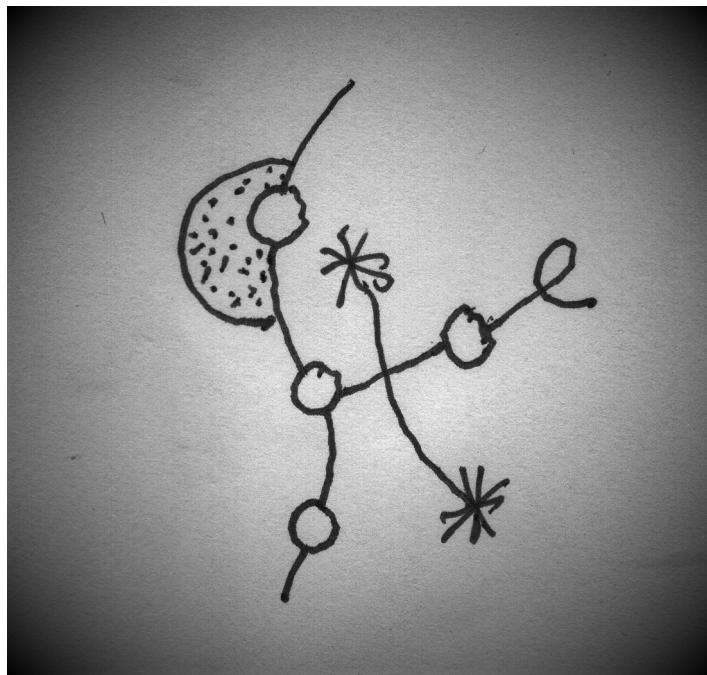


The Chumash House of Fate

The Chumash House of Fate

**The Gambling Gods
of California**

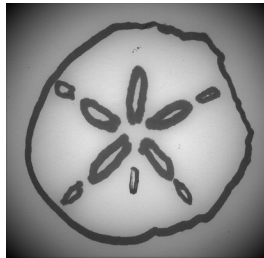


By John M. Anderson

Native American Religion

John M. Anderson has published numerous books on Native American mythology from the western United States. Many of his books focus on the history and culture of the Chumash Indians of southern California. In this text, he explores Chumash beliefs about fate.

** This text has evoked interest from persons approving of, as well as those opposed to, Native American rights to operate gambling casinos on reservations, as well as college students taking courses on Native American religion and culture.*



Native American tribe: Chumash, Pomo, Native American Religion, Dualism, Determinism, Luck, Gambling ethics, Native American mythology, Cosmic Abyss, Hand game (celestial), Cosmic Balance, Eagle, Coyote, Native American Astronomy, House of Fate, Sun, North star, Morning Star.

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Second 1999, First 1997.



The Celestial House of Fate

*In this text, Dr. Anderson summarizes his research on the Chumash Gambling Gods of Southern California**

The reader is first introduced to the heavenly ruler called the Eagle and his ally the Sun. They meet each night in what the author calls the heavenly "House of Fate" to gamble against Sky Coyote and Morning Star. Hanging in balance is the fate of humanity!

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The opening chapter discusses the role of fate in native California cosmology. Traditional Chumash theologians believed that humans have free will. According to their teachings, individuals can affect their fate either through direct action or indirectly by praying to the gods for help. They often looked skyward, therefore, to the stars and planets which were considered active participants in the celestial 'houses' of the gods.



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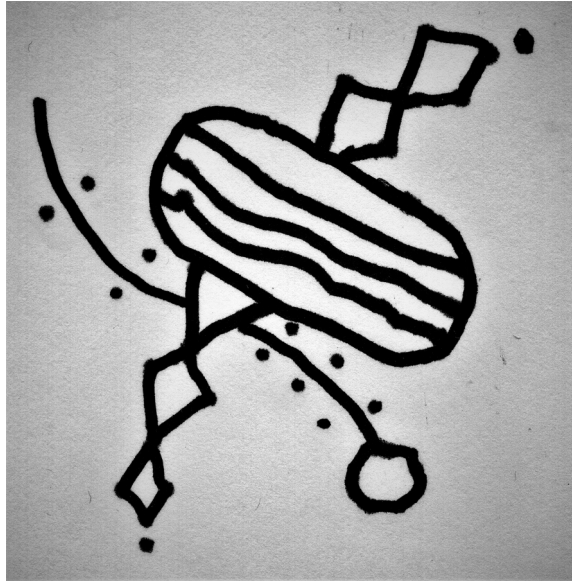


Introduction

The Chumash Indians of coastal California were once the largest tribe in all of western North America. They believed that the gods gambled against one another each night in the sky. This text focuses on these gambling gods and their celebrated rivalries.

The fate of humanity was determined by the ongoing conflict between the gods. When the side led by the celestial Eagle won too often, starvation and death followed. On the other hand, when the side led by Sky Coyote triumphed, food and material well-being were the joyous outcome.

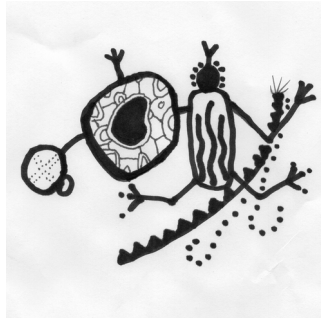
John Anderson
February 1997



* The cosmological models discussed in this book are based on the author's assessment of historical records dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The salient archetypes do not necessarily reflect the religious beliefs of all present-day Chumash.

Although many references in this book are in the past tense, the Chumash people are still very much alive today.

Chapter 1



Chumash Cosmology

Fate Plays An Important Role

*Chumash beliefs about the gambling of the gods
was central to their cosmology.*¹

According to the teachings of the well-known Chumash mythologist Maria S. Qiliqutayiwit, the fate of the world is contested nightly as the gods vie against one another in a cosmic struggle of wills.

Qiliqutayiwit's descriptions of the clashes between the heavenly powers should sound familiar to Christian readers. They are quite similar to biblical texts describing the struggles between Yahweh and Satan, who lead their respective forces of good and evil. Yahweh's team includes Jesus, Mother Mary, and the Angels who reside in the uppermost heavens. Satan's team includes hordes of devils who plague humans, luring them into the moral Abyss of hell where they 'fall' into the demon's grasp.

The struggles between Yahweh and Satan go on each day, and humanity suffers continually from the victories of Satan and his demonic allies who lure weak human souls to their ruin. These devils are active at night and in dark places such as caves, unlit houses and passageways, and in the darkest shadows of deep forests. These European demons can always be driven away by earthly light, such as a fireplace, a candle, or a campfire out in the open countryside. Chumash traditionalists would say their behavior sounds remarkably like that of the stars.²



Gambling Gods and Contemporary Astronomy

Generations of American scholars have denigrated the native gods of California as the products of 'primitive minds'. But the most unsympathetic of these critics have proven to be mistaken in their assumptions that the Chumash 'divine gambling' model is outmoded or intellectually discredited.

Divine gambling is actually an alive topic in contemporary physics. Albert Einstein, a German physicist is celebrated as one of the most creative thinkers in human history. In a famous statement made in opposition to quantum theory, Einstein turned to the gambling model to make his point. He suggested that "god doesn't play dice."

But the English physicist Stephen Hawking disagreed, arguing (like the Chumash theologians) that: "God not only plays dice, but he sometimes throws them where they can't be seen." ⁵ Hawking has emerged as one of the most influential theoreticians in contemporary physics.

Consulting the Stars

Chumash astronomers believed that all the stars were souls radiating light of various hues and intensity, each variation providing divine inspiration to properly trained observers.³ Not surprisingly, ethnographic records confirm that Chumash theologians looked to the stars for moral guidance and for predicting the future.

"Like many older European theologians, the Chumash philosophers taught that the stars and planets were souls. The brightest celestial objects were believed to be the souls of deities, and the weaker objects were the souls of previously living humans who had ascended into the heavens...

When a Chumash child was born, an official called an *Alsuqlash* was consulted. This specialist in astrology was responsible for assigning the newborn baby its 'birth' name based on the positions of the sun, moon, and other celestial bodies in the sky at the time of their birth. They were also asked to predict the destiny of the child." ⁴

In a previous book called *American Indian Astrology* I described how Chumash *Alsuqlash* officials routinely prophesied about a child's future, but I concluded that this did not mean they believed in a locked-in fate for each newborn human (Anderson, 1997). In fact, these sophisticated astronomers/astrologers routinely encouraged their clientele to take an active role in changing the world. The *Alsuqlash* were themselves constantly engaged in consultation about the gods (stars), offering their services to both government councils and private citizens who wanted to influence the future

Free Will and Fatalism

Chumash theologians believed in free will. This did not mean that they considered themselves independent

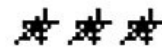
of the struggles between the gods. Rather they felt that they had personal and social responsibility for deciding which of the gods to seek help from at any given time.⁶

Kitsepawit, a Chumash islander, explained this situation to John Harrington, an ethnographer from the Smithsonian Institution. Traditional theologians taught Kitsepawit to believe that greed ruled the world. Harrington's field notes do not explain exactly what Kitsepawit meant by "world." But from other cosmological data we can guess that the power of greed was not active in the highest heavens and was manifested only in the lower levels of the cosmos such as in the 'world' occupied by humans and the supernaturals of the under world. Like other educated Chumash, Kitsepawit apparently believed that he had free will but was constantly suffering from the effects of selfishness. By himself, an individual human could never expect to escape suffering in the moral chaos around him. So he beseeched the gods to aid him in his struggles. He prayed for assistance, in a world overwhelmed with disease, death, and pain.

The Spanish and Mexican priests who ran the Chumash 'missions' (production centers) routinely sent reports to Mexico City condemning leaders of traditional native families for supposedly practicing black magic. Chumash traditionalists considered such accusations to be both bizarre and ruthless, because they implied that the native Californians were guilty of seeking alliances with the demons of the Lower World (whom the Christians believed to be led by Satan). Such an alliance with the ruling powers of the lower world made no sense to the traditionalists who were trained to balance the powers of the upper and lower worlds.



*Lucky and
Unlucky Months*

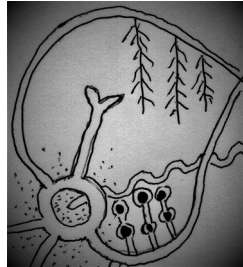


The Chumash believed that gambling between the two divine teams took place when the rising Sun was moving on the horizon. It only ceased, therefore, during the two solstice periods when the Sun appeared to 'stop' on the horizon.

According to this astrological model, not all days or months were equally lucky. Fortunate and unfortunate months followed one another in a predictable sea-

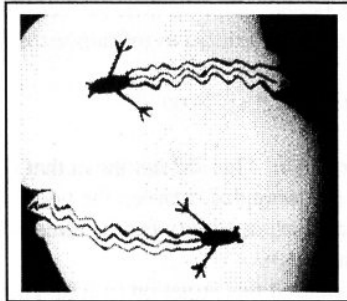
sonal cycle.

*April, for example, began a light-hearted period of three lucky months for the Chumash (April-May-June). August and October were also considered lucky periods, along with January which was the time of new beginnings: the "most fortunate" of all months.⁷ In contrast, September, November, February, and March were unlucky months.⁸ For further discussion see *American Indian Astrology* (Anderson 1997).*



Predicting The Future

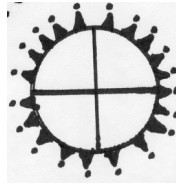
One of the titles used by the Chumash for their highly trained astronomers is Alsuglash, which refers to those officials who were asked to give advice about naming young babies.⁹ These learned men were traditionally consulted by parents of newborns to determine an auspicious name for their child.



Naming was taken very seriously by the Chumash, and these officials were highly respected as men of wisdom. They observed the heavens, and were most knowledgeable about the appearances and disappearances of celestial bodies. As a result, they were often consulted about gambling luck, including hints about lucky and unlucky gambling days, weeks, or even months.

In addition to using the stars, numerous other means were available to the Chumash for predicting the future. For example, gamblers often employed professional magicians and turned to magical rites to increase their chances of gambling success. Gambling team songs and accompanying music, burning of lucky gambling herbs, unique gambling hand and body gestures, and specially decorated gambling clothing may have been employed to enhance a participant's chances of success.¹⁰ The Chumash were so confident in the divine sanctioning of gambling that they even used ritual gambling to select their governors.¹¹

Chapter 2



The House of Fate

As in European and Asian cosmologies, the gods of the Chumash divided themselves into two rival sides. The opposing teams were led by Eagle and Coyote. Qiliqutayiwit explained that Coyote's team was sympathetic to the material needs of humanity, and her description of Eagle's team suggested (but did not say directly) that it was more spiritually oriented.¹²

Because the ethnographic documents describing the gambling of the Chumash gods are so brief, there are many more questions raised than answers given in surviving texts. Where exactly in the heavens, for example, did the divine gambling take place? Qiliqutayiwit did not say. In chapter five, I propose that it took place on the Moon. It may have involved all of the visible sky, however. It is even possible that it took place at the zenith, or at the North Star, or perhaps it moved from place to place according to the seasons, weather, movements of the planets, or even the sudden appearance of a comet.

What stars, constellations, or planets were associated with each of the gambling gods? We know the celestial locations of the Sun and the Morning Star, but can only speculate about the heavenly associations of Eagle and Coyote. We know that they gambled using the hand game, but lack details about the astronomical and calendar changes associated with their gaming. It is possible that each of the competing gods represented one of the four ritual directions, as was the custom among other western tribes.

