

CHAPTER 1

Indigenous Religious Traditions

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Introduction

The category “indigenous religions” of the world merits an encyclopedia all its own. For, as many tribal peoples as there are in the world today, each has its own set of beliefs and rites that relate humans and all other living beings to the ultimate sources of life. Insofar as possible, this chapter will present a “tip-of-the-iceberg” sort of perspective on the common concerns expressed in these traditions. I prefer to use the terms *indigenous religious traditions* and not *indigenous religions* because the term *religion* by itself has a colonial connotation for many indigenous peoples, which reflects their historical relations with Christianity, Russian

Orthodoxy, and other so-called world religions that were complicit with colonialist expansion and its repression of the “other peoples” (indigenous), their rites and beliefs. For centuries, colonial societies have denied that indigenous peoples had “religions” at all; as the great photographer of Native North American cultures Edward S. Curtis stated, “There seems to be a broadly prevalent idea that the Indians lacked a religion. . . . Rather than being without a religion, every act of his life was according to divine prompting.”

The difficulties in discussing “indigenous religious traditions” also lie in the fact that,



Fig. 1.1 Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl) potlatch with dancers and singers in photo by E. S. Curtiss.

unlike the “world religions,” which have a center of faith, a body of orthodox doctrine (with a multitude of local traditions), a relatively unified politics, a meta-narrative, and a corpus of theological texts to which both scholars and laypeople can refer, indigenous religious traditions can only be characterized by diversity recognizing that each “people” (or “tribe” or “nation”) has a unique vision of how the universe came into being, is structured, shapes peoples’ behaviors in life, and can undergo periods of total collapse followed by regeneration. Those visions are communicated and transmitted mainly through oral narratives or performative remembering of primordial acts in collective ceremonies. No single set of features can be applied to the creator deities of indigenous peoples, nor do indigenous peoples necessarily understand the “function” of “creating” in the same way as non-indigenous peoples, since each indigenous culture has elaborated its own

system of meanings regarding what they believe to be the ultimate reality.

Similarly, while scholars can find relative agreement in meaning among the followers of a single “world religion” for notions such as “soul,” the “afterlife,” “the person”—with indigenous religious traditions, there is such a diversity of perspectives that, although it is possible to speak in general terms about some aspects of these notions, there are nevertheless wide variations in the ways each of them is understood. Indigenous religious traditions, in short, are characterized by *heterodoxy* in contrast with the orthodoxy of the world religions. There is no set of unique features characterizing all indigenous religious worldviews. For the purpose of understanding some of their similarities and differences with the so-called world religions, we will explore the beliefs and practices in a variety of indigenous traditions, but without making any claims to universalities.

Some Common Elements in Indigenous Religious Traditions

On the most general level, native traditions share one or more of the following features in their worldviews, or *orientations to ultimate reality*: (1) They attribute enormous importance to ancestral lands, sacred geography, and local sacred sites, which are seen as portals to the primordial past through which people can receive the original life-force of their own deities or ancestors. (2) Access to sacred knowledge is gained by those who have undergone the trials and privations of initiation or are apprentices to the religious specialists. (3) Great value is invested in kinship obligations (consanguineal and affinal) and their fulfillment, which are considered to be the arena of harmony and conflict, as well as key features in native peoples' orientations to ultimate reality. (4) The sacred traditions are transmitted principally by oral and performative means, through narratives about prior worlds, when communications between humans and other-than-human beings (animals, spirits, deities) were normal. (5) They emphasize demonstrations of generosity, giving thanks to the creators for the gift of life and abundance, showing humility and rejection of displays of individual power and arrogance, seeking to abide by the "ways" of the ancestors, and being respectful to animals or other nonhuman beings. (6) They recognize the sacred powers of the spirits and deities and their material embodiment and emplacement in this world. These powers can be overwhelming—dangerously mixed blessings that impart to humanity special knowledge—or they can be focused in benevolent, caring, strong leadership that guides humans through their life crises. (7) They share responsibility in ensuring the

continuity of the order established in primordial times, through the ritual means bestowed on humans in the primordial past.

Indigenous peoples have traditionally sought to forge their ways of life in consonance with all other forms of life in their natural surroundings. This has profound consequences for understanding their spiritualities. Firstly, all of life is conceived in terms of innumerable short- and long-term cycles, from the short cycles of flowering plants and the alternation of day and night to the longer cycles of human life, the life of social units, to the longest cycle of all: the cosmos, which—like human life—is born, grows old, transforms to the spirit world, and regenerates in a new cycle. Concepts of human life cycles are thus modeled on other life cycles of the world around them and the larger cosmos in which their world is situated. From the time children begin to become aware of the ways of the world, they are taught to be morally responsible for respecting and maintaining these cycles.

The extent to which indigenous religious traditions have developed calendric modes of time passage, the cycles sometimes can be extraordinarily long—for example, the Maya and Aztec of Central America are celebrated for having developed "long count calendars" that last tens of thousands of years, starting from the calculated date of creation to a foreseen "end-time," followed by the regeneration of life. It is remarkable how indigenous cultures the world over celebrate cosmos-generating rituals with such calendric precision that the religious specialists guard and transmit the times of long-cycle transitions over many generations (e.g., the new fire ceremony of the Aztecs, celebrated every fifty-two years; or the Sigi ceremony among the Dogon of Mali, which are celebrated in cycles of sixty years).



Fig. 1.2 Dogon masks, Mali, Africa.

Dogon mask dance. They are actors in a cosmic theater, aiming to re-create the creation of the world, of men, of vegetable and animal species, and of the stars. What is happening is that this period of danger and disorder that has been brought about by death is now brought to an end by the evocation of the fundamental moments in the genesis of the universe. The audience, enthusiastic but solemn, watches with great attention the development of the different stages in the ritual.

Secondly, humans are one among many kinds of animate beings who share in life-forces, or “souls,” and whose “ways of life” or “cultures” are believed to be very similar. The belief that all beings possess one or more “souls”

is called *animism*. All beings in nature are animate, exercise intention (hunting, making shelters, performing rituals); however, the bodies of nonhuman beings (birds, fish, trees, stones) differ from humans and amongst themselves. Consequently, their perceptions of, and perspectives on, the life around them, their relations to other kinds of beings, and their senses of time and space vary. While many indigenous peoples believe that distinct kinds of beings may share similar cultural patterns, the perceptions of these “other peoples” own worlds—which are biologically, historically, and culturally situated—in turn shape the ways they understand and relate to each other. So, according to the stories, a human may see a vulture (of the “vulture people,” considered to be a potentially treacherous tribe) eating grubs from a rotten log on the ground, but from the vulture’s point of view, it is actually catching live fish from a pool of water. The vulture, from its perspective, sees as living food what humans see as rot; the rot of the vulture in turn can ruin the corporeal beauty of human beings, making what was once beautiful become ugly with an abominable stench.

