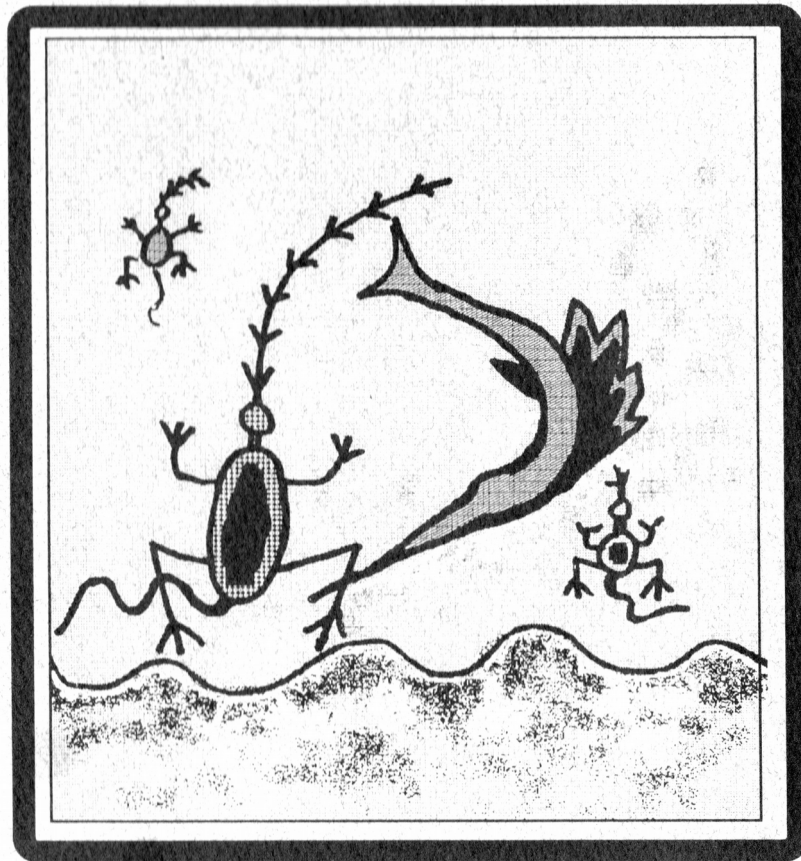


The Swordfish Race

The Swordfish Race

A Folk Tale
Told by Xwan Suleumeait



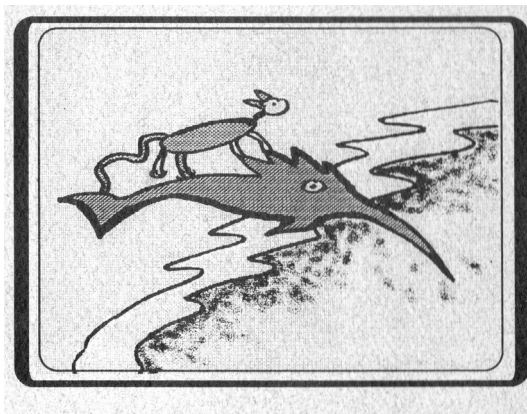
Edited by John M. Anderson

Native American Mythology

The Swordfish Race

John M. Anderson is a New West historian who also writes about the mythology of native Americans. He joins a growing number of scholars who are reassessing the history of the western United States, offering fresh viewpoints on events which shaped public policy in the past century. In this volume, he focuses on the role of the Swordfish in Chumash cosmology.

Native American mythology: Swordfish, Rulers of the Sea, Coyote, Racing Tales, Eating Contest, Dancing Contest, Shamanism, Drowning, Flute, Suleumeait. Native American tribes: Chumash, Pomo, Kootenai., Achumawi, Yakima, Haida, Tillamook, Coos. Native American: California, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, British Columbia.



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Table of Contents



Introduction.....	4
A Kootenai Racing Story.....	5
A Chumash Racing Story.....	7
Commentary On the Race.....	9
The Swordfish Feast.....	11
Competitive Chumash Dancing.....	13
Pomo Variants.....	16
Concluding Remarks.....	21
Postscript.....	23
Appendix A: The Swordfish and Sirius.....	24
Appendix B: Kuta Teachings.....	25
Appendix C: Pacific Coast Mermaids.....	26
Bibliography.....	28
Footnotes.....	30
Glossary.....	41



Introduction

Suleumeait used the nickname *Kwan Xustu*. This is a Chumash variant of the Spanish name Juan Justo, by which he was known to most American historians. Kwan lived on the California coast, near Santa Barbara and was active in the efforts of Chumash traditionalists to preserve their reservation lands at Kashwa. The hero of this narrative by Suleumeait is Old Man Coyote, who distinguished himself in a race against the mighty Swordfish. This is not just an ordinary race but a contest in which the winning side cheats by substituting many runners to compete against an awesome opponent.¹

The action begins with the silliness of Coyote's racing tactics, and then we find ourselves laughing at his outrageous behavior in an eating contest involving an inelegant use of a magic flute. Pomo folk lore is introduced in chapter six to demonstrate that these passages also have a more serious intent.

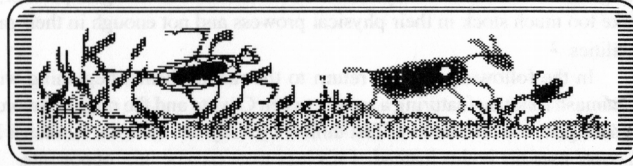
John Anderson

March, 2005

■ *This narrative has delighted many listeners interested in folk tales about the heroics of mariners who work the Pacific waters. The Chumash mythologist Suleumeait describes how Trickster Coyote rescued a missing fisherman by deceiving the powerful Rulers of the Sea. The drama celebrates a series of heroic conflicts staged at the bottom of the sea.*



Chapter 1



A Racing Tale From the Kootenai Indians

How Frog Cheated the Antelope

In 1994, I published *The Fast Thinker*, a small book which celebrated Native American racing tales. It featured a Kootenai Indian story about a race between a frog and an antelope. They competed in a foot race, which took place in western Montana near the Canadian border. Frog was able to trick the much faster Antelope into believing that he outran him. Actually Frog's relatives hid in the grasses and timed their jumps perfectly in sequence. Each frog leaped only once. To the excited witnesses, however, it appeared that one frog was jumping through the grass at a furious pace.

Since all Frogs looked alike to him, the foolish Antelope was completely taken in by the frogs' deception and to this day cannot understand how the seemingly clumsy Frog stayed ahead of him the whole way to the finish line. The clever Frog leader explained to his rival that he wasn't such a fast runner but he was indeed a fast thinker.

What makes this racing story so interesting is the narrator's approval of cheating as a means of obtaining one's goals. Similar folk tales were cited, from South America, Europe, and Africa to demonstrate the world-wide distribution of this racing/cheating genre. All of the stories were remarkably similar, with minor changes such as substituting a slow Turtle in place of the slow Kootenai Frog. But all of them shared the same plot device of having a team of runners compete clandestinely against a single rival. They also all taught the same moral. They celebrate the downfall of arrogant persons, who take too much stock in their physical prowess and not enough in their mental abilities.²

In the following text we return to the racing theme, beginning with a Chumash folk tale featuring a race between Coyote and the mighty Swordfish. Once again, we encounter a "fast thinker" in Coyote. Like

The Swordfish Race

the

Kootenai Frog, Coyote uses his brains instead of his legs to overcome his opponents.

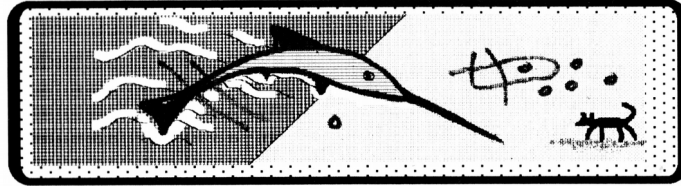
Weighing about the same as a medium-sized dog, Coyote faced a formidable rival in the Swordfish who can grow up to fifteen feet in length and weigh as much as a thousand pounds! Imagine what an impression it must have made on Chumash fishermen when they hooked such behemoths on their trolling line. Their boat would have been dragged through the water like a toy before the huge Swordfish tired itself out. When the Chumash managed to pull the exhausted catch alongside their boat, they were surely awed to see its length rivaling that of their craft. It weighed more than a grizzly bear, which was the dominant predator on the mainland. It is no wonder they assigned the Swordfish the role of the Ruler of the Ocean and that they venerated Coyote for daring to challenge this awesome creature.

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In the following Chumash narrative, the plot proves to be quite complex.³ The action focuses on the use of false images that appear to be something they are not. In the Kootenai narrative, the hero's fellow frogs hid in the reeds and pretended to be him. The reader will be surprised to learn who the Chumash hero chose to take over his running responsibilities!



Chapter 2



A Chumash Racing Tale

This narrative takes place in the ocean, off the California coast near the seaport of Shyuxtun (which is now called Santa Barbara).

One day long ago, Hawk went fishing. He fell overboard while trying to spear a fish and drowned. One of the rulers of the sea, a Swordfish, found Hawk and took him along with other scavenged items to his underwater home. Coyote, the clever magician, was sent by the mayor of Shyuxtun to save Hawk. To win Hawk's freedom Coyote underwent a series of tests designed by the Swordfish, passing each in succession. Here is a passage in the narrative, as told by X. X. Suleumeait (Juan Justo) and edited by J. Anderson.⁴ It explains how Coyote won a race against the Swordfish by cheating them.

"Before you return to your own people we must have a race to see who is superior," one of the Swordfish said to Coyote. "What will the course be?" Coyote asked. "Will it be from here straight out to there?" he said, gesturing. "Yes," said the Swordfish (whom the Chumash called Eleywun) for he was eager to race Coyote.

So Coyote quietly left the house and traveled along the proposed race course for a while, and then sat down and voided himself. He shaped the droppings into a coyote-like form, and then addressed it, saying, "You are a coyote like me and you are going to race tomorrow

The Swordfish Race

with the Swordfish. We are going to run a race." The Coyote went further on and did the same thing again. "You will get up and run, and run to that point there where the next coyote is, and then it will also run, always just ahead of the swordfish. You will run one way, and then you will run back the same way. And we will win the race, but the Swordfish will not have such magical helpers."⁵

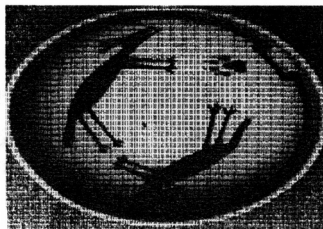
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The next morning dawned and the eldest of the Elyewun said, "Good, we won't have to leave at all, we'll stay here and watch." "Well, I'm not going to run for nothing," said Coyote. "What are you going to wager, what is the prize?" The eldest replied, "Well, if you win, you may carry Xelex (Hawk) off with you, and if you lose, you take nothing away." "All right," said Coyote. As soon as he uttered these fateful words, the swiftest of the Elyewun pranced up to the starting line and boldly announced that it was time to begin the contest.

"Are you ready?" the champion Swordfish racer asked Coyote." I think so," said Coyote. The starting official clapped his hands three times, and at the third clap the race began. Coyote soon fell behind the Swordfish. "Wow, I'm surely going to lose," he moaned as he lay down and urged his first ally to continue the race. To Coyote's surprise, his replacement really exerted himself and quickly ran ahead of the Swordfish. Arriving at the next check point, the imitation 'coyote' sat down to rest while the second one continued the race.

The gullible Swordfish runner was shocked to find his rival ahead of him. "That old man is faster than me!" he lamented. And all this time the real Coyote was resting near the starting place. Coyote congratulated himself when the racers reached the end of the course and started back, with his substitute racer still in the lead. Finally, they reached the spot where he was hiding. Lazy Coyote sprang up from the weeds and renewed the race just as the last coyote ally collapsed in exhaustion.

Coyote crossed the finish line, where the overconfident Swordfish spectators were gathered. Huffing and puffing as if from running, he exultantly demanded a concession from the leader of the hostile crowd. "You win," said the eldest Swordfish. "You win, there's no doubt about it."



A Yakima Variant

Magical 'scats' are often featured in native folk tales to entertain the audience, especially children. The Yakima of Washington State, for example, told a story of how Coyote created two excrement 'sisters' who saved him by chasing away a fierce grizzly.⁶

Chapter 3



Commentary On The Swordfish Race

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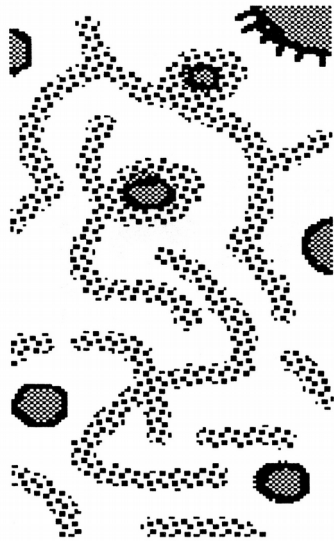
Coyote As A Trickster

Like the clever Frog discussed in the opening chapter, Coyote is forthrightly celebrated in this narration as a cheater. In a series of contests, he resorted to deception to continuously triumph over physically superior rivals. Coyote's use of scatological allies adds a humorous twist to the plot, and our understanding of the racing/cheating genre expands.⁷ Coyote is revealed as a "fast thinker" as he cleverly undermined the confidence of the Swordfish.⁸ As the narrative unfolds, the Swordfish became increasingly frustrated and began to express their growing impatience. They confided to one another that they no longer believed that Coyote could be beaten, and they thus grew increasingly eager to get rid of him.

To fully appreciate the narrator's admiration for Coyote in his triumph over the Rulers of the Ocean, the reader should keep in mind a number of fundamental problems facing Coyote before he swam down to the House of the Swordfish at the bottom of the ocean. First of all Xelex (Hawk) was in no position to help Coyote at any point in the drama. Xelex died because he foolishly ventured outside his proper sphere of influence. He apparently was a land hawk, who made the mistake of going fishing with his friends Pelican and a seabird identified only as Mut.⁹ Not being familiar with the ocean, Xelex could not swim and was easily seized by a Swordfish when he fell overboard. The Swordfish took Xelex's drowned body to his home at the bottom of the sea.

