The "Deified" Heart: Huichol Indian Soul-Concepts and Shamanic Art

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Abstract: This article asks what is the relationship between shamanic vision and the production of shamanic art? Based on interviews with Huichol Indian yarn painters in Mexico, the author shows that the artist's concept of the soul is important to understanding shamanic art. For the Huichol, the heart is the centre of shamanic inspiration and the vehicle for communication with the gods. This study builds on recent research into Mesoamerican concepts of the soul, and its relationship to the human body. It questions assumptions about contemporary "ethnic and tourist" arts which arise out of the shamanic complex,[1] and suggests that indigenous artists may be working from their own assumptions about process as well as product.

Résumé: Cet article demande comment la vision chamanique est reliée à la production de l'art chamanique. Utilisant des entrevues avec des artistes indigènes huicholes du Mexique, l'auteur démontre qu'on doit comprendre leur concept d'âme afin de comprendre leur art chamanique. Pour les indigènes huicholes, le coeur est le centre de l'inspiration chamanique et le moyen de communication avec les dieux. Cette étude utilise des recherches récentes sur les concepts mésoaméricains de l'âme et sur sa relation au corps humain. L'étude fait ressortir les postulats sur les arts «ethniques et touristiques» contemporains qui proviennent du complexe chamanique. Elle suggère que les artistes indigènes travaillent à partir leurs propres idées sur le processus et le produit.

> The true artist, capable, practicing, skilful,
> maintains dialogue with his heart, meets things with his mind.
> The true artist draws out all from his heart: makes things with calm, with sagacity; works like a true Toltec. — *Códice Matritense de la Real Academia* (cited in Anderson, 1990: 153)

When I first began to study Huichol (pronounced Wee-chol) Indian shamanism in Mexico, I was intrigued by statements that Huichol art was spiritually inspired. The dealers who sold brilliantly coloured yarn paintings in Puerto Vallarta insisted in their sales patter that all Huichol artists were shamans, and all their art the product of dreams and visions. Several articles in the literature support the idea of a visionary source for Huichol arts. Berrin (1978: 47) illustrates Huichol embroidery which was "inspired by the artist's dreams and hallucinations." Furst (1968-69: 23) describes several yarn paintings which are said to illustrate peyote-induced dreams. Schaefer (1990: 246-248) describes weavings based on dreams. Eger and Collings (1978: 39-41) discuss mandala-like drawings seen by a young shaman while eating peyote. However, Berrin, Eger and Collings and Schaefer all note that making designs based on dreams and visions represents an ideal that only some artists are able to achieve.

There is a growing literature which suggests that art of indigenous peoples is spiritually inspired, or is shamanic (Halifax, 1982; Lommel, 1967); but how much do we understand of what this generalization means? What is it that makes an art shamanic? How are shamans inspired, and how do they translate inspiration into art? Is it simply a matter of "seeing" a vision or dream, then replicating the image in art, or is some other process involved?

Some authors have suggested that one source of shamanic art may be the trance experience created by hallucinogenic plants, such as *yage* or *ayahuasca* (*Banisteriopsis spp.*) (Harner, 1973), or peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*)

(Cordy-Collins, 1989). This has led to observations that certain plants produce characteristic patterns and images, such as the writhing snakes of *ayahuasca*, or the geometric, lattice-like, transforming colour combinations of peyote. Other sources of visionary art may be physical stress, such as the fasting used by North American aboriginal people. Halifax (1982: 60-61) suggests that rock art found throughout North America may be records of spirits seen during visions.

Despite the widespread assumption that Huichol art is visionary, there is little documentation in the literature of the Huichol yarn painters' point of view. Therefore, I decided to ask the Huichol artists how they created their art, and whether it was shamanic or spiritually inspired. I also asked if artists use peyote as a source of their art and if yarn paintings are records of dreams and visions. As I will show, the artists' answers to these questions led me in unexpected directions. In particular, I found that the Huichol concept of the soul is central to understanding how spiritual inspiration occurs.

There are hints in the ethnographic literature on Mesoamerica that soul concepts may play a part in the production of art. Evon Vogt (1969: 371) writes of the Maya: "The ethnographer in Zinacantan soon learns that the most important interaction going on in the universe is not between persons nor between persons and material objects, but rather between souls inside these persons and material objects." This statement suggests that religious art, a material representation, might somehow be linked to concepts of the soul.

Another clue is provided by Richard Anderson (1990: 152-153), who writes that the Aztec model of aesthetics was based on a "deified heart," in which "true art comes from the gods, and is manifest in the artist's mystical revelation of sacred truth." The spiritual blessings of art come only to the enlightened few who have learned to converse with their hearts. Alfredo López Austin (1988: 231-232) proposes that the heart in Aztec thought was a component of what is often called the "soul" in English, and that the heart may play an important role in the production of art.

While Anderson regrets that the Aztec aesthetic tradition may not have survived the conquest, I began to wonder if the Huichol might still retain some of this tradition. The Huichol language is related to Aztec, and some terms appear similar, as I will show below. Could the soul somehow play a part in Huichol art? If so, how do the artists conceive of the soul, and what role do they think it plays in the making of art?

The Huichol and Their Art

The Huichol are a nation of about 20 000 people who live in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Northwest Mexico, north of the city of Guadalajara and east of Puerto Vallarta. They speak a Uto-Aztecan language, and are thought to be one-time hunter-gatherers and travelling traders, who may have only recently converted to life as Mesoamerican corn, bean and squash farmers (Furst, 1996: 42).

When the Spanish conquered most of south and central Mexico, the Huichol retreated to the mountains. Through a mixture of war and diplomacy, they managed to avoid being conquered for over 200 years (Franz, 1996). Even after the Spanish finally brought them under nominal control in 1722, periodic wars and rebellions over the next 200 years meant that travel was seldom safe and the Mexican government exercised little control over the Huichol, even as late as the 1950s. The Huichol only began to receive government services such as public schooling and health care in the 1960s and 1970s.

As a result of this history, the Huichol managed to avoid being Christianized. Although they do practise some Christian ceremonies in name, such as *Semana Santa* (Easter Week), they incorporate many indigenous elements in it, including animal sacrifices. They continue to practise a pre-Columbian form of shamanism. Their shamans are called *mara'a kame* (pl. *mara'a kate*), a term the Huichol often translate into Spanish as *cantador* or singer. This translation reflects the *mara'akame*'s central role of chanting in ceremonies, as well as healing groups and individuals.

Both men and women may be shamans. They call on male or female gods, who represent animal spirits, spirits of particular places such as mountains or bodies of water and natural phenomena such as the sun and moon. Particularly important is the Deer-god, who is a messenger and translator from gods to humans.

Making decorated objects, which Westerners might call art, is an integral part of Huichol ceremonial life. These objects are intended to convey prayers to the gods. For example, Huichol pilgrims make prayer arrows (Hui: *uru*), decorated sticks of cane, with small objects attached to represent the wishes of the maker. The arrows are carried to sacred sites and left there as offerings. Large stone disks with carved designs are kept in family god-houses or temples, and represent the spirit of the temple itself. The Huichol also wear their religion in the form of beautifully embroidered clothes and woven belts and bags, all decorated with designs of sacred animals, plants and symbols. The Huichol are sometimes

called a nation of shamans, but they could equally well be called a nation of artists.

