

RARAMURI COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this document to all those children of God who in one way or another have felt relegated from the Church because of their way of understanding or expressing their faith. Especially to the native communities that have often been classified as pagan despite having an authentic love for God. I also dedicate this document to those who, despite not sharing the culture, have dedicated their lives, and have inserted themselves into native communities, although many times that means risking their lives for those who have been forgotten by society and the church.

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I want to thank God for always blessing me at every stage of my life. Because no matter where I am in the world, God has given me brothers and sisters who show me how wonderful God is.

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Thank you to my great life partner, my husband. Thank you for continuing to make your decision to love me. Thank you for inspiring me to do things with love and joy and supporting me, especially when I needed it the most. Without your support, it would not have been possible to get here.

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Abstract

In this thesis, I will address native people from Chihuahua, Mexico, called Tarahumaras. Despite they are well known by this name, this community names themselves Rarámuris. In Chapters One and Two, based on different scholars, I will describe this community according to different aspects of this culture, including some of their celebrations. Then I will analyze how this community is based on their spirituality and how this dimension influences their lives. And finally, I will analyze if this community is really Christian or if they still believe in other gods. And if they are Christians I will address if they have to change their practices following the norm of the Catholic Church.

Preface

I want to begin this thesis by describing two facts that inspired me to write this document. The first was an article published by the *Catholic News Agency* website and posted on the Facebook page called *EWTN Vatican*, this article reports that at the opening Mass of the Synod of San Bernardino, California in the United States of America, there was the participation of natives of the area incorporating their rites into the opening Mass. According to these authors, this fact created some negative reactions on the YouTube page where the video of the celebration was broadcasted. They even quote a person who cataloged this indigenous presentation as "paganism in full bloom".¹

Although these authors were quoting YouTube comments, something that struck me is that this article describes one of these Native Americans' "at the end of Mass [in] colorfully costumed figure that resembled traditional representations of an Aztec demon"² This left me thinking about several things: the fact that both the Aztecs and the Native Americans of San Bernardino are called indigenous does not necessarily imply that their religious and cultural symbols share the same meaning; If a symbol is interpreted as a demon in one culture, it may not be for another culture. These communities are more than 1,800 miles away. To put it in perspective, it is like me

¹ Joe Bukuas, Shannon Mullen, and Carl Bunderson, "Indigenous prayers, dancing in San Bernardino Synod Mass spark backlash," *Catholic News Agency*, October 23, 2021, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/249383/indigenous-prayers-dancing-in-san-bernardino-synod-mass-spark-backlash>.

² Ibid.

saying that people from Vancouver, Canada, believe the same thing and have the same cultural symbols as people from San Diego, California, or Tijuana, Mexico. In addition, we would possibly be trying to compare the natives of today with the Aztecs that the Spaniards encountered in the sixteenth century.

Another point that emerged is to know whether or not these authors have the knowledge about Aztecs' beliefs on demons and whether the demons are the same as the devil as we understand in Christian Theology. At least, I do not have knowledge of Aztec theology or wisdom. But what I am sure of, is that prior to the encounter with the West, the Aztec worldview and theology were not based on Christian Theology, so it is unlikely – but not impossible – that their concept of demon is the same as that of the Christian.

In his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Anthropologist Clifford Geertz suggests that the way to understand culture is from within since members can express the meanings of the symbols that their own culture and religion have. According to this assertion, it can be deduced that as an external agent to a culture, it is very difficult to define what rituals or ceremonies mean. However, this author proposes that the approach to cultures different from ours through observation and research, that is, through ethnographic studies, can give us an idea of what is important to certain cultures, motivates them, and moves them.³

With this assertion, I move forward to the other event that motivated me to investigate Indigenous Theology. While taking an Intercultural Theology class at the Franciscan School of Theology in San Diego, California, I came across a document made

³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (United States of America: BasicBooks, 1973), 6-18.

by an indigenous priest from Juchitán, Oaxaca in Mexico, named Eleazar López Hernández. Through several documents, this priest exposed Indigenous Theology from the indigenous point of view, that is, from within. One thing that caught my attention was that this native priest describes what he has had to live according to his reality as indigenous and Christian in an environment in which being part of the Catholic Church means being different from his idiosyncrasy as an indigenous person. That is by believing in the religion brought by the Spaniards, indigenous people have to change their ancient practices and customs, as if they cannot be Christian and Indigenous because they are two opposite realities.⁴ On the other hand, he comments that he has met some people from the Church, who do not want to apply the term theology to indigenous expressions of faith as if expressing faith with indigenous symbolism was not authentically Christian.⁵

Putting myself in the place of the indigenous Christian, it concerns me that people outside indigenous culture, and who often have little information about it, could feel that they have the authority and knowledge to label Native people as pagan, or non-Christian, with something that they may not be understanding. All this is often due to a lack of knowledge, or the fact of thinking that Christians are homogeneous and that we are all going to think, act or express faith the same way. From my experience, I can say when I see the indigenous people of southern Mexico, despite being Mexican -I am from

⁴ Eleazar López Hernández, *La espiritualidad y la teología de los pueblos amerindios* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1999), 34-35.

⁵ Eleazar López Hernández, “La Teología India y su Lugar en la Iglesia,” *Centro Nacional de Ayuda a las Misiones Indígenas* (May 2012): 2-6.
https://cimi.org.br/pub/assteologica/Eleazar_LATEOLOGIAINDIAYSULUGARENLAIGLESIA.pdf.

North of Mexico-, I do not understand the meaning of the symbols or rituals they perform.

All of the above led me to become more curious about indigenous Christians and meditate on what the multifaceted church presented by Pope Francis means. The Bishop of Rome proposes a church formed with different local churches all with different faces, -one of them the indigenous church-, united all in diversity (*EG*, 236).

These reflections in my journey as a theology student led me to decide to create this thesis focused on the indigenous community called Rarámuri located in the Sierra Tarahumara in Chihuahua, Mexico. Why them and not another indigenous community? I am a Mexican who was born and raised in the city of Chihuahua, Mexico, which is close to where the Rarámuri community lives; and a city where many native Rarámuri have had to migrate. At the Sierra Tarahumara owing to the territorial extension, the ruggedness of the area, and the lack of quality roads, it is very common for Christian groups to go on a mission for a few days – especially in Holy Week or Christmas –. This is to be able to help priests in the most important celebrations of the Church. For the priest or deacon, it is a titanic task to be able to attend to the entire community in a single day. That is why these Christian communities, that live in the cities near the Sierra Tarahumara go on a mission for one or several weeks to these mountain communities. This represents a great help for these ecclesiastics, especially during Holy Week or Christmas.

However, today I reflect on the training I received to approach the Rarámuri community -many years ago-, which lacked explanation about the rites, ceremonies, celebrations, and important meanings for this community. This led us to present the

Gospel according to our understanding, but not according to how they understand life. With this in mind, I do not want to detract from all the efforts that are made to bring the Word of God to this indigenous community. Nevertheless, I seek, first of all, that when we approach our indigenous brothers and sisters, anywhere in the world, we should -or must- go more prepared to be able to understand as best as possible those cultures, including their symbols and meanings. Likewise, I seek that we understand that these communities actually are and reflect the universal Church; that despite dressing, celebrating, or worshipping God differently they are authentically and truly Christian. Finally, I would like to maintain that the fact of being Christians does not make them less indigenous than those who are not Christians, that is, having acquired or coupled Christian Theology to their previous worldview does not make them lose the essence of being indigenous.

This thesis is divided into four parts. In the first part, I present general information about the Rarámuri culture. I will talk about where they are located, their social organization, how they call themselves, and how they have transmitted their knowledge. I will also touch on part of its history. Finally, I will mention how factors such as global warming, organized crime, and exploitation of resources are affecting this community. In the second chapter, I will describe some traditional ceremonies of the Rarámuri people, such as the celebrations of *Tutuburi* and *Yúmare* that could be classified as a little more private, the ball race and the career of *Ariwueta*, performed by men or women respectively. In the last part of chapter 2, I will look at the celebrations with more Christian influence: the celebration of *Pintos y fariseos* -Pharisees- and the *Matachines*. In Chapter 3, I will analyze the implications of Rarámuri culture's symbols and rituals

based on different sociological, anthropological, and theological studies. In the fourth and final chapter, I will trace issues such as diversity and unity, as well as inculturation and the image of the Church, and how this involves the Rarámuri community.

Before I begin to present the Rarámuri indigenous community, I want to make it clear that this is a thesis for the master's degree in theology. For this work, I had to consult works by other authors about the Rarámuri community and other different documents. In the sources consulted, I find different interpretations because of the authors' backgrounds, or even the time the document was written. For these reasons, some of the interpretations would be contrary to others. I know that there is a lot of very valuable material besides the ones consulted here. But it is impossible to cite or bring to the document so much material. Unfortunately, I do not have any Rarámuri scholars in my sources, only interviews that were done with Rarámuris by outsiders. Therefore, what is exposed is based on translations or the perception of someone outside the community. When made by an outsider, these documents may be susceptible to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the culture, symbolisms, and meanings of Rarámuris. That is why I do not propose this thesis as a finished document, but as a work that can be further developed and perhaps modified by studies based on direct observation.

Chapter One: Initial Exploration of the Rarámuri Community

1.1 Location

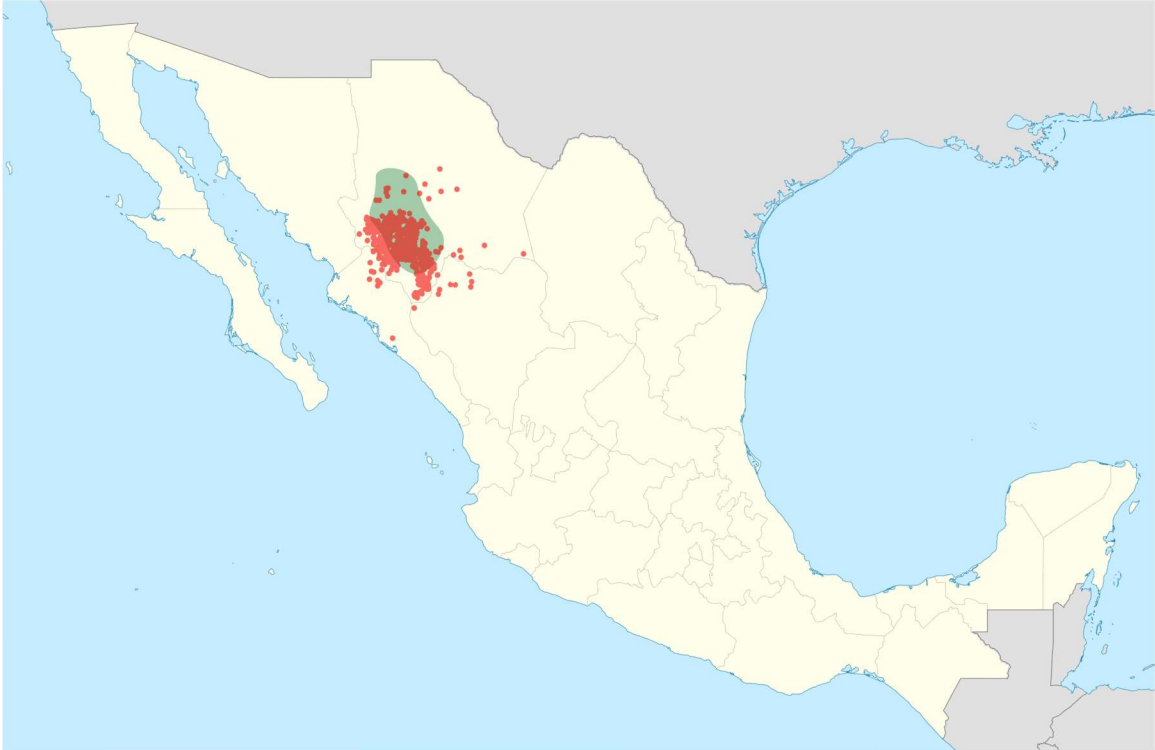


Figure 1.1: Sierra Tarahumara. Image by Noahedits, Jan 12, 2020, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tarahumara_precontact_and_modern.svg.

The Rarámuri¹ are an indigenous community located in a territorial extension of approximately 60,000 square kilometers in the Sierra Madre Occidental, which belongs to the states of Chihuahua, Sonora, and Sinaloa in Mexico² This geographical area is better known as the Sierra Tarahumara, which is inhabited not only by the Rarámuris, but

¹ They are also known as Tarahumaras.

² Juan Luis Sariego Rodríguez, *El indigenismo Tarahumara: Identidad, comunidad, relaciones interétnicas y desarrollo en la Sierra de Chihuahua*, 2nd ed. (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2015), 19.

by other indigenous communities such as Ódame -or Tepehuanos-, the Warijón -or Warijóns-, and the O'Oba. -opimas bajos-³. The Sierra Tarahumara has been geographically subdivided into the Alta Tarahumara, which includes the municipalities with higher altitudes above sea level such as Balleza, Guachochi, Bocoina, Carichí, Nonoava, and Guerrero; and in the Baja Tarahumara that includes the municipalities of the canyon zone such as Guadalupe y Calvo, Morelos, Batopilas, Urique, Uruachi, Maguarichi, Guazapares, Chínipas, Ocampo, Moris, and Temósachi.⁴

The Rarámuris generally live far from each other; isolated houses can be found several kilometers away. After analyzing three communities, ethnographers Wendell C. Bennett and Robert M. Zingg, comment that the Rarámuri tend to locate their small farms away from the trails and main economic centers.⁵ According to anthropologist Juan Luis Sariago Rodríguez, since colonization, this indigenous community has “assumed a highly dispersed settlement pattern, closely dependent on the location of agricultural and forestry resources.”⁶ Even Luis Nicolas Olivos Santoyo, with a doctorate in Anthropological Sciences, and the independent researcher Rubén Luna Castillo maintain that this characteristic was a limitation for the settlement of missions during the Spanish colonization, due to the desire of the indigenous people to maintain their pattern of

³ Ibid., 19.

⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁵ Wendell C. Bennett, and Robert M. Zingg, *Los Tarahumaras. Una tribu india del norte de México* (México: ini, 1978), 296, quoted in Nicolas Santoyo Olivos, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), chap. 2, 75, Mediateca INAH, https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/libro%3A444.

⁶ “asumido un patrón de asentamiento sumamente disperso, en estrecha dependencia con la ubicación de los recursos agrícolas y forestales.” Sariago Rodríguez, *El indigenismo Tarahumara: Identidad, comunidad, relaciones interétnicas y desarrollo en la Sierra de Chihuahua*, 23.

settlement and social organization based on *rancherías* far from each other.⁷ Given this peculiarity, today Rarámuri community is formed of a set of *rancherías*, whose inhabitants generally do not live congregated around a center where the church, the market, or the government institutions are located; rather, they are located according to the supply of resources for their survival. Olivos Santoyo expresses that over time the mestizo communities have tended to concentrate in the most populated and communicated nuclei, while the indigenous people have preferred to disperse away from the roads and close to their agricultural lands.⁸

1.2. Social Organization

According to Olivos Santoyo, the Rarámuri community has an understanding of the concept of community that does not go hand in hand with the way Western culture understands it. The indigenous peoples of the Sierra Tarahumara are made up of groups of families settled in physical localities called *rancherías*, whose members relate to each other through kinship ties and reciprocal practices.⁹ Their social organization system is based on relations of reciprocal exchange between one family unit and another, and from *ranchería* to *ranchería*.

Olivos Santoyo argues that, although family units or *rancherías* can be found several kilometers away from each other, indigenous society – nearby *rancherías* – meets

⁷ Nicolas Olivos Santoyo, and Rubén Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), chap. 10, 269, Mediateca INAH, https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/libro%3A444.

⁸ Nicolas Olivos Santoyo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), chap. 2, 75, Mediateca INAH, https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/libro%3A444.

⁹ Ibid., 76-80.

to celebrate their festivals, and on Sundays to worship.¹⁰ It is important to note that for the Rarámuri, the *Siríame* or governor is an important part of the social organization. Researcher Ma. Elena Orozco H. emphasizes that the *Siríame* is the nucleus of the community and moral authority. This author expresses that there is a bond of communal union between the ruler and the governed. According to her research conducted in the Rarámuri community between the years of 1983 to 1991, she discovered that the ruler is elected by the community. He is generally the wise man, noted for his experience and the virtue of the word. He will aim to seek justice and preserve cultural tradition. The *Siríame* will be responsible for consulting with the community before any agreement. Something remarkable is that no Rarámuri authority receives economic remuneration for their position.¹¹ Olivos Santoyo together with Luna Castillo maintains that the existence of the governor and the other Rarámuri positions are carried out according to their religion since the rulers of each community are responsible for organizing the festivities and watching over the conservation of these, as well as religion and the community.¹² Likewise, something that is worth highlighting within their social organization is the role between men and women. According to Raquel Adilene Escudero González, teacher, and researcher of the Bachelor of Nursing program at the *Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez*, in her ethnographic report, she argues that gender roles are very well defined. The woman is in charge of cooking and clothes, while the man is in charge of organizing the

¹⁰ Olivos Santoyo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 76.

