HISTORY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF HIERARCHY AND ETHNICITY IN THE PREHISPANIC TARASCAN STATE: A SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE RELACIÓN DE MICHOACÁN

By

DAVID LOUIS HASKELL

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The Tarascan Empire and the Context of the Production of the Relación de Michoacán</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Prehispanic Tarascan Empire</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrival of the Spaniards and the Onset of the Colonial Era</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 A Critique of Traditional Literal Interpretations of the Relación de Michoacán</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RM as Literal History</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning the Bases of these Assumptions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Tarascan Kings as Stranger-Kings</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger-King in Other World Areas</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of Hierarchy</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarascan Stranger-Kings</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 The Syntagmatic Structuralist Analysis of Narrative</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processual Structure and Elementary Categories</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntagmatic Analysis of Narrative</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 The Syntagmatic Analysis of the Relación de Michoacán</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrival of the Chichimecs</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career of Tariacuri</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Generation of Chichimecs and the Creation of the Tarascan Empire</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**LIST OF FIGURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>Approximate extent of the Protohistoric Tarascan empire.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2</td>
<td>Areas of the Tarascan empire where different strategies regarding ethnicity were used</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-1</td>
<td>Map of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin and Vicinity.</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-2</td>
<td>Episodes 1 and 2.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-3</td>
<td>The Genealogy of the Royal Dynasty, as told in the narrative.</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-4</td>
<td>Episodes 1 through 4.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-5</td>
<td>Episodes 5 and 6.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-6</td>
<td>Episodes 5 through 9.</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Episodes 10 through 15.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Episodes 16 through 20.</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>Episodes 21 through 26.</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Episodes 27 through 30.</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-1</td>
<td>Paradigmatic units of the entire narrative.</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The late prehispanic Tarascan empire provides a valuable opportunity in Mesoamerica to study the processes of state formation, the role of ethnicity in multiethnic states, and strategies employed by states to manipulate ethnic identity in order to preserve stability and the rule of the central government. However, little archaeological work has focused on the Tarascan empire in spite of its promise for yielding significant insights into such processes. The Tarascan empire is instead known primarily through ethnohistoric documents, with the Relación de Michoacán foremost among them. In particular a section of the Relación de Michoacán that claims to be a faithful representation of the official state history of the Tarascan empire has been viewed as literal history, “history as it really happened,” and this characterization has not been seriously questioned. This belief in the historical validity of the official history contained within the Relación de Michoacán has led scholars to read the history as it is told in the
document in order to study what they believe are the events and processes of Tarascan State formation and the role of various “ethnic” groups in these events.

By not questioning the nature of the document and its contents, these literal interpretations ignore the possibility that the official history of the *Relación de Michoacán* represents something other than literal history. Furthermore, if the official history is not literal history, as is generally believed, then our understandings of the nature of the Tarascan empire are potentially fundamentally flawed because of a misunderstanding of what the *Relación de Michoacán* represents and what it is telling us. For these reasons our study analyzes the official history of the *Relación de Michoacán* using a structuralist method suitable for the analysis of narratives. Such a method provides a more emic understanding of the nature of the narrative and its fundamental meaning within Tarascan society. Our study shows that the history contained within the *Relación de Michoacán* was most directly concerned with the construction of hierarchy through the actions and sequence of the narrative, as well as the form of the narrative itself. Furthermore, the labels used in the narrative to name groups do not express what we might recognize as “ethnic identity,” but rather are categories that create and convey meanings that carry cosmological significance and form the basis for the construction of hierarchy. It is this construction of hierarchy that is the fundamental meaning of the narrative.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Relación de los ceremonias y ritos y población de la provincia de Mechuacan hecha al Illmo. Sr. D. Antonio de Mendoza, virrey y Gobernador de esta Nueva España por S. M. (&) G (commonly referred to as the Relación de Michoacán and hereafter abbreviated as the RM) has long been viewed as the preeminent source for both ethnographic and historical information concerning the prehispanic Tarascan empire. The RM was written in Spanish sometime between the years 1539 and 1541 by an anonymous Spanish friar who was following the directions of Antonio de Mendoza, the Viceroy of New Spain at the time (from 1541 to 1550 according to Seler 1993 [1905]). Warren (1985:328) believes that the document was composed by Friar Jerónimo de Alcalá in the year 1541. The timespan in which the document could have been written places its production about 10 years after the death of the last native Tarascan king in 1530 at the hands of Nuño de Guzman and 19 years after that king peacefully allowed a Spanish expedition led by Cristóbal de Olíd to enter the capital city of Tzintzuntzan in 1522 (Warren 1985:50-51).

The RM is now located in Madrid in the Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial. It consists of 140 leaves (or folios) and contains 44 color illustrations. A copy of the original document is located in the United State Library of Congress. The first publication of the RM was in 1869 and was based on the original document located in Madrid, but it did not include the illustrations. A second edition was published in Morelia, Michoacán, and was based on the Library of Congress copy. In 1956 another
edition was published that was based on the original document and included facsimile reproductions of the folios, notes by José Tudela, and a preliminary study by Paul Kirchhoff (Glass and Robertson 1975:167-168). An English translation of the RM by Eugene R. Craine and Reginald C. Reindorp was published in 1970 and was based on the 1903 Morelia edition (RM 1970:ix).

In general, the document describes the culture of the Tarascan people, their practices, government, and religion. The RM originally contained three sections, which the friar who composed the document describes in the prologue (Kirchhoff 1956:xix; RM 1970:8). The first of the three sections, which contained descriptions of the gods, rituals, and religion of the Tarascans, has been lost. One folio, or page, that describes one of the religious ceremonies or festivals has been found and is believed to be one of the missing pages of the first part of the RM or perhaps a copy. The second section is a history of the creation of the Tarascan empire and contains information such as where the ruling family came from and how they came to found and enlarge the empire through battles, marriages, and alliances. The third section describes Tarascan culture at the time of contact and contains chapters on marriage practices, the priesthood, government officials and their duties, etc., and ends with an account of the coming of the Spaniards and the subsequent events up until and including the death of the last native king.

Virtually all interpretations and reconstructions concerning the history, functioning, and nature of the prehispanic Tarascan empire and Tarascan culture more generally rely primarily on the RM (see Chapter 2 for a brief background of Tarascan society and the Tarascan empire). In particular the second section of the RM, which claims to contain the official state history of the Tarascan empire, has been utilized extensively to study the
events and processes that caused or led to the formation of the Tarascan empire. Very briefly summarized (more detail of the story will be given in the section containing the analysis), the history tells of the arrival of a group of people called “Chichimecs” at a mountain north of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin in Michoacán, Mexico, the area that becomes the political core of the Tarascan empire. Due to a conflict with local peoples, the Chichimecs move into the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. Here they interact with the indigenous lake dwellers. Some of these lake dwellers live on islands in the lake and are commonly referred to as Islanders. In time a Chichimec leader marries an Islander woman and the marriage produces a child named Tariacuri. It is foretold that he will grow up to become king. The Chichimec leaders are killed, leaving Tariacuri and his two cousins to lead the Chichimecs. Through various acts the Chichimecs draw the ire of the lake peoples, and ultimately Tariacuri’s cousins are killed.

Tariacuri, the lone Chichimec leader, marries a woman, but this marriage is unsuccessful and prompts him to marry another woman. After this marriage Tariacuri finds his long-lost “nephews,” the sons of his cousins (while their relation to Tariacuri makes the nephews first cousins once removed in our kinship terminology, the document continually refers to them as nephews, and so they will be referred to as such in this thesis). He advises and teaches these nephews how to act properly, and in time he sends his younger son to live with them. Together, and under Tariacuri’s tutelage, these three youths grow in power. Eventually, with Tariacuri’s help, they are able to ally themselves with or conquer other towns in the Lake Pátzcuaro area. They ultimately conquer numerous towns outside the immediate area and create what has come to be known as the
Tarascan empire. During these conquests Tariacuri dies and leaves his two nephews and son to rule the newly created empire.

**Interpretations of the RM**

With the adoption of a literalist perspective (Burke 1990; see chapter 3) and assuming that much if not all of what is contained within this “official history” of the second section of the RM represents “what really happened,” various scholars have used this narrative as the basis for the study and description of the events and processes that gave rise to the Tarascan empire (Kirchhoff 1956; Michelet 1996; Pollard 1993, 1994; Seler 1993). These studies often view the various labels used to denote groups of people as names of ethnic groups, and characterize the formation of the Tarascan empire as the outcome of ethnic strife or ethnically motivated competition over resources (Kirchhoff 1956; Michelet 1996; Pollard 1993, 1994).

My structuralist analysis of the RM (which constitutes the major portion of this thesis) reexamines and questions the assumptions that the historical narrative in the RM does indeed constitute literal history. While those who have made this assumption have pointed to various factors to support their claim, I take the opposite argument and address some of those factors by examining their validity, as well as the influence of context on the production and telling of the narrative. I suggest here that the “historical” narrative in the RM is concerned less with the recitation of historical facts than with the creation and defense of the hierarchical relationships that permeated Tarascan society.

I further question the assumption that the names used in the RM to denote various individuals and groups constitute “ethnic” identities. This assumption is based upon largely outdated definitions and interpretations of ethnicity and group identification that give primacy to essentialized traits, common descent, and the fixity of identity
(conceptions referred to as primordialist; see Chapter 3). More recent anthropological insights into the nature of ethnic identification provide a more sophisticated appreciation for the nature of this phenomenon. Applying these understandings are then applied to the RM reveals that ethnic labels were used to express certain qualities of traits rather than fixed group identities. Additionally, in the course of the narrative these identities and qualities shift and change as part of the process of the creation of hierarchy in the Tarascan empire.

I was first convinced that the historical narrative contained within the RM is more about the creation of hierarchy out of two opposed categories of people than “history as it really happened” because of the similarities it shares with stories told in many parts of the world, including elsewhere within Mesoamerica. The general theme of such stories has been outlined recently by Sahlins (1985), who calls it the Stranger-King, building on the earlier work of Hocart, Frazer, and Dumézil (see Chapter 4). The marked similarities seem to indicate that the great amount of detail contained within the historical narrative of the RM is not due to the memory of actual historical events of the real past, but rather form a skillfully crafted exposition on the nature of hierarchy and therefore political legitimacy in certain societies.

To investigate the meaning of the historical narrative in the RM, we used a structuralist method is employed here. Turner (1977, 1985) showed that his syntagmatic method of the analysis of narratives is useful for interpreting the fundamental meaning of narratives. This method is outlined in Chapter 5, but it should be pointed out that Turner built his method on a conception of structure in some ways fundamentally different from that of Lévi-Strauss. Turner’s formulation has the advantages of being processual rather
than static and a capability to incorporate the syntax of narratives as a fundamental aspect of the creation of meaning.

Inspired by Turner’s syntagmatic method, the analysis of the historical narrative of the RM presented here demonstrates that the narrative is concerned primarily with the creation and legitimation of hierarchy in Tarascan society, and thus the superior position the Tarascan rulers enjoyed within that society. The narrative accomplishes this goal through the combination of two groups of characters, the “Chichimecs” and “Islanders,” to create a hierarchically superior synthesis of the two groups, the Tarascan royal dynasty. The synthetic and hierarchically superior nature of the royal dynasty that is the outcome of the story legitimates its position at the top of Tarascan society. As the two elements contributing to this synthesis, the “Chichimec” and “Islander” labels are not ethnic markers but rather identities that create and label elementary categories. By relating the characters that are named as such to organizing principles of society and the cosmos, the royal dynasty demonstrates that it is the synthesis of social and cosmological categories and therefore is hierarchically superior and possesses the legitimate authority necessary to rule.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, provides background information concerning the Tarascans and the Tarascan empire, ending with the subjugation of the Tarascans by the Spaniards. Chapter 3 examines the traditional interpretations of the RM and questions the bases for these interpretations, proposing instead that a more emic understanding of the RM is needed in order to understand what it represents and how it can inform our knowledge of the Tarascan empire. Chapter 4 notes the similarities between the historical narrative that comprises the second part of the RM and the Stranger-King
stories from other parts of the world, proposing that the historical narrative of the RM can be analyzed in a similar manner. The syntagmatic structuralist method of narrative analysis that is employed in this thesis is outlined and explained in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 presents the analysis of the narrative, including descriptions of some of the events and actions it relates. The results of this analysis are discussed in Chapter 7, in which it is concluded that the RM does not constitute literal history, nor does it document the presence of ethnic groups, in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, the narrative is an internally structured exposition on the nature of hierarchy in Tarascan society.
CHAPTER 2

The meaning of the RM cannot be properly understood without some knowledge of the Tarascan empire and the colonial context in which the document was produced. The Tarascan empire was an extremely organized and hierarchical society. Power relations were also inherent in the colonial situation following the arrival of the Spaniards. Therefore power relations, both those that existed prior to the arrival of the Spaniards as well as the colonial power relations created by the presence of the Spaniards, permeated the context of the production of the RM.

Late Prehispanic Tarascan Empire

At the time of the arrival of the Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortés on the shores of modern Mexico, the Tarascan empire was a large conquest empire second in size within Mesoamerica only to the Aztec empire. The maximal extent of the Tarascan empire was roughly equivalent to the modern Mexican state of Michoacán in west central Mexico, but also included parts of the modern states of Guanajuato, Querétaro, Jalisco, and possibly Guerrero and Mexico (see Figure 2-1). The Tarascan and Aztec empires appear to have fought their way to a stalemate by the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, with neither one able to make significant and permanent gains into territory held by the other (Pollard 1993). In order to expand and maintain this large conquest empire, the prehispanic rulers of the Tarascan empire developed highly organized secular and religious bureaucracies that were responsible for the efficient collection of tribute, the

These bureaucracies were headed by the *cazonci*, the native title for king. The *cazonci* was believed to be the earthly representative of Curicaueri, the patron deity of the Tarascan royal family and the empire as a whole (Pollard 1991:170; Roskamp 2001).

![Map of the Protohistoric Tarascan Empire](image)

Figure 2-1. Approximate extent of the Protohistoric Tarascan empire, represented by the vertical lines. Boundaries of modern Mexican states are also shown. Adapted from Pollard (1993:5).

This position was apparently a mixture of an elected and hereditary office: following the death of a king, his successor would be chosen from among a pool of eligible members of the royal dynasty by a council of noble elders (RM 1956:246, 1970:68). There is also some indication that before his death a king could name his successor, although it is unclear if this chosen noble would automatically be elected by the council (RM 1956:219, 1970: 44). At the time of Spanish conquest, the *cazonci* ruled from the capital...
city of Tzintzuntzan, located on the shores of Lake Pátzcuaro near the center of the modern Mexican state of Michoacán (Pollard 1980, 1993; Warren 1985:5). At his court in Tzintzuntzan, the cazónci oversaw the bureaucrats and priestly orders, as well as the chiefs of the individual towns under his control, which were often directly appointed by the cazónci (RM 1956:173-182, 203-206, 1970:11-14, 17-18, 31-35). In addition to the local level of government, the leaders of four regional capitals reported to the king and established a direct and strong presence of the central authority in the provincial areas of the empire (Pollard 1993:126; RM 1956:173, 1970:11).

Tarascan society in general was composed of two social estates, nobles and commoners. There is no evidence that there was the possibility of social mobility between these two estates, and marriage was apparently endogamous with respect to social estate (RM 1956:210-214, 1970:36-41). Offices in the religious and secular bureaucracies were open only to nobles, while the commoners generally held occupations involving manual labor (Pollard 1993:124-126). In addition to farming, there was craft specialization in Tarascan society, based on information concerning government officials who were responsible for overseeing such occupational specializations as house construction workers, masons, fishers, tailors, feather workers, weapons makers, canoe makers, and messengers, among others (RM 1956:173-178, 1970:12-14).

Both the Tarascan people and language are somewhat of an anomaly. Tarascan is a term that has been applied both to the people of this area and their language. The term itself seems to have its origin in the first contacts between these people and the Spaniards, as the Spanish often heard the native word tarascue, meaning in-law, and began to call the natives of the area by a bastardization of the word (RM 1956:247, 1970:69; Warren
1985:6). Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, a Spanish friar who documented indigenous culture in the Basin of Mexico, gives an alternate derivation for the term Tarascan. He states that the name comes from *taras*, the name of one of the Tarascans’ gods, or more likely, the general term for an idol (Warren 1985:6).

The native term for both themselves and their language, however, is *purépecha*, which means “working men” in that language (Warren 1985: 7). The Tarascan language, *purépecha*, is a linguistic isolate in the culture area of Mesoamerica, seemingly unrelated to any of the other languages of neighboring groups. Various linguists have proposed that it is most closely linked to Quechua, the language of the Inkas of South America, or perhaps Zuni in the southwestern United States (Pollard 1993:15; Warren 1985:8). Whichever language it is closest to, *purépecha* is different enough to have required a divergence at least a few thousand years ago (Pollard 1993:15).

The Tarascan empire was a relatively late phenomenon in the context of the history of prehispanic Mesoamerican civilizations. The founding of the royal dynastic line and its consolidation of power are believed to have taken place sometime in the 14th century AD, but this is based mostly on interpretations of the ethnohistoric documents (Kirchhoff 1956; Pollard 1993:88). Archaeological investigations into the history of the Tarascan empire have demonstrated that during the Tariacuri phase (1350-1525 AD) local elites or chiefs subservient to the *cazonci* in the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin began to share the markers of nobility defined by and also apparently emanating from the capital at Tzintzuntzan (Pollard and Cahue 1999). Work in the Zacapu basin to the north of Lake Pátzcuaro has demonstrated that at about the same time (1350 AD), artifacts associated with the
Tarascan empire such as painted Tarascan polychromes, ceramic pipes, and metal objects appear as part of an established complex of traits (Michelet 1989).

Most, if not all, interpretations of the processes that led to the formation of the prehispanic Tarascan empire hold that the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin was inhabited by various ethnic groups, some having arrived there later than the others. While there is disagreement over the specific relationships, various scholars have concluded that the original and invading populations can be assigned linguistic and therefore ethnic or cultural affiliations. On the one hand, Seler (1993 [1905]), Kirchhoff (1956), and Williams (2001) believe that the original inhabitants of the area were Nahuatl-speaking peoples, and the invading groups were Tarascan or purépecha speakers. Pollard (1993, 1994), on the other hand, believes the reverse was the case—that the invading groups spoke Nahuatl and the original inhabitants spoke Tarascan. These differences are not believed to have constituted significant barriers between the various groups, as a synthesis or mixing of the original and invading peoples was accomplished, and in time the descendants of one of the invading groups managed to establish themselves as the dominant political force in the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin.

Through conquests and alliances the Tarascan empire expanded from the Lake Pátzcuaro “Tarascan heartland” and came to encompass various other ethnic or linguistic groups, as best as can be learned from the documentary sources, such as Nahuatl speakers (Nahuatl was the language of the peoples of the Basin of Mexico at the time of Spanish contact), Otomis, Matlatzincas, and Tecos (Brand 1943; Pollard 1993:92-105; Stanislawsky 1947). Manipulation of ethnic identity is believed to have continued to play an important role in this expansion and the accompanying consolidation of the Tarascan empire following
these wars of conquest. In a study based on the changes in the dominant languages spoken in towns following the Spanish conquest, Pollard (1994) has written that this newly forged Tarascan identity was exported to conquered territories in the sense that the Tarascan central authority promoted a Tarascan identity among newly subjugated peoples (see Figure 2-2). This perception of a common identity and common interests is believed to be one of the primary ways in which the Tarascan Empire prevented rebellions and dissent and was able to raise large armies for defense and expansion (Pollard 1994).

