

# CEREMONIES AND TRADITIONS OF THE DIEGUEÑO INDIANS

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# CEREMONIES AND TRADITIONS OF THE DIEGUEÑO INDIANS. [1](#)

BY CONSTANCE GODDARD DU BOIS.

THE following pages, discussing mainly the relations existing between the religious practices and religious beliefs--the ceremonies and the traditions--of the Diegueño Indians of Southern California, may be regarded as supplementary to a parallel but fuller treatment of the neighboring Luiseños. [2](#) The Diegueños are of Yuman stock, the Luiseños Shoshonean; but the two tribes are very similar in general culture, and, as has been pointed out, one has evidently greatly influenced the religious life of the other.

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## Footnotes

[228:1](#) Contributed as part of the Proceedings of the California Branch of the American Folk-Lore Society.

[228:2](#) "The Religion of the Luiseño Indians of Southern California" (Univ. Cal. Publ. in *Amer. Arch. Ethn.* [in press]).

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## A DANCE-SONG FROM MANZANITA.

This includes Tutomunp, a Mohave dance-song, and Kachawharr, a Jacumba dance-song, accompanied by a basket rubbed with a stick.

Hatakek of Manzanita is to sing the Diegueño song Kachawharr with basket accompaniment; but he begins by singing part of Tutomunp, a dance which originated with the Mohave Indians. The song always begins at sunset; and all these Western Indian songs have a "starter," the interpreter explains. The

"starter" in this case is in the Mohave language, so the Diegueño interpreter attempts no translation.

The old man chants on and on, showing the most wonderful lungpower, continuing for five or ten minutes at a time, and ending each song or section of the song with a loud "Hup!"

Again he begins, and continues his loud and monotonous singing, for another five minutes or so. The tone of the chant varies. It rises to a higher pitch, "Hup!"

The same song again; and by this time a circle of men and women should be dancing, so the old man keeps time with his foot to show the measure of the dance. "Hup!"

For the next half-dozen songs he gives the translation in Diegueño. They relate to two brothers whose father is Homatimilya. [3](#) The names are all in the Mohave language. [4](#)

Another song with varied tones ending in "Hup!" The meaning of the song: "They are going along. All is dim and hazy before them."

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Song: More excited, with varied cadences. The singer keeps time with his foot. The song ends suddenly, "Hup!"

Song: Monotonous beginning, varied tones at end. Meaning: "We are going on. We have a long way to go."

Song: "We are going on. Many people live in other places, but we go on alone."

Another song: "We are going on, but some day we may meet somebody coming."

Now begins the dance-song of the Diegueños themselves, Kachawharr. This was taught the Manzanita people by those of Jacumba. All these dances are of course religious ceremonies. The singer, or leader of the dance, old Hatakek, takes a flat bowl-shaped basket turned upside down, and, part of the time seated, but mostly kneeling on the ground, he alternately rubs and taps this as if it were a drum, keeping time to the music of his chant.

Song: This is about the two brothers, the gods Tuchaipa and Yokomatis or Yokomat (the two names are sometimes given in one: Chaipakomat), who came forth from the ground at Jacumba, at the hot-spring there. Meaning of the song: "They are at Jacumba. They do not know where they came from. They came forth from the earth."

Song: "Let us build a house. It is going to rain." A hill at Jacumba is the house they built covered with earth. There is a hot-spring at the south of the hill, and this is the door of the house. [1](#)

Song: They were in the house at night and it began to rain on them.

Song: It leaked on them through the holes in the brush covered with sand. One brother was tapping on the roof of the house with a club (as the curving basket is tapped with the stick).

Song: He tells the other it is all right. "We have made it good and solid." He came out of the house and felt on the ground with his hands. The tobacco-plant was growing there. He could not see it in the darkness, but he could feel it. "It is ready to bloom."

Song: It was bigger the next time he felt it. He felt all around.

All kinds of plants are beginning to grow. The rain has started them in the night." He felt the plants. They were shaking in the wind.

Song: The brothers are talking of how they can gather seeds when the plants are ripe. The plants are growing fast in the rain, but they have no wives to gather the seeds.