¹¹ Ma. Elena Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura* (Chihuahua: Editorial Camino S.A. de C.V., 1992), 20-21.

¹² Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 270.

traditional ceremonies.¹³ Furthermore, Orozco comments that "all daily actions, work or social, are carried out in the presence of children, so they learn to work and behave each according to their sex, like their father or mother respectively [...] For the Tarahumara, life as a couple represents the complement and help necessary to develop."¹⁴



Figure 1.2: Tarahumara. Image by Ted McGrath, October 30, 2014, Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/time-to-look/15798114638>.

1.3. Economy

The Rarámuris have a deep connection to their place; they are rooted in their land. Orozco argues that the Rarámuri "has developed a true coexistence, in balance with nature."¹⁵ Daphne Miller, the author of the book *The Jungle Effect*, states that the Rarámuri eats according to what the seasons supply, which helps Rarámuris maintain

¹³ Raquel Adilene Escudero González, "La educación no formal en los rarámuris de la Alta Tarahumara," *Chihuahua Hoy* año 18, núm. 18 (enero-diciembre, 2020): 145-146, <http://dx.doi.org/10.20983/chihuahuahoy.2020.18.6>.

¹⁴ "todas las acciones cotidianas, de trabajo o sociales, se realizan en presencia de los niños, así ellos aprenden a trabajar y a comportarse cada uno de acuerdo a su sexo, como su padre o su madre respectivamente [...] la vida en pareja representa para el tarahumara el complemento y ayuda necesaria para desarrollarse." Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 25.

¹⁵ "ha desarrollado una verdadera convivencia, en equilibrio con la naturaleza." Ibid., 12.

good health. In addition, their eating habits include a good diet full of nutrients, with unprocessed foods; just the fresh fruits and vegetables they grow. Additionally, the environment provides the medicine they need.¹⁶



Figure 1.3 Image by Lance Fisher, May 13, 2005, Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tarahumara.jpg>.

In general, this community produces and consumes what is in its environment. In other words, the economic Rarámuri system is based on what nature provides; these people live from agriculture, hunting, and fishing, and they even build their homes

¹⁶ Daphne Miller in GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, Directed by Dana Richardson and Sarah Zentz 2015, accessed in “GOSHEN Documentary Film - Indigenous Tarahumara Rarámuri Running Tribe Born to Run,” Dana & Sarah Film, July 28, 2020, 8:40, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xeH0KAqiqI.

themselves.¹⁷ Some of them even sell everyday objects that they make such as blankets, baskets, violins, vessels, and drums.¹⁸ According to Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, Rarámuri's survival is based on agriculture and herding; as a source of fertilizer, wool, milk -and cheese- and meat for their festivities. He also states that Rarámuris continue their pre-historic practices of hunting and gathering, especially during poor agricultural years.¹⁹ In addition to this, the documentary film "GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People" suggests that at the ball race celebration, they bet money or other things like clothes, chickens mirror, etc. So gambling is a part of the economy.²⁰ Irigoyen Rascón also states that the economic importance of the ball race is considerable because Rarámuri bet literally all they have.²¹

In general, the economic system is based on exchange and reciprocity. The word *kórima* is an essential part of Tarahumara's economic life. They use it when requesting aid, but this aid, or rather *kórima*, carries a commitment. This word represents a form of generalized reciprocity among the Rarámuris. It is an exchange system that does not involve payment,²² at least not immediately. According to Orozco, this word can be defined or translated as "share." However, the person that requests some sort of aid knows that they will have to have something to share in return.²³ This lifestyle has helped

¹⁷ Evan Sofro in GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, 1:16:43.

¹⁸ Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarájipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara* (Chihuahua: Centro Librero la Prensa, 1994), 13.

¹⁹ Ibid., 111.

²⁰ Evan Sofro in GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, 44:50.

²¹ Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarájipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 30.

²² Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez, et al, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010) Mediateca INAH, 409, https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/libro%3A444.

²³ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 111.

them to survive as a community. Unfortunately, climate change and lack of rain, have led them to look for new livelihood alternatives as well as to migrate to large cities.

1.4. Light-footed

The native Rarámuri community is better known nationally and internationally as Tarahumara or Táraumares. According to the book *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico* in recent decades, the word Rarámuri has been used to call those we know as Tarahumaras, according to this publication in the West they call themselves ralómli, while in the southern region, they are called Rarámuri: All these words mean "people" and not "light feet", as has been popularly believed.²⁴ Contrary to this, the Jesuit historian Peter Masten Dunne conducted a study based on the documents of the first explorers and missionaries in the Sierra Tarahumara in which he explains that the word Rarámuri means in Spanish "el de los pies ligeros."²⁵ In "GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People," Will Harlan translates the word Rarámuri in English as "light-footed."²⁶ Orozco maintains that in its deepest sense, the word Rarámuri means "he who walks well."²⁷ This name is possibly due to the characteristic that this community is famous for walking or running long distances.²⁸

²⁴ Gotes Martínez, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 15.

²⁵ Peter Masten Dunne, *Las antiguas Misiones de la Tarahumara*, 5th. ed., (Chihuahua: Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua, 2003), 21.

²⁶ Will Harlan called the "light-footed" in GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, 1:05.

²⁷ "el que camina bien", Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 12.

²⁸ Sariago Rodríguez, *El indigenismo Tarahumara: Identidad, comunidad, relaciones interétnicas y desarrollo en la Sierra de Chihuahua*, 65.

This fame as the running community has grown in recent years thanks to social media, but, above all, because of the participation of professional ultra-marathon Rarámuris athletes such as Lorena Ramírez, Armulfo Quimare, and Antonio -Toño- Ramírez, among many others. In addition to being indigenous, it is outstanding that many times they run with their typical costumes, even with their typical Tarahumara footwear, and not with sports shoes like any other athlete. Directors and producers Dana Richardson and Sarah Zentz presented a film called “GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People” on their YouTube channel, where it is explained that Rarámuris are natural athletes of high resistance due to their way of life and that they do not need to train for an ultra-marathon, because every day the work in the fields is their training. They are not fast, but endurance is theirs, running is part of their lifestyle.²⁹

Walking or running long distances has been an indispensable part of their daily lives. Although the Rarámuri are characterized by running long distances for a long time either by profession, celebration, work or simply to go to another community, running has a deeper meaning in their culture. According to the article, “Running in Tarahumara (Rarámuri) Culture” running for hunting has been normal in some tribes, but for the Tarahumara running has a broader meaning in their practical, social, and spiritual roles.³⁰ For example, the Rarámuri has integrated running into their celebrations as seen in *Rarajipari* -the ball race- and *Arriweta*, the women's race. Rarámuri ultra-marathoner

²⁹ Richardson and Zentz, GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People.

³⁰ Daniel E. Lieberman, et. al, “Running in Tarahumara (Rarámuri), Culture Persistence Hunting, Footracing, Dancing, Work, and the Fallacy of the Athletic Savage,” *Current Anthropology* Vol. 61, No. 3, (June 2020): 356-359.

Armulfo Quimare comments in a video that for them the race is a party, it is the race that God commanded.³¹

1.5. Language and Knowledge Transmission

The language of the Rarámuri is known as Tarahumar, Tarahumara language o Rarámuri language³². For the purpose of this work, I will refer to it as Tarahumar.

According to researcher Escudero González, “the Rarámuris have a cosmovision based on ancestral beliefs and customs that they have preserved for generations.”³³ This author states that the Rarámuri society, far from transferring its knowledge to a traditional school, has been transmitting its ancestral beliefs and customs through oral tradition from generation to generation. The fact that the Rarámuri do not have a traditional education based on written data but only on their oral tradition, makes us rely on the studies/research carried out by people outside the Rarámuri culture -i.e.: missionaries, scientists, expeditionary/ or scholars-, who have lived with this community, but may not have a complete understanding of the Rarámuri culture. They may try to define or explain the Rarámuri culture based on Western understanding, which can also vary over time.

Likewise, we depend on the new generation of Rarámuris who have acquired their knowledge through their parents, the knowledge that over time could have been influenced by the cultural context in which they were immersed, thus modifying the previous knowledge with the current one. A clear example of this – which I will explain

³¹ Armulfo Quimare, GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, 47:45.

³² Abel Rodríguez López, *Gramática Tarahumara (1683)* (Ciudad Juárez: Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, 2010), 31.

³³ “los Rarámuris poseen una cosmovisión basada en creencias y costumbres ancestrales que han conservado por generaciones.” Escudero González, “La educación no formal en los rarámuris de la Alta Tarahumara,” 139.

in more detail in the next section— is the moment when the Rarámuri were in contact with Western missionaries, where some indigenous people adapted their previous worldview into a Christian understanding.

1.6. History

There are three hypotheses about the origin of this native community. The first maintains that a Uto-Aztec group arrived from the North, and that part of this community did not migrate to the South but stayed in what is now the Sierra Tarahumara. The second theory is that they are part of the ancient Mayan people, but due to invasions, they migrated from what is now southern Mexico to the mountainous part of the State of Chihuahua.³⁴ The last hypothesis, which according to Orozco is the one held by the Rarámuris, is that they are descendants of a previous race that has always inhabited the mountain part. This author argues Rarámuris have their origin in the Mesoamerican culture, which was based on knowledge and deep relationships with nature.³⁵ Rodríguez López describes that the Rarámuri, before the Jesuit contact, sang to the moon, drank *tesgüino*³⁶, and poisoned his arrows to go to war.³⁷ For his part, José de la Cruz Pacheco Rojas, with a doctorate in history describes that the mountain natives offered different

³⁴ Orozco, *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁶ *Tesgüino* It is a sacred drink made from fermented corn that is used both to give back for collective work and to build a social framework at important events. Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 15. Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 113.

³⁷ Abel Rodríguez López, “Thomas de Guadalajara y el *Compendio de la Lengua Tarahumara* de 1683” (paper presented at the symposium de las Misiones Tarahumaras at the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, México, 2011), 11.

things such as animal bones, pots, or flowers, to stone idols.³⁸ Fundamentally, the origin of these people is unknown, therefore anything we could say would be speculation.

1.6.1 Jesuit Contact

After conquering Tenochtitlan, the exploration of new lands and search for riches were taking the Spanish colonizers to the north of the continent. This time of exploration was usually accompanied by soldiers, militias, and missionaries. Robert H. Jackson describes that these three groups were collaborating by mutual agreement on a plan to integrate the indigenous into the economic chain.³⁹ Ursula Lamb, a historian specializing in Latin America, exposes that missionaries as well as the conquerors' government, militia, and colonizers had different motives during the conquest, either as a means or as an end. The missionaries saw the conquest as an instrument for the conversion of souls, and the conquerors saw the conversion as the instrument of conquest.⁴⁰ She also argues that the conversion of the Indians not only involved the adoption of the Christian creed but also the acceptance of the Catholic lifestyle, according to the Spaniards.⁴¹ Furthermore, historian Ingrid Engstand argues that during the conquest there were missionaries, explorers, farmers, ranchers, and even naturalists who studied flora and fauna. Far from harming the natives, these were people who also sought the common good. She states that there were Spaniards who were cruel, but there were also many

³⁸ José de la Cruz Pacheco Rojas, "Formación de la provincia Tepehuana y principios de la Tarahumara Baja" (paper presented at the symposium de las Misiones Tarahumaras at the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, México, 2011), 56.

³⁹ Robert H. Jackson, "La Colonización de La Alta California: Un Análisis Del Desarrollo de Dos Comunidades Misionales," *Historia Mexicana* Vol. 41, No. 1 (Jul. -Sep., 1991): 83.

⁴⁰ Ursula Lamb, "Religious Conflicts in the Conquest of Mexico," *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 17, No. 4 (Oct., 1956): 537, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2707786>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 526.

others who dedicated themselves to protecting and caring for the natives. Comparing these relations with the colonization of other Europeans, the Spaniards dedicated themselves to absorbing the Indians instead of excluding them.⁴²

Regarding the Rarámuri mission project, Olivos Santoyo and Luna Castillo state that each organism acted separately and with diverse and even opposed methods, but toward Christianizing and reducing the native populations.⁴³ These authors argue that this was achieved with other communities where the foundation of the mission town established a pattern of residence where the center of the town was the church and around it would be the dwellings of the Indians.⁴⁴

In the beginning, the Society of Jesus was in charge of missions in the territory that today we call Sierra Tarahumara. Pacheco Rojas, based on correspondence sent by then governor of the province of Nueva Vizcaya, Rodrigo del Rio y Loza (1589-1595), argues that the entry to mission by the Society of Jesus to the region of the Sierra Tarahumara is because the governor Rio y Loza considered that the best way to unite the Indians to political and Christian life was through conversion to Christianity and not violence. Because of this, the governor explicitly requested Jesuit missionaries, since he considered them efficient in the conversion of the natives and the Franciscans unfit to communicate with the natives because of their lack of interest in learning the languages

⁴² Iris H. W. Engstrand, "How Cruel Were the Spaniards?," *OAH Magazine of History* Vol.14, No. 4, The Spanish Frontier in North America (Summer, 2000), 12-13, <http://jstor.org/stable/25163377>.

⁴³ Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 261.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 266.

of the natives.⁴⁵ According to Olivo Santoyo and Luna Castillo, the people of the Tepehuán nation asked Fonte⁴⁶ to act as a mediator with the Rarámuri, since they were very warlike and made war on them frequently.⁴⁷

Paradoxically, establishing the missions in this territory required military force and there were even clashes between natives and missionaries -helped by the soldiers- for the destruction of idols.⁴⁸ The reception of the Spaniards, whether missionaries or soldiers, by the Rarámuris, was not so welcome. In 1648 and 1654 some rebellions caused the death of two Jesuits.⁴⁹ Because of this, according to Rodríguez López, by 1697 a captain proposes to put more soldiers in the missions.⁵⁰ This assertion presumes that the missionaries needed the soldiers to protect them from possible attacks, which makes us believe that neither the colonizing Spaniards nor the missionaries were welcome. Likewise, this author maintains that the Rarámuris, whom the first Jesuit missionaries encountered, refuse “any acceptance of the whole political, religious, military and economic system.”⁵¹ In addition to this, Pacheco Rojas maintains that the Jesuit missionaries followed the Christian tradition implemented since the Conquest of the new territories, in which idols were destroyed and Catholic temples were built

⁴⁵ Pacheco Rojas, “Formación de la provincia Tepehuana y principios de la Tarahumara Baja,” 37.

⁴⁶ One of the First Jesuits to be in contact with Rarámuri people.

⁴⁷ Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 262.

⁴⁸ Pacheco Rojas, “Formación de la provincia Tepehuana y principios de la Tarahumara Baja,” 59-60.

⁴⁹ Abel Rodríguez López, “Thomas de Guadalupe y el *Compendio de la Lengua Tarahumara* de 1683”, 14.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵¹ “niegan cualquier aceptación del conjunto del sistema político, religioso, militar y económico” *Ibid.*, 20.

instead, in an act of religious replacement.⁵² In the end, the goal of the governor of Rio y Loza to unite Native people to political and Christian life without violence by bringing the Jesuits was not so effective, especially at the beginning with the *Chamanes*.⁵³ The rebellions with the Rarámuris will conclude in 1700.⁵⁴

The Jesuits arrived in the Sierra Tarahumara at the end of the sixteenth century with the firm intention of converting the Gentiles.⁵⁵ It was the Jesuit missionary Pedro Méndez, who first ventured into the Sierra Tarahumara in 1601.⁵⁶ In 1604 and 1606, the missionaries Juan Fonte and Juan de Valle came into contact with the Rarámuris for the first time.⁵⁷ Fonte founded the mission of San Pablo, today Balleza, Chih. and then headed north to the Tarahumara region.⁵⁸ According to Pacheco Rojas, in 1631 “the discovery of the mines in Parral would lay the foundations for the definitive formation of the Tarahumara.”⁵⁹

Olivos Santoyo along with Luna Castillo maintains that the “project implemented by the Jesuits with the original settlers was based on the one hand on the indoctrination of

⁵² Pacheco Rojas, “Formación de la provincia Tepehuana y principios de la Tarahumara Baja”, 58.

⁵³ Pacheco Rojas presents a series of examples in which the Jesuits opted for violence to convince the Tepehuanes and Tarahumaras natives of baptism or to destroy their idols. Ibid., 59-68.

⁵⁴ Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 269.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁶ Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 262.

⁵⁷ Pacheco Rojas, “Formación de la provincia Tepehuana y principios de la Tarahumara Baja,” 57.