The hand game of the Zuni, called the *Sholiwe*, provides a useful model for speculating about the ritual directions and sacred elements associated with the *Alewa* game played by the Chumash gambling gods. Among the Zuni, each gambling team dressed and was painted to ritually represent one of the four directions and their associated elements such as air and fire.

Although Qiliqutayiwit did not reveal the ritual directions and sacred elements associated with the Chumash gambling gods, a rich legacy of Chumash astronomical lore provides ample information for reconstructing a plausible model. A good place to begin developing a paradigm is

the World Axis. In *A Circle Within The Abyss*, I describe its pivotal role in our understanding Chumash cosmology.

"The World Axis first appeared at the beginning of the earth's creation, to maintain the cosmic balance. Anyone can confirm the existence of the Axis for themselves by simply stepping outside at night and looking at the stars. They revolve around a central pivot. The top lies at the apex of the sky, at the North Star. This is the most pure place in the physical universe.

Assessing the Future At The Solstices



During the four days of the winter solstice, devout Native Americans withdrew into their homes. This was a time of contemplation, awaiting the resurrection of the newborn Sun and the new year. It was a time of hope.

The Count of Six was the Chumash ceremony most closely watched by politicians during the winter solstice, a time of reassessment both for local families as well for the provinces as a whole.¹⁶ At the Count of Six convocation the twenty-one members of each provincial council were invited to present their views on the pressing events of the times: high or low yields of grains harvested that fall, mildew and blight affecting next year's crop, availability of deer in the lowlands, fishing quotas, diseases and their control in various towns, warfare, and prospects for trade in the approaching spring.

Speeches sometimes generated heated debate, as rival factions maneuvered for influence. Ritual gambling was closely watched, as the human participants mirrored the gambling of the gods. Old debts were paid before the solstice, to help cleanse the world.¹⁷ But in the end the provincial governor, called the Kwain, counseled compromise between rivals.¹⁸ After harmony of opinion was reached, the 'Alsaiupayit official formally announced the governing council's assessment.¹⁹ His speech was a "state of the union" address, designed to formalize the council's deference to the will of the gods in heaven. Soon runners spread the news of the good (or bad) prediction for the upcoming seasons. Town mayors awaited their arrival with much trepidation, for the pragmatic impact of the news from the Count of Six assembly was taxation, especially when drought and plagues haunted the land. Dried seeds had to be sent to the provincial governor, for storage and redistribution in the hard months ahead.

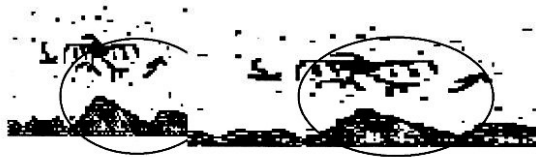
Below Polaris are realms of descending purity, leading downward to the level of the earth. The Chumash believed that the Axis cuts through Iwihinmu mountain, at the earth's sacred center northwest of Los Angeles and that its bottom lies in the underworld where the demons dwell.

The Encircled Circle depicts the many layers of the physical world as manifested from the World Axis with the outermost rings representing regions of increasing decadence. Chumash astronomers, as those of ancient Europe, looked around them and wondered why the earth did not revolve like the sky. It seemed fixed in place, unmoving. To express this ordering of life on earth, the Chumash used the Encircled Cross to symbolize the cosmic forces which seized the earth in mythic times and stopped it from revolving with the upper worlds. Supernatural powers dwelling in Polaris (in the north sky) and Sirius (in the south sky) were the dominant forces of order, maintaining the north-south line of the cross. The changing path of the sun, moving east to west, regulated the weaker east-west line. Combined, they divided the earth into four quarters."¹³

We can see from this description that the Encircled Cross (which appears frequently in Chumash rock art) provides a convenient symbol for discussing the House of Fate. For the purpose of discussion, imagine that each of the leading gambling gods sat at one of the four 'ends' of the intersecting north-south and east-west lines. All of the forces of cosmic conflict would thus come together at the World Axis, which lies in the center of the Cross. From surviving Chumash ethnographic records, we know that earthly center was called Iwihinmu mountain, which has been confirmed historically as the sacred center of Chumash spiritualism. Here, at Iwihinmu, the free Chumash militia made their last stand against Mexican and American colonialism in the 1850's. The dramatic story of this confrontation is described in The Piercing of the Yokut Shield. This text describes how the desperate Chumash withdrew to the foothills near Iwihinmu Mountain because they wanted to maximize the influence of their prayers to the gambling gods who controlled their fate.¹⁴

Balancing the North and West Gods Against the South and East

In the chapters which follow, I will explain how the gambling Eagle deity was associated in Chumash religious symbolism with the north (and thus the north end of the Encircled Cross) and that his gambling partner the Sun may have been associated with the west. The 'gambling' forces residing in these two cosmic directions were balanced in an endlessly recurring struggle against Coyote who ruled the south sky and Morning Star who ruled the east.¹⁵



The Location of the Celestial
House of Fate

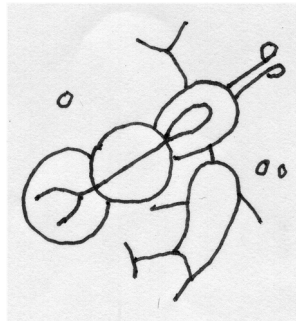
THE SPECIFIC LOCATION of the celestial House of Fate is not identified in any surviving ethnographic record from the Chumash. ²² Qilikutayiwit placed it somewhere in 'Alapayasup (the Upper World or heavens). But she declined to identify this celestial gambling house with any exact celestial location (except to confirm that it was not one of the celestial houses of the Sun). ²³

The most convincing explanation of Qilikutayiwit's refusal to identify a specific celestial location for the House of Fate is that it encompassed all of the heavens. Another way of saying this would be to suggest that ALL of the visible heavenly bodies influenced the outcome of divine gambling on any given night.

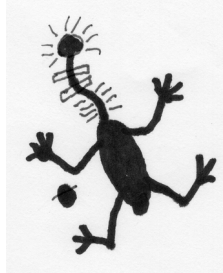
But surely, you might ask, aren't any specific places in the cosmos especially important to the divine gambling game? The answer is yes, there are at least two locations which warrant special consideration: Iwihinmu mountain and the zenith. Both are located on the World Axis, and therefore have potentially awesome power.

Iwihinmu is the central mountain of the Chumash, and may have been a ritual center used to reenact the gambling of the gods on the solstices. The zenith is separate from the sky hole located above Iwihinmu mountain, linking it with the North Star. The zenith sky Hole was located straight above, and served as an access to the heavens. The zenith was also considered a 'resting place' where the solar deity temporarily came to a standstill at noon, midway on its daily journey across the heavens. And it is possible that this hole also served as a ritual center of the heavens and thus a center of the celestial House of Fate. ²⁴

We should not confuse these four gambling gods with the four marvelous beings whom the Chumash called the Binders of the Earth. These subservient supernaturals were called the *Aa'aqwsiq 'Ita'sup*, meaning those who bind.²⁰ As restraining supernaturals, they were assigned the duty of 'fixing' the Middle World so it could not spin like the heavens. These binding gods were depicted as snakes by the Chumash, reflecting an ancient tradition that was widespread throughout the Americas.²¹



Chapter 3



Coyote's Gambling Team

Gods of the South and East

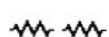
Now that we've examined some of the metaphysical foundations of the ancient Chumash religion, let's take a closer look at one of the celestial gambling teams. A good place to begin this discussion is with the likable team led by Coyote. Be warned that a traditional Chumash is taught to be cautious when approaching Coyote and his celestial allies, because Coyote is the Trickster god full of contradictions and surprises. At one moment in a folk tale he appears as a bungling fool incapable of even the simplest task. Then suddenly he shifts into an awesome power. He overcomes seemingly impossible odds and saves the day for the Chumash, who express heart-felt (but often guarded) appreciation of his assistance.

Snilemun

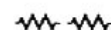
Qiliqutayiwit identified the celestial Coyote named Snilemun as the leader of the gambling team favorable to the material needs of humanity. Snilemun is like a kindly father to humans, according to his many devoted worshipers, as opposed to the Eagle who was venerated as an unsympathetic governor.²⁵

Snilemun represents the rebel, typically championing the cause of the lower classes in Chumash society. He breaks the rules, insults people, violates ancient taboos, and often succeeds (not surprisingly, to a cynical observer of the world) in his efforts.²⁸ Coyote is therefore the mirror image of the celestial Eagle, who represents the interests of the established order.²⁹ Coyote never boasted that he was a creator deity, but took pride instead in his role as a transformer who helped transmute the earth after its creation so that it is more appealing to

humans. In honor of his many achievements, numerous Chumash folk tales still celebrate Coyote's magical transformation of the earth's environment.³⁰



Humanity's Invisible Benefactor



L. Martinez, a Catholic priest living among the Chumash, reported in 1792 that every native town had a hilltop shrine nearby, where a pole about three feet tall was located. This pole had feathers attached to it, pointing to the heavens. Such hilltop shrines were dedicated, Martinez reported, to "the unseen power that provided them with seeds, fish, and all needed things."

Showing his lifetime animosity to Chumash theology, Martinez refused to name (give power to) the Chumash god honored at these shrines. Yet, traditionalist Chumash families risked clandestine worship at such shrines in spite of ongoing Catholic repression. No amount of ridicule by the Spanish, Campbell Grant acknowledged more than a hundred years later, succeeded in luring Chumash traditionalists from their faith in Martinez's 'unnamed' deity.²⁶

It was not until the early part of this century, when John Harrington gained the trust of the last elders to speak fluent Chumash, that the true identity of the Chumash deity most sympathetic to human material well-being came to light. Sky Coyote was revealed to be the celebrated deity of material prosperity. But he was a visible deity and presumably was never venerated at any shrine dedicated to an invisible god.²⁷

Coyote and Morning Star Were Sympathetic To Humans

The celestial home of Snilemun has not been clearly identified in surviving ethnographic records on the Chumash. But Hudson and Underhay present convincing evidence in *Crystals In the Sky* suggesting that *Snilemun* dwells in the southern Chumash constellation called *Mech*. More specifically, he may reside in the star called Sirius by Americans. Sirius is not only the dominant star in the *Mech* constellation, but it is also the brightest star in the entire night sky.³¹

If Sirius proves to be the House of Coyote, then clearly *Snilemun* is the Chumash god of the south. This mapping would place him appropriately in the sky opposite the North Star and its guardian deity called the Eagle. And if Sky Coyote can be linked to the brilliant star Sirius, then he is also certainly associated with the element fire. Sirius rules the heat of summer and stands in ritual opposition to the North Star which rules ice, cold, and winter.

Snilemun's association with fire is well documented in Chumash folk tales explaining why he can never take the role of the Sun without bringing disaster. In one story about his visit to the House of the Sun, for example, L. Y. Nutu tells how Coyote hassled the Sun so persistently that the exasperated deity allowed Coyote to carry the solar flare for a short while. "Coyote started off all right, but the firebrand slipped and almost fell, and the world almost burned up before Sun could get it back."³²

The Morning Star

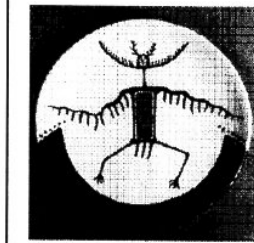
Morning Star was second in command on *Snilemun's* team. Sympathetic to humanity, this deity spread its brilliant light in the sky before dawn when the faithful rose from sleep to make their daily prayers.

Blackburn identified Morning Star as a male deity in Chumash cosmology. This gender identification would be consistent with the masculinity of the other three gambling gods. But a number of important Chumash myths suggest a female aspect for the Morning Star.³³ A number of passages in Chumash folk tales confirm this gender identification, suggesting Morning Star is associated with the Sun as his daughter. The daughters of the Sun appear in stories as benefactors of human souls which travel to the House of the Sun. They take in the humans and warn them against dangers posed by their father, the solar deity.

Sky Coyote and Morning Star Are Sympathetic to Human Suffering

The ruling gods of the south and east are Sky Coyote and Morning Star. The Chumash apparently used Toshololo Mountain for rituals associated with the Morning Star. And they may have used an island peak for their ceremonies associated with Coyote in the south.

Kitsepawit taught that greed is a primal urge among all forms of life on the Middle World (the earth). "Profit," he proclaimed, "is the voice of all." This emphasis on selfishness (profit) is clearly demonstrable by modern biology standards. In what is probably his most important speech on human ethics, Kitsepawit concluded that human greed will always exist. Gain is the "touchstone" of the human heart.³⁴



Yet the goal of Chumash social philosophy is to preserve a balance. Although greed does in fact motivate all humans, they need to keep it under control. Tales about Foolish Coyote warn children repeatedly of the consequences of succumbing to one's lust for food, sex, revenge. One is poisoned by their excesses.³⁵ In contrast, the wise person lives modestly, and works for the good of the community.

The Morning Star appears in the east as the brilliant planet Venus, rising in the predawn hours before the sun. It is a symbol of rebirth, sunrise and renewal as opposed to the Evening Star which symbolizes death, sunset, and endings of cycles. Both 'stars' are of course different aspects of the planet Venus, which is the second closest planet to the Sun. As a result of its size and proximity to the solar radiation, Venus is the brightest of the planets. It is venerated among the Chumash because (other than the Sun and Moon) it is the only celestial object that can cast a shadow.