Shamans are prime examples of what it means to have a multi-perspectival point of view of the “worlds” that constitute the cosmos since they have been schooled in the mastery of the knowledge and powers of the “other peoples” in order to communicate with them. When a shaman’s soul transforms into a jaguar, to the outside observer, it may look like he is “snuffing” or drinking a psychoactive, but from the shaman-jaguar’s point of view, he is actually “drinking the blood of a deity,” that is, incorporating its life-force, which enables the shaman’s soul to transform into an other kind of being, a jaguar spirit, and fly into the other world of the deities.

Thirdly, indigenous peoples’ worldviews are in general highly transformational, that is,

one type of being may transform into another (animal into human or human to spirit, and vice versa). In primordial times, these transformations occurred very frequently because the “boundaries” of time, space, self, and other were as yet porous and indistinguishable. Today, primarily religious specialists (shamans, especially) are adept at soul transformation, while normal human beings’ souls are believed to undergo transformation mainly during moments of ritually defined life passage. Only in certain contexts can nonhuman, spirit beings actually transform into humans; the vast majority of the other spirit beings retain their unique, visible, material form (as plants or animals), covering their invisible (except to shamans) forms or selves. If an exchange occurs between beings of different worlds, a transformation occurs in



Fig. 1.3 Nineteenth-century face mask from an island in the Torres Strait, Australia.

the item being exchanged. Thus external, material forms, on “bodies,” cover spiritual forms. Furthermore, external bodily forms are often adorned and painted, indicating some vital quality of their inner selves.

Such religious acts as worshiping a deity, finding a lost soul, changing from one to another form of life, and intermixing of divine and human worlds are not only perfectly possible in these traditions but are also much desired. A person cannot become fully human with an adult identity, for example, until he or she has been introduced face-to-face with the sacred “other peoples” in initiatory experiences. This may have been the foundation for the monumental cave paintings found at Lascaux, for example, places where initiates were presented to the full power of the sacred “other” hidden within the depths of the earth.

Sacred narratives often explain differences between the perspectives of native and non-native peoples to be the result of separations that occurred at the end of the primordial age. At that time, non-native peoples were given certain kinds of knowledge and native peoples were instructed to live in the knowledge of their ancestors, which new generations of adults should reproduce.

Fourthly, natural forms of symmetry and asymmetry figure prominently in native representations of life—from the weaving of tapestries with designs that recall both natural and historical forms to the building of houses modeled on the structure of the cosmos. Social relations are also ideally based on symmetry—as, for example, in reciprocal trade relations in marriage—although asymmetric forms such as social inequalities emerge from differential access to and ownership of sacred power.

Societies with peoples not considered to be fully human by other societies (generally



Fig. 1.4 Shipibo bowl from Peru, on permanent display at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, Canada.

based on cosmology and creation narratives, but also captives of war) have often been used in exchange relations or to labor for their “superiors.” Captives of war, for example, were sometimes incorporated into the societies of their captors as domestic servants or laborers. This inequality does not necessarily imply the kind of chattel slavery as understood by the West. Although hierarchical relations of dominance and submission have certainly been documented in many historical indigenous societies of the world, the relations of master or owner can rather refer to relations of symbiosis, complementarity, authority, and obedience on the model of parental relations to children, or owners to their domesticated pets.

Fifthly, indigenous peoples believe all life to have come into existence through the

actions of primordial beings and deities who made or transformed the features of this world, and left them for humans to care for and minister to their creations. Stated another way, the primordial beings left evidence of their presence in the marvelous forms of creation of this world (for example, Devil’s Tower in the Black Hills, considered to be a sacred place for many native peoples of the Plains). Each of these creations has its own sacred time and space; humans are entrusted with the responsibility of caring for, preserving, and respecting what the primordial beings had made. The deities left material representations of their bodies in the earth, along with sacred symbols for humans to use in ceremonies in order to remember and renew their connections with the divinities.

One of the great dilemmas in native thought is how a world in which there is constant change developed from a primordial condition of infinite space and unchanging time. How can a way of life be perpetuated for all times despite constant changes that threaten order with chaos? How can human life, with all its limitations, transcend the trials of death and decay? The most important way is re-membering primordial acts and events through rituals that prominently feature sacred symbols associated with the bodies of the deities. The sacred is in some way always and everywhere present in contemporary life as long as humans—especially the knowledgeable elders, priests, holy people, or shamans—continue to guard, keep, and minister to the sacred in this world. The major world religions, by contrast, require loyalty to hierarchical structures, centralization of religious authority, and constant renewal of the historical founders’ original acts enshrined for all to worship, where spiritual governance has become hegemonic in its power.



Fig. 1.5 Aboriginal Art of the Dreamtime, Carnarval Gorge, Australia.

Sixthly, native religious thought can be profoundly dualistic. All of existence can be divided into a series of interlocking, complementary oppositions, producing a whole (similar to the principles of yin and yang in Chinese Taoism). Life and death, female and male, harmony and disharmony, self and other produce dynamics that play themselves out on the stage of life in history, as they do in any culture. In non-christianized, indigenous religious traditions, however, notions of “good” and “evil” are not understood in terms of a struggle from which there will finally emerge a victor; rather, the “enemy other” is actually seen as necessary for the existence of collective self-identity. Sorcery, while discouraged and feared, is as much a part of tribal spiritual life as the harmonious joy of celebrating and dancing with one’s own kin and allies from other tribes. Further, sorcery may be seen as a necessary societal mechanism for limiting the abuses of power or to redress perceived wrongs.

“We Are from the Forest, Earth, and Air”: Universal Knowledge

The following speech was presented by a Barasana shaman, Tukanoan-speaking indigenous people from the Northwest Amazon in Colombia, to accompany the film “Traditional Knowledge of the Jaguar-Shamans of the Yuruparí Tradition.” This tradition was officially included in 2011 by UNESCO in its “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.”¹ Centuries ago, all of the indigenous cultures of the Northwest Amazon region and upper Orinoco had traditions similar to the one presented here. After several centuries of historical contact, the reduction in the indigenous populations due to diseases, enslavement, and rubber-gathering, along with Catholic and Protestant missionary repression of the tradition on the basis of a false association with the Christian devil, has meant that

this tradition—which is based on a profound understanding of the sources of “vital energy” in the cosmos—remains alive only among a few communities. For that reason, the Barasana people sought to protect the traditions from disappearing altogether by seeking UNESCO recognition as a vital heritage. Similarly, their neighbors of the Arawak language family have gained international recognition for their jaguar-shamans’ knowledge of Yuruparí.

