

## 1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Wizarika “the healers”, Huichol, Uto-Aztecan (1, p.1)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): hch (1, p.1)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 21°30' to 22°35' N and 104°00' to 104°30' W. The Huichol live in the Sierra Madre Occidental of Mexico, in the states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Zacatecas and Durango (3, p. 1). The area in which they live is some of the most rugged terrain in Mexico (2, p. 1). It is typified by mesas, cliffs and river valleys, and is covered mostly by scrub and thorns (2, p. 1).

1.4 Brief history: Little is known about the origins of the Huichol. Regardless of their origins, it is likely the Huichol culture consisted of four or five tribes, each with distinct regional traditions. Due to the rugged terrain of the sierra and the physical resistance of the Indians, the Huichol held out against direct Spanish domination until the 1720s. By this time their territory and population had been drastically reduced. The Franciscans established centers that served as missions and frontier posts in the area. Some of the first Franciscan missionaries established communities which eventually assimilated with the mestizo population. In the most remote of these centers the Huichol maintained more of their native beliefs and practices. Since the Huichol area was located along the fringe of Spanish-controlled lands, the centers became outposts to protect the region from Indian attacks. The Huichol had a more privileged status and were allowed to have their own tribal government and were exempt from paying tribute. After Mexican independence missionary influences were nearly all gone due to tension among Indians over land rights. Independence from Spain also ended the Indian communities and opened the Huichol communal lands to mestizo cattlemen and colonists. The Huichol joined the Cora in a ten-year revolution to stop further foreign encroachment. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth ethnographers began to document and research the Huichol people (4, p. 1).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Missionaries established communities and centers. They made inroads, constructed airstrips and built missions. The government agency INI (National Indian Institute) developed projects designed to integrate Huichol into the mainstream of Mexican national culture. They built airstrips and roads linking the isolated communities to the outside world. They also introduced agricultural projects that brought tractors, fertilizers and different strains of crops. Others projects focused on improving cattle and livestock in the communities. Medical clinics and schools were also created. The Huichol are now tied into the national economy and seek ways of generating cash income, usually as artisans or migrant wage laborers in the cities or on mestizo-owned lands (4, p.1).

1.6 Ecology: The rich cultural heritage of the Huichol Indians is indeed the real treasure of the Sierra Madre. The Huichols teach us that man must be a steward of the Earth; he

must feel in his heart the pain of the wounded animal, the crushed blade of grass. For all souls are linked. The universal life force, kupuri, flows through all nature's creations. And when man destroys nature, he destroys the finest part of his own being (7, p.1). In 1988, the Huichols were awarded the National Ecology Prize of Mexico for their efforts to repopulate the Sierra Madre forests with white-tailed deer. (7, p. 1).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: The number of Huichol at the time of Spanish contact is unknown. Rampant epidemics of measles and smallpox greatly reduced the population. Franciscan missionary documents from the 1780s report a population of 2,000 in the more assimilated communities of Tenzompa, San Nicolas, Soledad and Huajuquilla. In the three most traditional Huichol communities (San Andres, Santa Catarina and San Sebastian), the population totaled 1,000 inhabitants. In 1894 a Mexican government census placed the Huichol population at 4,000. From 1910 to 1940 numerous Huichol fled the sierra because of the turmoil created by the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero revolt and settled in several areas of Nayarit. Larger numbers of Huichol began to migrate to the Nayarit coast as seasonal laborers, and, beginning in the 1960s, some Huichol began to live in urban centers such as Tepic, Guadalajara, Zacatecas and Mexico City. In 1981 the total number of Huichol was estimated to be around 10,000, with the greatest concentration, 6,000, living in rural Jalisco, and approximately 2,000 residing in urban centers. The 1990 Mexican census placed the Huichol population over the age of 5 at 20,000 (3, p. 2).

## **2. Economy**

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Wild greens, roots and tubers, mesquite beans, mushrooms, avocados, nopal cactus and fruits, huamuchili fruits, berries and plums are gathered. Maize, beans, squashes and chilies are grown (3, p. 3).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Deer, rabbits, peccaries, iguanas, assorted birds, fish and crayfish are hunted. Cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, chickens and turkeys are raised for meat, milk and cheese (3, p. 3).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Originally traps, bows and arrows and a kind of slingshot. These have mostly been replaced by guns. Handmade nets for fishing (3, p. 3).

2.4 Food storage: Each rancho usually has at least one house made of bamboo that is built on stilts above the ground, where maize and other crops are stored after the harvest (3, p. 3).

