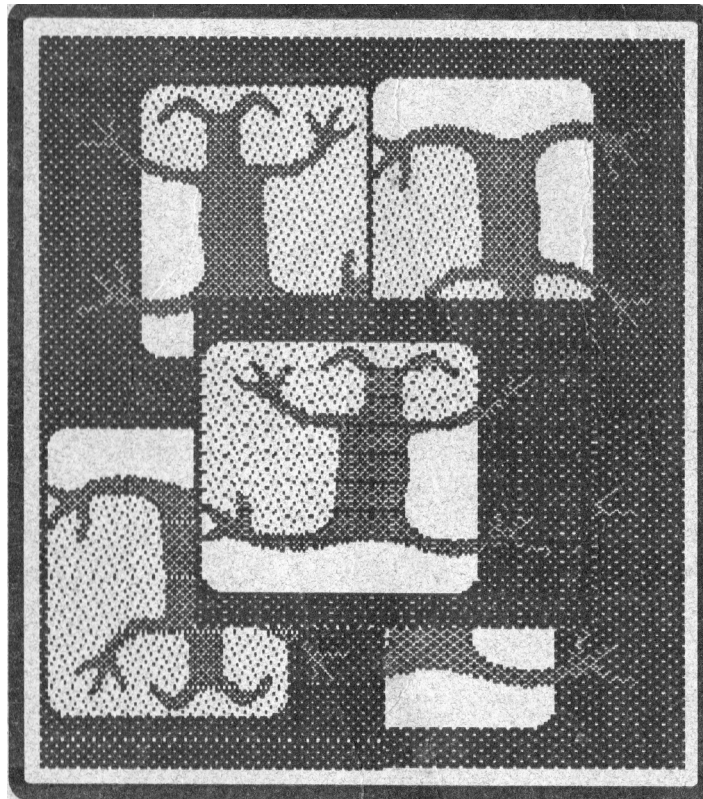


A Circle Within the Abyss

Title Page

A CIRCLE WITHIN THE ABYSS



Bu John M. Anderson

Chumash Metaphysics

A Circle Within the Abyss

John M. Anderson has published numerous books on native American mythology from the western United States. Many of his writings focus on the Chumash Indians of coastal California and the Salish Indians of the Inland Northwest and nearby Canada.

"A Circle Within the Abyss is a very fine introduction to one California Tribe's way of knowing their place on earth and within the larger universe.

John Anderson gives us special insights into the meanings of ancient Chumash sacred stories and integrates them in such a way that they are most understandable for contemporary women and men. He has taken the words of both Native informants and cultural specialists and made their wisdom and knowledge "user-friendly" for all of us."

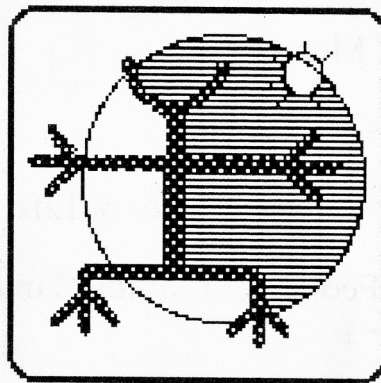
Rev. Scott McCarthy, Pastor of Our
Lady of Mount Carmel, a Catholic
Mission in Carmel California.

Native American mythology:, Cosmology, Abyss, the transformation of the First People, Encircled Cross, Encircled Cricle, Balance on Mother Earth, Sacred Number Four, Breath of Life, Native American Theology: California. Chumash, European Theology: Plotinus.

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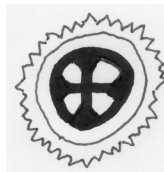
"All Life on this earth is a circle,
an eddy within the Abyss."

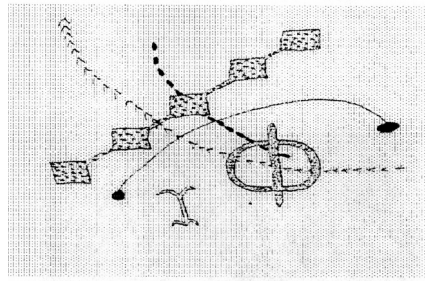


A study of the metaphysical
teachings of the Chumash Indians.

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Introduction

The Chumash Indians were once the largest cultural group in California. I wrote *Within the Abyss* a number of years ago, to provide an overview of their rich and enigmatic religious teachings.

This booklet is taken from one chapter of the larger publication. It begins with a discussion of the 'encircled circle' and 'encircled cross' images, which play significant roles in Chumash rock art.

Through an assessment of these ritual icons, the reader is introduced to the complex subject of Being, i.e. how the world came into existence and how it was subsequently ordered. An understanding of Chumash teachings on these subjects provides the reader with a benchmark for studying native theologies throughout the Western states.

John Anderson
December 1993

Title taken from F. Kitsepawit:

*"All Life on this earth is a circle,
an eddy within the Abyss."*

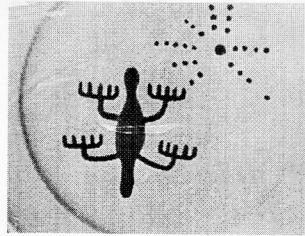
A Circle Within the Abyss

"This slim little booklet, while resembling an hors d'oeuvre, is a full-course dinner, providing such food for thought as to send the reader on to further courses."

Valle Novak, review from the Daily Bee
newspaper, North Idaho, Nov. 1993

John Anderson gives us special insights into the meanings of ancient Chumash sacred stories and integrates them in such a way that they are most understandable for contemporary women and men. He has taken the words of both Native informants and cultural specialists and made their wisdom and knowledge "user-friendly" for all of us."

Rev. Scott McCarthy, Pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel,
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The Creation

"The pole star was a *Kasunalmu*, a sending place from which the first winds (breath of life) appears in the lower realms. As this divine wind flowed down, it spread life throughout the universe and blew sacred *Atishwin* into innumerable air souls."



Chumash Metaphysics

California metaphysicians, like their Greek counterparts, described the world around them as a circle. It is filled with life and movement, including the motion of the stars in the heavens. Beyond this great 'circle of life' lies an immense void of incomprehensible depth. The spirit of philosophy caused them to ask who created all of this, when did it come into existence, and how is it governed?

The answers given by Chumash philosophers to these questions represented the thoughts of the largest native group in California. For this reason alone, there is much public interest in Chumash metaphysics. In *The Lizard's Tale* I document remarkable similarities to cosmologies of other peoples of the region, such as the Pomo of the northern coast, as well as Penutian-speaking groups of the central valley and the Sierra Nevadas. Not surprisingly, links can also be shown to inland Southwest groups such as the Hopi and Zuni, as well as to ancient European and Asian metaphysics.

Only a tiny fragment of Chumash theological teachings has been passed down to us from antiquity. Centuries of religious persecution destroyed most of their spiritual art and silenced their public ceremonies. Ethnographers such as John Harrington preserved fragments which had been handed down as prayers, songs, folktales, and commentaries of tantalizing richness. The task lies in rebuilding a metaphysical model, which unifies these segments. This construction process is worth the effort if the resulting synthesis throws new light upon Chumash cosmology.

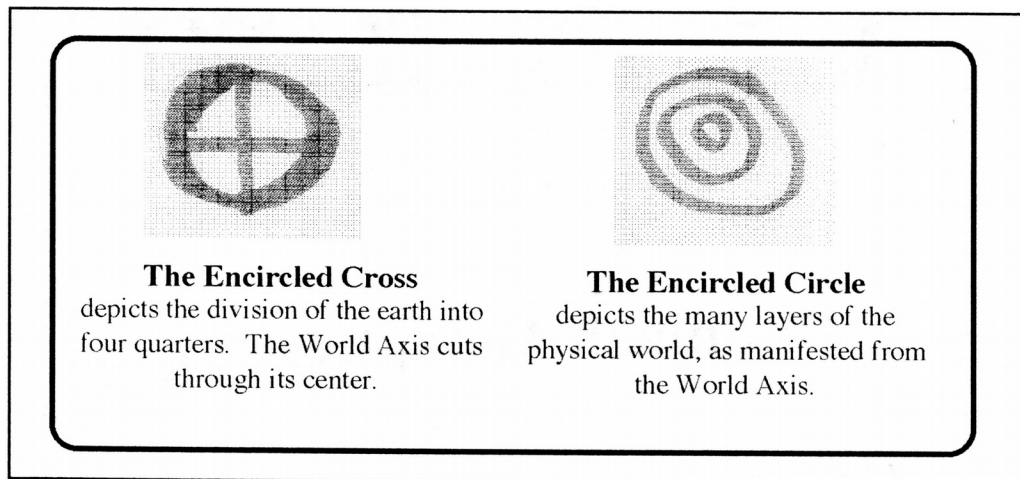
Let us begin our discussion with an examination of two religious symbols which survived into modern times because they were painted on remote rock outcroppings hidden in the interior Chumash mountains. Similar patterns are found all over the world, and are familiar to academics who call them the 'encircled circle' and 'encircled cross.'