Figure 2-2. Areas of the Tarascan empire where different strategies regarding ethnicity were used. Following Pollard (1994:84).

**Arrival of the Spaniards and the Onset of the Colonial Era**

The autonomous reign of the Tarascan kings ended when the *cazonci* Tzintzicha Tangaxoan peacefully permitted an expedition of Spaniards led by the conquistador Cristóbal de Olid in 1522 (Warren 1985:50-51). This began a period of uneasy and, at times, violent subjugation. The *cazonci* continued to receive tribute from towns subject to him, much to the displeasure of Spanish *encomenderos* and colonial administrators
Furthermore, he and other native lords were accused of practicing rituals of the prehispanic religion, even after having been baptized (Warren 1985:233). These two factors in particular led to the conviction and execution of Tzintzicha Tangaxoan, the last native king, in 1530 at the hands of Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán, a Spanish conquistador and president of the first Audiencia of New Spain (Warren 1985:234). With their king dead at the hands of the Spaniards, the native nobles and people in general must have contemplated and questioned their place in the new order (Krippner-Martinez 2001: 49). Many of the nobles sought to preserve their former status by petitioning to the Spanish Colonial administration. Significantly, Krippner-Martinez (2001:55) has characterized the RM as a claim of legitimate noble status on the part of the informants, as well as a version of the past that challenged the humiliating conditions of the present, their subordination to the Spaniards.

The colonial context of the production of the RM, therefore, was one charged with power relations. In addition, the telling of the historical narrative that comprises the second section of the RM is said within the text to have occurred at an annual feast when criminals and disobedient subjects would be punished, often by execution (RM 1956:11-14, 1970:101-103). Therefore this context is similarly one of power relations, namely the power of the ruling elites to exercise control over the rest of society. Before the full impact of these contexts of production can be realized, however, the traditional interpretations of the RM and their bases must first be discussed. Only after questioning the assumptions that are necessarily involved in these interpretations can we properly evaluate the role of power and hierarchy in the RM.
CHAPTER 3
A CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL LITERAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RELACIÓN DE MICHOACÁN

Traditional interpretations of the historical narrative of the RM have been based on assumptions that it represents a preserved memory of the real past as it actually happened. Following these assumptions scholars have taken the words of the RM at face value, believing them to be historically accurate. Certain passages and characteristics of the RM are held up as a defense of this perspective. Furthermore, the names used in the document to refer to individuals or groups are believed to denote actual ethnic groups following other assumptions concerning the nature of ethnic identity. By questioning these assumptions, however, we see that the evidence for literalist interpretations is less than satisfactory. Recent anthropological work outlining a better understanding of the functions of “historical narratives” and the nature of “ethnic identity” gives us a clue as to what exactly the historical narrative of the RM represents.

The RM as Literal History

The RM has traditionally been interpreted literally, taking the events described within it as an accurate representation of the “real past” of the prehispanic Tarascan empire (Kirchhoff 1956; Seler 1993; Michelet 1994). Historians have developed a method for evaluating the historical validity of documents, in the sense of determining the likelihood that a given document is a faithful representation of past events as they really happened. This method relies on many assumptions, a few of which will be outlined here. The first is that events involving implausible or outlandish elements,
commonly the deeds of gods, are considered for that reason to be non-historical (Gillespie 1983:77-78). Documents that display a precise orientation in real space and are logically and coherently ordered are judged to be more likely to be historical rather than false or mythical (Brown 1988:12; Gillespie 1983:77-78). Lastly, documents should be evaluated against one another, so that events described similarly in different documents are believed to have occurred in that way, while disagreements or contradictions are resolved by resorting to other criteria and the overall reliability of some of the documents compared to others (Collingwood 1946:129; Gillespie 1983:77-78; Vansina 1965:113-114, 121).

Several factors have lent themselves to taking such a literalist perspective of the RM. First, the friar who wrote the document claims in the prologue that he has acted only as the faithful interpreter for the Tarascan noblemen who served as informants (RM 1956:6, 1970:7-8). Second, at the onset of the historical narrative, we are told that this story was told yearly at a given ceremony (Uazcataconsquaro, at which criminals or disobedient subjects were punished, in many cases being executed). This recitation was performed by the head priest, the petámuti, in the capital of Tzintzuntzan just prior to the carrying out of the sentences. At the same time, lower ranked priests would tell the historical narrative in towns and villages throughout the empire. The friar who wrote the RM explains that one of his informants was a priest “que sabía este historia” (who knew this history) (Kirchhoff 1956:xx). Therefore, if we are to believe the friar, the words he wrote down were the exact words—with a few explanatory tangents included by the friar where necessary—of the Tarascan noblemen, the men who were purported to know their own history.
Kirchhoff, who wrote a preliminary study that accompanies the 1956 publication of the RM, points out that the history contains very few cases of anachronism, thereby contributing to the likelihood of its historical validity (Kirchhoff 1956:xvi). Furthermore, the countless details included in the account of the life of Tariacuri, the one figure in the RM most responsible for the creation of the Tarascan empire, amount in his opinion to “a richness of information without parallel in all the historical literature of Mesoamerica” (Kirchhoff 1956:xv, author’s translation). Given these observations and the claims of the friar as merely the interpreter of his native informants, Kirchhoff concluded that the memory of the priests responsible for preserving this history of the Tarascan people must have been remarkable, and the only explanation for such a feat “is to believe that the narration of the head priest was reduced to a fixed and unalterable text and that the new head priest learned it from his predecessor” (Kirchhoff 1956:xvi, author’s translation). Kirchhoff not only relied on the amount of detail and lack of anachronism in the document, but also the above assumptions that logical coherence and the near absence of supernatural or implausible events indicate that the document can be viewed as an accurate representation of the past. One could surmise that had the RM contained just as much detail concerning the deeds of gods and their role in the formation of the Tarascan Empire, his interpretation would have perhaps been different.

The loss of the first section of the RM—a description and history of the gods—has also contributed to a belief in the historical validity of the RM. It is impossible to compare this section to the subsequent section containing the official history of the Tarascan empire to detect similar or repetitive elements. This factor should not be overlooked, as at the outset of the section containing the history it is explained that the
patron deity of the ruling dynasty, Curicaueri, began his empire when he arrived at the mountain near Zacapu (RM 1956:14, 1970:103). The pages that follow depict the events in Zacapu as the deeds of the chief Hireticátame. In a side note in the same chapter, the Spanish friar states that the narrator always attributed events to the god Curicaueri instead of mentioning the humans who presumably were responsible for the events described (RM 1956:15, 1970:103-104). Therefore the fact that the RM looks historical in the sense that it is a description of the actions of men and not gods might be more attributable to the loss of the first section and the impositions of the transcribing friar rather than the intentions of the native informants to represent their history as such.

Lastly, it is important to recognize the importance of the fact that the RM stands virtually alone as the preeminent source for the study of the history of the prehispanic Tarascan empire. No other documents exist which can contradict or raise questions concerning the historical account in the RM. In other words, the methods of comparative analysis discussed above cannot be used. We are thus in a sort of double bind: because the RM is the only document of its kind, we are more inclined to read it as literal history, as there are no contradictory accounts, while on the other hand, this lack of accompanying documents prevents the events described from being supported by other evidence. Combined with the wealth of detail and other qualities possessed by the RM, this situation has served to cement a belief in the historical account contained in the RM as representing how things actually happened.

Even without this perceived support from the RM or the lack of contradictory evidence, it is likely that the RM would have been interpreted literally. The growth of literal-mindedness during the 19th century development of the modern discipline of
history led to the dominance of a positivist history that sought only to determine what really happened in the past (Burke 1990, Fogelson 1989). In this way virtually all historical looking documents (i.e., documents that do not contain a lot of mythic or supernatural events, as discussed above) were presumed to be literal history, that is, descriptions of actual events that preceded and motivated their production.

All of the interpretations noted in Chapter 2 concerning the presence of multiple ethnic groups and the role of ethnicity in the formation of the Tarascan empire in the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin rely nearly exclusively on the RM. These interpretations began with the assumption that the RM does indeed represent literal history. Various scholars further assume that the different terms used in the RM to refer to various individuals or groups of people were categories of identification that could be characterized as similar to our concept of ethnicity: a static notion of group affiliation based on some immutable or only slowly changing characteristics, language or ancestry being the most notable (Pollard 1994; Kirchhoff 1956). This assumption is contestable, however. As the contradicting interpretations concerning the linguistic affiliations of the recent and original inhabitants allude to, these linguistic interpretations are based on limited, and, I believe, questionable data found primarily in the RM. Nowhere in the RM is there a conclusive or definitive statement of either group speaking either language.

The issue is not simply one of specific data that might help us better reconstruct the history of the Tarascan Empire, but the need for a reexamination of the many assumptions that have laid the groundwork for these interpretations.

**Questioning the Bases of these Assumptions**

Many refinements have been made in anthropological theory and practice since the time of the earliest studies of the RM and the Prehispanic Tarascan empire. In the past
few decades scholars have made an effort to describe and analyze the native modes of historical consciousness as exemplified in their own historical traditions. These native historical traditions can be used to study how and why non-Western peoples construct their own narratives concerning the past, rather than merely fitting their historical traditions and modes of consciousness into our own Western mode of chronicle history.

Fogelson (1974, 1989) coined the term “ethno-ethnohistory” to contrast this approach to more traditional ethnohistory. The latter enterprise has mostly been concerned with using colonial-era documents or documents produced by non-natives to write the history of the non-Western groups according to positivist history in the Western tradition (Carmack 1972; Cline 1972; Krech 1991). While this is a worthwhile goal, some have lamented that it has dominated the field to the exclusion of another kind of ethnohistory, what Fogelson was attempting to draw attention to with his term ethno-ethnohistory: an understanding of history from the native point of view. Schieffelin and Gewertz (1985:3) agree, adding that in addition to writing the history of non-Western peoples where before there was none, we “must fundamentally take into account the people’s own sense of how events are constituted, and their ways of culturally constructing the past.”

This work within ethnohistory has built upon a recognition in anthropology more generally of the difficulty of maintaining some of the old dichotomies between myth and history and “hot” and “cold” societies. Myth and history have traditionally been viewed as antithetical modes of historical consciousness. Under this view, myth was perceived to be untrue or only generalized stories that serve to reproduce the social structure of the cultures in which they are told. History, in contrast, was viewed as true in the sense that
it told of real past events (Hill 1988b:5; Turner 1988b:236). This distinction is at the
heart of Lévi-Strauss’s famous delineation of a continuum at the endpoints of which are
“hot” and “cold” societies: societies that either are historically minded and record past
events or make historical events subservient to the reproduction of the culture,
respectively (Lévi-Strauss 1963:234).

As the recent works of many scholars (Dillon and Abercrombie 1988; Hill and
Wright 1988; Parmentier 1987; Sahlins 1985; Turner 1988a) have demonstrated,
however, these dichotomies are misleading. Gossen (1977:250) has written that both
“myth and history are bundles of meaningful experience about the past … which are
conditioned by utility for and relevance to the present, as it is experienced by a particular
cultural tradition.” In the same vein, Gillespie (1989:xxxviii) points out that both are
“endpoints of the same processes,” and that they serve the same function in society, to
give (sometimes divine) justification for events and as exemplars or ideal types of action.
Gillespie also states that the Aztecs made no distinction between history and myth
(1989:xxxviii). Narratives pertaining to cosmological themes or “mythic” events such as
the creation of the world have also been shown in some societies to be contiguous with
the present or historical era in the sense that they establish the categories and actions that
exist in historical times as well as the possibility for innovation in the real world
(McKinnon 1991; Parmentier 1987; Sahlins 1985).

Relating this work back to the RM, it is necessary to examine the “historical”
narrative contained within the RM on its own basis and without the assumptions of
literalist or positivist history. Krippner-Martinez’s point noted in the previous chapter
that the RM was produced to defend positions of privilege within Tarascan society and
the indications that the narrative itself was produced to legitimize the state’s authority must be accounted for. Whether or not the narrative constitutes history as defined in the traditional or positivist manner is at a certain point irrelevant. The narrative was produced, according to the specific mode of historical consciousness of the Tarascans, to express and legitimate the hierarchical relationships that were a fundamental part of Tarascan society and which the creators and tellers of the narrative had a vested interest in preserving. Therefore the view adopted here is that the narrative—which has traditionally been interpreted as the literal history of the Tarascan empire—constitutes an indigenous explanation of cosmological and political hierarchy that is created through and sanctified by the medium of a historical narrative.

As outlined above, notions of ethnicity have also played an important role in many interpretations of the RM. However, these interpretations, in addition to relying on very little evidence, are also based upon overly simplistic and somewhat outdated conceptions of ethnicity. These notions have been called “primordialist,” in that there is a belief that ethnic groups form cohesive groups because of some long held traditions (e.g., language) and/or heritable characteristics such as physical traits. This view of ethnicity has a long history in western scholarship and the layman’s vocabulary (Sollors 1996).

Nearly at the same time that some anthropologists were reformulating their views of indigenous modes of historical consciousness, others were rethinking the ways that ethnicity had traditionally been defined and studied. Since the pioneering work of Barth in 1969, it has been increasingly recognized that “ethnicity” can be expressed in many different ways, on many levels, and most importantly that ethnic identification is not immutable but subject to active manipulation (Barth 1969; Cohen 1994; DeCorse 1989;
Osborn 1989). Frequently the goal or cause of ethnic affiliation or identification is access to resources, and therefore ethnicity is often enacted in competitive arenas in which scarce resources are at stake (Barth 1969; Sollors 1996). Ethnicity is a way to claim membership and therefore any rights and resources a group may hold, as well as a method of expressing group strength and solidarity, reinforcing existing and potential claims for resources. This has been called an “instrumentalist” approach to ethnicity (Sollors 1996). In this way, group names come to be identified not only with the specific or actual people who identify themselves as members, but any of the traits or characteristic ways of acting of those groups, and lastly the rights and privileges the groups hold.

Furthermore, there is in Zuidema’s (1973) work on native conceptions of ethnicity in Peru a valuable lesson for the case of the Tarascan empire. In Peru, hierarchy is the dominant organizing principal, and notions of ethnicity were incorporated into hierarchical arrangements. Thus ethnic or group identification become a way, but not the only way, to express and explain hierarchical relationships. In some cases, the specific ethnic group that was used in such expressions was unimportant, and one group could be substituted for another, as long as they were in hierarchically similar positions. In the Tarascan empire, a highly organized and hierarchical state, we might also expect that ethnic, or some group identities, were similarly used to express these same types of hierarchical relationships.

Given these two concerns—first understanding the purpose of the telling of the narrative and the hierarchical relationships that it expresses, and second, the perspective of group or “ethnic” difference from the point of view of the Tarascan elites themselves—
a method must be utilized that has as one of its major advantages the analysis of
documents to achieve an understanding of the emic logic and categories employed in the
narrative. Various structuralist methods have been employed to analyze narratives much
like the RM, and have yielded important results concerning how peoples in different
world areas understood and actively constructed political legitimacy and group difference
(Gillespie 1989, Heusch 1982, Urton 1990). Therefore I have chosen to use a
structuralist method devised by Turner (1977, 1985) in this analysis of the “official
history” of the Tarascan empire that comprises the second part of the RM.
CHAPTER 4
TARASCAN KINGS AS STRANGER-KINGS

The Stranger-King, as outlined by Sahlins (1985), is a theme, or rather, a sequence of themes found in many systems of archaic kingship around the globe. Sahlins.

Sahlins’ chapter builds upon the previous work of other scholars (among others, Sahlins [1985] cites Dumézil [1949] for Indo-European systems; Heusch [1982] for concepts of kingship in Africa; Frazer [1905, 1911-15] in various parts of the world; Hocart [1969, 1970] in Fiji; also Gillespie [1989] for Aztec histories; and Urton [1990] for Inka histories), and therefore he did not invent nor was he the first to recognize the similarities among histories and political rituals in these archaic systems of kingship. Through the adoption of a structuralist perspective, Sahlins demonstrates that what is at work in these similarities is a general and processual structuralist theory of power and sovereignty as created out of a synthesis of opposed categories. A general outline of these stories is presented here, along with a brief discussion of the similarities present in the historical narrative contained within the RM. These similarities belie the view that this narrative is an accurate record of unique historical events. Furthermore, Sahlins’ work demonstrates the utility of a structuralist perspective for analyzing this narrative.

Stranger-King in Other World Areas

The first element of the Stranger King storyline is that the king is an outsider and is in some fundamental way different from the people he will come to rule. As Sahlins (1985:78) explains, “[b]y his own nature outside the homebred culture of the society, the king appears within it as a force of nature.” Kings are commonly said to have come from
above or beyond society, or their difference is explained as derived from the fact that they are of a “distinct [foreign] ethnic stock” (Sahlins 1985:78). These commonalities might be explained as “indigenous” conceptions or formulations of power. Because the king is set apart from and above the rest of society, this difference must be explained by way of his origins precisely because this difference is being expressed through the medium of narratives about the past (following Sahlins 1985:78).

Following his arrival in a locality, the stranger gains access to power through a native woman (Sahlins 1985:82). Commonly the woman is the daughter of the ruling chief of the native or autochthonous people, who represent the land, agricultural fertility, and economic prosperity. The autochthonous people also represent gravitas, the “venerable, staid, judicious, priestly, peaceful, and productive dispositions of an established people (Sahlins 1985:90).” The stranger wins this woman in marriage through some “miraculous exploit involving feats of strength, ruse, rape, athletic prowess, and/or the murder of his predecessor” (Sahlins 1985:82; this theme of gaining legitimacy through a marriage is characteristic of Indo-European narratives). By his actions the stranger represents celeritas, the “youthful, active, disorderly, magical, and creative violence,” the complement of gravitas, that is powerful enough to reconstitute society through its disruptiveness (Sahlins 1985:90).

Gender symbolism is also an important part of this interaction. The stranger is always male and his strength, skill, and marauding nature are all masculine traits. On the other hand, the autochthonous woman represents the feminine fecundity of the earth and the native people, as well as the legitimate authority of the native people that they possess by inhabiting the land first. Through the marriage, the feminine qualities of the
autochthonous woman encompass and “culturize” the virile masculine power of the stranger (Sahlins 1985:90). The stranger thereby gains a quality of legitimate authority from the native princess and has also been domesticated by the woman in that he is no longer barbarous and unruly. He therefore is no longer what he once was; he has been transformed into a legitimate king through the synthesis of two prior categories, with all of the associations and cultural prescriptions that this status carries.

Transformed thus from a stranger to a king of the native people, the Stranger-King must now rule in the culturally prescribed manner. In Polynesia, the king “just sits … i.e., in the house as a woman” (Sahlins 1985:91). He has come to represent the gravitas originally embodied by the autochthonous people, in contrast to the celeritas that he previously embodied. Sahlins (1985:90) explains that the “same creative violence that institutes society would be dangerously unfit to constitute it,” and therefore we see in the end the victory of gravitas and the transformation of the king that the initial triumph of celeritas had set in motion.