Song: When the wind blows, the plants look like the waves of the sea. It is a fine sight.

The old singer, squatting on bended knees, pounds gently on the

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basket which rests on his lap. Then he rubs it with the stick. Chawharr is said to mean "rubbing." He holds the stick with his right hand, the basket with the other. He rises by straightening his body, pounds more loudly, and sings louder. He moves his body up and down in time to the song. Song and movements stop suddenly, as is always the case in these dances. The old man is exhausted. This is hard work, and he is unaccustomed to it, since these dances are no longer performed, and it is many years since he has led the song.

He begins again, hitting the basket gently in time, and rubbing it at intervals.

The song is short, ending suddenly. It means: "They are going to make smoke out of the tobacco-plant. It is ready now to bring into the house."

Now they are going towards the west after the girls whom they wish for their wives. They run with balls, kicking the ball with their foot, running after it, throwing it again with the foot. With three bounds of the ball they reach the ocean where the girls are. But they do not stay. They turn and go back home, their hair flying in the wind, the east wind. [1](#)

Song: The girls get to thinking why the boys came.

Song: The brothers come home and see their plants ripe. "Who will gather the seeds? We need women for the work."

Song: They hunt cotton-tail rabbits at Jacumba.

Song: They are trying to see who can shoot the farthest. They begin to gamble with bow and arrows according to the length of their shots. The younger brother loses all the time. He comes home with nothing.

Song: They try another game. They first shoot one arrow. Then whoever comes close to the first arrow wins. The younger loses again.

Song: They gamble again, springing sticks edgewise. The younger gets thin. The elder wins everything.

Song: The younger begins to stake and to lose his fingers, arms, legs, all the parts of his body. He begins to wager every hair of his head. Nothing is left but his heart. "We will play with these long poles with hoops. I will stake my heart. If you win, you can eat it."

Song: They go east and get long poles and begin to straighten them in the fire to play with. The younger

loses his heart and falls down dead. The elder sees him dead and dances all around him.

Song, with basket accompaniment. The old man rises on his knees and pounds vigorously. Meaning: "He began to skin and eat him."

Song, with basket accompaniment as before: The Coyote brings a big

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load of wood and drops it on the ground. The brother tells Coyote he will roast (burn?) the body.

Song, with basket: The elder brother is behind the house. He sees a little bird flying there. He thinks it is the spirit of his dead brother.

Song, slow time, with basket, more excited than ever at the end. Meaning: He sees many birds fly out. He is afraid and wants to run away. He goes south through piles of rocks where the trail leads. He gets hungry and pulls up fresh yucca-plants to cook and eat. He looks at the plants.

Song: He sees deer-tracks going toward the water.

Song: He goes on towards the desert, and sees a band of mountain-sheep, which he frightens, and they run away from him. He is talking to them.

Last song: He goes to the Maricopa Indians. [1](#)

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## Footnotes

[228:3](#) Evidently the Mohave Matevilyle.

[228:4](#) One of these songs was obtained on a phonograph record (American Museum of Natural History, no. 1017), described in the paper now in press at the University of California.

[229:1](#) The primitive houses of the Luiseños and Diegueños were made of uprights and rafters of solid timbers, joined by wattled brush, the whole covered with earth, with an opening in front for a door, and a hole in the roof to permit the egress of smoke and the entrance of light, the house looking at a distance like a hillock of sand.

[230:1](#) This and the following songs recall similar incidents in the Cuyahomarr story, which would seem to be merged with the history of the two gods; or by some omitted connection, the two stories may both be celebrated in this dance. As the full recital lasts all night, it was impossible for Hatakek to give more than a portion of it.

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## AWIKUNCHI, A FAIR-WEATHER-MAKING CEREMONY.

Where all is fragmentary, the connections between external objects and the ideas they stand for must become obliterated by time; and if the story is given at second-hand, little can be learned with precision. Most of the writer's material has been gathered directly from the old men who are the only real authorities; but Sant, the Diegueño interpreter, told the little that he remembers to have heard about the

## Awikunchi ceremony.'

Awikunchi is the name of a certain rock in the middle of which there had been carved the figure of a tiny coiled snake. When a man makes a hole in this rock, it will grow together again. It is the only rock that is known to have this property.