Ethnographic sources do not provide explicit Chumash explanations or datings for these symbols, so we do not know with certainty when or why they were painted. After an extensive study of Chumash teachings, however, I am convinced that both symbols are cosmological in intent and

of profound importance. The keys to understanding their symbolism lie in the Chumash beliefs about the World Axis.¹

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. 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, like 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 from east to west, regulated the weaker east-west line. Combined, they divided the earth into four quarters.

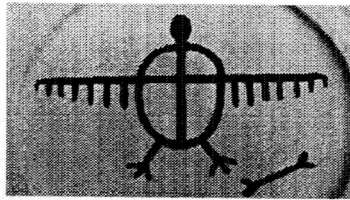


¹ I offer these explanations of the Chumash encircled circle and the encircled cross designs in the spirit of tentative exploration of Chumash aesthetics.

Coe presents a similar analysis of Sioux and Blackfeet icons in his study of contemporary native art co-sponsored by the American Federation of Arts and the University of Washington Press. He describes the "concentric ring" (encircled circle) design as having the cosmological connotation of "circles of the world".

Who Created the World Axis?

Surviving Chumash records do not specify whether it was one god or a number of gods who ordained the 'birthing' and subsequent 'ordering' of the physical world. They probably followed the tradition of nearby California cultures in attributing the primordial creation to a single celestial deity.



Mundane Time

Five deities are primarily responsible for ruling the world during 'ordinary' times. Four compete with one another in an eternal contest of supernatural wills, while the Moon serves as a referee.

Eagle, depicted above with an encircled cross as a body, was the leader of the Chumash gods favoring order. His primary rival was Coyote, who led the forces of chaos.

In most California theologies, this Creator remains beyond the understanding of the human mind. Mystical encounters with this divinity cannot be expressed in words, and thus descriptions of his presence in the world of human affairs are rare and opaque.

References to the Chumash Creator fit this pattern. *Alaleqwel* is the Chumash term for a person who creates something, and although it may have been used to designate the Creator, surviving documentation does not comment on such usage.² Whistler's dictionary of Chumash words, for example, has no citation for a creator deity. In *The Lizard's Tale*, I propose that this absence is compensated for by the preservation of a popular name for the Creator- Enememe, a moniker meaning "He who sleeps." Chumash narrators affectionately describe him as a flute playing lizard whose paradoxical music is a metaphor for the inexpressible essence of his being.

In previous writings, I have quoted numerous Chumash texts which suggest that the personality of Enememe is the central source of information about the Creator. Using other Native American cosmologies as models, many of Enememe's behavior patterns can be shown to have great significance, especially those found in sleeping and withdrawal passages. From such metaphysical teachings, it seems evident that Enememe was the original divine presence who existed prior to the creation of the physical world. He appears to be a variant of the ancient Eurasian deity who lived in a state of complete peace, which the Chumash call *Tipashumashwish*.³

For reasons beyond the comprehension of humans, the inscrutable first deity decided to manifest the physical world and initially populate it with the First People. Through *Kipshuwashich*, will power, he started the creation process, thus setting material body in motion and placing

2 'A'laleqwel means 'a maker' (Tsmuwich, 2; also means 'a person who creates, 57). The root is *Wil* meaning 'to exist' (38), thus *Eqwel* meaning 'to make' (8). See *Existence* in the glossary.

3 *Tipashumashwish* means 'to be at peace' (Tsmuwich, 30; the root is *Shumawish* meaning 'to be healthy').

his first animated beings into mythic time. At this transition, he entered the state of *Asshunach*, which means 'to be the ruler', for he was no longer alone.⁴

A short parable about Enememe's role in the creation of humanity demonstrates his rule over the five less powerful (transformer) gods who governed earthly affairs. This narrative is the most important surviving commentary on the flute player's supreme status.⁵ Enememe conflicts with Coyote, the leader of the gods of disorder. He imposes his will over Coyote, insisting that newly created humans be given hands like his, useful lizard hands instead of coyote paws. This conflict of wills takes place at the time of the epic transformation of the world following the Great Flood. The five Chumash transformer deities are overseeing dramatic changes of time, space, and species. These are the gods who still regulate the material world today, and therefore act as controllers of history. Enememe intervened only because this was a crisis point, when he was forced to reassert his powers as the dominant deity. His victory over Coyote, and his subsequent withdrawal, permitted the other deities to turn their attention once again to ruling the physical universe during mundane time.

Other references to the Creator deity are extremely rare in Chumash ethnography. Any citation that even mentions an attribute of the supreme deity or Creator is therefore worthy of careful analysis. A spiritual called "Coyote's Song" demonstrates the difficulties faced by anyone trying to understand the few citations available for study. This song is open to many explanations. Kitsepawit, a Chumash historian, tells how Coyote, when he sings this spiritual, was "pretending to be the one who does everything." This is a puzzling comment, since neither Coyote nor any of the four other Chumash regulator gods were capable of omnipotence, i.e. of doing everything.

The Creator and Coyote

The Chumash ethnographer Qiliqutayiwit, tells a related story about the creation of humanity. She repeats the claim that Coyote resented Enememe because he overruled Coyote's judgments.

From such citations it is plausible that when Coyote pretended to be like the Creator, the audience only laughed at his vanity. Coyote's boasting has no effect on their fidelity to the regional belief in a supreme deity through whose creative powers all of existence is sustained.

Kitsepawit does not reveal the name of "the one who does everything," but clearly it is not Coyote since he is only "pretending" to this status. The lyrics apparently were written as a parody of Coyote's vanity, to entertain an audience that had prior knowledge of the identity

4 *Asshunach* means 'to be ruler' (Tsmuwich, 4; also means 'to be a political leader'; *Assunan* means 'to command; 'to send', 79 and *Sunu'na* means 'to start to', 28).

5 The Chumash clearly recognized a multiplicity of gods active in the creation of the physical environment. Qiliqutayiwit, for example, listed five deities active in the transformation of the world "after the [great] flood". They were *Snilemun* (Sky Coyote), Sun, *Sl'ow* (Eagle, Moon (Datura), and the Morning Star. Her creation story, called "The Making of Man" is a variant of the transformer myths found throughout the West, including the Pacific Northwest where Lizard/hand association can also be found. The Skitswish Salish (Coeur de' Alene) term for lizard (*Chenchenteht*) means 'one with human hands' (*Snchitsu'umshtsn*, II, 253).

of the "does everything" deity. Surely they laughed heartily when Foolish Coyote sang:

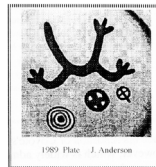
"... I go around the world- I, it is I.
I cause the mist...
When I climb the mountain tops,
I cause clouds; I cause the rain.
Long Live Coyote; he will always be." ⁶

It is typical of Coyote to glory in his powers, when in fact he is constantly being kept under control by his supernatural rivals. The final line of his song emphasizes Coyote's egotistic weakness, as he proclaims his eternal life. Coyote is best understood as a character plagued by his many frailties that keep him from using his divine power wisely. In his heart, he knows he is not the only being in the world blessed with eternal life. The other transformer deities also lived forever, and none of them were as old as the original Creator deity who began the creation process.

Nowhere in Kitsepawit's narrative is the "does everything" persona identified. Explicit information about his location or physical appearance is absent. Kitsepawit ends his rendition of Coyote's song with a very suggestive clue, however, which is widely admired as one of the most quotable of Chumash aphorisms.

*"Life is a dream, and the world is a banquet."*⁷

This is a classic example of the obtuse style of Chumash poetic expression. It abruptly ends the commentary with an observation which at face value has nothing to do with Coyote's song, which mentions neither a dream nor a banquet. What are we to make of this remark? My guess is that Kitsepawit is drawing the listener's attention to attributes of Enememe, the dreaming god whose creation of the physical world provided a cornucopia of food and other riches. This gentle prodding invites the knowledgeable members of the audience to chuckle at Coyote's impudence. They know that Enememe is the only deity who can conceivably be a Chumash candidate for omnipotence.⁸



⁶ The Chumash easily identified with Coyote's personality, because he exemplified the frailty of human ethical standards. I have shortened and edited Kitsepawit's song; for the complete text see *December's Child*, (226).

⁷ Blackburn, December, 227; Kitsepawit).

⁸ *Omnipotent* has a Latin root, meaning 'all powerful' (Webster 1960, 1024). The Chumash name for power is *Atishwin* (Tsmuwich, 75). Unlike a deity, humans can handle only so much power before being overwhelmed, thus *Tip'Atishwichish* means 'to be poisonous'.

Chapter 2



The Abyss

The Chumash term *Alampauwauhani* refers to the limitless abyss, out of which the Creator established order.⁹ The term *Abyss* has a Greek root, meaning bottomless. Many cultures use equivalent terms to refer to infinite space, which was the realm of the Creator prior to the manifestation of the physical world. When only the Originator existed, all of space was without limit and thus beyond human understanding. The manifestation of the heavenly axis gave definition to 'place' (ordered spatial relationship) and therefore 'space' was defined only after this seminal act of establishing cosmic dimensionality.