Photo 1

Eagle and Sun/*Nierika* by unknown artist. Courtesy Instituto Nacional Indigenista. A traditional type of yarn painting of religious symbols, with little detail and simple colour use of red, black and white. This painting is similar to traditional offerings; its origins are unknown. Note depiction of heart area in eagle.

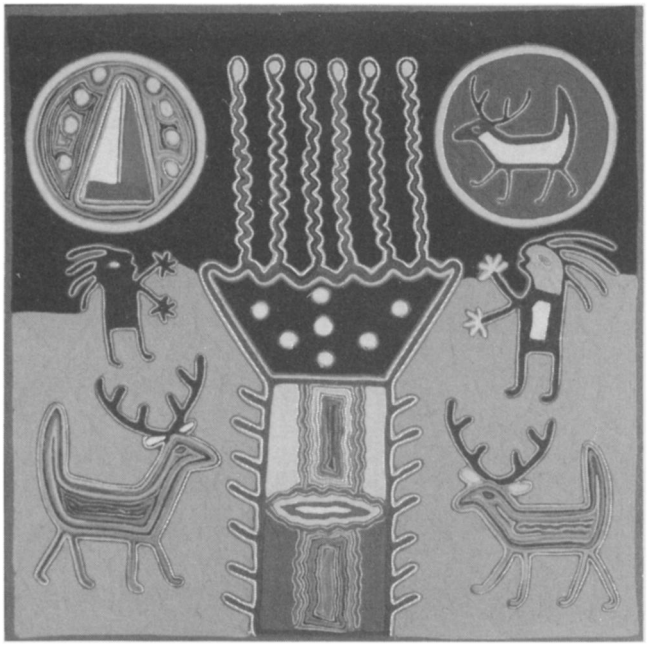
All the traditional arts were made in the service of religion. However in the 1950s and 1960s, the Huichol began to produce art for sale. The initial impetus came from a Mexican anthropologist, Alfonso Soto Soria, who organized an exhibition of traditional Huichol arts for the National Museum of Folk Arts (Museo Nacional de Artes e Industrias Populares) in Mexico City in 1954. Subsequently, the sale of Huichol arts was encouraged by the Governor of the state of Jalisco, and by a Franciscan priest, Father Ernesto Loera Ochoa, at the Basilica of Zapopan in Guadalajara (Alfonso Soto Soria, personal communication). In the 1960s and early 1970s, the National Indian Institute (INI) and FONART, the national government foundation for the support of the arts, attempted to foster Huichol commercial production of art through workshops and buying trips into the Sierra (Alfonso Manzanilla, personal communication). By the late 1970s, Huichol art had become commercially well established, and official Mexican government support seems to have become less important since then.

Photo 2

Mara'a kame (shaman) Communicating with Deer-god and Fire-God during the Fiesta of Esquite by M. Gonzalez. Courtesy Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan. This painting from the 1970s has somewhat more narrative content, but retains simple stylized stick-figures and use of religious symbols. The *mara'a kame* is communicating, or singing, to the Deer-god, seen on upper right. The Fire-god is seen as a face in the flames. Notice definition of heart area of shaman, and stylized shaman's plumes (*muwieri:* a wand with two feathers attached) on his head.

Yarn painting was one of the first Huichol commercial arts. Yarn paintings are made by spreading beeswax on a flat board, then pressing yarn into the wax, one strand at a time. The art grows out of traditional offerings of small yarn paintings (Hui: *nierika* or *itari*), which could be carried easily on pilgrimages; these were usually circular or ovoid objects with a design of beeswax, with yarn, beads or both pressed into it. The commercial works are flat, one-sided, intended to be hung on a wall, and are much larger. A standard size is a 60 cm × 60 cm; rectangular and circular shapes are also used.

Photo 3



The Birth of Peyote by Nicolas de la Rosa. Courtesy Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan. This painting from the 1970s shows the origin of the peyote cactus, a hallucinogenic plant which grows in the central Mexican desert. The peyote is shown in the centre, with its flowers as white dots in a cross-like formation, and its roots extending downwards. Lines of *kupuri* or life energy shoot upwards. The artist writes that this is how peyote is envisioned by those who eat it.

The early commercial paintings were quite simple, and depicted one or several symbols from the Huichol design repertoire. In the 1960s, the American anthropologist, Peter Furst, encouraged Ramón Medina Silva, one of the first yarn painters, to make narrative paintings of myths and legends (Furst, 1978: 26-27). Since then, the paintings have become increasingly complex and detailed. This seems to have occurred as a result of an interaction between Huichol artists and Western buyers. The buyers want paintings that include more detail. Western preferences for realism are also driving the artists to make somewhat realistic paintings which depict actual ceremonies taking place in Huichol communities. Left to themselves, the Huichol artists would probably continue to draw stick-figures and religious symbols. However, both buyers and artists have agreed on an art which only depicts Huichol religious subjects.

The price of yarn paintings has gone up considerably. Yarn paintings began as small, inexpensive tourist souvenirs selling for a few dollars U.S. Now the tourist souvenirs are still available, but the top artists produce elaborate paintings, sold in the international art market at retail prices ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars U.S.

Most Huichol artists market their paintings directly to dealers in Mexico, or to buyers from other countries. Some artists have ongoing relationships with patrons; other artists peddle their work from dealer to dealer. A few artists sell directly to the public on the street or in markets. The artists seem to be resolutely individualistic traders. I have heard of a few attempts to form co-operatives, mostly at the behest of external authorities, but these efforts seem to dissolve amidst accusations such as misappropriation of funds.

Photo 4

Bull Sacrifice by Heucame (or Neucame). Courtesy Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan. This painting shows a more realistic depiction of Huichol ceremony. The people are shown as fuller, rounded or modelled figures, as is the bull. There is an attempt to use perspective. The woman is shown catching blood from the bull's neck in a cup, to put in her jar. The temple is in the background. However, the realistic depiction is combined with depictions of symbols, such as shaman's plumes, candles, corncob (in temple) and prayer arrow (*uru*: cane with notch at top). In this painting, images of this world are combined with images of the world of the gods, as though one were seeing both levels of reality at the same time.

The buyers of Huichol art include some Mexicans, who purchase indigenous art as a symbol of Mexican heritage. However, the principal buyers are non-Mexicans, such as tourists looking for souvenirs, or art patrons who come mainly from the United States, and to a lesser extent, Canada, Germany, France and Japan. Most Huichol

artists travel within Mexico to sell their art in cities such as Tepic, Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta, the major venues for sales of Huichol art. A surprising number of artists have been taken on gallery tours to other countries.