When Coyote agreed to rescue Xelex, he knew he was taking on a

very difficult task. Coyote not only had to compensate for Hawk's



Chumash Humor

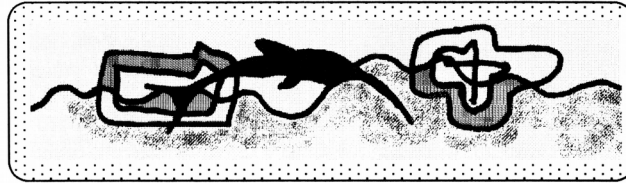
The descriptions of Coyote's impropriety in the opening scenes are very effective. Suleumeait fools the audience into thinking that this is only a comic narrative. But as they are laughing at Coyote, the audience is being set up for the dramatic second half of the story, which is dominated by the serious themes of drowning and reincarnation.

Although some contemporary readers might feel uncomfortable with naughty references to Coyote's 'false' runners, both young and older members of native audiences joined together in easy laughter at the silliness of Coyote's antics.¹⁴ They did not suffer from Anglo-Saxon taboos against scatological humor.¹³ On the contrary, Chumash spectators generally celebrated such lighthearted skits, and Coyote dancers were widely admired for their audacity during their show-stopping performances.¹⁵

pretentiousness (lack of personal balance) but he also had to carry out his rescue operations against the fastest animals in the sea. In case the audience had any doubt about their powers, Suleumeait described in detail how the Swordfish were also the greatest sorcerers in the ocean realm. The coastal Chumash considered them the guardians of the ocean food sources. They were venerated as the providers of fish, shellfish, and ocean mammals hunted by the humans.¹⁰ At times, the powerful Swordfish even chased whales ashore so the Chumash could enjoy a sudden bounty of nutritious meat and oils.

For all these reasons, the relatives of Xelex were greatly concerned when they sent Coyote to rescue him. They wanted Coyote to succeed but did not want him to offend the rulers of the sea. They gambled that he would outsmart the Swordfish, without making them vengeful, for Coyote was a very clever person.¹¹ If they were wrong, they faced starvation since the Swordfish would stop the ocean fish runs, and their nets and fish lines would come up empty.¹²





The Swordfish Feast

Questionable Etiquette At An Eating Contest

Coyote's troubles actually began before his celebrated race against the Swordfish, with two earlier ordeals. An examination of these preliminary trials will significantly enrich our understanding of the Chumash attitude toward cheating.

The first of these incidents featured a trial by eating. When the Swordfish proposed their welcoming feast, for example, Coyote became quite concerned. He knew that eating in the world below the sea was fatal, because once a person stomached the Swordfish's food they would never again be able to live in the world of humans. Coyote vowed to himself that he would not eat anything, or else he would fall under the Swordfish spell and fail to rescue Xelix. Thus he settled on a scheme of deception, to avoid contamination by the Swordfish food.

The Chumash believed that a person's soul remained forever in the ocean if it shared food with the Swordfish. It would be permanently cut off from the celestial Path of the Dead.

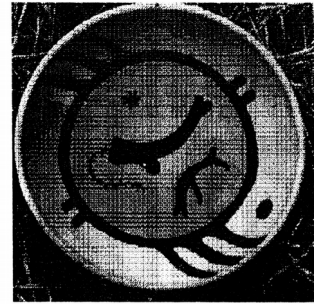
The *Elyewun* were so preoccupied preparing their feast, that they failed to consider how Coyote might spoil their plans. The elder Swordfish acted so graciously that Coyote could not refuse to eat, without behaving unseemly as a guest. To take advantage of Coyote's predicament, they placed a huge quantity of whale meat before him.¹⁶

The Flute Trick

It is at this desperate moment that Coyote came up with a scheme to save himself. Fortunately, he had planned ahead and brought his magic elderberry flute. "All right," said one of the Swordfish to Coyote, "Let's eat." Coyote thought to himself, "I don't like the looks of this. I know they're trying to kill me." "Get ready to dine," the impatient Swordfish commanded. Coyote adjusted his flute between his legs, so that no Swordfish could see it. "Have some," his host offered while thrusting a huge whale steak at him. Coyote pretended to chew the meat, while he placed it carefully into the opening of the flute. Then he gave a high, shrill cry, and the steak was sucked down and out the bottom end of the flute where it dropped onto the ground.

A curious Swordfish paused in his eating just long enough to thrust another steak of whale meat at his guest. And again Coyote howled "P'P" in a shrill tone so that the steak fell out of the flute's bottom. He held the flute between his legs in such a way that it appeared that he was depositing the meat behind him.¹⁸ The Swordfish were astonished to see how their diminutive guest was digesting his meat with very little effort, and so they began to really gulp their food in order to keep up with Coyote. Stunned by Coyote's deception, the Swordfish could think of nothing better than thrusting more and more chunks of whale meat on his plate. But Coyote kept right up with them, pretending to be eating while dexterously disposing of every chunk of meat they gave him through the hidden flute.¹⁹

Eventually, Coyote realized that he would win this eating contest. He began to plan for the events of the next day. "Tomorrow I'm going to get The evening finally drew to a close, when the twelve pieces of whale meat were finished off and Coyote single-handedly disposed of the last steak through his hidden flute. Even at this late hour, the foolish Swordfish never suspect their guest of duplicity.²⁰



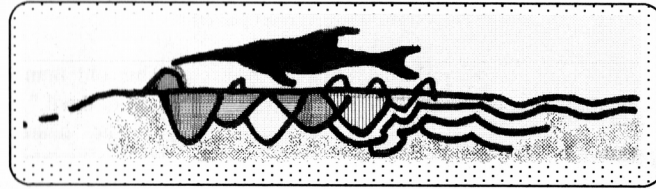
Chumash Whales

The theme of Swordfish dominating whales, the largest animals known to men, is widespread among the native peoples of California.

It appears, for example, among the Yana, an inland Hokan peoples located far north of the Chumash. Powers recorded, for example, that the Yana considered themselves like Swordfish chasing the much larger Wintun nation.¹⁷

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Chapter 5



Competitive Dancing

The Third Test

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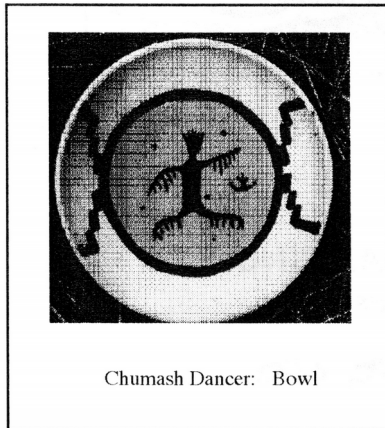
Coyote's troubles with the Elyewun were not yet over, for he was to be tested one more time before he could escape the depths of the ocean. The eldest Ruler of the Sea congratulated Coyote on his many successes, but the elder informed Coyote that before he could leave with Hawk's soul Coyote would have to join the Swordfish in a departure dance.

That night the Elyewun began to sing and dance among themselves. There were no guests and no female attendants. And there was no leaping or jumping. The Swordfish simply dragged their feet, dancing and singing in their dull fashion around the sides of the house, with the fire burning in the middle of the dance floor.²¹

Coyote sat and watched for a long time without comment. "That's not the way we do it back at home," he finally blurted out in frustration. "Your dancing is not very impressive!" When the dance ended the insulted Swordfish sat down. "Now it's your turn, kinsman," they gruffed to Coyote. "What can I do to please them?" Coyote thought to himself. "I know. I'll throw this poison so they can't see straight or see me clearly." So he threw a powdered drug at them and then began to sing and dance. He threw out his powder and the Swordfish watched as he danced, leaping and cavorting after the custom of the Chumash. Now it happened that there was a little water on the floor, and it seemed to the drugged Swordfish that Coyote was magically treading on the surface of deep water. *Cuq Cuq Cuq* it sounded underfoot, and the Swordfish

remained half-crazy, drunk from the drug, and watching in amazement.

The Swordfish Were Crazyed



Chumash Dancer: Bowl

The Swordfish grumbled among themselves, "This old man always wins, he is always superior to us! Yes, he's surely some kind of devil." Coyote was encouraged when he heard these laudatory remarks and began to sing louder and leap higher and higher. Finally he became utterly exhausted and sat down. The swordfish sang and danced again, but as before they simply circled around without any fancy steps and repeated what they had done before.

"Fine," said Coyote. "OK. you're done, but now it's my turn, kinsmen. I've decided to honor you by performing the *Sutiwiysis* or Seaweed

Dance."²² Coyote began to prance about and sing, leaping from place to place, and then he suddenly seated himself and began slapping his knees with both hands simultaneously.²³ Startling his audience, Coyote abruptly ended his slapping. He sprang up and renewed his dancing until a dramatic finale, when he gave a tremendous leap that carried him clear to the ceiling.²⁴

"Wow!" said one Swordfish. "Who would think that old coyote could leap clear to the roof? I couldn't do it!" "All right," said Coyote, "It's your turn again." But once again the Swordfish returned to their boring dance routine, while Coyote watched. And when Coyote's turn came, he announced that he would end his performance with the very difficult *Nukumpiyis*, or Barracuda dance, while the Swordfish grew increasingly nervous.²⁷

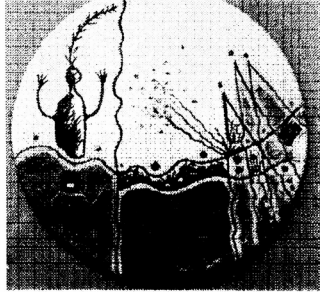
By the end of Coyote's dancing it was very late, almost midnight, and Coyote said, "It would be a good idea to go to bed now, because I have a long way to travel tomorrow." Then the eldest Swordfish answered, "All right. We've enjoyed ourselves very much, and now it's time to stop."

Resurrection of the Drowned Person

Although Coyote had passed the first three tests of the Swordfish, he still had the problem of resurrecting his drowned friend Hawk.²⁸ The Swordfish refused to help Coyote, arguing that they had found Hawk already drowned so it was not their responsibility to bring him

The Barracuda Dance

The *Nukumpiyis* was a very complex dance step, which quickly exhausted the dancers who had to be in excellent physical condition and quite agile. Kitsepawit describes one Barracuda dance in which the performers shot arrows at one another, deftly dodging the missiles which could have killed them if they struck.²⁵



A Swordfish Dancer: Platter

Rescuing the Souls of the Dead

When Coyote brought Xelex to the surface, they left behind the Swordfish and their gloomy seaweed world. Xelex soon recovered completely, and Coyote was celebrated as a hero.

But not all Chumash stories about rescuing the souls of drowned persons end so positively. Qilikutayiwit's story about a young girl who drowned in Zaca lake, for example, ends in tragedy. In this tale, the parents of the drowned girl asked a Limu (Santa Cruz) island spiritual leader to swim down into the depths of the mountain lake called Zaca to bring back the child's lost soul. When he dove into the cold waters, the heroic rescuer told the watching crowd that he would return in five days if he survived in the 'other' world below.

When the hero swam down, he found a world "just like" that of the Chumash living on the surface. There were many trails, including a very broad one leading north. He followed this trail until he came to a village of the dead. No one spoke to him for four days, but on the fifth day he was permitted to take the soul of the drowned girl back to the surface. She died the next day, in spite of his efforts.³²

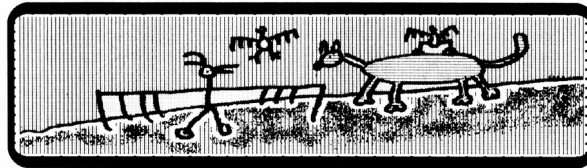
back to life.

Coyote became aggravated at this point in the drama, and resorted to using a sneezing powder on the guard who had been left behind to protect the Swordfish home. The guard sneezed and sneezed, until he became so miserable that he begged Coyote for mercy and agreed to revive Hawk. Coyote became exhilarated when he watched Hawk slowly regain consciousness, for he knew his adventure was almost complete.²⁹ Coyote had only to threaten the use of more sneezing powder to get the pliant Swordfish to reveal the location of the canoe where his Chumash friends were waiting on the surface.

When Coyote swam up from the Swordfish House, he surfaced near the rescue boat which quickly rowed him and Hawk in triumph to the mainland. Hawk's influential relatives in the town of Shyuxtun showed their gratitude to Coyote by giving him many presents. Even though Coyote had used deception to win his victories over the Swordfish, Coyote found himself an overnight celebrity, respected by all the people.³⁰ Due to his sudden social status as a hero, Coyote decided to remain at the Santa Barbara seaport, ending (at least temporarily) his notorious reputation for homelessness.³¹

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Chapter 6



Related Pomo Tales

The Thunder Brothers are the Pomo equivalents of the Chumash Swordfish. They were the rulers of the ocean storms and all the sea life.³³

Coyote's adventure at the bottom of the ocean ended happily, but he experienced a number of close calls before escaping with Hawk back to the mainland. In many scenes the plot development is straightforward and easily understood by the audience. But in some incidents, as in the dancing contest, the narration seems to be a fragment of a more complicated version.

Coyote's leaping up to the roof of the Swordfish's house is especially interesting. Suleumeait uses it to explain Coyote's victory in the dance contest, but did not embellish it enough to satisfy the listener of the importance of the leap. Why didn't the Swordfish try to jump up to the ceiling themselves? And what is the significance of such leaping into the air?