The Abyss

In his 1975 study of Chumash folk tales, *December's Child*, Thomas Blackburn concluded that the Chumash believed the universe to be "both dangerous and unpredictable." I suggested alternative explanations of Chumash cosmology in *A Circle Within The Abyss* and in a number of my recent publications.³⁶ A clearer reading of Chumash theology would reveal, I proposed, that the whole universe was not dangerous or unpredictable. The only unpredictable area of events is that which falls under the influence of the Abyss.

The Chumash used the term *Alampawauhani* to describe the Abyss, which I propose is located in the heart of the southern sky.³⁷ The disorder which characterizes the movements of the stars (celestial souls) in this area of the heavens was the primordial condition of the cosmos. This disorder existed prior to the creation of the north star and the earth. *Snilemun's* character thrives in the chaos of the Abyss, for he is the champion of spontaneity, and the human passion which Kitsepawit describes as greed.³⁸



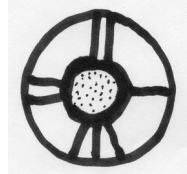
Gambling

In both The Fast Thinker (Anderson, 1994) and The Swordfish Race, (Anderson, 1996) cheating and gambling is examined from a moral perspective. To appreciate the gambling contest featured in these books, the reader needs to carefully consider the sociology of native American gaming.

When native Americans take part in gambling events they take their losses as part of the fun, just as they relish their victories. They share in an underlying belief that risk-taking is integral to all life in the middle world.

I am particularly fond of the teachings on this subject by the Chumash moralist, F.L. Kitsepawit. He says his elders taught him that greed rules the world of humans and animals. No one would agree more with this observation than an American advocate of capitalism. Competition faces us everywhere we look, and we must rise to the challenge or be overcome.³⁹

Chapter 4



Eagle's Team

North & West

*The North Star, the venerable 'pivot' of the northern sky,
is depicted as an Eagle's Nest in both European
And Native American cosmology.*

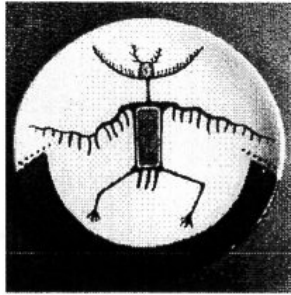
Eagle is called *Slo'w* by the Chumash. He almost certainly resides at the North Star, which is the ruling star of the northern sky.⁴⁰ This highest celestial abode of the physical [and visible] cosmos is depicted in Chumash cosmology as the Eagles Nest.⁴¹

*The Golden Eagle is the leader of the deities opposed
To Coyote's team in the Chumash House of Fate.*⁴²

Qiliqutayiwit described the celestial Eagle as a Wot, which is a Chumash title used by their highest government officials.⁴³ Eagle was never greeted with a family kinship name by humans, she explained, but only as the withdrawn ruler of the highest heavens.⁴⁴ "He is very patient. He is always there in the sky, thinking."⁴⁵

^ ^ ^ ^

Eagle was the symbolic guardian spirit adopted by the highest members of the Chumash intellectual class, whose power was beyond the pragmatic interests of town leaders who managed routine affairs such as harvests and food storage. Like rulers of aristocratic families in Europe, leaders of the most influential Chumash families did not bother with day-to-day political and economic affairs. One of their primary objectives was to remain aloft like the mythological Eagle, who left pragmatic management problems to the Sun, Coyote, Morning Star, and other super-naturals who were responsible for earthly affairs.⁴⁶



Comparisons To Neighboring Cultures

The Chumash Sun is very similar not only to the solar deities of the Pomo and Mohave, ancient residents of the region, but also to the Sun of the nearby Yokuts who are relative newcomers to California.

Tihpiknits is the Yokut equivalent to the Chumash Sun. Like many Pomo and Mohave deities, Tihpiknits is depicted by Latta in his Handbook as a "bird person."⁴⁹ His primary rival is Coyote, whom the Yokut called by the Spanish name Kiyu.

Tihpiknits rules the Land of the Dead and if he wins the celestial gambling game, the Yokut will suffer or even die and be taken to his kingdom. Latta describes the Yokut Land of the Dead as being in the north. It was probably, to be more specific, located in the northwest where the Sun set on the winter solstice on the northwest horizon (as with the Chumash).

The Sun

The Sun is a difficult deity to analyze in terms of a sacred direction or element. Like the mighty Eagle, who rules the heavens at night, the Sun rules the heavens during the day. But the Sun does not sit still like the unmoving Eagle at the celestial axis. The solar deity moves from east to west daily, and also changes his rising and setting points in a cyclic pattern. Humans who get up in the early hours to pray to the Sun, for example, witness its changing rising point on the horizon from north to south and back with the seasons.

The Sun is a fiery being and thus is associated in myths with the element Fire. But in previous passages we have also assigned this sacred element to the southern star Sirius (presumably Coyote). Fire does not seem to be exclusively linked to either.

In earlier editions of this book it was conjectured, by an argument of reduction, that Qiliqutayiwit's gambling Sun may have been ritually associated with the west. The gambling gods of the north, south, and east had already been identified. If this modeling held, then the Sun we were dealing with is the setting sun, which lowers itself daily into the waters of the western ocean. But with further study of native California cosmologies, I find myself reluctant to force the Chumash solar deity into any model which limits it to one ritual direction or cosmological 'element.' The Sun has associations with the end of the day [sunset], Venus as the Evening Star, the descent of the reincarnating soul into the lower world, the fall season, and with the ritual mountain named *Wasna*. In all these aspects, it is linked to the West. But the Sun is also associated with the dawn, Venus as the Morning Star, the ascent of the soul into the heavens, and with *Toshololo* mountain.

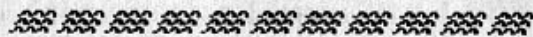
To facilitate the Sun's powerful impact on the human world, it was placed in the lower levels of the heavens where its radiation of light and power would have maximum effect.⁴⁷ Of all the deities, the 'lowly' Sun thus had the most impact on the earth's environment. Not surprisingly, the Chumash (as peoples across the globe) prayed to the Sun more than to any other deity, but they did so with the understanding that it would ultimately remain subordinate to Eagle and the other supernaturals of the higher heavens.⁴⁸

They understood that the Sun's heat is inconstant, changing its intensity from day to day, month to month, and season to season. After the summer solstice, its beneficial heat begins to wane. The months slowly but surely get colder as the fall rains (Water) dampen its energies

The Sun As A Cyclical Power

The Sun is not always described in Chumash folk tales as an adult. Like so many Chumash supernaturals, the solar deity changed form from time-to time (from month to month, from season to season). After the winter solstice, for example, the Sun is depicted in folk lore as a newborn baby. By the spring equinox it is a young man, and by the summer it is at the peak of its manhood. By the fall equinox it is in middle age, and by December a dying old man.

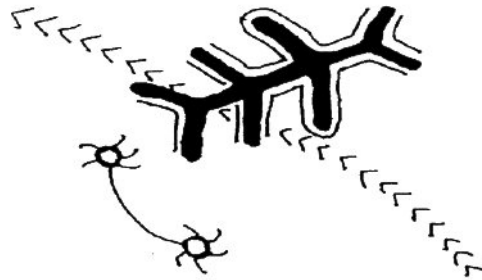
The Sun's decline did not mean the defeat of his gambling team, however, for Coyote and Morning star lost in their gambling against the Sun and Eagle during these same cold months (November-December; along with the first month of the new year, January) when the weather was under the power of the Eagle who was the ruler of cold, and ice.



In one folk tale Qiliqutayiwit described Sun as "an old man," a widower. Living in a household without a wife, this solar deity lacked the moderating influence of a woman's compassion for children.⁵² Qiliqutayiwit's audience presumably understood therefore that this story was about the 'old sun' persona associated with sunsets and the fall months. This was the time when the solar heat weakened, as the autumn Sun was increasingly overcome by the cold of the evening frosts.

The Franciscan priests who ran the California missions (production centers) also recognized the fundamental importance of the sun. They called this radiating source of warmth Brother Sun, in recognition of its sympathetic relationship with humans.⁵⁰ But the Chumash considered the Sun deserving of a more honored relationship; they described him ritually as an uncle.⁵¹ This relationship was chosen because in Chumash culture, a boy's uncle was a disciplinarian who was tough on the child in comparison to his father. He was not cruel, but rather acted as a strict supervisor because he feared that the child's father would be unduly compassionate and ask too little of the child during his education about adult religious responsibilities.

How Eagle and Sun Cleansed the World



Qiliqutayiwit taught that both Eagle and Sun "ate people."⁵³ By this statement, her purpose was not to frighten her listeners or alienate them from these two deities who were not demons but rather deities characterized by highly purified souls. The unmoving Eagle deity, for example, was the great thinker whose house was pure and whose soul was unsoiled by physical body.

The theme of the solar deity eating people can be found throughout north America.⁵⁴ The Pomo illustrate this concept in their Sun executioners. These four servants of the solar deity killed "erring mortals" with invisible arrows.⁵⁵ Such beliefs are based on the biological reality that a body begins to decay when exposed to the heat of the hot summer sun, while it will not decay when frozen in the winter cold. Any hunter could confirm this reality, by watching a newly dead deer decompose within days of death during the summer months when the sun is under the influence of Sky Coyote (Fire, Sirius). Humans also decay within days of death, and thus have to be buried or cremated according to the customs of their tribe.

It would be a mistake to consider the Sun an enemy of humanity or a demonic threat, just because the physical body has to be removed from the rays of the Sun. Ridding the world of dead bodies in fact helps cleanse the environment. Moreover, it is the decaying of the body which releases the soul from its bondage to physical substance. After four days, the soul is able to break free of the body and rise into the air. It appears as a small ball of fire, which ascends into the heavens. Following the Milky Way, it finds its way to a house of reincarnation which serves as a celestial womb. After a period of incubation, the soul descends down again into a physical body in the Middle Earth. Here it dwells (in a physical body) for a cycle of time, until death comes and the Sun once again releases it to fly into the celestial realms.

Sunlight

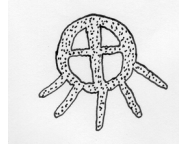
The light of the Sun chases away that of the Moon and stars at dawn. Since the Sun illuminates the 'reality' of day, it provides critical knowledge to humans living on the earth. Kitsepawit thus taught that the solar deity illuminates "the beauty of the world."⁵⁷ This beauty is that of physical body, but it is only temporal and inferior to the light of the stars.

The Chumash had so much respect for the Sun and its dominance over human affairs, that they gave their high governmental officials the title Rays of the Sun.⁵⁸ This appellation was meant to honor their insight into economic and political issues impacting human life in the Middle World.⁵⁹

The Chumash believed that the Sun was their benefactor, who taught them how to live a good life and, equally important, how to locate the celestial Land of the Dead to be reincarnated.⁵⁶ The devout Chumash watched where the Sun stopped along the Milky Way when it died on the winter solstice. They knew it was far more powerful and wise than any human, and thus they chose to follow its example when walking the Path of the Dead. The Sun's path led them to the constellation called Aquila by Europeans, the celestial womb of reincarnation. During this journey, they used the North Star (Eagle) as their guide to keep them from becoming disoriented in the revolving heavens.



Chapter 5



The Moon As a Neutral Referee

The twelve Chumash government officials called Rays of the Sun were assisted by eight other officials called the *Shan*. Together with a governor, they collectively made up ruling provincial councils of twenty-one members. Apparently, the *Shans*' special contribution to the government was their ability to 'see' into the higher heavens. They were powerful spiritual leaders, whose source of wisdom was the light of the Moon, the planets, and the stars.

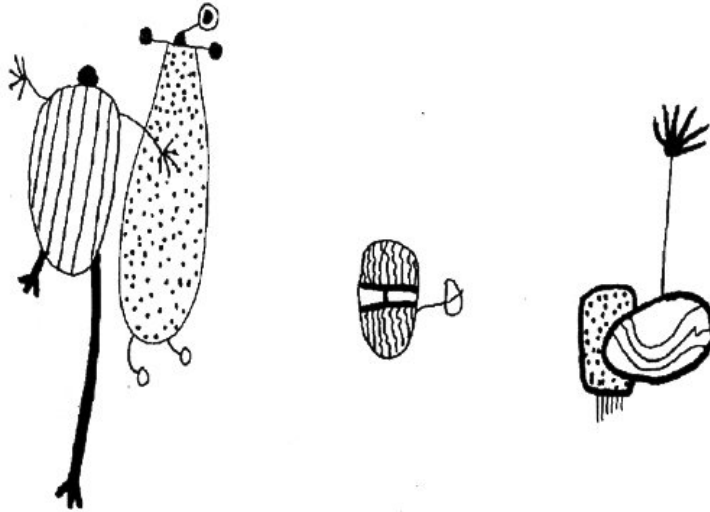
The Moon was especially important to the functioning of the Chumash House of Fate, because the Moon served as an arbitrator between the rival teams of gods. She is associated in Chumash myth with the neutral center called Liyikshup by the Chumash. *Liyikshup* means 'the center of the world' and it is associated with the Chumash Central Mountain. This mountain is located north of Los Angeles. It is called Pine by the Americans and Iwihinmu by the Chumash. *Iwihinmu* means 'a place of mysticism', and this peak is closely linked ritually with datura visions.