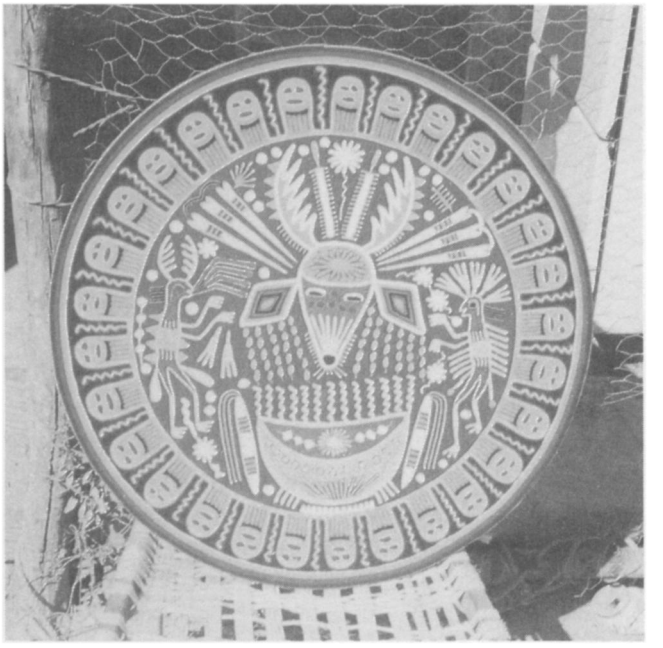
Photo 5

Goddess by unknown artist. Courtesy Isabel Jordan. This painting from the 1990s shows a Goddess, with snakes coming out of her head, probably representing *kupuri*. The goddess's *iyari* or heart area is emphasized, and may show *kupuri* radiating out of the heart and through the body. The painting seems to be a variation on the theme of the goddess of life giving birth amid the animals of the sea and sky. This theme was originated by artist Mariano Valadez in the 1980s and then copied by other artists.

The Huichol live by farming corn, beans and squash in the limited arable land left to them in the Sierra, but the land cannot support their growing population. They are increasingly being drawn into the cash economy, but they have few sources of income; most work as migrant labourers in fruit and tobacco plantations on the coast, where they may be poisoned by pesticides (Díaz Romo, 1993). In this economic context, making art becomes a desirable alternative; it is reasonably well paid, and as one artist told me, "Art is made seated in the shade." A number of artists expressed gratitude that Westerners buy their art, because it allows them to support their families and do work which allows them to think about their religion and their culture.

Most yarn painters are men, although some women do yarn paintings. This may reflect a tendency for men to do work which brings them into contact with the outside world, while women tend to focus on work which can be done at home. Women prefer to do weaving, beadwork and embroidery, which are skills highly valued by other Huichol. While there may be a link between gender and the production of yarn paintings, I have not collected evidence to prove that there is more than a pragmatic reason for the predominance of male artists. Women are also more likely to speak little or no Spanish, and to have little or no schooling. In contrast, most men seem to speak at least some Spanish, and many are quite fluent. Men are also more likely to have attended school (especially those under age 40, who were the first generation to have schooling widely available).

Photo 6



The *Mara'a kame* talks to the Deer-god at Night by Eligio Carrillo Vicente. Courtesy of the artist. This painting from the 1990s represents the artist's visionary perception of a Deer-spirit which appears during a ceremony. The night is black, but the shaman's power lights up the centre like a yellow searchlight. He is calling in the gods, who gather around and talk to the *mara'a kame*. All around are the green spirits of the peyote, who appear as little girls. The *mara'a kame* is communicating with the Deer-god, who appears hovering over the fire. The painting shows a particular point in a ceremony held before a pilgrimage. A bowl of copal incense is burning (lower centre), and candles are being blessed by smudging them with incense.

By the 1990s, yarn paintings were distributed internationally and were increasingly valuable. Yet comparatively little had been written about either the art or the

artists. Only three artists had been documented in any depth: the late Ramón Medina Silva, who was the consultant of anthropologists Peter Furst and Barbara Myerhoff; Jos, Benítez Sánchez, who exhibited internationally in co-operation with Mexican writer, Juan Negrín; and Mariano Valadez, an artist married to the American, Susana Eger Valadez, and perhaps best known in North America through reproductions of his work in calendars and greeting cards.

I first met Huichol artists in 1988 in Canada, in Wakefield, Quebec, where they were exhibiting their art as part of a cultural exchange, during which they were visiting aboriginal communities. I became friends with one of the women in the group, Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos (Lupe), the widow of Ramón Medina. Lupe invited me to visit her in Tepic, and I made several visits over the next three years. I learned Spanish and some Huichol, spent a number of months living with Lupe's family and participated in ceremonies including the pilgrimage to Wirikuta, the desert sacred to the Huichol.

In 1991, I decided to conduct doctoral research on Huichol yarn paintings and shamanism. I already had a network of contacts among the Huichol and some insight into shamanism before I started. With the help of dealers, Mexican government officials and anthropologists, the Huichol Center for Cultural Survival and Traditional Arts and my own contacts among the Huichol, I set out to locate Huichol yarn painters in 1993-94.

I wanted to interview a wide and representative sample of Huichol yarn painters, in order to go beyond the interpretations of just a few well-known artists, popularly regarded as the "best" artists. Instead, I travelled around the Sierra, locating artists from different regions and communities. These artists represented a range of experience along different dimensions, such as age, number of years spent doing yarn painting, whether they had attended school, whether they grew up in an urban, rural or indigenous community, whether and how they had learned about Huichol religion and shamanic practices and whether they themselves were shamans.

The following analysis is based on these interviews. I conducted all interviews myself, speaking in Spanish. Most artists speak a rather idiosyncratic version of Spanish, which includes a number of phrases and ideas based in Huichol concepts, or using Huichol grammar imposed onto Spanish. Their Spanish can be quite difficult to understand, even for Spanish speakers, unless one has a background knowledge of Huichol culture. Therefore I have translated the interviews from Spanish into colloquial English, and added clarifying notes, to make the interviews understandable.

Some artists allowed themselves to be tape recorded; these artists tended to be older, mature men who had travelled and were comfortable dealing with foreigners. Their accounts are verbatim transcripts of our interview. Some artists did not wish to be taped, and so I have paraphrased their answers, based on my field notes. All names are the artists' real names.[2]

One important question is whether the artists themselves are shamans. This can be determined with some confidence because Huichol culture has fairly specific criteria for becoming a shaman. An aspiring shaman makes a vow to certain beings, who are often spirits of particular places such as Tatei Haramara (the Pacific Ocean), or the gods of Wirikuta (the desert north of San Luis Potosí). He or she must complete a prescribed number of years of ceremony and fasting, although the exact number seems to vary, depending on which spirits are referred to and what level of attainment is desired. I have heard numbers as low as three years, and as long as 25 years. Huichol often refer to this process as making a contract (Sp: *hacer un compromiso*) and completing it (Sp: *cumplir*). A shaman is someone who has "completed," while a failed shaman has not been able to complete. It is the spirits who finally decide whether a person will be granted shamanic power. An aspiring shaman can carry out all the prescribed rituals, but still fail.

Most artists I talked to did not claim to be "completed" or practising shamans. A few had never tried to learn. Others were partway through the process, and had developed varying degrees of shamanic and visionary ability. One artist, Eligio Carrillo, did claim a fairly advanced level of shamanic ability. His statements were especially important in clarifying the relationship between the artist and the spiritual source of inspiration.

Dreams and Visions as a Source of Art

At first, I thought that dreams and visions might be the source of inspiration. I assumed that the process by which spirituality translated into art consisted of the artist "seeing" an image, through dream or vision, then transferring this image directly into a painting. By dream, I mean our common nighttime experience while asleep. By vision, I mean an experience while awake, or while in some form of trance. Visionary experience can include both auditory and visual experiences.[3] Artists quite often described "seeing" particular images, and also hearing sounds or holding a conversation with particular spirits.