By examining the folk lore of other people living on the Pacific coast, we can greatly expand our understanding of this and other passages in the Chumash story. The folk lore of the Pomo Indians is an especially rich source for ethnographic enrichment. The Pomo live far away in northern California, but their folk tales include passages of remarkable similarity to the Chumash. The settings may change and the characters sometimes differ, but the resemblances are remarkable given the hundreds of miles of hostile territory which separate the two cultures. Coyote was greatly admired by the Pomo, for example, for the same reason the Chumash admired him. He was a story told by the Pomo narrator L. Peters clearly illustrates this shared tradition. In one of Peter's fascinating ocean adventure stories Coyote, and his son Obsidian Man, decided to swim down to the bottom of the ocean to visit the House of Thunder.³⁵ Like the Chumash House of the Swordfish, this strange abode was located in the ocean at the western edge of the world.³⁶ Here, Coyote and his son were welcomed as the guests of the



Frog Woman: As the Ruler of Fresh Waters

Coyote's wife in the first Pomo narrative is Frog Woman, who is the Pomo "queen of the waters." She is the guardian spirit of springs, creeks, and fresh water ponds.

See *When Frog Stole The Waters* (Anderson, 1996) for further discussion about the relationship between Coyote and Frog Woman in Pomo mythology. Coyote did not always get along with his amphibious wife. In fact, he repeatedly conflicted with Frog Woman, when she tried to keep fresh water from flowing freely on the surface of the earth.

See Fresh Water in the glossary for further information.

Thunder Brothers, who ruled the ocean and all of its resources including mammals, fish, and plant life.³⁷

Peter's narrative suggests a number of interesting parallels to the Chumash story. Obsidian, for example, is a natural glass of volcanic origin. It was used for making arrowheads and knives and was therefore associated with warfare. But its smooth black surface also made an ideal mirror. Perhaps Coyote's bringing of obsidian to the bottom of the sea is paralleled by the Chumash Coyote who used the reflective surface of water on the floor to help 'craze' the Swordfish.

Peter's inclusion of obsidian in the story is not accidental. We can be sure of this, because the Pomo narrator C. Pinto tells a related story in which Coyote and his wife Frog conceived the cultural hero named Obsidian Man. Like many Chumash heroes, Obsidian grew at a magical rate into a young adult.³⁸ One day the youth asked his father Coyote to go with him to the house of the Thunder Brothers, located in the far west.³⁹ The father and son team met many challenges along the way before they came to the house of the Rulers of the Sea. Here they endured numerous afflictions, including an eating contest virtually identical to the Chumash version. "Then Thunder brought out bread and pinole and mush which were all made from human blood. These, Coyote ate alone, that is, he pretended to eat them, putting something into his mouth, so that the blood ran out and it was unnecessary to swallow it."⁴⁰ From many related Pomo tales, it is clear that this "something" was an elderberry flute! Agitated by his guests' seeming immunity to poison food, Thunder challenged Obsidian to a shooting contest in which Obsidian killed the Rulers of the Sea after dodging their arrows.⁴¹

The Kilaks

Kilak may be a Pomo name for one of the hawks, based on their high and rapid call "Klee, Klee." Perhaps it is the same hawk species as the Chumash *Kilak* which is the sparrow hawk.

The sparrow hawk, also known as the American Kestrel, is a swallow-like falcon. It is the only small hawk with a red back and tail. The sparrow hawk can be readily identified in the field, by its habit of hovering on rapidly beating wings as it watches the ground for prey.

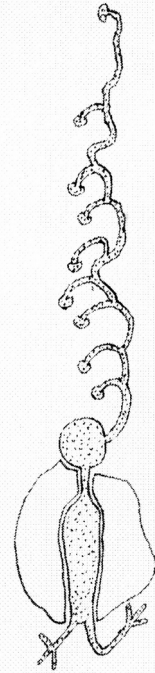
The Flute Trick

Let us temporarily put aside the theme of the archery contest to focus our attention on the whimsical food swallowing passages. The flute trick is a familiar motif which appears in a number of other Pomo tales, including another interesting version told by L. Peters.⁴² Coyote is featured in this text as the cultural hero, who saves Falcon from death (just as in the Chumash story). But in this tale, the events take place in the upper world, not the ocean. And the supernatural beings called the Kilaks take the place of the Rulers of the Sea.

Falcon appears in Peter's story as Coyote's grandson, who decides one day to go east to gamble with the Kilaks.⁴³ Like the Chumash Swordfish, the Kilaks never allowed anyone foolish enough to enter their house to escape.⁴⁴ Buzzard advised them to travel southeast to find the dwelling where the Kilaks lived (this southeastern direction suggests that they may have resided in the House of the Sun associated with the winter solstice).⁴⁵ To reinforce the great dangers of approaching this heavenly abode, the narrator told how others the heroes met along the way also warned them to turn back. But Coyote and Falcon persisted. They did not retreat even when they came to the very wide river which separated the middle and upper worlds.

Crane helped the adventurers across the river but cautioned them to go no further, or else they would be attacked by the cannibal Kilaks who ate people.⁴⁶ Leaving the river behind, Coyote and his grandson came upon friendly Crows who also warned them away, cautioning that they would never defeat the Kilaks at gambling. Fearing for the safety of the adventurers, they especially advised against eating anything served to them by the Kilak.⁴⁷

When Coyote and Falcon arrived at the Kilaks' house, they discovered that the cannibals wore red and their house was as white as snow, from the bones of the dead which had been thrown around their terrible dwelling.⁴⁸ Fortunately Coyote was a diviner, so he was able to see into the future to determine exactly what the Kilaks would do to try and kill them.⁴⁹ "Now Coyote had a flute in his hunting sack and he was going to pour the food from the baskets served by Kilak into this and it would run down into his magic hunting sack and disappear there."⁵⁰ Coyote succeeded in deceiving the Kilaks in a number of other incidents, and grew confident enough to agree to an archery contest.



The Flute

Coyote used a flute in the Pomo tale, to defeat his enemies. The elderberry flute is featured in many other folk tales celebrated by ancient Californians.

See *Enememe's Friends* (Anderson, third edition 1997) for a story about the Chumash flute-playing Lizard and the adventures of his companions including Coyote. The flautist in this story plays divine music, which brings tranquility and wisdom to the listener.

Falcon shot first, but missed. Then the first of four Kilaks flew into the air crying "Ki'lak, Ki'lak, Ki'lak."⁵² Coyote knew the future, so he guessed correctly which way each of the Kilaks would dodge. With his help, Falcon killed three Kilaks in succession, while none of his enemies even scratched Falcon with their arrows.

Then it was the Kilaks' last chance to shoot at Falcon. Thus the Pomo Falcon, like the Chumash Coyote among the Swordfish, had to 'dance' for his life. He succeeded in avoiding the Kilak's arrows, and flew down to the floor of the house to pick up his bow and arrows to shoot at the surviving Kilak. So when this last Kilak flew up, he tried to flee through the smoke hole at the top of the roof. But Falcon shot him before he could escape. Then Coyote and Falcon killed the two parent Kilaks to put an end to their cannibalism.⁵³

Another Visit To the Kilaks' House

When Pomo adventurers came upon the Kilak's house, they could see it from a long distance because of the many bones scattered all around it. These were the bones of dead humans, and visitors had much to fear.⁵¹

In a related Pomo story, Falcon encountered a beautiful woman while on a hunting trip. All Pomo hunters knew better than to be distracted away from their duties under such circumstances, but love-struck Falcon decided to follow this woman who lured him into the upper world.⁵⁵ The mysterious woman was Eagle Woman. She put the hunter through a series of tests. One of the most dangerous occurred when she flew ahead of Falcon and disappeared through a hole in a large rock. This rock doorway smashed together repeatedly and acted as a barrier against intruders into the heavens. Falcon managed to slip through without being crushed, and once again took up Eagle Woman's trail heading north. After a long journey, they came into view of the House

Falcons As the Pomo Sun Guardians

In the Chumash story we don't know what type of hawk Xelex is. Kwan Xustu provides no other clues as to Xelex's identity, except to explain that it was Coyote who intervened to save Xelex's soul.

A number of interesting passages, which appear in Pomo mythology, suggest that Xelex may have been a falcon (and possibly a sparrow hawk). The Pomo Falcon was subordinate to Coyote, who controlled Falcon through his vanity. Falcon was very popular with the people, however, because he had succeeded in placing the Sun into orbit above the earth. Coyote had conceived of the idea, but had to rely upon the birds to carry the newly created sun into the sky. Falcon's bright red feathers were a result of his bravery in carrying the hot sun aloft. But he wore his red feathers with too much pride, and Coyote was always able thereafter to exploit his vanity.⁵⁴

of the Kilaks (the Kilaks, who ate people). "No one who enters the house of the Gilak ever comes out alive," warned the narrator.⁵⁶ But Eagle Woman went ahead

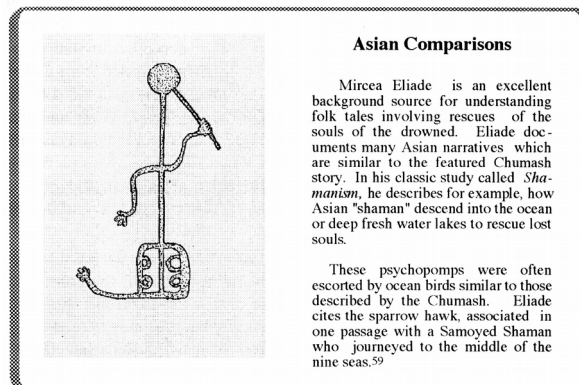
fearlessly, because she wanted revenge against the Kilak who had murdered her brother. She succeeded in killing the Kilak, and the story ended with her returning with Falcon back to the middle world.

Another Variant of the Flute Trick

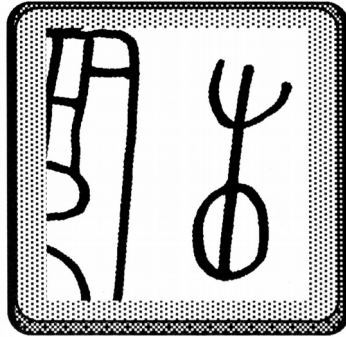
In a tale by an Eastern Pomo narrator, Falcon set out to find his missing wife, Quail.⁵⁷ She left him as a result of a quarrel. When he finally discovered his wife's trail, Falcon realized to his dismay that Quail had fled south to take refuge among the Kilaks.⁵⁸

Falcon was distraught and not thinking clearly. He and his younger brother boldly approached the House of the Kilaks. Failing to observe conventional caution, Falcon was killed almost immediately by the powerful celestials.⁶⁰ Fortunately his brother prudently held back, and returned home to get help.⁶¹ After hearing his explanation of Falcon's ill-fated adventure, Blue jay, Red-headed Woodpecker, Bat, and Fisher volunteered to rescue Falcon's body.⁶² These bold adventurers were determined to revenge the death of Falcon, so they pressed on to the House of the Kilaks. The Kilaks welcomed them with a deceptive invitation to a feast. But the Pomo had learned from Falcon's previous mistake, and they decided to trick their false hosts. Human flesh and blood was prepared for the feast, but the Pomo refused to eat this food. "One of the people had with him an elderberry stick with the pitch out, he pointed all this great quantity of food into his elderberry stick, and it looked as if the people had eaten it."⁶³

Failing to defeat the Pomo through this eating ruse, the Kilaks proposed an archery match designed to test the 'dancing' abilities of the contestants. To participate, each antagonist had to expose themselves to arrows shot by their rivals. The Pomo pressed their cause, primarily because they trusted the Fly, who swore to them that he knew his masters secret shooting strategies.⁶⁴ In the opening battle, the Kilaks' arrows repeatedly missed the Pomo fliers. When their turn came, the visitors slew the Kilaks and burned their home.⁶⁵



Chapter 7



Concluding Remarks

From our examination of these Pomo narratives, we can see that Suleumeait's Swordfish story is beguilingly complex. It contains a number of subplots, some of which are only partially developed. Yet these fragmentary passages are quite interesting because they suggest important links to more fully preserved mythological traditions found elsewhere in California. Perhaps most significant among these secondary sources are drowning stories which are widely dispersed not only in California but among native peoples living all along the Pacific coast. In story after story, the cultural hero is asked to save a drowned person, by swimming down to the home of the Rulers of the Sea. Here he undergoes a series of tests, overcomes adversity, and returns to the mainland as a hero.

Drowning narratives are found as far north as the Arctic. Haida stories about Nanasiimgat, for example, offer interesting comparative chronicles from Alaska. In a number of stories from Queen Charlotte island, the hero's wife drowns and is taken by the Rulers of the Sea, the killer whales, to their home at the bottom of the ocean. Just like the Chumash Coyote, the Haida cultural hero is escorted out to sea by two birds who waited on a boat for the hero to return.⁶⁶

Like the Chumash Coyote, the Haida hero realized that he needed an ally to overcome the ocean rulers and thus sought the confidence of a household slave who resented the Rulers of the Sea. Taking the advice of this slave, the desperate hero steamed up the Killer Whales' home just before they arrived, by sprinkling water on the hot coals of the fire. The dwelling was suddenly filled with dense water vapors, just like the heavy fog which obscured the Swordfish House in the Chumash narrative. In the confusion of the shrouded room, the hero escaped with the soul of the drowned, swam up to the waiting boat, and was

escorted triumphantly to the mainland.

Ocean Storms of the Fall & Winter

For further information about Chumash traditions involving the Swordfish as rulers of ocean storms, see *American Indian Astrology* (Anderson, 1997). The chapter on October explains how the majority of these storms come in the fall and winter. The Chumash had such respect for the force of these Pacific storms that they ceased most ocean traffic in October. Fear of drowning was a major motivating force in observing this traditional ban on ocean transportation.

Each of these dramatic narratives celebrates the heroics of a native spiritual leader who dared to venture out onto the ocean to rescue a drowned soul.⁶⁷ The story of Coyote's adventures among the Swordfish clearly fits into this genre. The humor which characterizes the opening scenes of Suleumeait's narrative thus blends almost imperceptibly into a more somber conclusion. When queried by his Santa Barbara relatives, the recovered drowning victim described his captivity at the bottom of the ocean as like sleeping. Hawk's soul had left his body as in other forms of death, but his tragedy was that his soul was condemned to remain in the ocean. The waters of the sea dampened the fire of Hawk's soul, rendering him incapable of rising up into the heavens to journey on the Path of the Dead.

