

Peyote lecture

Reading: Barbara Myeroff, Peyote Hunt

1) Social Structure of Huichol Indians (in Mexico):

- Nuclear families
- Ranchos – extended families – scattered. 1 mara'akame (shaman) for 8-10 families
- Rancherias – loosely related, 1 ritual dancing plaza & ancestor crystals
- 5 communities – “acephalous”

2) Subsistence

Historically, colonial powers wrestled with indigenous disinterest in market, accumulation. Preference for leisure

Marshall Sahlins: hunter-gatherers as “original affluent society” (rich in time, if poor in goods)

3) Religion

Mara'akame = priest, theologian, curer, shaman, artist, psychiatrist

4) **Functionalism v Symbolic Anthropology**

Mandelbaum & Leacock would say Huichol live far apart & pilgrimage & peyote give sense of integration

Pilgrimages esp. of interest to Victor **Turner**, but for meaning rather than function

What parallels can you think of?

Mecca
Grateful Dead
Bikers → DC
Vision quest
Full Moon party
Anti-nuclear protests
Burning Man
Spring break?

Pilgrimages & other rituals have 3 parts:

Disengagement from profane

Among Huichol: confession, tying knots, water purification

Now in vulnerable & powerful “liminal” state

Communitas/ collective effervescence

Identity changes (in rites of passage) – wedding, baptism, funeral, circumcision

Mystical experiences, insights, bonding

Reinsertion to normal life – run from Wirikuta, stop language reversals, back to mundane

Symbolic anthros interested in actual symbolic content of system in all its richness

In final chapter, Myerhoff plays with us: shows us Geertzian, Turnerian, Jungian, Freudian explanations for ritual and symbolism

Then tells us that even they're not rich enough

They = manifestations of Western habit of thought of breaking things apart, of looking for unseen, underlying explanation to which surface can be reduced

We think she's going to explain Huichol cosmology in terms of a Western theory

Instead she uses Huichol cosmology to critique Western theory-making!

pp.256-7 fuses ancient Greek thought, Buddhism, Christianity and Huichol religion

Given that she's told us Huichol cosmology is about reconciling opposites, this = Huichol move