The Huichol use peyote, a hallucinogenic cactus, during ceremonies. It is widely available and even given to young children. I asked the artists whether they had eaten peyote, and whether they found it a source of the

imagery in their paintings. I also asked them whether they used dreams or visions generally as a source of imagery.

All the artists had eaten peyote. Some said they did not use peyote as the source of their imagery. For example, artist Mariano Valadez told me that he is not a shaman, and does not rely on peyote to generate images. Moreover, he questioned whether this process was actually possible.

Hope: Have you seen things when you are eating peyote? Things that you put in your yarn paintings. Or do you not put these things in your yarn paintings?

Mariano[4]: No, because, the thing is, when you are eating peyote, it is as though time is passing. When the effect ends, I don't keep in my mind what I see, or what I imagine. I don't do that. Nor can I eat peyote in order to do my work.

Hope: You don't remember afterwards what you have seen?

Mariano: No, I don't remember. Because I cannot lie in my explanations, and say that I can take something in order to be able to paint better. No, because I cannot. . . . And regarding the peyote, I don't do it [use it as a source of inspiration]. Many of my colleagues say that they use peyote to do their work, but I don't believe it. I can't lie. I want to speak honestly.

Artist Modesto Rivera explained that peyote gives energy but is not itself a source of the images. He is referring here to a Huichol belief that peyote is a source of spiritual and physical energy or life force, called *kupuri* in Huichol. Modesto has begun the training required to become a shaman in Huichol culture, but as an apprentice shaman, he seems not to have acquired visionary ability yet. Modesto stated that while peyote gives the artist *kupuri* which he or she can then use to make paintings, peyote is not in itself a source of the images. I asked him whether he had seen visions. He told me that when a person takes peyote, he or she has the energy that comes from peyote. This energy stays with the artists, and gives them energy to invent images. He thinks that the things of the Huichol religion are not things a person can actually see. For example, one does not see things in the sacred water, but one has a mental idea or image of what they represent; and it is this idea which the artist presents in the painting. Sometimes he depicts the energy of some sacred places or of the sacred gods. For him, the source of images comes from his childhood. His father always did the ceremonies and fiestas, and so he knows what the Huichol traditions are.

The artist who was most explicit about using dreams and visions as a source of imagery was Eligio Carillo. However, even he stated that dreams were more important as a source than visions.

Hope: And do you get your designs from visions?

Eligio: Oh yes, that yes. From visions. Sometimes, from dreams. Which represent a lot through dreams.

Hope: And is there a difference between the designs that you get from dreams and designs that you get from your imagination?

Eligio: Yes, there is that also, from my imagination. There is also that. That is to say, it comes from many places. I have learned that it is thus, things which I learn well [i.e., through shamanism], many things result.

When I asked him if it was possible for a person looking at his paintings to tell the difference, his answer was that a person who was already a *mara'a kame* or visionary would know without being told. Otherwise it was up to the artist or *mara'a kame* to explain it. Without an explanation, an observer could not really understand.

Hope: And do the two types look different. . . . If I am looking at a yarn painting, can I know if it is from a vision or if it is a dream or something else?

Eligo: Yes.

Hope: How can I know this?

Eligo: Well, for me it is easy. But perhaps that person, there, who doesn't know anything [i.e., does not have shamanic ability], for him it is very difficult. That's how it is. Because I . . . when I see it . . . I have to say it, because I have the knowledge, right [i.e., a shaman should explain what he sees. I should say to the person] "Good then, that is an image, which is the representation of where they made the beginning of the ceremony." Perhaps I should say it. But if he doesn't say anything to me, I will only look at it to see what it contains, right. And that too. If another person makes it, I just [look at] what he made, right. Just look at it. I understand. That's what that means.

As Eligio explains, it is the learner's (or the purchaser's) obligation to ask what the painting means, or what sort of vision it may contain. Once asked, it is the artist's obligation to explain; for example, he may explain that this painting represents a vision of what occurred at the be-

ginning of a ceremony. If the learner does not ask, the artist will not explain but will only look at the painting himself, knowing its meaning. Similarly, if Eligio sees a painting by another artist, he can understand its meaning without asking.

I will note here that the artists seem quite willing to explain the meaning of their paintings to strangers, such as myself. The meaning is considered an important part of the painting, and a competent artist should know the story and be prepared to explain it. (In contrast, an artist who just copies other people's designs without understanding the meaning is not considered to be at a very high level.) I found that generally the artists are quite pleased and proud to explain their work. This openness was one reason why I chose to study yarn paintings; it may indeed be in contrast to some indigenous people, who feel that spiritual subjects should not be shared openly.

Among artists who did say that they had occasionally experienced dreams or visions, the evidence was equally mixed. Some artists could describe a vision that they had experienced, but said that they had never tried to depict it in a yarn painting. Others had experienced one or more visions, which they did put in a yarn painting; but they said that most of the paintings they made were not of this vision, but rather of culturally derived themes such as myths. An artist such as Ramón Medina may produce some paintings which express actual visions, but make other paintings which narrate myths. I found it was not uncommon to have painters point out to me which paintings were their own visions, and which were not; this ability to distinguish showed that they used both types of inspiration in their work.

Some artists used what might be called a second-hand version of dreams and visions as a source of inspiration. I have called this process "borrowed vision." During ceremonies, the *mara'a kate* may tell in their songs about what they may be envisioning at that moment; often the *mara'a kate* tell stories from the Huichol body of myths. The artists listen to what the *mara'a kate* say; then use their imaginations to paint what they hear. Mariano Valadez explained how he applies this idea.

> Hope: When you make your yarn paintings, do you paint things you have seen in ceremony, or from your imagination?
>
> Mariano: I make yarn paintings in my own style, according to my imagination. But also, many times, the shamans give me ideas, because whenever they talk about the religion of the Huichols, I am thinking how it is, with my imagination. When I hear the myths or the songs, or the prayers, or the stories, at the time I record in my memory, and afterwards I have it. That's how I am.

He emphasized his respect for the sacredness of the tradition, and for the work that the *mara'a kate* do to understand and teach it. It was this fidelity to the tradition which he attempted to portray in his art.

Most yarn paintings have more conventional origins. The symbols and designs, such as deer, eagle, peyote or sun, are widely known and used in other Huichol arts such as embroidery and weaving. Some images are traditional, such as designs used in traditional offerings and stone nierikas. Some images are more modern, such as the recent somewhat realistic paintings of myths, sacred stories, or actual ceremonies. All of these images can be learned or copied from other artists.

Clearly the evidence regarding the use of vision in yarn paintings is quite variable. Some artists are limited to their own imaginations or intellectual processes; some use dreams and visions of the supernatural plane as the source of inspiration. Moreover, some artists use their own personal dreams and visions, while others borrow the dreams and visions of *mara'a kate*.

As I talked to the artists I began to feel that I was missing the point of what they were telling me. I was concentrating on the *source* of the image, whether the source was dream, vision, peyote, personal experience or traditional or culturally derived themes. The artists did not seem too concerned about which of these sources they used. What was important was the *process* of envisioning, or *how* vision and artistic inspiration occur. This process is less variable, being inherent in the artist himself or herself. It is closely related to concepts which Westerners might call body, mind and soul.