Unless his soul reached the celestial paradise called *Shimilaqsha*, the Chumash Land of the Dead, Hawk could not be reincarnated. Clearly, the Chumash audience listened in awe as Suleumeait described Coyote's descent into the depths of the ocean.⁶⁸ Who else but Coyote would have such compassion, and such confidence in his own powers, to risk the dreary fate of the permanent ocean dwellers-cut off forever from the light of the stars and the Sun?

John Anderson
April, 1997





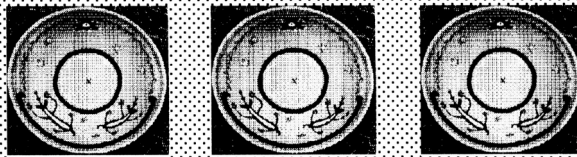
Postscript

In the eight years since *The Swordfish Race*, was first published, my understanding of Chumash cosmology has been greatly enriched by exposure to Uto-Aztecan mythology. To understand Uto-Aztecan mythology about the Pacific ocean, the reader needs to understand that the Los Angeles Basin was invaded and occupied by these non-Chumash peoples, who drove the original Chumash and Hokan residents back to the borders reported by the invading Spanish military.

My wife's attendance at the Morongo reservation's cultural and linguistic classes led by Earnest Siva stimulated my cross-cultural understanding of the Tongva and the Chumash.

The Morongo reservation is the home of Maringayam and Kawi native Californians. Although it is some distance from the Pacific ocean, both the Maringayam and Kawi theology has been profoundly influenced by the nearby seashore where their folklore identified as the site where Coyote took the heart of their Dying God.

John Anderson, 2005



The Chumash House of Fate

Hawk's drowning, under normal circumstances, would have meant his soul was doomed to remain forever at the bottom of the sea. But in Suleumeait's story Coyote intervened and apparently changed Hawk's fate.

For a detailed discussion of the role of **fate** in Chumash cosmology see *The Chumash House of Fate* (Anderson 1997). This text explains that Coyote was not an insignificant bit player in Chumash folk lore. He was in fact one of the five most important deities in many ancient Californian religions! To fully appreciate Coyote's adventures among the Swordfish, therefore, the reader needs to understand why of all the gods Coyote was, and continues to be, the most sympathetic to the needs of humanity.

Appendix A



The Swordfish And Sirius

In the 1997 edition of the *Swordfish Race* (Anderson) the southern star called Sirius by Americans was speculatively associated with the crystal house of the Swordfish.¹

In the glossary of the 1997 edition, under Crystal House, the star Sirius was speculatively associated with the home of the Swordfish located at the bottom of the ocean. The text read:

“Hypothesis: The native Californians’ crystal houses located below the sea represent Sirius, the brightest star in the heavens.

The Chumash Swordfish with their one horn may therefore rule the southern end of the cosmic axis, which is the star Sirius. Sirius is the brightest star in the heavens, and is the inspiration of the Chumash and Pomo crystal houses of the rulers of the sea which lie at the bottom of the ocean [a symbol of the southern heavens].”

In the decades which followed, my research into Chumash and Pomo cosmology led me to reject this early speculation. I came to realize that native Californians considered the ocean realm to be unique and clearly separate from life on the surface of the earth and from the celestial realm. The crystal houses of the rulers of the ocean were, indeed, similar to the crystals which made up the stars. Presumably, they were constructed from the falling stars which landed in the ocean. And presumably Sirius, with its unrivaled brilliance, was also made of a vast crystalline structure. With this observation, the similarities end.

In the fourth edition of *Chumash Cosmology* (Anderson) the glossary term Crystal reads: “The Chumash believed the crystal found on the surface of the earth was scared pieces of fallen stars. The stars, themselves, were made of crystal.”² The ocean was described in this glossary as separate from the surface of the earth and from the heavens. The star Sirius (*Snilemun*) is not associated with water like the realm of the Swordfish but instead is described as a sweat house of intense heat. It is a place where the reincarnating souls of the newly dead are challenged by the awesome heat of Sirius. This process is associated with the dessication of the body of deceased humans. Chapter seven focuses on the ocean realm and its dangers to humans. It cites Kitsepawit’s warning that drowned souls never return to the path of life and death but become wanderers.

In *Kuta Teachings* (Anderson) the crystal houses of supernaturals like the Swordfish in the ocean and Sirius in the southern sky are revered for their ability to sparkle with light and for their transparency

1 (Anderson, *Swordfish*, 42).

2 (Anderson, *Chumash Cosmology*, 75).

indicating minimal physical body. Unlike Sirius which abhors physical body, the Swordfish embrace physical body to the extreme of eating whales which are the largest animals in the sea. Coyote finds himself at home in Suleumeait's narrative because he too is a champion of physical body.

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Appendix B



Kuta Teachings

The second part of *Kuta Teachings* (Anderson) features the perilous flight of the soul after it leaps from the cliffs of Point Humqaq.³ At first the soul must resist the lure of mermaids whose beauty tests its ability to put aside sexuality as it seeks reincarnation. The ruler of the mermaids is the daughter of Eagle who rules the stars of the northern skies. She rules the plants and animals of the shallow seas, with their awesome abundance.

Once the soul soars beyond the shallows, it enters the deeper ocean which is ruled by the Swordfish. Suleumeit does not mention the mermaids in his narrative although they played an important role in Chumash lore about the shallow seas. But we do know a good deal about the deeper waters of the ocean. Chapter four of *Kuta Teachings*, for example, focused on the many threats to the aspiring soul as it moves across the waves and high winds of the deeper ocean. If through fatigue, loss of will power⁴, wind storms or other causes the soul falls into the water, it is seized by the Swordfish and dragged down to the bottom. The waters of the ocean drown the soul, extinguishing its flame and ending its immortality.

Drowning

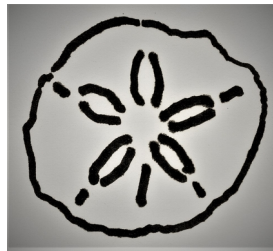
The drowning featured in *The Swordfish Race* was fundamentally different from the deaths caused by demons harming humans on the surface of the land. For example, a person dying from a plague brought to the earth by a demon is not cut off from the path of the dead. In contrast, drowning did cut off the soul from reincarnation!

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- 3 Point *Humqaq* is the most western point of land in Chumashia. It is called Point Conception by the Americans. The flight of the soul as it begins its journey over the shallow oceans is called *Xoyoyon* flight in *Kuta Teachings* (Anderson, glossary; *Xoyoyon* means 'to fly').
- 4 *Ushk'al* means 'to be strong' (Tsmuwich, 83); *Usk'al* in Samala (398; 'to endure'). "The southeastern governor named Kwayin taught that will power was a fundamental of proper education (Chumash Psychology, Anderson; glossary term 'Will_Power'; under the glossary term Drowning: Fear of. It is noted in this passage that Chumash seamen were greatly admired, for they routinely risked drowning and thus the loss of the immortality of their souls).

The Swordfish Race

In *A Chumash Christmas* (Anderson) a dangerous witch threatened the welfare of a Chumash community. The cultural hero Ciqneq deliberately killed this witch by drowning: “the witch was not killed by “an animal” but by drowning.”⁵ In traditional Chumash mythology, this witch thus fell under the sway of the *Elye’wun*, the Swordfish demons (*Nunashish*) who rule the ocean. See New

England witch trials for examples of American Christian drowning of witches.”⁶ Note that the Swordfish cannot drown nor be killed by demons, disease, or witchcraft for they are supernaturals who live eternally.



Appendix C



Pacific Coast Mermaids

The research for *The Swordfish Race* led to the first draft of *Pacific Coast Mermaids* (Anderson, 1998). Chapter two is focused on Chumash narratives involving mermaids who are not mentioned in Suleumeait’s swordfish story but play an important role in Chumash conceptualization of the ocean ecology.

“In Chumash tradition, the soul of the newly dead left its life-long dependence on logical, sentient reasoning and began its slow immersion into the subconscious. In its flight across the open waters of the Pacific, it became disoriented and crazed.”⁷ If the soul is weak, it falls into the ocean waves and is seized by the Swordfish and taken to their crystal house at the bottom of the sea.

5 (Chumash Christmas, Anderson, 29; footnote 27). Note that Kitsepawit referred to demons (*Nunashish*) when he spoke of “animals” in this narrative. See Demon in the glossary.

6 (Chumash Christmas, Anderson, 29; footnote 27).

7 (Mermaids, Anderson, 7; from the 1998 introduction).

Mermaids as Symbols Of Ocean Fecundity

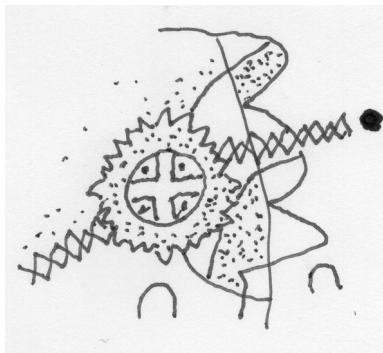
Kitsepawit described the daughter of Eagle as living on *Limu* island before her transformation into a mermaid. Coyote tried to seduce her, and she rejected his advances in the opening passages in the tale. But soon she became remorseful over rejecting Coyote, who was a symbol of male sexuality. She immersed herself to her waist in the sea, magically transforming the bottom half of her body into a fish form. Thereafter, she became a sexual being mothering the plants and animals of the shallow ocean off the coast of the mainland and the islands.

“Kitsepawit described the daughter of Eagle, who transformed herself into a mermaid, as the Flower of the World. He did not say specifically which type of flower was associated with the mermaids, but I suspect that it is the flower seen on the Sanddollar.

Before her transmorphing, the Eagle’s daughter’s favorite flower may have very well been the poppy. In Suleumeait’s passage about her life as a fully human woman, the Eagle’s daughter was from *Swaxil* which is famous for the large poppy fields in the hills above this seaport. In *Enememe’s Friends* (Anderson), not surprisingly, Kitsepawit explained that the brilliant orange red poppy flower was closely linked to the Limu island seaport of *Swaxil*.

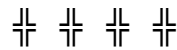
The Flower of the World was originally one of the supernatural First People. She lived on the surface of the earth in mythic space/time, but through an act of repentance transmorgified herself at the beginning of

mundane space/time into a being of the ocean whose depths lay below the rays of the Sun. But the mermaid, like the seals and other pennipedia, spent much of her life resting and sunning herself on coastal rocks, warming in the warmth of the sun.⁸



8 (Pacific Mermaids, Anderson, second edition 2020).

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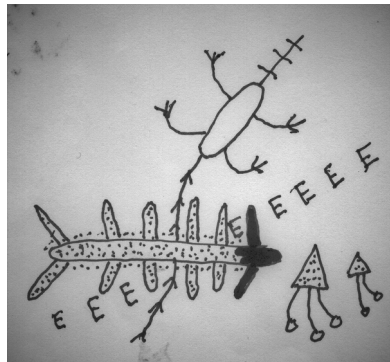
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Ygnacio, Luisa See Nutu.

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Endnotes

Tsmuwich refers to the Barbareno (Tsmuwich) dictionary.

Samala refers to the Santa Ynez (Samala) dictionary.

1 These stories featuring winning a race by deceit contrast with equally popular racing tales celebrating the courage of a hard runner who wins a race through tenacity.

Two Pomo racing stories illustrate this principle. One story, for example, is told by an Eastern Pomo named Tom Mitchell. It is called "The Race Between Mud-hen and Other Birds" (Barrett, Pomo, 354). Although Mudhen is ungainly in his stride, he runs hard and eventually wins a great race. In a related narrative, told by a Central Pomo named Charlie Pinto, Mudhen again triumphs over a swift rival. In both tales, the arrogant loser is humiliated as in the Kootenai story, but no deceit is used by the Mudhen to overcome its rivals.

These Pomo stories are particularly interesting, since the Chumash Indians (separated by hundreds of miles from the Pomo) used the title Mudhen for important diplomatic officers in their governments. These officials probably utilized young men chosen for their running abilities, for they were responsible for bringing messages from centers of government to outlying towns. As government officials, we can be assured they followed the work ethic of the Pomo Mudhen runners, and not the cheating ways of the Kootenai Frog (or of Coyote in his race against the Swordfish).

2 Cheating narratives should be distinguished from Native American stories featuring team running, including the many popular tales which celebrate the triumphs of a 'relay' team.

Relay racing appears in Native American mythology throughout the Americas. These tales involve no deception, and instead feature successful efforts of a team of runners. The Karok preserved a classic example of (baton-passing) relay racing in their story entitled "How Animals Brought Fire To Man" (Fisher, California, 46). The moral of this story is that a group of individuals with varying talents can overcome more powerful rivals through collective efforts. The baton (fire) is passed sequentially from Coyote to Mountain Lion, to Bear, to Rabbit, Squirrel, and finally to Frog. In the end, the relay team won the race.

3 See chapter seven for further discussion of Peyeyol's subplots.

4 See Suleumeait in the glossary for a discussion of this narrator's name.

5 (Blackburn, December, 185; Suleumeait).

6 The Chumash were certainly not unique among western tribes in featuring excrement jokes!

In a humorous Yakima folk tale called "How Coyote Tricked Grizzly

Bear", for example, Trickster Coyote used his excrement as guard dogs. When Coyote saw Grizzly Bear coming along the same trail, he quickly excreted two "sisters" to help him. As soon as they came out, he metamorphosed them into fierce dogs (Hines, Ghosts, 121). The two magical excrement dogs intimidated Grizzly Bear, who quickly went his own way without bothering Coyote. One of the dogs is described as "excrement" in Hine's glossary (420). These magical excrement 'beings' are described as "advisors" (30; Hines cites Stith Thompson's 1946 index of folk lore literature, in classifying the Yakima excrement "advisors". See Magic Excrement in the glossary for further discussion.