When Kitsepawit teaches that "all life on this earth is a circle, an eddy within the Abyss," he reminds us of a Hindu spiritual leader discussing the theory of Karma and rebirth. Human souls, Kitsepawit cautioned, are like the stars in the night sky. Each is differentiated in a 'winnowing' process in which some souls move up and some move down in the cosmic levels. People die and are reincarnated, according to their virtues, at a higher or lower level in relation to the heavenly axis. Those who are born under the influence of the stars of the southernmost sky suffer a vast moral depravity- thus the connotation of the term abysmal, referring to immeasurable hopelessness. On the contrary, those who are rewarded by coming under the protection of the stars closest to the axis gain celestial bliss and divine knowledge. They literally have learned to fathom the divine. In this cosmology Black Mystery is excluded from the celestial axis and the paradise of the Creator living beyond.¹⁰ Black magic prospered, instead, in the demiurgic presence of the the southern sky, whose outermost limits lie in the dark realm of chaos.

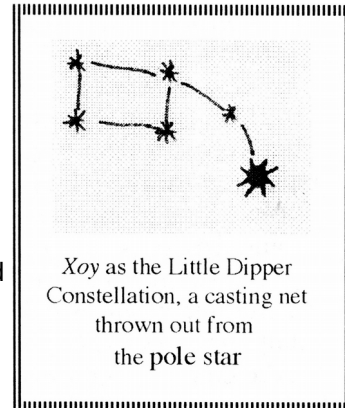
T. Hudson and E. Underhay wrote *Crystals In The Sky*, a pioneering 1970's study of Chumash cosmology. This book made a remarkable contribution to Chumash studies, breaking new ground in ethno-astronomy. The authors took on a formidable task, and their work inspired others to propose refinements of their 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

9 'Alampauwauhani' means 'abyss' (December, 97, Kitsepawit). See *Abyss*.

10 The House of *Slo'w* is without Black Mystery (Blackburn, December, 159; Kitsepawit). The house of *Slow* (Sky Eagle) is the North Star.

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. 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, whose celestial bodies were continuously in contact with the middle and lower worlds as they dropped below the earth's horizon.



Duality and the Web of Life

No one knows why the Creator manifested the physical world. A common philosophical explanation is that he became discontented or over full. The material world then came into existence, because he expelled excessive substance from his primordial being. The Chumash term *Naqtikuy* suggests such a phenomenon. It means to move, and one of its roots is probably *Aqti*, meaning 'to be full'. In normal times the Creator remained aloof, separate from the relatively corrupt material world. Movement resulted, however, from a condition of internal satiation which created dissatisfaction. The discharged space-time, the world inherited by humanity, subsequently became a place where the primordial unity was shattered, a degenerate place of fractured existence.

A similar model can be seen in Aztec metaphysics in which the thirteen levels of the upper world began to be manifested from the Place of Duality. There, the ultimately transcendent deity began creation of the dual world of male/female. The highest realm of the Creator was beyond duality, yet controlling all of the manifested world below. This milieu is also similar to the Hindu *Brahmaloka* abode of Brahma, grandfather of all material beings, who lived in the uppermost heavens.

The Chumash called the network of physical body, first manifested by the Creator, *Xoy*. It was depicted as a spinning throw net and may be the Little Dipper which looks like a net with a line attached to the Pole Star. The Pomo Spider is a similar symbol, probably a variant of the celestial *Xoy* image, with its web serving as a network of interconnections in the physical world by which the Creator maintains ties to all existence. An earthly spider, positioned in the center of its web, senses movement at the periphery from vibrations sent along individual strands. Using its unseen network covering the earth, the celestial Spider (located at the Axis) proves to be aware of all events taking place in the physical world below. The Pomo, a northern California group closely related linguistically to the Chumash, called the spider deity *Elam-mu*, referring to the spider web. Its threads spread out from the sacred center, to connect all of the physical world in an interlocking net.

The farther that one traveled from the celestial axis, the more the physical world diminished in its capacity to behave in an ordered manner. As a result, the objects located in the heavens most distant from the axis had the least spatial order. These were the stars in the southern sky that stretched out into the Abyss. The more distant they were from the northern pivot of the heavens, the less they benefited from its positive influence.

The stars in the outermost circles of the heavens revolved so rapidly that they were considered only marginally under the control of the central divine power. Thus the objects in the southernmost heavens resided in a gulf or pit of undefined space. Flung outward from the divine center, they were caught in the corrupt power of gravity and pulled down from the positive influence of the celestial axis.

Such forces dominated stellar motion and were mirrored by human morality. Unless each of us works hard to overcome vice, we will fall from grace. The *Tokoy*, the whirling noisemaking instrument used in Chumash ceremonies was a reminder of this lesson. Its harsh resonance warned the faithful that they had to work hard to approach the sacred center of the world, ritually manifested in the *Siliyik* church.

The Sphere of Xutash

The ritual phrase Sphere of *Xutash* is used by the Chumash to refer to all of the physical world manifested by the Creator. It is the 'fruit' (*Xutash*) of the Creator's labor, and consists of all entities in the universe having *Amin*, or physical body. The manifestation of this realm took place in a series of creations, each one increasingly corrupt with physical body. Thus the farther one descends from the predominantly male North Star, the more female substance is encountered. The elements, the building blocks of creation, become separated in the sequence of fire, air, water, and earth (symbolized by the encircled circle motif).¹¹

11 The encircled circle pictograph depicts the increasingly debased levels of the cosmos, extending outward from the pure center.

As a result of this plan, each lower level of creation became more and more saturated with material presence until one reached the bottom, which had the highest percentage of physical matter in the cosmos. This was the realm Europeans called Hell, and it was farthest from the axis of the sky. This was the region of least *Atishwin*, governed by the forces of transmutation. Like Foolish Coyote, it embraced change for its own sake, suffering eternally from its gravitational distance from the unmoving sacred center of the sky

The lower world was not the only focus of ancient cosmology, however. Early philosophers believed the newly created cosmos was roughly divided into three, the upper and lower worlds, balanced by the middle world, called Earth. L Y. Nutu, trained in Tsmala Chumash metaphysics, refines this scheme so that both the upper and lower worlds are severally divided. She states that, "There are five worlds in all: We live in the middle one, Sun and his daughters live alone in the next, and Xoy lives in the highest of all."¹² The two levels she does not mention in this passage are those of the lower world. Many other Chumash tales relate how the Nunashish (demons) thrive in this region, but they are kept in check by their rival Trickster Coyote and other supernaturals who struggle to overcome evil. Because Trickster coyote is forever drawn to personal gratification, he is the dominant actor in the Sphere of *Xutash*. He is constantly coming into conflict with the demons, as he fails to overcome his sexual drives and other lusts of his *Ahash* soul.¹³

Chumash rock art is a frequent source of the encircled circle motif, representing the concentrically expanding levels of the universe. Many of these drawings depict only three circles, following the most basic cosmological divisions. Nutu's model suggests two additional subdivisions, perhaps reflecting a popular cosmological tradition in which both the upper and lower realms are divided. Furthermore, it would be consistent with other areas of Chumash theology to hypothesize as many as thirteen cosmic levels, as found in Mexican theology. This southern model proves useful in explaining the ritual significance of the various officials serving in the Chumash government. Each of the twelve *Antap* officials might have been assigned to a level of the upper world, thus taking responsibility for ritual activities in ascending order as the months progressed toward December. At the solstice, the *Kwaiyin*, or governor, could assume leadership, since all of the twelve *Antap* officials would have fulfilled their month of service. The *Kwaiyin* would thus become active as the thirteenth official functioning in the thirteenth (and most sacred) calendar period, when the sun was reborn.

This comparison between Chumash and Aztec ritual calendars is intriguing because it also provides a plausible explanation for the role of the Chumash *Ksen* officials. Aztec cosmology recognized nine levels of the lower world, and perhaps the Chumash adopted a parallel enumeration. A level could have been assigned to each of the eight *Ksen* officials.

12 Nutu used the colonial name Luisa Ygnacio. She presented a five layered cosmic model (December, 199, Blackburn). Her Middle Earth lies at the middle of a Chumash encircled circle pictograph. It is thus depicted halfway between the realms called by Christians *Heaven* and *Hell*.

13 The Chumash deity *Snilemun* is a variant of the Trickster Coyote, found everywhere in the West.

The ninth level could have been assigned to the Kwaiyin official, thus enabling him to act as a balancing force between the *Ksen* and *Antap* councilors. This would explain the fact that the Chumash had a combined governmental council of twenty, with a twenty-first official moving back and forth between both groups as a ritual link. In such a hypothetical Chumash system, the upper and lower world rituals would only be in balance when the *Kwaiyin* (the official of the sacred center) served both realms.

This model is speculative, being based on ritual systems familiar in many parts of the world. The Egyptian philosopher Plotinus, for example, documents a Mediterranean system which may have the same antiquity as Chumash metaphysics. In Plotinus's cosmology, the encircled circle represents the circles of creation. The outer rings symbolize the less pure realms, and the inner ring is associated with the celestial center, i.e. the pole star. Plotinus reports that as the material world was manifested by the pure soul of the Egyptian Creator, earthly things were of last development and therefore the most distant from the cosmic source.

