

Additional Classroom Resources

A Yaqui Narrative of Meeting the Jesuits by Musician Juan Valenzuela*

(Transcribed and translated in 1942 by Edward H. Spicer)

There was a time when the people of the Yaqui River knew nothing about baptism. This was some time before the Conquest by the Spaniards and marks the beginning of the real Conquest in the Yaqui country. There was a stick at Vicam [in Yaqui country]. It was of mesquite, and it was very thick. It spoke sometimes with a voice that was very unpleasant. People came to listen to it, but there were none who could understand what it said.

There was a man named Mapooli, who lived in the west of the Yaqui country. He lived a little way toward the sea from the present place of Mapooli on the Southern Pacific Railroad. . . . The old people of the eight pueblos came to him and told him that they would like him to listen to the stick and say whether or not he could understand it. He said that he would have to get ready.



Figure 6. Yaqui Young Woman, Arizona, c. 1910. Courtesy of the University of Southern California Libraries and the California Historical Society

So, he took his daughter and went down to the sea. Here he caught a fish and had some conversation with it, telling it what the pueblo wise men had asked him to do. The fish asked him why he had to do this, and he said that the *mayoría* [majority, or group of elders] had ordered it. Then the fish said he would help him with what knowledge he had. So Mapooli went to Vicam with his daughter, and they found all the people of the eight [Yaqui] pueblos gathered there.

The stick was speaking in its very terrible voice every half hour. Finally, it began to talk again. Mapooli was there with his daughter, and she translated what the stick was saying. It said: "There is a thing called baptism. All those who are baptized will die." This is all it said. Mapooli told the people there was an angel in the sky above whose spirit had been talking.



Figure 7. Yaqui Indian Camp, Ortiz, California, c. 1910–1915. Photograph courtesy of Bain News Service

Immediately all the people in each of the pueblos were divided into two different groups. Every pueblo, wherever you went on the Yaqui River, had one group of people who wanted to be baptized and one group who did not. The people got great piles of wood and took them to Vicam. There, one group planned to burn the talking stick. There was a great fight all up and down the river, the people who wanted to be baptized fighting with the people who did not want to be. They fought hard. Eventually the people burned the talking stick, but those who wanted to be baptized were baptized. . . . Those who would not be baptized became enchanted. Everywhere on the Yaqui River they were enchanted, like the Mesa Encantada near Roosevelt Dam in Arizona.

These people who became enchanted remained here but no one knows where they are exactly because they cannot be seen. Sometimes a person hears a drum or a violin, and it is probable that this is the music of the enchanted people. Sometimes when a pascola musician is a very good musician it is said that he learned his music from the enchanted people. They, like the Yaquis, are the descendants of the . . . people who lived everywhere in the Yaqui country in the ancient times before the talking stick was in Vicam and before the beginning of the Conquest which started with the talking stick.

* Extract from Edward H. Spicer, "Excerpts from the 'Preliminary Report on Potam'," *Journal of the Southwest* 34, no. 1 (1992): 127–128. Extract edited for clarity by MIM Education.



Figure 8. Early twentieth-century photograph of Yaqui Indians, c. 1910–1915. Photograph courtesy of Bain News Service

A European Narrative of Meeting the Yaqui Indians by Jesuit Priest Andrés Pérez de Ribas* (Originally published in 1645)

The Yaqui nation was considered to be the bravest and most daring and aggressive of all the nations in the province. . . . This is because they did not become faint like others when they saw their comrades' corpses spread all over the field. Rather, they planted their feet firmly on these bodies and arched their bows with even greater fury, saying, "Kill, for we are many." And they did not weaken one bit in the fight. . . . When an effort was made at the time of Holy Baptism to strip the Yaqui of their barbarous culture it could not be done because all their names were associated with death. . . . The same customs were present in [the Yaqui] nation as among

the other [Native American] nations we have recorded . . . barbarous dances, . . . extensive sorcery, great numbers of sorcerers, and other similar customs. . . . In spite of the Yaqui's ferocity I can affirm that I found many who were of good character, grateful, and loyal.

There were still a number of rebels and troublesome persons, particularly the sorcerers, who were ministers of Satan and enemies of Christ and his evangelical law. However, God had willed that the time had finally



Figure 9. Eighteenth-century map of Jesuit Missions in Sonora, Mexico. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Digital Mexicana

come for this nation to escape the power of the devil who possessed it. . . . Therefore, the lovers of peace prevailed.