7 See Coyote: His Magic Excrement and Image in the glossary, for further discussion.

8 See *The Fast Thinker* (Anderson, 1994) for a discussion of fast thinking racers who use their wits to defeat a champion runner.

This Chumash narrative fits into this genre, which is sometimes described as 'cheating' racing tales. Coyote could never have defeated the mighty Swordfish, for example, in an honest contest.

9 Suleumeait used the term *Xelex* to refer to the drowning victim in this narrative. *Xelex* was the "nephew" of Eagle, the Chumash governor (who held the title *Wot*; Blackburn, December, 175).

It is known that the Chumash term *Xelex* refers to a hawk, but the exact species of hawk featured in this story remains obscure. Justice tells us that this Hawk was an incompetent fisherman and swimmer, so it is unlikely that it is the fish Hawk, i.e. the Osprey, the only hawk which dove after fish, and rose easily from the waves without drowning.

The unlikelihood that *Xelex* was an Osprey is suggested by a Cayuse story which features an Osprey (the "Fish Hawk") as a leading character. This Cayuse Osprey does not sound at all like *Xelex*, who was easily seized by the Chumash Swordfish. The Cayuse Osprey, on the other hand, was "the chief in battle" and led a raiding party whose members all wore red jackets. "He was a tough man; many times he had fought and come out all right" (Ramsey, Coyote, 25). See Xelex in the glossary for further discussion.

10 Chumash folk tales describe Coyote as a master over freshwater fish. In some narratives the fish even jumped out of streams at his bidding. Such fishing incidents are consistent with stories from other native Californians which feature passages in which Coyote showed humans how to use weirs and nets to catch fish.

This tradition of Coyote as a champion of freshwater fishermen is also present among the tribes of the Pacific Northwest. The Chinook of Oregon, for example, also honored Coyote as the inventor of fresh water fishing. They believed that Coyote taught them fishing technology as well as necessary rituals associated with continued fishing prosperity (Ramsey, Coyote, 135). Yet, in spite of these many accomplishments, Coyote was out of his realm of expertise when visiting the salt waters in the Chumash narrative.

11 All of the Swordfish were powerful spiritual beings. At the end of Suleumeait's story, therefore, even the youngest Swordfish is described as "something of a sorcerer."

Coyote would have been foolish indeed to underestimate the powers of this young Swordfish, who was the last obstacle to Coyote's returning to the mainland with Hawk's soul. Although young, this Swordfish was able to revive the dead nephew of Coyote, who had drowned (Blackburn,

December, 188; Suleumeait). It would certainly be an error, therefore, to translate Suleumeait's term "sorcerer" detrimental

Davenport/Johnson/Timbrook (Swordfish, 264) cite David B. Roger's (Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History) unpublished notes on a Chumash swordfish dancer's mask, which was worn while performing the Swordfish dance. "A remarkable feature of the swordfish skull was the eye orbit on the right side. The orbit had been greatly enlarged and was inlaid with shaped sections of shell, to form a most striking ellipse-shaped, iridescent ornament on the side of the wearer's head. The center of this ellipse was a well-worked, plain ellipse of mother-of-pearl set in asphalt. Radiating from this center was a mosaic of other pieces of mother-of-pearl, each shaped much as were those of the cape attached below them." This cape was made of haliotis shell, each carefully shaped and brilliantly colored with "sparkling iridescent surfaces.," Rogers was so impressed with this costume that he described it as an "amazing attire" (264).

The use of mother-of-pearl almost certainly meant that the Swordfish (and the Swordfish dancer) had divine sight, i.e. they were deities. See Crazed in the glossary for further discussion.

12 The Swordfish (and other thunder associated ocean creatures) were considered the rulers of the sea among a number of California Indians.

Often, the Swordfish are associated (or even identified) with Thunder as in Suleumeait's narrative which describes thunder and terrible winds accompanying them. Coyote is almost killed by these powers (of the ocean storms) when the mighty Swordfish entered their home where Coyote was hiding.

See chapter ten of *American Indian Astrology* (Anderson, 1997) for a review of Chumash ceremonial practices associated with the first ocean storms of the year (which usually occur in October). The Chumash shipping monopoly, called the Brotherhood of the Tomol, ends its trading for a number of months due to their fear of drowning in a winter storm [called up by the Swordfish]. For further discussion, also see Winds: West in the glossary.

13 A standard motif in the folk lore of Pacific coastal tribes is the use of excreta as advisors. The Tillamook of the Oregon coast, for example, celebrated narratives in which the Trickster Transformer used his feces to overcome his opponents. The Tillamook called the trickster in these stories the South Wind (Ramsey, Coyote, 132).

In a related tale, South Wind transferred his feces into a magic bird who fooled a man who wore a belt of live snakes (similar to the belts worn by the daughters of the Sun, in Chumash folk lore). This victim avenged himself by ordering a whale to swim far into the ocean and keep South Wind in this region for many months.

Next, South Wind obtained advice from his feces about the proper rituals used in cleaning and cooking fish so their souls would accept their death and be reincarnated. The purpose of such rituals was to ensure that fish would remain plentiful. Later in the story, South Wind orders a feces to guard a fish trap and to call him when it is full.

This Tillamook tale is similar to a story from the nearby Chinook, in which Coyote asks advice on fishing ceremonies from his feces (Ramsey, Coyote, 131). Coyote's excrements were not passive in this text, but "scolded him" (136). Such scatological passages have parallels among Chumash narrations, such as Qiliqutayiwit's "The Dog

Girl" in which a dog girl is shamed when she is discovered eating excrement lying on the ground (Blackburn, December, 241).

14 Northwest Coast folk tales often feature Raven, instead of Coyote, as the Trickster Transformer. Scatological humor was frequently featured in their popular stories, as can be found in their tales of Raven's trickery during berry picking season.

In one tale, for example, Raven defecates and begins to talk to his feces. He instructed them to start shouting "Invader, invader," to frighten off his Bella Coola relatives. Once the humans had fled in fear of the invaders, Raven calmly sat down to a feast of berries, eating all of their winter supplies (Davis/Ross, Bella Coola, 171)

15 See Kitsepawit's commentary on the Coyote Dance, for further information on scatological scenes featured in Chumash theater. In this intentionally shocking performance, the Coyote dancer defecates in the middle of the crowded dance floor, at the climax of the drama (Hudson, Breath, 30; Kitsepawit).

16 The hunting of whales by the Rulers of Sea (the Chumash Swordfish) is not unique.

Everywhere along the Pacific coast, native folk lore includes descriptions of whales being driven to the shore by the rulers of the sea. The Coos of the Oregon Coast, for example, told similar tales in which "sea serpents" (presumably the Coos Rulers of the Oceans, and thus equivalent to the Chumash Swordfish) drove whales onto the sands of Coos Bay for the benefit of the local townspeople. These sea serpents lived, like the Chumash Swordfish, in "a village at the bottom of the sea" "Whenever the tide is low, you can see our house right in the middle of the ocean" (151).

Note that Coyote, in Suleumeait's narrative, first fooled the Swordfish into believing that his excrements were coyote (runners). In this passage he fooled them into believing that the undigested whale meat was excrement. Clearly, Suleumeait was entertaining his audience with the possibilities of excrement deceit!

17 The Yana (Hokan-speaking relatives of the Pomo) described themselves as fierce fighters, like the swordfish.

The Yana boasted how the much larger Wintun nation is often chased by Yana attackers, like "a whale pursued by a sword-fish" (Powers, Tribes, 275). This is a particularly interesting use of ocean imagery by a California Hokan group, since the Yana live in the mountains far from the ocean. Few Yana, given their great distance from the ocean and the rarity of Swordfish sighting by casual visitors to the coast, probably ever saw a live Swordfish.

18 The Nez Perce of Idaho provide an example of this geographical dispersal of scat jokes.

They tell how, when Coyote wanted good advice, he sometimes struck his hip and his "excrement children" ran out. They fought each other, while Coyote watched in amusement. Then he told the children, "Come! You can poke out each other's eyes" (Walker, Blood, 52). After following Coyote orders, they all fled back into his anus except the youngest who Coyote stopped and asked for advice on a pending danger. The excrement child gave him wise counsel, and Coyote later used it to overcome his opponents in the story

Then Coyote went upstream and encountered the Demon Deer. Again Coyote hit his hip and his "excrement children" ran out of his anus

(52). He demanded that they pierce their eyes again, but the defiant magical beings refused and ran back inside his anus before he could catch them. Coyote was able to catch only the youngest, who paid for his release by advising him again on how to defeat the demon deer (52)

Harrington provided no translation of Coyote's cry of "*P'P*" in this passage (Blackburn, December, 181). It is probable, however, that Coyote's exclamation meant "I am defecating," and that Harrington failed to translate it in deference to American listeners who might find it offensive. If this is correct, then Harrington may have censored this text out of concern that Coyote was acting lewdly, proclaiming laudatory excretory achievements while actually passing undigested food through a hidden flute which stuck out between his buttocks. To the gullible Swordfish, he appeared to be a superhuman eater, digesting food and excreting it as fast as he could put it in his mouth (to the delight of Suleumeait's audience).

Waxanish, means 'feces' in Chumash (Tsmuwich, 22); *Waxan*, means to defecate (37); and *Wa*, meaning 'to leak' (37). *Pash* means 'to vomit' (22), and probably has the same root.

Pa means 'excrement' in Pomo (Barrett, Pomo, 531).

19 Suleumeait ends this passage with another scatological joke. Coyote tricked the Swordfish into thinking that he had successfully consumed immense amounts of whale meat in a single sitting.

To convince the gullible Swordfish that he had digested the whale meat, Suleumeait has Coyote ending the banquet scene by rubbing his back legs along the floor, to cleanse it of feces ("so he sat down on the floor and began to drag himself along as if he were cleaning himself off in this fashion" December, 181). Anyone who has seen a dog do this very maneuver, would appreciate the silliness of Suleumeait's humor here.

20 Sham Eating is a standard motif of California folk narratives. The Achumawi are Hokan-speaking people who live in northern California. They preserved a narrative featuring the sham eating trick, in which Edechewe (Elder Brother) defeated the Wicked Ghosts in an eating contest. This eating contest featured poisoned foods, including wild parsnip, yellow lichen, and death camas. "When this poison food is eaten it kills in three breaths" (Merriam, Anakadel, 71). Edechewe was the cultural hero of the Alchumawi. He easily disposed of the food offered by his hosts (Ghosts) who were among many monsters Edechewe had to overcome before he could reach the House of the Sun. "He took a handful and pretended to put it in his mouth, but instead put it in a sack under his chin; and the water they gave him, he put in the same place. He seemed to eat all the food" (71).

21 Kitsepawit describes the Eleyewun (Swordfish) dance as one in which a dancer turns "round and round, first in one direction and then in another, without rising from the ground" (Hudson, Eye, 75). It is a simple dance step, compared to many Chumash dances which involve complex footwork, leaping, and gesturing with the hands.

The Swordfish dancers carried *Tspa I'elyewu'n* meaning 'Wands of the Swordfish', and referring to the wands held in the dancer's hands. These red painted wooden wands were two feet long and shaped in the form of a funnel" (71). *Ahiwoltolkoyish* means 'to turn around' and it is the name of a cycle of songs which ended in the Swordfish dance. *Wotolkoy*, meaning 'to revolve' (Tsmuwich, 77) is a root term.

22 The *Sutiwiwish* is called the Seaweed Dance by the Chumash. Qiliqutayiwit describes its use by two Limu island women, to lure a husband back from his lover on another island (Blackburn, December, 286). Perhaps Coyote was using it to 'lure' Hawk's soul back to the mainland?

Kitsepawit provides a detailed description of the *Shutiwiwish* in a separate text. In his narrative, the dancers are dressed in feather skirts and wear special hats with feathers and carry feathered wands in their hands. The dancers would imitate the movement of seaweed (Hudson, Eye, 72). The songs sung during the Seaweed Dance were very patriotic, especially the final two songs. The last song is sung at night when the Pleiades came out. "Go down to the water and bathe your face. We shall endure"(74)

23 Suleumeait's slapping of the knees is not included by Kitsepawit in his detailed description of the Seaweed Dance (Hudson, Eye, 72-75).

24 Coyote's leaping all the way to the roof strongly suggests the flying behavior of Pomo archery contestants described in chapter six.

25 Kitsepawit described a Barracuda Dance at Ventura involving an archery contest.

"All at once the dancers began to shoot arrows at each other, but they would merely pass under their arms and never hit; it was all owing to the mysterious power" (Hudson, Eye, 79). These were not 'blunted' arrows, as Kitsepawit makes clear in a discussion of a different ritual archery contest narrative (79).

See Chapter six for a number of Pomo citations of archery contests between a hero and dangerous supernaturals. These suggest that Suleumeait omitted a detailed description of an archery contest between Coyote and the Swordfish, providing instead the suggestion of such a contest in the name of the dance involved (Barracuda). If this is the case, then it demonstrates the importance of studying Pomo and other California Hokan mythology to expand our understanding of the surviving Chumash folk tales.

26 In Chumash theology, the souls of the drowned were prevented from traveling to the celestial Land of the Dead and thus could not be reincarnated.

Q'inc'i means 'to drown' in Chumash (Tsmuwich, 25). Perhaps it is an opposite of *Yinc'i* which means 'to be hot' (66; as in *Axyinci*, meaning 'for a body to be very hot', 'to have a fever'). Perhaps prefix *Q* is a variant of *Se*, meaning 'not' (72)?

27 The *Nukumpiyash* is the Barracuda dance. Kitsepawit described it as a very complex dance which was hard on the performers (Hudson, Eye, 77).

28 See Kitsepawit's story in which the Tejon spiritual leader named Sapakay used Falcon (Xelex) beads to achieve a personal resurrection (Blackburn, December, 268). These beads were familiar talismans used by Chumash seamen to ward off drowning.

29 Suleumeait described Coyote not only as a "sorcerer" but also as a "doctor" who helped Hawk recover from the shock of being revived from death (Blackburn, December, 189).