"Imagine a center and about this center a luminous circle that sends out rays; then around this circle another circle equally luminous, light flowing from light; outside these two circles a third, which is no longer a circle of light but, lacking its own light, needs to be lighted by another."¹⁴

The highest heavens are the center of this Egyptian cosmology. This is the region where the stars move most slowly, being nearest the axis of the revolving sky. Their restrained motion demonstrates their purity, as opposed to the stars in all rings situated beyond them. In Plotinus' model, only the stars in the inner two levels of the heavens radiated light. Through such symbolism he has honored the uppermost realms of the divine power.

In Sweden, the home of my ancestors, rock art images are remarkably similar to Chumash designs. Carvings of the encircled circle, for example, can be found which are essentially identical to those of Southern California. In Europe, this symbol is associated with the bull's-eye, a target guiding the soul's journey into the center of the heavens.¹⁵ Chumash lore contains many references to the use of arrows in obtaining spiritual power, as the visionary focuses his efforts to elevate himself to the next level of achievement. Religious education thus prepares the devout Chumash to traverse the encircled circle, moving upward from the Sphere of *Xutash* into the sacred center where enlightenment is obtainable.

14 (Plotinus, 145).

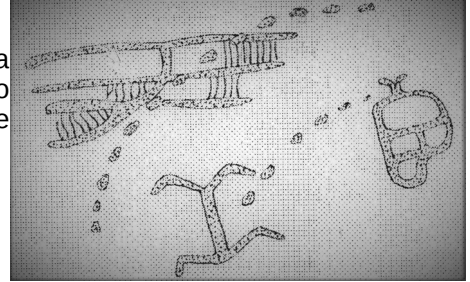
15 The ancient Scandinavians, like the Chumash, used the bow as their primary hunting and military tool. Archery was often used by both peoples as a symbol for the soul's (arrow) journey to a defined goal (heavenly destination).



To Send Forth the Breath of Life

The pole star was a *Kasunalmu*, a sending place from which the first winds (breath of life) appeared in the lower realms. As this divine wind flowed down, it spread life throughout the universe and blew sacred *Atishwin* into innumerable air souls.¹⁶ The Chumash word for wind is *Saxkkit*.¹⁷ This term is analogous to the Sanskrit word, which is the principle of energetic manifestation.¹⁸ The Hindu believed that the physical universe began when it was first manifested from pure unconditional consciousness. This credo is similar to the Chumash concept of the Breath of the World (the *Cenhus Heisup*). Only after this divine breath was manifested from the celestial axis, was the creation of the material cosmos completed.

As the place of entrance for all physical body into the universe, the heavenly axis is sometimes symbolized as a birthing place by ancient theologians who honored the feminine aspect of the supreme creative forces. For many other religions, which located the female essence in the earth, a non-generative orifice served as the symbol of the celestial fountainhead. In European mythology, for example, the source of life was often depicted as the mythical Cornucopia, or horn of plenty. In other cultures it was the vomiting Mouth of Heaven, or even the defecating Anus of Heaven which rids the supreme paradise of corrupt influences.



Such purging terminology may sound sacrilegious to contemporary Christian readers, but to the ancients it served to humble human worshipers by reminding them that their world consisted only of the reject material from the divine. Moreover, the term *Anus* had a broader

16 *Atishwin* means 'supernatural power'. The Tsmuwich dictionary defined it simply as 'power'(5).

17 *Saxkkit* means 'wind' (Tsmuwich, 26). It has the connotation of awaking, as in *Yixkkit* meaning 'to be awake'.

18 *Prakrti* is one of the two eternal elements of the primordial Hindu world. It is the unconscious, yet subtle, cause of all material phenomenon (runes, Dictionary, 247).

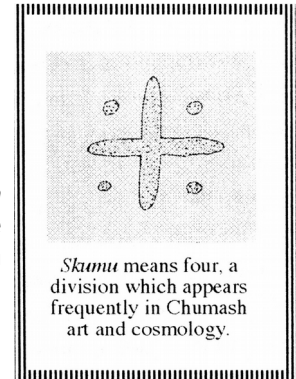
meaning than simple references to animal anatomy. Its Indo-European root referred to an apex, a tip, an opening at the source. In Sanskrit, for example, its root is *Anu* meaning 'point'.¹⁹ It is a significant philosophical term, with wide distribution among Indo-European cultures. The Egyptian celestial Heaven of the Blessed, for example, was named *Anu*, a paradise where the souls of the just lived face-to-face for all eternity with the supreme deity. *Anu* was the source from which all physical body originally emerged, i.e. the celestial axis.

When the Creator was expelling the physical world, he was purging himself not only of air (breath) but also of the lower elements. Chumash seeking purification during vision quests thus sometimes purged themselves of physical matter.²⁰ Through such actions, they honored the primordial feats of the Creator by expelling physical substance from their bodies. Rejected (corrupt) matter was forced to have a separate existence, and they were purified.

Maintaining Balance on Mother Earth

After establishing the stars of the heavens, the Creator began manifestation of *Itiasup*, the earth. This world was affectionately called *Shup* by the Chumash, referring to the female deity which Europeans call Mother Earth.²¹ She became the special protector of the bones of the dead.²² Although the highest concentration of physical matter in the cosmos was located in her massive body, she also had a soul just like the stars. She was thus a very influential goddess with the Chumash, as can be seen in the fact that they used her name as a rallying cry in their repeated revolts against the Spanish. Chumash freedom fighters prayed to the earth goddess to assist them, in recognition that the main cause of their downfall was not military power but rather a weakening of the rule of *Shup*, manifested by the spread of European diseases.

Since the corruption of our physical bodies results from an imbalance in the cosmos, Chumash theologians believed that the plagues could only be brought under control by strengthening *Shup*, who governed physical matter. They feared that the Spanish priests had weakened *Shup*'s influence, releasing demons from the lower world. The *Nunashish* brought new diseases to plague the Chumash. Even more tragic than these mass deaths in the adult population was the sudden decrease in births. Spanish venereal diseases were sterilizing the Chumash nation. Traditionalists believed that this was caused by the



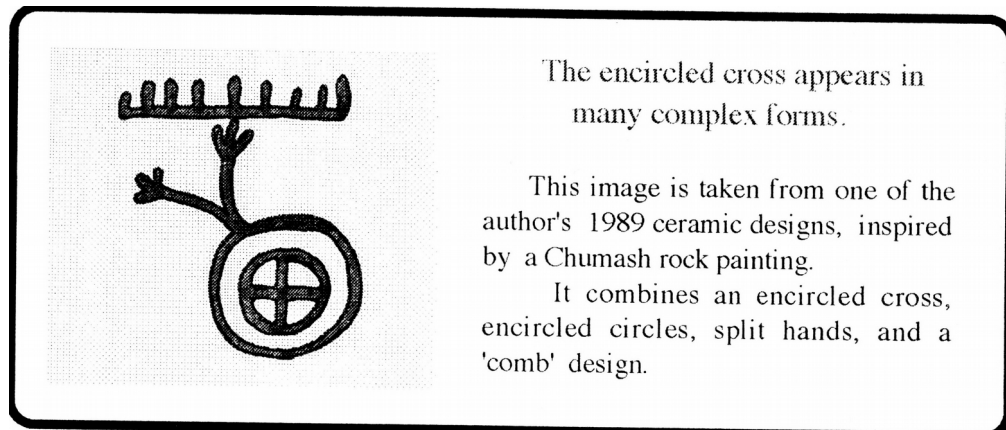
19 *Anu* means 'point' in Sanskrit (Runes, Dictionary, 14). The Chumash term for point is 'Tik' (Tsmuwich, 32; means 'top', 'tip'; thus *Tikay*, 'to be on top').

20 *Uxmala'yik* means 'to purge through the mouth' (Tsmuwich, 36). The roots are *Ishmax* meaning 'to throw at' (11) and '*Ik* meaning 'mouth' (12).

21 *Shup* means 'earth' (Tsmuwich, 30; thus *Shupshup* means 'dust', 'earth').

22 On November of/2000 a footnote was inserted here to speculate that the bones of the dead were linked to the *Ahash*, soul. In subsequent writings, the author used the term *Ahash* to refer to the embodied soul, as opposed to the term *Antik* which he used for the disembodied soul.

inability of air souls to join with the body souls residing in the depths of *Shup*, i.e. in the lower world. The earth itself had become corrupted.



To appreciate the desperate debates raging within the Chumash community during these plagues, it is necessary to understand how the cosmic order was originally established in *Itiasup*, the earth. From the perspective of the Chumash, normal human life could go on only if balance was maintained between many competing forces in the universe. When the Creator withdrew after originating the physical world, numerous lesser deities were left with responsibilities for regulating events in the cosmos. They vied with one another, since they did not have the Creator to force cooperation. When humans were finally introduced into this world, they found that they could maintain their societies only by integrating the conflicting powers of the deities, balancing the influences from both the upper and lower worlds.

The number four is the sacred number which regulated Chumash rituals. Four brings balance.

Four is a universally distributed sacred number, probably dispersed to all the continents in a period beyond human reckoning. *Sku'mu* means four in Chumash, and it is greatly honored in their culture as the basic organizing tool for measuring a wide spectrum of proper behavior patterns.²³ It is a basic unit in their counting system, as shown in the Chumash terms for five, six, seven, and twelve which all use *Sku'mu* as a base.