Finding that it was within accessible distance, I went to see it. It is a large, low, sloping rock of soft, loose granite; but it was with difficulty that the carved figure of the snake could be seen, for this had been damaged by some iconoclast who had dug it partly away, perhaps in the expectation of seeing it grow again.

In the old days no one could be found so sacrilegious as to deface such an object; but American influence is shown in the younger generation, who have been robbed of their past and preserve no reverence for it.

The connection between the rock and the song-series which bears its name could not be discovered. This series was sung for fair weather. If it rains for some time, they may say, "Let us sing Awikunchi to end

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the rain." So they sing all night to the accompaniment of a basket rubbed by a stick; and perhaps the rain stops in the morning.

The story of the songs is forgotten; but Sant recalls a mere fragment. A certain number refer to a boy named Kwilyu, who could eat more than any one in the world. His father grew tired of a son who ate so much, and planned to run away and leave him. So he made himself a boat. And he went out in it to the islands of the ocean. He thought the boy could not catch him there; but he could not escape in this way, for Kwilyu overtook him. The forgotten sequel of the story may never be known.

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## Footnotes

[231:1](#) It is said that in this dance the singers alternate, one man taking up the song when the other stops.

[231:2](#) Wi means "rock" in Diegueño. Wily, with the sound of Spanish liquid *ll*, is another form of the word. The initial *w* is pronounced so as to give the sound of a before it, but the vowel does not actually belong there.

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## BELIEFS.

Cinon Duro (Hokoyel Mutawir), the last hereditary chief at Mesa Grande, a living repository of the knowledge of the past, felt more keenly than any of the old men the lasting value of the ancient rule of life. It was sacrilege to reveal the religious mysteries to a stranger, or even to hint at the sacred ritual so solemnly imposed. His affection for the writer and his consciousness that the past was to die with him, led him to give for friendship what could never have been bought for money. But the struggle between his inbred reluctance to reveal the things of the past, and his promise to do so, led him to give the recital in the briefest way.

A satisfactory rendering of this recital could be given only by an interpreter combining a full knowledge

of old Indian terms with a good acquaintance with the English language; and such a one was not often to be found at Mesa Grande, where most of the younger Indians know only enough of their mother tongue for conversation with parents and grandparents in the house. Any Diegueño word not in common use, any allusion to the myths, the gods, or ceremonies, is foreign to them. <sup>1</sup> It is extremely fortunate that in the Manzanita region an excellent interpreter was found, familiar with the rare terminology of the past. The loss is great that in the death of Cinon Duro, September 17, 1906, there must die many a secret of the past.

The ceremonies which Cinon performed and the ancient religion he adhered to had been carefully taught to him by his father, that they might be transmitted to posterity with exact detail. The myths and sacred songs had been acquired in the same way. His father's name was mentioned with the greatest reverence in a half-whisper, since the names of the dead are spoken with reluctance. Where his father gained this knowledge was not distinctly explained, though it was stated that all religious ritual had been devised and directly given by Tuchaipa himself.

It is extremely interesting to trace the reciprocal influence of the two

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tribes, Luiseño and Diegueño, each upon the other as shown in the surviving fragments of their ancient worship. To one who has long studied the subject it becomes increasingly evident that many of the ceremonials used among the Diegueños were acquired directly from their neighbors the Luiseños, as the latter declare. The toloache initiation ceremony, the eagle fiesta, and the whirling eagle-feather dance are the ones especially stated to have been thus introduced.

The value of the Chungichnish worship as a conquering faith has been noted. The Luiseños declare that they received it themselves from their brethren of the coast. It is not probable that it displaced an earlier and more primitive religion, but much more likely that its ritual became fused and blended with whatever of the sort already existed in both tribes. It would be impossible at this late day to disentangle all these associations and to make positive assertions in regard to the matter, but the statement made by the Luiseños that some of the sacred songs sung by the Diegueños in their ceremonies are in the Luiseño language may be possible of verification later. Certain it is that the language of these songs is acknowledged by the Diegueños to be foreign or unknown to themselves.