There is an alternate permutation of the synthesis of the two opposed categories. Rather than the king gaining power through a marriage to a native princess, the king can also be conceptualized as the offspring of such a union. In this way the king is the “biologically” produced synthesis of the opposed but complementary qualities of masculinity and femininity, celeritas and gravitas, etc. This is the case in Polynesia, in which the king is viewed as the nephew, the son of a sister, of the autochthonous people. The installation ceremonies in Polynesia imitate the “historical” events of the Indo-European narratives. In the common Fijian installation ceremony when the king-to-be enters the village from outside and drinks kava, which is not poisonous but leads to the
metaphorical death of the “terrible outsider,” who is then reborn as a divine king of the indigenous people (Sahlins 1985:95-97).

Because the king no longer explicitly embodies the roving and marauding traits he once did, this category must be represented elsewhere in the structure of the system kingship. Different solutions to this logical problem—commonly some conception of cyclical dynastic histories or the alternation of kings said to behave according to the prescribed notions of kingly behavior—are discussed in Dumézil (1949), Gillespie (1989), and Heusch (1972). The king’s previous warrior functions are transferred to a younger heir who is not bound by the customs of kingly conduct, or rather, the young heir is bound by cultural prescriptions to embody the *CELERITAS* that the king has given up (Sahlins 1985:91). Another related solution is to divide the two sides of sovereign behavior between senior and junior lines of the chiefly or royal family (Sahlins 1985:91). Either way, this transference often takes place as soon as possible following the king’s accession to power (Sahlins 1985:91).

The marriage and/or transformation of the “stranger” into a “king” creates a union of the two opposed categories that are contrastive, yet necessary, to produce a superior synthesis. The duality of *CELERITAS* and *GRAVITAS* is transcended by the synthesis that the king represents, and therefore the king possesses both the power to create and recreate society as well as the ability to maintain that society. In the gender symbolism we see that a productive union of male and female has been formed, and it is this union of genders that is necessary for procreation and social reproduction.

It is worthwhile to point out that in the case of ancient Roman historical narratives, non-complementary dualism embodied by the brothers Romulus and Remus fails to
establish a stable political system. By non-complementary I mean a dualism of two
elements that are too similar as opposed to a union of opposed yet complementary
elements. It is only after the murder of Remus by Romulus that a synthesis of the
complementary Roman and Sabine people is created:

The Romans adopt the armor, i.e., the military techniques, of the indigenous
Sabines; the Sabines take over the Roman names for months, i.e., the
ceremonial/agricultural calendar, of the invading warriors. But above all, the
Romans now gain the means of their own reproduction in the Sabine women and
their dowries, and all live happily ever after in the Eternal City. (Sahlins 1985:84)

Here we see that the important point is that a synthesis of the two formerly opposed
categories is created. The original synthesis fails because the two elements, the Roman
brothers, are overly similar and are therefore unproductive because the proper kind of
exchange and transcendence of contrasted categories cannot take place.

The combinations and syntheses at play in these “Stranger-King” stories are about
the creation of sovereignty: “The combination of two terms produces a third, a sovereign
power, itself a dual combination” of *celeritas* and *gravitas*, male and female, autochthon
and foreigner (Sahlins 1985:90). In this way the king is able to rule society because he
can mediate between its various parts, precisely because he himself encapsulates some
quality of these different parts of society. The king is hierarchically superior because he
encompasses the various parts of society and therefore represents a whole or totality
greater than any of the lesser parts (following Dumont’s concept of hierarchy; see below).

Furthermore, this synthesis and the creation of king and empire are but the most
recent instantiations of the development of categories set in motion at the time of the
creation of the world. Following Sahlins (1985) and other analyses of cosmogonies
(McKinnon 1991; Parmentier 1987), such narratives of the creation of the world
introduce and establish general categories or paradigms that are embodied by more
recent, “historical,” even real-life or actual actors. The people and characters involved in these rituals and stories are members of cultural categories, the same categories involved in tales of the creation of the universe.

**Construction of Hierarchy**

This conception of synthesis and the resultant hierarchical superiority is explained by Dumont, an anthropologist. As formulated by Dumont (1980, 1986), hierarchy is defined as the relationship of a whole to the parts that constitute it. A whole consists of its parts yet is more than the sum of its parts; therefore it takes on a hierarchically superior position. This is what Dumont called encompassment, and the fact that the whole encompasses and consists of its disparate elements gives it a greater value than any of the parts. “Hierarchy” in this sense is not concerned with power, coercion, or authority as in the layman’s use of the term but rather a system of the differential valorization of the whole and parts.

In one of his explications of his theory, Dumont (1980:239-240) explains the higher status accorded to males in western society. He traces this hierarchical relationship to the Biblical genesis in which Eve is formed from one of Adam’s ribs. Because Eve was formed from the rib, she was originally part of Adam. Therefore Adam encompasses both himself and Eve, both male and female more generally, and he is thus given a higher value and hierarchical position.

In Dumont’s formulation, the whole or hierarchically superior unit precedes its parts. The story of Adam and Eve is a perfect example of this, in that Adam, as (hu)mankind, precedes the parts that are formed out of him, namely, men and women. In this way Dumont himself (1980:243) contrasted his definition of hierarchy to the dialectical process outlined by the German philosopher Hegel. In Hegel’s view, a whole
could be constructed from a conjunction of parts. The whole, or synthesis, does not preexist but is actively created out of the prior thesis and antithesis.

This is an important point, as will be seen throughout the analysis. In the course of the RM, characters and groups change, and wholes are created as the outcomes of the events of the narrative. Just as in the Stranger-King narratives or systems of rulership, in the RM a novel third term or whole is created that takes on a hierarchically higher value precisely because it is a whole that consists of the various and disparate parts of society. This condition does not exist at the beginning of the narrative, which speaks of the separation of the Chichimecs and Islanders and disunity of the various polities.

Outside of this disagreement over the preexistence or construction of the whole, however, the both Dumont’s and Hegel’s conceptions of hierarchy are quite similar. They both propose that the whole or synthesis takes on the higher value because it is a combination of the parts, existing on a higher level than those parts.

**Tarascan Stranger-Kings**

The similarities of the basic Stranger-king theme to the sequence of events described in the RM will be briefly summarized here. The Chichimecs, a group of barbarous, nomadic, hunter-gatherers arrived in the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin from the mountainous north. They therefore originate from outside or beyond the area that they come to rule over. Following a few generations, the younger of two Chichimec brothers marries the daughter of an indigenous fisherman, who represents the productivity of the lake area and the autochthonous people of the lake in contrast to the invading Chichimecs. It is this union that produces the culture hero Tariacuri, himself a synthesis of the outsiders and original inhabitants of the land, and, it is foretold, the future king. In
this way Taríacuri is a synthesis of both the Chichimec, hunting, barbarous peoples and the autochthonous, fishing, and agricultural peoples of the lake basin.

While Taríacuri is still a youth, his father and uncle, both Chichimecs (and therefore a non-complementary duality akin to Romulus and Remus), are murdered. Following their deaths, and with the occasional help of his Chichimec cousins, Taríacuri commits various acts of aggression against the native peoples. Eventually, however, he wins the daughters of a native priest of the primary feminine/earth goddess by shooting a hummingbird, thereby displaying his skill as a hunter and warrior. In addition to being the “biological” synthesis of the two opposed categories he also becomes the son-in-law of the autochthonous lake people. By the inclusion of the priest of the preeminent female fertility deity as Taríacuri’s father-in-law, it is now clear that Taríacuri is a synthesis of the opposed but complementary categories of violent, barbarous, and hunting Chichimecs and the legitimate, feminine, productive lake people. The historical narrative of the RM therefore includes the permutations of both the Polynesian and Indo-European systems of kingship, and in this way is similar to Gillespie’s (1989) findings concerning Aztec histories.

Immediately following this marriage Taríacuri settles in his capital city and no longer goes on forays or commits aggressive acts against the lake people. Upon his return to his capital he begins asking about his long lost “nephews,” the orphaned sons of his cousins. These nephews take on the roving and marauding characteristics previously embodied by Taríacuri and his cousins, their fathers. Together with Taríacuri’s younger son by one of the priest’s daughters, and under Taríacuri’s guidance, these nephews go on to establish the empire.
As the analyses of not only the Stranger-King narratives but also other cosmogonic narratives mentioned above point out, the categories of people that are the subjects of “historical” narratives and events are established by the creation of the cosmos. Therefore we might expect that the “historical” narrative concerning the creation of the Tarascan Empire was indeed the final stage of a history that began with the creation of the universe. This is supported by the original order and subject of the first two sections of the RM as well as a statement at the beginning of the historical section in which it is specifically stated that it is the god Curicaueri who arrives at Zacapu (RM 1956:14, 1970:103). This gives the impression that originally a chronicle of the actions of the gods led up to and connected with the story of the creation of the Tarascan Empire. If this was indeed the case it is reasonable to expect, that the categories established in the creation of the universe were the same categories involved in the creation of the Tarascan royal dynasty and the Tarascan empire. Or, working from the reverse direction due to the lack of a cosmogonic narrative but the presence of an historical one in the RM, the characters involved in the history of the RM should represent instantiations of fundamental and cosmic categories.

Conclusion

Due to the similarities to the general sequence noted in many areas of the world and the role of such stories in creating hierarchy, it is logical to suppose that the “official history” of the Tarascans contained within the RM is primarily concerned with explaining the nature of hierarchy and authority in Tarascan society as well. The narrative in the RM is not identical to any of these other Stranger-King stories, however, and the similarities noted in this chapter to the “Stranger-King” outline only serves to point out a generic meaning of the narrative. In order to understand the specific way in which the
Tarascan elites legitimated their authority and the nature of the categories and people involved, a more detailed and rigorous analysis of the RM itself is necessary. The analyses of Sahlins and others have demonstrated the utility of a structuralist perspective for understanding the meaning of cosmogonic and even narratives that seem “historical.” Sahlins offers a general guide of how such an analysis can proceed; however, for a more explicit method for analyzing narratives, I use Turner’s (1977, 1985) structuralist method of narrative analysis. Both Sahlins’ general outline and Turner’s more specific method are discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
THE SYNTAGMATIC STRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE

The analytical method used here is one inspired by both Sahlins’ work outlined above in the analysis of the changes and syntheses of the elemental categories at play in the Stranger-King scenario, as well as Turner’s structuralist method of narrative analysis. Sahlins points out the need for a dynamic theory of structure as well the creation of a synthesis of elementary forms in the creation of hierarchy at play in the Stranger-King theme. Turner’s method is outlined in two articles (1977, 1985), the first of which includes a critique of earlier methods of structuralist narrative analysis (most prominently that of Lévi-Strauss) while the second article clarifies and expands upon the earlier article and uses the method to analyze the Kayapó myth of the origin of cooking fire. The method used here draws from Turner’s insights into the contextual juxtaposition of contrast and contiguity within what he calls episodes as well as the operations that drive the action and links episodes tone another. By incorporating the various changes within and then between episodes, the structure is then revealed through the course of the narrative.

Processual Structure and Elementary Categories

Sahlins (1985:103) uses the example of the Stranger-King stories to demonstrate an important theoretical insight. In the Stranger-King stories, the stranger is transformed from a terrible stranger to a divine king. Therefore, at different points in the sequence, the same person has different attributes. These changes are structured, however, to the effect that they are the logical results of certain underlying principles. Sahlins’s main
point is that only by taking into account these changes or transformations that occur in different contexts is the total structure revealed. In this way structure should be conceptualized as taking place in and through time: “in its global and most powerful representation, structure is processual” (Sahlins 1985:77).

Therefore Sahlins (1985:77, 103) contrasts this view of structure with the conception of structure developed by Saussure, which was later adopted by Lévi-Strauss. In the Saussurean definition of structure, the meaning of a word is derived from the fact that it is contrasted with other words on two axes, the syntagmatic and associative axes (Saussure 1959:121). The syntagmatic axis assigns meaning based on the contiguity that exists among and between words in a sentence or intelligible speech act (Saussure 1959:121). The associative axis, more commonly referred to today as the paradigmatic axis, involves the assigning of meaning to words based on the similarities and differences words share with other words (Saussure 1959:121-122). Words from various classes are then chosen from memory according to the associations that create their meaning (Saussure 1959:121). Saussure referred to the simultaneous co-existence of rules governing the selection of words and their placement one following another as synchrony, or the synchronic aspect of language (Saussure 1959:98). However, Sahlins (1985:103) points out that in Fijian society, the synchronic relationships of “men:women::culture:nature::chiefs:people” are true only from a certain perspective or at a particular moment. They are misleading and falsifiable when analyzed from a different perspective. Only by realizing that such relationships do change over time and in different contexts can the “logic of the whole,” the generative rules that motivate all the
concrete and different instantiations, the static Saussurean contrasts, be revealed (Sahlins 1985:103).

Through the course of his analysis of the Stranger-King, Sahlins states that the legitimacy of the king is the result of the synthesis of categories that the king represents. Therefore another focus of my analysis of the RM is how categories of people in particular are created and then related to one another, and which categories combine to produce the legitimate authority of kingship.

**Syntagmatic Analysis of Narrative**

Similar to Sahlins, Turner adopts a definition of structure that is dynamic and processual. Specifically, Turner draws from Piaget’s definition of structure in which structure is self-producing or self-constructing. Piaget also emphasized the notion that structure is constructive activity (Turner 1977:126). In concordance with this definition of structure as processual, Turner formulates a method of narrative analysis that incorporates the syntax of narratives and thus the production of structure through the course of the narrative.

In Turner’s method, the story itself is the source of important contrast and distinctions. Drawing from the recognition of the Prague school of structural linguists (Jakobson being the most notable) that contrast can only be recognized in the context of continuity, or only “becomes structurally significant in correlation with continuity” (Turner 1977:115), Turner recognized that in narrative the context allows for meaningful contrast, or changes, to be recognized. Therefore all binary oppositions are bi-dimensional, in the sense that they involve contrast on one dimension and continuity on another dimension. The syntax of a narrative is therefore integral because it is only through the course of the narrative, the syntax, that continuity can be expressed. Syntax
serves to separate out and concretize, in specific contexts, the paradigmatic associations of events, characters, etc. through their juxtaposition.

Building upon the necessity of syntax and the nature of binary opposition, Turner defined a basic unit of narrative, what he calls an episode, a sequence of actions or events in which something changes, or a contrast appears, while at the same time something has remained the same. For example, in the myth that Turner (1985:100) analyzes, a move from up to down is juxtaposed against the absence of movement in horizontal space in one episode.

This method is therefore fundamentally different from the method of the analysis of myth popularized by Lévi-Strauss (1963). As Turner (1977) points out, Lévi-Strauss misapplied the fundamental insight of the Prague School linguists and did not incorporate the bi-dimensional nature of binary oppositions. Rather, Lévi-Strauss, through his disregard of the syntax of narratives that made any incorporation of meaning based on contextual juxtapositions impossible, was forced to draw elements, actions, and themes that he believed contrasted with one another based on some inherent meaning from different parts of the story, or even parts of different stories (Turner 1977:115).

Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss disregarded the syntagmatic aspect of narrative due to an erroneous identification of syntax with what Saussure called the diachronic aspect of language, the changes that take place in a language over time, which Saussure stated has no bearing on the production of meaning (Turner 1977:119-120).

By incorporating the syntagmatic aspect of narrative, therefore, Turner has formulated a more properly structuralist method for the analysis of narrative. Binary oppositions in Turner’s method are not drawn from various parts of the narrative at the
discretion of the analyst, but are recognized as created by the narrative itself. The syntagmatic aspect of narrative not only preserves continuity and creates contrast within episodes but also links episodes to each other. Episodes are linked to one another using what Turner calls operations. Operations are “constituents of narrative structure [that] are embodied in actions or movements that transform structurally significant aspects of the relationships among the actors and objects involved in the action” (Turner 1985:102). Different kinds of operations are employed to move the action from one episode to another, changing or preserving certain conditions or characteristics. Only a two of the operations outlined by Turner (1985), those relevant to the present analysis, are mentioned here: reversals and pivoting.

Reversals link the action of episodes or groups of episodes by reversing, or repeating in an inverse manner, the action of the preceding episode or group of episodes. They do not achieve a return to the original state, however, because in addition to the actions of the previous episode(s), an initial condition of the episode must also be reversed as the final outcome of the episode(s) that reverses its predecessors. In Turner’s analysis of a Kayapó myth (1985:68-69), a reversal is said to occur when one character manages to reverse his action by returning home from a hunting expedition that took him into the forest with his brother-in-law. However, this character leaves his brother-in-law in the forest and so the two characters have gone from unified in space to separated in space.

Pivoting is also an important operation in the RM, and it can be conceptualized as a sort of double reversal. In pivoting, two characters or elements that up until that point are contrasted to one another switch roles or places, becoming exactly what was previously
antithetical to their very nature. In the same Kayapó myth, Turner (1985:83) shows that the brother-in-law pivots, at the same time as horizontal space, when he shoots a surrogate jaguar mother through the nipples. The jaguar mother repeatedly tries to hunt and kill the boy as a hunter would. By killing the jaguar mother, the boy becomes the hunter and the jaguar becomes the (now dead) prey, and so the two characters switch places. Furthermore, when he kills the jaguar, the character has successfully hunted an animal and even more specifically repudiated his dependence on this surrogate mother by shooting her in the nipples, symbols of the dependence of children on their mothers for food. The boy therefore becomes a man. Just as he pivots by transforming himself from a youth into a man, horizontal space also pivots for him; because he is now a hunter, the forest, which was previously dangerous space to him, has become his proper domain as a hunter.

The episodes and the operations that link them through the syntagmatic aspect of the narrative also create larger paradigms of episodes through the association of equivalence or reversal of actions. These paradigmatic sets of episodes are then linked to other paradigmatic sets of similarly linked episodes through the syntax of the narrative and exist at a higher conceptual level because they encompass the individual episodes and operations. In this way the syntax of a narrative can create larger and larger paradigms that encompass individual episodes and smaller paradigmatic units that in turn are linked to each other through syntax. This interdependency between paradigm and syntax is what Turner calls their “relativization” (Turner 1977:131). According to the Dumontian (and Hegelian) formulation of hierarchy outlined above, the higher-level paradigm encompasses the episodes and transformations and therefore takes on a
hierarchically superior value. Narratives thus construct hierarchy through the interaction of both syntax and paradigm, and this creation of hierarchy is one of the fundamental attributes of narrative (Turner 1977:131, 162). At the same time the narrative creates hierarchically greater units of episodes and operations, it may also create hierarchically superior paradigms or categories, i.e., characters or groups of people according to the same general theory of hierarchy. This is the case with the RM, as will be evident in the following analysis.

In the analysis of the RM presented here, I do not follow Turner’s methods exactly. The juxtapositions within episodes will be noted as establishing certain contrasts and creating paradigms. The level of rigor in Turner’s definition and use of episodes is unnecessary for the goals of this analysis, which are to discuss the nature of the categories within the RM and to reveal the basic structural principles that serve as the basis for the various episodes and transformations within the narrative. While the contextual juxtapositions have remained the basis for delimiting episodes, a special concern for establishing paradigmatic linkages between episodes has also influenced my delineation of episodes in the RM. While my episodes at times approximate the separate chapters of the RM which are given their own titles, the definition of an episode is not related to this division of the document.