2.5 Sexual division of production: Women gather wild foods, help in horticultural activities, milk cows, prepare food, carry water, sew, weave and embroider, make clothing and accessories and care for children. Men hunt, fish, perform the heavy manual labor in cultivation, gather firewood, construct buildings and help with child care. Young boys herd animals and help the men hunt; girls care for younger siblings, make tortillas and help in household chores. Most shamans are male; those women

who are shamans tend to be more discreet about their specialized training. Men are the political leaders and musicians. Women can specialize as midwives and master artisans. Ritual traditions emphasize the importance of male and female counterparts in ceremonial roles (3, p. 4).

2.6 Land tenure: The sierra is divided into districts of community lands. Local Huichol governing officials allocate land to family members of the community. Many families occupy several plots of land, where they reside on a seasonal basis in conjunction with their subsistence activities. A community member can petition for a parcel of unoccupied land. Land is passed down through the family, and inheritance rules place special importance on the oldest and youngest children (3, p. 5).

2.7 Ceramics: Females make some pottery (3, p. 4).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?: None

### **3. Anthropometry**

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): A child lives in a household with its parents and with siblings of both sexes. The household usually forms part of a ranch that contains several other households of similar composition (Grimes p. 105).

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Children are wed when they reach puberty (3, p. 5).

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Divorce is discouraged, but is permissible, especially in cases of excessive cruelty. If family members cannot reconcile the couple through mediation, the matter will go before the governor of the community for his decision (3, p. 5).

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Polygynous marriages are more common in some communities; however, this practice appears to be gaining popularity in others as well (3, p. 5).

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: The union of the couple does not include the joining of economic assets; women and men maintain their own property separately, especially cattle and other livestock (3, p. 5).

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Parents begin to pass on their inheritance to children while they are still living. From an early age, offspring start receiving gifts of cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens and turkeys. In some communities, inheritance may be patrilineal. The eldest and youngest usually receive the largest amount of the wealth and property of the deceased parent. They also inherit the primary responsibility for fulfilling the temple, government and church cargos previously held by their parents (3, p. 6). Both males and females own goods and pass them on independently in inheritance (Grime p. 106).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin):

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?: Orphans merge with the household of any relative who will take them (Grimes p. 105).

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?:

4.24 Joking relationships?: A joking type of behavior was once noted between male cross cousins once removed; its connections have not been trace out yet (Grimes p. 109).

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: The eldest son of the Elder will leave to marry and then return to become Elder when necessary (Grimes p. 105).

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: Incest restrictions apply only to the nuclear family. Nonkin do not normally marry (Grimes p. 105).

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?:

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?: Shortly after birth, children are named by a grandparent or shaman. If a child falls seriously ill, he or she will receive an additional name (3, p. 6).

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): Traditional marriages are bilateral, between first cousins. Presently marriages frequently occur between more distant kin; however, it is preferred that the spouse be from the same temple district, or at least from the same community (3, p. 5).

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?: Arranged by parents when children are very young (3, p. 5).

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

### **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Out-group vs. in-group cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: The most common in-group conflicts involve land disputes, cattle and livestock thefts and transactions, domestic family problems, neglected cargo responsibilities, sorcery and relations with outsiders. The governor and council members present serve as arbitrators between the parties involved. Punishment varies from fines, service rendered, jail (sometimes in the stocks) and ousting from the community. Matters of murder are settled by the mestizo authorities in the cities (3, p. 7). Most conflicts with other groups involve land and property disputes arising, for instance, from mestizo land encroachment and

exploitation of natural resources. International outsiders who arrive to make movies, take photographs, write books and seek messianic experiences can also cause disruptions (3, p. 8).

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

4.18 Cannibalism?

## 5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: The rancho consists of a number of nuclear-family households that usually form an extended family spanning three to four generations, along with sons-in-law, grandchildren and widowed or divorce adults. Occasionally aunts, uncles, cousins or godchildren visit and even live at the rancho for extended periods (3, p. 6).

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Every few years the household as a unit may move to some other ranch within its kindred. Households go on visits to ranches of relatives for periods ranging from a few hours up to several months, so that social connections with a number of ranches are kept up (Grimes p. 105).

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The political authority of the community appears to reside in the informal consensus of the elders of the ranches, who express their decisions through executives they appoint (Grimes p. 105). The community is led by a council of kawiteros, wise elder men who are usually shamans. Through the consensus of their dreams, they annually select the new governor, tribal council, and church cargos. Much of the political organization was structured from eighteenth-century Franciscan missionary teachings. The governor is the major decision maker and serves as arbitrator for the community. Council members include commissioners for each temple-group area, a constable, a judge, a bilingual secretary and community representatives. The governor, who redistributes goods and services in the community, is a religious figurehead. The governor's wife, who shares the position with him, has much influence in decision making (3, p. 7).