Huichol Soul Concepts

The important question was whether the artist's soul or spirit was open to the gods or not. If the soul was open, then ideas, images and inspiration would flow in to the artist. The art could then be said to be shamanic or spiritually inspired, no matter what the artist painted. If the artist's soul was not open, then the art was not particularly spiritual, no matter how well executed it was in terms of technique or drawing.

Understanding what the artists mean by the term "soul" or "spirit" is central to understanding the role that the soul plays in Huichol art. Recent research by Mexican scholar, Alfredo López Austin (1988), has provided a dramatic impetus to the understanding of soul

concepts in Mesoamerica. In *The Human Body and Ideology,* he examines ancient Aztec concepts of the body. He relates the Aztecs' internal model of the human body to their concepts of the exterior world, the spiritual world and the cosmos.

López Austin (1988: 181-184) states that "the words *souls, spirits, animas* all lack precision." To refine these terms, he tries to locate them at points which he calls "animistic centres" in the body; these are the point of origin of the impulses for life, movement, psychic functions; they may or may not correspond to a particular organ. He draws an important distinction between animistic *centres* of the physical body, and animistic *entities* which might be called souls or spirits and which may live on after death.

According to López Austin (ibid.: 190-194), the heart was most important to the Aztecs. It is mentioned most frequently, and "it includes the attributes of vitality, knowledge, inclination, and feeling. References to memory, habit, affection, will, direction of action, and emotion belong exclusively to this organ." *Cua*, the top of the head, is the seat of the mind. It is the intellectual process, the seat of memory and knowledge. López Austin (ibid.: 199) proposes the following model:

> Consciousness and reason were located in the upper part of the head (*cuaitl*); all kinds of animistic processes were in the heart (*yollotl*); and in the liver (*elli*) the feelings and passions . . . a gradation that goes from the rational (above) to the passionate (below), with considerable emphasis on the centre . . . where the most valuable functions of human life were located. The most elevated thoughts and the passions most related to the conservation of the human life were carried out in the heart, and not in the liver or head.

In Aztec belief, the heart played a central role in artistic production. It was thought to receive some divine force. The person who was outstanding for brilliance in divination, art and imagination received divine fire in the heart, whereas a person who was a bad artist lacked it (ibid.: 231-232).

Since the Huichol language is related to Aztec, I hypothesized that the Huichols might share similar conceptual categories. Two of the three main Aztec animistic centres—the top of the head, called *cua* in Aztec, and the heart called *yol*—seemed very close to Huichol concepts called *kupuri* and *iyari*. However, as will be shown below in my interviews with Eligio Carrillo, the functions of *kupuri* seemed more like the Aztec word *tonal*, which López Austin defines as life force or irradiation contained in the body.

The most complete information on Huichol concepts of the soul in relation to the body comes from an article by Peter Furst (1967), which is based on interviews with Ramón Medina. Zingg (1938: 161-173) Lumholtz (1902: v. 2, 242-243) and Perrin (1996) discuss soul concepts, but they write mainly about the soul after death, rather than in relation to the body and its attributes. Here I will review the Huichol soul concepts as described by Ramón.

Ramón located the soul, or more accurately the essential life force, in the top of the head or fontanelle. He called both the soul and the fontanelle *kupuri* in Huichol and *alma* in Spanish. A Mother-goddess, *Tatei Niwetukame*, places *kupuri* in a baby's head just before birth. It is placed in the soft spot where the bones have not yet closed; this is its life or soul. *Kupuri* is attached to the head by a fine thread, like spider's silk (Furst, 1967: 52).

Myerhoff (1974: 154) adds a few more details about *kupuri*, also based on information from Ramón:

> A great many plants and animals and all people have this *kupuri* or soul-essence; it is ordinarily visible only to the *mara'akame*. Ramón has depicted it in his yarn paintings as multicoloured wavy lines connecting a person's head or the top of an object with a deity. Verbally he described *kupuri* as rays or fuzzy hairs.

When Ramón shot peyote with an arrow as part of the peyote hunt ceremony, he said that rays of colour spurted upward like a rainbow; these rays are the *kupuri* or lifeblood of the peyote and the deer.

Kupuri is needed to maintain life. When a person loses *kupuri* due to a blow, he or she feels ill and cannot think properly. The *mara'a kame* is called. Because the person is still alive, the *mara'a kame* knows "that the *kupuri* has not yet become permanently separated from its owner, that is, the metaphorical life between them has not yet been severed by a sorcerer or by an animal" (Furst, 1967: 53). The *mara'a kame* hunts for the soul, and finds it by its whimpering; seeing the soul in the form of a tiny insect, he or she catches it with the shaman's feathers, wraps it in a ball of cotton and puts it in a hollow reed. The *mara'a kame* brings the soul back and places it in the head. The cotton disappears into the head along with the soul. Then the person comes back to life (ibid.: 53-56).

Occasionally, Ramón used the term *kupuri-iyari* which Furst translated as "heart and soul." *Iyari* was also used in terms such as "he has a Huichol heart" or a "good heart." Furst does not talk in any detail about *iyari.* He notes only that during a funeral ceremony held five days after death, the soul is called back and captured

in the form of a luminous insect called *xaipi'iyari* (Hui: *xaipi* meaning "fly" and *iyari* meaning "heart" or "essence"). When the soul takes the form of rock crystals which incarnate the spirit of respected ancestors, the word *iyari* is also used; it is known as *tewari* (Hui: grandfather), *uquiyari* (Hui: guardian, protector or chief) or *uru iyari* from *uru* (Hui: arrow heart) (ibid.: 80).

Thus, where López Austin (1988) separates the Aztec ideas related to *kupuri* and *iyari*, Furst's analysis appears to combine them. For example, Furst describes *kupuri* as the soul which leaves the body, both during life and at death and which returns to the family one last time during the funeral ceremony. However, the Huichol have two separate words, which seem to correspond to the Aztec words in other ways.

It is possible that Ramón himself did not make a clear distinction, since Furst later says that he corrected himself on other points; or Furst did not identify a difference between the two words and their related concepts; for example, in describing the soul which comes back after burial as a luminous fly or as a rock crystal, it appears that Ramón actually used the word *iyari*, not *kupuri*. He called them *xaipi iyari* (Hui: fly-heart) and *uru iyari* (Hui: arrow heart). Furst (1967: 80) noticed the change of name and commented on it, but did not identify *iyari* as a different entity. Therefore, Furst's article describes the soul as seated in the top of the head; and Furst gives the head greater importance, in contrast to the Aztec emphasis on the heart. Perrin (1996: 407-410) identifies the confusion between *kupuri* and *iyari*, and tries to distinguish the capacities of the two. However, he does not make the link to animistic centres of the body, as I have done here.

The usual translation given for the Huichol word *iyari* is heart (Furst, 1967: 41), heart-memory (Schaefer, 1990: 412) or heart-soul-memory (Fikes, 1985: 339). I have also heard the Huichols translate *iyari* into Spanish as *corazón* (Sp: heart) or *pensamiento* (Sp: mind, personality), a Spanish word that they use broadly to refer to a person's character; for example, a person of *buen pensamiento* (Sp: good character, good intentions). Peyote is the *iyari* of the deer and also of the gods (Fikes, 1985: 187; Schaefer, 1990: 342).