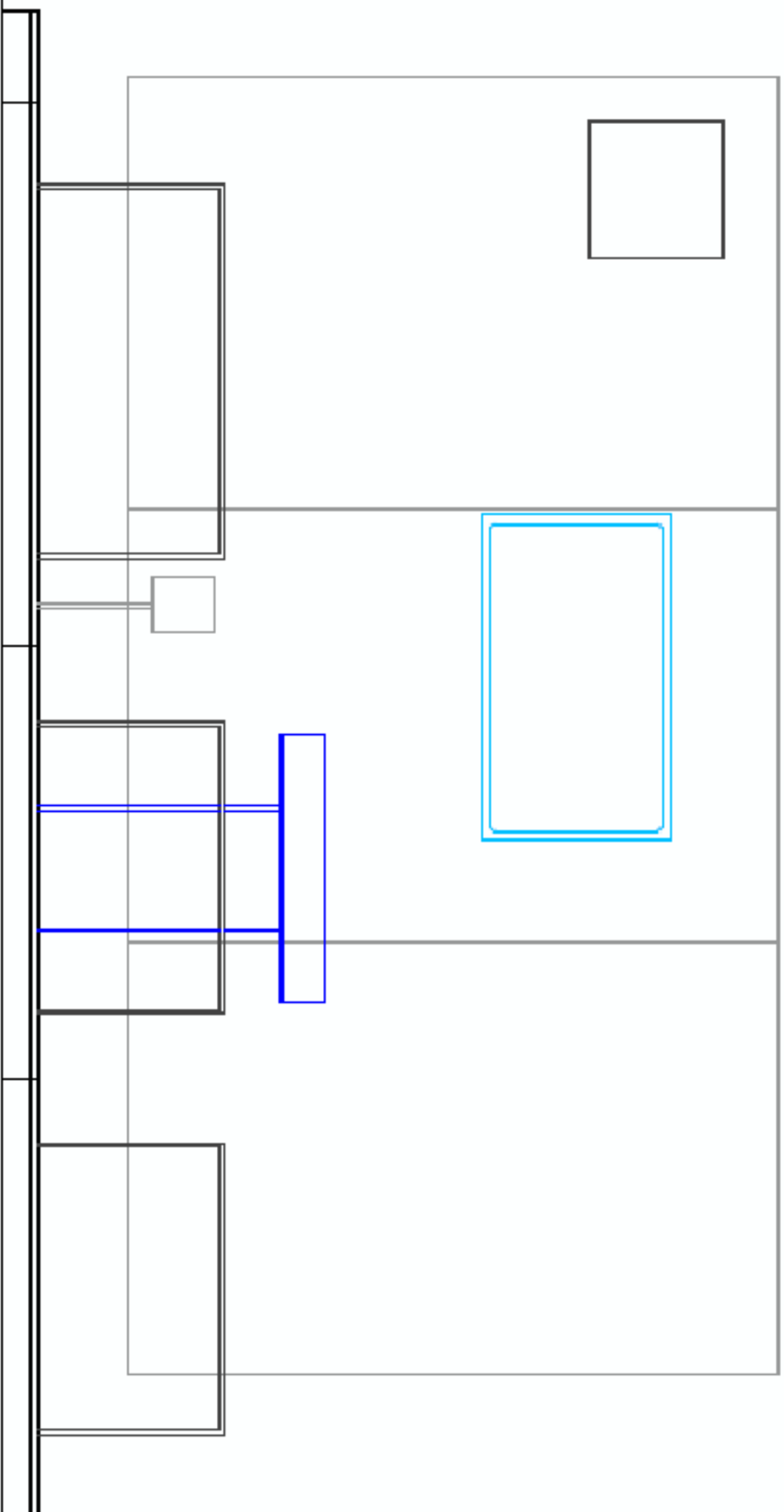
But the devil, the enemy of the human race who is always on the lookout for ways of foiling good works, saw that this nation—his fortress and stronghold, where he had been ensconced for so many years—was succumbing. He also saw that the little [Yaqui children] that had been baptized that day were being snatched from his clutches. He roared like a lion whose cubs were being taken away, fearing and foreseeing in the remaining pueblos the highly productive births of children who would be reborn in Christ and His Church. On this occasion then, he mounted one of the greatest persecutions ever endured during the early days of this Christianity.

That same night after the first baptism of infants was celebrated in this first pueblo, the devil perverted the

spirit of an [Indian] sorcerer. Without our knowledge he had accompanied us, and when the good-hearted Indians were congratulating one another for having had their children baptized, he planted that seed of the devil's doctrine that is often repeated by these bedeviled sorcerers. [The sorcerer] told them that the Baptism performed by the priests takes the lives of the children and anyone else who receives it. Therefore, if they didn't want to expose their children to death and lose them, then they should not offer them for Baptism.

The [sorcerer] was so clever with his diabolical trick that word quickly spread. The following day when I tried to speak with the chiefs of the pueblo about celebrating the Baptism of the remaining children, they answered me with great regret that the mothers who had not yet brought their children to be baptized had withdrawn with their children to their fields and hilltops. These women had been terrified of the speeches of the sorcerer, who had fled without the chiefs catching him.

*Excerpt from Andrés Pérez de Ribas, *History of the Triumphs of Our Holy Faith amongst the Most Barbarous and Fierce Peoples of the New World*, trans. Daniel T. Reff, Maureen Ahern, and Richard K. Danford from 1645 Spanish original (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 327–348. Excerpt edited for clarity by MIM Education.



PROJECT:

DATE:

CURATOR:
DESIGNER:

Know – Wonder – Learned

<p>Know</p> <p>I currently know the following things about cultural diffusion, the Yaqui Indians, and Mexican banda.</p>	<p>Wonder</p> <p>I had the following questions after learning more about cultural diffusion, the Yaqui Indians, and Mexican banda.</p>	<p>Learned</p> <p>From this activity, I learned the following things about cultural diffusion, the Yaqui Indians, and Mexican banda.</p>