As the following statement shows, the Yuruparí tradition speaks to issues of cultural continuity and spiritual links with the entire habitat, and is an embodied and emplaced spirituality (see figures 1.6–9 below):

“Traditional Knowledge of the Jaguar-Shamans of Yuruparí”

(spoken by Maximiliano Garcia, Makuna of the Northwest Amazon, Colombia; translation by the author)

We are from the forest, the earth, from the air itself;

We come from the Ancestral Anaconda,
Historically we have protected the environment. We are like Guardians, the Protectors of Nature. We are owners of universal knowledge!

We are from the Pira-paraná River,
Territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí
Our ancestors travelled from the lower part of the Apaporis River,

Entering the Caquetá River, then crossing over the Apaporis River.

Going to the headwaters of the Apaporis River,

And entering the Pira-paraná until reaching its headwaters.

We are the many different ethnic groups living there with different languages.

Each group has its own way of taking care of the world.

Its own way of carrying out healing,
But we all share the same system for taking care of the world.

...

Knowledge is made up of physical and spiritual elements. There are elements that enable thought to continue,

Such as the yajé vine.

The Yuruparí plumage

And the Maloca [longhouse] which is a physical representation of the cosmos;

With each of its divisions symbolizing the most important sites of the territory

And is the center of knowledge for taking care of the territory,

According to the seasons of the ecological and cultural calendar.

There is also coca and tobacco,

Coca is a very valuable element for the continuity of knowledge;



Fig. 1.6 Yuruparí jaguar shamans.



Fig. 1.7 Dance of the Panpipes, northwest Amazon.

For the continuation of knowledge that
enables learning.
Because coca is “thought,”
It is a means that enables us to understand
things better.
That enables us to have an appropriate and
healthy system of human behavior.
Tobacco is the very essence of life,
It is like the sensitivity that exists within a
human body.
Which enables us to understand better, to
accept things with wisdom.
Just as we have vital organs for the func-
tioning of our bodies,
So the territory has its vital organs.
Its vital organs are the sacred sites
Found in rivers, hills, lakes, or stones.
In these places, there is knowledge.
There is wisdom,
There is understanding and power.

It is here that the system of organized
thought
And self-governance are concentrated.
They are sites where energy flows and
which gives life to the rest of nature.
Traditional knowledge is reflected in the
daily activities of the women,
It is a knowledge they have acquired over
millennia for preparing food.
For carrying out rituals, for caring for the
family.
For health and for the transfer of this
knowledge
Our knowledge is a holistic system
That is not concentrated only in the shaman.
Or in specific people.
...
We want to conserve this knowledge
Because it is our life.
It is the knowledge of the forest.



Fig. 1.8 Hipana, the sacred waterfalls that mark the place of origin of indigenous peoples of northwest Amazon.

And with this we want to guarantee life for
all people on this earth.
The continuity of the knowledge, of
“thought,” the power to care for the
territory,
This is the model for living
That we have maintained for a long time.
It is the model left to us by our ancestors
And this is what we want to preserve.
It is a model that can help
With intercultural tools,
For solving the global environmental crisis.

Maintaining Life and Health through Ritual

The mythical and cosmological structures that make up the traditional knowledge of the jaguar-shamans of Yuruparí represent the cultural

heritage of the many ethnic groups living along the Pirá Paraná River in southeastern Colombia, in the department of Vaupés. According to ancestral wisdom, the Pirá Paraná forms the heart of a large area called the “territory of the jaguars of Yuruparí,” the “jaguars” being the jaguar-shamans, an elite group of highly trained and knowledgeable specialists who guard the ancient knowledge of the cosmos. They understand that the cosmos is a living being with “sources” of energy, just as the human body has its own “sources” of energy that make the life force (blood) flow throughout the system. In other words, the sacred sites contain vital spiritual energy that nurtures all living beings in the world.

The jaguar-shamans follow a calendar of ceremonial rituals, based on their sacred traditional knowledge, to draw the community together, heal, prevent sickness, and revitalize



Fig. 1.9 Jaguar mortar, Chorrera culture, east coast of Ecuador (1500–300 BCE).

nature. The rituals feature songs and dances that constitute the healing process. The vital energy and traditional knowledge of the shamans are believed to be inherited from a powerful, mythical demiurge called “Yuruparí,” which, among the Barasana, was an anaconda that lived as a person and is today embodied in very sacred trumpets that are made from a palm tree, which altogether make up the body parts of the Anaconda Ancestor. Each ethnic group conserves its own Yuruparí trumpets, which form the centerpiece in the most sacred *Hee Biki* (Grandfather Anaconda) ritual. During this ritual, traditional guidelines for maintaining the health of the people and the territory are transmitted to male children as a part of their passage into adulthood. The traditional knowledge concerning care of children, pregnant women, and food preparation is transmitted among women. In short, in the Northwest Amazon, indigenous peoples’ heritages are embodied in the sacred instruments, which are the vehicle that enables the young initiates to grow and understand the world, and to live a healthy life. They were, in Tukanoan tradition,

created at sacred places, which are conceived of today as the vital organs of the founding ancestor of the tradition.

Among the Kogi peoples, a priestly society of the Sierra Nevada of northern Colombia, the *mama* priests likewise have a deep knowledge of the dynamics of nature in the universal sense, known as the “law of *Aluma*,” or the “Great Mother.” Changes in the environmental cycles due to global warming prompted Kogi priests in 1995 and 2012 to issue a “Warning to the Younger Brother” in the form of two BBC films, explaining how the ways of life of the white man “younger brothers” are bringing on the destruction of the planet. The priests’ message urges that something be done immediately before the world is completely destroyed.



Fig. 1.10 Native Americans from southeastern Idaho, late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