Many of the Spanish priests who ran the California 'missions' also believed the moon was female. Francis of Assisi, who founded the Franciscan order, for example, called her Sister Moon. Instead of a sister, the Chumash considered her to be a kindly grandmother named Momoy which means 'datura'. As the ultimate source of visionary wisdom, *Momoy* simply had to dip her hands in a basket of water to create a sacrament capable of bringing a person into direct contact with the gods. The *Shan* officials were honored by all Chumash citizens for their awesome abilities to enter the higher celestial levels and engage the deities. As a result of their courageous encounters with the heavenly powers, the Chumash people were able to balance their behavior in such a manner as to please the gods.

Gambling On the Moon

In earlier editions of *The Chumash House of Fate*, I speculated about various places where the gods might have gambled at night. The zenith, the sky above Iwihinmu mountain, and the celestial axis were all mentioned as possible sites for this heavenly gambling. The specific location was not evident, because Qilikutayiwit omitted this information from her rich but cryptic

narrative on the gambling gods. She explained to John Harrington, for example, only that: "There is a place in the world above" where the Sun, Eagle, Morning Star and Coyote compete against one another each night to determine the fate of humanity. Harrington did not ask her where this gambling occurred, so Qiliqutayiwit evidently offered him no further information.



For years, I was at a loss to explain this gap in Qiliqutayiwit's cosmology. Then in the early years of the twenty first century, I shifted my research focus from the Chumash to the Maringayam, Pomo, and Achumawi. While studying influences of neighboring cultural groups on Achumawi religion, I came across a reference in a Tolowa myth which caught my attention. The Tolowa of northern California believed that the celestial Spider[and Snake] stole fire from the Moon. Spider sent her thread all the way into the heavens to the Moon, where she gambled with the Moon deity.⁶⁰

This reference to the Tolowa gambling Moon deity caught my imagination. Qiliqutayiwit acknowledged that *Momoy*, the datura inspired Chumash moon goddess, served as the referee for the competing teams of male Chumash gods. Was it not possible, that this gambling took place on the moon?

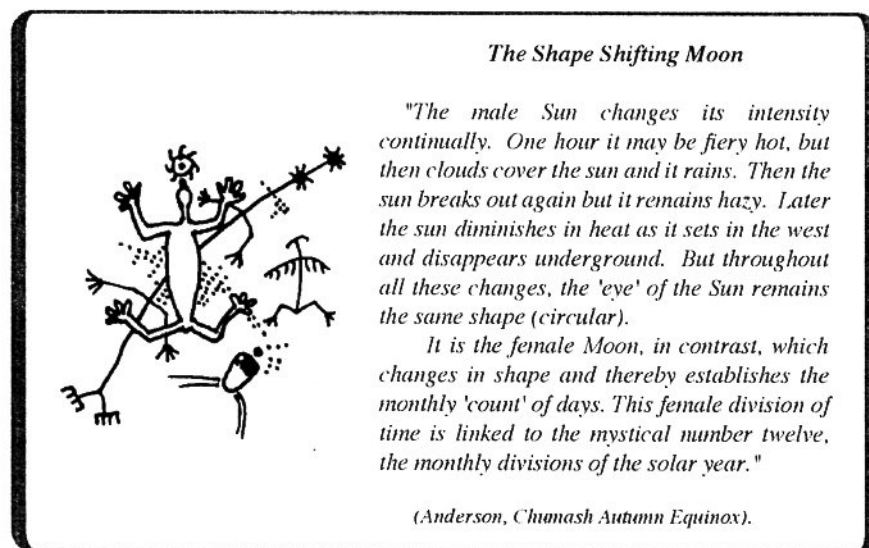
Moonlight

It is interesting to speculate why the Moon was considered a neutral referee between the Chumash's two divine gambling teams. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that the Moon rules over datura which (like other psychotropics) was used by humans to see like the gods. Another important factor is the Moon's periodic shape-shifting, which allows her to distribute her moonlight evenly throughout the month. As the full moon, for example, she floods the night sky with penetrating moonlight which illuminates the earth and overwhelms the star light. Humans often lose their celestial bearings because they can no longer see the North Star which 'centers' them in the cosmos. Chumash religious leaders use datura during such periods to view the presence of supernaturals who are active on the earth. Datura-inspired encounters with the

supernaturals can bring great benefit to humanity; but the Moon Flower's influence can also bring troubles. The psychically weak can be overwhelmed by the Moon's illumination, and occasionally they degenerate into lunatics.⁶¹ Witches transform into animals during such times, prowling the night and allying themselves with demons.

But the Moon is constantly shifting its shape, diminishing nightly in size until half a month later it becomes a dark moon. Only the faintest moonlight now shines from its diminished presence in the sky, and the stars of the higher heavens are brilliantly illuminated again. This is the time most conducive for humans to return their attention to the stars. The North Star once again provides guidance, but it seems so withdrawn and distant that for many observers it offers little solace from their troubles here on earth.⁶²

And so the Moon continues to change in a constant twenty-eight-day cycle, which persists without synchronization with the sun or planetary cycles. Thus at one summer solstice (a time when the Sun's physical power is at its peak and Coyote's team is in ascendancy) the Moon may be full. This would of course increase Coyote's team's influence. But the next year the Moon might be just a thin crescent of light in the sky at the time of the summer solstice. This would significantly decrease Coyote's team's power. And so it goes on forever, in a constantly changing and seemingly impartial cycle of moonlight.



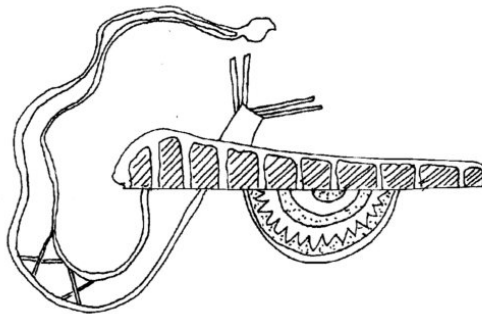


Concluding Remarks

Hopefully, these comments have helped readers to expand their understanding of Chumash cosmology and enriched their appreciation of Eagle, Coyote, Morning Star, the Moon, and the Sun whenever they appear in Chumash folk lore. And perhaps most importantly, they will realize that Chumash narratives can be deceptively complex and filled with serious issues of religious interest.

For decades, American publications have taken a less sympathetic view and dismissed Chumash cosmology as the product of reprehensible superstition. But the term superstition should not be necessarily invoked in a negative context.⁶³ It means 'a belief about the super', i.e. the heavens which are superior or above humans living on the earth.⁶⁴ Should we continue to dismiss native Californians as superstitious when 98% of all adult Americans have confirmed in public polls that they believe in one or more gods?⁶⁵ And on what grounds shall we discredit Chumash mythological teachings about the demons and Coyote when 65% of all Americans say they believe in the existence of one or more devils?⁶⁶ From such statistics we can see that the Gambling Gods of the Chumash are still alive in various guises in the human psyche of contemporary people.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Millenarian fervor that is sweeping through California as the year 2,000 approaches. Millenarianism has a Latin root, meaning 'one thousand', and it refers to various eschatological movements which have predicted the end of time at the close of a given thousand year period.⁶⁷ California's mass media is filled, for example, with articles about Christian sects proclaiming that a celestial ruler will appear in the



year 2,000 to usher in a utopian age. Such beliefs about a new space/time continuum are similar in many interesting respects to those which accompanied mass deaths among the Chumash in previous centuries. Junipero Serra, the so-called 'father' of the California missions, encouraged such eschatological convictions for he was a fanatic believer in the end of the world, which he considered an imminent event in the 1770's.⁶⁸ The Spanish holocaust in California was, to him, part of a final cleansing necessary to prepare the way for a paradisaical rebirth.

Many native theologians, despairing at the ruin all about them, came to the same erroneous conclusion that the California holocaust did indeed signal the end of a world cycle. They did not know, any more than the Spanish priests, that the antibodies in the blood of the colonials was the source of the Europeans' immunity from the great plagues.⁶⁹ To these devout Chumash, their way of life was being destroyed by supernatural events beyond their control. Year after year the Eagle and the Sun took away the souls of the dead in despairing numbers, and normal balance could no longer be restored in the House of Fate.

Traditionalist leaders argued that the beneficial forces symbolized by Coyote and Morning Star would eventually return balance to the Middle Earth, and they pleaded with their relatives to remain faithful to their ancestral beliefs. But for many, the only solution was conversion to the religion preached by the Catholic priests. Then after decades of faithful Chumash devotion to the Catholic religion, the Americans came and seized their land and demanded conversion to the spiritual teachings of a new set of priests. By this time, only a few native Californians took up their offers of conversion. The Americans imposed a harsh new socio-economic system, denying the native claims to their lands and their economic resources.



✓ Note. This brief text can only scratch the surface of a complex and fascinating subject - ancient California cosmology. Its value comes in proposing a new astronomical "mapping" of the Chumash gods.

There is much we still do not know about ancient Chumash religious beliefs, but it is important that we continue to explore alternative interpretations of their cosmology. If for no other reason, a respectful reconstruction is needed to help correct centuries of misinformation and selfrighteous condemnation of native California religions.

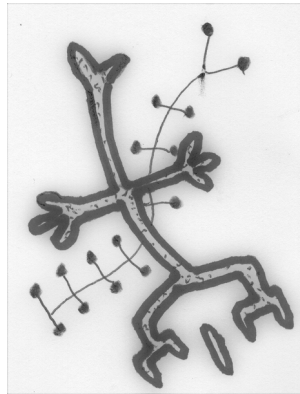
A credible interpretation will ultimately be based on a gestalt that is emotionally satisfying and astronomically sensible. It would appeal to one's sense of cyclically recurring order in the universe. And gambling would emerge from this discussion not as evil but as a necessary component of cosmic reality.

John Anderson, September 1997



The vexatious closing question is whether modern Californians live under the rule of Eagle and the Sun or their rivals Coyote and Morning Star? Newspaper and magazine articles give us a

clue in their numerous polls of state residents who express satisfaction with their economic prosperity which is higher than almost anywhere else in the world. They would say that Coyote and Morning Star obviously have blessed the state. For a large majority, visions from Momoy have been replaced by trickle-down economics guided by the morally neutral sciences. Others, and many of these are native peoples, say that Eagle and the Sun really rule. And they warn that overpopulation and environmental decline give ample evidence of hard times ahead. For myself, I can't stop thinking about Kitsepawit's musings about greed ruling the world, and I find myself slipping from time to time into troubled daydreams of celestial gamblers.



Appendix A

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The Supreme God of Ancient California

Early editions of *The Chumash House of Fate* featured an epilogue written in 1995. This commentary identified the Eagle as the Chumash supreme deity. Later research on Pomo, Achumawi, and Maringayam cosmology caused Anderson to downgrade the Eagle to the role of a guardian of the celestial portal leading to the realm of the supreme Creator. In this revised cosmology, the flute-playing Enememe emerged as the Chumash supreme deity.

Text of the 1995 Epilogue

"In 1978 Travis Hudson and Ernest Underhay published *Crystals In the Sky*, an admirably inquisitive study of Chumash religion. For two decades this text has been a primary influence on researchers studying native California theology. In many areas, Hudson and Underhay have therefore contributed significantly to our understanding of ancient California.

After reading *Crystals In the Sky*, I became convinced that students of traditional California culture could benefit from a re-examination of Hudson and Underhay's conclusions. Inspired by their ground breaking analysis, I wrote the first draft of *The Lizard's Tale*. A revised model of Chumash cosmology was outlined in this text, which proposed that the locations (and roles) of the primary Chumash divinities should be changed from Hudson's & Underhay's scheme. It seemed to me that the greatest error that Hudson and Underhay made was to assume that the Sun was the most important deity. "For the Chumash, as for many California Indian peoples," they wrote, "the sun was the supreme supernatural being."⁷⁰

I suggested, instead, that proclamations by American scholars persistently identifying a supreme native solar deity have been inaccurate and prejudicial. They have relied primarily on reports about native American religions generated by Christian invaders who were fanatically hostile to the natives. European imperialism was not gentle with the conquered peoples of the Americas, and all too often the Spanish, French, and American armies were allied with proselytizing Christian churches. As a consequence, few native peoples volunteered to tell the full truth about their religion to hostile priests, who had life and death powers over them and their families.

*It was the most sacred 'truths' about the gods
which were most carefully hidden from the conquerors.*

What this means for students of native California religion is that they cannot rely solely upon ethnographic materials in trying to understand the ancient theologies of the region. Such

written documents represent a random sampling of views, often rich with significant details but seldom complete or self-explanatory. The people interviewed may or may not have been the most knowledgeable about subtle theological teachings, and they may or may not have wanted the Christian interviewers to learn the truth [even if they possessed it].

It is long past time for American scholars to drop the 'primitive sun worshiper' stereotyping of native Americans and look more subtly at their religions. Chumash theologians, for example, were as sophisticated and intelligent as the Catholic priests who marched with the invading armies into California. They shared many common cosmological beliefs with the Spanish, but were treated with contempt by the European theologians who had been taught that interdenominational dialogue was a sin. The Catholic priests did not want to learn from the native intelligentsia but rather to destroy its influence. As a result of ongoing repression of religious freedom among defeated populations, ethnographic data captured only a fractured view of the full richness of native thought.⁷¹

One of my primary purposes in writing *The Chumash House Of Fate* was to summarize my research findings identifying the North Star (and not the Sun) as the supreme god of the Chumash people.⁷² This writing project evolved into an overview of the California gambling gods. A sequel entitled *Understanding Indian Gambling* is in rough draft stage and will be released in the future. In the meantime if you are interested in expanding your study of native theology, look closely at the folk tales, prayers, and religious songs associated with the Abyss, for they are a key to unraveling Chumash beliefs about luck and its relationship to the movements of the stars in the southern sky. By expanding our appreciation of the role of luck in human life, we bring ourselves closer to understanding the gambling of the gods.