Coyote healed Hawk with a mild diet and getting him to talk about his ordeal. Interestingly, Hawk described the state of being dead by

drowning as like sleep. See the personality of Enememe (He Who Sleeps) in *Enememe's Friends* (Anderson, 1996) for further discussion of sleep symbolism in Chumash mythology.

30 Note that Kwan Suleumeait described the Swordfish as a "kinsman" of Coyote (Blackburn, December, 187).

Yet Coyote does everything he can to cheat the Swordfish, including repeatedly using poisons against them. From his actions, it appears that Coyote was using a 'polite' greeting for the Swordfish but recognized all the time that his real kinsmen were the Chumash First People who lived on dry land and in the sky. Eagle, who commanded Coyote to save Hawk's drowned soul, was the leader of these First People.

31 Coyote is recognized by the Chumash as a homeless character, living outside the bounds of civilized life.

Typically he is mistrusted by townspeople, as a vagrant who will cheat and steal whenever he can. But by the end of Suleumeait's story, Coyote earns a place in Shyuxtun (Santa Barbara) society and is given his own home. The presence of such a great sorcerer, one who had triumphed over the awesome Swordfish, made everyone in the town safer. Thus Suleumeait ends his narrative with the observation: "And one thing is certain: if any enemy should happen by there, he would really have his work cut out for him" (December, 189). The knowledgeable audience knows, of course, that Coyote never settled down for long and eventually would do something inappropriate to alienate the Santa Barbara Chumash and be sent into exile again.

32 (Barrett, Pomo, 183).

33 The Pomo Thunders were the rulers of all sea life, including the salmon and other sources of food for the coastal Pomo.

A central Pomo narrative by Bill James is entitled "Thunder Kills Coyote and Creates All Forms of Sea Life" (Pomo, 193). This story explains how Thunder is the creator and ruler of all ocean animals and plants. The Pomo Thunder is a variant of the Chumash Swordfish who were thundering masters of ocean life. Both persona caught and ate whales, e.g. the Pomo Thunder "cooked a whole whale at once" (193).

34 Lee Peters, a Central Pomo, explained how much his people admired Coyote. "Now Coyote was a very smart man. He really knew everything but he pretended to know nothing" (Barrett, Pomo, 172).

35 This long tale by Lee Peters, a Central Pomo folklorist (Barrett, Pomo, 164) is very similar to the Chumash Swordfish tale featured in chapter one.

36 (Barrett, Pomo, 191).

37 Thunder regulates the flow of Salmon up the Pomo rivers.

In a Central Pomo narrative called "The Abode of Thunder Under the Ocean" the House of Thunder is located at the bottom of the sea near Point Arena. This house, like that of the Chumash swordfish, was made of crystal. "It is made of a sort of glass-like substance. You can see right through the side of this house and see everything that is going on inside. There are many fish in here and they jump and strike against the walls in their endeavor to get out. The inside of the house is, however, perfectly dry, notwithstanding the fact that it is submerged in the ocean" (Barrett, Pomo, 188).

38 "Obsidian-Man Kills the Four Thunder Brothers" told by a Central

Pomo folklorist named Charley Pinto (Barrett, Pomo, 211).

39 The Pomo normally locate the House of Thunder at the bottom of the ocean, to the far west (for example, see Barrett, Pomo, 188).

In this Central Pomo tale, however, the narrator Charley Pinto described it as located on the coast "just east of the present town of Mendocino" (Barrett, Pomo, 211).

40 (Barrett, Pomo, 213).

41 Bob Pot, a Northern Pomo, relates a similar scene in "Flower-Man Kills Thunder."

Flower-man and his grandfather Coyote went to challenge Thunder who is the father-in-law of Flower man. "They started off out into the ocean toward the west" (191). After many tests, they agreed to compete in an archery duel. "Thunder made Flower-man fly up and then he tried to shoot him but Flower-man knew how to dodge, so that Thunder was unable to injure him. Then Thunder flew up and Flower-man shot and killed him" (192).

42 (Barrett, Pomo, 164).

43 See Kilak in the glossary for further discussion.

44 In a related Kilak story, told by a Northern Pomo named Jim McCalluck, Falcon was caught by one of the Kilaks while out hunting deer. He was taken to the Kilak's house in the "upper world" (Barrett, Pomo, 178).

45 The House of the Rising Sun, located in the southeast, is occupied by the sun during the winter solstice.

46 The similarities between Chumash and Pomo sun guardians are very striking. Like the residents of the Chumash House of the Sun, the Kilaks collect human bodies after they died on the Middle Earth.

47 The Crows warned that the Kilaks would serve visitors only human flesh and blood (from the bodies of the newly dead, which they have brought from the middle world).

48 Jim McCalluck, a northern Pomo reported that "Ki'lak wears a red suit and his house is as white as snow. His red suit is really a blanket of fire without which he is entirely unable to fly" (Barrett, Pomo, 177).

Presumably the red symbolized blood and white symbolized dried bones, as in related Chumash myths about the House of the Sun. The parallels between the Pomo Kilak stories and Chumash House of the Sun stories are extensive, and the author assumes that the Kilak are representatives of the Pomo solar deity. This is strongly suggested in the "blanket of fire" phrase, since the Sun was the preeminent source of upper world fire (heat) impacting the middle world where humans lived.

49 (Barrett, Pomo, 172). See footnote one of Enememe's Friends (Anderson, 1996) for a discussion of related Chumash beliefs about Coyote's abilities as a diviner.

The Chumash called Coyote *Sipisiwas*, whose root is *Sipis* meaning 'a wise man'. Blackburn mistranslated *Sipis* as 'a diviner' (December, 343).

50 (Barrett, Pomo, 172).

51 Qiliqutayiwit's description of the Chumash celestial Eagle's House is remarkably similar to the Pomo descriptions of the Kilaks' House with human bones scattered all around it.

The Chumash Eagle, ruler of the heavens, is called *Slo'w*. "The place where *Slo'w* lives is surrounded by hills and hills of bleached white bones that can be seen from afar. They are the bones of people of this world that *Slo'w* has eaten" (Blackburn, December, 92; Qiliqutayiwit).

In spite of such similarities, the Chumash Eagle is almost certainly not a variant of the Pomo *Kilaks* who are closely associated with the Sun. *Slo'w* is a north star persona ("He never moves; he is always in the same spot" Blackburn, December, 92; Qiliqutayiwit). Eagle is much higher in the celestial hierarchy than the Sun (who is preeminent in affairs of humans, but not dominant in the higher heavens).

52 (Barrett, Pomo, 173). It is not surprising that the *Kilak* was named after its call, for this was a frequent practice among Native Americans

The call does not determine the species in this incidence. The Eagle is called the *Cai* in Pomo (502), but this call is probably not the same as the "*Ki'lak*." See *Kilak* in the glossary for further discussion.

53 Did the six *Kilaks* represent the six months between the solstices?

54 This Pomo narrative featured the *Kilaks* guarding a celestial house in the south. But this does not mean that the *Kilaks* were exclusively associated with this direction.

In a related narrative, for example, Obsidian decides to visit the *Kilaks* in a northern celestial abode. Taking Frog and Coyote, his mother and father, he travels to the north. After some time, six *Kilaks* challenge the adventurers and offer them enchanted food. "Coyote had a flute in his hunting sack and poured the food into this flute and it disappeared."

The bawdy Chumash humor featured in the Swordfish tale is absent from this Pomo variant of the swallowing tube (flute) trick. Instead of defecation humor, a magical bag capable of absorbing any amount of food solved Coyote's dilemma. After this test, the dancing contest began. Coyote advised his son Obsidian-man how to avoid the *Kilaks*' curse. Through Coyote's magic, Obsidian man killed all the cannibals. They then returned home to the middle earth.

55 Tales of luring female demons are common among the tribes of the western states.

Properly trained hunters, as a result, were less tempted during encounters with beautiful women in open country. Modern sociologists would interpret such taboos as social mechanism to regulate against rape of women found in isolation while harvesting seeds and berries in the countryside.

56 (Barrett, Pomo, 182).

57 This tale was recorded in 1906 by a Central Pomo named Bill James. Barrett entitled it "Quail Deserts Her Husband and Goes To *Gilaks*" (Pomo, 183).

58 Quail "left him" presumably because she died, and her body had been seized by the *Kilaks*. Barrett described the *Kilaks* as "keepers" of the Sun (Pomo, 513; they would devour her body, i.e. the heat of the sun would result in its bloating and decay).

Barrett describes the Hawk in this tale as a "black Chicken-hawk" (Pomo, 183). This phrase is a general one for any of a number of hawks

which attack chickens, and it is not very helpful in determining the specific species of the Pomo Hawk persona.

Note that this 'black' hawk is defiled in the story and could not be resurrected (like the red hawk in other stories). Hawk's sibling is not identified except as his "younger brother".

59 Blackburn calls this narrative by M. S. Qiliqutayiwit "The Little Girl in Zaca Lake" (December, 283). It is a Samala (Santa Ynez) Chumash tale, associated by Qiliqutayiwit with a Santa Ynez mission family.

60 The Pomo Falcon is a variant of the Chumash *Xelex* (another hawk) who is quickly killed due to his foolishness.

61 Folk tales from the Hokan speaking peoples of California (and other Hokan living to the east) often present plots in which one Twin (brother) hides in the hair of the defeated hero. The hidden one escapes and brings reinforcements who eventually rescue the soul of the defeated hero (often the Elder Brother).

62 This Pomo list of rescuers is an interesting grouping. Many have the ability to hover, as the Bat, Kingfisher, and Hummingbird.

Fisher (*Slil*) was the first of the rescuers to arrive. Bat (*Ho'cmatala*) was the best arrow-maker. Bluejay and Red-headed Woodpecker were "poison-men" specializing in making poisons for arrows (184). Chumash terms for these rescuing personalities are: *Cay* (Bluejay), *Xa'yxay* (western belted Kingfisher, 53), and *Pulak'ak* (Acorn woodpecker (Tsmuwich, 53).

63 (Barrett, Pomo, 185). Compare this tale to a related Pomo story told by Sally Burke, a Central Pomo.

Burke's tale is entitled "Obsidian Man Contests With the Kilaks" (Barrett, Pomo, 224). Burke describes how Obsidian Man (Coyote's son) decided to go to the northern home of the *Kilaks*, bringing his father Coyote and mother Frog along for the adventure. They eventually located the House of the *Kilaks* and sat down to await the arrival of the six cannibals.

When the *Kilaks* discovered their unexpected guests, they quickly challenged them to a series of tests which were designed to bring their deaths. The most important test was one of eating, and the *Kilaks* placed great quantities of food before Coyote. All of this food was, of course, celestial in origin. If Coyote or any of his family ate it, they would never be able to return to the middle world. Fortunately, "Coyote had a flute in his hunting sack and poured the food into this flute and it disappeared" (224).

After this test, the dancing contest began. Coyote advised his son Obsidian Man how to avoid the Kilak's arrows. As a result of Coyote's prophetic skills, Obsidian was able to kill all the cannibals. At the end of the story, all of Coyote's family returned happily to their home on the middle earth.

64 For a discussion of the role of the Fly in Chumash mythology, see footnote 51 in *A Chumash Christmas* (Anderson, 1995). This passage explains in some detail why the Fly played an important role in ancient mythology in California. Numerous Chumash and Pomo folk tales are cited, which feature the Fly. "To the uninitiated the fly is an unclean being, but the educated Chumash recognize that it plays an important role in cleansing the earth of corrupt physical matter. It is not surprising, therefore, that the fly appears in a number of Chumash cultural hero narratives" (32).

65 This Pomo sub-plot (featuring a Fly living as a servant in a celestial house visited by human cultural heroes) is frequently found among native California peoples.

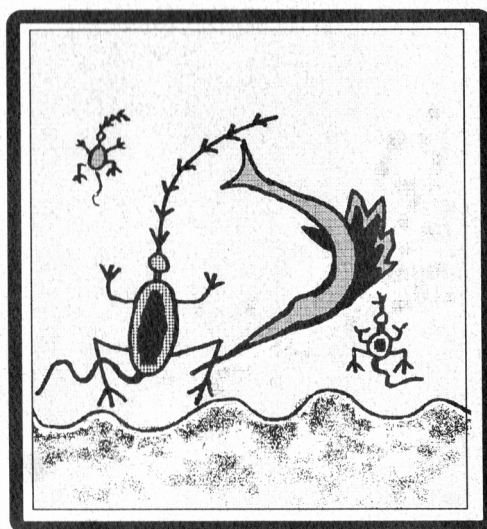
66 The Chumash birds who escorted Coyote out to sea were the Cormorant and Pelican. At least one of the Haida birds who fulfilled the same escorting function was a land bird, the Martin.

67 This is a familiar theme in the folk lore of Pacific coastal cultures.

The spiritual leader who rescues souls in the heavens (the Upper World) is called a Shaman by American anthropologists. In many native traditions the same spiritual leader (who entered the upper world) also entered the ocean to save souls.

68 For an excellent summary of Chumash teachings about reincarnation, see Kitsepawit's commentary in *December's Child* (Blackburn, 98).

69 Atishwin is the Chumash term for 'power' (Tsmuwich, 5; thus 'A'latishwinich meaning 'to be a shaman').



Glossary

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ADVISOR See Coyote: Magic Excrement and Image (False).

AXIS: CELESTIAL See Eagle for the ruler of the pole star which is the top of the axis.

BOAT Coyote used a boat to row out into the deep ocean where the crystal house of the Swordfish is located. Cormorant and Brown Pelican were the "mariners" in Suleumeait's Swordfish narrative (December, 176).

Terms: Yee translated *Tomol* as 'boat' (Tsmuwich, 34; *Tomto'mo'l* is plural; *Tomoluch* means 'to go in boats'). The Samala dictionary translated *Tomol* as 'boat' (382, 'canoe').

Mut means 'cormorant' (Blackburn, December, 342). *Hew* means 'brown pelican' (Suleumeait, 176); *Xe'w* (Tsmuwich, 52).