Native peoples of California had many ways in which they used the quartering system. This is especially evident in their efforts to organize social activities to reflect the four-fold divisions of the larger cosmos. *Moiety* provides an interesting example. It is an anthropological term used to describe social organization in cultures which divide their population into two distinct groups. Since all human

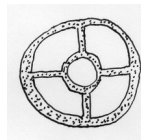
²³ *Sku'mu* means 'four' (Tsmuwich, 27). Four is the Chumash unit of measurement, thus '*Al'altsukumu* means 'one who measures'. Both terms may have the same root as *Kumi*, meaning 'to arrive' (14), i.e. bring to completion, to end a process.

groups are already divided into male and female halves, this second

division created the proper ritual subdivision into fourths. Marriage laws typically dictated that a partner has to belong to the opposite moiety. Evidence of this practice is absent from surviving ethnographic materials on the Chumash, but there is a good chance that at least in ancient times the ancestors of the Chumash shared this social organization practice with surrounding cultures.

Moiety has a Latin root, meaning 'middle', and it has the connotation of being cut down the center.²⁴ Half of the Santo Domingo pueblo in New Mexico, for example, are Turquoise People. They are responsible for ritual ceremonies during the winter period, while the other half are Squash People who are active only during summer ceremonials. This same pattern is seen in Kwakiutl society. The sacred house of their Eagle deity is ritually divided into winter and summer sides. Half the men and half the women belonged to each moiety, thereby maintaining the proper mixture of humanity needed to carry out ceremonial responsibilities during all periods of the year.

The full Chumash calendar system is not well understood. Most of our surviving information concerns the solar calendar, but they also used a lunar calendar to arrange meetings, begin harvesting crops, etc. Hudson and Underhay have studied their Venusian calendral observations. It is not known, however, if the Chumash had an officially recognized fourth calendar like the Mayan and Aztec, which was focused on magic.²⁵ Perhaps Tilinawit's calendar served this function, thus rounding out the full spectrum of yearly time measurement. Nevertheless, a four-fold symmetry is suggested in the well-documented solar calendar, which was divided into four by the two solstices and the two equinoxes.

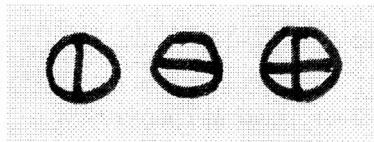


24 *Moiety* has the Latin root *Medius*, meaning 'the middle'. It means 'a half'; thus in anthropology referring to either of two subdivisions in Native American cultures.

Note that in the early editions of this text, the word *Roman* was used for *Latin*. But so many readers got caught up on this substitute, which was deliberately used to place emphasis on the continuity of Roman imperial values into the modern world, that the conventional term *Latin* was substituted.

The primary point of the paragraph was being lost in the syntax .

25 The Mayan and Aztec had four separate calendars: lunar, solar, Venusian, and ritual. The ritual calendar was their "magical" system based on a 260-day division of time (Marti-Kurath, 206).



The first division of the Chumash world (the symbol on the left) was from north to south. It is represented by a circle split vertically by a line. The 'fixed' north star dominates this conceptualization.

The second division (the symbol in the middle) depicts the sun's movements along the east-west line. It is 'changing' in aspect.

Combined, they make up the Encircled Cross motif (right). This religious icon is used to represent the divine forces of order in the physical world.

The earth is universally divided into four, representing the cosmic divisions which Europeans called the four 'quarters' of the world. This metaphysical organization of quartered space is probably the ancient conceptual root for the Chumash term *Sku'mu*, literally meaning 'to divide in four pieces'. The suffix *-mu* means 'to occupy space', and it may be that all space was originally conceived as ritually divided into four.²⁶ Such geographical terminology expresses the four-fold division of the Middle World, and is one of the most significant examples of the sacred number four in Chumash numerology. The poppy with its four petals has been an important symbol of this spatial division in Chumash folk tales.

The Chumash also adopted the number four as the dominant pattern of action in ritual behavior. Three feints would routinely precede a successful motion or action in both public and private ceremonies. A dancer, for example, might approach the central pole of a dance arena three times before finally touching it on the fourth (successful) approach. Endless variants can be found in Chumash folk tales where a character will fail to achieve a goal until the fourth try.

Examples of four-fold warnings, or four refusals to take advice, or four scoldings of children is a popular motif of traditional Chumash storytellers who were especially fond of plots organized around four attempts of a hero to complete an adventure. The four-fold divisional model thus appears many times in Kitsepawit's stories. In one example, he states that a Chumash will be overcome with terrible fear if he hears a coyote make a long howl three times in a row. The fourth cry warns of disastrous results, typically death to a loved one. Faced with such prospects, the listener often takes *datura* to counteract impending misfortune.²⁷

The Chumash probably believed, like some of their neighbors, that the contemporary world is the fourth effort on the part of the Creator to establish harmony in cosmic affairs. Although not explicitly stated in

²⁶ The Chumash suffix *-mu* means 'to be at a place' (Harrington field note 1585).

²⁷ After hearing three long barks a Chumash took the warnings seriously and consulted an astrologer ('*Alchuklash*') about taking *datura* (Breath, 75, Kitsepawit). The three warnings led to the fourth event, i.e. the moment of action.

Chumash depositions, this cosmological pattern has been documented throughout the Southwest. In this popular system, each preceding world cycle came to an end as a result of the failures of humanity. Within a declining world order, humans grew intellectually but failed to live up to their full spiritual potential.

The original test of humanity probably took place at the end of the 'childhood' period of human evolution just as it now does with individual humans. The transition into adulthood can be studied in Chumash *Timoloqinash* stories, which describe how some of the First People were turned into psychotropic plants. This sequence of events in the mythic era would parallel the development of the individual in mundane time, when youngsters at age twelve became adults and took their first datura. Psychotropic drugs created the conditions in which humans could first experience adult perspective, setting the stage for development into mature adulthood and old age.

Kitsepawit seems to be following this same four-fold developmental model in his broader commentary on Chumash history. The prophets predicted, he reports, that the Chumash would slowly lose their faith in the traditional religion after the Christian conquest. In the fourth generation, this process of alienation would reach an all-time low. As foretold, the Chumash abandoned public meetings at this time, and religious continuity was preserved only by the efforts of scattered underground organizations.

Kitsepawit uses a four-fold model in other areas of his history of the Chumash people. A prime example is his rendition of the cycle of plagues that devastated the Chumash prior to the Spanish conquest. Although there were undoubtedly a long series of such plagues sweeping up from Mexico over hundreds of years, Kitsepawit simplifies the events into four. Three great pestilences struck the Chumash before the Limu islanders reversed the population declines and emerged as the successful leaders of the Antap government. Thus in the fourth crisis, the Chumash recovered and made positive gains against European diseases and violence.

The Encircled Cross

The unifying symbol of Chumash cosmological lore is the encircled cross, consisting of a circle with a cross in the center. The cross divides the circle into four equal sections, corresponding to the four-fold divisions of the cosmos.²⁸ The vertical line represents the linking of the divine powers of the north and south, and the horizontal line represents the east-west solar path.

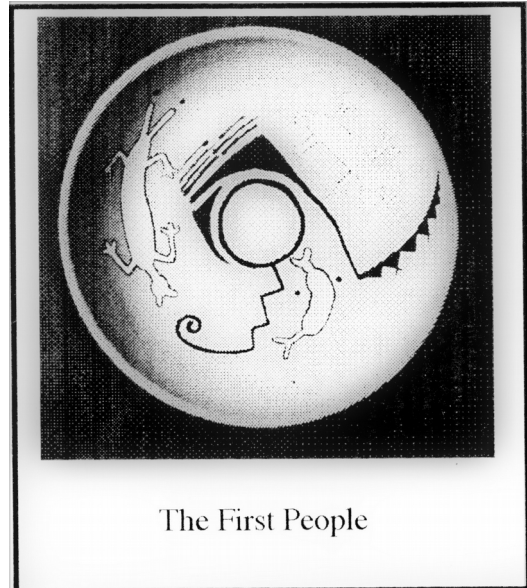
In *Masked Gods*, Frank Waters discusses the role of the encircled cross in Navajo and Pueblo mythology. It is a "reconciling symbol" with many world-wide variations, such as the golden flower of Taoism, the lotus-cosmos of Tibetan Buddhism, and the four-petaled universe of the Navajo. It is also symbolized in the four-leaf clover of Irish

²⁸ *Kaskumu* means 'to cut into four pieces' (Tsmuwich, 13); the root is *Sku'mu*, meaning 'four' (27). *Kumi*, meaning 'to arrive' (Tsmuwich, 14), may have a common root (implying completion of an act).

mythology, reflected in the ancient Irish practice of dividing their nation into four quarters with a fifth central sector where the Stone of Divisions was located.²⁹ This mountain of the center is a European version of the Native American axial mountain surrounded by the sacred mountains of the four directions.

Each of these mountains is guarded by a powerful deity in Southwestern cosmology. For the Hopi, the two most important of these directional deities were the Hero Twins who transformed themselves to keep the earth in its proper balance. They became the binding gods of the north and south mountains. The Winnebago in Wisconsin used strikingly similar cosmological characterizations, demonstrating their widespread influence on this continent. The first beings created in the Winnebago myths were represented as four binding snakes. These divine guardians were the greatest spirits ever created in the material world, and they pierced through the earth so that it would be held in place to keep it from spinning like the heaven.