5.4 Post marital residence: Post marital residence for the first year is at the rancho of the wife's family. Afterwards, the couple decides in which family rancho they will eventually build their own house. If either one of the couple is the oldest or youngest of the family, they will reside in his or her family's rancho (3, p. 5). Upon marriage a couple resides within the household of the wife's parents; after about a year of married life it forms a separate household on the wife's parents ranch; and later still it may live with either the wife's or the husband's kin. The regular exception to this pattern is that the eldest son of the elder of a ranch, after an initial period of matrilocal residence, returns to his father's ranch, where he is the most likely successor to his father's eldership (Grimes p. 106).

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: Most Huichol live in dispersed family ranchos within the vicinity of the temple district corresponding to the lineage of the elder of the rancho. Rancho settlements consist of individual houses belonging to the eldest couple, to their adult children and grandchildren and to extended-family members who have received permission from the elder to construct their homes in the rancho (3, p. 3).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): A communal kitchen, a house that is the family's xiriki (shrine), and an encircled main patio with an outdoor fireplace and sacred stone disk where family ceremonies are held (3, p.3).

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?:

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The extended family constitutes the core Huichol social structure. Family lineages are organized within temple districts based on bilineal descent. Disruption of these districts makes it difficult to reconstruct the original social organization. In some temple districts, the group is organized into moieties of dry- and rainy-season lineages. Each half is united under an ancestor deity. Members of surrounding temple districts are linked to their ritual cargo-holding counterparts in each temple group 3, p. 5).

5.12 Trade:

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?: Social status is based on age (the elders having the highest position) and participation in government, temple and church cargo roles. Specialists, such as shamans, musicians, or master artists receive higher status and recognition (3, p. 7).

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6 Time allocation to RCR: Religion permeates all aspects of life, and most Huichol make no real distinction between the sacred and everyday worlds. For the Huichol, religion is life itself (3, p. 8).

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): The apprenticeship of Huichol shamans (called mara'akames) is filled with challenges to the mind, body and soul: eating bird hearts, sucking lizard tails, grabbing rattlesnakes, entering the lion's den and running with the wolves. Once they undertake these alliances, there's no going back for fear of fatal consequences. The key to obtaining metaphysical powers for the Huichols is overcoming their fears, not once, not twice, but five times for each ally they acquire.

Their boldness is a statement of faith to their gods, and is rewarded by a step up the spiritual ladder (9, p. 1).

6.2 Stimulants: Peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*) has a strong presence in Huichol culture. The Huichol make annual pilgrimages to the sacred peyote land, Wirikuta, in the San Luis Potosi desert. Peyote's psychoactive properties enable participants to see bright, colorful visions that are interpreted as personal communications from their gods. Huichol look upon peyote, which is identified with the deer, as a sacred gift; its consumption is highly ritualized and serves as a unifying force among community members (3, p. 8). The powerful Kieli plant (in the Solanaceae family, a hallucinogenic plant resembling datura), is highly esteemed for its magical properties. Kieli is used by shamans and nonshamans for a variety of reasons: to excel in the shamanic arts, to become good artists, musicians or deer hunters and for love spells. Different Kieli plants rule over these various powers, and the mara'akames dream about which plants pertain to the desires of each individual (9, p. 1).

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): When a girl reaches puberty, she has usually mastered the basic embroidery and backstrap-weaving techniques, which she visually displays to mark her initiation into womanhood. With her first menses, a lock of hair is cut to symbolize this passage (3, p. 6). The annual cycle is divided into wet- and dry-season temple ceremonies and activities. Ceremonies for rain and planting of crops take place around the summer solstice. Harvest ceremonies occur close to the fall equinox. Deer hunting and the peyote pilgrimage ensue, completing the cycle. Ceremonies usually last at least two days and nights, during which shamans sing extensive myth cycles with the help of two assistants (3, p. 9).

6.4 Other rituals: When the gods' presence is known, animals are sacrificed to provide them blood, which embodies the life force, and ritual food. Ceremonies also take place in the center of the community and at family ranchos (3, p. 9). The Huichols have performed ceremonial rituals they believe heal the Earth and keep nature balance. Key to the ceremonies is the ritual love offering of the white-tailed deer to their nature-deities. The blood of the deer nourishes the earth (7, p. 1)

6.5 Myths (Creation): If you ask the Huichols about their origin, they will tell you fantastic stories about ancient gods rising out of the sea and walking deep into the eastern side of the Sierra Madre. The Huichols believe history is knitted from the many threads of their countless myths and these are the roots that have determined their social and religious behavior. The Huichols believe the world has a sacred dimension, which only the mara'akame (Shaman) can pass through to by means of dreams, thus creating a bond between the world of the gods and the earthly one (5, p. 1).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Beaded jewelry, gourd bowls, masks and other figures, embroidered and woven clothing, guitars, violins baskets, hats baby cradles, prayer arrows, pottery, yarn paintings, etc (Various sources).