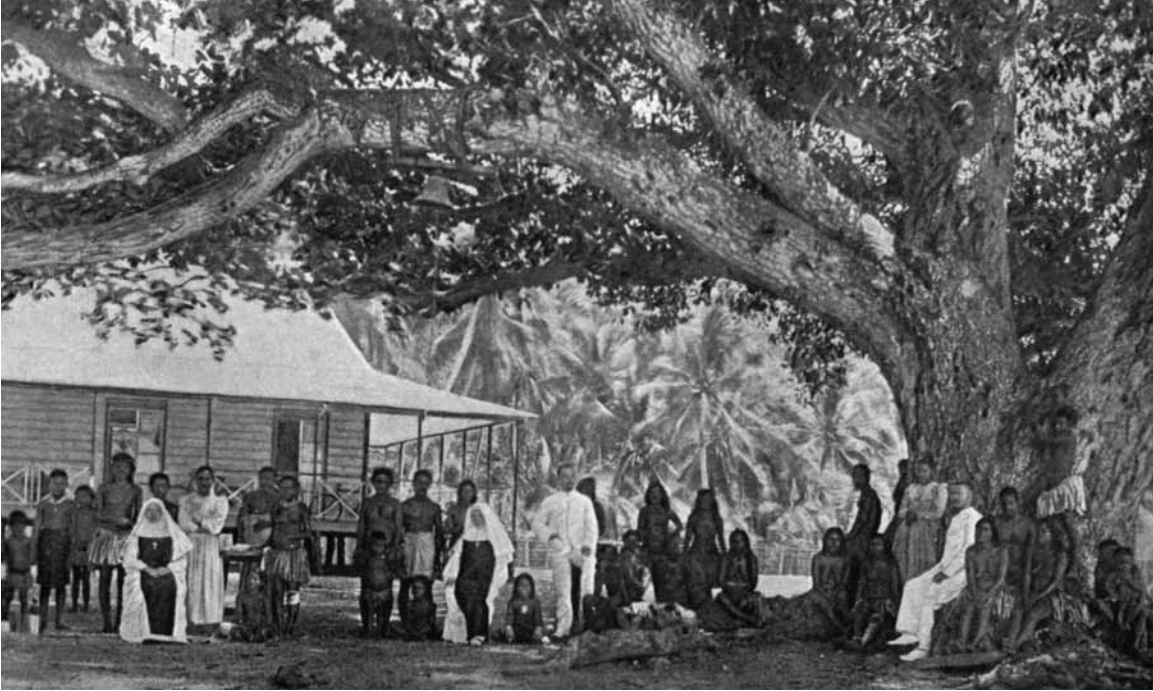


Fig. 1.11 Early twentieth-century Catholic mission station in Nauru, Micronesia.

Contact, Displacement, Prophecy: Indigenous Religious Traditions over Time

After centuries of contact, few—if any—indigenous peoples can be said to be living the same religious traditions as their ancestors of four or five centuries ago. With regard to the importance of ancestral lands, historical change has been most dramatic in countries such as the United States, where the policy of forced removal from ancestral lands and relocation to government-designated reservations or boarding schools dramatically changed Native peoples' lifeways and religious traditions, forcing many of the elder religious specialists to seek alternative ways of guarding the traditions. Not all were successful, and these changes caused a

great deal of harm to the indigenous peoples and their culture.

Those non-indigenous societies, assuming a constantly expanding frontier and exhibiting an unrelenting drive to settle and develop supposedly “unoccupied” lands, have paid little attention—until very recently—to the long-term future of environmental effects on the populations of humans and nonhumans whose predecessors actually have lived on those lands for thousands of years. With few exceptions, all of these factors have radically changed native peoples' relations to their ancestral homelands and consequently put in question the viability of maintaining their ceremonies and traditions. By far the greatest struggle that indigenous peoples throughout the world have confronted over centuries of contact with exogenous, invading societies has been the latter's

drive to homogenize land and people, against the fundamental principles of cultural diversity that have defined native cultures for millennia. Nevertheless, in recent years, with the increasing recognition of indigenous peoples' cultural rights by international institutions, many native peoples have seen this moment as a welcome opportunity to establish protective guarantees for their cultures and religious traditions. By the same token, sometimes these so-called revitalization movements have been politically driven to acquire external funding, which is ultimately used to re-signify and update traditional culture.

Among indigenous societies in many regions of the world (especially the Americas,

Africa, and Melanesia), the phenomenon of “prophet movements” characterized early contact histories, in which visionaries and religious savants proclaimed the imminence of a new order, following a period of transition in which the invading societies would either be eliminated or be forced to assume a subordinate position. These prophesied utopian orders often celebrate the coming of a religious regime of “world transcendence,” negating the reality of death as well as the military power of the outsiders.

Prophets have fulfilled numerous other functions. Prominent among these has been their leadership in rebellions against colonial oppression, utilizing ideologies grounded in mythological themes of world destruction and renewal. They initiate what in many cases eventually became historical traditions of religious resistance; their movements cannot with any justice be considered as passing reactions to domination. Their views of the coming end-times offer distinctly spiritual solutions of transformation that cannot be understood solely through social-scientific “explanations” of such phenomena in political, economic, or military terms.

Features that have been common to prophet movements from early colonial times to the present day include political and economic displacement; the expectation of an imminent catastrophe and the reinstallation of a paradisiacal state; the awaiting of a salvific figure, who helps people out of the path of destruction from the whites; the total suspension of normal living routines; rejection or eager acceptance of foreign clothes, goods, or foods; ceaseless dancing and unbroken festival performances as signs of admission into the envisioned utopia; dreams and visions; miraculous abundance of food; the incarnation of gods in material or human form;



Fig. 1.12 Wooden statues of nineteenth-century native savant, Kamiko, a Baniwa prophet.

the prominence of celestial powers; the reversion of the transformed earth to native control; arduous restrictions on believers; and the transformation of the believers' bodies into healthy, invulnerable, or even immortal beings.

Historical prophet movements have often been marked by the ways in which native peoples have appropriated Christian symbols, practices, and representations of authority, often independently of any kind of missionary interference. Christian missionaries, for their part, have often been surprised by the manner in which native peoples have converted en masse to the religions they have introduced—sometimes with the same enthusiasm with which they have followed prophetic leaders. Conversion movements can be interpreted as solutions to two kinds of issues faced by native societies:

one, external, referring to the disorganizing and de-structuring effects of contacts with nonnative societies. Such disorganization frequently manifests itself as a rise in accusations of witchcraft and sorcery, demonstrating the unease and the threats to traditional ways of life by the advance of Western civilization and the transformations it brings. Conversion offers moral reform, which enables native peoples to control the witchcraft and regain their integrity vis-à-vis intruders. The other problem is internal, having to do with dilemmas inherent to cosmologies and inherited from primordial times; for example, the ontological status of affinal (in-law, “outsider,” “other”) groups and their perceived threat to the continuity of consanguineal or descent kin groups; the challenges of harnessing dangerous shamanic power for the



Fig. 1.13 Engraving of a nineteenth-century New England missionary preaching in a kukui grove in Hawaii.



Fig. 1.14 Initiation ritual tableau in a ceremonial house in village of Apangai, Papua, New Guinea.

purposes of social reproduction; and so forth. Clearly, explanations may draw equally on both hypotheses.

Cosmogony: The Primordial Times of Creation

There is an enormous diversity in the scenarios of creation that indigenous peoples have elaborated. Sacred stories sometimes affirm the divine origin of the universe as an “intention,” a self-germinating seed, floating in an infinite space of nothingness. The primordial state of being undergoes transformations, gradually or abruptly, over multiple epochs. Creation may unfold as the thought, dream, or intentions of divine being(s), who, after numerous episodes

of relating how they made the world ready for peoples (in the broadest sense of the term *people*), later withdraw from creation leaving future generations to take care of the new world. The divine beings are self-generated and self-generating principles that set the universe in motion. They hold within themselves the duality of being and becoming, manifesting themselves as specific phenomenal beings (the sun, moon, animals, etc.), although, in so doing, they do not lose their original nature of constant becoming or intentionality.