Discussion of terms: In "Linguistic Evidence Suggests An Independent Development of the Chumash Plank Boat" (Anderson, 2018) the term *Tomol* is translated as 'a plank boat'. The boat described by Suleumeait in his Swordfish narrative is a plank boat, for the reed and dugout boats of the Chumash were not used far from land.

CHUMASH The largest cultural group in the western states, prior to Spanish intrusion into California. These peoples lived north of Los Angeles, along the coast and islands and inland as far as Tejon. Compare Hokan.

COCOON RATTLE Coyote used a cocoon rattle to store his poison and to play music during his dance performances in front of the hostile Swordfish.

Terms: *Towonowon* means 'a cocoon rattle' (Blackburn, December, 343). *Wockonoyic* means 'a rattle made of cocoon' (Samala, 439; *Wockonoyic* means 'to play a cocoon rattle').

COYOTE: CELESTIAL The Chumash celestial Coyote is Sirius. Compare Coyote: Earthly.

Terms: The Chumash celestial Coyote was called *Snilemun* which has the connotation of 'a place of fire' (*Ni*). This celestial Coyote is Sirius, the brightest star in the sky.

• The Chumash *Snilemun* is comparable to the Pomo's *Kuksu* (Big Head) deity (Anderson, Cosmology, 100).

COYOTE: Earthly A diviner and cultural hero, who rescues a hawk from death in both the Chumash and Pomo tales. Compare Coyote: Celestial.

Terms: The Chumash Trickster Coyote, associated with life on the surface of the earth, is called *Sipisiwas*. This name means

- Peters says the Pomo Coyote knew "everything" (Barrett, Pomo, 172. He is a variant of the Kootenai "fast thinker" discussed in chapter one. Compare Crazy.

COYOTE: HIS MAGIC EXCREMENT Excrement is a standard burlesque theme, appearing in Native American folk lore- to the delight of children in the audience.

- In the featured Chumash racing tale, Coyote's magical excrement substitutes for him as a runner in a race against the mighty Swordfish. Coyote's excrement also served as an astute advisor. In a Nez Perce tale, for example, Coyote's excrement "children" gave him advice which saved his life. In a Yakima tale, the excrement 'sisters' of Coyote served as advisors and chased away a threatening grizzly bear.

CRAZY A term often used to describe Native American mythological characters who were 'crazed' (by repeated contact with the gods) and therefore act abnormally.

Terms: The Pomo called Coyote *Diwi*, "because of his crazy actions at times" (Barrett, Pomo, 505: *Iwi* is a variant name for Coyote, 517). *Aqimowon* means 'to be crazy' in Samala Chumash (62, also means 'to be elegant', 'to be wild'; the root *Mowon* means 'to be sweet'). *'Una'waw* means 'to be crazy' (Samala, 390; *Suna'way* means 'to make crazy').

- The Chumash Swordfish were crazed by Coyote's drugs, in chapter five. See footnote 11 for further discussion.

CRYSTAL HOUSE Native Californian mythology [from the Chumash north to the Pomo] feature crystal houses located deep in the ocean, which are the homes of the rulers of the seas. See Thunder for related discussion.

Terms: *Xili'w* means 'crystal' (Samala, 449; 'quartz'). *Xi'liw* (Tsmuwich, 41).

Hypothesis: The native Californian's crystal houses, located below the sea, were constructed from fragments of stars (crystals) which fell into the ocean.

DEMON The Swordfish were demonic supernaturals who ruled the deep waters of the ocean.

Terms: *Nunashish* means 'a devil' (Tsmuwich, 20, 'an animal', 'a beast').

Related terms: *'Alqapac* means 'an animal' in Samala (48; *'Alqapacun* means 'to turn into an animal').

- In *When Demons Rule California* (Anderson) the Swordfish are identified as salt water demons (35). Other salt water demons include the Sea Serpent (*Psos 'i alnuna Hee Soo*) and the Tiger of the Sea (Blackburn, December, 309, Nutu).

DROWN The Chumash feared drowning, for the soul is overcome by the salt water and cannot continue its cycle of reincarnation.

Terms: *Qinc'i* means 'to drown on one's own' (Samala, 291; *Suqinc'i* means 'to drown someone', 'to drown something'; one root is *Qil* which means 'of water'). *Q'inc'i* (Tsmuwich, 25).

Hypothesis: The embodied soul of a drowned Chumash separates from the dead body but does not survive like a normal soul on the path of the dead. See *Kuta Teachings* (Anderson, 2020) for related commentary.

EAGLE The great ruler of the upper world in Native American

mythology, from the Pacific to the Atlantic. In Chumash cosmology Eagle is the ruler of the pole star [top of the celestial axis] See Pole Star and One Horn for related discussions. Compare Swordfish, Eagle Woman, Hawk, and Kilaks.

• See The Chumash House of Fate (Anderson, 2001; chapter 4) for discussion of the role of Eagle in Chumash theology. Eagle seizes the stars of the upper heavens in his vice-like grip, bringing order to this celestial realm.

EAGLE WOMAN The name used in this text for the Pomo female eagle, who led Falcon into the upper world to the home of the *Kilaks* (Pomo, Barrett, 180).

EAT Eating [of physical body, and the many spiritual taboos associated with food] is given emphasis in Suleumeait's narrative. See Swallowing Monster, Flute: As a Sucking Device, and Excrement for related discussion.

EXCREMENT See Eat, Coyote: His Magic Excrement and Images:False for discussion.

FISH See Swordfish for the ruler of the ocean fish and see Coyote for his associations with freshwater fishing. See Osprey for the Fish Hawk, and compare Frog for the ruler of fresh water.

FISH: HAWK See Osprey. Also see Hawk for a general discussion of hawk terms.

FISHING: FRESH WATER The Chumash Coyote was associated with freshwater fishing. See Swordfish and Thunder for the rulers of salt water fishing. And see the Pomo Water:Man for further discussion.

FLUTE A musical instrument found among most Native American cultural groups in North America. Compare Flute: As A Sucking Device.

Terms: *Wol'wol* means flute in Pomo (Barrett, Pomo, 511). *Kalul* means 'an elderberry' (531; 'an elderberry plant'; also means 'elderberry wood', 508); thus *Kite'cato'lo* means 'an elderberry tube', 521). Does the term *Tiwalulua'y*, meaning 'a flute in' Samala (376) have any relation to the Pomo term *Kalul* (meaning elderberry wood)?

FLUTE: AS A SUCKING DEVICE The flute is used in the featured Chumash narrative as a sucking device (a straw). It was used by Coyote to suck huge amounts of food from a banquet table without having to digest it. Compare Flute.

Terms: *Oqyoson* means 'to suck' (Tsmuwich, 21). *Axt'utun*, meaning 'to such in liquids' (Tsmuwich, 6) is a related term. *Axtut'un* (Samala, 96). *Aquc'um* means 'to suck in food' (Samala, 73).

FROG In many Native American myths, the Frog is the ruler of the fresh waters of the world.

See Toad and Sneezing for further discussion. Compare Ocean:Ruler of for a discussion of the Swordfish, who ruled the sea animals in Chumash mythology.

Terms: Across the continents, human names for frogs provide excellent examples of onomatopoeia, an ancient human linguistic practice in which animals were named after their vocalizations. Examples: *Waq'oq* means 'a frog' in Chumash (Tsmuwich, 37) and it may be a cognate of the Pomo term *Kawo*, meaning 'a frog' (Barrett, Pomo, 494; also *Sapo*, *Xawo*; compare *Kopkop*, meaning 'a toad', 14). Compare to *Acqw* meaning 'a frog' (Bella Coola) and *Pakw* (Hopi).

- Frogs are smooth skinned, leaping, amphibians. They have protruding eyes, and are predominantly aquatic.

FROG: WOMAN The female ruler of fresh waters, among the Chumash. She could order, for example, springs to stop flowing; and she could dry up any creek or stream (Blackburn, December, 206).

Frog Woman was one of the five Pomo leading supernaturals, and the wife of Coyote. See *When Frog Stole the Water* (Anderson, 1996) for further discussion of Frog Woman.

GILAK See Kilak for more information.

HAWK The hawk species is the second-in-command (assistant ruler) in many native American folk tales including those of the Pomo and Chumash. The Chumash Hawk is the nephew of the Eagle, for example. Compare Eagle.

Terms: This species of birds is often named after its bird call, i.e. its vocalization. The Pomo term *Kilak*, for example, is based on the call of these birds, as in "*Ki'lak, Ki-lak*." Many Pomo groups prefer the spelling *Gi'lak*, whom Barrett described as "keepers of of the sun" and "attendants" of Madumda [north star ruler] (Pomo, 513). The Pomo *Kilaks* are probably sparrow hawks, which are red in color and hover with rapidly beating wings when looking for their prey.

Discussion of terms: *Xelex* is not identified as a specific type of hawk in many Chumash stories. Perhaps this is a clue that *Xelex* is a general term, referring to hawks as a species. This would explain how the physical characteristics cited for *Xelex* changes from narrative to narrative. On the other hand, *Xelex* may be a variant of *Kilik* which is the Tsmala Chumash name for the sparrow hawk (177; "small and reddish").

HOKAN A native American language family, with many members residing in California.

- Some linguists (Sapier, Kroeber, Harrington, Grimes) classify the Chumash as a subdivision of the Hokan language family. Grimes, for example, groups the Chumash and Salinan with the Seri of northern Mexico (coastal Sonora province). Other scholars (L. Mithun) classify the Chumash as an language isolate and do not group them with the Hokan.

IMAGE: FALSE From the frogs and turtles of *The Fast Thinker* (Anderson, 1996) to the excrement runners featured in this text, the 'false image' is a popular theme in western native myth. Compare Coyote: Magic Excrement.

Terms: *Uxwal* is the Chumash term meaning 'to look like', 'to resemble' (Tsmuwich, 37). *Uqwatiwilpi* means 'to resemble' in Samala (396). *Aqiwacuy* is probably a related term, meaning 'a reflection' (Tsmuwich, 3; compare *Aqiwo*, 'a star'). *Uteqpey* means 'to imitate' (Tsmuwich, 36). *Uteqpey* (Samala, 404; the root is *Eqpey* meaning 'to stick to').

Anyapah is a related term meaning 'something that is visually deceiving, as in a mirage' (Harrington field notes).

JUSTO, JUAN See Suleumeait.

JUSTICE See Suleumeait.

JUAN See Suleumeait.

KILAK A flying supernatural associated with the Sun in Pomo mythology. The six Kilaks lived in the upper world. The Pomo described them as "attendants" of Madumda [north star ruler], presumably as

guardians of the Sun. The *Kiliks*' red feathers were like blankets of fire, and their House was white as snow. In this they are identified as falcons, and probably Peregrine falcons. Compare Eagle for the north star guardian.

Terms: *Ki'lak* (Pomo, 316).

MAGIC EXCREMENT See Coyote: Magic Excrement.

NAMES: OF CHUMASH PEOPLE See Peyewol for discussion.

NATIVE NAMES See Suleumeait for discussion.

OCEAN: MONSTERS Demons of the ocean, which crawl out of the waves in Chumash narratives. They are described as as ocean dragons (snakes) and are not the same as the Swordfish. Compare Swordfish, Ocean: Rulers of and Demons for further discussion.

Terms: *A'nuna Hee Soo* is the Chumash name for the snake that comes from the ocean (Kitsepawit, December, 255). This phrase means 'demon of the ocean'. *A'nuna* is probably related to the term *Nunashish* meaning 'a demon', or 'monster' (Tsmuwich, 20; also means 'a beast, animal'). 'O' referring to liquid water (Tsmuwich, 20)(Samala, 255) is the root of *Soo*.

OCEAN: RULER OF The Chumash Swordfish are the featured rulers of the ocean (and its salt waters). Thunder is the Pomo equivalent of the Swordfish. See Water and Frog (for the ruler of the world's fresh waters). See Osprey for a discussion of the rulers of the air above the ocean.

ONE HORN The Chumash Swordfish belong in the native American mythical tradition of the one-horned supernaturals. Compare Two Horn.

OSPREY The only hawk which dives (feet first) into water to catch fish. This hawk is called a Fish Hawk in many parts of the world.

Hypothesis: The drowned hawk in Suleumeait's narrative is not an Osprey (which was the guardian spirit of Chumash sailors). The Osprey is at home in the water, and never drowns. See Hawk for further discussion.

PAXAT See Whale.

POMO A Hokan-speaking peoples who live on the Pacific coast, north of San Francisco.

PROMETHEUS The Greek mythological figure who stole fire from the Upper World.

SNEEZING POWDER Coyote used a sneezing power, made of ground up toadstools, to overcome the powerful Swordfish (Blackburn, December, 176). Compare Toadstool.

SULEUMEAIT, X. X. The Chumash folklorist who used the colonial name Juan Justo and narrated the Swordfish story featured in this book. He was born in the Santa Barbara area of California in 1858 and died there in 1941.

Names: He used the Spanish name Juan Justo, with the Chumash variant Xwan Xusto. *Kwan* is a Chumash variant of Juan, and Xustu is a Chumash variant of *Justo* (a Spanish 'nickname' meaning a pious or devout person).

Discussion of names: In the 1977 edition, I was not aware of Suleumeait's Chumash name, so I called him *Kwan Xusto* in the text. I explained this decision as follows: "many American books and articles

used Mexican or American names when identifying Chumash folklorists, historians, politicians, and spiritual leaders. This practice has reinforced the colonial aspect of native California life, while under representing the Traditional aspect. I prefer, therefore, to use native names when they are available. I call them self-names in my writings (the names the natives were given by their own people).

My reasoning for preferring self-names is that the European names appearing in official documents reflected bureaucratic policies of cultural reduction against California natives. The stripping away of native names and language is a basic tool used by colonial administrators (including Christian church officials) for destroying the cultural identity of a conquered people. Refusal to use native names was unfortunately a routine practice during Spanish, Mexican, and American colonization of California. Early American government records, such as Indian reservation census reports for example, typically referred to native peoples only by their Spanish name. In many cases, the American bureaucrats did not even bother to determine any more than the individual's first name or nickname. Names like Old Juan or simply Jose were too often considered sufficient identifiers.