There is little discussion of *iyari* in the literature. The fullest account is in Schaefer (1990: 244-246), whose Huichol weaving consultant, Utsima, explained that one's *iyari* grows throughout life like a plant. When a person is young, he or she has a small heart; when he or she grows, it becomes much larger. However, the *iyari* must be nourished to grow; eating peyote and following the religious path to completion allow one to develop this consciousness. At the highest level of mastery, the *iyari* is the source of designs used in weaving:

> the designs she creates are a direct manifestation from deep within, from her heart, her thoughts, and her entire being.... those inspired to weave *iyari* designs learn to view nature and the world about them in a different perspective, as living designs. When they tune into this mode of seeing their world, they tap into a wealth of design sources and consciously bring their imagination into visual form. (Ibid.: 245)

Weaving from the *iyari* is so difficult that many women never attempt it, preferring to copy designs all their life. Nonetheless, achieving this goal is the peak of Huichol artistic expression; and women who achieve it receive elevated status and are recognized for their designs (ibid.: 248).

The Soul of the Artist

On the basis of the importance of the *iyari* in weaving, it seemed to me that *iyari* might have considerable significance for the production of yarn paintings as well. Moreover, the general aesthetic significance which the heart had for the Aztecs suggested that its role in Huichol thought might have been neglected. Therefore, I asked the yarn painters what they understood *iyari* and *kupuri* to mean; and what role they thought these entities played in their art.

Young artists tended to give one-sentence answers to these questions, such as "*iyari* means life." Huichol artist Eligio Carrillo gave the fullest expression of the meaning of *iyari* and *kupuri*, and their significance in art. Because his answers were so complete and form a connected whole, I quote him at length; what he said was consistent with my discussions with other artists.

According to Eligio, *iyari* contains a number of ideas. *Iyari* is a form of power which comes from the gods. It is the breath of life, sent from the gods; and the person's own life and breath.

> Eligio: *Iyari*, that means the breath (Sp: *resuello)*, the breath of the gods ... That god sends the power, to continue living. To think. And it is what guides you. That is *iyari*. What makes you able to think. In every place you go, with that you walk around. It is what protects you. The *iyari*. It is the thought (Sp: *pensamiento)* which gives you ideas and everything.

The *iyari* includes the heart, but is more than the physical organ. I interpret what Eligio says here to mean that while *iyari* is seated in the heart, it has many meanings;

and pervades the person's life. It is also a person's being or identity, which we might call in English, the unique personality or the person who knows and sees.

Eligio: It is the heart, of the body. But it is the whole body, not just the heart, the *iyari*. It is as though it were a magical air. Magical air. That *iyari*. The *iyari* tries to translate from many directions (Sp: *traducir de muchas partes)*.
Hope: If a person is understanding things from many directions, it is by means of the *iyari*?
Eligio: Yes that power, that is *iyari*

"Translating from many directions" is a Huichol expression in Spanish, which means that a person with shamanic abilities is receiving messages from the gods. I clarified this point in my next question.

Hope: And when a person is receiving messages from the gods, it is by means of the *iyari*?
Eligio: Yes, exactly, But [only] if it [the *iyari*] is already in tune (Sp: *ya coordina*) with them. You make it in tune when you are studying [i.e., learning to become a *mara'a kame*], and you are in tune by means of this. An electricity.

Here he means that a person "tunes" the heart to the gods through the pilgrimages and other actions required to become a *mara'a kame*. Once in tune, it is as though there was an electrical current passing between the person and the gods, carrying messages.[5]

Even though a person develops the *iyari* so that it can receive messages from the gods, the capacities of the *iyari* alone are not enough to make yarn paintings. A person must also use mind, for which Eligio uses the Spanish word, *mentál*. Here is how Eligio distinguishes the two capacities. He talks about the mind and about the knowledge of shamanism, by which he means the knowledge perceived through the heart. Both are required to paint.

Eligio: Shamanism is one thing, and mental power is something else. Because, even if I know something about shamanism I need to have mental power to do my work. Mental is different, it is to translate and make things. And you need both powers, right, to do the work.
Hope: Shamanism is in order to see?
Eligio: Yes, it is to see.
Hope: And mental power is to translate and make the yarn painting?
Eligio: That's it.
Hope: You need the two, then?
Eligio: That shaman has to have the two powers to be able to make things, and if he doesn't have both, even if he is a good shaman, what will he gain? He won't be able to do anything. That's how it is.

He distinguishes between painters who have developed both capacities and those who have not. Some painters use only the mind; Eligio is careful to say that they too can paint well, since they too are focussing just as a person focusses through shamanic study.

Hope: And are there some people who do yarn paintings who are not shamans, and others who do them who are shamans?
Eligio: Well, those who do yarn paintings who are not shamans, they only base themselves in mental powers. Or it is mental power that they have opened. They just take note of something, and more or less have an idea, and they make it. But still, more or less, I don't think they are very deficient, they do well with their minds. They are also concentrating. They do that.

To clarify the difference between mind and *iyari* further, I groped for an analogy; and hit upon the perhaps awkward idea of a car and driver. The mind is like the steering wheel, but the *iyari* is like the motor; without a motor, the car goes nowhere; but without a steering wheel, the strongest motor spins its wheels.

Hope: And the mind is like the guide . . . as though I were driving a car, I hold the wheel?
Eligio: Exactly. That's how the mind is.
Hope: And *iyari* is like the motor of the car?
Eligio: It's the most important. It's what you need. That is *iyari*. In Spanish, they say heart; in Huichol, we say *iyari*. It is the power, that is the breath of the whole body.

I then asked him what was the link between *iyari* and becoming a shaman. He clarified that through the training and pilgrimages required to become a *mara'a kame*, the person is opening the heart so that it will be able to receive messages from the gods.

Hope: And if a person is becoming a shaman, do they strengthen the *iyari*, or do they open it?
Eligio: They open it. Now they begin to understand. After, it [the idea] comes out and then ready [to make art].
Hope: The ideas, the messages, come out?
Eligio: You think of them, then they come out.

A *mara'a kame* is a person with the heart open. During the training, another *mara'a kame* can help a person

to open the heart, if the *mara'a kame* has been given the power to do so by the gods.

Eligio: Oh yes, there is among shamans, if that one is not . . . if his *iyari* is covered, many healers know how to open it.
Hope: Does the shaman have his heart more open?
Eligio: Yes, because the shaman has it open, well, and those who don't know, well it is closed. For those who know. . . . For example, [pointing to a child] this one doesn't know, and if I were a shaman, very good, I could open his mind (Sp: *mente*) so that he would learn faster. That's how it is, but with the power from the deer, with the power from the gods. It is because they have given me power, that I can do this. And that's how they do this. The *iyari*.

I then shifted to the idea of *kupuri* and asked what its role was in relation to *iyari*.

Hope: And *kupuri*, I don't understand what is the difference between *kupuri* and *iyari*?
Eligio: Little difference. *Kupuri* means the same [as I have been saying]. And *kupuri* means a thing very blessed, which is the *iyari*. It can be blessed with the *iyari* of the gods, bless your body, it has been blessed. That is the word it means.

In Eligio's explanation, *kupuri* has the meaning of energy, while *iyari* or life is the product of the energy. The energy of *kupuri* blesses, or irradiates, the person's entire body including the *iyari*. The gods have *iyari* and so do people; *kupuri* is the energy that is transmitted between them.