The differences between these two tribes are very striking, and based on deep-lying racial factors. The Diegueños' natural affiliations are with the Mohaves, Maricopas, Havasupais, etc. The great creator-gods Tuchaipa and Yokomatis are held in reverence. Diegueño mythology deals with characters powerful in themselves, and representative of those who are to come after; as, for example, Sinyohauch, the wonder-working woman, typical of the various powers of Nature; and Cuyahomarr, the wonder-working boy, who gives names to all the plants and animals in the world. These characters have no counterparts in Luiseño mythology, which is subtler, less dramatic, and more metaphysical than the Diegueño. The death of Tuchaipa has many of its details either lent to the Luiseños or borrowed from their moon myth, the sickness and death of Moyla the Moon in its waning, and its rebirth as the crescent in the resurrected Quiot.

All tribes with early affiliations with Mexico might naturally adopt the myth of a dying god or demi-god, but these influences are lost in obscurity. It will be found an important and perhaps not a hopeless task to trace the reciprocal give-and-take in two tribes so racially distinct and geographically and socially

conjoined as the so-called Luiseños and Diegueños.

On review of the notes of Cinon's conversations, it appears that in his account of the toloache ceremony he mentions Wanawut, not by that Luiseño term of course, but by saying that "the boys jumped in a ditch which had a redo (woven net), with stones in it, in the bottom of it."

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In describing the girls' ceremony, he remarked that red, white, and black were the colors for women.

Such of the Luiseño form of ritual as was adopted by the Diegueños of Mesa Grande seems to have been introduced about a hundred and twenty years ago. In the two tribes there were some minor differences in performance. Instead of the lump of sage-seed and salt, rabbit-meat and salt were put into the girl's mouth in the ceremony Wukunish. Instead of the dry root of the toloache, a freshly-dug piece was pounded and the juice expressed in the boys' initiation ceremony.

In the Story of Creation as he first gave it, Cinon did not mention any primeval existence antedating Earth and Sky; but on a later occasion he sang the songs referring to the birth of the creator-gods, and mentioned in an obscure way the First Existence, typified in Luiseño myths by Kivish Atakvish. If he had lived, the Diegueño version of this most obscure and important part of the Creation myth would probably have been heard, since a few hours before the accident which resulted in his death he promised next time to tell "a part of the Creation story he had never yet related."

The words of the Songs of Creation which he sang, and which were recorded on the graphophone, are as follows:--

First song, sung by the Sky father who begot the creator-gods Tuchaipa and Yokomatis:--

Yi-haw-ma-ya-a i  
Yi-haw-ma-ya-a i (repeated six times)  
(A long sigh repeated)  
Ich-a-pa-wha-chi-ho  
Yo-o-o  
Ich-a-pa-wha-chi-yo  
Yo-o-o  
Ma-to Tu-chai-pa  
Mai-i-i Yo-ko-mat  
Ich-a-pa-wha-chi-yo  
Icha-a-pa-wha-chi-yo.

The second song by the Earth mother describes the bringing forth of the creator-gods:--

Chu-pa-chu-wha  
Wi-i-i  
Chu-pa-chu-wha  
Wi-i-i  
Tu-chai-pa  
Chu-pa-chu-wha  
I-i-i  
Yo-ko-mat-is

Chu-pa-chu-wha

Wa

Wi-i-i

Wi-i-i.

The weird intonation of the chant, and its strange changes, cannot

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be described, nor the intense reverence for the old religion expressed in every look and gesture.

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## Footnotes

[232:1](#) The Mesa Grande Chaup story (*Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 1904, vol. xvii, pp. 217-241) is an exception, being well interpreted.

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## SIGNIFICANCE OF MYTHS.