In other cases, creation occurs through the transformations initiated by primordial beings from some preexisting state or condition to a radically other state, which is then transmitted for all future generations. Countless narratives affirm the existence of other worlds that pre-existed the current one; each is imperfect and suffers catastrophic destruction by flood, fire, other natural disasters, putrefaction, or petrification. From this destruction, a variety of symbols appear, which then serve as vehicles through which the order created can be reproduced and new worlds brought into being.

Thus, in the sacred text of the Quiche Maya, called *Popol Vuh* (Book of Counsel), the first humans were “mudmen” who had no possibility of sustaining life—they were simply dissolved. The second was a race of beings made of wood, which again did not satisfy the gods and was destroyed by a flood. A third, a race of humans was excessively vain and also did not satisfy the gods because the humans could see like the gods and tried to be like them. So the gods threw dust in their eyes and made them short-sighted; these first men and women were then made to praise and give thanks to the deities as well as to populate the earth.

Native peoples imagine the primordial times as epochs when all was possible,



Fig. 1.15 Map of indigenous religious traditions in the world.





Fig. 1.16 Tattooed indigenous man from New Caledonia, Oceania, 1846.

undifferentiated, simultaneous, when the forms of things had not become fixed. Either a single creator being or a group of creators lived in a perilous world in which humans, animals, and spirits warred among themselves, committed errors that would later become part of the human condition, sought to create order despite the perennial existence of anti-order that destroyed what was created, and so on.

Another phase in the history of creation introduced into the world the essential means for biological and cultural transmission—namely, sacred plants, sacred sounds and musical instruments, and sacred rituals, leaving these for all future generations. Although humanity was given the responsibility for maintaining

this orderly transmission, the original order has been subject to all manner of disorganization, departure from the original norms, and senseless violence. Harmony versus disharmony, and predation versus reciprocal relations are the elements of eternal struggles in which humans seek to maintain not only order, beauty, and harmony but also the means for controlling abuses of power, in whatever form they take.

For many native peoples, creation is not a closed circle in which what happened in the primordial times will last for eternity, for often the stories leave the question unanswered of whether the creator ever really went away forever or still lives somewhere in the present world. Also, divine order may occasionally intervene in history when conditions call for it, through prophets whose messages, received from their deities, warn not only of coming dangers or offer a utopia where there will be no more sickness or suffering but also give counsel, preparing the souls of their followers to always remain watchful and faithful to the old ways.

Cosmology: Space, Time, and the Orderly Structures of the Universe

There are two main orientations of spatial structure: horizontal and vertical. Neither consists of continuous, straight-line arrangements of different worlds of spirit beings and deities. The complex constructions of indigenous cosmologies and the plethora of values associated with the different parts of the cosmos permit us to make only a few broad generalizations. Usually, native peoples think of each of the multiple worlds in the universe as relatively flat planes, circular and bounded by water. Some traditions

represent islands of earth piled up on top of a primordial water animal such as the turtle, others as pieces of rock floating in endless space, yet connected with other worlds by various kinds of holes and tubes running through their centers. Horizontal structures include markers of the main directions (mountains, lakes), as well as one or more centers, comprising a sacred geography of important places situated around a center. The universe is a series of layers, which can be arranged either vertically or horizontally, which are different “worlds” in which different kinds of beings live.

The vertical structures of the universe vary widely in composition, from simple three-layer arrangements (upper world, middle world, underworld) to massive, multilayer compositions inhabited by a great variety of beings. There is a clear correlation between the multilayered-cosmos idea and the structures of spiritual power or knowledge in society, as well as, homologously, the arrangement of the vital points on a person’s body (heart, umbilicus, crown), which connect the person with the spiritual sources of power and knowledge.

In general, the upper worlds are associated with the creative and life-renewing forces of light (the sun), lightness, and liquids (rain), with important places where soul transformation takes place, as well as dwellings of the ancestors, often featured as worlds of order, beauty, and happiness. They may be associated with the highest deities, the primordial beings who were responsible for all of creation and its imperfections.

The underworlds are associated with places of darkness, netherworlds of the bodily remains of the dead, animal souls, and monstrous, inverted beings who can cause sickness to humans. Or they consist of worlds where the progenitors of animals transform the souls of

the dead into animals who return to earth and provide food for their descendants and family in times of need.

The middle world, the center of the universe, is the place where all life-forms as we know them, began, including human life. Tropical-forest peoples imagine the earthly plane as the concentric rings of a tree, considering the innermost circle of the earthly plane the most ancient, where the “true people” live while the outer rings represent different moments in time, associated with different places and “other peoples” they have experienced or become aware of; the outermost layer, the bark of the tree, is the border between one people’s universe and another’s. Different kinds of space and places of being in the horizontal layers are systematically related to one another through the narratives that delineate the extent of each people’s “worlds.”

Horizontal spaces highlight the center, or multiple centers, associated with a wide variety of images (cosmic trees, mountains, waterfalls, ladders, vines) symbolizing sources of energy in the cosmos. These form part of the larger conception of the universe-as-body, consisting of multiple organs and energies that work together. The peripheries, or spaces on the outer margins, often express in inverted form (demonic spirits, enemy others, “outsiders”) the key values of the center. These enemy others constantly seek ways of penetrating a people’s universe to predate on its food supply or to realize some other form of exchange. A variety of intermediary elements, openings, and penetrations connect inner and outer realms in the same way that upper and lower realms are interrelated. In native South American cosmologies, the places where sacred beings first appeared often become models for innumerable spatial constructs.

Indigenous cosmologies illustrate a remarkable quality of flexibility in their construction.

Far from being fixed and static “things out there” or “models of how the universe is structured,” cosmologies are better described in terms of their plasticity, their capacities to expand and contract, their permeability (that is, their “openness” to the external world). Mythic narratives of the creation often display this feature of expanding and contracting worlds to mark major moments of transition and growth from one state of being to another. The religious specialists are the “guardians,” as well as the “artisans” of the cosmos, for they interpret events and occurrences in relation to possibilities of cosmic change.