John Anderson
November, 1995

Related books include:

Kuta Teachings

Reincarnation theology, (Anderson, 2002)

A Circle Within The Abyss

Chumash Metaphysics (Anderson, 1994).

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Also see *Enememe's Friends*.

Appendix B

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Indian Gambling Today

"Gambling remains an indispensable part of Native American social life. It is viewed as a positive expression of communal and even family life, much as a non-Indian family might join together today in an evening of 'gambling' by playing a board game of monopoly- Dad and son against Mom and daughter Or perhaps the parents will sit and talk , while the kids gamble against one another in a friendly computer game." ⁷³

"American diplomatic and military officials [during the California gold strikes of the 1840's and 1850's] made a practice of righteously condemning native gambling customs. It is a little known fact that the three American diplomats assigned to California gambled away the future of its native citizens on a dice throw. Borbour's gambling toss sent him south, to challenge the Yokut and Tejon governments." ⁷⁴

Revenues from gambling casinos located on Indian reservations have become a major source of economic reconstruction and financing of badly needed social programs. After generations of poverty, native peoples like the Chumash suddenly have found themselves able to support self-help programs, from medicine, to arts, to language preservation. But as revenues from gambling shoot up to unprecedented levels, non-native gambling interests attempted to gain control of this lucrative "business". Every justification imaginable has been thrown at the "problem" but the casinos have managed to stay open on most reservations.

Newspaper and television coverage has generally been sensational rather than educative, contributing to a weakening of public support for native gambling. Both media have highlighted the ongoing attacks by state government officials against Indian gambling, egged on by extreme Christian groups whose ideology precludes respect for religious tolerance. Many 'born again' Protestant church leaders have emboldened the anti-gambling crusade, publicly expressing intolerance for the religious freedoms of natives (or even whites who disagree with them). Catholic church leaders, on the other hand, have spoken out in support of gambling and dismissed charges that it is immoral.

The persistent hostility of state governments against tribal gambling has not been driven, however, by high-minded religious motivations. One would be hard pressed, for example, to establish a Protestant verses Catholic voter pattern to explain outbreaks of state sponsored raiding of native gambling facilities. Although some officials have been driven by religious righteousness, the majority have been motivated by a more immediate cause - greed. Every time a state attempts to cut into native gambling revenues, you can be assured that it hopes to benefit by increased gambling in state lotteries.

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Endnotes

- 1** For related reading see *Enememe's Friends* (Anderson, fourth edition 1997, page 10). Kitsepawit explains that his mentor S. P. Pamaskimait taught that the sound of the flute of Enememe, a wise Lizard, "brought submission to the power of the world." This apparently is a lesson in traditional Chumash ethics, advocating a balanced life based on realistic submission to the heavenly powers which control the world of man. These powers are focused, of course, in the Chumash House of Fate.
- 2** I am working on a book about the Chumash beliefs about the Moon and visionary enlightenment. This text will explore the interesting question as to whether demonic activity is regulated by the twenty eight day cycle of moonlight.

The Moon and its light was not associated with Black Magic. "Black magic is associated with the night, darkness, shadows, ill health and misfortune" (Anderson, *Astrology*, 41).

Moonlight is not evil (and thus not necessarily a source of black magic) but rather a neutral source of enlightenment if a human is spiritually developed enough to "see with divine eyes." Most Chumash people saw with divine eyes (encountered the gods) at least once in their lives. This occurred during their datura rites of adulthood, and many people were so intimidated by the experience that they sought renewed contact only occasionally during their lives. The responsibility for routine contact with the celestials was assigned to the specialists, the religious leaders the Europeans call Shaman.

A primary function of any hypothesis about the relationship between Moonlight and demon-activity should help us better understand behavior of Sirius, the brightest star of the southern sky. Sirius is the House of Sky Coyote, who the Chumash call *Snilemun*.

When Sirius rises above the earth's horizon, it is the last of the celestial lights to be overcome by the illumination of the Moon. During the nights approaching the full moon, star after star fades from the view of human observers until only Sirius is visible. Thus the Chumash, like many other ancient astronomers, presumably believed that the monthly lunar 'shapeshifting' served as a monthly confirmation that Sirius' power is stronger than any other star in the sky (for it is the last star to fade from view).
- 3** This concept of celestial souls is widespread throughout the native religions of the Americas. Ramsey describes the Kalapuya model, for example, in which: "All the people [of the first mythic age] changed into stars (and they are still the stars today)." (Coyote, 107).
- 4** This quote is taken from the introduction of *Chumash Astrology* (Anderson 1997; originally entitled *American Indian Astrology*).
- 5** (Overbye, *Lonely Hearts*, 117).
- 6** See the glossary citation under 'fate' in *Chumash Astrology* (Anderson 1997, 40). It reads: "The Chumash believed that certain months were ill-fated and others fortunate. But a person's destiny was not forever fixed by their birth date. They had free will and much of their destiny was determined by their ability to win protection from guardian spirits (supernatural guardians like Christian Angels)."

Note that the divine teams led by the North Star (Eagle) and Sirius (*Snilemun*) were only involved in the fate of life in the physical universe. *Enememe*, the supreme creator) was normally withdrawn from their efforts. But *Enememe* was so powerful that he could override the powers of the lesser gods. See Enememe for related information.

7 (Anderson, Astrology, 12).

8 (Anderson, Astrology, 26).

9 (Hudson/Underhay, Crystals, 149; "they made predictions about the future"). See Astronomy and Prophet in the glossary for further discussion

10 See Magic: White in the glossary for further discussion.

11 Kitsepawit described how at the death of a governor, the Chumash would select his replacement through ritual gambling. The new governor (*Kwaiyin*) was actually being chosen by the gods, as human politicians engaged in a game of *Pi* (Hudson, Eye, 21; Kitsepawit). *Pi* involves a guessing contest, in which small objects were hidden under walnut shells and the players had to guess their locations. Through assistance from his guardian spirits, the winning individual would know the locations of the hidden objects.

If a *Pi* game ended in a tie, they turned to the Hand Game (*Alewa*) to determine their new leader. Note that a similar procedure was used for selection of other officials, assigned each year to run various public ceremonies (Hudson, Eye, 55; Kitsepawit).

12 The theme of celestial gambling (in what I have called a "House of Fate") is very ancient. It is shared by other California people, like the Pomo who also recognize five dominant gods in their celestial gambling house. The Pomo Kingfisher is a "judge" and presumably a variant of the Chumash Moon, the Lizard probably is a variant of the Eagle, the Sun is the same in both systems, the Pomo Coyote is a variant of the Chumash *Snilemun*, and Frog Woman may be a variant of the Chumash Morning Star which brings the morning dew.

The Pomo incorporated the sacred number four into their post-conquest gambling customs, gambled four days and four nights in their hand game tournaments. Fasting and the use of a sweathouse were normal Pomo preparations for gambling (Barrett, Pomo, 386). Did the four day/night schedule symbolize a quarter of a year, i.e. a season of time? If this was the case, two such tournaments would be held each half year.

Closer to home, the Kitanemuk on the northern Chumash border had a pantheon featuring *Cukit* as Coyote, and *Atmeat* as the sun. The other three gods were *Pamashyit*, *Picureyt*, and *Ukat*. The Tongva people of the Los Angeles Basin used the names *Chukit*, *Pichurut*, and *Ukat*.

13 (Anderson, Circle, 6).

14 *Iwihinmu* was renamed Pine Mountain by the Americans. It is located just west of Frazer Park and is ritually associated with nearby *Liyikshup* which means 'the center of the earth'.

The Chumash hold a solstice encampment on *Iwihinmu* each summer. Visitors are welcome (see the Kern County Chumash web page for more info.).

15 Blackburn assumed a "dynamic equilibrium" that should normally prevail in the universe (December, 72). The celestial gambling in what I call the Chumash House of Fate is an ongoing contest between what Blackburn described as "those forces sympathetic to man and those antithetical to him" (72). This is actually misleading, for the forces led by Eagle are sympathetic to the psychic well being of man, while the forces led by the celestial Coyote (*Snilemun*) are concerned with the physical well-being of man [humanity]. See *Chumash Cosmology* (Anderson) for related commentary.

16 The number 'six' in this ritual name presumably refers to six months, i.e. the last half of the year.

17 Hudson and Underhay described this five year calendar system as it worked at *Muwu*, the mainland capital of the Ventura area and island Chumash (during the Spanish and Mexican colonial periods). All the town mayors and the governor (the *Kwaiyin*) attended a five year conference "for the purpose of settling civil, legal, or other disputes." This conference was "possibly" used as the ceremonial time for coordinating the Chumash solar and lunar calendars (Hudson, Crystals, 31).

The Chumash used this holiday for cleansing (including paying debts), and it was undoubtedly celebrated by the common people with a grand festival.

18 At least some of the Chumash provincial governments were organized into Councils of Twenty-One. These governments were responsible for helping maintain a balance in the cosmos, through proper rule over the affairs of humans. They were careful astronomers, constantly watching the heavenly bodies so as to coordinate public ceremonies with the activities of the gods. Thus they sought to avoid social disaster, which literally means 'to move against the stars', i.e. to be out of sync with the heavens. A wise ruler would use his knowledge of the celestial bodies to guide his people, so they were properly prepared to respond to upcoming events.

The box on page twelve describes the Count of Six ceremony at the time of the winter solstice. Note that a similar Count of Six ceremony almost certainly took place at the summer solstice. Each of these ceremonies was six months apart, and they were a time for assessing the state of the nation, which was directly the result of divine gambling by the gods in the House of Fate. See Gambling and House of Fate.

19 The *'Alsapiyit* was the Chumash name for the official "who gave notice of good or bad years and requested food accordingly" (Hudson, Crystals, 150).

20 "The *Ma'awsiq 'Ita'sup* are Binding Snakes of the Earth." They are two giant serpents which "hold the world up from below" (Anderson, Within the Abyss, 30).

21 Qiliqutayiwit explained to ethnographer John Harrington that Coyote [presumably her reference is to *Snilemun*, the ruler of the southern stars] could lure a snake from six feet under the ground. This is an interesting choice of words, possibly suggesting that Coyote is associated mythologically with the 'unbinding' of the stars of the southern sky. Perhaps the six feet represent six months, and thus the time of a solstice which takes place each six months. Coyote's powers are at a peak at the summer solstice, when the unbound stars of the southern sky were at the peak of their powers. See chapter three for further discussion.

22 The reader should keep in mind that the European Houses of Fate, such as that of Greek theology, were also located vaguely (somewhere in the heavens).

23 Qiliqutayiwit stated that the Chumash name for "the world above" (the Upper World, the heavens) is *Alapayasup* (Blackburn, December, 91; it is also called *'lapay* and *Misupasup*). Qiliqutayiwit also reported that the gambling house of the gods is located in this realm ("the world above", 91), but she does not say exactly where it could be found (except that it was not in the House of the Sun).

24 Lacking written confirmation from interviews with native theologians, American scholars studying Chumash culture are faced the difficult task of speculating about this celestial gambling house's location. One solution of the puzzle would be, for example, to propose that the gambling house of the gods is located at the zenith. A gateway into the heavens is located at this celestial site, and it would be ideally suited as a middle gathering place for the celestial deities who rule the fate of life on the surface of the earth..

But the zenith as a candidate for the House of Fate has its drawbacks, because the "house" probably involved the whole sky. The zenith may instead symbolize the middle of the gambling

"house", perhaps where the sticks used in keeping score are placed during the contesting of the gods. At this point, we simply don't know a complete answer.

25 Qiliqutayiwit described Sky Coyote as "our father" (Blackburn, December, 92). This male identity compares to the Pomo who describe Foolish Coyote as a lazy old man (Clark/Williams, 54).

26 (Grant, Coastal, 513).

27 The Yokut equivalent to *Snilemun* was a celestial Coyote, whom the Yokut called *Kiyu* (Latta, 49 Handbook). *Kiyu* is almost certainly not a Yokut name, but a variant of the imported Mexican name for a coyote.

The Yokut Sky Coyote was the leading rival of *Tihpiknits*, a solar deity similar to the Chumash Sun. *Kiyu* and *Tihpiknits* challenged one another and even got into physical fights in which Coyote tried to bite *Tihpiknits* and pull out his feathers. (240). Note that this story implies that the Yokut Sun had feathers, i.e. was like a bird in its ability to move in the sky.

The Yokut Sky Coyote was similar to the neighboring Chumash *Snilemun* (Sky Coyote) deity who ruled the southern sky. *Snilemun* is associated with the constellation *Mech*, which is similar in form with the Little and Big Dipper. The tip of *Snilemun's* tail is Sirius, the brightest star in the heavens.

28 "Sirius is especially interesting, for it is a member of the Chumash constellation called *Xuxaw*, the southern Coyote. As the brightest star in the heavens, Sirius dominates the southern sky whenever it is visible, and it apparently serves as a symbol of material pleasure and lust. As with the Kalispel and Yakima Transformer Coyote, the Chumash Sky Coyote brings material prosperity to humanity in good times. His benevolence is consistent with narratives which describe Coyote's definitive interest in pleasures such as food and sex" (Anderson, Fox Jumps, 23).

