

On Sun, we have seen the widespread motif of "Coyote sent for fire." The Yumas, Mojaves, and Cocopas have it, too. A mission to the sun (elemental, not character, sun) is the Maricopa rendition of the motif. One could consider the entire spread of elemental fire sources to be minor parodies of each other. But the major parody, I believe, is Stacey's making the sun into a character. Stacey or a predecessor's message is: "You have the sun as an elemental small thing, I make him an interesting fellow!"

On Rabbit, there is a nice contrast between Rabbit as victim and Rabbit as victor, but I can't suggest which is the parody. The Rabbit-as-victim story seems confined to the Maricopa and Pima versions of the cremation story. The Yumas, Mojaves, and Cocopas have their man-god killed because of his incestuous glances at a daughter who eats his feces in retaliation. One can say the Rabbit as victim is a parody of those (Rabbit replaces man-god, bath water replaces feces). I don't know a nearby story other than Stacey's with Rabbit as victor, nor of Sun as gambler or piece-of-gambler as source of the sun, nor of piece-of-sun-man as cause of conflagration. If such stories are not found, we can say that the whole great Yavapai story is

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a parody of — or “a refraction from” — the locally rather widely spread cremation story.¹²

Parodies in modern written literatures are single-minded attacks on single texts. Tribal mythologies simultaneously parody points in all of their neighbors, like ships with guns pointed in several directions. And the mythologies change constantly depending on the new targets they discover.

What will this theory of mythologies do for us? We should like to tie the particulars in myths to particulars of a teller’s personal, political, geographical, and economic circumstances: to tie something literary (story) to something extra-literary. For the miniregion, where the peoples are all neighbors, the theory of parody opposes this reductionist, outside-cause theory of myth as follows. The theory ties a point in a myth to something outside the text, but inside the realm of literature, namely a neighbor’s mythology. This is a benefit because it makes us consider whether the peoples of a miniregion are not effectively the same in their practical activities in the world: same natural environment, same subsistence, same family life. They might be the same, and their mythological (also ceremonial) life may differ simply in order to be different. We can entertain this because we now have a sociological or psychological motive for their mythologies to differ: for the sake of difference, for social identity, for pride. Now, is this not an extra-mythic, extra-literary explanation? Yes it is, but it is not of the sort, “because the tellers had families of a certain type,” or “because the rains were of a certain amount.” Indeed, one supposes that within a miniregion such factors are constant. Not so, however, between macroregions.

Conclusions: Macroregions

“Desert” versus “grassland” versus «mountain forest» are macroregions, at least in a biological sense (regions are also political, and as we know politics can override geography). I believe it is in the spirit of this conference to consider how

¹² There are surely aggressive and «agentic» stories on Rabbit or Hare from the Midwest of the U.S. There are summarized, for instance, by Bierhorst, 1985, 213-224.

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“desert” mythologies contrast with, say, “forest” ones. This is the spirit of *discontinuous* comparison in which continuity or neighborliness, and therefore parody, do not apply. A good topic for such comparison would be, for example, how the mythologies of the Athabaskans of North America differ depending on the life zones of the peoples, specifically the Athabaskans of the forested Subarctic and those of the dry Southwest. About them one could consider whether the details of the north and south peoples owe more to life zone or to neighborly parody (say, of Navajos making neighborly play on their Pueblo neighbors). This paper does not do that. We will, however, do the following: take the desert-sensitive topics of Rain and Wind, and note how a desert people promoted those topics as characters, not merely as mere elements.

Since the earth’s life zones mainly depend on climate – hot, warm, cool, cold — and moisture — arid, dry, moist, sopping — then a useful study should be how peoples of different zones mythologize aberrations of climate. There is ample study of the local *norms*, for example in archaeoastronomy: the solstices, the months, the phases of Venus, etc. But as far as I know the mythic expressions of aberrations of the local norms – floods, droughts, cold- and heat-waves — are little studied. Here as a start is a myth from the desert Pima on drought.