The creation stories often provide a “cultural cartography” of the territorial conceptions of indigenous peoples. As one ethnographer notes, “Virtually every landmark in the forest or along the river has some significance in the myths of origin of one group or another.” These symbolic conceptions of space have persisted despite substantial changes in social organization and economic and political life. They are integral to the cultural identity, health, and continuity of indigenous peoples. Along with indigenous environmental and land-use knowledge, these conceptions of identity are fundamental to the determination of land-tenure policies and the delineation of indigenous territories in modern peoples’ attempts to have a positive effect upon the conservation of ecosystems. To incorporate indigenous environmental knowledge, land-use practices, and conceptions of sacred space into an indigenous territorial model entails combining detailed ethnographic, historical, and ecological knowledge. Linking these cultural conceptions with political, economic, and religious considerations provides an integrated approach to the conservation of ecosystems and is more in keeping with the land-extensive subsistence practices of indigenous societies.

Beings and Their Relationships

This section discusses the nature of humans and other-than-human beings who populate the world and with whom native peoples interact.

Interrelationality

What constitutes, for indigenous peoples, the self, the person, categories of person-in-time (ancestors and their descendants)? The person consists of several “souls,” modes of consciousness, mental and physical faculties, intentionality, sentiments, bodies, along with ongoing relatedness to different kinds of beings. The religious beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples are characterized by a conviction that spirit moves through all things, animate and inanimate, subjects and objects, and that the living are intimately connected with the souls of their deceased ancestors.

The universe is most definitely not a human-centered place to live but consists of multiple types of beings, each in its own spaces, each having distinct points of view, attributes, physical and spiritual characteristics. Each kind of being is related to most others through culturally defined types of relations—for example, predator/prey, ally/enemy, master/pet, owner/owned, parent/children, in-laws, and so on.

The elaborate structures of space and time that order the universe, coupled with the frequent beliefs in multiple souls and a rich symbolism of the human body, integrate humanity into the cosmic system through which life unfolds. Humans’ relationships to the divine are often mediated by priests, shamans, diviners, religious artists, and other specialists. These interactions take the form of worship, prayers of thanksgiving, and supplication, sacrifice, mystical union with divinities, ritual combat with

spirits, or the celebration of divinely instituted festivals, preferably as nearly as possible to the way they were done “in the beginning.”

Bodies and Souls

L. Sullivan² has distinguished two systematic tendencies with regard to beliefs regarding the soul in South America but that may apply to other areas of the globe as well: (1) There is a physiological element, which affirms that the soul is situated in specific body parts, coterminous with the functioning of the bodily organs and defined by “animal” appetites (food, sex). Often, such souls extend to animals who are the doubles of their counterpart human soul-elements. (2) There is also an epistemological element, in which spiritual elements are associated with specific human faculties (thought, memory). Here, the human being is affirmed as a self-contained and autonomous being set apart from the object of its perceptions. These are broad categories that are not necessarily separable but rather manifest themselves in synaesthetically intertwined images of beauty and sensual delight, or fear of unknown powers.

In some cultures, the most important of the souls are linked in a network extending back to the primordial times; in others, the stronger attachment of the soul may be with ceremonial groups based on names, residence, or types of ritual performance.

Among the Guarani peoples of South America, there are two kinds of souls: one is linked to the animal appetites of the person, while the other—considered to be more important because it comes from the ancestors—is the “name-soul,” which is bestowed on the child by a shaman shortly after the child’s birth. The name-soul is the reincarnation of the ancestor into life; the name-soul is the sacred

life-principle of the person. All throughout one’s life, the person must struggle to maintain the strength of the spiritual name-soul over the physical appetites and desires or emotions of the animal soul. One does this by singing the “beautiful words” that come in inspiration from the ancestors.

Multiple souls gained throughout a lifetime constitute the person and his or her connections with other beings (e.g., companion spirits). Each of these souls leaves the body at the moment of death and returns to the place in the cosmos from which it originally came. Dream-souls and dream interpretation are particularly important in identifying the souls of other peoples, enemies, and sorcerers. Sonic imagery—in naming ceremonies, sacred music and song, drumming, sacred flutes and trumpets—is fundamental to the production of the



Fig. 1.17 Quoniambec, Tupinamba Chief, sixteenth century CE.

person. A rich symbolism of corporality is connected to the notion of the person. Through this symbolism, indigenous cultures express fundamental values defining spaces constitutive of human life.

Among the meanings attributed to the notion of “transformation” in indigenous belief and practice is that human bodies and “selves” are complex and socially constructed. Traditionally, this has been expressed through body ornaments, masks, “coverings” or clothing, mantles of jaguar pelts, bird feathers, bear robes, loincloths, body painting, tattooing, and hairstyles. These kinds of “clothing,” adornments, and alterations are often understood both as ways of “domesticating” an animal interior, essential to the socialization of cultural beings, while highlighting a specific cognitive, spiritual quality or power that the person has gained through life passages. These external manifestations mediate between the interior self, society, and the cosmos. In rites of passage (birth, initiation, and death), persons acquire cognitive and emotional qualities, which constitute them as persons.

The body is also the locus of moral issues that are fundamental to becoming fully human. In many cultures, control over body orifices—by fasting, for example—is the mark of a fully cultural human being, while transgressions of boundaries between beings that ought to be maintained separate provoke catastrophic transformations; this is perhaps the most important knowledge that initiates acquire when they are exposed for the first time to the sacred.

A beautifully decorated body is one that is fully ornamented, with earrings, beadwork, kneebands, featherwork, elaborate hairstyles. Body painting or tattoos, representing a variety of metaphysical and moral properties, are etched in exquisitely symmetrical patterns, as



Fig. 1.18 Totem on an Indian (Tlingit) grave, Wrangell, Alaska.

among the Maori peoples of New Zealand or the Marquesas Islanders.

Being a member of a community implies consubstantiality, that is, the sharing of body fluids as in sexual relations, or spiritual connections to ancestors such as a collective umbilical cord–soul, or even a collective body–soul, common to members of the same social group, (nuclear or extended families, siblings, clans).

Body painting is intimately connected with notions of self and other and can thus be linked to historical contact—for example, a change in diet regime, or food taboos, or conversion to Christianity bring about fundamental changes in notions of corporality (often in a negative sense), sicknesses such as obesity, diabetes caries, and a host of other irregularities.

Ancestors and descendants

The importance of bonds that tie the ancestors' deeds to their living human descendants are found throughout the indigenous world: in North America, there is the emphasis on the importance of a person's acts having repercussions for the "seventh generation." In South America, for the peoples of the Northwest Amazon, the deities created a world "for their descendants," a bond that ties the ancestors' deeds (whether these were errors or gifts) to living and future humans, who must abide by that order and are responsible for reproducing that order, until another "end-of-the-world." Similarly, the concept of a continuing relationship of mutual dependence between the living and their ancestors is central to Mapuche (Chile) religion and the moral order of their society. Among the Guaraní Indians of the southern Cone of South America, cults to the bones of ancestral holy people (*karai*, "big men") have been well documented. In Africa, Siberia, and elsewhere, families maintain ancestral shrines with the assistance of local shamans. In Australia, as in Africa, Amazonia, and highland South America, the physical landscape is seen as a sacred geography, where portals to the sacred are found everywhere in the traces and marks left by the ancestors for their descendants to remember their deeds and as guides for the future.