29 The Eagle and Coyote are the rulers of the stars of the northern and southern areas of the heavens respectively. Only the Eagle, ruler of the northern sky, occupies an established residence (the unmoving North Star). In this model Eagle represents the interests of social elites, while Coyote represents the interests of the common people.

30 Nutu described how Coyote "transformed" objects in the world, such as a house, through his powers as a "wizard" (December, 195: note how Nutu uses the term transformed three times in a segment on Coyote, to emphasize his role as a transformer. The Chumash (transformer) Coyote and his gambling ally Morning Star were probably associated in Chumash folk tales with the Younger Brother of regional myth, who championed material body.

31 See *The Fox Jumps* (Anderson) for a discussion of the identification of *Snilemun*, a giant Chumash constellation in the form of a coyote (Anderson, 26).

In these pages, I examine the numerous reasons why American ethno-astronomers routinely fail to recognize Coyote's duality, thereby locating the celestial Coyote in a single heavenly site. I propose instead, that American astronomers recognize two Coyote constellations: Old Coyote and Young Coyote.

Sirius is the brightest star in the sky, called the Dog Star by the Romans. This star is "probably" the southern Coyote of Chumash astronomy (Anderson, Fox Jumps, 28). It is part of a large constellation called *Mech* by the Chumash. If this celestial location is correct, then Sirius (as *Snilemun*) would have been favorable to human material well-being.

32 In this narrative by L. Y. Nutu, Coyote came close to burning the whole earth when he tried to take the role of the Sun in the sky (Blackburn, December, 194). This drama apparently served as a metaphor for drought, thus explaining times when the solar deity failed to provide beneficial

summer heat. It is an excellent example of the disciplinary (uncle) personality of the Chumash Sun, in comparison to the greedy and irresponsible personality of Coyote.

The Pomo, who live in northern California, share numerous folk lore tradition with the Chumash. Their storytellers preserved numerous folk tales, for example, in which Coyote (the Pomo ruling deity of Fire) sets fire to the whole earth. These catastrophic tales play an important role in Pomo mythology. Clearly Coyote is associated with summer heat, drought, and fire. Was the star Sirius the Pomo celestial House of Coyote?

33 Blackburn identified the Morning Star as "presumably male" (December, 37). This is consistent with the masculine gender of the other three gambling deities. But not all celestial deities are male, as is clearly demonstrated by grandmother Moon (named *Momoy*) and the two daughters of the Sun (who may be aspects of the Morning and Evening Star persona of Venus).

34 (Blackburn, December, 253; Kitsepawit). A touchstone is a European concept, meaning a test for determining genuineness or value. Thus Kitsepawit seems to be emphasizing in his statement that we can test a person's morals through temptation (personal and social greed).

35 *Aqutipey* means 'to get poisoned with' (Tsmuwich, 4). Its root is *Tipey*, meaning 'to be excessive'. Sekpeweyol provides an example of this principal in his narrative about Datura. *Momoy* (who is a representative of datura) warns her grandson against taking too much datura drink because excessive intake would turn him into a *Nunasis* demon (Blackburn, December, 135).

36 Blackburn's analysis of Chumash culture, presented in the early chapters of the 1975 folk tale collection called *December's Child*, has significantly influenced students of Chumash philosophy for two decades. Unfortunately, Blackburn's analysis relies upon a number of what he calls "assumptions" which are apparently mistaken.

In chapter three, for example, Blackburn concluded that Chumash intellectuals considered the universe "to be both dangerous and unpredictable" (December, 69; compare this statement to his related assumption that humans live in a "mostly hostile universe", 75). What Blackburn should have concluded, instead, is that the Chumash considered the forces in the universe unsympathetic to the physical needs of humans to be unpredictable. These forces are mostly influenced by the North Star (Eagle) and the Sun.

To ignore the predictability of the stars in the northern sky (the highest levels of the Upper world) is to fundamentally misconstrue the Chumash conception of the universe. Moreover, disregard of the order imposed on the stars of the northern sky by the pole star led Blackburn into a series of mistaken assumptions about Chumash ethics (including fundamentally important beliefs about the stars, the soul's journey on the Path of the Dead, and reincarnation). In *A Circle Within the Abyss*, I commented on Hudson and Underhay's pioneering 1970's study of Chumash cosmology called *Crystals In The Sky*. "This book made a remarkable contribution to Chumash studies, breaking new ground in ethno-astronomy. The authors took on a formidable task, and their work inspired others to propose refinements of their models." My own research focused in the 1980's on reassessing the relatively low value they attributed to the southern stars. I came to the conclusion that this area of the heavens was just as important as the north. In fact, it embodied the power of ritual opposition to the north, thus completing the manifestation of dualism in the physical realm.

Dualism is a fundamental concept affecting all aspects of Chumash speculation about the cosmos. This is evident in the values the Chumash associate with the world directions. Kitsepawit makes this very clear in his explanation that the northern sky was important because it was 'fixed' (by the world axis), while the south was unbounded.

The north was the male force maintaining order, and the southern sky was the female force relatively free of restrictions, and thus capable of greater creativity, for both good and evil. The

female was more sympathetic to the physical needs of living things, while the male was more sympathetic to order, proper behavior, maturation of the spirit. Native ceremonies honored this cosmological order by having male dancers go to the north side of a dance arena while the women stood in the south. The women represented the stars in this disordered part of the heavens, where celestial bodies were continuously in contact with the middle and lower worlds as they dropped below the earth's horizon." (Anderson, *A Circle*, 15).

37 For further discussion see *Abyss* in the glossary and see *A Circle Within The Abyss* (Anderson, third edition 1997).

In early editions of *The Chumash House of Fate* (Anderson) the Abyss was located in the southern skies and assigned responsibility for the chaos of the stars in this region of the heavens. But research leading to the release of *Chumash Cosmology* (Anderson, third edition 2008) led to the realization that Chumash cosmologists conceived the *Alampauwauhani* (Abyss) as "the awesome multiplicity of being having its source in a primordial real of potentiality" (Chumash Cosmology, 69). the Abyss was not located in the southern sky, for it had no physical reality.

38 Kitsepawit taught that greed ruled the Middle World where humans lived. For a related ethical teaching, see the Chumash folk tale called "Gain Is All" (Blackburn, December, 253).

39 (Anderson, *Fast Thinker*, 26).

40 Qiliqutayiwit described *Slo'w* as "the great eagle that knows what is to be" (Blackburn, December, 95).

The celestial Eagle grips the sky with its mighty claws and won't let go. As a result, all of the northernmost stars rotate around its nest (North Star) in perfect and predictable order. This order contrasts to the stars of the southern sky, which do not have a pole (pivot) star and routinely drop down below the earth's horizon.

41 The American dollar bill honors the symbol of the Eagle by depicting it grasping arrows (warfare) in one claw and a shaft of wheat (food, peace) in the other. To the left of the Eagle, the dollar features a pyramid with a radiating eye, presumably the eye of the high god (the Eagle in Chumash mythology), at its apex. How remarkably similar this contemporary American monetary symbolism is to that of the ancient Chumash.

42 (Blackburn, December, 91; Qiliqutayiwit).

43 Qiliqutayiwit describes the Eagle as like a governor to the Chumash. The term she uses is *Wot*, which is the highest official in many Chumash governments. Eagle is the celestial *Wot* and thus serves as "he who commands" (Blackburn, December, 92).

44 Like the supreme creator, whose realm he guards, the Chumash Eagle is a withdrawn deity who is relatively indifferent to the physical needs of humanity. He may be attended to by *Xolxol*, or Condor (Samala, 450; speculatively identified with the planet Mars).

The Pomo *Tsikolkol* deity may also be associated with Mars but this is unlikely. It does have a name sounding similar to the Chumash *Xolxol*. But Barrett described this deity as so distant that "his entire existence appears to be of negative importance... He never concerns himself with the activities of the human world"(Pomo, 20). This is an unlikely attribute of Mars whose influence on human affairs was predominately one of death.

What distinguishes the Chumash *Xolxol* and the Pomo *Tsikolkol* from their Eagle deities is their habits of traveling widely, while the Eagle sits in one place. Barrett reports for example that the *Tsikolkol* "lives without any fixed abode"(20). This statement clearly distinguishes it from the Chumash Eagle who never moves from his celestial abode.

45 (Blackburn, December, 92; Qiliqutayiwit)

46 In Chumash folk tales, Falcon is typically a second-level administrator and probably is a representative of the Sun. The Chumash "chief" is clearly the Eagle (presumably the North Star).

47 Christian scholars often succumbed to the idea that the frequency of native American prayers dedicated to the solar deity warranted their being condemned as "primitive sun worshipers." Over the last five hundred years, this is surely one of the most persistent and grievous errors of Christian writings about native religions. See footnote 48 for further commentary on this topic.

48 In Native American theology, the Sun is not the highest deity or the ultimate ruler of the cosmos. Instead of placing it in the supreme heavens, native theologians typically identified the Sun as the most important deity impacting human society (i.e. events on the middle world).

Christian scholars have persistently misrepresented the role of the solar deity as the most influential god in Native American cosmology. Barrett, for example, fell into this unfortunate error in his generally admirable writings on the Pomo culture. Sun-man, he concludes "is perhaps the most important of all supernatural beings. He is the one who regulates everything and who assigns the various other supernatural beings to their proper places" (Pomo, footnote, page 21). Barrett is almost certainly mistaken in this claim, since the Pomo deity residing in the North Star (protected by the Celestial Eagle, as guardian of the North Star) is the one who regulates the Pomo cosmos. The Sun's realm of influence is in the lowest levels of the sky and the middle earth.

49 (Latta, Handbook, 247). Compare this Yokut *Tihpiknits* to the Pomo *Gilak* who is described by some Pomo as "the keeper of the Sun" (Barrett, Pomo, 513). And both the *Tihpiknits* and the *Gilaks* compare closely to the Mohave Meteor-man, who is also a keeper of the Sun (see Anderson, *A Chumash Christmas: Virgin Birth*, appendix B, page 28).

50 Saint Francis of Assisi described the solar body as Brother Sun in his Cantic of the Sun.

51 Qiliqutayiwit describes the Sun as like an uncle to the Chumash (Blackburn, December, 92). Such kinship terminology is not rigid in Chumash thinking, but is only used to suggest a relationship. Kitsepawit states elsewhere, for example, that all the Chumash considered themselves "sons of *Kakunupmawa*." This implies a father (not uncle) relationship since *Kakunupmawa* is a ritual name for the newborn sun at the winter solstice. And in another passage Kitsepawit explicitly stated that *Kakunupmawa* was the "father of nature."

What is evident from these statements is that the Chumash did not characterize the solar deity as a malignant force, but considered it a close kin in spite of its persistent appearances in narratives as a cannibal, a devourer of the bodies of human dead. The Sun assisted the human soul because it helped rid reincarnating souls of physical body.

52 (Qiliqutayiwit, December, 92).

53 (Qiliqutayiwit, December, 92).

54 The Bella Coola Sun of the Pacific Northwest, for example, was described by Davis/Saunders as a "creature." The sun is "a kind of monster" who took away (cleansed) the bodies of the dead. Perhaps, instead, he was a beneficial supernatural and a variant of the Chumash and Pomo Sun deity, who cleansed the world of dead bodies. *Snx* means 'sun' in Bella Coola (Bella Coola, 303).

55 The four Pomo Sun-Executioners were servants of the solar deity, sent to kill humans with their "invisible arrows" (Barrett, Pomo, 539) They were called the *Da-tcma* (537; *Tcma* 'war' and *Tcma-ke* means 'a war dance', 539; and *Da* means 'Sun').

56 (Hudson/Underhay, Crystals; see all of chapter five for a particularly provocative discussion on the Chumash solar deity).

In *Kuta Teachings* (Anderson), the Chumash sun is depicted as a psychopomp. It gathers up the souls of newly dead humans and leads them downward into the bowls of Mother Earth. In the third book of the *Kuta* series, called *Mishup* [unpublished to date] it is proposed that human

souls are purged of most of their remaining physical bodies and worldly desires in the lower world. Hence, they ascend from the lower world with the Morning Star, through the portal of the rising sun, into the heavens (Kuta Teachings, second edition, 2002). Thus the Sun plays a vital role in Chumash reincarnation theory, while being vitally linked to both the west and east, with the three elements Fire, Water, and Earth.

57 (Blackburn, December, 96; Kitsepawit).

58 A "ray" is a line of light, appearing to come from a single light source. The Latin root of Ray is *Radus*, meaning 'any straight line extending from a fixed point'.

For many native Americans, the rays of the sun are symbolically depicted as eyelashes. For the Bella Coola, for example, the rays of the sun were called the Eyelashes of the Sun (Davis/Sanches, Bella Coola, 122).

59 Chumash officials called the "Rays of the Sun" were probably ministers assigned to facilitate pragmatic affairs of state such as trade, fishing, agriculture, trail maintenance, and war taxes. In other words, they were responsible for everything

60 (Judson, Myth, 68; in this text, Judson called the supernaturals gambling on the moon "Moon Indians").

61 The Pomo, who lived in northern California far north of the Chumash, also linked Coyote and the 'crazed' influence of the Moon. They called the celestial Coyote *Diwi Tcakale*, which means 'the Coyote who serves as a powerful governor'. *Dw* means 'Coyote' (but not insignificantly, it is also used to describe crazy people; Barrett, Pomo, 507). Was Coyote given this top official title because he was the leader of one side of the Pomo celestial gambling game? Was this the side favorable to humanity as in the Chumash model, i.e. full of greed and irrational impulses?