The following chapter presents the analysis of the “official state history” as it is presented in the second part of the RM.
CHAPTER 6
THE SYNTAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE RELACIÓN DE MICHOCÁN

The episodes of the second part of the RM, the part that purportedly contains the “official state history” of the Tarascan empire, will be presented throughout the analysis, in order, with their significance explained following the episode or a group of episodes that are related and help to illustrate the significance of the others. The episodes are summarized by me to provide the essential actions and settings that are necessary to demonstrate paradigmatic associations among them, but other details are omitted. The episodes are numbered, italicized, and “End of Episode” marks the next paragraph as my own analysis. The division of the chapter into sections marked by descriptive subheadings does not reflect any results of the analysis, but is done merely to separate out what is a lengthy narrative and analysis.

Arrival of the Chichimecs

**Episode 1.** At the beginning of the narrative, Hireticátame is said to have arrived at the mountain named Zacapu Tacanendan with his god Curicaueri (see Appendix for associations of this deity). Recognizing the power of Curicaueri, the lord of Naranjan, a nearby town (see Figure 6-1), proposes the marriage of his daughter to Hireticátame. Hireticátame, the chichimec chief accepts the proposal, and explains to his in-laws that they are not to take the deer that he shoots because he offers the animals to the gods. The skins are particularly taboo because they are used to make blankets for the god Curicaueri. Hireticátame and his wife live on the mountain, and after some time passes Hireticátame’s wife bears a son named Sicuirancha. Hireticátame shoots but only
wounds a deer near a place named Querequaro. Soon night falls, and he marks the spot where he must leave off the chase. The next morning he follows the deer tracks to Querequaro where the deer died, only to find the Naranjans butchering the animal and cutting the skin to pieces. Hireticátame chides his in-laws, who shove him to the ground. Hireticátame is enraged and shoots one of his in-laws with an arrow, killing him. He runs home, tells his wife what has transpired, and they set out for Zichaxuquero, carrying their son Sicuirancha and the god Curicaueri. At Querequaro, however, they stop and
the wife asks if she can go and bring a god in her house named Uatzoriquare (see Appendix for associations of this deity). She does this, and eventually they all settle in Zichaxuquero, a town further south where they build a house and temples. End of Episode.

In this first episode the movements of Hireticátame and his wife create a contrast between up and down. Prior to Hireticátame’s quarrel within his in-laws, he and his wife live on the mountain Zacapu Tacanendan. Following their flight to Zichaxuquero, they live in a house and build temples. While they have remained in the north and outside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin, they have moved from up on the mountain, to down, in a house in a proper town complete with temples. The mention of Querequaro twice is significant; it could be said to serve as a boundary between the two groups involved. As the place where the deer dies and location of the ensuing violence, it separates the Chichimecs and the Naranjans. It is also a point of no return; this is the place where Hireticátame’s wife stops and goes back to fetch her god. Furthermore, the hunting associations of Hireticátame are made clear in this first episode; Hireticátame explains that he and his people are frequently out in the mountains hunting and gathering wood.

**Episode 2.** Hireticátame and the Chichimecs live in Zichaxuquero. Not long after Hireticátame’s son Sicuirancha becomes a man, the Naranjans come to kill Hireticátame at Zichaxuquero. When they arrive, only Hireticátame’s wife is at the house, and the Naranjans tell her of their plans. When Hireticátame comes home, she tells him what they had said to her, and Hireticátame prepares himself, making arrows. When the Naranjans come back Hireticátame defends himself valiantly, but eventually he runs out of arrows and is overcome and beaten to death. The Naranjans set his house on fire and
carry off the god Curicaueri. When Sicuirancha, Hireticátame’s son, returns from
hunting on the mountain, he finds his mother weeping and Curicaueri gone. He retrieves
his god Curicaueri from the Naranjans, who Curicaueri has inflicted with a sickness.
Sicuirancha settles at Uayameo, which is on the northern banks of Lake Pátzcuaro, with
his god Curicaueri and all his people. There he builds a temple and priests houses, and
orders that wood be brought for the temple fires. End of Episode.

The end result of this episode is the movement of the Chichimecs, led by
Sicuirancha, to Uayameo. Therefore the Chichimecs have moved from a position outside
the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin to a position inside that basin. This movement creates an
opposition between outside and inside. Furthermore, this episode functions through a
reversal of the action of the previous one (see figure 6-2). Rather than Hireticátame

Figure 6-2. Episodes 1 and 2. The horizontal line indicates a higher-level paradigm that
is created based on the relationship between the two episodes, in this case a
reversal of action.

killing a brother-in-law, it is he who is killed by the Naranjans. The violence in this
episode occurs in Hireticátame’s house as opposed to the open field where the deer dies.
The inversion in geographical terms is the most important, however. The Chichimecs
start out as a northern people, located outside the Pátzcuaro Basin at the beginning of the previous episode. The first quarrel with the Naranjans provides the impetus for the move to Zichaxuquero, from up to down. In this episode, however, Zichaxuquero serves as the starting point, and by the end of the chapter we see that it has functioned merely as a halfway point between Zacapu and a position inside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. Notice how all these transformations can be categorized as going from nature, or wild, outside space, to inside, cultured space. At the same time they move from out to in, they remain down (a move the first episode accomplished) and to the north.

**Episode 3.** Following Sicuirancha’s death in Uayameo, he is succeeded by his son Pauácume. Pauácume in turn is succeeded by his son Uapéani, who is succeed by his son Curátame. Curátame dies and leaves two sons, Uapéani and Pauácume, as the leaders of the Chichimecs (see Figure 6-3 for a genealogy of the royal dynasty). The succession of these leaders is given a second time in which the order is somewhat different: Sicuirancha followed by Curátame, then Pauácume, then Uapéani, and then the two brothers named Uapéani and Pauácume are left as the leaders of the Chichimecs. At the time that these two brothers were leaders of the Chichimecs, the goddess Xarátanga (see Appendix for associations of this deity), has her temples in Tzintzuntzan. At the beginning of the episode, the Chichimecs are engaged in a reciprocal relationship with the people of Tzintzuntzan. The priests of Xarátanga take firewood to Uayameo for Curicaueri’s temples and vice versa. One day Xarátanga’s priests drink too much and start wearing the adornments of the goddess, who is angered and causes the maguey
Figure 6-3. The Genealogy of the Royal Dynasty, as told in the narrative. Elder sibling are placed to the left of younger siblings. Also, the second version of the leaders who succeeded Sicuirancha that is told in the narrative connects to the main genealogy by the dashed lines. This genealogy is different from the illustration of the royal “family tree” contained within the RM, in which kin relations are difficult to interpret.

wine they are drinking to make them sick. After vomiting and recovering somewhat from their illness, the priests want to eat something to help them cure their hangover. They try to catch some fish, but Xaratanga hides the fish in the lake from them. All that they could find was a large snake. They cook and eat the snake, and after the sun sets they begin turning into snakes. By morning they have completely turned into snakes and swim toward Uayameo, where they shout at the Chichimecs. The Chichimecs flee to the top of the mountain called Tariacaherio in the city of Tzintzuntzan. The snake-people then swim ashore and bury themselves in the ground. End of Episode.

At the beginning of this episode, the Chichimecs and Islanders/priests of Xarátanga are engaged in the exchange of wood for the temples of the deities Curicaueri and
Xarátanga. This is not complementary exchange, however, because it is exchange for the same object or good. The exchange is therefore unproductive, and the two groups are not well differentiated because they exchange the same thing. They therefore lack a degree of differentiation that is needed to create a new synthesis. The priests of Xarátanga then appropriate that goddess’s adornments, identifying themselves with that goddess. In this way there is a lack of the proper differentiation between people and gods. As the result of their actions, they end up burying themselves in the ground, and the Chichimecs go to the top of a mountain. The priests therefore have moved to an extremely down (and inside) position, below and within the earth. The Chichimecs have moved from down back to up, starting in Uayameo and ending atop the mountain called Tariacaherio. At the same time they remain north as well as inside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. Through these actions the Chichimecs have become spatially differentiated from the priests of Xarátanga, becoming differentiated on a vertical axis.

**Episode 4.** *From atop Mount Tariacaherio the Chichimecs disperse, believing the appearance of the snakes to be an omen. One group goes to Corínguaro with the god Urendequeuécara (see Appendix for associations of this god), another to Pechátaro with the god Tiripeme Xungápeti, a third with the god Tiripeme went to Iramuco, and the fourth group went to Pareo carrying Tiripeme Caheri. All of these gods are said to be the 4 brothers of the god Curicaueri. The dispersal leaves Uapéani and Pauácume, with their god Curicaueri, alone atop the mountain. The two brothers carry their god along the edge of the lake until they arrive on a mountain overlooking the island of Xaráquaro. Xarátanga’s priests also flee the area, taking the goddess ultimately to Tariaran or*
Harocutín (while Harocutín is the last place the goddess Xarátanga is taken in this episode, in all contexts after this she is located in Tariaran). End of Episode.

In this episode, the movements of the Chichimec brothers Uapéani and Pauácumé introduces another opposition, the opposition of north and south. At the same time that they have moved from north to south, they have remained up, moving from one mountain to another, and remained within the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. Also, the movements of the goddess Xarátanga preserve some differentiation between her and the Chichimec brothers Uapéani and Pauácumé. If the goddess is moved to Harocutín, this difference exists on a vertical axis: Harocutín is near the island of Xaráquaro and is a lakeside town that is low in elevation, therefore down in contrast to the Chichimecs who are on a mountain overlooking Xaráquaro. Or, if the goddess Xarátanga is moved to Tariaran, a town located south of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin, her position is differentiated from the position of the Chichimecs by her location outside of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin, in contrast to the inside location of the Chichimecs. In this way the original cooperation between the Chichimecs and Islanders that takes place in the north in Episode 3 is reversed and they are juxtaposed against each other overlooking Xaráquaro in the south, if Xarátanga is taken to Harocutín. If Xarátanga is taken outside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin to Tariaran, then the differentiation between the Chichimecs and the Islanders that existed on a vertical axis at the end of Episode 3 is transformed into a differentiation on a horizontal axis as a contrast between outside and inside.

In Episode 3 the priests of Xarátanga appropriate the adornments of that goddess and therefore become “too close” to her. In contrast, in Episode 4, and as a result of this
closeness, both the Chichimecs and the priests of Xarátanga are dispersed from Tzintzuntzan. Therefore the Chichimecs and Islanders become distant from one another.

Episodes 3 and 4 also form a paradigm that is contrasted with Episodes 1 and 2 (see figure 6-4). In the first episode, the deerskin (the outer covering of the deer), destined to cover the god Curicaueri as a blanket (thus also the god’s outer covering), is ruined. The action of the Naranjans has prevented the Chichimecs from fulfilling their obligation to their god, creating distance between them. In Episode 3, however, it is the goddess Xarátanga’s adornments—her outer covering—that is appropriated and worn by her priests. Therefore in contrast to Episode 1, the outer covering serves as the vehicle for the priests to become “too close” to the goddess as opposed to the “too distant” relationship of the Chichimecs to the god Curicaueri created by the ruined blankets. The
movement of the Chichimecs from outside to inside in Episode 2 is replaced by a
movement from north to south within the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin in Episode 4.
Furthermore, in Episode 2 the Chichimecs preserve their down position as they move to
Uayameo, in contrast to Episode 4 in which the Chichimecs preserve their up location as
they move from Mount Tariacaherio to a mountain overlooking the island of Xaráquaro.

**Episode 5.** *The Chichimecs, still led by the brothers Uapéani and Pauácume, come
down from the mountain and meet a fisherman from the island of Xaráquaro.*

Uapéani jumps into the fisherman’s canoe and the Chichimecs and fisherman exchange
and eat foods associated with the other: the fisherman broils some of his fish for the
Chichimecs to taste and then the Chichimecs give the fisherman a taste of a rabbit they
have caught. *The Chichimecs ask if the fisherman has a daughter, and at first the fisher
denies having one. The Chichimecs explain:*  

*We are not asking for the reason you are thinking, for we do not want women for
the future; we ask because Curicaueri will conquer this land, and you for your part
will stand with one foot on the land and one on the water. We likewise shall stand
the same way and we shall become one people.* (RM 1970:116)

The fisherman admits he has a daughter, and the Chichimecs tell him to come back the
next day at noon and to bring his daughter. *The Chichimecs go back up the mountain to
hunt. The following day the fisherman arrives at the bank of the lake with his daughter in
the canoe and waits for the Chichimecs to arrive. They are late coming down from the
mountain, having hunted longer than expected. The Chichimecs take the daughter and
move to Tarimichundiro, which is said to be a barrio (a district) of Pátzcuaro. End of
Episode.*

In this episode the Chichimecs led by Uapéani and Pauácume move from up to
down. At the beginning of the episode they are on they mountain and at the end they
settle at Tarimichundiro, having acquired the fisherman’s daughter. It is important to note that the first time the Chichimecs leave the fisherman, they go back up the mountain and hunt. Only once they have acquired the girl from the island of Xaráquaro do they settle in a town that is down. Furthermore, the exchange that occurs at the beginning of the episode is also complementary and productive, because the items exchanged, fish and rabbit, are different. Therefore this exchange indicates a complementary relationship between the two peoples differentiated by the actions, and is different from the exchange of firewood between the Chichimecs and the priests of Xarátanga at the beginning of Episode 3.

**Episode 6.** The fisherman’s daughter grows up, and Pauácume, the younger of the two Chichimec brothers, marries her. This woman gives birth to a boy named Taríacuri, and it is foretold that he will eventually become king. The lords of the island of Xaráquaro learn of the marriage and birth, and invite the Chichimecs to come to their island and live with them. The Chichimecs agree and arrive on the island, and the Islanders cut the hair of the Chichimecs, giving them a round bare spot on the top of the head. The Chichimecs are also given a string of golden tweezers to wear around their necks, and they are made sacrificers, a religious office, there. The people of Corínguaro, one of the groups who had dispersed following the omen of the priests turning into snakes, intervene, saying that the Islanders have no need for the Chichimecs. After the Corínguaros insist twice, the Islanders oblige and expel the Chichimecs from Xaráquaro, removing their lip-plugs and other insignia. The Chichimecs, slobbering due to the holes in their lips from the lip-plugs and without their wives, return to Tarimichundiro, from where they had come. They do not settle there but instead set out looking for a sacred
place in Pátzcuaro proper that had apparently been foretold to them. They find the location of sacred rocks on a high spot, and there they build their temples. End of episode.

The movement from up to down of the previous episode is reversed in Episode 6 (see Figure 6-5). The Chichimecs return from the island of Xaráquaro and immediately move up and found the temples on an elevated place in Pátzcuaro. Furthermore, the move from down to up takes place at the same time that the Chichimecs lose their wives, including the fisherman’s daughter that had settled with them at Tarimichundiro in Episode 5. Also, the first attempts to make the Chichimec brother Uapéani and Pauácume legitimate nobles—indicated by giving them lip plugs and other insignia of noble status—fails due to the intervention of the Corínguaros.

This intervention is the first instance of a pattern that is established throughout the narrative. The Corínguaros are perpetually intervening, and these interventions terminate whatever relationship exists between the Chichimecs and the Islanders (a name that the peoples of the islands in Lake Pátzcuaro are often collectively referred to as) at the time.
In this way the Corínguaros constitute what Turner (1977:156) calls “precipitators.” Precipitators function to directly cause an event that would not occur if not for their presence within the narrative. In this way the Corínguaros precipitate the expulsion of the Chichimecs from the island of Xaráquaro. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the relationship between the Chichimecs and the people of Xaráquaro, or at least, the termination of the relationship established between these two groups occurs only due to the meddling of the Corínguaros.

**Episode 7.** With the Chichimecs in Pátzcuaro, the Corínguaros fear that the Chichimecs will not forget the troubles the Corínguaros have caused them. The Corínguaros send a messenger to the Chichimecs telling them they want to war with the Chichimecs and to prepare for battle. The Chichimecs agree, and the two parties meet on the battlefield. In the fighting Uapéani and Pauácume are shot and wounded. After some time the fighting ends. End of Episode.

This episode expands upon the role of the Corínguaros as precipitators. Having intervened and split up the Chichimec/Islander union in the previous episode, the Corínguaros once again intervene, driving the action. Uapéani’s and Pauácume’s injuries set up the action of the next episode, in which the Corínguaros once again intervene. This role only becomes apparent in the next episode, however.

**Episode 8.** Following the war with Corínguaro, the Chichimecs return to Tarimichundiro. The wounded Chichimec brothers stay in the Eagle House, a religious building. Some Islanders are there in the Eagle House with the Chichimecs, and the two groups hold a vigil during the night. The Corínguaros know that they have only wounded Uapéani and Pauácume, and so the Corínguaros send a woman to spy on the brothers
and see if they will live. The woman arrives at the Eagle House at midnight and
approaches the two, saying she only wants to put blankets on them. Uapéani realizes
that the woman is from Corínguaro and calls to his brother and then tells the woman to
leave. The disturbance causes Islanders to alert their people and leave, saying that the
Chichimecs are two-faced and some have come from Corínguaro so that they can
ambush them. The Islanders get up and leave, returning to their homes. End of Episode.

At the beginning of the episode the Chichimecs return not to Pátzcuaro but to
Tarimichundiro. Therefore they change position in elevation, moving from up to down.
They also remain in the south and inside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. At the beginning of
the episode, however, the some Islanders are staying in the Eagle House with the
Chichimecs as the Chichimecs recover from the battle. In this way the actions of the
Corínguaros have provided the context for the union of the Chichimecs and Islanders. In
this episode, however the Corínguaros also instigate the departure of the Islanders from
the Eagle House. Thus the Chichimecs are have moved down, south, and inside, and
without the presence of their wives or any Islander companions. Furthermore, in Episode
6 it is the Chichimecs who are forced to leave the island of Xaráquaro after the
Corínguaros intervene. In this episode, however, this situation is reversed, as it is the
Islanders who leave Pátzcuaro after the intervention of the Corínguaros.

**Episode 9.** The Corínguaros, once again fearing that the Chichimecs would not
forget the injuries they had caused them, send a messenger who proposes a plan to the
lord of the Island of Xaráquaro. The Xaráquaros are to send a messenger to the
Chichimecs telling them their wives grieve for them daily and that the Chichimecs should
come back and retrieve their wives. The Islanders play their part, and the Chichimec
brothers Uapéani and Pauácume are about to set out for Xaráquaro when the three elder priests of Pátzcuaro ask where they are going. The brothers explain what the Xaráquaros told them, and the priests tell them to send some runners ahead, because it sounds like a Corínguaro plot. Along the road at Zacapuhacurucu the Corínguaros ambush the runners, thinking the runners are Uapéani and Pauácume. Seeing this, the two brothers turn back. The Corínguaros again request that the Xaráquaros help, and the same plan is repeated. This time, however, the Corínguaros wait for the runners to go by and ambush the brothers. Uapéani is shot then and there, but Pauácume runs back toward Pátzcuaro. The Corínguaros catch up with him and shoot him as he is climbing a mountain called Zacapuhacurucu. Word of the death of the two brothers gets back to the three priests of Pátzcuaro, who take a gold necklace to exchange for the bodies of the brothers. They find the Islanders hitting the two dead lords with oars, and offer the necklace. The Islanders object, saying it was the Corínguaros who killed them. The priests argue, saying that it is enough that the Islanders killed them and the Islanders should take the necklace and hand over the bodies. Eventually the Islanders relent, and the priests take the bodies back to Pátzcuaro where the temples are, cremate them, and bury them. End of Episode.