Qiliqutayiwit reports that the Chumash called these deities *Ma'aqsiq Itasup*, two divine beings holding the earth so that it remained in a fixed position. This appellation means 'Binders of *Shup*', the earth, and they were symbolized as two giant serpents.³⁰ In other writings I have established that it is Eagle who rules the upper world under the direction of the Creator, so these *Ma'aqsiq* did not replace the Eagle's control of the heavens but instead served like the Hopi Hero Twins as the guardian snakes of the sacred north and south mountains. They were earthly representatives of the powers that maintained order in the larger cosmos. It is possible, therefore, that the North Star was the patron deity of the Chumash northern Binding Snake, while Sirius was the patron of the southern Binding Snake.³¹



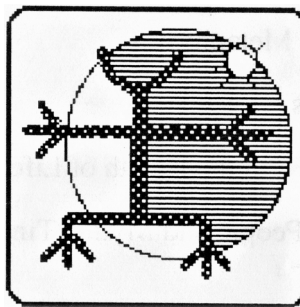
29 (Graves, White, 281).

30 The *Ma'aqsiq Itasup* are Binding Snakes of the Earth, "two giant serpents" that hold our world up from below" (Qiliqutayiwit, December, 91; also called the *Ma'aqsiq'ita'sup*). They control the north-south Axis. One root is *Aqshik*, meaning to bind (Tsmuwich, 4). Blackburn calls them "mystical serpents", the *Masaq'iq'itasup* (December, 341). They are similar to the dragons of Europe and Asia, and the Feathered Serpents of the American Southwest and Mexico. Among the Pueblos, for example, the plumed serpents were an important mythical influence, and their presence in Southwest theology can be traced back to the ancient culture of the Anasazi.

31 In *Chumash Cosmology* (Anderson) Eagle (ruler of the North Star) is associated with the Binding Snake of the North, and *Snilemun* (the star called Sirius) is associated with the Binding Snake of the South (glossary term *Binders of the Earth*). These points of the compass do not change, but the east-west axis is changing constantly during the year, using the rising and setting sun as daily markers. Only on the solstices does the sun stop shifting its position on the horizon. In this context, there are no Binding

The east-west line had a mirror-image symbolism. It connected the rising and setting sun. In Central America, for example, it represented the transitory phenomena of nature, exemplified by the daily path of the sun across the sky. In Chinese symbolism it linked the Bright Valley of the rising sun with the Dark Valley of the setting sun. Qiliqutayiwit says there were only two Binding Snakes, ruling the north and south, so we might conclude that the east-west line of the Chumash did not have binding spirits to hold it in place. This would explain why the solar deity wanders along a wide arch on the horizon during its annual pattern of rising and setting. There were no *Ma'aqsiq* to force the sun to rise and set every day at the cardinal points of east and west.

The responsibility for keeping the sun from wandering all over the horizon probably fell to the two Binding Snakes from the north and south, who alternately pushed the sun back and forth in conflicts of will. Thus, as the sun approached its extreme northern sunrise point at the summer solstice, the northern *Ma'aqsiq* reassured itself and pushed it back south to moderate the summer heat. Each day thereafter, the sun rose farther and farther toward the south on the horizon and reduced the southern sphere of influence. Finally, at the winter solstice, the southern snake reasserted itself and pushed the sun back north to renew its rule during spring and summer. Through this endless cycle of the seasons, the east-west line of the sun constantly changed its rising and setting positions.



Snakes of the East and West, for these directions are not 'bound'.

Chapter 4



The First People And Mythic Time

The Chumash believed that the Creator manifested the world in two stages. First came the more perfect world that existed in mythic time. The term *Siliyik* probably refers to the world as it was first created.³² Secondly came the transformation of this original creation, at the time of the Great Flood, into the more corrupted world of mundane time where humans now live. Mythic time never disappeared, however. The gods continued to act in this realm, influencing events in the lower worlds by periodically entering mundane time. Mythic time became closed off from the normal participation of humans, as punishment for their continued transgressions. Only specially-trained spiritual leaders could enter, and this necessitated rigorous ritual preparation, deprivation, or the use of psychotropic plants.

Huho Woi means a period of time long in the past.³³ But even further in the past is the era of the *Moloq*, a cosmological period which took place before the Great Flood. In this golden age, the First People acted like humans but were at the same time the ancestors of the animals and plants of the contemporary era.

J. R. Tolkien's stories in *The Lord of the Rings* are reminiscent of Chumash tales of mythic times, in that Tolkien's trees walk around and talk like humans. In Chumash tales, the datura plant is a kindly grandmother named *Momoy* who scolds her grandsons, and the agave plant is an aunt named *Pox* who saves her nephews from being burned by covering them with her soothing leaves.

In another story two Samala valley magicians enchant (*Alaxpus*) oak trees and make them sway from side to side without any winds blowing, thus re-enacting the primal conditions of the *Moloq* age when trees moved independently like humans.³⁴ Mythic time was renewed during such dramatic demonstrations. Qiliqutayiwit warned that such events take on supernatural characteristics, because they are dominated by the *Moloqiku*,

32 *Siliyik* is the Chumash name for their church building, meaning 'a place which contains everything'.

33 *Hu ho'wo'i* means 'long ago' (Tsmuwich, 43).

34 (Blackburn, December, 95; Qiliqutayiwit).

persona of gigantic stature who perform heroic deeds beyond the capabilities of modern people.³⁵ Until the Creator sent the Great Flood to destroy the evil in the world, the First People continued to live in an environment incomprehensible to contemporary humans.

The *Moloq* era was also a time when awesome power was readily available to those who could wield it, for good or evil. This is the reason that Chumash spiritual leaders seek to re-enter mythic time during their most important ceremonials. Bean describes this process as one in which humans try to bring mythic time into the present, so that they can interact with beings living in a supernatural realm. It is probably more correct to say that the human supplicant transcends mundane time, entering mythic time temporarily for the purpose of gaining knowledge or Atishwin and bringing it back into mundane time. This interpretation is consistent with Bean's analysis of Chumash spiritual leaders transcending both space and form.³⁶ *Talawiyashwit*, for example, is a Chumash personal name, which Kitsepawit translated as meaning 'a person who can teletransport himself anywhere in the world'. Such supernatural flight is a frequent motif in Chumash stories about the Moloq era and its magic qualities.

A frequent misconception about the first phase of world creation involves a confusion between the terms *Animism* and *Animalism*. The first term can be appropriately applied to Chumash metaphysics, in which animals, plants, and even physical objects were believed to have souls.³⁷ The European philosophers Leibniz, Schelling, and Thales would therefore appeal to Chumash intellectuals as colleagues, capable of appreciating the richness of Native American theology. *Animalism*, on the other hand, has nothing to do with Chumash religion, for it refers to the doctrine in which man is perceived as a soulless animal. This term applies to some Euro-American ~~0~~scientific theories in which humans are classified with other animal species which (it is believed) lack spiritual qualities.

Chumash theologians fundamentally rejected Animalism since they were convinced that all of the created world has been endowed with soul since its inception. The ritual phrase *Cenhes Heisup*, meaning 'the breath of the world', refers to this animating force. Naturalistic philosophy, as taught in American biology courses, no doubt has little appeal to those who believe in the *Cenhes Heisup*. The writings of Galileo, Hobbes, and other European proponents of naturalism would have been abhorrent to native Traditionalists, who rejected the doctrine that the material world is devoid of divine presence.

The term *Nature* has a Latin root, meaning 'that which is born'.³⁸

35 *Moloqiku* is the assigned (Anglicized) variant of *Molmoloq'iku*, meaning people of the *Moloq* era, who were superhuman in stature and capabilities (Blackburn, December, 95; Qiliqutayiwit).

36 (Bean, Power, 410).

37 *Animism* has a Latin root *Anima*, meaning 'air', 'soul'; a metaphysical theory in which all objects have souls (Webster 1960, 59). *Animalism*, on the other hand, is the doctrine which describes man as similar to other animals in lacking a soul or spiritual quality.

38 *Nature* has a Latin root, meaning 'to be born'; it is the sum total of all things born into time and space (Webster, 1960, 978).

To the traditional Chumash, however, it is properly defined as including the manifestation of the soul along with the physical body. Spiritual life cannot be separated from the material, in the Traditional viewpoint. Religious insight should not be derived solely from the study of the biological world, viewed as if it were devoid of divine purpose. Moreover, the mundane world of contemporary biological science is a secondary and derivative reality which cannot be understood properly without the recognition of its relationship to mythic time and space.