62 It is the Sun (*Sol*) which gives solace with its comforting heat. The North Star remains distant and without solace to the average person. (but note that it does provide inspiration to the religiously trained). Eliade provides many interesting Asian examples of this pattern, whereby the celestial Eagle helps shamans to gain enlightenment. The Buryat and Yakut, for example, believed that the high gods sent the Eagle to create the first human shaman. The Buryat and Yakut Eagle was known as the Creator of Light, presumably referring to the first light of the newly created stars [or possibly the light of the sun].

63 Compare Blackburn's discussions of the supernatural in his analysis of Chumash cosmology. He uses the phrase "super-human nature" to elaborate on his ideas.

64 *Superstition* is a Latin term meaning 'to stand above', with the specific meaning of "standing still over" (Webster, New World, 1430). Clearly only the North Star of all the celestials stands still over the visible cosmos. Thus any astronomical nomenclature incorporating such terminology is almost certainly linked to the North Star (and its rule over the universe).

65 Ninety-eight percent of Americans believe in the existence of one or more gods according to a 1971 Gallup poll. In comparison, only 60% of Swedes and 73% of Norwegians hold similar beliefs (Rosten, Religions, 337).

66 A 1974 Harris poll of Americans age 28 or older confirmed that 53% believed in the devil, while another 12% responded that they might answer affirmatively to this question, depending on how the devil is defined. Together, they constituted 65% of respondents (Rosten, Religions, 343).

67 (Smith, Dictionary, 718).

68 *Eschatology* has Greek roots meaning 'furthest out' and has theological associations with death.

69 This quote is taken from chapter one of my unpublished book entitled *Junipero Serra and Iwihinmu Mountain*.

70 (Hudson/Underhay, Crystals, 51). For evidence of the Sun's supreme role ("a supreme vivifying male force") in Chumash theology, they cite F. L. Kitsepawit folk tales, listed in narratives eight and nine of Blackburn's *December's Child*).

71 Rev. Scott McCarthy, Pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Carmel Valley has been in correspondence with me about my writings and provided commentary on an early draft of *The House of Fate*. He pointed out correctly that my text is constantly portraying the 17th century missionary efforts of the Catholic Church in a negative light. He gently reminded me that: "The contemporary Catholic Church is not part of that 17th. century Spanish enterprise. We (both people and clergy) think and act very differently and are a multi-cultural church in California and the rest of North America." Certainly through his own generosity of spirit, Rev. McCarthy exemplifies this contemporary Catholicism.

Rev. McCarthy also provided me with thoughtful commentary on my characterization in chapter one of Christian theology. Rather than address these issues in this short text, I will take them up in a separate book called *Chumash Theology: The Naxalamuw* (in rough draft, to be published at a later date).

72 After 1995, I came to the conclusion that the celestial axis [North Star] was a portal leading to the abode of the Chumash supreme deity named *Enememe*. Eagle was the highest deity of the Chumash physical cosmos, but not their supreme creator.

In this sense, both Eagle and *Enememe* are similar to the high gods of Middle Eastern cosmologies which influenced early Christian and Muslim theology (though this subject was not the focus of this text).

73 This quote is taken from the opening passages of chapter one of my current draft of *Understanding Indian Gambling* (Anderson, to be released; this text focuses on Chumash gambling lore). I cite it here to emphasize the routine appearance of gambling in normal middle class American family life. Too often, righteous attacks on native American gambling fail to acknowledge the fundamental importance of gambling concepts in understanding all human activities. (A noted exception would be die-hard fatalists, but they are so few in number that they have little impact on contemporary American culture).

74 (Anderson, *The Yokut Shield*, 16).

Glossary

References citing Tsmuwich are from the Barbareno Chumash dictionary (Mary Yee). References citing Samala are from the Samala Chumash Dictionary (published by the Santa Ynez Reservation).

ABYSS A realm of infinite potentiality existing before the realm of Ideas and the physical universe was created.

Terms: Chumash cosmologists called the Abyss *Alampauwauhani* (Chumash Cosmology, Anderson, 69).

■ The Abyss is the key to understanding the Chumash concept of luck. In related writings, the author presents arguments that luck (chaos) rules human life because of entropy, and therefore those who do not actively resist Coyote (the ruler of the Abyss) come to ruin, since the middle and lower worlds are ruled by greed.

■ Earlier editions of *The House of Fate* (Anderson) mistakenly identified the Abyss as the chaotic realm of the southern sky ruled by *Snilemun* (Sirius). But research behind *Chumash Cosmology* (Anderson, third edition, 2008) led to the realization that the Abyss was “the awesome multiplicity of being having its source in a primordial realm of potentiality” (69; glossary). It was not located in the southern sky, for it had no physical reality. *Snilemun* (Sirius) was the ruler of the southern heavens.

ALEWA The Chumash name for the celestial gambling game played daily by the gods, the outcome of which determined the fate of humanity living below. Compare Gambling, Dice, House of Fate, Luck: Good.

Terms: *Alewa* is the Chumash name for the celestial contest (Hudson/Underhay, Crystals, 33). '*Aliws* is a Samala variant of *Alewa* meaning 'to play a game,' and also 'to spin a top [with the possible connotation of fate being determined by the actions of the spinning heavens]. The Spanish priests called the stick game *Peon* (Hudson/Underhay, 32); *Peon* refers to the pawns used in European chess games, and is an adopted term for the sticks used in the *Alewa* game.

The Pomo name for the game is *Duwega* (Barrett, Pomo, 512). The Kitanemuk call this game *Atipwi* (Hudson/Underhay, Crystals, 133; Harrington).

■ *Alewa* is a guessing game, often referred to as the Hand Game (or Stick Game, or Grass Game).

ASTRONOMY The Chumash used astronomical observations to determine the supernatural influences affecting a particular gambling situation. They also believed in an astrological system in which the heavenly bodies influenced (but did not completely determine) one's fate. See Prophet for further discussion.

Discussion of terms: Hudson and Underhay described the Chumash *Alchuklash* official as "an astrologer and astronomer" (Crystals, 149); *Alsuqlash* is a variant (Blackburn, December, 344). Both terms presumably do not mean 'astronomer'. They may refer instead to either a magician as in Kitsepawit's term *Alaklapsh*, meaning 'an enchanter' (Blackburn, December, 237) or possibly to 'one who gives names to new born children', based on the root term *Suqlaw*, meaning "to give birth" (Astrology, Anderson, 40).

ATISHWIN See Power.

BAD See Luck: bad.

BET To place a wager, typically on the assumption that one can correctly determine future reality (the outcome of a pending event). See Luck: Good, Fate and House of Fate for related discussion.

CHUMASH A southern California peoples who many linguists earlier in this century classified as Hokan speakers (Mithun, however, considers Chumashan to be a language isolate). Prior to European intrusion they lived along the coast from Malibu, north through Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and northern counties.

COYOTE: EARTH The Chumash called the coyotes of the earth by the name 'Ashk'a (Tsmuwich, 4). Qilikutayiwit distinguished the coyote of the earth ("this world") from *Snilemun*, the Coyote of the sky (December's Child, 91). Hudson and Underhay cite a Chumash "supernatural being" called *Aska'* and tentatively identify him with the star Alderbaran (Crystals, 50; they list *Huhaw* as a variant, 151). See Snilemun, Coyote: of the Sky and Coyote: Trickster for further discussion.

COYOTE: SKY See Snilemun.

COYOTE: TRICKSTER Trickster Coyote is a greedy character, with dual folk lore associations with the sky and earth. Qilikutayiwit describes him as "a bad customer" (Blackburn, December, 228) who brings "unfortunate" influence (227).

Terms: One of the various Chumash names for the (folk lore) Coyote who visits the earth is *Sipisiwas* meaning one who possesses great prophetic powers.

■ See *Sipisiwas* in *Enememe's Friends* (Anderson 1990) for further discussion. Compare Coyote: of the Sky for further discussion; also compare Satan and Coyote: of the Earth.

CRYSTALS Because of their ability to alter light, to sparkle like the stars, crystals were revered by the Chumash.

Terms: *Xiliw* means 'crystal' (Tsmuwich, 41).

■ They were also used for meditation and prophecy. Thus the Chumash House of the Sun was made of crystals (Hudson/Underhay, Crystal, 52).

DEITY: DEVOURING Many of the deities of the heavens threaten to devour human intruders into the celestial realm.

■ The Sky Eagle is one such deity who "ate people" (Blackburn, December, 92; Qilikutayiwit). This devouring is almost certainly a reference to the absorption of a human soul that dared to ascend too close to the awesome presence of the Eagle [so that his soul merged with that highest deity?].

In contrast the Sun "ate people" (Blackburn, December, 92; Qilikutayiwit) in a physical sense. When a human or animal died on the earth, the heat of the sun contributed to its rapid decay. The Sun had this power because he was the ruler of the lower heavens as opposed to the Eagle [who was the ruler of the highest heaven, i.e. the north star. and its encircling stars].

DUALISM Chumash philosophy assumes a basic dualism in all of existence. Thus the celestial *Alewa* game is divided into two opposing sides. The Eagle (north) and Coyote: of the Sky (south) are the leaders of these divine teams. Compare Magic: black and Magic: white.

Terms: The Chumash suffix *-tun*, means 'two' or 'to split in two'; as in *Axtun* which means 'to happen twice' (Tsmuwich, 5; thus *Axitunus*, meaning 'to be equal to').

HEARTH The earth was the Chumash deity popularly called Mother Earth.

Terms: *Shup* means 'earth' (Tsmuwich, 30; it also means 'year' and is the name of "a God"). *Shup* is the deity popularly known as Mother Earth.

Xuxaw is a Chumash name of the Coyote of the earth. *Xuxa'w* means 'coyote' (Samala, 452; thus *Suxuxaw* means 'to do like Coyote'; also means 'to pretend to be dead').

EAST See Morning Star for further discussion.

EAGLE The Eagle was on the side of the Sun in the Chumash House of Fate. Eagle's celestial role was a dominant one, for he was very patient, always thinking, and never moved.

Terms: *Slo'w* is the Chumash name for the celestial eagle (Blackburn, December, 92;

Qiliqutayiwit). The celestial Eagle was never referred to as an uncle or grandfather, but only as a Wot, which is the Chumash name for their highest governing official (Tsmuwich, 39).

- Eagle was not referred to sympathetically as a relative by the Chumash, but was always approached formally as a celestial ruler (a Wot).

- In chapter four in this text, Anderson proposed that the Eagle is almost certainly the North Star in Chumash astronomy. If this astronomical association is correct, then Eagle's ritual direction is the north. Compare *Siwot* for a celestial home of the Wot (ruler of heaven).

ELEMENT Qiliqutayiwit identified three "sacred bodies" which were earth, air, and water (December, 9). Blackburn uses the term "element" to describe them (December, 96).

- Qiliqutayiwit's three 'sacred bodies' presumably are associated with life on the surface of the earth and in the underworld.

- Fire is also described "a body" in Chumash cosmology, and thus may be a fourth body which is treated differently because it is associated with the sky [not the earth].

ENEMEME The Chumash supreme creator who is withdrawn into the mysterious uppermost realm.

Terms: Harrington's notes on Tata Xuse's folk tale referred to *Enememe* as "Lizard" and "he of the flute" (December, 156). See *Enememe's Friends* (Anderson) for related commentary.

Discussion of terms: 'Ene'me'me is the Samala name for a "very small" lizard species (115).

- Enememe is not normally concerned with the behavior of the lesser gods who are active in regulating life on the surface of the earth.

EVIL See Luck: bad and Magic: black for discussion.

EVENING STAR This aspect of the planet Venus is not mentioned by Chumash cosmologists as one of the four "gambling gods."

- The Evening Star [*Xutash*] is one of the daughters of the Sun, with the Morning Star [Fox] being the other daughter.

FATALISM A philosophical system which asserts that all human activities are predetermined by (one or more) supernatural powers. Human free will, under this system of thought, is impossible. See Fate and House of Fate for further discussion.

FATE The Chumash believed that humans had free will, and they did not believe in determinism as it is understood by some European sects of Christianity. Compare House of Fate, Fatalism, Prophet and Alewa.

Terms: Neither the Tsmuwich nor Samala dictionaries list *Fate*, *Destiny* or *Fortune*. Both dictionaries do translate terms involving luck, fortune

- Chumash cosmology is closer to that of the pre-Christian Europeans, who believed in a celestial House of Fate, similar to the Greek house of the gods ruled by Zeus.

- In *Chumash Cosmology* (Anderson) it is hypothesized that humans have free will. In *Chumash Astrology* (Anderson) it is proposed that "a person's destiny was not forever fixed by their birth date" (glossary term *Fate*).

FATHER DEITY See Coyote: Sky. Compare Sun for the uncle deity and Moon for the grandmother deity.

FREE WILL Qiliqutayiwit taught that humans have free will (Hudson, Breath, 116).

GAMBLING The Chumash culture, like that of other western tribes, celebrated gambling.

- The leading gods (the "gambling' gods") in the Chumash celestial House of Fate, challenged one another nightly in the hand game (which is also often called the stick game).

GAMES The Chumash believed that games were not wholly based on chance, but on a player's ability to determine (know) future reality.

- Many games of chance involve phenomena which are opposite to the motions of the stars in the northern sky (which revolve predictably around the north star). They are associated with the chaos of the southern stars. Note that neither the Tsmuwich nor Samala dictionaries list *Chance* or *Predict*.