Hope: And *kupuri* is like the electricity that comes?
Eligio: That comes to you from the gods who are blessing that person.
Hope: And they send from their *iyari* the electricity which is the *kupuri*?
Eligio: Yes.
Hope: And it arrives at my *iyari*?
Eligio: Yes.
Hope: Now I understand it. . . .
Eligio: *Iyari* is breath. *Kupuri* is the life, is the life of the gods, that the gods may give you life, they give you power (Sp: *poder*), that's what that is.
Hope: Is it like force (Sp: *fuerza*)?
Eligio: Force, yes, force. More force from the gods is *kupuri*.

Kupuri can be transmitted from gods to humans, with the help of the *mara'a kame*. In this way the person's life and energy are increased. Eligio uses the analogy of the *iyari* as a glass of water, which may be filled up to the top with *kupuri*. If some water is lacking, the *mara'a kame* can give more.

Eligio: It [*kupuri*] is a power. Here among ourselves, that's how we use it. Among shamans, they give it—*kupuri*—and it is a power, a bit more. For example, to say, well, suppose this glass of water is a life, yes, an *iyari*. It's lacking a little bit, or here like this. Good, I am going to give you a little bit more, I have to fill it up, it is one day more, a little bit more, then this glass will have this.
Hope: And are there people who lack *kupuri*?
Eligio: Yes, a lack of . . .
Hope: Force?
Eligio: Of force of the gods. That's *kupuri*.
Hope: And those people are very weak?
Eligio: Exactly, yes.

We continued on with the idea of how *kupuri* appears to the shaman or how it is seen.

Eligio: But that is the power, they are magic powers. No one can see them, only the shaman is watching what he is doing. That's how it is.

I then inquired where *kupuri* is located in the body. Eligio insisted that while *kupuri* enters through the head, it spreads throughout the body. While it is carried in blood, it is carried in other parts of the body as well.

Hope: Does a person have *kupuri* in their own blood?
Eligio: Well, what you receive, the power, if you have it in all your body, all your body has it.
Hope: Is it seated in the head?
Eligio: That is, it is seated in the whole body. It extends throughout the body. It does it, everywhere receives it.
Hope: Is it received via the head or via the heart?
Eligio: It arrives via the head, then spreads throughout the body.

Finally, I returned to the idea of how *iyari* is represented in yarn paintings. Eligio interpreted this question to mean, what is the process by which images or visions arrive, and then how does a person translate them into a painting? He explained that the messages from the gods which the person sees through the *iyari* appear as though tape recorded there. Then the artist can use his or her mind to comprehend the images or the sounds, and make a picture of it. In this way, a person learns many different designs.

Hope: And how do you represent *iyari* in the yarn paintings?

Eligio: *Iyari*? Well, you can present it in the form that you think it. That which comes from them, that which happened, that which the gods did, it is as though you saw it, saw it and it stayed seated in your body. That is what can take place in the yarn painting. To make designs. Because you carry it in your mind. That is what you will make. No, it's no more than that. From there, then it [the designs] comes out. Different ones. About many things it comes out. They [the gods] tell you a thing, here it comes out [in art]. From the mind. It opens then, to be able to do that.

Hope: Many different designs come forth?

Eligio: Now they come out of there.

Hope: From the heart, from the *iyari*?

Eligio: Yes, from the heart, That is, from the moment when a person learns about this.

A person learns these designs at night, during a ceremony, when a spirit arrives and teaches them. The expression "it comes walking" (Sp: *viene caminando*) is another Huichol expression in Spanish referring to the arrival of a spirit during the ceremony. All night the person may learn. The next morning, the artist will have many new designs.

Eligio: Because in one night, almost you will . . . let's suppose that [the ceremony begins] at six or seven o'clock, [and lasts] until midnight. From midnight until five in the morning. That makes about 11 hours, you can be learning about this. It comes walking [a spirit or god]. It comes walking and [what it teaches to you] it stays with you here, here it will stay. In the moment that you do this work [i.e., make yarn paintings], you can do it [i.e., you have the power and designs] and now it comes out of you. Like a recorded tape, then. . . .

Hope: And with that, a person can make many designs in one day? That many designs come forth quickly?

Eligio: Yes, because there you go . . . well, this is all [that you need].

Using the mind, and the ability of the *mara'a kame* to see, an artist can develop many paintings; and all will have the same quality and power as the first.

Eligio: Well then, since you have two, two powers—mental power and knowledge of that which is, that is to say, that which is of the shaman, and mental power is another thing. You can originate (Sp: *inventar*) more [designs]. But with the same power. And there are more. From one, you go on making. . . . From one, you go on to make four, five, but by shamanic power. And with just mental power, you can go on making another five more. From one [ceremony], that's all. That is mental, to make up more, and that they always come out with the same power.

To summarize, ideally artistic production comes from having the *iyari* open to the gods. Achieving a state of openness is something that a person develops through the training required to be a *mara'a kame*; another *mara'a kame* can facilitate this process. With the heart open, tuned to the gods, images and ideas will flow in. Such an artist can attend a ceremony when the door to the spirit world is open, and learn many new designs. By using the mind in conjunction with the heart, the images and ideas are converted to art. The artists emphasized that ideally both mind and *iyari* were required; *iyari* alone was not enough, although it is possible to do paintings solely with the mind.

The Huichol idea is not unlike the Western idea of heart and mind. A Western artist might say a painting has "heart" or "soul"; but in Western terms this attribute tends to mean feeling or emotion. It is not specifically a reference to the supernatural. However, the Huichols take this concept one step further, since the open heart is filled by or linked to the gods. The gods have *iyari* and so do people; ideally the two are linked, as though by a bridge. *Kupuri* is the energy which comes from the gods through this channel.

The Huichol aesthetic ideal is represented by an artist who has his or her *iyari* open to the gods. The artist's *iyari* receives and is charged with *kupuri* carried in this channel. If the artist also has a well-developed mind, he or she will be a good artist. Without a good mind, the artist will not be able to express the designs through art.

This Huichol concept can be compared to the description of the good artist from an Aztec codex. The similarities are remarkable.

> The true artist, capable, practicing, skilful,
> maintains dialogue with his heart, meets things with his mind.
> The true artist draws out all from his heart: makes things with calm, with sagacity; works like a true Toltec [that is, with skill]. (*Códice Matritense de la Real Academia*, cited in Anderson, 1990: 153)

The artists' explanations also clarify why I began to feel that it was not necessarily important whether the subject matter of the particular painting comes from a specific dream or vision. What is important is whether the artist is in a state of receptivity or openness to the gods. Out of this openness comes the artistic work, which may have its specific source in a dream, a vision, or an intellectual thought.

The Huichol aesthetic ideal seems to be of an individual artist in direct communication with the gods. The artist uses art as a way of developing a channel of communication with the gods, and reflecting back to others the results of the exchange. Huichol art is not only a visual prayer, as early anthropologists such as Lumholtz understood it to be, but also a demonstration that vision exists. The artist ideally has an obligation to explain to others his or her vision. The yarn painting is one way of doing this.