⁵⁸ Dunne, *Las antiguas Misiones de la Tarahumara*, 23.

⁵⁹ “el descubrimiento de las minas de Parral sentaría las bases para la formación definitiva de la Tarahumara.”, Pacheco Rojas, “Formación de la provincia Tepehuana y principios de la Tarahumara Baja,” 47.

the Catholic creed and the teaching of the faith. On the other hand, it sought to create mission towns where, in addition to bringing together indigenous populations, it was intended to create self-sufficient agricultural production units from which to sustain the foundation of other missions throughout the region”.⁶⁰ According to these authors, this attempt to congregate the Rarámuris in an economic center will be limited by the desire of the Rarámuris to continue with the social organization based on remote *rancherías*.⁶¹

Jesuits understood that the Rarámuris wanted only to live in the mountains. These missionaries made the decision not to force them to live gathered around the missions or heads of towns, opting for the persuasion of adopting baptism and Catholic belief along with ritual practices and economic dependence on new technologies brought from Europe. New technologies and tools such as cultivating, draught animals, the development of livestock, grazing, and the cultivation of cereals such as wheat, as well as the introduction of livestock -goats and sheep-.⁶² According to Olivos Santoyo and Luna Castillo, this strategy “Over the years, it proved more effective in achieving peace than the path of terror promoted by its military co-religionists and white settlers.”.⁶³

By 1767 the Society of Jesus was expelled from all Spanish dominions, according to the decree of the Spanish king Carlos III. These included Jesuits working in Rarámuri

⁶⁰ Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 262.

⁶¹ Ibid., 269.

⁶² Ibid., 268-269.

⁶³ “al pasar los años mostró ser más eficaz para lograr la paz que la vía del terror impulsada por sus correligionarios militares y colonos blancos”. Ibid., 269.

missions.⁶⁴ Olivos Santoyo and Luna Castillo maintain that the expulsion of the missionaries of the Society of Jesus resulted in the destruction of the territorial organization of the indigenous people: “The Tarahumara overturned the territorial organization format based on mission towns *-pueblos de Misiones-*, returning to their life on *rancherías*. However, the idea of town *-pueblo-* persisted in the notion and conceptualization of the [Rarámuris], with the only difference that now the group of members recognized by the community was called *pueblo*.”⁶⁵ While the Jesuits were there, some dedicated themselves to ethnographic, sociological, or even linguistic studies about this community. An example of this is the Jesuit priest Thomas Guadalajara, who made the first grammar of the Rarámuri language.⁶⁶ He was a missionary among the Rarámuris from 1675 to 1720 and the founder of one of the towns founded by the Jesuits.⁶⁷ The doctor in history María Esther Montanaro Mena maintains that after the Jesuit expulsion “There was a huge documentary gap concerning the Rarámuri people.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Dizán Vázquez, “¿Quién fue Aquiles Greste?” In Aquiles Greste, *Informe sobre un viaje de exploración en la Tarahumara (Noreste de México)*, Eds., Dizán Vázquez, and María Esther Montanaro (Chihuahua: Secretaría de la Cultura de Chihuahua), 16.

⁶⁵ “los tarahumaras echaran por tierra el formato de organización territorial basado en pueblos de misiones, regresando a su vida en ranchos. Sin embargo, la idea de pueblo persistió en la noción y en la conceptualización de los [rarámuris] sólo que ahora se nombraba pueblo al conjunto de miembros reconocidos comunitariamente”, Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 267.

⁶⁶ Abel Rodríguez López, “Thomas de Guadalajara y el *Compendio de la Lengua Tarahumara* de 1683”, 11.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁸ “se produjo un enorme vacío documental en relación con el pueblo rarámuri.” María Esther Montanaro, “Aquiles Greste: un sacerdote jesuita por la Sierra Tarahumara” In Aquiles Greste, *Informe sobre un viaje de exploración en la Tarahumara (Noreste de México)*, Eds., Dizán Vázquez, and María Esther Montanaro (Chihuahua: Secretaria de la Cultura de Chihuahua), 48.

1.6.2 Franciscans

With the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Sierra Tarahumara and until the mid-nineteenth century, the Franciscans tried to continue the task undertaken by the Jesuits. Olivos Santoyo and Luna Castillo maintain that the Franciscans introduced new things such as praying the rosary and modified some important celebrations.⁶⁹ Additionally, these authors affirm that the Franciscans integrated the Rarámuris through *repartimiento*, which consisted of integrating the indigenous into the service of the colonizer, incorporating them into Western life.⁷⁰ The *repartimiento* comes to supply the *encomienda*. It will be the work of the native people, in a certain way forced, where the worker received a small and fixed salary and only worked for a short period of time.⁷¹

Olivos Santoyo along with Luna Castillo describes that the Franciscans developed larger complexes than the churches built by the Society of Jesus. They also maintain that the Franciscan missionaries dedicated themselves to opening new missions. Due to the shortage of religious people for such a large area, however, the missionaries were unable to fulfill their evangelizing task as expected in the Sierra Tarahumara.⁷² Finally, these authors explain that some of the towns founded by the Jesuits were occupied by the Franciscans, but that others were abandoned, which led to the arrival of mestizos, “who settled in these their administrative, commercial and regional power seats. This caused

⁶⁹ Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 270.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 268.

⁷¹ Mark Cartwright, translated by Agustina Cardoso, “Repartimiento,” *World History Encyclopedia en español*, August 22, 2022, <https://www.worldhistory.org/trans/es/1-21000/repartimiento/>.

⁷² Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 270-271.

the withdrawal of the Indians to the most rugged areas of the Sierra, which would not represent – until the arrival of forestry – areas of interest to the white population.”⁷³

1.6.3 Western Influence

Whether Jesuits, Franciscans, or conquerors, the reality is that the economic, social, religious, and cultural life of Rarámuri was influenced by the encounter with the West civilization. Pacheco Rojas asserts that, although the task given to the Jesuits was to convert the Gentiles, their mission ended up being an act of social transformation.⁷⁴ Certain changes were introduced in the organization of the Rarámuri ethnic group such as the introduction of a political system of administration, the introduction of new methods of cattle and agriculture, and the systematization of their lexicon and grammar of Tarahumar.⁷⁵

Olivos Santoyo and Luna Castillo suggest that the presence of the missionaries influenced not only the Rarámuris but also the other ethnic populations in the area. For them, both the óódamis, rarámuri, warijón y o’óba share ritual forms and social organization “since many of them are the product of syncretism between their ancestral practices and those introduced by the mission”.⁷⁶ They also express that the Rarámuris adopted new technologies and tools for agriculture, which changed the cultural elements

⁷³ “quienes se instalaron en éstos sus sedes administrativas, comerciales y de poder regional. Esto provocó el repliegue de los indígenas a las zonas más accidentadas de la Sierra, las cuales no representarían —hasta la llegada de la explotación forestal— zonas de interés para la población blanca”, Ibid., 271.

⁷⁴ Pacheco Rojas, “Formación de la provincia Tepehuana y principios de la Tarahumara Baja”, 46.

⁷⁵ Zacarias Márquez, *Simposium de las Misiones Tarahumaras* (Chihuahua: Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, 2011), 9.

⁷⁶ “ya que muchas de ellas son el producto del sincretismo entre sus prácticas ancestrales y las introducidas por la misión”, Olivos Santoyo, and Luna Castillo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico*, 261.

of these inhabitants. Also, the introduction of cattle consolidated the peasant condition and new patterns of subsistence.⁷⁷ They add that in the religious dimension, the adoption of the Christian ritual calendar stands out, as well as the practices of marriage and baptism, which have strengthened the group bonds necessary for the reproduction of the community. And finally, they argue that a new referent of the social organization of the peoples was introduced: the system of indigenous government, as well as clothing, and household utensils.⁷⁸

We can conclude that the Rarámuri community had a history before and after conquest by the West. Their economic, social, religious, and cultural life was altered, like many cultures throughout history. Due to the lack of documents before the arrival of the Jesuits, we do not know if this community was previously altered by other communities. One thing is clear, colonizers and missionaries influenced the Rarámuri community in their use of new tools of agriculture, the use of animals, the integration of the Christian calendar, the introduction of marriage and baptism, and the system of government based on a governor.⁷⁹

1.7 A Culture in Danger

The article, “Running in Tarahumara (Rarámuri), Culture Persistence Hunting, Footracing, Dancing, Work, and the Fallacy of the Athletic Savage” argues that the Rarámuri has long been subject to oppression and exploitation, and their way of life is being affected by external forces. The Sierra Tarahumara is rapidly transforming due to

⁷⁷ Ibid., 267-268.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 270.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

ecological change, roads, increased tourism and logging, expansion of the non- Rarámuri community, drug trafficking by drug gangs, and the migration of much younger Tarahumara to cities.⁸⁰ This exploitation and oppression began from the encounter with the West. According to Montanaro, by the end of 1800 the increase in cattle and mining production, the construction of the railroad, and the exploitation of wood from the forests in the mountains of Chihuahua, where the Rarámuri were concentrated, accentuated the serious problem of land eviction.⁸¹

According to Will Harlan, “drought, and famine, and drug trafficking, and everything else is threatening Tarahumara’s way of life.”⁸² Additionally, climate change is not helping the Rarámuri community in their agriculture and cattle. Drought is disrupting their celebrations because Rarámuris do not have enough food to hold their festivities; they sometimes do not last as long when they do not have the right number of calories. Because of the scarcity of food, drought endangers Rarámuri’s traditions and part of their identity as Rarámuri.⁸³ Irigoyen Rascón states that “despite help received by the government and the Church, social environment is characterized by high rates of illiteracy, child mortality, and tuberculosis.”⁸⁴

As shown previously, the Rarámuri community has faced external challenges. Despite all this, the Tarahumara have managed to survive not only as inhabitants but as

⁸⁰ Daniel E. Lieberman, et. al, “Running in Tarahumara (Rarámuri), Culture Persistence Hunting, Footracing, Dancing, Work, and the Fallacy of the Athletic Savage,” 358.

⁸¹ Maria Esther Montanaro, “Águiles Greste: un sacerdote jesuita por la Sierra Tarahumara”, 56.

⁸² Will Harlan in GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, 1:14:201.

⁸³ Ibid., 1:12:09.

⁸⁴ Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 15.

an indigenous culture, with very characteristic features that distinguish them as Rarámuris. In the next chapter, I will describe some celebrations performed by this community.

Chapter Two: Rarámuri Celebrations

As shown in the previous chapter, the Rarámuri community is shaped of small family units called *rancherías*, that are far away from each other. Because of this, ethnographer Angel Acuña Delgado maintains that Rarámuri ceremonies will vary according to each town, especially between *Alta Tarahumara* and *Baja Tarahumara*.¹ To say it clearly, when we talk about the Rarámuri culture there is no homogeneous culture as such. Nevertheless, we can see a pattern in certain aspects such as social, economic, and legal organization, clothing, or language.²

According to Orozco, Rarámuri culture is based entirely on their religion.³ For the Rarámuri social, economic, and religious life are connected; they believe that everything is interrelated. This is because for them God is everything, so all their actions will be influenced by their faith. Likewise, due to the integration of the Christian religion into their previous beliefs, Rarámuri's religious and social festivities are determined by the Christian calendar. They celebrate Lent, Easter, and Christmas. However, authors such as Orozco⁴, Acuña Delgado,⁵ and Gotes Martínez⁶ maintain that the ceremonial calendar is

¹ Ángel Acuña Delgado, "Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza rarámuri," *Latin American Music Review* Volume 33, Number 1 (Spring/Summer, 2012) University of Texas Press: 29.

² Ma. Elena Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura* (Chihuahua: Editorial Camino S.A. de C.V., 1992), 20.

³ Ibid., 44.

⁴ Ibid., 64.

⁵ Acuña Delgado, "Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri," 36.

⁶ Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), Chap 1, 64, Mediateca INAH, https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/libro%3A444.

really based on the agricultural calendar; Therefore, for Rarámuri it was easy to adapt their celebrations to the Christian calendar brought by the Jesuit missionaries since these coincide completely with the agricultural calendar.

According to Irigoyen Rascón, religion is basically monotheistic. For Rarámuri, *Onorúame* - meaning: He who is Father- created all things and made them available to the people so that by working with them they can live.⁷ This God is Father and Mother at the same time, as Acuña Delgado indicates.⁸ Irigoyen Rascón maintains that for the most acculturated communities, *Onorúame* has become God Father of the Catholic Trinity without difficulty.⁹

The production of corn begins with Lent, a period in which the fallow of the earth begins -*wasalá*-. Later, the Easter party is expected -*Pintos y fariseos*-scheduled in connection with the first full moon of spring.¹⁰ Corpus -*Korpo*-: in this season ceremonies are performed to heal the land and it is fed by burying portions of tortilla broth at different points of the plot.¹¹ And it ends with the celebration of *Matachines*, which coincides with Christmas, when the agricultural cycle closes, and whose purpose is to thank *Onorúame* for the goods received.¹²

⁷ Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara* (Chihuahua: Centro Librero la Prensa, 1994), 13.

⁸ Acuña Delgado, "Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri," 28.

⁹ Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 14-15.

¹⁰ Gotes Martínez, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico*, 63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹² *Ibid.*, 68.

2.1 Traditional Celebrations

Orozco defines that there are five ceremonies that Rarámuris still preserve and that make up their entire religious set; these are *Tutuburi*, *Yúmare*, *Raspa del Peyote*, *Semana Santa* -Holy Week-, and *Matachines*.¹³ Acuña Delgado focuses his study on the Rarámuri dances of *Matachines*, *Pintos y fariseos*, *Pascol*, *Yúmare/Tutuburi*, *Jicuri*, and *Bacánowa*, as he considers that all these are part of the "Rarámuri cultural heritage."¹⁴ Fructoso Irigoyen focuses on the ball race.

According to Orozco, every religious ceremony has three elements: symbols -eternity, absolute and infinite-,¹⁵ prayer -through singing and dancing-, and the offering -which somewhere in the ceremony is shared by the attendees-.¹⁶ On the other hand, Irigoyen Rascón argues that another important element in the celebrations is music. This author describes that Rarámuri music takes a theme and repeats it over and over again without variations until the end of the piece. Both civic and religious ceremonies are characterized by a slow pace.¹⁷

For the purposes of this work, I will focus on describing the most common celebrations among the Rarámuri people. I will begin with the celebrations of a more private nature such as *Tutuburi* and *Yúmare*; then, the celebration of the ball race and *Ariweta*, which could be described more as recreation and coexistence. Finally, I will

¹³ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 78.

¹⁴ “acervo cultural rarámuri”, Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 29.

¹⁵ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁷ Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 28-29.

describe those that seem to have more Christian influence, that is *Pintos y fariseos* and *Matachines*.

2.1.1 *Tutuburi/ Yúmare*: private ceremonies

According to Acuña Delgado, the *Tutuburi* and *Yúmare* constitute the most characteristic and frequent religious celebration of the Rarámuri. This author shows that these celebrations carry elements such as dancing, singing, offering, food, and drink.¹⁸ Orozco expresses that *Tutuburi* is the ceremony that takes place when someone wants to request help for different reasons such as raising a soul to heaven or requesting something, such as solar energy for a newborn, rain, the calm of storms, good harvest, etc. This author describes this ritual as the help and protection requested so that the spiritual force grows. This ceremony begins with the cleaning of a piece of land, sweeping an area marking a circle -a symbol of the sun-. In front of this circle are the cross -a symbol of the absolute- and the offerings. Then, singing and dancing will take place, and a petition will be made.¹⁹

Yúmare is a complementary ceremony to the *Tutuburi* since its objective is to give thanks for the help received. In this case, the cross and the offerings move to the center of the circle, surrounding eternity and the absolute. But in this case, the song expresses gratitude, and the dance describes the infinite circular movements that a row of men performs in the opposite direction to the movement of the women's row. The ceremony begins with the sacrifice of an animal, which requires long preparation and is carried out

¹⁸ Acuña Delgado, "Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri, 48.

¹⁹ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 52-54.

by the men of the house. *tortillas* and *tesgüino* are made as well. The ceremony ends when the *tesgüino* is finished. In the two ceremonies, a special dress is not worn, and they are "private" celebrations; that is, not always the whole community is invited.²⁰

2.1.2 Rarájipari (Ball Race)/Ariwueta

Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón explains that the race is a Rarámuri communal activity, which according to Bennett and Zingg, should have had a religious significance, although currently, it is more of a competitive sport as we understand it in modern society.²¹ Will Harlan, Executive Director of the organization Barefoot Seed, maintains that this celebration is done for "fun and recreation."²² It seems that in this celebration the spiritual dimension is not included. But nevertheless, Rarámuri Armulfo Quimare comments that for them the race is a party. It is the race that God commands.²³ According to the documentary movie "GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People", it is claimed that the ball represents the world and God commands Rarámuri to keep the whole world moving. So, Rarámuri needs to kick the ball. This video argues that the Rarámuris are convinced that, if they don't run and kick the ball, the world will end. Therefore, their role is to maintain the world moving.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid., 50.