Some readers may be under the misconception that the native names had been lost forever, and it was futile to search for them. But the real problem was that the colonial authorities preferred European names and often did not ask for self names even when they were available. In the case of the California mission records, native names were entered into the mission records but the individual was expected thereafter to use a European name. And overshadowing this mission bias toward European naming was the violence freely exhibited by colonial soldiers and ranchers against native Traditionalist families. Understandably, such harassment made the Chumash reluctant to publicly identify themselves with native names and become targets of ongoing racist reprisals.

Yet in many interesting cases, native Californians did reveal their self-names to sympathetic colonials. The willingness to do so increased by the time that John Harrington and other scholars worked with the surviving Chumash Traditionalists. As a result of the trust that Harrington built with these Traditionalists, the substitution for a colonial name became quite straightforward. We know, for example, that the famous Chumash ethnographer called Fernando Librado by the Mexicans had the self-name *Kitsepawit* (Blackburn, December, 18; citing ethnographer John Harrington). We know that the father of the Tsmala folklorist called Maria Solares by the Mexicans had the self-name *Qiliqutayiwit* (18). But unfortunately no Harrington field note that I am aware of tells us the native name of Juan Justo.

- How does one get from Juan Justo to *Kwan Xustu*? *Kwan* is the easy and straightforward part. It is an Anglicization of *Xwan*, which is a known Chumash variant of Juan (Tsmuwich, 49). I chose to substitute the Anglicization *Kwan*, to make it as easy for my readers to pronounce native self-names. Moving from Justo to *Xustu* is not as straightforward because Yee did not provide an exact Chumash substitute for this name. She did, however, provide a number of examples by which an X is substituted at the beginning of Spanish names beginning in J (as in *Xuse* for Jose, and in *Xulyu* for Julio, page 49). She also provided a number of examples by which "tu" was substituted by the Chumash in Spanish words ending with "to" (as in *Lixuntu* for *diffunto*, page 47, and *Kwaltu* for *Cuarto*, page 46).

SWALLOWING MONSTERS In native California mythology, many demons threatened to kill and eat humans. See Eat for related discussion.

Discussion: The theme of swallowing vast amounts of food is given much emphasis in Suleumeait's narrative where the Swordfish are capable of consuming seemingly impossible meals of whale meat. Coyote was incapable of duplicating this feat, so he used trickery to make the whales believe he was keeping up with them in the consumption of physical body (Blackburn, December, Suleumeait).

- Suleumeait described another swallowing monster, the *Hap*, in "Momoy's Grandson". The *Hap* was "the most powerful man in the world" (December, 138). See Two Horn for related discussion.

SWORDFISH The rulers of the ocean, in Chumash mythology. When the Swordfish entered their home, thunder and lightening flashed violently. They were equivalent to the Pomo Thunders, who were also rulers of the sea. See Ocean (Rulers of) and Thunder. Compare Ocean (Monsters).

Terms: The Chumash called them '*Elye'wun*' (Blackburn, December, 179). '*Elye'wun*' (Tsmuwich, 8). '*Eleyewun*' (Samala, 114). The root of these terms is *Icqwe'* which refers to the sword of a swordfish (Samala, 137; *Icqwe'nic* means 'to have a swordfish sword').

Discussion of terms: Pinart (1878) listed Chumash names for 'swordfish' as: *Elieun* (Samala and Lulapin), *Leieu* (Kagismuwas). These terms are similar to the modern Samala and Tsmuwich vocabulary. They are not apparently associated with Pinart's citation of *Smacao* (Limu and Wimat islands) and *Macao* (Tsmuwich). The similarities between the island names and that of the Tsmuwich is curious. Perhaps, Pinart should have listed *Smacao* under Wimat and Tuqan island vocabulary. This would be consistent with the Tsmuwich closer ties to these islands rather than Limu island.

Discussion of names: The *Elyewun* are associated thunder in Chumash and other native California folk lore. Perhaps the sword (*Icqwe*) made thunder, and *Iwon*, meaning 'to resound' (Tsmuwich, 12) has a shared root. *Iwon* (Samala, 160, 'to make a sound'). See Thunder for related terminology.

THUNDERS The Pomo rulers of the ocean and all forms of sea life, as well as ocean storms (blowing in from the west). They are equivalent to the Chumash Swordfish. See Swordfish for further discussion. Compare Wind (West).

Terms: '*Oxkon*' means 'thunder' (Tsmuwich, 21). *Oq'won*, meaning 'to howl' probably has the same root (21), as in *Oxlolon*, meaning 'to growl' (21). '*Elye'wun*' means 'swordfish' (Suleumeait, 175); it may mean "resounder" in Chumash, as in *Iwon* which means 'to sound' (Tsmuwich, 12; also means 'to resound'). '*Oxkon*' means 'to thunder' (Tsmuwich, 85). See Swordfish for associated commentary.

Related terms: *Alahtimimi* means 'a bullroarer', which makes a thundering sound when swung in a circle.

TONGVA The southern neighbors of the Chumash, who spoke a Uto-Aztecan language unrelated to Chumash.

- The Tongva adopted the maritime technology of the Chumash, including the plank-boat design. Their Pibotovar deity was a variant of the Chumash *Hap* who symbolized the Pacific storms which struck the southern California coast in the winter months. See Two Horn for related

discussion.

TOAD In English, a toad is a person regarded as loathsome, contemptible. It has warty skin and lives on moist land rather than in water like the Frog. Compare Sneezing, Frog.

Discussion: the poison used by Coyote to overcome the Swordfish was made from powdered toadstools (Blackburn, December, 176; Suleumeait).

TWO-HORN In native American myth, the two horn deity represents the realm of duality, change, and even chaos. See Abyss for related discussion. Compare One Horn and Swordfish.

Discussion: The Chumash *Hap* demon is an example of a honed supernatural who causes chaos. Blackburn lists his Chumash name as both *Hap* and *Haphap* and describes him as a dangerous *nunasis* (December, 341; *Nunasis* means 'demon'). *Haphap* means 'horns' (plural of *Hap* meaning 'a horn'; *Xap* is a variant meaning 'a horn' Tsmuwich, 66). Both Nutu (113) and Suleumeait (38) use the term *Hap* [meaning horn, but not necessarily two horns]. Blackburn identified the *Hap* as a variant of a Tongva *Pibotovar* demon who lived on Santa Catalina island (December, 140).

- D. Ramon described a Tongva "god of the ocean" as a two-horned deity (Waytayawa, 552). Presumably the *Pibotovar* and the *Hap* are variants of this two horned demon, swallowing monsters symbolizing the fierce winter storms that strike the southern California coast in the winter months.

WATER FRESH: FISHING See Fishing (Fresh Water).

WATER FRESH: RULER OF The Pomo ruler of fresh waters was called Water man. See Frog Woman for the female ruler of fresh water. Compare Ocean: Rulers of, Swordfish, and Thunder for rulers of salt water. See Fishing :Fresh Water for further discussion.

Terms: *Ka* means fresh water in Pomo (Barrett, Pomo, 544; *Xa* is a variant). Thus *Xawo*, meaning 'a Frog or water being' (512). *Xa-gak* is the Pomo name for the ruler of fresh water, described by Barrett as Water-Man (546). *Xa* means 'water' and *Gak* probably is a variant of *Tca* which means 'man' (538). Thus *Xa-cinal* is a Pomo place name meaning 'water-head', i.e. the head of the stream), and *Kapa-Ku* is the Pomo name for supernatural beings living in springs (Barrett, Pomo, 519; these water spirits were seen as babies by the Pomo and were distinctive from Water man, *Kapa-Tca*. See Whale for further discussion.

WATER: MAN The Pomo name for the ruler of fresh waters in the middle world. See Water: Fresh, Ruler of for discussion. Compare Swordfish, Hap and Thunder for Chumash deities of the ocean.

WATER: MONSTERS See Ocean: Monsters for the demons of the oceans, who lived in conflict with the Rulers of the Ocean. Compare Oceans (Rulers of) and Swordfish.

WATER: SALT See Swordfish and Thunder for rulers of the ocean.

WHALE The largest animal in all of the Chumash environment, symbolizing material substance. One the land, the Bear with its massive body, was the corresponding ruler of physical body.

Terms: *Paxat* means 'whale' (Tsmuwich, 22). *Xax*, meaning 'to be big' (40; to be great) is probably the root of *Paxat*. *Nox* is a Samala variant of *Xax*, meaning 'big' (thus *Noxonox*, meaning 'very big'; and

Noxus meaning size').

Pinart (1878) listed *Paxat* for Kagismuwas, Samala, and Lulapin. But he listed *Poxlo* for Limu island and the closely associated *Puxlu* for Wimat island (59). The root of these island terms (*Xlo*, *Xlu*) presumably is a variant of *Xat*, meaning 'big'.

Discussion of terms: *Paxa*, a Chumash name for a ceremonial official (also called *Paha*) may have the same root suggesting largess. On the other hand, *Paxa* may be is a variant of the Tsmuwich term *Pak'a*, meaning 'one' (22), but *Paha* is a widespread title used throughout a large area of the Southwest and may transcend linguistic boundaries.

Discussion: Is there any relationship between *Kate* (Barrett, Pomo, 526; meaning 'whale') and the Chumash term *Xax* (Tsmuwich, 64) implying a huge physical body.

WIND: EAST In Chumash mythology the east wind is associated with the dry heat of the interior Mohave desert. East winds are responsible for the chaparral fires called the Santa Ana by the Spanish.

WIND: NORTH This wind is sent by the North Star. Compare Wind: South. The north wind is associated with the cold of the north.

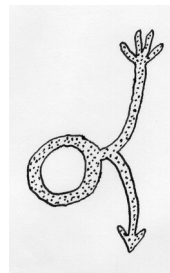
WIND: SOUTH The native peoples of the Pacific coast, such as the Chumash, recognized the southern (warming) phenomenon called *El Nino* by the Spanish. See Two Horn for discussion of the Chumash Hap demon who represented the great Pacific storms which routinely struck the coast of southern California. Also see Swallowing Monsters for related discussion.

WIND: WEST Associated with Thunder and lightening (and winter storms) among the native peoples of the Pacific coast, such as the Chumash. Compare Thunder and Swordfish.

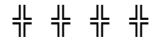
XELEX The Chumash term for a hawk. See Hawk for a general discussion.

XUSTU: KWAN See Suleumeait.

YAKIMA A Penutian-Sahaptin speaking peoples, from central Washington. They are closely related to the Sahaptini (Nez Perce).



Other books by Author



The Fast Thinker This is the Kootenai racing tale from the American Northwest, discussed in the first chapter of *The Swordfish Race*; compares Yakima, Tupi (S. America), Bantu (Africa), and French racing tales, 44 pages, 1994.

When Frog Stole the Waters Frog symbolism & cornucopia tales; Chumash, Karok, Kootenai, Pomo, Yakima, Kalapuya, Micmac & Passamaquoddy, 40 pages, 1996.

A Circle Within The Abyss Chumash Indian religion, metaphysics. 38 pages, third edition 1996.

Enememe's Friends Chumash theology, Third edition, 24 pages, 1996.

The Fox Jumps Chumash summer solstice tales from California; compared to Kalispel & Yakima tales from the Northwest. 40 pages, 1994.

The Chumash House of Fate The gambling gods of ancient California, gambling, cosmic dualism, the celestial Abyss, ritual directions, the hand game, fate and free will. 44 pages, 1997.

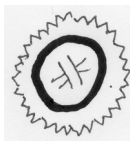
Nestelah's Journey A Salish morality tale, involving Camas Woman; Kalispel, Okanogan, Schrowyelpi, 40 pages, second edition 1995.

Holiday Series

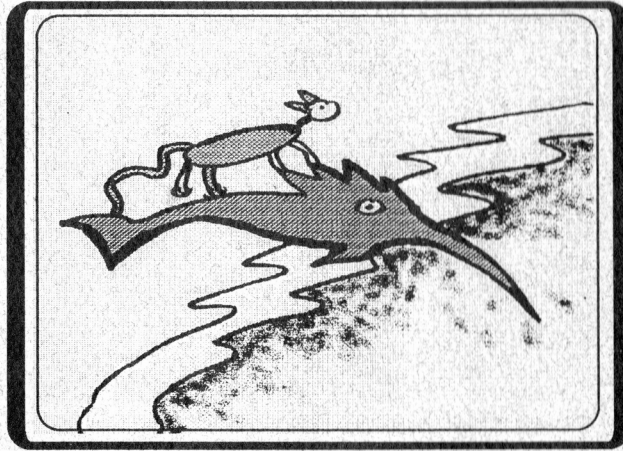
A Chumash Christmas A wondrous child is born on Christmas day, reincarnation, winter solstice, cosmology, Chumash cultural hero. 40 pages, 1995.

Tales For the Christmas Season The dying winter sun as depicted in native mythology of California, features Chumash & Mohave folk tales, 40 pages, 1996.

When Demons Rule California A Chumash Halloween, 52 pages, second edition 1999.



The Swordfish Race



The Swordfish Race

The book features a humorous race between Coyote and the Swordfish who were the Rulers of the Sea. Coyote was a very clever magician, and he managed to defeat the Swordfish with a surprising ruse.

This story begins with Eagle telling Coyote how his nephew fell overboard while fishing and was taken to the bottom of the ocean by one of the Swordfish. Eagle pleaded with Coyote to rescue him.

Coyote accepted the challenge and underwent a series of tests with the Swordfish as his judges. He managed to make such a nuisance of himself that the Swordfish began to plot how to get rid of Coyote. Though we laugh at Trickster Coyote's antics, we also recognize a more serious side to this narrative. It is not as simple as it first appears.

This Chumash folk tale took place in the ocean, just offshore from their ancient seaport which was located at the Santa Barbara harbor in Southern California.

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