GOOD See Luck: good.

GRANDMOTHER DEITY See Moon.

GRASS GAME See Hand Game.

GUARDIAN SPIRIT Like Christian angels (stars), Chumash guardian spirits (stars) looked after the welfare of humans.

Terms: *'Ichku* means 'a bodyguard' (Tsmuwich, 9; *'Ichkuch* is a related term meaning 'to defend').

Qilik means 'to guard' (Tsmuwich, 24, 'to watch over'). *Qilik* (Samala, 290, 'to take care of').

■ These supernaturals were called upon to guard a person's fate.

■ Charms were used by both Christians and Chumash, to influence their guardian spirits.

HAND GAME Assigned name in this text for the popular gambling game, played by Native Americans throughout the west. See Alewa for further discussion.

HOUSE OF FATE The author's assigned name for the celestial 'house' where the gods gathered nightly, to contest with one another and thereby determine the fate of humans in the middle world. See Fate and Free Will for related discussion.

Terms: *The 'house' of Fate is a phrase having the same connotation as the Chumash House of the Sun and the Christian House of God. See Alewa for the Chumash name for the gambling game played by the gods, in this celestial house.*

IWIHINMU MOUNTAIN The Chumash mountain of the center, a place of mystery. Compare Wasna and Toshololo mountains.

Terms: *Iwihinmu* is now called Pine mountain by the Americans, and is located northwest of Los Angeles near Frazier Park.

LUCK: BAD Bad luck is caused by an inability to win assistance from the supernatural realm in achieving ones goals. One cause of this inability is human greed. See Abyss for related discussion.

LUCK: GOOD Good luck is caused by acquisition of power. Compare Power, Luck: Bad, Winning, Magic: White.

■ See footnote 72 for discussion of common sources of good luck among California natives.

MAGIC: BLACK The political leaders of Chumash society fought against "black magic."

■ Black magic is associated with darkness, night, ill health and misfortune. This is magic impacting the spiritual (supernatural) world. See footnote 71 for further discussion.

MAGIC: WHITE Use of supernatural power (associated with the Sun, sunlight, daytime, good health, and pragmatic affairs such as food production) is called white magic.

■ White magic is magic impacting the material world.

MARIA SOLARES See Qilikutayiwit, M. S.

MIRROR Compare Coyinashup, Reality.

MOMOY See Moon.

MOON The neutral referee, who served as the celestial arbitrator in the Chumash House of Fate.

Terms: *A'way* means 'the moon' in Chumash (Tsmuwich, 71; also means 'a month'). *Mo'moy* is the datura plant (Tsmuwich, 18; thus *M'moyich* means 'to be intoxicated').

■ The Moon is associated with visionary light of the night. She is a Grandmother figure in Chumash folk lore, associated with the psychotropic effects of the datura plant.

MORNING STAR The sky Fox, a celestial being favorable to humanity, who served on the side of Coyote (Sky) in the Alewa game. Morning Star is ritually associated with the east and the rising Sun.

Terms: *Alnahyit I Akiwi* is the non-ritual Chumash name for the morning star, literally meaning 'the morning star' (Hudson/Underhay, Crystals, 150); a variant is *Alhah yit Iaqiwi* (Kitsepawit, Eye, 36). *Naxyit* means 'to be morning' (Tsmuwich, 19).

Xilqen means 'to dawn' (Tsmuwich, 40). *Xelqen* is a Samala variant. *Qenmay* is the root term meaning 'to be gone' [as the night is gone after the dawn]. See *Toshololo Mountain* for a related discussion.

■ The Morning Star [the Fox] was one of the two daughters of the Sun, and the Evening Star was the second daughter.

MYSTICISM "The Chumash religion was mystical, based on personal visions. Compare *Iwihinmu* mountain.

■ Unlike Christians, Muslims, or Jews, the Chumash had no priesthood (advocating a specific dogma) and thus did not impose a uniform doctrine on their population" (Anderson, Astrology, 42).

NORTH See *Eagle* for ruler of the North Star.

Terms: *Siwot* is the Chumash name for the celestial home of the *Wot* (ruler) of the heavens. It is a ritual name for the north star. The Chumash mountain of the north is undetermined. See *The Fox Jumps* (Anderson) for related commentary).

PEON GAME A Spanish adopted name for the Chumash *Alewa* game. See *Alewa*.

POWER A basic concept in Chumash cosmology. Compare *Luck: good*, *Luck: bad*, *Prophet*. Terms: *Atishwin* means 'power' in Chumash (Whistler, Dictionary, 5; thus the *Alatishwinich* is "one who has power visions").

PROPHET One who sees in the future, i.e. a prophet, a diviner.

■ Such individuals (whether divine or human) are good gamblers! See *Enememe's Friends* (Anderson 1990) for a discussion of *Sipisiwas*, the great Coyote who prophesied (who knows).

REALITY The purpose of Chumash gambling is to determine reality, i.e. to have an accurate view of the future, and (after mastering this information) to prophesy. Compare *Bet*, *Magic: White*.

SATAN The Christian devil called Satan was similar in many ways to the Chumash Coyote.

■ Anderson speculates that both Satan and Coyote may be associated with the fiery star Sirius and the 'disorder' of the southern sky (see *Abyss*). Thus both may have served as rivals to the deity associated with the order of the north star.

SKY COYOTE See *Coyote: of the Sky*. Compare *Coyote of Earth*.

SKY EAGLE See *Eagle*

SIPISIWAS A Chumash name for Coyote (Trickster) which has the connotation of a very knowledgeable person. See *Prophet* for further discussion.

SIRIUS See *Snilemun* (Coyote: of the Sky) for related information.

SIWOT See *North Star*.

SLOW The Chumash name for the celestial Eagle. See *Eagle* for discussion.

SNILEMUN The celestial Coyote named *Snilemun* was the champion of humanity in the nightly gambling which takes place in the Chumash House of Fate. Also listed as *Coyote: Sky*.

Compare *Coyote: Trickster* and *Coyote: of the Earth*.

Terms: *Snilemun* is the Chumash name for the "Coyote of the sky" (Blackburn, December, 91; Qiliqutayiwit); he is the celestial Coyote who champions the physical needs of humanity.

■ Sky Coyote was the leader of the gods who were sympathetic to the material needs of humans. He was like a "father" to the Chumash people (Qiliqutayiwit, December's Child, 92).

■ In chapter three of this text, *Snilemun* (Sky Coyote) is associated with the star Sirius (in the Chumash constellation called *Mech*). If the Sirius association is correct, *Snilemun's* ritual direction is south.

■ *Snilemun* watches "all the time from the sky" (December, 92, Qiliqutayiwit).

SOUTH STAR *Snilemun*, as the Coyote of the Sky, was associated with the star called Sirius, the ruler of the south sky. Compare *North: Star*.

Terms: *Snilemun* means 'he who is on fire', referring to Sirius which is the brightest burning star in the sky ; the primary root may thus be *Ni*, meaning 'to burn' (Tsmuwich, 20).

STARS: SOUTHERN SKY The Chumash, like other Native Americans, believed that the stars of the southern sky, with their relatively undisciplined patterns of rotation, were inferior to the stars of the northern sky. Compare Abyss.

- Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, rules this area of the heavens (but not the he Abyss).

Compare *South Star*.

STICK GAME See Alewa , Gambling.

SUN The solar deity was on the side of Eagle, in the Chumash House of Fate.

Terms: *Alishaw* means 'the sun' in Chumash (Tsmuwich, 83); *Ishaw* means 'hot' (66). . *Ya'* meaning an arrow (Tsmuwich, 42) and *Ssa* meaning 'a tooth' (Tsmuwich, 29), may be related terms, connoting that the rays of the sun are like heat arrows?

- The Sun is the deity who had the most impact on the material needs of humans, and he was the dominant deity of the lower heavens.

■ The Sun's ritual direction may be the west, as with the setting Sun. If this directional association is correct, the Evening Star would be closely related to the Sun in Chumash rituals. See Wasna for related discussion.

■ The Pomo term *La*, means 'the sun' (Barrett, Pomo, 523; *Da* is a variant, 537). The Pomo called the "supernatural Being who carries the sun" *Da'tca* (537; Barrett calls him Sun-man).

SUN: EATER OF HUMANS The Chumash solar deity is sometimes described as an old man who ate humans. Compare Eagle for a variant on this theme.

- The eating of humans refers to the decay of physical body after death of a plant or animal. The Sun, for example, leads to the rapid decomposition of a deer carcass left in the open.

SUN: DAUGHTERS The Morning Star and Evening Star are depicted in many native myths as the daughters of the Sun. Kitsepawit, for example, describes the two "daughters " of the Sun (Hudson/Underhay, Crystals, 52).

Names: The Morning Star is the Chumash Fox deity, and the Evening Star is *Xutash*.

- In related Pomo myths, the Evening and Morning stars are called the *De'mata* meaning the "daughters of Sun-man" (Barrett, Pomo, 537; *Da* means 'the Sun' and *Mata* means 'female', 526).

TOSHOLOLO MOUNTAIN A sacred Chumash mountain located east of *Iwihinmu* mountain which is the Chumash mountain of the center. Compare Wasna and Iwihinmu mountains.

- *Toshololo* is probably associated with the Morning Star [Fox] and the spring equinox. *Toshololo* may have been the Chumash ritual mountain of the East. It was renamed Frazier mountain by the Americans, and is located northwest of Los Angeles and south of Frazier Park.

THUNDERBIRD The Chumash Eagle is the Chumash variant of the Thunderbird, although other beings such as Scorpion Woman and the Swordfish also cause thunder. Compare Eagle.

- See *The Swordfish Race* (Anderson 1997) for further discussion of thundering gods.

VENUS See Morning Star and Evening Star.

WASNA MOUNTAIN A sacred Chumash mountain located on the west coast of Chumashia at the top of the *Huasna* drainage [east of Santa Maria]. Compare Toshololo and Iwihinmu mountains.

- *Wasna* was at or near an ascending place into the heavens, and may have been the Chumash mountain of the West. It probably was ritually associated with the setting sun and the fall equinox.

WATER Qiliqutayiwit identified water as one of the three "sacred elements" (December, 96).

- The [setting] Sun is associated by the author with the element Water. For the Chumash, the rising sun appears over the land in the east, while the setting sun provides brilliant red sunsets when it disappears into the western portal [gate] in the Pacific ocean. The setting Sun is associated ritually with decline, descent, and death.

■ The *Itsunas* flute, a wind instrument stored in a basket of water before performances in the Chumash Siliyik church, is clearly associated with water and death, and probably the setting sun [old age, decline, death]. Note that water is also associated in Chumash mythology with birth, which is the ritual opposite of death in Chumash reincarnation theology.

WEST The west is associated with death of the physical body in Chumash mythology. See Sun (Setting) for further discussion.

XUTASH The Chumash term *Xutash* was used both for Mother Earth and the Evening Star.

Terms: *Xutas* refers to both Mother Earth and the Evening Star in Samala (452). It is associated with female fecundity.

■ In *Chumash Autumn Equinox* (Anderson) Mother Earth is described as the mother of both plants and animals on the surface of the earth (63; glossary term *Xutash*). In *Kuta Teachings* (Anderson) the Mermaid is identified as the mother of the plants and animals of the shallow ocean.

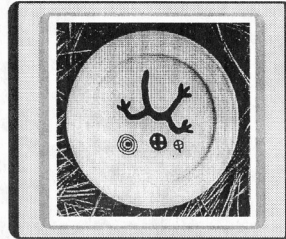
The Chumash House of Fate

Other Books by the Author

- A Circle Within The Abyss** Chumash Indian religion, metaphysics; covers many philosophical issues featured in *The House of Fate*; 40 pages, third edition 1997.
- Kuta Teachings: Reincarnation Theology and the Chumash Path of the Dead**, second edition, 60 pages, 2002.
- Enememe's Friends** Chumash theology, a very complex folk tale includes cosmology and reincarnation themes, fourth edition, 32 pages, 1997.
- The Swordfish Race** Chumash & Pomo racing tales, rescuing drowned souls from the rulers of the ocean, 40 pages, 1997.
- The Fox Jumps** Chumash summer solstice tales from California; compared to Kalispel and Yakima tales from the Northwest, 40 pages, 1994f.
- When Frog Stole the Waters** Frog symbolism & cornucopia tales; Chumash, Karok, Kootenai, Pomo, Yakima, Kalapuya, Micmac & Passamaquoddy, 40 pages, 1996.
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Holiday Series

- A Chumash Christmas The Life Adventures of a Wondrous Child Born On Christmas Day**, 40 pages, 1995, \$5.80.
- Tales For the Christmas Season: Chumash & Mohave Folk Tales**, the dying winter sun as depicted in the ancient mythology of California, 40 pages, 1996.
- When Demons Rule California A Chumash Halloween**, 52 pages, second edition, 1999.



*The Four Most Powerful Gods:
Chumash Cosmology*

Maria Piliqutayiwit, a Chumash Indian elder, lived in the Santa Ynez Valley, a short distance north from Santa Barbara, California. She explained to John Harrington when he came to visit her from the Smithsonian Institute, that Chumash theologians honored four gods whose celestial rivalry determined the fate of humanity.

The Sky Eagle and the Sun were the most influential members of one heavenly team, while Coyote and Morning Star were the leaders of a rival team. They challenged one another through a divine gambling game which took place each night of the year, except for the days of the winter and summer solstice. This text examines the celestial identities of these dominant gods of ancient California.

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