²¹ Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarájipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara* 30.

²² GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, Directed by Dana Richardson and Sarah Zentz 2015, accessed in "GOSHEN Documentary Film - Indigenous Tarahumara Rarámuri Running Tribe Born to Run," Dana & Sarah Film, July 28, 2020, 39:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xeH0KAqiqI.

²³ Armulfo Quimare, in *ibid.*, 47:45.

²⁴ Ibid., 43:32,

In this celebration, two teams are created. These teams can vary from one to several people. There may even be races by categories such as the best runners, children, or the elderly.²⁵ They use a wooden ball the size of a softball, which will be kicked only with the foot -toes specifically-. In some areas, this celebration has a variation, and a stick is used instead. The goal is to kick the ball from teammate to teammate on the race field from side to side.²⁶ According to Irigoyen Rascón, the first to reach the finish line wins.²⁷ But the documentary “GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People” holds that there is no finish line, and the celebration lasts until there is no one standing. Only one person could run up to 200 miles.²⁸

Ariweta is the women's variant of the ball race.²⁹ A hoop is made with a cassava leaf, which will be thrown with a stick. The race is similar to that of the ball race, although it generally does not last that long.³⁰

An important aspect of these celebrations is the gambles between the Rarámuris and sometimes with *chabochis*.³¹ As a part of the celebration *Rarajípari* -Ball Race- or *Ariwueta*, they use to bet for a runner. And if the runner wins, they take the bet. As presented in the last section, gambling is part of the Rarámuri economic system. According to Irigoyen Rascón, racing is an important part of the Rarámuri economy since

²⁵ Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajípari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 28-29.

²⁶ GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, 40:05.

²⁷ Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajípari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 29.

²⁸ GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, 44:50.

²⁹ Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajípari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 19.

³⁰ GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, 48:00.

³¹ White and bearded man. Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri, 40.

the Rarámuris usually bet on what they have.³² They can bet money, or other things like clothes, mirrors, chickens, etc.³³ According to Irigoyen Rascón, the bet does not go to any player. They bet on the runner of their *ranchería*, town, or region.³⁴



Figure 2.1 Rarámuri in ball race (*Rarajipari*). Image by Evangelia Anastasaki Lance Fisher, July 10, 2017, Periegra, <http://perierga.gr/2017/07/h-fylh-tarahumara-kai-oi-monadikes-ikanothtes-ths-sto-treximo/>.

2.1.3 Celebrations with more colonial influence

Finally, I will explain the celebrations of *Pintos y fariseos*, and *Matachines*, which could be classified as celebrations with more colonial and Christian influence. According to Acuña, these two celebrations are complementary. He comments that “the system of *Pintos y fariseos* within the Spring cycle must be taken into consideration, given the fact that both constitute complementary systems where harmony and conflict

³² Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 30.

³³ GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, 44:50.

³⁴ Fructoso Irigoyen Rascón, *Rarajipari: La carrera de la bola Tarahumara*, 28.

are felt as axes of social dynamics and synthesis of life experience.”³⁵ This author argues that the dance of *Pintos y fariseos* and that of the *Matachines*, have colonial influence,³⁶ and thus, religious influence. On the other hand, Orozco argues that these two celebrations mentioned above do not necessarily have colonial influence, but rather they coincide with the celebrations of Holy Week and Christmas.³⁷

2.1.3.1 *Pintos y Fariseos* (Holy Week)

The celebration known as *Pintos y fariseos* is performed at the same time as the Holy Week of the Catholic calendar.³⁸ As stated above, some authors argue that this agricultural celebration was coupled with the Catholic calendar after the encounter of the two cultures: native Rarámuris and Catholic missionaries. Acuña maintains that this tradition carried out in Holy Week was brought and imposed during the colony because there is no pre-Hispanic record of this tradition.³⁹ It also emphasizes that despite being external, it contains its originality in the incorporation of typical Rarámuri native elements in this festival such as dance and music, feather ornaments and bells, drum and flute, body painting, dancing, or *tesgüino*.⁴⁰ Orozco considers the Rarámuri as non-Christians.⁴¹ He maintains that both the rituals of Holy Week and *Matachines* -which will

³⁵ “es preciso tener en consideración el sistema de *Pintos y fariseos* dentro del ciclo de primavera; dado que ambos constituyen sistemas complementarios en donde la armonía y el conflicto se dejan sentir como ejes de la dinámica social y síntesis de la experiencia vital.”, Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 36.

³⁶ Ibid., 29.

³⁷ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 64.

³⁸ Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 36.

³⁹ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 36.

⁴⁰ Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 36.

⁴¹ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 14.

be described later- are mostly celebrations, whose purpose is to remember the beginning and end of an agricultural cycle, but within a calendar imposed by the Christian church and even affirms that within these rituals the same church has imposed some elements of its own as images, processions and prayers⁴²



Figure 2.2 *Pintos y fariseos Celebration*. Image by Mexico Unexplained, August 14, 2021, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/MxUnexplained/status/1427010065014214657>.

According to Olivos Santoyo, the festivity of Holy Week is characterized by being a ritual of a petition, as well as of confrontation between good and evil. The purpose of this celebration is to please *Onorúame* so that it may drive away evil, send enough rain, and bring good harvests. Likewise, he maintains that the ceremony includes rites of provocation towards nature in order to force it to behave in a fertile way so

⁴² Ibid., 64.

climate may be benign, and that new pregnancies and new births may occur. In fact, he explains that in the community of Norogúachi -a community located in the south of the Sierra Tarahumara-, members of the ritual groups *moro [pinto]* and *fariseo* fight each other by representing the sexual act in order to promote human fertility itself.⁴³

According to Orozco the celebration of *Pintos y fariseos* is an event in which the Rarámuri represents the struggle between positive and negative forces; this could be the more secular way; Or the struggle between good and evil—the enemies of Christ—⁴⁴ in a Christian sense; Olivos Santoyo describes it as the celebration of scaring evil away.⁴⁵ According to Acuña, this celebration has been changing over time. Initially, in the community of Norogachi, the *fariseo* was shirted and had a face painted white. This emulates the one they call *chabochis*,⁴⁶ where the captain carries a spear facing down -pointing to the ground- and with Judas -grass doll- as the chief. Due to the influence of the Rarámuri communities of the north, the *fariseos* were displaced by the *pintos*, who were almost naked, with white polka dots with the spear facing upwards -pointing to the sky-. In short, either as *pintos* or *fariseos* this group is in charge of representing evil.⁴⁷ Sometimes they can be called *Chamucos*.⁴⁸ Acuña expresses that this festivity goes beyond the struggle between good and evil in the depiction of Jesus and Judas. It is the

⁴³ Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico*, 63.

⁴⁴ Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 39.

⁴⁵ Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico*, 65.

⁴⁶ Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 40.

⁴⁷ Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 39.

⁴⁸ Demons, Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 68.

representation of the struggle of good against evil that prevails in the Rarámuri, whereas evil is embodied by the *chabochi*,⁴⁹ who in the end will be the losers over the winning Rarámuri.

Acuña asserts that this festivity is characterized by the sounds of the drums together with the austerity of the monochromatic costumes, with dance with slipped and circular steps, which mark the beginning of Spring and, therefore, the time of sowing.⁵⁰ This author divides this celebration into three phases: the first -preparatory- involves awareness, which takes place during Lent; the second phase is Holy Week proper; the third consists of the *Tesgüinada*.⁵¹ Acuña describes the first stage beginning in Lent with the integration of drum sounds in many places of the Tarahumara as a distinctive sign of being within that festive cycle. It should be noted that the way of celebrating can vary from town to town. Acuña tells us how, in the community of Norogachi, a group of *pintos* -representing positive forces- or *fariseos* -representing negative forces- dance next to the church every Friday of Lent. He also tells us how, in Tehuerichi, *pintos* dance around the temple on the Friday before Holy Week. Finally, he mentions that the people of Panalachi carry out *luchas*⁵² between soldiers and *fariseos* every Sunday of Lent.⁵³

According to Acuña, the second stage called Holy Week usually begins on Palm Sunday. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday morning are the most intense days of the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 37.

⁵² Fights.

⁵³ Ibid., 70.

celebration.⁵⁴ Orozco describes this stage as a nine-day celebration. She expresses that there are two camps: negative forces and positive forces, staging the struggle that sustains the whole universe.⁵⁵

On the first days -of the nine-, you hear the drums that are hidden. They increase their beat, evoking negative forces. On the fourth day -Wednesday of Holy Week- *fariseos*, almost naked, painted, and barefoot or with *huaraches*⁵⁶, carry a small lump at the waist emulating their attachment to material things. When the sun is high in the sky, the *fariseos* leave a house, dancing periodically and drunk on *tesgüino*, telling obscene jokes while laughing. They carry a white flag as they continue with their symmetrical dances and shouting like *guajolote*⁵⁷ or *coyote*. This group of *fariseos* carries a doll made of grass with Western clothing -the Judas-.⁵⁸ This doll will remain hidden until the end of the celebrations, specifically on Saturday.

During the time described above, there are the pulsations of other drums with different types of vibration. In this group, there are also women with their typical costumes of bright colors. All those who want to participate can do so. These people are also drunk as the first group but keep discipline without rigidity. At the center of this group are the so-called soldiers because they guard the pulsations stalked by the opposing side.⁵⁹ The soldiers are dressed in breeches and very white *jorongo* embroidered with

⁵⁴ Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 37.

⁵⁵ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 68.

⁵⁶ Sandals.

⁵⁷ Turkey.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 70.

strong-colored *collera* -usually red-, with some weapons such as rifles -which do not work-, spears, or sticks, and with red flags carried by their captain.

On this same fourth day, there is a procession from the church headed by an image of the Virgin -there may be more images of the Virgin, and it is usually that of Guadalupe-. The image is supported by women, including girls, which are persecuted by the *fariseos* in constant movement. The procession leaves the church, walks around it, and stops at all four sides, each time in front of a wooden cross, at each station, and the two forces dialogue with rituals and moving their flags.

This rite is done twice a day, from Thursday to Saturday. The first procession leaves from the left side of the church, and the second time from the right side. While the procession is inside the church, some male authority prays when entering and before leaving. In turn, a group of *fariseos* enters with an attitude of discipline and indiscipline at the same time; the rest of the community remains within the church in a very passive attitude while the two flags both white and red are in front of the altar, entering, as Orozco says, in a refined dialogic combat. Then *fariseos* come out and then the rest of the community follows them to the front courtyard of the church; now they stand in front of a large cross. Some authority figure of the group of soldiers speaks to the community reminding them through a *Nawésari*, which are the ethical precepts said by an authority. According to Orozco, these days represent the combat in which evil provokes good. The two flags are juxtaposed in a convincing dialogue in which apparently the *Chamucos* are losing strength.⁶⁰ In his narration, Orozco presents the captain as the standard-bearer of

⁶⁰ Ibid., 72.

the group. However, Acuña presents the dance of Norogachi with a captain, a standard-bearer, and a drummer with *Pintos y fariseos* forming two parallel lines. There is a drummer in each line, at the back of each line. The captain is at the end, in the center of the two lines. He also describes the instruments used in this community. Each group has two musicians; each one carries a drum hanging in their body with a drumstick and a reed flute with four holes. The flute is held with one hand and the drumstick is held with the other, usually the right one. Sometimes you can see only one drum, but usually, there are several. Acuña comments that the rhythm of the drums and flutes changes according to the process of the celebration and evokes a warrior environment.⁶¹

On the morning of the penultimate day, which will always be Holy Saturday, two sides, much stronger and more intoxicated, face each other in another fight at the end of the procession, but this time in hand-to-hand combat, in consecutive pairs of soldiers against Pharisees until they have all fought. The fight is only strength in the arms that knock down the opponent thanks to a girdle attached to their waist. One of the two has to fall to the ground. According to Orozco, this ceremony is performed between the laughter and joy of the whole community, especially women.

After this confrontation and the supposed victory of the soldiers -- those representing the positive force, or good -they take to the task of searching for the evil force. The soldiers make a journey through the hills looking for the evil force following the sound of the drums. When the evil force is found, including the grass doll of the *fariseos*, there follows the purification and transformation from the negative force to the

⁶¹ Ibid., 38.

positive, which is symbolized by the burning of the doll, *chamuco*, or Judas of Holy Week. With this, the triumph of good over evil has been represented.⁶² Acuña says that both the dance of *Pintos y fariseos*, as well as the burning of Judas -which has all the vices-, is not in itself a representation of the Rarámuri, but that the *chabochi* – the other; the different one – is represented in these characters;⁶³

After the burning of Judas, or the doll, the celebration continues with the drinking of *tesgüino*, which usually ends at sunset on Sunday. Orozco expresses that, according to Rarámuri's thought, here begins a cycle.⁶⁴ For his part, Acuña describes that at the end of the celebrations, people return to their *ranchería* or town to take the *tesgüino* from house to house until it runs out after several days.⁶⁵

At the end of the celebration, "the families move to the agricultural plots located in the different *rancherías*, where the fallow of the land will be concluded to begin the planting of corn -ishi-bó sunú-, which takes place after the moon of May and until the day of Corpus Christi -Korpo-, a date coinciding with the first days of June."⁶⁶

2.1.3.2 *Matachines* (Christmas)

According to Orozco, the generalized interpretation of the feast of the *Matachines* refers to the meeting of two cultures that oppose each other. Both try to impose their version, but finally one triumphs, the one that is considered a reasonable winner; the

⁶² Ibid, 73.

⁶³ Acuña Delgado, "Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri," 40.

⁶⁴ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 73.

⁶⁵ Acuña Delgado, "Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri," 37.

⁶⁶ Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico*, 64.

other, the defeated one, passively submits. This symbolizes the triumph of Christianity over paganism, according to the interpretations of Jesuit missionaries. However, Orozco disagrees with this Christian interpretation and maintains that the celebration of the *Matachines* is due to the winter solstice, the end of a period of agriculture. He further explains this ceremony can be perfectly found in the sense and cultural context of the Tarahumara before Christianization.⁶⁷

In this ceremony, as well as in the Holy Week ceremony, the opposites are presented, but here the negative force is directed by positive force, and the grace and rhythm that the Rarámuris give to the elements that represent this transformation, is manifested through color.⁶⁸ According to Acuña, this dance is to thank *Onorúame* for the harvest received and ask for prosperity for the one that will come. It is time to keep him happy, and there is nothing better than dancing to achieve this goal.

Acuña suggests that the dance and music of *Matachines* have their origin in the interaction with the Jesuits, but the Rarámuri were giving it the sense of pleasing God and sharing with people and having fun, owing to their native mentality that has that double dimension: sacred and earthly.⁶⁹ The ceremony of the season of plenty after harvest integrated with soft violin melodies, sometimes with guitars or even accordion.⁷⁰ According to Acuña, the violin, rattles, and guitar are the instruments that accompany the celebration of the *Matachines*. He also maintains that some of the melodies played in

⁶⁷ Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 78.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 75.

⁶⁹ Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 36.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 30-31.

the celebrations are adaptations of others that come outside the Rarámuri such as *El Condor Pasa* or *Los huaraches*.⁷¹

Something that is important to emphasize is that Orozco, Acuña,⁷² and Gotes Martínez describe that for this ceremony very colorful and abundant clothing is used. This is how Gotes Martínez describes it: “The dancers dress in bright colors so that the androgynous unit *Onorúame-Ryerúame*, God Father and Mother, notices the festive presence of the Rarámuri and helps them to navigate the harsh winter weather, a time when God often gets sick, which is noticeable by the greater pallor of the sun.”⁷³

The dance is performed with steps struck with crosses, streamers, and waves in the dance. Acuña describes that after dancing all night, the evening ends with the collective meal *-tonare-* and *tesgüino* shared and offered to one another. It is also necessary to note, in favor of the denial of the conflict and the affirmation of harmony and fraternization, the fact that the *Matachines* carry in their left hand a *palmilla* and not a staff or a sword.⁷⁴

Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez comments that it is within this celebration that those responsible for organizing the next Holy Week, *Norogúachi*, a celebration that will mark the beginning of the next agricultural year, are appointed⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid., 30.

⁷² Ibid., 39.

⁷³ “los danzantes se visten de vivos colores para que la unidad andrógina *Onorúame-Ryerúame*, dios adre y dios madre, adviertan la presencia festiva de los rarámulis y se sientan ayudados para transitar el duro tiempo invernal, época en la que Dios frecuentemente enferma, lo que se nota por la mayor palidez del sol.” Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico*, 63.

⁷⁴ Acuña Delgado, “Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza Rarámuri,” 35.

⁷⁵ Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico*, 63.

With these descriptions made by some scholars, we can have an introduction to the Rarámuri culture. In the next section, I will analyze this information and compare it with some interviews conducted with some Rarámuris in which they express the meanings of their symbols and symbolic acts, under the light of some insights from other scholars.