Ritual life

Rituals are highlighted by feasts held at important moments of the agricultural cycle, or by the spectacular rites of passage for moments of birth, initiation, and death throughout the indigenous world. These renew the links of humanity with primordial creative powers. Ritual music, songs, and chants are the great

symbols of religious culture, expressing change, social and cultural reproduction over time, and the very acts of creation.

Religious specialists

Shamans, priests, diviners, ceremonial dancers, sorcerers, artisans, and prophets are responsible for managing these interrelations, interpreting the realities of the external worlds of other peoples, spirits, enemies to people of their own society, coordinating ritual relations among spirits and humans, ensuring that the most fundamental principles of the universe are observed, acting as the guardians of morality, holding at bay possible attacks from spirit beings, determining whether the newly arrived Europeans were human, and so on. Religious specialists differ ontologically from "normal" beings of a species. (Animals and plants may have their shamans or medicine people too.)

Generally speaking, whereas the shamans derive their power from direct knowledge and experience of the deities and places of the cosmos, the priest's or holy person's power is based on the accurate recall of canonical and esoteric knowledge, which is essential for rites of passage—that is, for the reproduction of society, the renewal of the world, and the ontological categories that define the nature of being. While the shamans are relatively more egalitarian or "democratic" in their internal organization—that is, anyone can become a shaman who accepts the years of arduous training and perilous experiences—the priests come from a specific lineage or class chosen at birth and are trained throughout their lives. Priestly *functions*, it should be noted, such as chanting at passage rites, may also be exercised by the elderly men or women of the society without there being a recognized class of priests with political and religious functions.

Traditionally, priestly societies are organized into hierarchies and sacred societies, linked to the distinct functions priests may perform. While the shaman's influence and prestige depends on his or her performance and capacity to retain a local clientele, the priests' influence extends over large networks of communities who depend on them for their knowledge and power. At initiation rites, postbirth and postdeath rites, a new group of adults, or a natal family, or the integration of the deceased into the communities of ancestral souls, all imply shifts in the composition of the entire society to a new situation. In some societies such as in ancient Mongolia, priests could at the same time be shamans as well as diviners and political leaders.³

Eschatology

A final important dimension of religious life in indigenous traditions is eschatology, which refers to views of the end of times, whether that be the death of a specific individual or the demise of the cosmos itself. At the death of an individual, all of the components, spiritual and material, that have been bestowed on that person during his or her lifetime may become reintegrated into ongoing cosmic processes. The afterlife of an individual is imagined in a wide range of potential forms, sometimes as a process of alienation from the world of the living and enclosure in a separate existence without meaningful interactions, and other times as reincarnation in some other form, or an ongoing communication between the living and the dead. Eschatology also refers to the broader cosmic sense of the end-times as the "end of the world," the destruction and regeneration of the universe in general.

As we have seen above, indigenous traditions generally attribute enormous importance

to the mystery and power of death as an integral part of human existence. For many cultures, the condition of mortality implies a transitory, ephemeral life, one of constant metamorphoses. Sacred stories often explain that death entered the world in the context of a trial—the failure to pass a test or to undergo an ordeal, making a fatal choice, or giving an inopportune signal. The rituals associated with death are among the most elaborate of all processes of passage, occupying a critical theme in all native traditions. These involve processes of administering the passage of the deceased between existence in this world and incorporation into the other, processes of healing the sentiments of kin whom the deceased have left behind.

Anthropophagy, for example, was once a practice among various peoples of lowland South America, of Papua New Guinea and other areas of the world. It generally took two forms: the consumption of the flesh remains or the ashes of a cremated kinsperson or the consumption of the flesh of the enemy killed in war. The first practice has been shown to be more related to assuaging the intense suffering, or "consuming grief,"⁴ at the moment of loss of close kin.

Among the hill-dwelling indigenous peoples of the northern Philippines, the practice of taking heads was not only a demonstration of a young man's becoming a warrior, but it was also a way of casting away the burden of grief at the loss of kin because of feuds and raiding, and in that sense it can be considered a piacular rite.⁵ For the Tupian-speaking peoples of the Atlantic coastal region of South America, the elaborate rituals related to warfare, taking captives, sacrificing the captives, and eating the flesh of one's enemy represented a critical transition that had as much to do with vengeance as they did with reproducing the social foundations of



Fig. 1.19 Inca cult figurine, located in the Ethnological Museum, Berlin, Germany.

time and memory. Shamanic vengeance and warfare were other means for retribution at the loss of kin and the grief death brings.

Spectacular solutions to the dilemma of what to do with the deceased of the noble classes in more complex indigenous societies can be seen in the mummification practices of the Inca. All efforts seemed to deny that death had taken the deceased royalty away; rather, the royal deceased continued to hold a privileged position socially, ritually, and politically in their society long after being placed in tombs, where specially designated persons gave them food and drink and cared for them. In societies such as those of the Xingu region of central Brazil, the *Kwarup* ceremony is regularly held as a pan-tribal occasion, lasting several weeks, explicitly

to “honor the dead,” the most important chiefs and aristocracy of the tribes.

In the Americas and other areas of the globe, it is common to find the theme of immortality in myth as a condition that existed in the primordial world: at the moment of death, the person would be secluded for a period of time, at the end of which he or she would reemerge rejuvenated. This cycle of eternal return was interrupted by the error of a person, and so mortality was introduced into the world. Shamans and prophets, however, are believed to “never die” and continue to give counsel to their living kin at their burial places. In this, we see direct links between notions of immortality among native peoples of the highlands and lowlands of South America.

In numerous eschatologies, the entrance of the soul of the deceased into the other world is conditioned on his or her moral behavior and virtues in this life: those who kill, for example, do not succeed in completing the way of the dead souls, falling into an abyss or being attacked by swarms of bees (as among the Makiritare of the Orinoco region of South America). The notions different peoples have about life after death vary a great deal, from a completely other existence, an inverted image of this world, to the transformation of the



Fig. 1.20 Petroglyphs near the west bank of the Orinoco River at Caicara, Venezuela.

deceased into the gods after being devoured by them, or the transmigration of the souls of the deceased into species of game animal that may serve the living as food in times of need.