In this episode the two Chichimec brothers are kept from their wives, and no other Islander characters come to live with them. They once again remain down, south, and inside. It is a Corínguaro plot that keeps them from their wives and eventually results in the deaths of the Chichimec brothers. Pauácume attempts to move from down to up, and thus repeat the move from down to up that occurred in Episode 6 with the founding of the temples in Pátzcuaro, but his movement is prevented by the Corínguaros when they shoot
Pauácume as he tries to climb a mountain called Zacapuhacurucu. Instead, it is only in
death the two brothers do return to high ground, as they are buried at the foot of the
temples of Pátzcuaro proper.

Another point has yet to be stressed, that of the first differentiation within the royal
dynasty, in this case into senior and junior characters (see Figure 6-6). While Uapéani
and Pauácume appear in Episode 3, it is not until Pauácume’s marriage to the fisherman’s
daughter in Episode 6 that it is explained that he is the younger of the two brothers.
Tariacuri, the son of Pauácume and the fisherman’s daughter, is foretold to be the
eventual king. By Pauácume’s marriage to the daughter and the glory predicted for
Tariacuri, the junior line triumphs over the senior line of the royal dynasty.

In other ways, however, the two brothers are not significantly differentiated from
one another, both being Chichimecs in name and deed, acting as one. Even their names
serve to minimize what difference does exist between them, as their names mean the

Figure 6-6. Episodes 5 through 9.
opposite of their given positions as elder and younger brother. Pauácume means “first
born,” while Uapéani is a derivation of “son” according to a note by Tudela (RM
1956:23). Therefore Uapéani refers to someone younger, while Pauácume should refer to
an older sibling. Furthermore the same names appear as earlier members of the royal
dynasty. In the text of the RM, the names of Chichimec leaders that live in Uayameo are
listed twice. The second time gives a different order than the first, but each time
Pauácume precedes Uapéani. Thus the pattern of an older Pauácume and a younger
Uapéani established both by meaning and usage is reversed with the two brothers bearing
this name. This has the effect of leaving the only difference between the two brothers,
the difference created by the explanation that they are elder and younger brother,
somewhat ambiguous or open to question. With their deaths, non-complementary duality
within the royal dynasty, characterized by similarity rather than difference, has failed to
institute a new political order.

This failure, however, sets the stage for a new differentiation within the dynasty,
and this new differentiation is based on a different contrast, one more capable of
transforming the Chichimecs into kings.

**Career of Tariacuri**

**Episode 10.** Tariacuri, the son of Pauácume and the fisherman’s daughter, lives in
Tarimichundiro with his two older cousins, Zetaco and Aramen. The two cousins are
said to be the sons of Uapéani (Zetaco is the elder brother) by another woman, but this
woman is not named. Because it is foretold that Tariacuri will be king, the three elder
priests of Pátzcuaro educate him constantly, lecturing him to take wood to the temples for
the fires that are kept burning there. Tariacuri’s cousins Zetaco and Aramen, in
contrast, continually go about getting drunk and running around with women. They take
Taríacuri along with them, putting him on their shoulders. The three elder priests of Pátzcuaro banish Zetaco and Aramen to Uacanámbaro, saying they are a bad influence on Taríacuri. With his cousins gone, Taríacuri goes out to the mountains, gathering wood and making bonfires at the boundaries of the territories of his enemies. His last bonfire frightens the people of the island of Xaráquaro, and they hide in their houses, unable to go ashore to farm or get wood, and Taríacuri watches them from atop a hill.

End of Episode.

At the beginning of the episode, Taríacuri is contrasted with his cousins. As the son of an Islander woman, Taríacuri is more of an Islander than his cousins (we are not told who the mother of the cousins is). The cousins also go about getting drunk and running around with women, embodying disorganized, wild, and improper movement. They take Taríacuri along with them, but he rides on their shoulders, thus remaining stationary and embodying stability or motionlessness in relation to his cousins. There does exist a certain element of ambiguity in this action, however, because by riding on his cousins’ shoulders, he does move about, and therefore is able to move without moving, embodying both movement and motionlessness at the same time. Following the banishment of his cousins, however, Taríacuri goes about making bonfires on hills and mountains, isolating the Islanders who are afraid to come ashore because of the fires. In this way he demonstrates his mobility, free to move about the mountains, while the Islanders cannot go ashore and are trapped on the island. He thus switches from being contrasted to his cousins in which he embodies stability to being contrasted with the Islanders. When contrasted with the Islanders he is up on a hill and free to move about while the Islanders are trapped and cannot move due to the fires that frighten them.
Therefore with respect to his Chichimec cousins he has the qualities of an Islander, but with respect to the Islanders he has the qualities of a Chichimec.

**Episode 11.** After a few days of being trapped on Xaráquaro, the lord of that island sends a messenger to lord Zurumban to ask him for help against Tariacuri. Zurumban is a native of Xaráquaro, but has been favored by the goddess Xaratanga and became a lord in Tariaran. Zurumban agrees to help, and the next day he sends a messenger to both Corínguaro and Xaráquaro so that an alliance can be formed. The messenger, Naca, is stopped along the way by a lord who invites him to eat something, and Naca tells this lord of the war plans. After Naca leaves the lord goes and warns Tariacuri, who is seated making arrows in Tarimichundiro, of the plot. Tariacuri devises a plan so that Naca can be captured, and calls his cousins Zetaco and Aramen to come visit him. Tariacuri explains the Islander plot and his own plan to capture Naca, and Zetaco and Aramen agree to do whatever he orders. The next day Zetaco and Aramen lay in wait for Naca, pretending to be hunting for a deer. Just as Naca is about to get away, Aramen shoots him in the back, and they take him to Tariacuri. Naca says that only Chichimecs deceive in such a way, and Tariacuri orders that he be taken to the temples and sacrificed. Tariacuri orders Naca to be cooked and cut up, and then he sends the arms of Naca to Corínguaro, Naca’s midsection sent to the Islanders, and his thighs to Zurumban, saying that it is the meat of a slave he caught sleeping with one of his wives. Tariacuri again devises a scheme so that messengers, after Zurumban has eaten the thighs of his own priest, Naca, deliver the news that the meat he has eaten is Naca and not one of Tariacuri’s slaves. Zurumban is enraged at the trick that Tariacuri has played on him. End of Episode.
In the first part of the episode, Tariacuri is said to be seated making arrows, and he is therefore immobile and “down” or low in elevation. Facing an alliance bent on destroying him, Tariacuri recruits his cousins Zetaco and Aramen to capture Naca the priest, while he remains in Tarimichundiro. The two cousins obey Tariacuri and accomplish the task, capturing Naca on a mountain. Furthermore they deceive Naca by pretending to hunt a deer, and Naca remarks at their deception. In the first part of the episode Zetaco and Aramen are up in relation to Tariacuri. Naca’s remark that only Chichimecs deceive in such a way also marks the act of deception as a Chichimec trait, and this becomes important in the second part of the episode. In the second part, Tariacuri tricks Zurumban into cannibalizing his own priest. Thus Tariacuri deceives Zurumban into eating Naca and therefore is equated with his cousins as the deceiving Chichimec. Zetaco and Aramen play no part in this deception, and it is only Tariacuri who is being contrasted with Zurumban. Therefore Episode 11 repeats the same pattern of Episode 10 in which Tariacuri first takes on Islander characteristics in relation to his own Chichimec relatives but once his cousins are out of the picture, he becomes a Chichimec in relation to the Islanders. The only difference is that Zurumban replaces the Islanders of Xaráquaro, and this replacement links Zurumban as an Islander, an identity further strengthened by the fact that Zurumban is said to have been born on the island of Xaráquaro.

**Episode 12.** Angered by Tariacuri’s trick, Zurumban sends a war party to Uacanámbaro to cast out the Chichimecs there (Zetaco and Aramen), saying the land there is his land. The war party knocks down the houses and the granaries, takes out the lip-plugs of Zetaco and Aramen, and dishonors the women. Tariacuri, afraid that the
warriors will come after him next, flees from Tarimichundiro, casting everything he owns into the weeds. He eventually makes his way to a place called Zinzuariquaro and settles at the foot of an oak. Zetaco and Aramen send messengers to look for him, and they find him at the foot of the oak surrounded by women. Tariacuri tells the messengers that Zetaco and Aramen and their people should eat from the god Curicaueri's storehouses. The cousins do this, and it is explained that whoever eats or takes anything from the god's granaries becomes a slave. Zetaco settles on a mountain, and Aramen settles at the foot of a slope, while Tariacuri returns to Pátzcuaro (while Zetaco and Aramen apparently do not become slaves in the strict sense as indicated by the explanation concerning taking from the granaries of the gods, it does at least indicate that they are of low social status). Tariacuri then establishes a market at Pareo, where Aramen frequently meets the wife of Caricaten, the lord of Xaráquaro. Caricaten learns of this and orders Aramen killed, and Aramen is shot in his house, then climbs a mountain and dies. Tariacuri learns of his cousin's death and decides to flee and visit a lord in Condembaro, a town to the southeast of Lake Pátzcuaro. He tells his priests to take some feathers to lord Chanhori of Coringuaro so that he may be granted passage through Coringuaro territory. Chanhori refuses the request saying that Tariacuri can settle in Chanhori's own territory. The priests relay the message to Tariacuri who has already left, and Tariacuri decides to settle where he is, on the slopes of the mountain Hoataropexo. End of Episode.

Throughout the episode Zetaco and Aramen are contrasted with Tariacuri. In contrast to their younger cousin, Zetaco and Aramen settle on mountain slopes and places that are not true cities. They also have their lip plugs, signs of nobility, removed and
become slaves by taking from the god Curicauerí’s granaries. In contrast, however, Taríacuri is first surrounded by women when the messengers find him (in contrast to the women of Zetaco and Aramen’s group, who are dishonored). He also settles in Pátzcuaro, an established city, in contrast to the settlements of Zetaco and Aramen. Taríacuri then institutes a market in Pareo, where Aramen sleeps with the wife of the lord of Xaráquaro. This action leads to Aramen’s death (and by extension Zetaco’s death, because he is never again mentioned), and Taríacuri flees, ending up on a mountain. His cousins now dead, Taríacuri once again takes on Chichimec qualities, moving from down to up, and perhaps also inside to outside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin.

Episode 12 finalizes the actions and changes in status that occurs in Episodes 10 and 11. In these two previous episodes, Taríacuri is first contrasted with his cousins, and he maintains a vertically low, stationary identity in contrast to his cousins. In each of the two episodes Zetaco and Aramen are not involved in the action after a certain point and Taríacuri is contrasted with the Islanders. In this contrast he is vertically up, mobile, and deceptive, the last of which is explicitly said to be an indicator of a quality of being a Chichimec. In Episode 12 this pattern of shifting contrasts involving Taríacuri is repeated. In the beginning he is contrasted with his cousins, who have their markers of social status taken from them and become slaves. At the end, however, the cousins Zetaco and Aramen are not involved in the action (and never will be again) and Taríacuri is contrasted with another category, this time the Corínguaros. Taríacuri settles on a mountain and is thus up in relation to the Corínguaros.

Furthermore, Episodes 10, 11, and 12 can be grouped together to form a larger paradigm. The first two establish a pattern that becomes irreversible with the action of
the third episode. The episodes also document an attempt at internal differentiation within the royal dynasty, with this difference deriving from Taríacuri’s status as more of an Islander in contrast to his cousins. He remains Chichimec in relation to the true Islanders, however, as the events of each episode and the outcome of the last episode confirm. Taríacuri, despite being the most junior of the three, also assumes a role of authority within the royal dynasty, which seems to fulfill in a small way the predictions of greatness that were made when he is first mentioned in Episode 6. The triumph of the junior line represented by Pauácume’s marriage to the daughter of the fisherman from Xaráquaro is thus confirmed for the present by Taríacuri’s ability to command his older cousins.

Furthermore, the unity of the Chichimecs and Islanders achieved for the first time in Episode 5 with the sharing of food and the acquisition of the fisherman’s daughter and repeated in Episodes 6 and 7 is transferred to a smaller scale in Episodes 10 through 12. In these episodes, the royal dynasty itself contains both Chichimec and Islander categories, even if they only are defined as such in relation to one another. This duality within the royal dynasty contrasts with the duality between groups that existed in Episodes 5 through 9.

**Episode 13.** While settled on the mountain Hoataropexo, Taríacuri is approached by messengers of Chanhori, the lord of Corínguaro. The messengers relay that lord’s suggestion that Taríacuri marry a daughter of Chanhori. Taríacuri accepts the proposition, giving the messengers some blankets and shirts. The woman comes and lives with Taríacuri and after a short amount of time becomes pregnant and bears a son named Curátame. She frequently travels back to Corínguaro where she gets drunk in the
One time she does not return, and Tariacuri goes to Corínguaro to fetch her. On the way, Tariacuri catches a deer and gathers some wood and takes it to Corínguaro with him. There he builds a fire with the wood and sacrifices the deer, giving it to the Corínguaros. Chanhori asks why Tariacuri has not brought his wife with him, and Tariacuri replies that his wife has not returned to his house and the only reason for his visit was to make an offering to Urendequaquécará, the god of Corínguaro. Tariacuri also refuses to have a drink, saying that he might attack the Corínguaros because they gave him a poor raiser of children. He departs without taking leave, and Chanhori orders his people to look for Tariacuri’s wife.

The Corínguaros look for Tariacuri’s wife, find her, and bring her to her father, Chanhori, who asks why she leaves her husband. She lies to her father, saying that every day Tariacuri insults her brothers, calling them men who are not valiant and are “women,” and saying he will kill them. Chanhori says that these must be Tariacuri’s words because women do not speak in such a way. He nonetheless sends his daughter back to live with Tariacuri. He also sends some elders to accompany her along the way, and at two places (named Xoropiti and Tarequetzingata) the elders sleep with her. Arriving at Hoataropexo, she goes inside Tariacuri’s house. She tells her husband that she went out to buy a fish. Tariacuri has his aunt cook the fish and a small piece is given to the god Curicauerí as an offering, and Tariacuri says “we do not eat brothel fish” (RM 1970:151). Tariacuri then goes out into the mountains to gather wood. End of Episode.

The behavior of Tariacuri’s wife is obviously outside the bounds of proper behavior for a married woman, and it provokes Tariacuri’s actions. Through the course of the episode, Tariacuri maintains his elevated position, even becoming farther up than
at the beginning of the episode because he is out in the mountains gathering wood at the end. Taríacuri also takes a deer to Corínguaro to offer to the god of that place. This offering is reciprocated poorly by Taríacuri’s wife when she returns with a fish in an attempt to lie about where she has been and a piece of the fish is offered to the god Curicaueri. Taríacuri’s remarks concerning the fish indicate clearly that there is something wrong with this offering.

Furthermore, it is interesting that Taríacuri’s wife brings back a fish, because the fish paradigmatically links Taríacuri’s marriage to the Corínguaro princess back to his father Pauácume’s marriage to his mother, the fisherman’s daughter from Xaráquaro. Prior to that marriage, the Chichimecs eat some of the fish that the fisherman has caught, and they in turn give the fisherman some rabbit that they have hunted. The resulting marriage between the Xaráquaros and Chichimecs is productive, each contributing something of their nature to the union. In the present episode, however, Taríacuri’s wife brings home a fish after Taríacuri has already taken a deer that he has hunted to Corínguaro. Therefore the exchange once again appears complementary and the Corínguaros appear to fill the role of the Islanders. Corínguaro is not on a lake, however, and the fact that the wife contributes a fish seems out of place. As already has been stated however, the fish is rejected by Taríacuri, and his rejection is probably most directly attributable to his wife’s infidelity. Not only does the wife commit adultery, but she also sleeps with her own people, committing “incest” by failing to maintain the proper (sexual) distance from her own kinsmen.

Episode 14. During a religious festival two men from Itziparamuco, named Xoropiti and Tarequetzingata, come to Hoataropexo, claiming to want to perform blood
sacrifice by bleeding their ears. When Tariacuri’s wife learns of the coming of the two men, she dresses herself prettily and greets the visitors. The men are served maguey wine, and they invite Tariacuri to drink with them. Tariacuri declines, and eventually he takes leave of his visitors and goes to the mountains and gathers wood, telling them they may stay and continue to drink. In his absence, his wife continues to pour the maguey wine for the visitors and in time the visitors sleep with her. Tariacuri remains in the mountains all night, and returns the next morning and unloads his cargo of wood at the temples. The visitors had run home to their village of Itziparamuco, and Tariacuri finds his house full of the stench of spilled wine. An aunt tries to dissuade Tariacuri from seeing his wife, saying that she is ill. Tariacuri persists and goes into her room, finding her laying down with a blanket covering her. Tariacuri lifts up the blanket with his bow and sees that she is covered in paint which has rubbed off onto her from the two men (whose bodies were painted), and her sash is in disarray. He comments that his wife is indeed sick, and goes out to the mountains doing nothing but gathering wood, not even stopping to eat. The two men eventually go to Coringuaro and tell the lord of that town, Chanhori, Tariacuri’s father-in-law, that Tariacuri accused them of sleeping with his wife and cut their ears as punishment. They also tell Chanhori that he insults the Coringuaros, just as Tariacuri’s wife told Chanhori. Tariacuri’s wife had told them what to say to her father so that when Chanhori hears the lies a second time, he believes them.  

End of Episode.

This episode builds upon the previous episode as evidenced by Chanhori believing the lies of Tariacuri’s wife, having heard them now a second time from the men from Itziparamuco. The fact that the two men are given the same names as the places that the
priests had stopped and slept with Tariacuri’s wife links this episode to the previous episode, and also confirms that the men from Itziparamuco are equivalent to men from Corínguaro. Therefore Tariacuri’s wife again commits adultery and incest, sleeping with her own people. However, in this episode Tariacuri’s marriage to the Corínguaro princess is linked to the first marriage of Hireticátame to the woman from Naranjan. That marriage was disrupted when the Hireticátame’s in-laws ruined the skin of the deer that Hireticátame had caught. In the present episode, by sleeping with the men from Itziparamuco, Tariacuri’s wife ruins her own skin; Tariacuri finds her the morning after with her sash in disarray and body paint from the visitors all over her body. The marriage to the Naranjan woman and the present marriage to the Corínguaro princess fail on their own accord due to the rule breaking behavior of the in-laws.

Because the fish in Episode 13 that prompts the comparison to the Xaráquaros is rejected, by inference the marriage between Tariacuri and the Corínguaro princess, and the Chichimecs and the Corínguaros in general, is a combination of the wrong categories. Corínguaro is located outside of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. Similarly, the marriage to the Naranjan woman is a marriage between two northern groups living outside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. The fact that Tariacuri’s wife does bring back a fish indicates what the proper combination of categories is. The marriage to the Xaráquaro woman is the proper relationship, because the Chichimecs and Islanders form a productive unity, exchanging hunted food for fish. This marriage does not dissolve due to its own internal contradiction, but only because of the intervention of the Corínguaros.