Chapter Three: Rarámuri is a Religious Culture

3.1 Introduction

According to French philosopher Edgar Morin, “There is no culture in the human brain -the biological apparatus able to act, perceive, know, learn-, but there is no mind, no spirit, no capacity for consciousness and thought, without culture”¹. For him, culture gathers that which is conserved, transmitted, and learned. For Morin, man fulfills himself as a thoroughly human being only in and by culture². This author suggests that interactions between individuals ensure the perpetuation of culture and the self-organization of society; in other words, culture impacts humans and humans will impact culture. The relationship between humans and culture is reciprocal.

I recognize that there are many more people writing about the interrelation between culture, human beings, and society, but I have chosen to concentrate my analysis using the insights of only some scholars. I will base my analysis on the description of culture by Clifford Geertz. He describes culture as a “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”³ According to this author, culture is expressed through symbols, which is why he argues that, in order to understand a culture, it is necessary to

¹ Edgar Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future* (France: UNESCO Publishing, 2001), 43.

² Ibid., 43.

³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (United States of America: BasicBooks, 1973), 89.

observe how people express themselves through their symbols, signs, symbolic acts, and rituals. This leads us to study culture from the perspective of the people who are inside the culture. Consequently, I believe that, in order to understand the Rarámuri culture more effectively, it is not only necessary to observe the Rarámuri rituals, or what is expressed by scholars such as those mentioned in the previous chapter, but also that Rarámuris express the meaning of these symbols in order to expose it in the most faithful way possible so that people outside the Rarámuri culture may be able to understand them.

That is why I will base my analysis on interviews with the Rarámuris. I will seek to comprehend in the best way possible some meaning of the symbols and symbolic acts carried out in rites celebrated in Holy Week by this community. I intend to discern which rituals are most meaningful for the Rarámuris as well as the reasons that motivate and impel them to perform those rituals. In addition to this, I will use the concept of culture defined as an ongoing process by Edgar Morin and Geertz.⁴ Therefore, culture will not be understood as something homogeneous since it will depend on the individuals that make it up. I will also focus on the way in which these two authors propose religion or spirituality as something that impacts culture and, thus, human beings and society.

Something that caught my attention is the suggestion of the coordinator of *Centros Jesuitas de la Tarahumara*⁵, Daniel Vargas. He states that it is important not to folklorize this community, to understand that their rituals are not only customs based on tradition but that the Rarámuri has a motive rooted in their spirituality and their own

⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵ Jesuit Cultural Centers are responsible for reinforcing the essence of the Rarámuri culture for the inhabitants of the Sierra Tarahumara and opening up to other cultures. Másde131, "Centros culturales Jesuitas de la Tarahumara," May 28, 2017, 6:15, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaKYSn1H7NM>.

religiosity.⁶ In other words, the Rarámuri perform their rituals motivated by their faith, which will be expressed through external symbols.

Although people outside the Rarámuri culture could see their beliefs as mere superstitions and myths, the reality for them differs from that of other more Westernized contexts, and that does not mean it has less validity. In this perspective, philosopher Morin states that “games, festivals, ritual activities are not leisure activities that get us back in shape for practical or working life. Beliefs in gods and ideas cannot be reduced to illusions or superstition because they are deeply rooted in anthropological depths, and they touch the human being to his nature.”⁷ For his part, Geertz proposes to see religion as “a system of symbols that acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence.”⁸

As stated in the previous chapter, the Rarámuri culture is based entirely on their religion. Therefore, trying to remove this element from culture would be to fragment the Rarámuri, and our understanding would be very limited. Therefore, the focus of this analysis is more on integration than fragmentation. Morin suggests that fragmented knowledge divided up into disciplines sometimes does not help to connect parts and wholes. He suggests we should change by learning that we can grasp subjects within their context, their complexity, and their totality.⁹ For this reason, Rarámuris’ beliefs will be

⁶ Daniel Vargas in Másde131, “Centros culturales Jesuitas de la Tarahumara,” 22:10.

⁷ Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, 48.

⁸ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 90.

⁹ Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, 12.

analyzed as part of their culture, where sacred symbols function as a synthesis of the *ethos* of the people.¹⁰

Given the fact that meanings of symbols and symbolic acts must be expressed by the same people within the community towards an external community, I will expose the information that I found, where Rarámuris explain what their rituals and symbols mean to them. Unfortunately, there are not many documents where Rarámuri expresses the meanings of his culture. For the purposes of this thesis, I did not find any document that was written by some Rarámuri; only transcripts, often translated from Tarahumar to Spanish, of some interviews conducted with people from this community.

In the next section, I seek to analyze the Rarámuri culture based on the celebration of Holy Week called *Pintos y fariseos*. Likewise, I will delve into a simple word used by the Rarámuri, *kórima*, in which the economic, social, ethical, and religious aspects of this community are wrapped. For this, I will base myself on what Marcel Mauss and Lewis Hyde proposed about exchange and reciprocity, and the implications this has on the different dimensions of the Rarámuri culture.

3.2 Analysis

Before my analysis, I would like to delve into two points that I consider it important to clarify. According to Edgar Morin's definition of culture, exposed at the beginning of this chapter, culture is found both externally, which is what we see, as well as internally, that is, within the human mind. In addition to this, if we consider that

¹⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 90.

everyone is different from others due to multiple factors, both external and internal,¹¹ -e.i.: cultural context, geographical area, education, time, or knowledge- the way of understanding culture will vary from individual to individual. Having said that, I realized that the interpretation of symbolisms will have variations from individual to individual as this document is based upon individual interviews. Nevertheless, the pattern was that all this was directed towards God and that they seek God's protection and providence. Likewise, these interpretations can change over time. In other words, culture or the interpretation of symbols will be based on the transmission of information from previous generations, but it will also be transformed over time. Consequently, the information presented today may not be accurate at another time.

I will continue with the next point. If we tried to homogenize Rarámuri culture, we would be wrong. As was exposed in previous chapters, this culture has many variants, but it definitely has certain patterns that can be analyzed. For this reason, the way of understanding and acting will not be the same in the different *rancherías* that constitute the Rarámuri community. Likewise, it can vary even from one individual to another. Once the two points have been clarified, I will start with the analysis.

3.2.1 Holy Week Celebration

The celebration called *Pintos y fariseos* can be considered one of the largest Rarámuri ceremonies of this community. Some scholars propose it as a ceremony based on the agricultural calendar, that is, as a ritual of transition from one season to another,

¹¹ Chapter three "Teaching the human condition", Edgar Morin presents the human condition as rooted and influenced by the cosmos, nature, life, our humanity, our culture, our mind, and our consciousness. Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, 39-50.

which was adapted to a Christianized calendar. The fact is, however, that this community considers the Holy Week celebration as their own, not as a foreign tradition, and they use it to communicate with *Onorúame*, God Father, creator of everything.

Likewise, as I suggested previously, the belief that this celebration is a mere performance or tradition limits the understanding that what is done in this ceremony goes beyond dancing and drinking. For the Rarámuri, however, it is a ceremony of communication and accompaniment with *Onorúame* that involves reconciliation and purification, which impacts the levels of relationships of the Rarámuri. These are with himself, the community, and other beings.¹²

3.2.1.1 Dance

According to philosopher and scholar in religion Kimerer L. LaMothe, dance, far from being considered a form of entertainment and fun, can be seen as a means of religious expression and experience. This author argues that a symbolic act cannot be isolated from the context, specifically from religion, because the meaning of the act would be lost.¹³

For Rarámuris, the dance performed inside the ceremony of *Pintos y fariseos* is the necessary means to enter into communication with God, a way of giving thanks as well as asking *Onorúame* to maintain his providence. Nicolás Olivos Santoyo describes that the Rarámuri dances so that God is happy and does not let life end.¹⁴ For his part, Acuña

¹² Ibid., 44-45.

¹³ Kimerer L. LaMothe, "Why Dance? Towards a Theory of Religion as Practice and Performance," *Method & Theory in the Study Religion* 17 (2005): 101-102.

¹⁴ Nicolas Olivos Santoyo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), chap. 2, 73, Mediateca INAH, https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/libro%3A444.

maintains that the Rarámuri approaches God standing and not kneeling. This author considers that the Rarámuri dance constitutes a system of communication with *God-Onorúame* that transmit Rarámuris' joy and fulfill what was commanded by God. Likewise, this author asserts that dancing is an obligation.¹⁵

The Norwegian explorer and ethnographer, Carl Lumholtz, explains that through dance the Rarámuri aims to get the favor of Father Sun and Mother Moon. It is by dancing and drinking *tesgüino* that wishes to the gods are expressed, that Tata God can be happy.¹⁶ This Norwegian author argues that dance is work for the Rarámuri. According to Lumholtz, the word with which they express dancing, *nolávoa*, literally means to work. The old blame the lazy and lazy bait for their inactivity, saying: "Why don't you go to work?" -, thereby implying that they should take part in the dance instead of remaining idle during the holidays.¹⁷

Apparently, this interpretation made by this Norwegian explorer over a century ago could be limited by observing that the Rarámuri only sees dancing as work.¹⁸ Contrasting this assertion with what Rarámuris exposed today, dancing represents something more than a job. By dancing, the Rarámuri enters into communication with God. It is a way of giving thanks for creation, for God's sacrifice in giving life, and thus,

¹⁵ Ángel Acuña Delgado, "Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza rarámuri," *Latin American Music Review* Volume 33, Number 1 (Spring/Summer, 2012) University of Texas Press: 59.

¹⁶ Tata Dios, generally means God Father, although Carl Lumholtz, presents a syncretism between God the Father and the god of the Sun. Carl Lumholtz, *El México Desconocido*, 3th. ed. Trans. Balbino Dávalos (México: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2006), 173.

¹⁷ Ibid., 187.

¹⁸ With this I do not want to completely object to Lumholtz, rather I want to bring up the fact that what is exposed by him possibly lacks a complete understanding of what dance means to the Rarámuri of this era.

God is honored. This is how some Rarámuri express it when questioned why they dance. When asking a young Rarámuri from Norogachi about why he dances, he comments that he has heard many say that we dance so that it rains, so that we can bear more fruit, more corn.¹⁹ Rosalinda Guadalajara, a governor of a Rarámuri community living in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua²⁰ comments that they dance because "it is the way to give thanks to the Creator, who gave his life many years ago [...] for all of us"²¹ Likewise, a Rarámuri named Candelario García Bustillos, from this same community, maintains that "as our Lord Jesus died on the cross, we want to honor Him with our traditions by dancing three days and two nights."²² According to LaMothe, dance as an expression of faith is not new in Christianity. She suggests that dancing as a religious act has been relegated since the nineteenth century.²³ Even though dance may not be seen as "the" expression of faith par excellence, it does not mean that dancing is something external to the Christian religion.

Dance: Ask for Forgiveness and Seek Reconciliation. The Struggle Between Good and Evil

On the other hand, Orozco argues that, in an ethical dimension, a struggle takes place daily in the Rarámuri community so that development is balanced through the observance of its two extremes, positive and negative. In this way, individual harmony is

¹⁹ Young Rarámuri dancer. Interview in *El Souvenir*, "Rarámuri Holy Week, the largest celebration in the Sierra Tarahumara, Chihuahua," May 26, 2021, video, 6:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouE9S-tFkwc&t=1074s>.

²⁰ Ciudad Juarez is highly populated with Rarámuri immigration, this city is on the border with the USA, with El Paso Tx.

²¹ Rosalinda Guadalajara, interview in *Canal 44*, "El vía crucis de los Rarámuri de Juárez," March 30, 2018, video, 0:26, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Tf0pCcb0iU>.

²² Candelario García Bustillos, interview by Hugo Argumedo, *Canal 44*, "Celebran Tarahumaras semana santa," April 13, 2017, video, 1:41, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-J1TLqsgI4>.

²³ LaMothe, "Why Dance? Towards a Theory of Religion as Practice and Performance," 101-102.

ensured and, consequently, it will influence the world's harmony. Thus, Rarámuri will fulfill the objective they claim to have of taking care of the world.²⁴ Santoyo maintains that dancing, in addition to being a petition, is a confrontation between good and evil.²⁵ This seems to be deeply rooted in the Rarámuri understanding. When a dancer from Noroguachi is asked why he dances, he comments that they dance "to celebrate God who is tied up so that they may release him."²⁶ Rosalinda Guadalajara adds that "dancing on land or in the Church is a way to weaken the one who lives down there and thus help the Creator rest."²⁷ According to these assertions, the Rarámuri takes part in a struggle between good and evil while dancing, where all the things that could have been done against what is ordered by God are purified through acting. It is a way to restore his relationship with God and seek providence through rain and good harvests, as well as health and prosperity.

This same confrontation between good and evil can be observed in the *luchas* between the two sides that take place on Holy Saturday, after the dance, and before the burning of Judas. One way to see this tradition for a Rarámuri from Ciudad Juárez is that the *luchas* are a representation of the struggle of Roman soldiers -evil- against Christ -good-. This is how a Rarámuri expresses it: "On Saturday we carried out a *Lucha* like the Roman soldiers."²⁸

²⁴ Ma. Elena Orozco H., *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura* (Chihuahua: Editorial Camino S.A. de C.V., 1992), 73.

²⁵ Nicolas Olivos Santoyo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico* 188.

²⁶ Rarámuri dancer from Norogachi. Interview in *El Souvenir*, "Rarámuri Holy Week, the largest celebration in the Sierra Tarahumara, Chihuahua," May 26, 2021, video, 4:49, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouE9S-tFkwc&t=1074s>.

²⁷ Guadalajara, "El vía crucis de los Rarámuri de Juárez," 1:18.

²⁸ Raramuri, "Celebran Tarahumaras semana santa," 2:00.

Dance: Purification through Victory Between Good and Evil and Restoration

It is of utmost importance to emphasize the purifying aspect that is generated in the dance and the Rarámuri *luchas*. After the dance between the opposite poles of good and evil, the burning of Judas takes place. It represents a culmination of that fight between opposite poles. In the burning of Judas, we can observe the variations according to the different areas, going from a simple fight against the doll to a more structured ritual, where the standard bearers begin to destroy Judas. Then, the dancers follow -some with the spears they bring-, and then some people from the community. What is a fact is that everyone hurts, destroys, and ends up burning Judas. Fire is the purifying point that eliminates evil definitively. A Rarámuri of Norogachi comments "That night [of Good Friday] the *pascoleros* dance, and on Saturday we burn the Judas that symbolizes the death of evil [...] For us, it is very important to dance so that there are no evils in the world"²⁹

This argument, in which dance is construed as a means of transformation, is presented by LaMothe. This author comments that a bodily, emotional, and intellectual transformation is generated in dancing,³⁰ as dance possesses this transformative nature.³¹ A testimony of a Rarámuri expresses very precisely what LaMothe argues, saying: "This celebration [of Holy Week] is done to give thanks to the Creator *Onorúame*. It is also to ask for forgiveness for all the wrongs we did in the year so the next year will be a better

²⁹ Meeting Chihuahua, "SEMANA SANTA RARAMURI en Norogachi, la CELEBRACION RARAMURI más importante," Apr 10, 2021, 2:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNQ3zCsz7jY>.

³⁰ By interpreting LaMothe, not only will the dance have the transformative aspect, but also the *luchas* of both sides.

³¹ LaMothe, "Why Dance? Towards a Theory of Religion as Practice and Performance," 114.

one for us [...] At the moment of dancing, our mind forgets, and the body rejuvenates; the universal order is restored; and there is no disease, no drought. Now there is drought because traditions are being lost."³² In this assertion, we can observe that dance and *luchas* generate the effect of reconciliation with God and, therefore, the Rarámuri enters into a purification that impacts not only the personal sphere, as exposed by Adrián Espino Espino, Rarámuri from Ciudad Juárez, who says that dance cleanses the body.³³ This ceremony will also impact the whole community thanks to the providence of God and, therefore, to the whole environment that surrounds the Rarámuri, including all creation.

3.2.1.2 Music

Acuna Delgado states that both dance and Rarámuri music constitute a way of thinking and acting in which the Rarámuri dances so that the world does not end.³⁴ In other words, according to this author, music has the same effect as dance, that is, music will have the same effect on the reconciliation and purification of the Rarámuri community. About music, a young Rarámuri music professor states that "dance is for us like a relationship with God. When we dance, we do it to the sound of music. There is music that is mainly to make an offering. When they are playing the music, they are making the offering"³⁵ According to this, Rarámuri music will not be a simple harmonic accessory for tradition, but rather it will be an offering to please God.

³² Meeting Chihuahua. "SEMANA SANTA RARAMURI en Norogachi, la CELEBRACION RARAMURI más importante," 1:12.