Mundane Time

By puberty, young Chumash were well-versed in poetry and prose about the legendary age of the *Moloq*. They learned how it was destroyed by the Great Flood, and how Coyote helped transform the Sphere of Xutash into the contemporary ecological system. The *Moloqiku* were reduced in power, and man was elevated to a primary position of influence, but not one of dominance. *Muscalalitiwi* is a Chumash term used by Kitsepawit to describe this newly created social world of mankind. Kitsepawit warns us that it is a shameless social environment, where people often follow their most base instincts such as sexual promiscuity, greed, and violence.³⁹ It is not known why this decadence came about, except perhaps as an ironic by-product of Trickster Coyote being given the dominant role in the transformation following the Great Flood. As a result of his many deeds benefiting humanity over the other species, Coyote became known as the benefactor of mankind even though he operated in an era characterized by the decay of supernatural power.

It was Coyote who weakened the powers of the First People, transforming them into the animals and plants of contemporary ecology. Coyote assigned each of them to a specific niche by announcing their new names such as Bear, Hawk, Salmon, Tobacco, and Datura. With each naming, a transformation magically ensured that no one animal or plant would preserve its great powers from the *Moloq* era. Humans were placed at an advantage in the emerging system, but they were also instructed to treat the *Moloqiku* respectfully, so that each animal or plant would continue to make its unique contribution to the new environment.

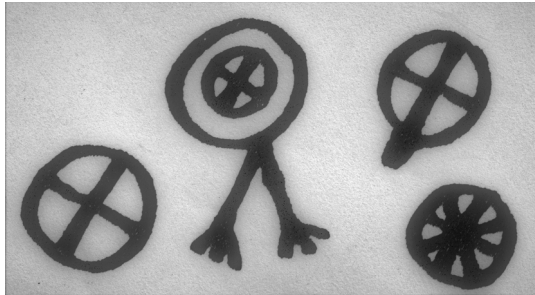
Bear was given large teeth and claws, as well as a massive body, which enabled him to challenge humans in direct combat. Other animals were assigned speed, size, or cunning so that neither man nor animals could completely dominate the ecosystem. Some of the First People were transformed into plants and others into what Euro-Christians consider inanimate objects, each with a different role to play in the emerging environmental balance.

Coyote also served as a Monster Slayer, overcoming powerful demons while making the new environment habitable for humans. Chumash folk tales are filled with descriptions of his heroic battles with the primordial demons that appeared at the end of the *Moloq* era. Similar stories can be found in native lore throughout the west, such as that of the Yakima of the Columbia River plateau. One Yakima tale begins with the statement

39 *Muscalalitiwi* means 'the social world' (Kitsepawit, Eye, 87). Kitsepawit describes it as shameless.

that: "Coyote traveled through the country, fighting monsters and making the world ready for the new people, the Indians who were to follow." Kwan Suluemeait relates a Chumash tale in which Coyote kills a transvestite demon named *Poxono*, who threatened to "tilt the world" and routinely frightened humans when he made it shake violently. Poxono's death symbolizes the controlling of homosexuality so modern humans could remain heterosexual and thus reproduce themselves.

Along with inland Southwest cultures, the Chumash describe the great deeds of another Monster Slayer, a solar child called Elder Brother. The Navajo chant, *Monster Way*, celebrates Elder Brother's triumphs over the demons, and tells how he overcame obstacles which confounded the child of the Moon, Younger Brother. In a number of Chumash stories, Coyote intervenes just in time to save these brothers whose powers are inferior to his own. The Chumash Elder Brother is Six'usus. He leads his younger brother, Sumiwowo, into many adventures. Nutu relates, for example, how Coyote saves them from the feathered *Xolxol*, a condor monster who bewitched them but could not overcome coyote's great powers. "No one excelled Coyote", Nutu concluded.⁴⁰



In another story about the brothers' adventures, Coyote rescues them from the Haphap demon, who was ripping up the hills near the ocean in an attempt to destroy the boys. Coyote cuts through his thick hide with a flint knife, ending the devastation to the coastline. Such heroics of Coyote the Transformer even extend into the ocean realm ruled by the Swordfish. X.

Suluemeait relates how Coyote swam down to the depths of the sea to rescue a drowned man by enchanting the normally defiant Swordfish.

Axi is a primary Chumash term relating to time. It means literally for something to happen. It is the root of many common Chumash phrases, such as "once upon a time" and "when things begin to happen."⁴¹ *Kumi* is another key term, meaning 'to approach something'. It probably has the same root as *Kam*, referring to the wing, the supreme instrument of movement. *Kumuli* means 'to be in season', and is related to many terms having to do with limitations of time.⁴² Time itself seems to be a negation, based on movement, which brings pain and decay.

The decadent state of movement began only after the transformation of the mythic world. The new ecological state was pervasively inferior to the original ecology. Eliade describes the changes that took place as so radical that the spiritual leaders of the First People withdrew permanently within the divine reality. After their departure, human spiritual leaders could still enter the divine realm through such means as the use of psychotropic plants. In short, the new era was one of relatively weakened spiritual powers. The age of man, according to

⁴⁰ (Blackburn, December, 115; Nutu).

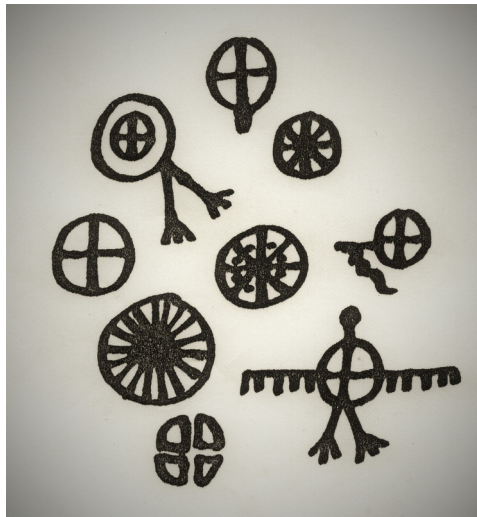
⁴¹ *Axi* means 'to happen' (Tsmuwich, 44).

⁴² *Kumi* means 'to arrive' (Whistler, 14; also means 'to come', 'to approach').

Chumash metaphysics, remains inferior to the golden age. Our contemporary environment has replaced a mythic environment of perfection beyond our understanding.

Decay, elapsing of time, and death were the conditions of the newly established middle world.⁴³ Plotinus demonstrates that this conceptualization was not unique to Native American philosophy. He argued that there is no evil within the Creator's reach, since moral decay came to exist in the 'lower realm' only after it was brought into being by the defects of the entities of this region. Plotinus influenced later Roman theologians who believed that matter cannot properly attain the ideal form of the higher heavens.

Such teachings eventually became a standard credo in Catholic gospel. The Spanish priests who worked in California, however, failed to understand that the Chumash held similar beliefs long before European expansion. American clerics repeated this mistake, persecuting the Chumash without understanding their cosmological belief that we live, we die, we are reborn into a perpetually changing world which is only an ephemeral circle within the great Abyss.



43 Furst presents an insightful discussion of Eliade's thesis that ancient human mystics were superior to modern mystics, because the ancients could enter the ecstatic state without the use of drugs (Furst, *Flesh*, ix).

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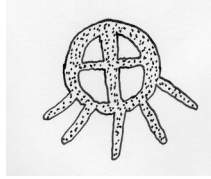
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Glossary

Citations for Tsmuwich are from the Barbareno Chumash Dictionary, Mary Yee. The citations for Samala are from the Santa Ynez Chumash Dictionary.

ABYSS The primordial condition of the cosmos, existing prior to the creation of the earth. The Abyss is a realm of infinite potentiality existing before the realm of Ideas and the physical universe was created.

Also see Within the Abyss.

See *Chumash Cosmology* (Anderson, fourth edition 2020) and *The Chumash House of Fate* (Anderson 1997) for discussions of the importance of the Abyss in Chumash cosmology.

Terms: The Chumash call the Abyss the *Alampauwauhani* (December, 97, Kitsepawit). The term has the connotation of a realm which is characterized by a potential for existence.

- In the earliest editions of *A Circle Within the Abyss*, the Abyss was associated with Sky Coyote, the South Mountain, and the stars of the southern sky. But later research into Chumash cosmology led to a reconceptualization in which this area of the sky is a realm of chaos but not the Abyss.

The Abyss does not have material existence like the stars of the southern sky. See Snilemun for the dominant star of the southern sky.

AXIS See World Axis.

BINDERS OF THE EARTH The supernatural beings who control the World Axis, i.e. keep it in a north-south alignment. Compare Encircled Cross. Contrast with Encircled Circle.

CHUMASH A family of southern California people who spoke a number of related Chumashan languages.

- The Chumash lived on the Santa Barbara Channel islands and along the coast from Malibu, north through Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and northern counties.

CIRCLE The Chumash symbol of perfect form and thus perfect motion.

- The title of this text refers to the existence of perfection within the disorder which characterizes the Abyss. The concluding passage of this book refers the reader back to the Chumash cosmological emphasis on the circle: "we live, we die, we are reborn into a perpetually changing world which is only an ephemeral circle within the great Abyss" (33).

ENCIRCLED CIRCLE A native American symbol which depicts the many layers of the physical world manifested from the World Axis. Compare Circle, Encircled Cross.

ENCIRCLED CROSS A native American symbol which depicts the division of the earth into four quarters. The World Axis cuts through its center. Compare Encircled Circle, Binders of the Earth.

EXISTENCE All of existence is preceded by the potential to exist. This potential is in the Abyss.