As might be expected by the previous episodes in which the Corínguaros serve as the precipitators of the narrative, instigating new action in the plot, these two episodes
concerning the marriage of Tariacuri to the Coringuaro princess serve to drive the action and set up the succeeding episodes. This is exactly what happens, and a clue of what is to come is Tariacuri’s intensifying “Chichimecness” throughout the two episodes, represented by his increasingly up or elevated position, gathering wood on the mountain.

**Episode 15.** Tariacuri does nothing but gather wood for the temples due to his grief over his marriage. He turns white and grows thin from not eating anything, spending all his time gathering wood. An aunt worries about him and tricks him into eating something, and then tells Tariacuri to go visit Zurumban:

> Take no thought for that woman [the wife from Coringuaro] because there will be no lack of another to keep you company so that you may be lord. Perhaps the one you are to have is not born yet. There must be a good one who will help you be the lord. Go to Zurumban, lord of Tariaran, you and he shall be lords. (RM 1970:156-157)

Once Tariacuri arrives in Tariaran, Zurumban challenges him to shoot a hummingbird. Tariacuri accepts the challenge, telling Zurumban to fetch the arrow. He successfully shoots the hummingbird, and Zurumban retrieves the arrow and the bird. The bird does not die but flutters in Zurumban’s hands. Zurumban exclaims that Tariacuri is a true Chichimec because his shooting skill is unmatched. He then offers Tariacuri some maguey wine to drink, and Tariacuri accepts. Zurumban paints Tariacuri and then calls for two women, either daughters or wives, to be brought out from his house. He instructs the women to sleep beside Tariacuri that night so that he does not fall off the many crags of that place because he has drank wine. Zurumban goes to his house to sleep, and Tariacuri instructs the three elder priests to move the women to a corner of the room. Tariacuri does not sleep that night, but stays up and plans with the elder priests.

The next morning at dawn Tariacuri blackens himself by having smoke from braziers stick to his body due to his sweat. Zurumban comes and asks the women if
Tariacuri slept with them overnight. They inform him that he did not, and say that he is
crazy and has no sex. Zurumban replies that Tariacuri is indeed a lord. He goes into the
house where Tariacuri is staying, and covers Tariacuri with a fine blanket. After a bath,
Tariacuri says that they should go to where the idols of the gods are. Tariacuri lectures
Zurumban there, saying he should not get drunk as much and can go to war and take
captives. Tariacuri tells Zurumban that if anyone complains about such actions,
Zurumban can tell them it is not he but Tariacuri who is raiding and going to war. In
Tariacuri’s words:

You see, Zurumban, that I am making you a lord if you do this, for you are not a
lord but of lowly caste and a beggar, and now I am making you a lord and you will
perform [these deeds]. (RM 1970:161)

Zurumban promises to do as Tariacuri has instructed, and the two men go to his house
and eat. Zurumban’s daughter has two women brought out with their best sashes,
turquoise necklaces, and blankets. These two women return to Hoataropexo with
Tariacuri, bringing with them bridal apparel and furniture, consisting of mats and
women’s jewelry. Once back in Hoataropexo, Tariacuri goes to gather wood for the
temples and his first wife returns to her home town of Coringuaro. End of Episode.

Tariacuri irrevocably changes from a Chichimec at the beginning at the episode to
an Islander at the end. In this way he takes on the qualities that at first seem antithetical
to his identity as a Chichimec. As analyzed in Episodes 10 through 12, Tariacuri has
already shown hints of certain characteristics such as immobility, but only in contrast to
his Chichimec cousins (see Figure 6-7). In this episode, Tariacuri’s identity is contrasted
to Zurumban, the chosen priest/lord of Xarátanga, and an Islander. Through his
interactions with Zurumban Tariacuri not only takes on the qualities that previously were
embodied by the Islanders, but prior aspects of his identity are given to Zurumban. In
other words, Taríacuri and Zurumban “pivot”—they switch their contrasted actions and associations. Through this pivoting, Taríacuri acquires the legitimacy necessary to institute a Tarascan empire with the royal dynasty at the top.

Figure 6-7. Episodes 10 through 15.

At the beginning of the episode, Taríacuri spends all day and all night gathering woods in the mountains; therefore he is very high. Furthermore, he does not eat and grows so gaunt and weak that he is white. At his aunt’s suggestion, he visits Zurumban who challenges him to shoot a hummingbird. This constitutes the “miraculous exploit” (as explained in the chapter detailing the “Stranger-King,” the stranger wins a native princess through a “miraculous exploit”) that allows him to win the indigenous princesses and autochthonous riches of the Islanders. This feat also causes Zurumban to remark at Taríacuri’s skill in shooting, saying that this makes him a “true Chichimec.”

As soon as Taríacuri shoots the hummingbird, however, he and Zurumban begin to change identities. Taríacuri instructs Zurumban to fetch the arrow, and Zurumban does as instructed. He thus moves, in opposition to Taríacuri, who remains still. This is the same contrast between movement and immobility that separated Taríacuri from his
cousins in Episode 10. Furthermore, Tariacuri moves to a position inside with respect to Zurumban, who moves outside. The morning after Tariacuri shoots the hummingbird he is blackening himself with smoke and Zurumban puts a very fine blanket around him. Tariacuri is thus inside a blanket, a product of women’s labor (RM 1956:182, 208; 1970:18, 36) and Zurumban is outside the blanket. Thus Tariacuri, formerly a Chichimec and thus an outsider, has moved to an inside position, while Zurumban, an Islander and priest of Xaratanga, has become outside in relation to Tariacuri. Also, the fact that Tariacuri is blackening himself with the smoke indicates his transformation: before the visit to Zurumban he is white from not eating but now has turned black from the smoke.

Tariacuri also gains authority over Zurumban following the shooting of the hummingbird. He tells Zurumban to fetch the bird and Zurumban obliges. Later in the episode, Tariacuri lectures Zurumban and tells him to quit drinking so often, and to go on raids for the goddess Xaratanga. Here again we see a reversal in terms of movement and immobility, because the plan would have Zurumban as the roving and marauding character in contrast to Tariacuri. Lastly and most explicitly Tariacuri says he is making Zurumban a lord.

While the analysis presented here has focused on Tariacuri, in every context he is juxtaposed with Zurumban. In this way the pivoting involves Tariacuri and Zurumban as the two switch places. Tariacuri comes to embody qualities that formerly (i.e., Episodes 10 and 11) are attributed to the Islanders. Zurumban, in contrast, embodies the traits that in those same previous episodes are attributed to Tariacuri.

This episode also furthers the collapse of scale that saw the shift in the duality embodied by two separate groups of Chichimecs and Islanders to a royal dynasty
internally differentiated into Chichimec and Islander characters. In Episodes 10 through 12, Tariacuri was an Islander when juxtaposed with his cousins within the royal dynasty, but in relation to the Islanders he is a Chichimec. After the deaths of his two cousins and the events of Episodes 13 through 15, however, Tariacuri is the lone representative of the royal dynasty. Through the actions of Episodes 13 through 15 he demonstrates the ability to be both fully Chichimec and Islander, in contrast to other groups of the Lake Pátzcuaro area. Therefore once again the scale of this duality becomes smaller, shifting in this set of episodes to the scale of one man.

**Episode 16.** When lord Chanhori in Coringuaro learns that Tariacuri has taken another wife, he is outraged. He orders that Tariacuri be expelled from Hoataropexo. There the Corínguaros cast the idol of Curicaueri into the corner of the temples and renovate the temple in the colors of their patron god, Urendequauécará. Tariacuri and his people leave and go to a mountain called Uhpapoato, where Tariacuri tells his priests to take copper axes as an offering to Urendequauécará so that Chanhori might give them some better land to live on. Chanhori rejects the request, and Tariacuri moves to Urexo where the Chichimecs build a temple out of sod. The Corínguaros attack them there, but the god Curicaueri makes the Corínguaros sick and Tariacuri’s people capture and sacrifice the Corínguaros warriors there. The heads of the Corínguaros are placed on pikes. There were so many pikes that they made a large shadow. Tariacuri states that his first wife has been a “valiant man” because she has caused the deaths of many men and therefore the gods to be fed, as a valiant warrior would do. Tariacuri then moves to a place named Querenda Angangueo, where the Corínguaros spy on him. They send Zurumban’s son to assist in the spying because he can visit Tariacuri without Tariacuri
suspecting anything. Taríacuri’s aunt learns of the scheme and interrupts Taríacuri eating with Zurumban’s son and tells Taríacuri what is happening. Zurumban’s son leaves, saying he cannot be at ease. Taríacuri and his people depart from Querenda Angangueo and go to various towns, settling finally in Sant Angel where the lord of the town welcomes him. End of Episode.

Once again the Corínguaros play the role of precipitators in this episode, moving Taríacuri from a mountain settlement to Sant Angel, which is not said to be a town on a mountains and appears to be a true village or city. In this way Taríacuri has moved from up to down. Sant Angel is elsewhere mentioned as being the same town or very close to a town named Uacapu, which is outside and southwest the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. Thus in this episode he has remained outside while moving from up to down.

The war with Corínguaro reverses the actions of the two Episodes, 13 and 14, preceding Taríacuri’s pivoting in which Taríacuri’s first wife sleeps with people from her own town. The first wife’s adultery breaks the rules of her marriage to Taríacuri and is at a certain level incestuous, representing a conjunction of characters of the same category. In this episode the Corínguaros suffer a violent disjunction as their heads are separated from their bodies and placed on spikes following their fate as sacrificial offerings. The gender inversion of Episodes 13 and 14, in which Chanhori is told that Taríacuri insults the Corínguaro men by calling them women, is also reversed when Taríacuri comments that his first wife has been a valiant man.

**Episode 17.** Soon after Taríacuri has settled in Sant Angel, he is approached by messengers from Corínguaro. They demand the riches that Taríacuri has acquired by making forays to the west (forays which the RM does not otherwise mention). Taríacuri
tells them to sit and that the riches they have asked for will be brought out. Chests full of
arrows are presented to the messengers, who complain that they were ordered to bring
back riches and not arrows. Tariacuri explains that the green arrows are named and are
the green feathers they ask for, and the other kinds of arrows have various names and are
the turquoise necklaces, silver, gold, red feathers, blankets, and corn, beans, and other
seeds that they requested. The messengers accept the arrows, but when the young lords
in Coringuaro (who appear to be ruling Coringuaro directly due to the old age of
Chan horrifying the previously lord of Coringuaro) see what they have brought back and heard
what Tariacuri told them, they laugh and ask Tariacuri’s former wife if she has heard
him call the arrows those names. She says no, that Tariacuri must be crazy. The lords of
Coringuaro break the arrows and burn them. Lord Chanhori learns of what has
transpired, and chides the younger lords, saying that perhaps the arrows were sacred.

Shortly thereafter Tariacuri is approached by messengers from Pacandan who ask
him to return to Pátzcuaro because the people of Pacandan, the Corínguaros, and the
people of Tariaran fight over Pátzcuaro. He refuses to help them, and soon another
embassy from Xaráquaro asks the same thing of him, because the Xaráquaros had just
suffered a defeat at the hands of the people of Pacandan. Tariacuri tells the Xaráquaros
to sell themselves into slavery and then he will help them and return to Pátzcuaro. They
do this, and so at night Tariacuri climbs a mountain in Pátzcuaro and blows a small
whistle imitating the cry of an eagle. This causes the warring parties to flee from
Pátzcuaro and Tariacuri settles in that town. End of Episode.

This episode serves to return Tariacuri to a position within the Lake Pátzcuaro
basin, furthering the Chichimec to Islander transition that begins when he shoots the
hummingbird and pivots, and continuing in the previous episode with his move from up
to down. Tariacuri moves to within the basin, returning to Pátzcuaro. Thus he moves
inside and up while remaining south.

Furthermore he manages to maintain possession of the Islander riches that he
acquired along with the daughters of Zurumban. The Corínguaros attempt to take away
riches, many of which are the exact same items that Tariacuri received in the marriage.
Instead Tariacuri substitutes arrows, saying they represent the green feathers, turquoise
necklaces, silver, gold, red feathers, blankets, and corn, beans, and other seeds. Tariacuri
has managed to preserve the Islander riches that he acquired through his second marriage
while at the same time he has lost arrows, the primary hunting weapon and symbol of the
warrior Chichimecs (i.e., Hireticátame shoots his in-laws with arrows, Aramen shoots
Naca with an arrow, and Tariacuri shoots the hummingbird). Therefore at the same time
that Tariacuri moves from outside to inside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin, he even
strengthens his Islander identity by keeping the riches and shedding the Chichimec
identity associated with hunting and warring. The Corínguaros, furthermore, destroy the
arrows, demonstrating that arrows are not proper possessions for them. In this way they
fail to appropriate both the feminine wealth as well as the hunting ability characteristic of
Chichimecs. Tariacuri also enters the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin in an improved position
compared to when he left to move to Hoataropexo. The Urendetiecha (people in first
place), the people of Xaráquaro, sell themselves following Tariacuri’s orders. Only after
they have done this does Tariacuri return to Pátzcuaro, and so the Chichimecs are no
longer inferior to the people of Xaráquaros because the latter have become slaves.
These two episodes (16 and 17) form a larger paradigm that reverses Episodes 13 and 14, which themselves from a paradigm. Taríacuri’s intensifying “Chichimecness” in Episodes 13 and 14, caused by his marriage to the Corínguaro princess, is reversed in Episodes 16 and 17 with Taríacuri’s increasing “Islanderness” that began with his marriage to Zurumban’s daughters and spurred on by the actions of the Corínguaros. In this way Episode 15, Taríacuri’s pivoting, serves as a dividing point not only of these two pairs of episodes, but as will be shown, the narrative as a whole. The similar, but reversed or inverted, events in the two pairs of episodes link one to another, as do the places involved in the movements. Episode 13 begins with Taríacuri having just moved from Pátzcuaro, while Episode 17 ends with Taríacuri’s return to Pátzcuaro.

**Episode 18.** As soon as Taríacuri returns to Pátzcuaro he starts asking about his nephews Hiripan and Tangaxoan, the sons of Zetaco and Aramen. The story explains that these nephews have not been mentioned since the expulsion of Zetaco and Aramen from Uacanámbaro at the hands of Zurumban so as to make them seem dead. Taríacuri also sends his son Curátame, whose mother is the woman from Corínguaro, Taríacuri’s first wife, to Corínguaro. Taríacuri orders Curátame not to follow the example of the people of that town, who get drunk everyday. Curátame disobeys his father and so Taríacuri disowns him. The story then follows the nephews Hiripan and Tangaxoan, who have traveled with their mother and sister from Pechátaro to Asaveto (Seler [1993] recognized that their movement creates an arc outside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin to the west and then north). In the market in Asaveto Hiripan and Tangaxoan eat scraps and crumbs that people drop. A woman recognizes them and has them come live with her,
where they watch over her cornfield, scaring off the birds and eating green ears of corn.

End of Episode.

Tariacuri’s nephews, Hiripan and Tangaxoan begin the episode dead for all intents and purposes, as is explained by the narrative. They turn out to be alive, however, and move from Pechátaro, a town just west of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin to Asaveto. There they lead an impoverished existence, eating the scraps of food that people drop. They are outside and north, as well as poor. Through the intervention of an aunt, a woman who claims to be related to their father(s), they move to a house where they eat corn. They thus move from an impoverished condition or a condition of low social status to a higher social status, all while remaining north and outside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. The present episode elaborates on the general contrast between lower and higher status that appears in previous episodes (i.e., the political relationship between lord and sacrificer in Episode 6 and the low status of slavery introduced when Zetaco and Aramen ate from the granaries of the god Curicaueri in Episode 12) through the change in Hiripan and Tangaxoan from a begging existence to an existence in which they have food.

**Episode 19.** Chapa (who we are later told is from Coringuaro), a lord in Hetoquaro, learns that Hiripan and Tangaxoan along with their mother and sister have settled with their aunt. Chapa requests that Hiripan, Tangaxoan, their mother, and their sister, be brought to his town so that they can make offerings to the god Curicaueri. The aunt who has given them shelter hides the children from Chapa’s messengers and then tells Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and their mother and sister to go to Pátzcuaro, because Tariacuri has returned to that town. After traveling from town to town, Hiripan and Tangaxoan ask their mother where they are going. Their mother replies that they will go
to ErongarícuarO because she has relatives there. In ErongarícuarO, Hiripan and Tangaxoan promise to do services for the lord such as bringing firewood for his house. However, the two go to the mountains every day gathering wood that they take to the temples rather than the house of the lord, and the lord of ErongarícuarO loses hope that they will do anything useful for him, complaining that the two “are crazy for they wander about the mountains like all Chichimecs who do not have houses” (RM 1970:172).

While Hiripan and Tangaxoan are out in the mountains, the lord expels their mother and sister from his house. The brothers soon return, and ask their mother where they will go next. Their mother replies that because the lord of ErongarícuarO was niggardly, they will all go to Urichu. Hiripan and Tangaxoan make the same promises to the lord there as in ErongarícuarO, but again they only gather wood for the temples day and night, taking none to the house of the lord. All four are expelled from Urichu and move to Pareo.

In Pareo, Hiripan and Tangaxoan again promise to serve the lord, but the lord there welcomes them as true lords, and tells them to take wood to Curicaueri’s temples in Pátzcuaro. Hiripan and Tangaxoan take wood to Pátzcuaro, where Tariacuri has continually been asking about them. On the third night that Hiripan and Tangaxoan take wood to Pátzcuaro, they are discovered by the elder priests in Pátzcuaro, who tell them to stay there while they fetch Tariacuri. The two brothers instead run back to Pareo, and when the priests return with Tariacuri they are gone. The next morning Tariacuri sends the priests to Pareo to bring his nephews to Pátzcuaro. After the messengers bring the nephews along with their mother and sister to see Tariacuri, the nephews live in houses
in a place called Yauacuytiro that Taríacuri had ordered made for them, and gather
wood to take to the temples. End of Episode.

Once again a Corínguaro character serves as the element that drives the plot
forward and ends the seemingly happy life Hiripan and Tangaxoan have found with their
aunt. Through the course of this episode, Hiripan and Tangaxoan move from outside to
inside and from north to south. They remain down throughout they entire episode; none
of the towns they temporarily inhabit nor their final settlement at Yauacuytiro are said to
be on a hill. They thus reverse their position of Episode 18, at the end of which they are
located outside and north of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. In that episode they are united
with an aunt. In the present episode, however, their uncle Taríacuri replaces that aunt.
Therefore an inversion of gender also takes place in the protective “senior” figure.
Furthermore, the movements of Hiripan and Tangaxoan from Pareo to Pátzcuaro are
reversed every time when they go back, and the repetition, even when the elder priests
find them, indicates that they cannot by themselves move permanently from Pareo to
Pátzcuaro. Only when they are accompanied by Taríacuri’s priests as they move from
Pareo to Pátzcuaro do the nephews and their mother and sister move permanently from
one town to the other.