Eschatologies not only refer to the end-times but also to the possibility of a future regeneration, after the destruction of this world. The cosmogonies of many indigenous cultures throughout the world contain the seeds of regenerative hope, and therefore we should not consider the movements associated with them as the exclusive result of external pressures, as they many times have been, but rather as pondered and divinely guided solutions for dilemmas and processes internal to the native cosmogonies themselves. In all cases, prophets—emissaries of the deities—have acted as interpreters of the signs of the times, foreseeing the violent destruction as a necessary condition for the regeneration of the world.

Creating the World and the Day: A Baniwa Account from the Northwest Amazon

The following selection is the first episode of the creation story of the Baniwa Indians of the Northwest Amazon region in Brazil (taped in 1998, from the oldest living shaman then alive) and is followed by an interpretation of the story.

In the beginning there was only a little
stone ball called *Hekwapi*
Nothing else around. A vast expanse of
nothing around the little ball.
There was no land, no people, just the little
ball of stone.
So the [Creator] “child of the Universe”
looked for earth. He sent the great dove
Tsutsurwa to find earth for him,

and put it all over the little ball. He made
that stone ball become the earth.

The name of the “Universe child” was *Hekwapi ienipe*.

He made the Sun rise up then above the
new earth, above the hole in the earth
called *Hipana*, the navel of the Universe.
The Universe-child was all alone, so he
went to look for people.

He went to the Universe-navel at *Hipana*,
the navel of the sky.

He heard people coming out of the hole,
singing their names as they came.

They came out one after another, and he
sent each one to their piece of the earth.

Then he looked for night, he obtained
night which was inside a little, tightly-
sealed basket.

On receiving the basket of night, its spirit-
owner instructed him to open it only
when he reached home.

On his way back home, he marveled at its
weight and opened the basket up just a
little bit,

Then darkness burst out, covering the
world with the first night,
and the sun fell out the western door.

The Universe-child waited for the sun to
return,

He and the birds waited for it to return.

When they saw the sun entering the sky
vault at the eastern door, the birds began
to sing—

For it was the beginning of a new day.

The Universe child embodies the idea of
self-generation. How did it come into being?
There is no answer; it always was, along with the
little stone ball, and the vast emptiness around
it. In one sense, the Universe child means the
universe *as* child, which throws a new light on

the nature of the first being. The universe was not like any human being but rather was more like an “illuminated intention,” the great spirit whose external body shape was the sun, which later underwent various bodily transformations over time. In other words, rather than imagining the creator deity as a “human-like person,” it is better to think of a self-generated and generating principle that brings into the light of day the first generation of living beings and distributes them on parcels of land all over the earth, which was at that time still miniature.

There is a deep hole located at the place, called *Hipana*, considered to be the center of the universe, the connection to the other world through a spiritual pathway that only the shamans and dead souls can follow, the opening through which ancestral beings emerged from their prior, virtual existence into the first world. This opening is called the “Universe Umbilicus,” the primal cord of birth, an idea that is commonly associated with religious traditions

grounded in the concept of descent, here in the male line, as the central axis that generates all life. That axis, according to the traditions, became embodied in the child of the sun deity, who introduced the first rites of initiation to humanity. Through the powerful sounds made by this being, the world opened up to its present size. These powerful sounds are engraved on the boulders of the sacred rapids, as an everlasting reminder of origin.

Indigenous religious traditions, as we have seen in this chapter, focus on many of the same issues and concerns that we see in all other religious traditions. The complementarity of opposites—for example, good and evil, dark and light, shaman and sorcerer—however, is not understood in the same senses as in Christianity or Zoroastrianism. Indigenous religious traditions characteristically embed their metaphysical questions in a language and art of the sacred that is embedded in the natural, material world in which they live. That is, religious



Fig. 1.21 Petroglyph of Capihuara, Cassiquiare Canal, Venezuela.

images and metaphysical questions are intertwined in such a way that the interpreter can understand these question through the symbolic attributes of material images. Indigenous religious traditions are notable for the ways in which they harmonize their life cycles with the rhythms, cycles, and forms in nature. All of nature is imbued with the power of the sacred, the divinities who once were living, whose lives and acts are remembered and celebrated at cosmically significant celestial moments in time (e.g., the annual appearance of certain constellations) and at geographical points of intersection between spirit and matter comprising a “map” of the world.

While many indigenous religious traditions exhibit a great concern for the end of long cycles of time, with its correlated fear of the return of a “long, dark night” in which many people die, the world in which humans live

nevertheless holds a comforting promise that a new world will come into being if the old one is destroyed. A cycle, therefore, is not just an endpoint but rather is the beginning of another long cycle of time to come.

The prophecies in many indigenous religious traditions have served multiple functions: to warn non-indigenous societies of natural catastrophes due to cosmic imbalance from the destructiveness and greed of the “younger brother” (as the Kogi Indians of the Sierra Nevada in Colombia call the white man); or to maintain the importance of the ancestral traditions, for without these, the “enemy” culture will come to dominate, meaning the destruction of the indigenous world; and finally, to critique the disastrous relations between the indigenous peoples and the West, because although exogenous societies “conquered the Indians,” in the end, the enemy outsiders did not “defeat them.”



Fig. 1.22 Petroglyphs in South Mountain Park, Phoenix, Arizona.

◆ STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the religious tradition of the so-called Yuruparí, what are some of the key symbols and how do you think they represent key ideas of the tradition? How does native discourse about their religious tradition compare with an outsider's perspective on the same? Compare the Makuna version of the Yuruparí tradition (as seen in the film) with the Arawakan version of creation presented at the end of this text. What do they have in common? What are the key questions each tradition focuses on? Why do you think the Yuruparí tradition was declared a "nonmaterial patrimony of humanity"?
2. Discuss the importance of the following themes in indigenous religious traditions: symmetry and asymmetry, complementary opposites, reciprocity, anomalous beings, the circle and the cross, matter and spirit, conversion to Christianity, or other exogenous religions.
3. What are some of the issues indigenous peoples worldwide face with regard to the continuity of their religious traditions? How can humanitarian agencies assist indigenous peoples in continuing their traditions? In what ways have non-indigenous societies incorporated indigenous religious traditions into their religious practices? How has this appropriation of native religiosity been seen by native peoples themselves?

◆ KEY TERMS

Affinal relations
 Animism
 Apapaatai
 Australian aboriginal dreamtime

Consanguineal kin
 Cosmogony
 Cosmology
 Dogon Kanaga masks
 Eschatology
 Guarani theory of souls
 Interrelationality
 Perspectivism
 Popol Vuh
 Prophetism
 Religious specialists
 Sun dance
 World Tree of Life
 YAJÉ
 Yuruparí tradition

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◆ NOTES

1. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/RL/00574>
2. Sullivan, 1988, chap. 5
3. K. Turner, in *Shamanism Annual*, 2011.
4. Conklin, 2002.
5. Rosaldo, 1980.