³³ Adrián Espino Espino. interview in *Canal 44*, "El vía crucis de los Rarámuri de Juárez," March 30, 2018, video, 0:26, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Tf0pCcb0iU>.

³⁴ Ángel Acuña Delgado, "Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza rarámuri," *Latin American Music Review* Volume 33, Number 1 (Spring/Summer, 2012) University of Texas Press: 28.

³⁵ Másde131, "Centros culturales Jesuitas de la Tarahumara," 19:43.

Something that is very striking when the different *rancherías* join at a meeting point before the celebrations of dance and *luchas* is the use of the drum. According to Orozco, the pulsations of the drums represent the negative force.³⁶ On the other hand, a dancing Rarámuri comments that the drums represent the pulsations of the heart.³⁷

3.2.1.3 Costume

The costume used by the Rarámuri in this celebration does not vary much from those of other traditions, even though it seems that everyone wears their typical costumes, for many that clothing will be the same as they use daily. In the ceremony, some accessories are used such as the bells above the ankle. Nevertheless, something very characteristic of the ceremony of *Pintos y fariseos* is body painting sometimes with clay, but more commonly with white lime. They are painted to distinguish one side from another. Depending on the geographical area, they are sometimes dyed from several days before until Saturday. A dancer comments that he was painted since Palm Sunday.³⁸ They can also vary from being painted completely, or with dots. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this white color and the *pintos* -or *pintados*- represent the *chabochi*. Nevertheless, when asking a Rarámuri about the white dots on his body and their meaning he responds that "the white moles represent the blood of the Lord" -referring to flagellated Christ-.³⁹ The Rarámuri Juana Jariz, a resident of Juarez, says "Jesus Christ

³⁶ Orozco, *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 68.

³⁷ cabe aclarar que esta contestación estuvo sugerida por el entrevistador, por lo que pueda ser no certera. Rarámuri dancer from Norogachi, "Rarámuri Holy Week, the largest celebration in the Sierra Tarahumara, Chihuahua," 6:14.

³⁸ Ibid., 5:18.

³⁹ Ibid., 5:25.

died for us; they dress as if they were the ones who killed Christ,"⁴⁰ speaking of the Pharisees or the Roman Soldiers. On the other hand, Lorena Cano, Rarámuri, comments that "the *fariseos* are dancing to Jesus Christ. The *fariseos* are the ones who help Jesus. That's why they dance like this, without clothes, like poor people without clothes"⁴¹ This refers to the dancers, who go with their chests uncovered.

In the community of Norogachi, some dancers bring a crown made of *guajolote* feathers, and a very young dancer who brings this crown comments that he brings it because he is a chief – in the context, it is understood that he is a chief in the dance –. He also says that others who are chiefs can bring it.⁴² Possibly, the crown may have a deeper meaning than the mere hierarchy when dancing, but nevertheless, I did not find any data different from that exposed by the young dancer.

One thing that draws my attention is a comment from a dancer from Ciudad Juárez. He says that they should not forget the customs, especially the dress. He also mentions that, when they leave the Sierra Tarahumara, many times the Rarámuris do not use their original clothes anymore, and say that they are no longer Rarámuris.⁴³ With this comment, this Rarámuri exposes the dress of the Tarahumara as an important part of the Rarámuri identity, that is to say, if being dressed or not as this community typically does, it will cease to be part of the Rarámuri community, as if they were losing their identity.

⁴⁰ Juana Jariz, interview by Hugo Argumedo, *Canal 44*, "Celebran Tarahumaras semana santa," April 13, 2017, video, 3:13, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-J1TLqsgI4>.

⁴¹ Lorena Cano, interview by Everardo Cardona, *Canal 44*, "SEMANA SANTA DE LOS RARAMURIS DE JUAREZ," April 18, 2014, video, 1:10, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHeR4GudDko>.

⁴² Young Rarámuri dancer. "Rarámuri Holy Week, the largest celebration in the Sierra Tarahumara, Chihuahua," 6:54.

⁴³ García Bustillos, "Celebran Tarahumaras semana santa," 2:14.

Therefore, we can assume that the Rarámuri clothing is the symbol of the identity of this community and possibly acts as a connecting link between the inhabitants.

3.2.1.4 Aesthetic

Another important aspect is aesthetics. In the celebrations, we observe how the symbols can become transformative. The painting that the dancers put on their bodies marks the *luchas* between good and evil. When a dancer removes the paint from his body, he becomes the purifying aspect, not only on a personal and communal level. The parish priest Javier Ávila, president of the commission of solidarity and defense of human rights for the Rarámuris states that all the ornaments -such as arches or palms- are destroyed on Sunday, representing the triumph of good, the end of evil, and the resurfacing of a new life.⁴⁴

An important part to highlight in this Holy Week ceremony is the sacramental part that emerges from the symbols and actions performed in this celebration. According to Orozco, external and visible symbols show an intrinsic reality.⁴⁵ According to my interpretation, that reality is the relationship between *Onoríame* and his people. Jesuit Michael J. Himes suggests that everything that exists has a sacramental principle since all creation is loved and filled with the grace of God. Although that grace goes unnoticed, it does not mean that it does not exist.⁴⁶ For Himes, everything that helps us appreciate God's love -God's grace- is a sacrament. This can be a person, a place, a thing, an event, a

⁴⁴ Youtube, "Reportaje semana santa en Creel," Apr. 22, 2020, 5:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3sL6LgLFLE>.

⁴⁵ Orozco, *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 66.

⁴⁶ Michael J. Himes, "'Finding God in All Things': A Sacramental Worldview and Its Effects," *As Leaven in the World: Catholic Perspectives on Faith, Vacation and the Intellectual Life* (2001): 98.

sound, or even a taste. For the whole that exists is potentially sacramental.⁴⁷ Based on this, we can say that both the dance, the *luchas*, and the music performed by the Rarámuris are sacramentals that enliven our senses to identify the grace of God poured out to his people.

In conclusion, we can say that dance, together with music or clothing, rather than being a mere act -or work- to prevent the world from ending, for the Rarámuri is to enter into communication and accompaniment with God the Creator and Crucified, where dance acts as an element of bodily, emotional and intellectual transformation since they move from the struggle between good and evil into facing a reconciliation not only personal and communal but with God himself. Entering into a purification that emanates from this ritual will impact all levels of the relationship of the Rarámuri.

3.2.2 *Kórima*: Sharing and Coexistence

Acuña describes that the Rarámuri dances to keep *Onorúame*, the God who are Father and Mother at the same time, happy so that the world does not end. This community also dances to attract rain, avoid disease and natural disasters, be joyful, be together, and share.⁴⁸ He also maintains that the Rarámuri dance, in general, constitutes a system of communication with God, as well as a vehicle to strengthen social ties.⁴⁹ Sharing and reciprocity in the Rarámuri community are deeply rooted concepts. They are part of their code of ethics and philosophy. According to Orozco, the social institution on which the Rarámuri culture is based is called *kórima*, a word that could be translated as

⁴⁷ Ibid., 99.

⁴⁸ Acuña Delgado, "Danzar para que el mundo no acabe. Estudio sistemático de la danza rarámuri," 29.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 59.

share.⁵⁰ It consists of the redistribution of goods, in which the one who has more gives to the one who has the least.⁵¹ An example of this is a *Nawésari* said by a governor, where he encourages those in the community to "share with your family what little you have, eat together and in peace."⁵² The French writer Atraud Antonin, in his account of his trip to the Sierra Tarahumara, shows that "giving to the one who has nothing for them [referring to the Rarámuris] is not properly a duty, but a law of reciprocity, law of physical reciprocity."⁵³

3.2.2.1 Gifts as Agents of Cohesion

The French sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss, in his book entitled *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, expresses the impact generated by sharing and reciprocity in communities that are based on this philosophy, as does the Rarámuri people. Mauss bases his theory on several ethnographic studies conducted mainly on native peoples of Polynesia, Melanesia, and the Northwestern United States. This book suggests that gifts given within a community or between communities -even between individuals- create social relationships that bind community members, or communities, through reciprocity. According to this author, those who give away always expect to receive something in return. This does not necessarily have to be something tangible; it can be for mere prestige or for personal satisfaction. The fact is

⁵⁰ Orozco, *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 111.

⁵¹ Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), 89, Mediateca INAH, https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/libro%3A444.

⁵² *Nawésari* of May 28, 1991 in Orozco, *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 40.

⁵³ "darle al que nada tiene para ellos no es propiamente un deber, sino una ley de reciprocidad, ley de reciprocidad física." Atraud Antonin, *México y viaje al país de los tarahumaras* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1984), 302.

that something is expected in giving. It should be noted that, according to Mauss, gifts are agents of social cohesion.⁵⁴ They are the symbol of a union that creates a relationship or alliance. In the same way, he maintains that receiving a gift entails a social obligation on the part of the one who receives it. Based on ethnographic studies, Mauss suggests that certain social systems of native communities are based on exchange and reciprocity to create bonds between members or with other communities. He also argues that this type of interaction of sharing and receiving involves aspects not only social but also religious, economic, legal, and aesthetic.

It is not surprising that the Rarámuri has a system of social organization based on relations of reciprocal exchange between one family unit and another, and from *ranchería* to *ranchería*, as I have previously described. An example of this is what was experienced in the ceremony of *Pintos y fariseos*, or Holy Week. In this celebration, the inhabitants of the different *rancherías* or families join in the celebration and participate in the burning of Judas, and *luchas*, sharing food, dancing, and music. If Mauss's statement is true, we can conclude that the ceremonies performed by the Rarámuris have great importance and impact on the social dimension, and they promote coexistence and reciprocity among the members not only of the community but of the surrounding communities that participate. What generates harmony and peace impacts not only the Rarámuri but the entire region.

⁵⁴ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Trans. W.D. Halls (London: W.W. Norton & Company, Ltd, 1990), 35.

3.2.2.2 The Spiritual Dimension of the Gift

Likewise, the religious and spiritual dimension enters this dynamic of sharing and reciprocity. According to Rarámuri Theology, the relationship with God does not go in a single direction, in which God only provides, but the Rarámuri is perceived as an important part of the process of interaction with God the creator. For them, it is indispensable to thank God for what they have received and to ask for providence for the next season. That is why they dance and celebrate, because in their understanding, by acting they enter into communication and relationship with God, not only personally but as a community.

For this community, everything created is a gift from *Onorúame* -God the creator. This creates a bond between God and His people, where nature enters as a sacramental part that expresses the love of God, this being the symbol of God's union with man; and dance, music, games, and food become symbols of reciprocity with God and with our brothers and sisters. This theological thought is very much on par with the Jewish thought presented in the Old Testament, where God enters into a covenant with his people, in which he provides and protects, and the people respond to God.

Lewis Hyde goes beyond Mauss's conception of the ideas of exchange -or sharing- and reciprocity. This author argues that the gift not only moves within a society, that is, from one individual to another, but goes in a cycle where more than one member or community is included. The person who gives something does not expect to receive something from the same person to whom he offered the gift; that is, the exchange is not a mere barter, but has a deeper impact than a mere transaction and impacts more members or communities. To be more precise, the movement of sharing and reciprocity,

according to the conception of this author, would be like that of a spiral, or triangular, where a member of the community does not necessarily share with the one who gave him something.⁵⁵ As an example of this, Hyde proposes the native tribe of New Zealand, the Maori. When hunters catch birds, they have a celebration where they offer a portion of their catch to the priest. The priest eats some and prepares others as a sacrifice to return them to the forest. In this type of celebration, you can understand what Hyde proposes as a circular gift: nature-hunters-priest-nature.⁵⁶

This process is completely understood by the Rarámuri. According to Orozco, in *kórima*, economic or in-kind help is requested, when needed, knowing that at the time it will act reciprocally with someone in need.⁵⁷ As stated before *kórima* can be translated as "share". Nevertheless, with this word the Rarámuri requests economic or in-kind help, to feed himself when he does not have anything to eat, knowing that at the time he will reciprocally act with those who need it. From a religious and social standpoint, another example of this can be perceived in the ceremony of *Yúmame* where, as part of the communal ritual, a goat is sacrificed and then a stew is made for the community. Even the children participate in the sacrifice of this animal, collecting the blood and returning it to the earth, to *Onorúame*.⁵⁸ They enter into a reciprocal relationship with the Creator.

⁵⁵ Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 16.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 18-19.

⁵⁷ Orozco, *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 111-112.

⁵⁸ Meeting Chihuahua, "Danza TARAHUMARA de Chihuahua, ritual YÚMARE, PARTE II | W/LETHAL CRYISIS," Feb. 21, 2021, 1:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFAVkdWEbw>.

3.2.2.3 Gift as Transformative

Additionally, there are transformative gifts, according to Hyde. They are gifts in motion that impact society, so these gifts act as agents of change for society.⁵⁹ An example of this is in the transmission of wisdom by the *Siríame* or Rarámuri governor, in which communal wisdom has been passed down by oral tradition, is shared with the youngest, and so on from generation to generation. These tips that contain wisdom transmitted orally are a very clear example of how culture through a *Nawésari* is impacting the Rarámuri in particular, and how this human being will impact culture by applying what has been learned through *Nawésari*.

Likewise, the religion and spirituality of the Rarámuri can be seen as this transformative gift that produces a change in the person and that reciprocally impacts religion. This is proposed by Geertz, who exposes religion as both a symbolic model “of reality” and a model “for reality.” In other words, religion shapes itself into the psychological, economic, and social world in which it flourishes, but simultaneously shapes that world to itself.

Although the *tesgüino* may be viewed as only an intoxicating drink, it has the versatility of acting as a symbol of reward and joy, as in the celebration of Holy Week. It is also considered a gift that encourages coexistence between the elements of the community, other *rancherías*, and even with the *chabochi*. In this case, the *tesgüino* acts as an agent of coexistence and union of the community.

⁵⁹ Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, 45-47.

3.2.2.4 Exchange Broken

According to Hyde, this spiral relationship can be broken when someone keeps the gift or uses it to trade; then, scarcity appears.⁶⁰ For the Rarámuri, everything created by *Onorúame* is to be in harmony, as long as the Rarámuri enters into this relationship with God through dance. The relationship with God is broken if they cease to dance and forget their traditions, which will cause the world to come to an end. A Rarámuri from Norogachi says: "Now that there is drought, it is because traditions are being lost;"⁶¹ Candelario García Bustillos expresses the following: "We are forgetting about our traditions, about our customs."⁶² Talking about the ball race, a Rarámuri lady says: "The race represents the rain; so we do it here in the mountains to call it. But we are forgetting about running a race, about everything. How will the rain continue to come?"⁶³ May 28, 1991, *Nawésari* "those who dance, dance well.... as it should be so that we may have a good year; so that it rains a lot, and we may have good harvests."⁶⁴ The Rarámuri considers that harmony is broken if they do not enter into a relationship with God and, thus, all levels of the relationship of the human being are affected.

3.2.2.5 Implications of Sharing in the Rarámuri Culture

In addition to these ideas, when trying to combine the ideas of Mauss with the Rarámuri culture, we realize that the reality of the celebration for *Onorúame* not only

⁶⁰ Ibid., 21-22.

⁶¹ Meeting Chihuahua, "SEMANA SANTA RARAMURI en Norogachi, la CELEBRACION RARAMURI más importante," 1:45.

⁶² García Bustillos, "Celebran Tarahumaras semana santa," 2:45.

⁶³ Meeting Chihuahua, "Danza TARAHUMARA de Chihuahua, ritual YÚMARE, PARTE II | W/LETHAL CRYISIS," 9:12.

⁶⁴ *Nawésari* of May 28, 1991 in Orozco, *Tarahumara: Una antigua Sociedad futura*, 40.

impacts the religious and social dimensions, but also involves other dimensions such as economic, legal, and ethical. As stated in the first chapter, the Rarámuris have learned to live in balance with nature. This community, in general, consumes and works with what the environment offers them. Therefore, its economic system is based on what God provides through nature and on exchange and reciprocity. The Rarámuri, based on the fact that God is the real provider of everything that exists, considers that everything created belongs to everyone. They do not work on accumulation. Based on the *kórima*, what they have, they know that they have to share it with the ones in need. Economically, they do not see the need to accumulate excessively since they know that God will provide. They fulfill their part of working the land, asking God for sustenance, and giving thanks for what they have received. In addition, the day they do not have what they need, there will be someone who will see that their needs are met. For them, providence is not only on a vertical plane, between God and the Rarámuri, but also on a horizontal plane, between the individual and his community, or between *rancherías*.

It should be noted that, for the Rarámuri, *kórima* is not only asking and doing nothing. *kórima* carries a social obligation to share with those who have less. This lifestyle has helped them to survive as a community for centuries. Unfortunately, external changes due to climate change and lack of rain have led them to look for new livelihood alternatives, as well as to migrate to large cities.