The Luiseño story of the dying Ouiot who became the moon, and the Diegueño story of the dying creator-god Tuchaipa, probably originated in some source common to both tribes; but while the Luiseños derive all their ceremonials from the deliberations of the first people in council assembled, related with an almost historical precision, the Diegueños find the sanction for each of their religious customs in some event in a myth. The first Image ceremony was performed to celebrate the death of Tuchaipa, when the people were still at Wikami; [1](#) but, no one knowing how to perform it, they sent to a mysterious being, Maiheowit, who lived in the islands of the ocean, to ask him for instruction. [2](#)

The reason for the Diegueño Image dance in the ceremony for the dead is to be found in the Cuyahomarr myth. Sinyohauch, having killed her son by cruelty, was forced to dance carrying his decayed body in her hands. The following is a realistic description of this: "The long hair had partly fallen out, but what was left upon the scalp, lifted by the wind, waved up and down as she danced and sang, carrying the body. She sang the song of the Image dance. This was the first time any one made a dance for the dead. These were the First People; and as they did, all must do who come after. This is the reason they have the Wukaruk ceremony."

Further sanction for the Image dance in this ceremony is found in the same myth, as follows: "He came to the spot where his father and uncle had been killed; and, coming first to his uncle's grave, he put his hand in the ground, and reached down and pulled him out. He set him there before him; but his uncle said, 'You can do nothing for me. My bones are all dust, and are mixed with seeds in the earth.' So he put him back, and went to his father's grave and pulled him out in the same way. But it was the same as before. 'You can do nothing for me,' said his father. 'But what you have done, the people that come after will do. They will bring back their dead to look at them once more' (in the Image dance)."

Cuyahomarr also originated the custom of cutting the hair in mourning for the dead, still practised by many. "The boy's hair had grown long; and he set fire to a bunch of tall grass that grows on the desert, and, putting his head in the fire, he began to burn his hair off. Then, seeing in his shadow that one side of his hair was still long, he put his

head again in the fire and burned it off even all around. This is why they still cut the hair for the dead and bum it in the fire."

I have found no other myth-tale in either tribe in any way similar to the Cuyahomarr story. It has unity, consistency, and what we should call a dramatic sense which makes it still impressive as fiction. Even among the younger Indians the memory of it lingers in a fragmentary way. Sinyohauch remains a type of extraordinary power in woman. Some of the older Indians who are Catholics have identified her with the Virgin Mary.

The Luiseño creation myth [1](#) shows less of the inventive instinct of the story-teller, and more of the power of abstract thought and intellectual conception. This remarkable survival from the past must serve to rank the Luiseños high in the ethnic scale.

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## Footnotes

[235:1](#) Mohave Avikwame, Dead Mountain, in southern Nevada.

[235:2](#) Compare the Mohave myth summarized in *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 1906, vol. xix, p. 315. See, also, *American Anthropologist*, 1905, vol. vii, p. 627.

[236:1](#) *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 1904, vol. xvii, p. 185.

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## YUMA CREATION MYTH, AS TOLD BY A DIEGUEÑO.

An old Yuma told the Diegueño interpreter Sant how the gods Tuchaipa and Yokomat [2](#) first came into being.

When they came forth from the Earth mother, they had to pass through the ocean, which then covered the land; and the first-born, Tuchaipa, came up through the water with his eyes shut, so that he got through all right; but when his brother called to him to ask him how he managed it, he told him that he came through with his eyes open.

So Yokomat came with wide-open eyes through the ocean, and the salt water hurt his eyes and made him blind.

Each brother had brought an animal with him. Tuchaipa had the badger, and Yokomat the swift. The badger was rough and furry, and the swift's feathers were smooth and fine.

After they came out, when his brother could not see, Tuchaipa changed the animals, taking the swift for himself.

"What have you done?" asked his brother. "This is not my animal. This one is rough and furry."

"Yes, that is yours," said Tuchaipa.

But Yokomat was so angry that he went down into the ground again.

So Tuchaipa made the world by himself.

He made all the people. First he made the men, and then the women. The women were very hard to make.

Then he made the moon to give them light; but, finding that the moon was not bright enough, he made the sun to light the world.

WATERBURY, CONN.

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## Footnotes

[236:2](#) Or Yokomatis. Tuchaipa and Yokomat are the Diegueño creator-gods.