Terms: Neither the Tsmuwich nor Samala dictionary cited *Existence*.

Wil means 'to be' (Tsmuwich, 52). *Wil* (Samala, 433, 'to be', 'to exist'; *Wilpi* means 'to be at a particular place'). *Uxwatiwil* means 'to be in or at a particular location' (Samala, 435).

Related terms: *Aqqay* means 'to be at' (Tsmuwich, 4, 'to be at'). *Aqhay* (Samala, 475, 'to be in a particular place').

Related terms associated with truth: *Ma'linuc* means 'really' (Samala, 208, 'truly'; with the connotation of being 'true' as in the root '*Inu*'). *A'linuc* means 'truth' (Samala, 44).

Maticpi means 'really' (Samala, 598, 'truly').

- All of existence lies within the Abyss, a realm of infinite potentiality which precedes being.

FIRST PEOPLE See Molog for discussion.

HARRINGTON, JOHN A brilliant linguist and ethnographer from the Smithsonian Institution, who worked with the Chumash Indian elders in the early part of this century.

- Harrington's Smithsonian files remain the single most important source of Chumash ethnographic and linguistic data available to contemporary scholars.

HOKAN A major native language family of North America.

- Some linguists (Sapier, Kroeber, Harrington, Grimes) classify the Chumash as a subdivision of the Hokan language family. M. Mithun (Univ. Calif Santa Barbara) classified the Chumash as a language family unrelated to the Hokan.

KITSEPAWIT A leading Chumash historian from Santa Cruz Island. Used the colonial name Fernando Librado. Compare Suluemeait, Qiliqutayiwit.

LIZARD In *The Lizard's Tale* (unpublished) Anderson documents remarkable similarities between the lizard folk lore of the peoples of California in comparison to lizard tales from nearby tribes.

- See *Enememe's Friends* (Anderson 1997, third edition) for a discussion of the importance of the flute-playing Lizard in Chumash

theology. Also see Chumash Cosmology (Anderson, fourth edition 2020). Enememe is a musical Lizard, whose name means He Who Sleeps.

MOLOQ The Golden Age in Chumash theology, ruled by the *Molmoloq'iku* who are known as the First People (Qiliqutayiwit, December, 95).

Terms: The Anglicized term *Moloqiku* is used in the text for the First People. Stories about the *Moloq* age are called *Timoloqinash*.

Discussion of terms: The Samala dictionary translated *Ma Molmoloq' a Ku* as "the ancient people" (225). No distinction is given between the First People (supernaturals with personhood) and ancient humans (who also have personhood).

- Many surviving Chumash folk tales feature the transformation of the First People into the plants and animals of the contemporary environment.

PETROGLYPHS images cut into rock.

PHYSICAL Universe The physical universe was manifested from the Abyss which is without physical attributes.

Also see Xutash.

See Enememe for the supreme creator deity whose realm of Ideas is beyond the physical realm. See Snilemun for the ruler of the southern sky, where physical body is dominant and in chaos. And see Within the Abyss for commentary on the reality of all that is manifested by the Abyss.

- The Eagle (North star) is the ruler of the physical universe.

PICTOGRAPHS images painted on rock.. The pictographs of the Chumash are among the finest painted rock art in North America.

QILIQUTAYIWIT, M.S. a leading Chumash historian from the Santa Ynez Valley who used John Harrington of the Smithsonian Institution as a consultant before she died in 1922.

Terms: Qiliqutayiwit used the colonial name Maria Solares, thus the initials M.S.

REALITY See Existence.

SNILEMUN The celestial Coyote who is the dominant star of the southern sky.

See Abyss and Physical Cosmos for related commentary.

SULUEMEAIT: KWAN X. A leading Chumash historian who lived in the the Santa Barbara area. Compare Kitsepawit, Qiliqutayiwit.

Terms: Suluemeait used the Spanish nickname *Justo*, which means a just or pious man. *Xustu* is the Chumash variant of *Justo*. His adopted first name was *Juan* (*Kwan* or *Xuan* in Chumash, and John in English).

WITHIN THE ABYSS Text.

Also see Abyss, Physical Universe, Xutash.

Terms: *Tiyik* means 'to be in' (Samala, 533,). *Tiyik* (Samala, 377).

Ma'm means 'to be inside of' (Samala, 208; *Ma'm Awil* means 'it's inside').

- When Kitsepawit spoke of human existence being only an eddy within the Abyss, he honored the ancient Chumash metaphysics which placed all of the physical universe and the realm of Ideas within the Abyss which preceded being.

WORLD AXIS The top of this axis lies at the apex of the sky. which is the North Star.

- Descending downward on the pivotal pole from the apex, one would find one's self at the peak of the Chumash Central Mountain (called Iwihinmu).

XOY A Chumash constellation located at the highest levels of the heavens.

- Presumably this constellation is the Little Dipper which has the form of a net (square) with a throw line linking it to the North Star.

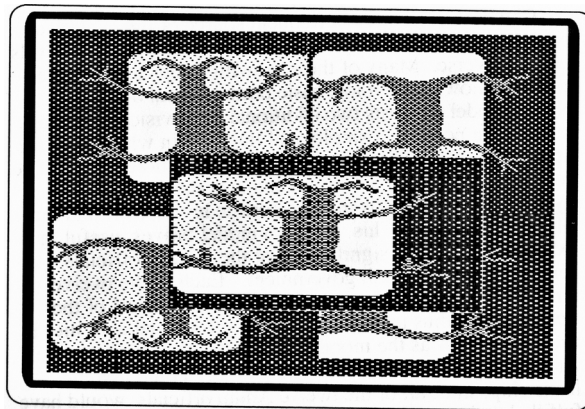
XUTASH The Sphere of *Xutash* is all of the physical world, as manifested by the Creator from the primordial Abyss.

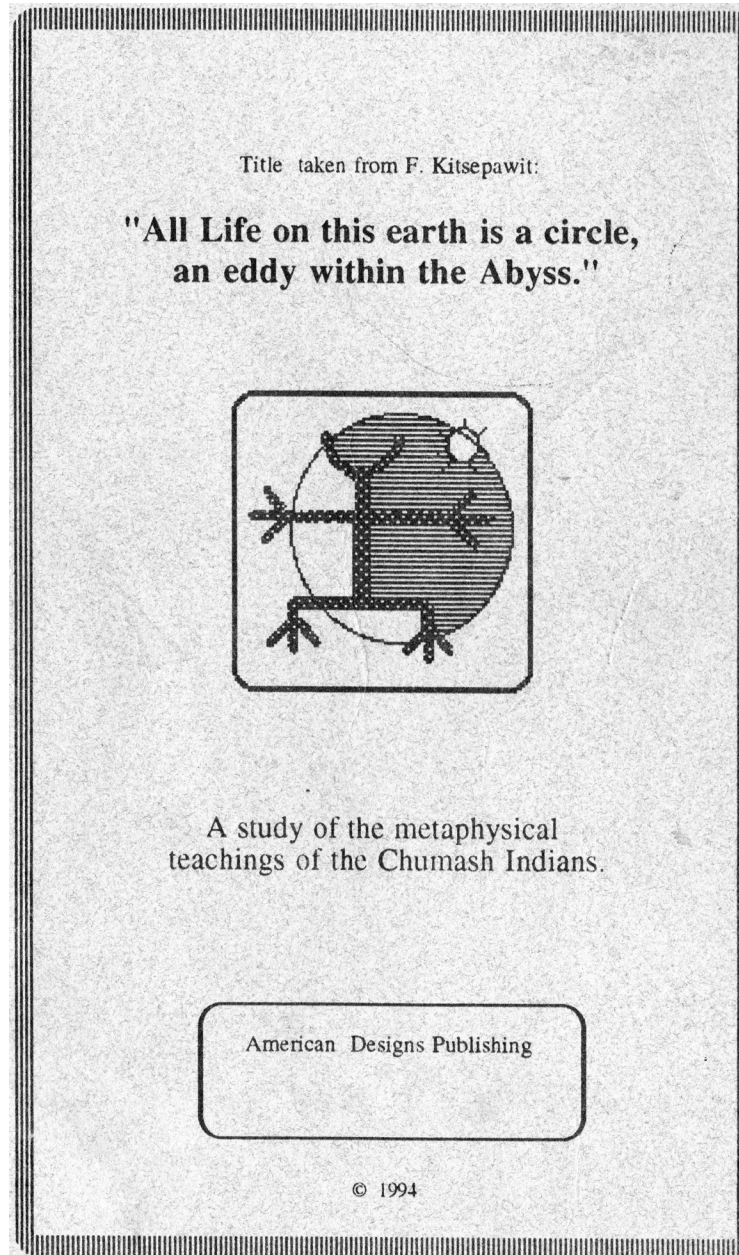
Also see Abyss, Within the Abyss, Physical Universe.

Terms: *Xutash* means 'the fruit', 'the flesh', 'of the physical world'.

Xutash also is used to refer to Mother Earth and the Evening Star (Crystals, 151, Hudson/Underhay; citing the Lulapin variant *Hutash*). See Physical Universe for related commentary.

- The cosmic layers of the physical world are symbolized in the Encircled Circle.





The 1993 back cover, first edition.