In this action of exchange and reciprocity, we discover that the Rarámuri culture is strongly based on charity and that the ethical dimension of Rarámuri of protecting the needy creates bonds of coexistence that are reflected in the harmony of the Rarámuri people. These attitudes impact the legal dimension of this community, owing to the

creation of strong bonds of belonging and brotherhood among those of this community, thus creating invisible and non-formal ties between the members of the communities and other communities. That is why they are considered a nonviolent community. Their way of competing to know who is better than another is through the races, either ball or *Ariwueta* or in the *luchas* in Holy Week.

Conclusion

Based on these reflections, the importance of celebrations such as *Matachines* or *Pintos y fariseos* is clearly exposed. For the Rarámuris, these ceremonies carry a deeper meaning based on their worldview: reciprocity with the creator God -*Onorúame*-.

Whether in asking or in giving thanks, the Rarámuri enters into this reciprocal exchange in which he asks God for what is necessary and then thank God for what he has received.

Chapter Four: Rarámuri Theology.

4.1 Introduction

As this study has examined and interpreted the religious practices of the Rarámuri, it has also raised in a particular way the question of the relationship between culture and religion. We have seen this underlying issue arise in many of the previous studies of the Rarámuri. Up to what extent was Christianity an imposition on their culture? Having become Christianized, are they truly Christian? This chapter will try to address the question of culture and religion by examining, first, how some contemporary scholars interpret the encounter with the other. It will then reflect on how the polyhedric Church that Pope Francis proposes impacts the way we understand the Rarámuri in the Church. I will conclude with a reflection on whether Rarámuris are authentic Christians, or not.

4.2 Encounter Culture in Contemporary Scholarship

How do we understand the relationship between culture and religion with respect to the encounter with diversity? According to Edgar Morin, the human being is not only diverse at the individual level -we have genetic, cerebral, mental, psychological, affective, intellectual diversity or even the way of understanding our transcendental dimension- and social level -diversity of language, cultural, social, economic, or recreational ways of organization-, but the human level is also highly complex.¹ The perception that we are different is something that we have understood, especially in this

¹ Edgar Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future* (France: UNESCO Publishing, 2001), 46-50.

era in which we are more communicated, owing to globalization. As Pope Benedict XVI said, globalization “makes us neighbors but does not make us brothers” (*CV*, 19). In the same way, Franciscan priest Martín Carbajo Núñez, a specialist in Social Communication, states that media “can facilitate efficient connections, but not guarantee good relationships.”²

Why does connection not guarantee unity? According to Glenn Geher, professor of psychology at the State University of New York, “People often demonstrate the outgroup homogeneity bias.” He summarizes it by saying that before the external and different group from ours, we say “they are all the same”.³ He argues that it is generally easy to recognize differences in those we consider “equal” to ourselves, but we tend to homogenize those we consider different. Geher calls this attitude “othering”. An example of this is the *EWTN Vatican* article cited at the beginning of my thesis, where people outside the culture of the indigenous people of San Bernardino, California, saw them as equal to the Aztec Indians of the sixteenth century.

For his part, British-Pakistani scholar and award-winning writer, Ziauddin Sardar say that human beings are usually afraid of each other and of diversity.⁴ Mitchel Waldrop suggests that there is a human tendency to turn it around or reject the one who is

² Martín Carbajo Núñez, *Everything is Connected* (United States of America: Tao Publishing, 2021), 48.

³ Glenn Geher, “The Psychology of ‘Othering’: Outgroup psychology and the roots of social conflict,” *Psychology Today*, April 6, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/darwins-subterranean-world/201904/the-psychology-othering>.

⁴ Ziauddin Sardar, “‘Afterthoughts: Transnormal, the ‘New Normal’ and Other Varieties of ‘Normal’ in Postnormal Times,” *World Futures Review* Vol. 13(2) (2001): 64, DOI:10.1177/19467567211025755.

different.⁵ Based on this, we can understand that it is completely normal that in the first instance, we have the fear or rejection of the unknown. It seems that the problem does not lie in diversity, but in how we face it.

Returning to the example of the *EWTN Vatican* article, for someone outside the San Bernardino native culture, the way this community expresses faith could be rejected or classified as paganism. Nevertheless, our subjectivity to the fact does not make it a reality. I consider that the fact of knowing this condition of rejection or fear of the stranger is the first step to avoiding that rejection of the different. This is proposed by the Montreal Holocaust Museum. Its home page states that it is important to understand the process of “othering” because it can help us to take action against discrimination and sectarianism.⁶ According to American missiologist Paul G. Hiebert to avoid othering is to understand that there is only “us”. He states that based on Scripture we can conclude that “at the deepest level of our identity as humans there are not others -there is only us”⁷; we are one humanity.

Not changing our attitude in an encounter with the one we consider different can bring serious consequences such as what happened in the encounter between the European and the natives of the American continent. According to the Catholic and indigenous priest Eleazar López Hernández, the lack of dialogue on the part of the first

⁵ Mitchell Waldrop, “Modeling the Power of Polarization,” *PNAS*, September 8, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.211448411>.

⁶ “The Processing of Othering,” Montreal Holocaust Museum, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://museeholocauste.ca/en/resources-training/the-process-of-othering/>.

⁷ Paul G Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Context* (United States of America: Baker Academic, 2009), 188-189.

missionaries of the American continent led to not understanding that the Christian God could adapt without any problem to the ancestral theology of the indigenous.

Native people converted to Christianity, but without leaving their ancestral customs. The intolerance towards the indigenous religiosity by the European people led the natives to reject Christianity or live a clandestine indigenism within Christianity, which came to repress the cultural identity of the indigenous.⁸ According to Hiebert since the Age of Exploration, Western civilization declared itself as the norm of humanity.⁹

Today as a society we point out the errors in the encounter between Europeans and America -the continent-. But now, we need to reflect if we continue with this attitude of superiority, over native cultures. Morin argues that the disintegration of culture under the destructive effect of technical-civilizational domination is a loss for all humanity, where the diversity of cultures constitutes one of its most precious treasures.¹⁰

Based on the above information, it is important to understand that as human beings we will be diverse. Despite this diversity, we need to be united. In the end, we are all connected in the same planetary community, sharing a common fate.¹¹ Celso José Martinazzo suggests the construction of a planetary citizenship that recognizes the Earth as a homeland. This attitude, consequently, recognizes human beings as fellow citizens of

⁸ Eleazar López Hernández, *La espiritualidad y la teología de los pueblos amerindios* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1999), 31-34.

⁹ Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Context*, 188.

¹⁰ “When the destructive effect of technico-civilizational domination results in the disintegration of a culture it is a loss for all of humanity because it deprives us of cultural diversity, one of our most precious treasures.” Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, 47.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

all other peoples.¹² About this idea, Morin states the notion of planet Earth as a homeland “bears a common identity, a relation of affective filiation.”¹³ He also remarks that we “should be careful not to allow the idea of the unity of the human species to efface the fact of its diversity, or the idea of its diversity to efface its unity.”¹⁴ In a few words: unity does not mean uniformity.

These latter assertions are also applicable to the universal Church. First, based on Scripture, we are one humanity, one family with one Father. Second, as Christians, we need to understand that God reveals to God’s people in different contexts over time, so our way of understanding and explaining the ineffable will be linked to our reality. Because of this, we will find diversity in the Church the same as we find cultural diversity. Therefore, to think of a homogeneous or uniform Church would be to repress the particularity of cultures or individuals. In the next section, I will talk about how it is important to address these social, psychological, and historical issues related to culture and religion in today’s global world. Pope Francis has tried to construct a different ecclesiological image for Christian and Catholic believers.

4.3 The Church as a Polyhedron

Pope Francis uses the model of the polyhedron¹⁵ to explain his view of the relationship between unity, culture, and religion. For this pontiff, the Church is like a

¹² Celso J. Martinazzo, “Transdisciplinary thinking as perception of reality and the educational and planetary challenges,” *Educar em Revista, Curitiba*, v. 36, e66048, (2020): 14.

¹³ Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, 61.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵ In geometry, a polyhedron is a three-dimensional shape with flat polygonal faces, straight edges, and sharp corners or vertices. “Polyhedron,” Wikipedia, last modified April 7, 2023, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyhedron>.

polyhedron, “which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness.” (*EG* 236). In *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis explains that the polyhedron represents a society where differences coexist complementing, enriching, and illuminating each other, even if this implies discussions and preventions (*FT* 215), since the whole is greater than the part (*EG* 237). Pope Francis’s polyhedron example expresses how the church could be united in diversity, where every point is equidistant from the center, and there are no differences between them. He also declares that “diversity based on the [local] church is the concrete manifestation of the one Church in one specific place, but with local features.” (*EG* 30). In other words, it is the Church united in diversity.

With the image of the polyhedron, we can have a clearer idea of the role of particular churches -they can also be called local churches- in the Universal Church. From its place, the local church portrays the Universal Church. Thus, when we see any Christian community, we may say that they are the Universal Church and represent it.

Michael Mohr, SJ., argues that this image of the polyhedron states that “seeing the globalized world and the multicultural Church as one united through a variety of rich identities will help us grow as a global society and in the Body of Christ. [...] The unity of all Christians and all people does not lie in our cultural identities, however, but in our faith in Jesus and our trust in one another.”¹⁶ Perhaps the image of the polyhedron is best expressed by Morin, who states that it is necessary to conceive a unity that ensures and

¹⁶ Mohr, Mitchel “Pope Francis: The World is not Round.” *The Jesuit Post*, April 24, 2017. <https://thejesuitpost.org/2017/04/pope-francis-the-world-is-not-round/>.

favors diversity, a diversity that is inscribed in unity.¹⁷ But, the question that arises with this model of the polyhedron could be if the distinctiveness is really recognized by society and the Church.

4.3.1 A Colonization with Different Faces

Unfortunately, as Pope Francis maintains, “colonization [has not] ended; in many places, it has been changed, disguised and concealed.” (QA, 16) Today globalization seems to be the new colonizer that through homogenization seeks to dispel the differences between individuals and cultures. In addition, French philosopher Edgar Morin states that “techno-industrial wave sweeps over the globe, washing away so many cultural, ethnic, human diversities.”¹⁸ Likewise, Carbajo Núñez states that the current techno-scientific paradigm favors individualism, homogenization, and massification, but not individuality.” This new way of colonization seems to affect both culture and the church.

According to the indigenous priest Eleazar López, in the history of evangelization in Latin America, the missionaries were not able to identify and welcome the “Seeds of the Word.” (AG, 11) On the contrary, native people were demonized and attacked by the missionaries. He also maintains that the theology that emanates from the original peoples, also called Indigenous Theology, has always been present, but has not been valued because it is not based on great philosophical theses. It does not have brilliant systematizations, successful books, or renowned speakers. Rather, they are based on oral

¹⁷ It is “appropriate to conceive of a unity that ensures and encourages diversity, a diversity that fits into unity”. Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, 47.

¹⁸ Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, 56.

tradition and expressed through indigenous myths, rites, symbols, and forms according to each community.¹⁹ According to this native priest from Juchitán, Oaxaca in Mexico, many people do not value native theology because, as indigenous people, they have not explained it in words that those outside the culture understand. The *National Catholic Reporter*, in an article about *Querida Amazonia*²⁰, suggests that there are people who think that the imposition of the Western Tradition is the only way to evangelize the Amazon.²¹

Based on this reality that has been present in the church and society for centuries, Aparecida's document²² suggests we should be "decolonizing minds, knowledge, recovering historical memory, strengthening intercultural spaces and relations, are conditions for the affirmation of the full citizenship of these peoples." (96) Writer Sandar suggests that we must look for new modernity, where "diversity is more than acceptance and respect of other cultures or simply recognizing that each individual, culture, and community is unique. It is also appreciating the simple fact that our own happiness and enrichment depends on the happiness and enrichment of others." This includes giving equal importance to knowledge systems of non-Western civilizations, including indigenous cultures.²³ The question would be what attitudes we should have to avoid

¹⁹ Eleazar López Hernández, "Una misión Descolonizadora de Nuestras Mentes en Relación a los Indígenas" Curasopp, accessed April 6, 2023, <http://www.curasopp.com.ar/web/es/teologia-india/75-una-mision-descolonizadora-de-nuestras-mentes-en-relacion-a-los-indigenas>.

²⁰ *Querida Amazonia* is Pope Francis's apostolic exhortation after the synod on the Amazon.

²¹ "Querida Amazonia gives plenty to act on," *National Catholic Reporter* (March 6-19, 2020), 16.

²² Aparecida's document is the conclusive text about the V general conference of CELAM (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano y del Caribe) in May 2007, in Brazil.

²³ Sardar, "'Afterthoughts: Transnormal, the 'New Normal' and Other Varieties of 'Normal' in Postnormal Times,'" 64.

acting like new colonizers before the different local churches and cultures. In the next section, I will address some attitudes that could help us to live in unity.

4.3.2 Attitudes Necessary to Decolonize and Create Church as Polyhedron

With the image of a polyhedron before us, and the understanding that comes to us from Pope Francis, and based on Anderson, Foronda, and Morin, I will take a closer look at the local churches including Rarámuri religious culture in order. Professor of History at Ohio State University, Greg Anderson, argues that being aware that we are different and that the best way to understand each other is to be open, leads us to think about the so-called "pluriverse," which according to this professor is the presence of different realities²⁴. According to Anderson, the concept of the pluriverse opens up a world of diverse possibilities that would lead us to a future with more human and ecological models of life in which everything and everyone is covered. Understanding that we live in a pluriverse with different models leads us to understand that the reality of the Universal Church is based on multiple particular churches that make up the Universal Church. About this, Zachary Hayes states that "Christology never exists in a cultural vacuum. As a theological endeavor, it represents the efforts of Christians to give expression to their faith in and their experience of Jesus Christ."²⁵ That is, each believer or Christian community will understand and express their faith based on their own culture. Based on this, we can say that there is not only one way to act or think but also not only one reality; therefore, there is not only one way to "make" a church. Because of

²⁴ Greg Anderson, "Have humans always lived in a 'pluriverse' of worlds?," *Oxford University Press's Academic Insights for the Thinking World*, July 16, 2021, <https://blog.oup.com/2021/07/have-humans-always-lived-in-a-pluriverse-of-worlds/>.

²⁵ Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center* (St Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1992), 11.

this, the inculturation of the Gospel according to each context is important. Paul G. Heibert suggests that one essential step in Christian missional theology is to make the Gospel known to humans in their social and cultural context.²⁶ Therefore, missionaries are the bridges between the Gospel and the world.²⁷

In *Querida Amazonia*, Pope Francis claims that the process of inculturation is necessary to listen and dialogue. He maintains that it is important for the church to listen and learn about the values of every region. This is to get a precise way to transmit the Gospel without changing the culture, but inside the culture, and not colonizing the faith. He also says that, despite the fact that fifty years have elapsed since Second Vatican Council, we still have a long way to go about the issue of inculturation, especially in regions with indigenous people. *Querida Amazonia* suggests that the inculturation of the Gospel “must better integrate the social and the spiritual so that the poor do not have to look outside the Church for a spirituality that responds to their deepest yearnings.” (76) In other words, what is proclaimed should be lived with respect and comprehension of the values of every culture for the influence in evangelization and the approach of the poor.

Something that Pope Francis emphasizes in the fourth chapter of *Fratelli Tutti* is that we must have an open heart to others, being aware and recognizing our peculiarities and those of the other, but without annulling them. That is to say, with the interaction with the others none of the parties loses their identity. For this reason, it is important that in the encounter with other cultures, we approach the other with cultural humility.

²⁶ Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Context*, 159.

²⁷ Ibid, 179.

According to Cynthia Foronda, cultural humility presents a new approach toward approaching diversity and conflict. Foronda states that this attitude is a life-long process that includes recognizing and minimizing power differences, promoting respect, the individual focus on not only the other but on the self, flexibility, making bias explicit, and as an ongoing life process, understanding that:

1. All humans are diverse from each other in some way, yet part of a global community.
2. Humans are inherently altruistic.
3. All humans have equal value.
4. Cultural conflict is a normal and expected part of life.
5. All humans are lifelong learners.²⁸

After reading these suggestions, it is clearer that if we as a community of believers want to be united, we need to understand that we are not a uniform Church, but the opposite. We are a community of believers inserted in different cultures and if we want to be united it is important to integrate the different local Churches, including those of native peoples, into the Universal Church. This integration should be in an open and real way, listening and dialoguing with intellectual humility and an open heart. There must be a dialogue in which, instead of there being a clash between the particular churches, the Universal Church is enriched by the contributions of the local churches; thus, becoming united in diversity, where each church with its particularity reflects the Universal Church. Edgar Morin argues that society is a product of interactions between

²⁸ Cynthia Foronda. "A Theory of Cultural Humility." *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* Vol. 31(1) (2020): 7-12, DOI: 10.1177/1043659619875184.

individuals, but in turn, society influences individuals. Therefore, individuals are both producers and products of society.²⁹ So religion influences culture, just as culture influences the church. Therefore, there is an incarnation of the Gospel in culture.