Because Hiripan and Tangaxoan take firewood to the temples in Pátzcuaro, they are
found by the priests and ultimately brought to Pátzcuaro permanently. The pious work of
Hiripan and Tangaxoan that causes their expulsion from Erongarícuar and Urichu is
now rewarded in Pareo and Pátzcuaro. This also establishes the proper role of the lords
of towns, which is to be generous and have wood brought for the temple fires, rules
which the lords of Erongarícuar and Urichu break.
Furthermore, the union of Hiripan and Tangaxoan with Tariacuri reverses the death and disappearance of their fathers, Zetaco and Aramen, in Episode 12. As their sons, Hiripan and Tangaxoan are extensions and natural replacements for Zetaco and Aramen. The town of Pareo provides an additional clue to the linkage between Hiripan and Tangaxoan and their fathers Zetaco and Aramen. Pareo is the location of the market where Aramen repeatedly went in order to sleep with a woman from Xaráquaro, thus leading to his own death. In the present episode, Pareo is the place that Hiripan and Tangaxoan leave to take wood to Pátzcuaro repeatedly until they are brought to live with Tariacuri permanently. The end of one set of characters is eventually reversed by the introduction of equivalent characters. This only happens, however, after Tariacuri’s fundamental identity has changed. Once again Tariacuri is contrasted with members of his own lineage. Therefore the scale of the Chichimec/Islander duality has now shifted to a larger scale. Previously this duality was subsumed entirely, if only abstractly or as a totality, within the character of Tariacuri. Now that this character has found his Chichimec nephews, however, the Chichimec/Islander duality is extended to the scale of the royal dynasty, and these identities are solidified by their location in space as well as their actions.

There is another ramification of this reunion of Hiripan and Tangaxoan with Tariacuri. In relation to Zetaco and Aramen, Tariacuri was younger, both in age and as a son of the younger of the two Chichimec brothers Pauácume and Uapéani. Tariacuri is now in a position of seniority, however, being one generation older than Hiripan and Tangaxoan. In general terms, the Islander element within the royal dynasty has switched
from being junior to senior, as represented by Tariacuri. The Chichimec element has
reversed from senior to junior, as represented by Tariacuri’s nephews.

**Episode 20.** Tariacuri decides to make his son Curátame (his son by the
Corínguaro princess) lord in Pátzcuaro. Tariacuri moves to a district of Pátzcuaro
named Cutu. Curátame does nothing but get drunk, and during a religious festival tells
Tariacuri to visit him the next day. Tariacuri arrives in the morning, drinks some
maguey wine which makes him drunk because he has not yet eaten anything, and asks his
son if they should not talk about their enemies. Curátame is enraged, saying that
because he is now lord he should decide the topic of discussion. He seizes Tariacuri by
the throat and calls him an Islander. Tariacuri replies that it is true that he is not a lord
because he is an Islander, but Curátame is not a lord because he is an upstart and a
newcomer. He concludes by saying that Hiripan and Tangaxoan (his nephews) are the
true lords. Tariacuri returns to Cutu with the feathers he had intended to give his son,
and makes a lesser noble the lord in Pátzcuaro instead of Curátame. End of Episode.

This episode finalizes Tariacuri’s movements in geographical space that follows his
pivoting in Episode 15 (see Figure 6-8). Tariacuri moves from Pátzcuaro to a suburb
called Cutu, thus moving from up to down. As part of this move he makes his son
Curátame lord in Pátzcuaro. The dispute between Tariacuri and Curátame further
connects Tariacuri’s geographical location as down, south, and inside to the identity of
being an Islander. Nearly as soon as Tariacuri has moved from up to down he and
Curátame have an argument in which Curátame calls Tariacuri an Islander as an insult.
Meanwhile, Hiripan and Tangaxoan are on the mountains gathering wood the entire time.
At the same time that Tariacuri moves from up to down (remaining south and inside), his
nephews who are gathering wood in the mountains move from down to up. Establishing the relationship, Tariacuri returns with the feathers he intended to give his son Curátame not to Pátzcuaro but to Cutu. Instead of reassuming rule in Pátzcuaro Tariacuri makes a lesser noble the lord in Pátzcuaro. This confirms Tariacuri’s geographical movement as significant, especially in relation to his nephews Hiripan and Tangaxoan. Tariacuri’s movement from up to down contrasts him with his nephews, who are now up.

The dispute between Tariacuri and Curátame also hints at the requirements of legitimate authority. Tariacuri is now purely an Islander, and Curátame’s accusation and Tariacuri’s own admission indicate that he cannot therefore be king. Tariacuri also explains that Curátame cannot be king because he is an upstart; therefore he lacks some quality of legitimate authority. In a passage of foreshadowing, Tariacuri claims that Hiripan and Tangaxoan will be kings. First, however, they must be combined with the proper characters with whom they will become kings.
Next Generation of Chichimecs and the Creation of the Tarascan Empire

Episode 21. A year after Tariacuri and Curátame trade insults, Curátame captures a criminal and invites Tariacuri to participate in the feast at which the criminal will be sacrificed. Curátame also invites Hiripan and Tangaxoan although they may only watch. Tariacuri has enough food and has his own feast at the foot of a mountain, thereby rejecting Curátame’s invitation. Hiripan and Tangaxoan likewise spurn Curátame’s feast, instead going about the mountains spying on the Islanders. Hiripan and Tangaxoan happen upon Tariacuri’s feast, and after some initial confusion Tariacuri realizes they are his nephews. They all eat, and Tariacuri suggests to his nephews that they go to Curátame’s feast. Hiripan and Tangaxoan refuse, saying it is a bad place and that they would rather gather wood for the temples and spend their time in vigil. Tariacuri asks if they mean what they say. They reply that they do. Tariacuri then begins to lecture them, advising them to prepare themselves because they will be lords over everything. End of Episode.

Due to the intervention of Curátame (he now takes over the role of precipitator, a logical result given his Corínguaro parentage), Hiripan and Tangaxoan end up meeting Tariacuri and his people on a hill. Thus a Chichimec and Islander conjunction takes place in this episode, and it is Tariacuri who moves from down to up. Tariacuri provides food for the nephews, and suggests that they go to Curátame’s feast. They refuse, saying that there are commoner people and “bad women” there, and that they would rather spend their time in vigil. The piety of Hiripan and Tangaxoan, wanting to remain separate from the commoners and bad women of Curátame’s feast and serve the gods instead results in a lecture in which Tariacuri foretells that they will be the rulers of a united empire. Therefore Hiripan and Tangaxoan demonstrate the correct behavior of nobles, keeping a
distance between themselves and the common people and “bad women” at Curátame’s feast. Their behavior is contrasted with and provides the impetus for Tariacuri’s lecture that comprises the next episode.

**Episode 22.** In the lecture begun at the end of the previous episode, Tariacuri advises his two nephews, Hiripan and Tangaxoan, saying that they should prepare themselves to be lords. He names numerous towns that will not have lords and foretells that Hiripan and Tangaxoan will be the only lords. As part of the lecture he relates events in various towns which result in the absence of legitimate lords in those towns. The events that occur in two towns and the fates of the towns are particularly relevant. Tariacuri says that he gave a part of the god Curicaueri to a man named Chapa, who was from Corínguaro, but whose mother was a commoner woman. Chapa won many battles and took many captives, but took fewer and fewer captives to Pátzcuaro to be sacrificed to Curicaueri. Ultimately Chapa only took one captive to Pátzcuaro, and Tariacuri refused it because Chapa offered the rest of the captives to the Corínguaros. In time Chapa established a large empire to the east of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin. Chapa died and his children vied for power. In Hetoquaro, one of the heirs’ capitals, the priest took off his insignia, mingled with the commoners and did a certain dance. Other priests did the same, and even the cloistered women participated in the dance. It did not take long before the men and women slept with one another, and in time Hetoquaro was overrun by weeds that grew rampant. Small trees began to bear fruit, and even very young girls became pregnant. The elder women began making knives, building temples, and getting drunk, and they were known as the Black, White, Yellow, and Red Cloud Mothers. Because there were no men to tell the cloud mothers that such things had never
been done in the past or to maintain order, the cloud mothers dispersed and there was a
terrible drought. The empire that had been created was lost.

In the town of Zacapu a lord who was of low class sought a dream in which he
would be visited by the god Querenda Angápeti. The lord, Caracomoco, slept on the
mountains in search of a dream, and then close to the temple, and then each night he
slept one step higher. Querenda Angápeti learned of Caracomoco’s actions and ordered
that no one will be lord in Zacapu but himself, Querenda Angápeti. He ordered that
Caracomoco should marry a certain commoner woman, but that they should live apart,
only seeing each other every twenty days. Tariacuri explains that Caracomoco is now
dead and his wife acts as the lord of Zacapu, governing and carrying a shield and club.
Tariacuri exclaims that it is not the role of women to rule and for this reason the people
of Zacapu should depose her. Tariacuri ends his lecture by telling his nephews to go to
the house of the chief priest and hold vigil, and Hiripan and Tangaxoan do as Tariacuri
has advised them. End of Episode.

In this episode Tariacuri tells of disasters that befall certain towns, explaining why
they will not have lords and saying that Hiripan and Tangaxoan will be kings and rule
over these towns. The two lengthy stories are similar in basic elements but represent
inverses of each other. Both Chapa and Caracomoco begin as lesser nobles at best, as
they are said to be of questionable parentage. Chapa does not take sacrifices to offer to
Curicaueri in Pátzcuaro and thus fails to fulfill his relationship to that god, as Tariacuri’s
remark implies. Caracomoco, on the other hand, gets too close spatially to the god
Querenda Angápeti, sleeping higher and higher on the steps on the temple. As a result,
Querenda Angápeti orders the man to marry a woman but live apart from that woman,
only seeing her every twenty days. Therefore a married man and a woman are permitted to only have limited sexual contact. In contrast, the priests in Hetoquaro leave off their insignia and dance with the commoners and the cloistered women sleep with the people. Male/female relationships that are too distant in one story become male/female relationships that are improperly close in the other. Both stories end with women performing men’s roles (building temples, making knives, acting as a lord, etc.) and gender imbalance (the absence of men) that guarantees that there will be no lord in those towns.

Both of these stories document relationships between humans and gods, nobles and commoners, and men and women. The relationships, which are either too distant or too close between gods and humans, men and women, and nobles and commoners, in these areas ultimately result in the abandonment or illegitimate rule in these towns. They thus stand in contrast to the behavior of Hiripan and Tangaxoan in the previous episode, whose proper actions cause Tariacuri to lecture them and tell them that they will be kings over all these towns.

**Episode 23.** *Hiripan and Tangaxoan set up an ambush on a mountain and capture an Islander noble named Zapiuatame. Zapiuatame requests to be taken to see Tariacuri, and the nephews take him to see their uncle. Tariacuri takes the Islander into his house and discusses matters with him. After a short time Zapiuatame emerges from Tariacuri’s house with an oar on his shoulder and returns to his island. Tangaxoan is angered, because he had captured the Islander and wanted to sacrifice him, but Tariacuri explains to his nephews that Zapiuatame had come to ask if he and his Islanders could put themselves under the protection of the god Curicaueri. Hiripan and Tangaxoan go make*
arrows, and then go to the top of a hill overlooking the lake as their uncle Tariacuri had ordered. Hiripan and Tangaxoan see the Islanders of Zapiuátame coming, followed by a second group of Islanders who are chasing the first group. Hiripan and Tangaxoan shoot their arrows at the second group, forcing this second group to stop chasing the first group and turn back. After the first group of Islanders comes ashore, Tariacuri gives them some land in Aterio, a town on the lake near Pátzcuaro. The Islanders work with Hiripan and Tangaxoan, taking wood to the temples, going on forays, and farming.

Hiripan and Tangaxoan, along with the Islanders, establish themselves at Queretapuzicuyo (this place is apparently synonymous with Ihuatzio because the name means “place of the ballcourt” [Tudela RM 1956:119], and Ihuatzio was the location of the only ballcourt in the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin [Pollard 1980:686]). There they all are prosperous, and they repeatedly cross the lake to visit Tariacuri and offer him the first fruits of the harvest. End of Episode.

In this episode, Hiripan and Tangaxoan are combined with a group of Islanders. At the beginning of the episode, Tangaxoan wishes to sacrifice Zapiuátame. Following the Islander’s meeting with Tariacuri, however, the Islanders join Hiripan and Tangaxoan. Thus the Islanders are transformed from sacrificial victims to companions. The activities of the combined group are important. Not only do they go on raids, hunt, and gather wood for the temples at night but they also farm by day, growing corn and beans, taking the first agricultural products as gifts to Tariacuri and the god Curicaueri. Thus they have formed a productive totality, farming, hunting, and serving the gods. Furthermore, Zapiuátame and his Islanders represent the Islander companions that Hiripan and Tangaxoan, as Chichimecs, most associate themselves with. In this regard the Islanders
replace Tariacuri as the Islander counterpart to the Chichimec nephews. Tariacuri, in turn, begins to fade into the background.

**Episode 24.** Curátame, who is lord in Pátzcuaro, learns of the success of Hiripan and Tangaxoan and sends some messengers to ask Tariacuri why Hiripan and Tangaxoan make bonfires and where Hiripan and Tangaxoan think they will be lords (the implication is that Curátame is the lord in Pátzcuaro and therefore Hiripan and Tangaxoan have no place to be lord). Tariacuri refuses to answer the messengers, telling them to ask his two nephews. The messengers go to Hiripan and Tangaxoan and repeat their questions, saying that Hiripan and Tangaxoan can come and serve Curátame. Tangaxoan is enraged and says that he and Hiripan will be the lords and that they will be lords in Pátzcuaro. The messengers are taken aback by Tangaxoan’s tirade and relay his response to Curátame. Hiripan and Tangaxoan cross the lake again to visit Tariacuri, who says he has a plan and suggests that Hiripan and Tangaxoan take his younger son, Hiquingaxe, back with them so that Hiquingaxe can be sacrificer. The two go and tell Hiquingaxe what Tariacuri has said, and Hiquingaxe agrees, departing for Ihuatzio.

Hiripan and Tangaxoan go to tell Tariacuri the news, saying that Hiquingaxe has already gone ahead. Once back in Ihuatzio, the three (Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe) spend some time living in a cave. Hiripan and Tangaxoan eat wild weeds and give corn that they roast to Hiquingaxe. End of Episode.

Curátame’s actions once again spur the story onward, as they cause Hiripan and Tangaxoan to visit Tariacuri. Tariacuri suggests that his son Hiquingaxe live with them and be the sacrificer. Hiquingaxe accepts, and in the next scene they live in a cave. The food serves to explain the identities of Hiquingaxe in relation to his cousins. Hiquingaxe
eats cooked, domesticated food in contrast to the raw, wild food that Hiripan and Tangaxoan eat. This separates Hiquingaxe off from his cousins as the Islander of the group and confirms the contrasting status of Hiripan and Tangaxoan as Chichimecs.

Hiquingaxe’s position as sacrificer is also important. Remember in Episode 6 the Chichimec brothers Pauácume and Uapéani (Tariacuri’s father and uncle, respectively) are brought to Xaráquaro to be sacrificers. Because the latter, as sacrificers, are not lords and are subject to the orders of the lords, they are subservient to the Islander lords of Xaráquaro. In the present episode, however, it is the Islander character who has become the sacrificer, and as is evident later on, the Chichimecs Hiripan and Tangaxoan (particularly Hiripan) are the leaders of the group. Therefore this episode represents a reversal of certain categories and relationships in that much earlier episode.

Furthermore, Hiripan and Tangaxoan, the Chichimecs of the royal dynasty, are senior in relation to Hiquingaxe, who is a member of the same generation. They remain junior to Tariacuri, who is here being replaced by his younger son Hiquingaxe. The parentage of Hiquingaxe is not given, but he does not appear prior to this episode. It is reasonable to presume, because he is not mentioned previously and his parentage given explicitly (in contrast to Curátame, who is mentioned immediately following Tariacuri’s marriage to his mother), that Hiquingaxe is the son of one of Tariacuri’s Islander wives. Therefore Hiquingaxe is very much an Islander, as the son of Tariacuri (who is at least partly an Islander in both a genealogical sense and a behavioral sense) and an Islander woman. Tariacuri continues to be replaced by other characters who take on his Islander characteristics and he is less directly contrasted with his Chichimec nephews Hiripan and Tangaxoan, and so is less directly an Islander. The ambiguity of his character, as
combining both Chichimec and Islander qualities, has been reproduced but polarized (Turner 1985:77), that is, divided among multiple distinct characters in the next generation of the royal dynasty.

**Episode 25.** Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe decide to cross the lake after some time, and Tariacuri gives them a share of the god Curicaueri, a part embodied by an obsidian knife. Tariacuri instructs the three to build a shelter and altar for the knife, but upon their return they build an entire temple complex, complete with a temple, house for the priests, eagle house, and ark or box for the knife. They go and tell Tariacuri, who is furious, saying that Curicaueri is not a common god and that he requires sacrifices for such a complex, sacrifices that the three youths do not have the means to obtain. *Tariacuri shoots an arrow at them, but misses as the three scurry out of the house.* End of Episode.

In this episode the three young lords are given a piece of the god Curicaueri but build him an entire religious complex. They do not have the means to acquire sacrifices for such a large complex however, and so they cannot fulfill their obligations to that god and are therefore too distant from the god Curicaueri. This situation is therefore similar to the actions of Chapa in Tariacuri’s lecture in Episode 22 in which Chapa did not take enough captives to Pátzcuaro to be sacrificed, therefore not fulfilling his obligations to the god Curicaueri.

**Episode 26.** Tariacuri ponders a way to redeem his nephews and son, and decides to coerce the lord of the island of Pacandan into sending some of his people to be captured by the Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe, so that the captives can be sacrificed to Curicaueri. *The three young nobles have no knowledge of Tariacuri’s plot,*
but they only learn of the scheme when the lord of Pacandan sends a messenger to them to renegotiate the number of people that will be sent to be captured. The three complain that they do no know what the messenger is talking about and to tell Tariacuri, but the messenger says that by telling them he has done what he was ordered to do by his lord. The messenger leaves, walking away with an oar on his shoulder. The three young Chichimecs go and ask Tariacuri if he knows what the messenger spoke of, and Tariacuri reveals the plan to them. In the end, sixty islanders are captured, with forty taken to Pátzcuaro and sacrificed, while the remaining twenty are sacrificed for the dedication of the new temple in Querétaro (Ihuatzio). End of Episode.

Not only does this episode contain a union of Chichimec and Islander as the rift between Tariacuri and the three young Chichimecs is erased, but more importantly the inability of Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe to fulfill their obligations to the god Curicaueri in the immediately preceding episode is rectified. This is significant because this improper relationship is one of the pitfalls that Tariacuri warns Hiripan and Tangaxoan about in Episode 22, in which Chapa does not offer a sufficient amount of sacrifices to Curicaueri. In Episode 26, a similar event occurs within the royal dynasty as the temples are built without the necessary sacrifices. Therefore to avoid the outcome that is a result of Chapa’s actions in Episode 22, obligations to the god must be met. In this episode the royal dynasty, through the combined efforts of Tariacuri and the Islanders of Pacandan, demonstrates that it has the ability to meet such obligations and therefore can legitimately be lords.

The problem is rectified by acquiring people from Pacandan to be sacrificed at the dedication of the new temples. This is a reversal of Episode 23 in which Hiripan and
Tangaxoan capture Zapiuátame. In that episode, Zapiuátame is transformed from a sacrificial victim into a companion, as his Islander people join with Hiripan and Tangaxoan going on raids and farming. In the present episode the Islander people from Pacandan remain sacrificial victims. To solidify the link between the two episodes, in Episode 23 Zapiuátame confers with Tariacuri while Hiripan and Tangaxoan are left outside to wander what the two are talking about. Zapiuátame leaves, walking away with an oar on his shoulder. In the present episode, Episode 26, a messenger is sent to tell the Chichimecs that there will only be sixty people sent to be captured. The messenger tells Hiripan and Tangaxoan, and so the renegotiation reverses the action in Episode 23 in which Hiripan and Tangaxoan do not know what Zapiuátame and Tariacuri are discussing. The messenger from Pacandan is even said to leave carrying an oar on his shoulder, a seemingly needless detail, except that it links the messenger to Zapiuátame and therefore the two episodes.