*How Morning Green Lost his Power
Over the Wind Gods and the Rain Gods*

Morning Green [the chief of an ancient village at the present-day Casa Grande Ruins National Monument] is reputed to have had special magic power over two supernatural beings, known as Wind-man and Rain-man. It happened at one time that many people were playing a game with canes in the main plaza of Morning Green’s settlement, on the south side of the compound; among these were Rain-man and Wind-man. The latter laid a wager that if he lost, his opponent should look on the charms of a certain maid. When Wind-man lost, in revenge he sent a great wind that blew aside her blanket, at which indignity she cried

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and complained of Wind-man to Morning Green, who was so angry he made Rain-man blind, obliging him to be led about by his servant, the wind; he also banished both from Casa Grande. They went to the San Bernardino Mountains in what is now California and lived at Eagle Mountain, near the present town of Wadsworth, where as a consequence it rains continually.

After the banishment of these two the rain ceased at Casa Grande for four years, and Morning Green sent Humming-bird to the mountains where Wind-man and Rain-man resided. Humming-bird carried with him a white feather, which he held aloft to detect the presence of wind. Three times he thus tried to discover Wind-man by the movements of this feather, but was not successful. When at last Humming-bird came to a place where there was much green grass he again held up the feather to see whether it showed any movement of the air. It responded by indicating a slight wind, and later he came to the spot where Wind-man and Rain-man were, but found them asleep.

Humming-bird dropped a little medicine on the breasts of Wind-man and Rain-man, which caused them after a time to move and later to awake. When they had risen from their sleep Humming-bird informed them that Morning Green had sent him to ask them to return and again take up their abode with him at Casa Grande. Rain-man, who had no desire to return, answered, "Why did Morning Green send us away?" and Wind-man said, "Return to Morning Green and tell him to cut off his daughter's hair and make from it a rope. Bring this rope to me and I will tie it about my loins that Rain-man, who is blind, may catch hold of it while I am leading him. But advise all in Casa Grande to take the precaution to repair the roofs of their houses so they will not leak, for when we arrive it will rain violently." Humming-bird delivered this message to the chief at Casa Grande and later brought back the twisted rope of human hair. Wind-man and Rain-man had barely started for Casa Grande when it began to rain, and for four days the downpour was so great that every roof leaked. Morning Green vainly used all his power to stop the rain, but the magic availed little (Fewkes, 1912:47-48).

Rain and Wind are surely characters in this story. They are classic dirty young/old men. Here is how the story could be

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explained: ask what this story could be a parody of, and establish whether it is part of a desert-caused regional theme. Here are some thoughts.

First, the Maricopa and Yavapai mythologies do not contain Wind and Rain as characters, and they do not have stories of drought in the sense of «we had rain and then unfortunately we lost it.» Therefore the Pimas are exceptional in these matters, and therefore they seem to be parodying something or someone.

What could their target be? The only parodic resonance that I detect is relative to other Pima stories, not between them and the Maricopas or Yavapais. But this is tentative: the Maricopa and Yavapai record is very scant, and I may still have missed something in it. In any case the above story parallels other Pima stories on the loss of Corn and Tobacco, than these take two forms: (1) Tobacco was a woman who desired but lacked suitors so she got her father to kill her by burial; then she sprouted as tobacco the smoking of which attracted rain for the people; and then she quarreled with Corn over who was most important, and they both left humanity; and (2) Corn was a man who came to humanity and married a woman and provided humanity with work-free and abundant showers of corn; the couple had a child who died; corn left and the miraculous corn showers ceased (Bahr, ed., 1994: 85-107 for examples of both types).

I conclude that the Pima dirty-old-man drought story fits with other Pima «character-stories» in which an initial abundance is followed by total loss and is then normalized to today's standards. Love, sex, and marriage drive all of these stories. I suspect that the Pimas are more interested in those topics than in drought. The dirty old men are a comical and obscene turn in this love set, and the drought is more a means than an end. But let us see what moist land peoples say about droughts and other climatic aberrations!

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