Conclusions

The conclusions I have cited here have implications for future research on the link between art and shamanism. One particularly interesting direction of research is the linkage I have made here between López Austin's (1988) theories of soul concepts, especially as manifested in animistic centres of the body, and the production of art. Anderson (1990: 241, 247-252) concludes that religious motivations underlie the production of art in most cultures; however, he states that the mechanisms which link the two still remain obscure.

I suggest here that concepts of the soul as seated in the body may be one connecting link between art and the divine, at least for some cultures. Some other authors, such as Laderman (1991) and Atkinson (1989) have drawn similar analogies about the link between the soul as seated in various parts of the body, and aesthetics. When we ask what is the nature of shamanic inspiration, we go beyond the content of the dream or vision, and begin to look at the process of shamanizing itself. I have shown here that shamanic inspiration, in the case of the Huichol, has much wider ramifications than simply "seeing" a vision or "dreaming" a dream. It includes notions of the soul, and of the soul seated in various parts of the body. It also includes an interpretation of how the human soul is linked to the divine, and how communication flows between them. All of these play a part in the making of a shamanic art.

There is a voluminous anthropological literature on soul concepts, and an equally voluminous literature on the production of art. What conclusions might be derived by putting the two together? As I have demonstrated here, the results can deepen our understanding of shamanic art.

In *Ways of Knowing* (1998), Jean-Guy Goulet suggests that indigenous epistemologies or ways of knowing may be radically different from those taken for granted by Western academics. His Dene-Tha informants considered information gained through dream, vision or communication from spirits as valid and important sources of information. As anthropologists, we may need to examine all these sources of knowledge, if we are to ask questions which will elicit indigenous systems of meaning and understanding. As I have suggested here, the idea of dream and vision, which I began my research with, was much too simplistic, and probably very Western. I had to enter more deeply into a Huichol model to understand the process of shamanic inspiration. I began to ask, who is the seer who sees, and how does seeing take place. Thus my focus shifted away from the content of the vision and onto the process of seeing and the nature of the seer.

It is striking that the Huichol ways of knowing persist even in the production of a modern commercial art, such as yarn painting. This may indicate that indigenous epistemological concepts may be resistant to change and may be manifested in so-called "tourist" art. This accords with observations by anthropologists such as Goulet (1998: 200) and Marie-Francoise Guedon (personal communication), that even though the northern Dene practise Christianity, they have modified Western religion substantially to conform with underlying Dene ways of knowing. Similarly, Huichol practising a Western artform such as decorative painting, intended for a Western audience, seem able to maintain an indigenous process and experience of shamanic inspiration.

However, an important caveat is that perhaps only some Huichol artists think this way or understand the deeper meanings of shamanic art. My interviews showed a different picture among some young artists, Christian converts who were not interested in shamanism, or artists who were not raised practising Huichol ceremonies—an increasingly common situation among the generation of young Huichols raised in cities. Such artists tended to see inspiration as intellectual only. On the other hand, older artists raised in a more traditional environment did tend to use the model of mind and heart, whether they were shamans or not.

How does the finding of persistence of ways of knowing compare to other studies of ethnic and tourist arts which derive from a shamanic complex? Several studies suggest that the Huichol may be unusual in their comfort with the idea of using sacred information com-

mercially. For example, in a study of Haida commercial argillite carving, Kaufmann (1976: 65-67) concludes that religious themes could not be portrayed as long as the religion was widely practised. Only after acute cultural breakdown could the arts be made for sale. Parezo (1983: 22) makes a similar point in her study of Navaho sand paintings. The Navaho singers only accepted the sale of sand paintings after the designs had been changed somewhat so that they did not duplicate the ceremonial paintings. In a comparison of Pueblo and Navaho weaving, Kent (1976) shows that weaving was peripheral to the Navaho culture, and therefore, could easily be sold or changed to accommodate market demands. In contrast, certain Pueblo weavings had important social and symbolic meaning, were highly resistant to change and continued to be made mainly for Pueblo markets.

These studies suggest the range of solutions which cultures may adopt in response to pressures to commercialize their religious arts; from complete refusal to sell, through modifying the figures, to unrestricted freedom to sell once the religion had lost its force. In all of these cases, however, the sale of arts which had ongoing religious significance was restricted.

In contrast, the Huichol seem to place little restriction on the type of image depicted, even if generated through visionary processes. One factor may be that they regard commercial paintings as copies of sacred images, rather than originals. Several artists affirmed that they should not sell original art, made for sacred purposes such as offerings for a pilgrimage or images to be kept in a family temple. However, they argued that the gods recognize that people need to support themselves, and so it was acceptable to sell copies. The distinction between sacred original and copy may be an old one in Huichol culture. The 19th-century explorer, Carl Lumholtz (1902: v. 2, 169-171, 181-182), recorded that the Huichol refused to sell him an original statue of the Fire-god, kept in a sacred cave, but were quite happy to make and sell him a copy.

The Huichol artists I interviewed seemed comfortable with the idea of depicting visionary experience, whether it was the artist's own experience or that of others. The important distinction was not the content of the painting, but rather whether the artist has an open heart and is capable of learning through shamanic inspiration. Such an individual can make and sell paintings that have significant shamanic visionary content.

It would be interesting to extend the line of questioning I have used here into other studies of indigenous arts, whether they are traditional arts or commercial arts, which still use themes based in shamanism. There is sparse literature indeed on the process of how shamans envision, and comparatively little on how shamanic vision is related to the making of shamanic arts. As Wardwell (1996: 8) notes regretfully, we may never know the specific interpretation of imagery on the many older shamanic objects kept in museums, because this information was not collected from living shamans at the time. Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff's body of work (see, for example, 1978a, 1978b) stands out in this field, particularly for his work on the relationship between the hallucinogenic plant *ayahuasca*, dream, vision and cultural symbols in several South American nations. However, few others have approached the level of detail he achieved.

Such an analysis may take us into the heart of spiritual philosophy itself, into concepts of the soul, the relationship of the seer to the divine and what dream and vision really mean.

Notes

1 I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this insight. I would like to thank all three anonymous reviewers, who recommended this article for publication, as well as Dr. Sally Cole, editor. All of these people have made valuable suggestions which brought out interpretations of my data which even I was not aware of, and which have given me new directions to pursue in research with Huichol artists. I am also grateful to Dr. David Young, who fostered this research, and to Dr. Jean-Guy Goulet, for encouragement. The field work interviewing yarn painters was supported by the Mexican Government's Department of Exterior Relations.

2 I did not use pseudonyms, for reasons explored more fully elsewhere (MacLean, 1995: 35-36). However, one consideration was the artists' desire to become better known as artists, and to be associated with their statements; in other words, they were professional artists, making art for public consumption, rather than anonymous folk artists.

3 I thank an anonymous reviewer for emphasizing this point.

4 In Huichol culture, first names rather than surnames are most commonly used. Indeed the Huichol did not use surnames until Spanish census-takers required them to do so in the late 1800s (Lumholtz, 1902: v. 2, 98-99). I follow the Huichol common practice of referring to people by their first names.

5 Most Huichol are familiar with electricity, since they visit the city where even most low-income houses now have access to electricity. They are also familiar with portable tape recorders, which are quite popular, and with cars, although few can afford to own one. In our discussion, Eligio introduced the analogy of electricity and tape recorders. I introduced the idea of a car's steering wheel and motor.

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