4.3.3. Inculturation.

After reflecting on attitudes towards the encounter of other cultures, it is important to add the theological aspect of unity. According to Carbajo Núñez, the Creator makes unity possible by including all creatures in a network of harmonious relationships in which each one finds its specific function, utility, and fecundity.³⁰ Ormond Rush presents the Holy Spirit as the “link” between the individual and the communal faith, and between the local and the universal community of faith; this is because the Spirit enables the believers “to understand, interpret, and apply the faith in their concrete daily lives, in different cultures and circumstances.”³¹ This author states that the gifts of the Spirit poured upon believers who gather in a community -local Churches- in some ways have influenced the Universal Church since the beginning. Therefore, the local Church is a place of reception of faith in a particular time and place among a particular community of believers.³² This happens because faith is always inserted in time and space -context and some specific time. Therefore, local churches have been working as translators of faith in

²⁹ Celso J. Martinazzo, “Transdisciplinary thinking as perception of reality and the educational and planetary challenges,” *Educar em Revista, Curitiba*, v. 36, e66048, (2020):14.

³⁰ Martín Carbajo Núñez, *Everything is Connected*, 76.

³¹ Ormond Rush, “The Church Local and Universal and the Communion of the Faithful,” in Christopher D. Denny, Patrick J. Hayes, Nicholas K. Rademacher, eds., *A Realist’s Church, Essays in Honor of Joseph A. Komonchak* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 117.

³² *Ibid.*, 121.

the culture and time where they are inserted as well as listeners and voices of the *sensus fidei* for the Universal Church.

With respect to the inculturation of the Gospel, Pope Francis states in *Querida Amazonia* that culture “is not only an object of redemption and elevation but can also play a role of mediation and cooperation.” (67) So, culture allows the Gospel to be expressed in a specific place and time, and the Gospel enriches culture. The Pope adds that in the process of inculturation “nothing of the goodness that already exists” in [any] cultures is rejected but “brings it to fulfillment in the light of the Gospel”; “nor does culture scorn the richness of Christian wisdom handed down through the centuries.” (QA 66) In other words, Christian wisdom enriches the culture as the culture enriches the Church. Hiebert states that culture shapes society as society shapes culture; Therefore, it is not always easy to distinguish between what is cultural and what is social.³³ Likewise, Christians are the church with a specific face and formed by the Church. To be more precise, the Rarámuri community is the Church and is formed by the Church. This community influences the Church and is influenced by the Church. But are the Rarámuris real Christians? Or do they just follow an imposed tradition?

4.4 Are Rarámuris Christians?

As we see in the last Chapter, it seems that the Rarámuri always has been in a relationship with God the Father, their Creator. With the encounter with the Spaniards, they adapted their ancient religiosity to the God made human. As López Hernández stated, for indigenous communities the Christian God made sense because their previous

³³ Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Context*, 159.

understanding was part of the Seed of the Word. In other words, based on López Hernández, the Holy Spirit had been preparing Rarámuri's hearts to receive the Son of God.

4.4.1 Rarámuri Inculturation

As stated in the previous chapter, the rituals and ceremonies performed by the Rarámuris are not only customs that are made by mere tradition. The Rarámuris perform their ceremonies motivated by their faith and spirituality. One thing scholars agree on, is that for the Rarámuri, everything has to do with God. They name God *Onorúame*, which means the Father and The Father is the Creator of everything. For them, everything comes from God. That is why they believe that everything has its origin in God and everything is centered in God. This theology starts from God as the creator of everything that exists. It is usually called Creational Theology. According to my interpretation, Rarámuri theology is based entirely on Creational Theology. The starting point of their theology begins from the conception of God the Creator.

Additionally, I bring the philosopher Edgar Morin's suggestion in his book *Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future*, which argues that fragmented knowledge will lead us to a very deficient version of reality. He suggests that knowledge should be transdisciplinary. It means seeing where the most possible aspects are integrated across multiple disciplines because it will be easier to understand something complex that way.³⁴ For this very reason, I suggest that in studying the Rarámuri, neither its ancient wisdom

³⁴ Edgar Morin, *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, 29-38.

nor theology nor the Christian dimension can be taken away from it, since it would lead us to an error.

Rarámuri Theology is not based on Western structures, but on their ancestral wisdom, or rather on what God was revealing to these peoples through the Spirit, what is known as the Seeds of the Word presented in the conciliar document from the Second Vatican, *Ad Gentes*. The way of expressing faith will be different from the Western one since Rarámuri's Theology is based on oral tradition. This will be through myths, ceremonies, rituals, and particular symbols of the community.

In the documentary "Voices of the Sierra Tarahumara," Erasmos Palma, a Rarámuri poet, argues that "the ancestors believed that the moon or the sun had life, but always with the thought that everything is created by an eternal divinity, who is God."³⁵ This insight supports López Hernández's argument that the Christian God fits perfectly in Indigenous Theology. According to my interpretation, this does not happen randomly. These previous understandings are part of the Seeds of the Word because God did not create everything to leave it to its fate. The Spirit has always been accompanying their peoples, and the Rarámuri people are no exception.

Since the Second Vatican Council, openness and integration of the local Churches have become clearer. Documents such as the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* address the high importance of liturgy in the life of the Church. The purpose of this document is to undertake the reform and promotion of the liturgy. In doing so, local churches had to

³⁵ Erasmos Palma in Robert Brewster and Felix Gehm, "Voices of the Sierra Tarahumara 2001," 2001. In "Voices of the Sierra Tarahumara -- Sundance 2001. Film by Robert Brewster and Felix Gehm." Robert Brewster, May 13, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkjEKM5ajg>.

adapt the liturgy language according to each particular location. (SC36) That was the case for the Rarámuri community. Now, they have their celebration and Gospel in their own language. Additionally, music used in liturgy now can be expressed in the specific language of each place and according to each culture's way of expression. (SC 21) The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*³⁶ allowed Tarahumar to the language in music and Rarámuri liturgical celebrations. They have their own music as they used to perform as well as dances because they praise God dancing, not kneeling. An example of this is a video on YouTube, where there is a ceremony of the First Communion of the Rarámuri indigenous people of Cerocagui. In this video, girls celebrate the Sacrament of Communion dancing and wearing the costumes of their own culture.³⁷

As it was explained in the previous section, dance, music, clothing, and other elements of the Raramuri celebrations should not be viewed merely as parts of a folkloric act, or work to prevent the world from ending. For the Rarámuri, they are ways to enter into communication and accompaniment with God the Creator, who has been crucified. Celebration dances and some other things that are part of the creation act are considered elements of transformation and purification. Rarámuris are moved by the struggle between good and evil to enter into a reconciliation not only personal and communal but also with God. In doing so, they enter into a purification that emanates from their rituals that will impact all levels of the Rarámuri relationship: with God, the personal, the communal, and with all Creation.

³⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is a Vatican II document on the Sacred Liturgy.

³⁷ "Ceremonia de Comunión en la Tarahumara," Fundación Loyola, June 14, 2017, 0:04, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jS226Cp2Ge8>.

One of the major theological traditions in the Church that may help to build a bridge between religion and culture and show their interconnection is the Franciscan theological tradition. It is to that tradition that we now turn.

4.4.2 Culture, Religion, and the Franciscan Theological Tradition

In this section, I will analyze how the Rarámuri Theology based on Creation will lead them to see creation as an act of God's love. They respect all creation because of its intrinsic value and, thus, they live in simplicity. I will focus on how this theology intersects with the Franciscan Tradition.

4.4.2.1 Creatures as Brothers and Sisters

Ana Paula Pintado states that the Rarámuri consider themselves as one more element of nature, and not superior; that is why they do not believe they own their land.³⁸ In a theological perception, this understanding under the lens of a Creational Theology could be compared to the way Francis of Assisi saw himself inside the Creation. Martin Carbajo proposes Francis of Assisi as a model of the universal fraternity, where Francis becomes a universal brother and recognizes all persons and all creatures as a divine gift.³⁹ Although the theology of the Rarámuri is not a complex and structured theology, basing their theological understanding on God the Creator has led them to follow - unintentionally- the example of Francis of Assisi.

³⁸ Ana Paula Pimtdo, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas Etnográfico* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), chap. 7, 207, Mediateca INAH, https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/libro%3A444.

³⁹ Martín Carbajo Núñez, "Fraternity in the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*," *REB, Petrópolis*, volume 81, número 319, (Maio/Ago., 2021), 299-306.

4.4.2.2. Created by Love Gives Us Dignity in Bonaventure

For Bonaventure, the entire universe was created because of trinitarian love. Based on the premise that God is love, it could be implied that “the reason that anything exists is that it is the object of love. All things that are, are loved into a being [...] everything is loved perfectly because God, being God, does nothing imperfectly.”⁴⁰ We are created by an act of love. This theology is a call to treat all creatures in the universe with dignity. Bonaventure explains that “the created world is like a book in which is reflected, presented, and read the Creative Trinity.”⁴¹ In some way, these created things are symbols of God’s action. Just as in a book, one can read the author, so in creation, one can know the Creator. In God’s providence, Rarámuri sees that God first loves them. This understanding leads this community to see in the creatures the generosity of God. That is why they respect not only their community but also the environment. For them, every creature has dignity, not because their ancestors taught them, but because they come from *Onorúame*.

Because all comes from God’s love, Rarámuri gives each creature its dignity. The Rarámuri distinguishes the sacramental principle of each creature. This position has led them to live in a personal, social, ecological, and spiritual harmonious environment for many generations. Thus, the indigenous Rarámuri teaches us that respect for God is integral to respect for his creation.

⁴⁰ Michael Himes, “Finding God in All Things”: A Sacramental Worldview and Its Effects,” *As I Live in the World: Catholic Perspectives on Faith, Vocation and the Intellectual Life* (2001): 97.

⁴¹ Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center*, 15.

4.4.2.3. Value of Creatures in John Duns Scotus

At this point, it is important to restate that all creation has a divine origin derived from Trinitarian love. All living and non-living things are created in the perfect love of God. Therefore, we need to respect God's creational plan because all created things have high dignity. From the tiniest particle of sand in the desert to complex human beings, we all deserve to be considered valuable because of our divine origin.

In "Scotus' theology each particular being has its own intrinsic, unique, and proper being; thus, everything has an inherent dignity, an essential "thisness."⁴² In other words, every creature reverences and obeys God in their own particular way and has their particular place and properties as a result of their individual identities. According to Scotus, every creature has its own unique way of reverencing God, specific to the way each one is created.

The Rarámuri community understands that *Onorúame* created everything in balance. They understand that each created being has value, and it is unique. For this reason, the Rarámuri does not enter into the two exclusive extremes. They do not arrive at a biocentrism, where only nature is respected, or anthropocentrism where only the human being counts. Rather, they envision comprehensive care where everyone fits in.

4.4.2.4. Private property in Francis of Assisi

Goshen's documentary states that the Rarámuri lives in community and simplicity, in a non-material lifestyle. This documentary suggests they can help us to

⁴² Philippe Yates, "The Primacy of Christ in John Duns Scotus: An Assessment," *A pilgrimage through the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition*, (2008): 194.

understand that we live with a lot of things that are not necessary: “They are the living proof that nonmaterialism is the way of abundance and joy.”⁴³ In my opinion, Creational Theology is the reason why Rarámuri lives a simple life.

The implications of seeing everything as a gift from God’s love are to value all created things and see them as equals. The Rarámuri is not above other creatures but is part of creation. They are in the midst of creation. The Rarámuri is not the owner of creatures; therefore, they will just use what they need to survive. This fact is suggested by Ana Paula Pintado, when she says that the human being is one more element of nature for the Rarámuri, and not superior. That is why they do not believe they own their land because they were lent the land by their ancestors.⁴⁴ About this interpretation, I consider that the Rarámuri take more care of nature not because their ancestors did so, not because it is a tradition. I think they take care of creation because of their understanding that God the Father gives everything. I consider Pintado's statement sets Rarámuris as a being that only follows traditions, without having that in-depth understanding of their role in creation.

Martín Carbajo proposes that Francis of Assisi recognizes all persons and all creatures as a divine gift. This led Francis to understand that possessions distance us from our brothers instead of uniting us.⁴⁵ Based on this, the fact that the Rarámuri at the

⁴³ GOSHEN. Places of Refuge for the Running People, Directed by Dana Richardson and Sarah Zentz 2015, accessed in “GOSHEN Documentary Film - Indigenous Tarahumara Rarámuri Running Tribe Born to Run,” Dana & Sarah Film, July 28, 2020, 8:40, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xeH0KAqiQI.

⁴⁴ Ana Paula Pimtdado, *Los Pueblos Indígenas en Chihuahua: Atlas*, 207.

⁴⁵ "Lord, if we had possessions, we would need arms for our protection. For disputes and lawsuits usually arise out of them, and, because of this, love of God and neighbor are greatly impeded. Therefore, we do not want to possess anything in this world." FRANCIS OF ASSISI, «The Legend of the Three Companions,» [L3C], n. 35 (FAED II, 61-110).

community level has not broken their relationship with the Creator helps us to understand the reason why this community does not perceive itself as an owner of all that has been created; they simply use what they need to live.

4.4.3. *Kórima* in Rarámuri Culture

God the Creator, the source of all created things, implies a powerful socio-ecological message, based on the divine origin of all created things. Pope Francis argues that taking care of people as well as systems is inseparable (QA 42). This is understood in an "empirical" way by the Rarámuri, which has led them to a deep sense of charity. As stated in the last section, Rarámuris live by *kórima*. It consists of the redistribution of goods, in which the one who has more gives to the one who has the least.⁴⁶ The bishop of the Tarahumara, Juan Manuel Gonzalez Sandoval, says that as priests, they accompany the Rarámuri in their faith, enriching each other. He expresses that "as priests, they cannot contribute much to charity, because Rarámuri has a deeper level of understanding than us -the outsiders- when it comes to charity."⁴⁷

Conclusion

After analyzing Rarámuri's theology, we can conclude that these people have been in a constant relationship with God since before Christianization. This community is a clear example of the Seeds of the Word presented by *Ad Gentes*. Upon encountering the Europeans, the Rarámuri people did not convert. They simply realized that *Onoríame*

⁴⁶ Luis Eduardo Gotes Martínez, *Los pueblos indígenas de Chihuahua: Atlas etnográfico* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), 89, Mediateca INAH, https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/libro%3A444.

⁴⁷ Juan Manuel Gonzalez Sandoval in Jonas Soto "151 - Labor pastoral con la comunidad Rarámuri en México, October 22, 2020, 12:48, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeCY_AihQCE.

became man, so they continued to dance to God. Now Rarámuri community celebrates the days in which God the Creator became man is celebrated. Based on the Creational theology and theological reflections of Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure, and Scotus, the fact that the Rarámuri before Christianization found in nature that connection with God does not sound so far-fetched. These theologies, both Franciscan and Indigenous, converge because they are based on Creational Theology, in *Onorúame*, God the Father who is the Creator.

It seems that the Rarámuri people consider themselves a people who are chosen by God. God has entrusted them the world and all that is in it; that is why they take care of it with reverence. The Rarámuri does not sit idly before the generosity of the Creator. They respond with their whole being, give thanks, ask forgiveness for their errors, and also rely on the Creator's providence. Regardless of what outsiders say, there is a reality in the Rarámuri people: They are authentically Christian in spite of the fact that their spirituality is based upon their ancestral theology. By the same token, they are authentically Rarámuris, despite having included the Christian Creed in their culture.

Based on its theology, this community teaches us how to be in harmony with the creation. God's grace is infinite and is around us. When we break our relationship with God, it is difficult to see God's grace. Therefore, we cannot recognize other creatures' values and we treat them as if we own them, thus becoming dominators and exploiting everything, even humans. In this way, as a species, we restore our relationship with God the Creator, to live in harmony with our four levels of relationship: with ourselves, with other humans, with nature, and with God.

As Rarámuris cares for all that has been created, including us, what is our role with them? As brothers and sisters, we need to seek to integrate them into society and the Church. I believe that the integration of marginalized peoples into society must be in an open and real way, with intellectual humility, leaving arrogance aside. At the missionary level, or accompaniment, as suggested by the bishop of the Tarahumara, we must first understand the Rarámuri in all their dimensions, so that as outsiders we may understand them better.

In addition, be aware that in this cultural and religious encounter, there can be unity within diversity, where each of the parties recognizes their particularities without annulling them, taking the best of both cultures in order to mutually enrich themselves. It is also important to understand that conflict between interactions will be normal. In addition to living in a complex world, we are complex human beings as well. But first and foremost, unity must remain. Since we are coming from the same Origin, we should not forget that, as creatures, we are called to return to the Father. Christ guides us through his example, and the Holy Spirit accompanies and enlightens us.

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