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Mostly men are shamans, women are only sometimes shamans (3, p. 8).

6.8 Missionary effect: Some Christian elements have entered into Huichol religious beliefs, and certain Christian ceremonies are observed. The amount of Christian influence varies. In some communities, there is a relatively minor degree of syncretism between the two religions (3, p. 8). Religious zealots sought to convert the “pagans”. But through it all, the Huichols held with certainty to their ancestral beliefs (7, p. 1). The missionaries brought with them colorful glass beads to trade with the Huichol in the hopes of converting them to Christianity. The Franciscans were able to exert a considerable amount of influence on the Huichol, however they were never successful in converting the Huichol and abandoned them after about 100 years (8, p. 1).

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Upon death, the soul of the individual retraces its life, following a path into the underworld, where it is faced with trials and tribulations that are a consequence of the actions of the individual while living. If a person has had sexual relations with a non-Huichol, his or her soul is banished to a corral around which stampeding mules or horses eternally run in circles. If the soul has lived a more pure life, it eventually reaches a temple of the dead in the west, where it dances to unwind itself from the thread of life. Five days after the death, the shaman and family hold a ceremony to bid farewell to the soul. The shaman then helps the soul reach the other world in the sky to join the souls of the previously deceased. Five years later, a special ceremony is performed in which the shaman captures the soul in the form of a rock crystal, which is cared for upon the altar in the family shrine. It is anointed with sacrificial animal blood and offered food during family ceremonies (3, p. 10).

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?:

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.):  
 Animism and ancestor worship: The Huichols have no word for “god”, but incorporate into their eco-religious philosophy the natural wonders of their environment. The mountains and rocks of the Sierra are the physical embodiments of their ancestors who stand guard with love, willing to teach and guide their descendants in the Huichols obligation to care for the Earth. The rivers are veins of Mother Ocean, conveying her life-giving blood inland to their lands. Father Sun warms the earth and produces the crops, but when he becomes too strong, offerings must be given to Grandmother-Growth-Nakawe who brings the rains to balance the drought (7, p. 1). They petition the deities for sun and rain for the crops, successful deer hunts, fertility, good health and protection from the dangers of the natural and supernatural worlds. The gods in the Huichol pantheon embody and personify nature in all of its manifestations, with the oldest being Takutsi Nakawe, Grandmother of Growth and Germination, who created the world, and Tatewari, Grandfather Fire. The large company of deities includes the

sun, rain, wind, ocean, earth and deer. Votive offerings, artistically rendered, are made as visual prayers to the deities and communicate innermost Huichol needs and desires. (3, p. 8).

## **7. Adornment**

7.1 Body paint: Face painting (3, p. 9)

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Designs meticulously embroidered onto shirts and woven into wide wool belts are symbols representing their gods and the sacredness of nature. Peyote visions are the source of many of these designs (3, p. 9).

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Decorated guitars, violins, gourd bowls, feathered arrows. (3, p. 9).

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system: "Sibling" denotes not only Ego's siblings but also his parents' siblings' children, parents' parents' siblings' children's children and so on indefinitely. "Sibling", a primary consanguineal term, which is semantically noncommittal as to degree of extension (One may refer to "my sibling who has the same mother and father as I" or "my distant sibling" when the field of zero generation consanguineals needs to be narrowed.) (6, p. 107).

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Huichol kinship terminology is Hawaiian. Terms of address distinguish kin one generation from Ego, but in the second generation and beyond, the terms are reciprocal (3, p. 5).

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them): Once a Huichol finds the Kieli plant that pertains to him, the individual must pledge himself to it for five to ten years. The person

is then obligated to bring it offerings which express his/her prayers – such as shaman's wands for becoming shamans, deer antlers for hunting, embroidery and artwork samples for becoming good artist, tiny guitars or violins for becoming good musicians and lipstick, rings and beads for love spells (9, p. 1).

The Kieli plant is described by Huichols as being a very jealous ally. It won't stand for any sexual relationships outside of marriage by either partner after one of them has vowed to it. This rule stays in effect until the person completes with the plant for a period of five or ten years. If an unmarried person pledges himself to the plant, he is obligated to forego sex until the vow is complete. This is often a difficult restriction for the Huichols to maintain, in spite of the benefits (9, p.1).

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