The addition of Hiquingaxe to Hiripan and Tangaxoan in Episode 24 completes the reversals of the outcomes. The Pacandans cannot join Hiripan and Tangaxoan because they are sacrificed. Hiquingaxe is the Islander character that replaces Zapiuátame in joining his Chichimec cousins. In this way a character within the royal dynasty replaces a character outside the royal dynasty as a companion to Hiripan and Tangaxoan. Furthermore, in terms of the sequence of the plot, as sacrificer Hiquingaxe is a necessary precondition for there to be sacrifices and therefore the new temples that
Figure 6-9. Episodes 21 through 26.

require them. In all of these ways, Episodes 24 through 26 form a paradigm that reverses the outcomes of Episodes 21 through 23 (see Figure 6-9). Both sets begin with an intervention by Curátame that drives the action forward. What is outside in the first set becomes inside in the second: the improper relationships between god and human and male and female that occur in Hetoquaro and Zacapu takes place as a crisis in the royal dynasty. The conjunction of Chichimec and Islander involves a character external to the royal dynasty in the first set and a member within the lineage becomes the Islander element in the second such conjunction.

Furthermore, the royal dynasty has once again demonstrated its ability to reproduce its dual aspect, possessing both Chichimec and Islander elements or characters. The Chichimec-Islander unity first embodied by Tariacuri himself was initially divided between Tariacuri and his nephews, then Tariacuri’s nephews and the Islanders, and lastly by Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe. The permanent acquisition of Zurumban’s daughters is what has endowed the royal dynasty with this ability, most notably in the appearance of Hiquingaxe.
On a final note, in these episodes Curátame plays the role of precipitator. This role is logical because as the son of the Corínguaro princess, he is the Corínguaro character within the royal dynasty. However, following Episode 15 in which Tariacuri pivots, the Corínguaro character, in this case Curátame, instigates a conjunction of Chichimec and Islander characters. This is the opposite of the effects of the interventions of the Corínguaros prior to Tariacuri’s pivoting, in which the repeated result was the disjunction of the Chichimecs and Islanders, i.e., in Episodes 5 through 9.

**Episode 27.** Tariacuri instructs Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe to construct a hut for Curátame, and that they are to get him drunk in the hut and kill him. Tariacuri tells Curátame to help Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe because they are being threatened by an attack from the Islanders. Curátame agrees, and when he arrives he requests and is given some maguey wine to drink. Just as Curátame is about to start drinking his ninth cup, Tangaxoan strikes him at the back of the neck with a club, killing him. Curátame’s servants start running around in a state of panic, but Hiripan calms them down and orders them to go take wood to the temples.

Shortly thereafter Hiripan decides to make a bonfire on Mount Tariacaherio, a mountain in or near Tzintzuntzan. Tangaxoan decides to do the same on a mountain called Pureperio (also in or near Tzintzuntzan), and Hiquingaxe builds a fire in Querétaro at the new temple. Tariacuri sends for them after a few days, telling them to explain themselves. Hiripan explained that they had made bonfires on the different mountains, and Tariacuri says that those are places that the gods come down and touch and that they must have had visions. After first denying having had any visions, Tangaxoan says that after making his fire he fell asleep at the foot of an oak and in his
dream he was visited by a woman. The woman told Tangaxoan that she is the goddess Xarátanga, and she ordered him to clear her former temples, altar, ballcourt, and other structures at Tzintzuntzan. She said that if he did this she will favor him and make him a lord, giving him a house and women to be in that house, gold jewelry and other insignia of lords, and will fill his granaries. Tariacuri then tells Tangaxoan that he should do what Xarátanga has said and Tangaxoan explains that he already has. Tariacuri then asks Hiripan about his dream, and Hiripan says that he was visited by the god Curicaueri. That god told Hiripan that if Hiripan looks after him well, he will favor Hiripan, making him a lord. Tariacuri explains that according to the dreams they will be kings, and then they return to their settlement across the lake. End of Episode.

The shared context of the gods Curicaueri and Xarátanga reverses the action of Episode 4 in which the Chichimecs disperse from Mount Tariacaherio and Xarátanga is taken away from Tzintzuntzan which can be interpreted as a “union” of the two deities that ended as separation. In the present episode Tangaxoan is visited by Xarátanga, who tells him to favor her and return her to Tzintzuntzan, which he does, thus reversing the goddess’s movement away from there in Episode 4. Curicaueri visits Hiripan and says that he will make Hiripan a lord. In this way the separation of Curicaueri and Xarátanga is reversed as the two gods favor or are favored by members of the royal dynasty, uniting the most prominent Islander and Chichimec deities in the guardianship of the brothers. Furthermore, this appropriation of the goddess Xarátanga and the union with Curicaueri as gods both favored by the royal dynasty internalizes what was previously a relationship between two groups, namely the royal dynasty and the Islanders. Xarátanga is brought back to Tzintzintzan, but her favor is now internal to the royal dynasty.
The death of Curátame at the hands of Tangaxoan and the orders of Tariacuri seems somewhat out of place at first. However, once it is realized that Curátame is essentially a Corínguararo character, being the son of the Corínguararo princess as well as having played the role of precipitator, it is evident that his death is also a reversal of events in Episode 4. In that earlier episode, the Chichimecs dispersed, and part of the dispersal was the move of some Chichimecs to Corínguararo. Thus Curátame’s death, as the termination of a Corínguararo character, reverses the initial creation of the Corínguararios in the first place. It also follows the same internalization that is significant in the movement of the goddess Xaratanga back to Tzintzuntzan. The Corínguararo category that exists outside of the royal dynasty was created in Episode 4, and in the present episode it is the Corínguararo character within the royal dynasty that is terminated.

**Episode 28.** The people of Itziparamuco are threatened by the fires that Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe have made, and request aid from their brothers in Corínguararo. The lords of Corínguararo refuse, saying that the Chichimecs do not pose a threat. The people of Itziparamuco then get drunk, knowing that their fate has been sealed and planning to abandon that town in five days. During the drunkenness an old woman visits the wife of one of the nobles. The old woman sells the wife a mole for a few ears of corn, and the wife cooks the mole for her husband so that he may recover from his drunkenness. By mistake she ends up cooking her baby son (who has the same name as her husband, the baby’s father) and giving it to her husband to eat. The husband, realizing what she has done, shoots and kills his wife with an arrow. The next morning the nobles learn what had happened, and the lord of Itziparamuco explains that the old woman who sold the mole must be the goddess Auícanime, an aunt of the gods of the
heavens. It is said that the gods must be starving since the goddess sold the mole for some corn. The people of Itziparamuco then abandon the town after five days of drunkenness. End of Episode.

This episode represents a reversal of the previous episode as well as being linked to Episode 3. In contrast to the gods Curicaueri and Xaratanga favoring members of the royal dynasty, a deity plays a role in the abandonment and termination of the town of Itziparamuco. The goddess sells a mole for some corn, and the lord of the town believes that this must mean the gods are starving, in contrast to the riches that the gods will bestow upon the Chichimecs in the previous episode. Furthermore, the fact that Curicaueri and Xaratanga favor the Chichimecs indicates that they will be kings. The visit of the goddess Auícanime occurs as part of the abandonment of that town, and so no one will be lord there.

There are many parallels between this episode and Episode 3. Both episodes involve a loss of differentiation between humans and animals. In Episode 3 Xarátanga’s priests eat a snake that they have caught and therefore turn into snakes. In this episode the woman mistakes her baby son for a mole, or in other words the mole becomes the baby, and feeds her son to her husband. Furthermore, the animal symbolism establishes a link, as both the snake and mole are animals that burrow or live in the ground. Also, abandonment of the town is the result of both episodes.

Episode 29. Tariacuri tells Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe to take a fish to Hivacha, the lord in Zirahuén and a son of Zurumban, so Hivacha can eat and sober up, because he is always drunk. Because Hivacha is a son of Zurumban he is also a brother-in-law of Tariacuri. Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe take the fish to Hivacha, who
asks if they should sit, talk of war, and count the days (using a calendar). Tangaxoan is
insulted at the suggestion, saying that they are Chichimecs and the only preparation they
need to fight is to hold vigil and gather wood for the temples. Then they all sit, and
Hivacha has food brought, but the Chichimecs are not served anything, nor are they
given any blankets or short shirts. This appears to have been a major breach in the rules
of etiquette, and the Chichimecs leave. Hivacha’s second-in-command chases after them,
apologizing for the affront and giving the three men feathers in exchange for sparing his
family.

The three continue on to Ihuatzio, where they set about gathering wood. Hiripan
climbs a tree, which is worm-eaten, and the branch under him falls, sending Hiripan
crashing to the ground. Tangaxoan panics, exclaiming that his brother is dead.
Together Tangaxoan and Hiquingaxe manage to sit Hiripan up and revive him. Hiripan
expresses his anger, saying that he deserves the favor of the gods because his hands are
calloused from gathering wood, and that he will never forget Hivacha’s insult.
Tangaxoan says that he is even angrier than his brother, and they go to see Tariacuri,
and tell him of what has transpired. Tariacuri asks if they are planning to fight, and they
reply that they are, naming some allies that will fight with them. Tariacuri tells them to
wait a day so can gain the support of some more allies. End of Episode.

Kirchhoff (1956), in his preliminary study of the RM, believes that the major insult
here is the fact that Hivacha asks if they should count the days using a calendar.
However, the three Chichimec nobles still sit down to eat with Hivacha after the
supposed insult of proposing to count the days. It is only after Hivacha has food and
blankets brought out but does not give any to Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe that
they leave enraged at Hivacha’s insults. Elsewhere in the RM (1956:185, 1970:19) it is explained that generosity is a virtue that all nobles are expected to display, and that visitors should be given blankets by the nobles. Therefore Hivacha violates a rule regarding the proper behavior of nobles, and breaks it by not reciprocating the fish that the Chichimecs have brought.

In the second part of the episode, Hiripan “dies” but is successfully revived by Tangaxoan and Hiquingaxe. In this way the royal dynasty has one again displayed the ability to maintain and reproduce itself, similar to the transference of the duality that Tariacuri embodies to the three lords, Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe, of the next generation.

**Episode 30.** After some days pass Tariacuri sends a message to the three young lords, saying that he has received commitments of support. He tells them to meet him on a small hill, and before they arrive, Tariacuri climbs the hill and makes three piles of dirt, placing a stone and arrow on each. He then hides, and Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe happen upon the place with the piles. They ponder the meaning of the piles and the possibility that Tariacuri might have made them. The latter comes out of hiding, and after an attempt at a ruse, explains the piles. They represent the cities of Pátzcuaro, Ihuatzio, and Tzintzuntzan, where Hiquingaxe, Hiripan, and Tangaxoan, respectively, will be lords, ruling together. Together, and with Tariacuri’s help, they outline the plan of attack on Hivacha’s village. Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe, with their allies, carry out the plan, and the battle is a short and decisive one. Hivacha is amongst the first to be killed. The people of Hivacha’s village are then taken to Pátzcuaro where the sacrifices last an entire day because there were so many captives. Hivacha’s second-in-
command, along with his family, are spared because he gave the feathers to Hiripan and Tangaxoan following Hivacha’s insulting behavior in the previous episode. End of Episode.

Hivacha pays for his insults with his life, as a Chichimec and Islander alliance successfully destroys his village. This episode is a reversal of the previous episode. In the previous episode Hiripan dies, and this death is replaced by Hivacha’s death in the present episode. Hivacha’s second-in-command preserves the continuity between the two episodes, first giving the Chichimecs the feathers in Episode 29 and then being spared in the present episode because of his offering.

The two episodes form a paradigm concerning the proper behavior of nobles and the proper relationship between in-laws. In this last respect, this paradigm is a reversal of Episodes 1 and 2, which involve the marriage of Hireticátame to a woman from Naranjan. In both paradigms the in-laws break certain rules: the Naranjans break Hireticátame’s prohibition against taking and butchering the deer he shoots, thereby rendering the deerskin unsuitable for making blankets. Here Hivacha does not behave like a noble should when he denies the Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe food and blankets. The geographical location of the in-laws is also inverted: Naranjan is a town north of Lake Pátzcuaro while Hivacha is lord in Zirahuén, a town on a lake by the same name to the south of Lake Pátzcuaro. Even the animal symbolism is reversed; the deer that instigates the first quarrel is replaced by the fish that the Chichimecs take to Hivacha. Thus a hunted animal that is most commonly found on the mountains (up) is replaced by a fish, an animal from within the lake or below the water level (down).
The strange “death” of Hiripan also preserves a measure of balance between the two pairs of episodes. In Episode 1 Hireticátame kills a brother-in-law from Naranjan, only to be killed himself in Episode 2. In Episode 29, Hiripan “dies” thus repeating Hireticátame’s death in Episode 1. In Episode 30, Hivacha, a brother-in-law, is killed thus repeating the death of the man from Naranjan in Episode 1.

These two pairs of Episodes, 27, 28, 29, and 30, form a larger paradigm in which relationships between gods and humans are transposed to human society and the rules governing the proper behavior of humans and particularly in-laws and nobles (see Figure 6-10). The royal dynasty establishes a proper relationship with the gods in Episode 27, and the concomitant legitimacy is contrasted with the abandonment of Itziparamuco due to the intervention of a goddess. Hivacha’s failure to enter into an exchange relationship with the Chichimecs, by not giving them food or blankets after receiving the fish and thus only exchanging among themselves, mirrors the conjunction of the Itziparamuco tragedy.

Figure 6-10. Episodes 27 through 30.
In that episode, the wife cooks her son and feeds it to her husband, and therefore rather than eating proper food, food that is sufficiently differentiated from humans, the husband eats his own kind. The Chichimecs rectify the insults of Hivacha by defeating him and sacrificing him, once again maintaining proper relationships with the gods by offering war captives.

**Episode 31.** Following the defeat of Hivacha, the Chichimecs and their Islander and other allies go on to conquer numerous other towns, with Zacapu and Tariaran among the first. After these initial conquests, Tariacuri dies, and Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe return to Pátzcuaro for the funeral. They then establish themselves in Ihuatzio, Tzintzuntzan, and Pátzcuaro as Tariacuri had instructed them. The three conquer more towns and then they build a treasury in Ihuatzio for all the riches they acquire. Hiripan address all the people of the conquered villages, telling them to live in their villages as before, to plant their fields, and to bring wood for Curicaueri. The three also decide to install leaders in the villages, and the Islanders take over the southern half of the empire, while the Chichimecs take over the northern half of the empire. The narrative ends with a listing of towns that different kings and members of the royal dynasty conquer. End of Episode.

To conclude the narrative, the Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe, together with their Islander allies, go on to conquer other towns. Following the defeat of Zacapu, the origin place of the Chichimecs, and Tariaran, the southern town and longtime seat of the goddess Xaratanga, the three return to Pátzcuaro because Tariacuri has died. His death following the conquering of these two towns is significant, because the two towns represent the essential qualities of the Chichimec and Islander identities. In Episode 1
Zacapu, located north of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin, is the place where Curicaueri, the major solar and a hunting deity, first appears and is the place from which the royal dynasty begins its journey and transformation. Tariaran, on the other hand, is located south of the basin, is ruled by Zurumban (a native of the island of Xaráquaro), and is the seat of the goddess Xarátanga, the most important earth/fertility deity in the narrative. Therefore following their incorporation into a unified empire, an empire that truly represents a unity of Chichimecs and Islanders, Tariacuri dies. Tariacuri’s death at that moment indicates that he as an individual represented or embodied that duality or combination. The totality that Tariacuri represents is transformed into the totality of a unified empire.

After Tariacuri’s funeral the three lords establish their capitals as Tariacuri has instructed, and they establish various government institutions, such as a royal treasury, as well as the offices of local lords. They settle the people and instruct the local lords how to rule the people, creating a new unified society. Also, the fact that the three ruled from Pátzcuaro, Ihuatzio, and Tzintzuntzan is significant, because they, and therefore the royal dynasty, control both the north and south of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin and the inside as a whole. Therefore the initial condition of separate, outside, and inferior Chichimecs residing in the north is ultimately reversed as they rule a empire composed of both Chichimecs (people who take over the northern part of the empire) and Islanders (people who take over the southern part of the empire).

Having completed the sequential analysis of the episodes of the narrative, what remains to be discussed are the higher-level paradigms up to the level of the narrative as a
whole. In this way the meaning of the narrative, and its relation to the Tarascan empire and the colonial context in which the RM was produced, can be understood.
CHAPTER 7
STRUCTURE, “HISTORY,” AND “ETHNICITY” IN THE RELACIÓN DE
MICHOACÁN AND ITS RELATION TO THE TARASCAN EMPIRE

The structure of the “historical narrative” that comprises the second part of the
Relación de Michoacán reveals itself as the through the coordinated actions, events, and
operations that create meaning through their syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships.
In this conclusion, the meaning of the entire narrative is analyzed. The meaning of the
narrative reveals that the narrative is fundamentally concerned with the construction of
hierarchy. As part of this construction, the narrative takes the form of a “historical-
looking” narrative as an outcome of the endeavor to relate the unfolding and processual
nature of the hierarchy it creates and embodies through the sequence of events it
describes. Furthermore, what has traditionally been interpreted as “ethnic difference” is
the creation of opposed yet complementary identities that together form a hierarchically
superior synthesis.

Narrative as a Whole: Reversal and Hierarchy

Through the course of the analysis, the different paradigms of episodes created
through the syntax of the narratives have been presented. These paradigms form even
larger paradigms, the two halves of the narrative and ultimately the narrative in its
entirety. Here the significance of these “mega-paradigms” is analyzed, and it is
demonstrated that the second half of the narrative constitutes a reversal of the first half, in
both its paradigmatic and syntagmatic aspects. Taking into account that the operation
that links the episodes to one another in the narrative is reversal, it thus becomes apparent
that “all the episodes replicate the same basic structure [and] constitute an orderly series
of transformations of the form of that structure” (Turner 1985:66-67).

Figure 7-1. Paradigmatic units of the entire narrative. Lines above the episode numbers indicate paradigms created within the halves of the narrative through juxtaposition. Lines below episode numbers indicate reversals that occur between the two halves of the narrative, creating a mirroring effect. In this figure it is clear that Tariacuri’s pivoting in Episode 15 (boxed) serves as the focal point of the narrative, and his pivoting is the point around which the entire narrative reverses itself.
As has been pointed out throughout the analysis of the second half of the narrative (the part following Episode 15 in which Tariacuri pivots from Chichimec to Islander), certain events or episodes in this half reverse events in the first half of the narrative (see figure 7-1). Therefore at the same time that larger and larger paradigms are being created through paradigmatic and syntagmatic associations within each half, other paradigmatic and syntagmatic associations—the similarities and contrasts as well as their position in the half—establish each half as a paradigmatic set that is contrasted with the other. In this way the second half of the narrative becomes the mirror image of the first half, and the reversals in the second half of events and relationships of the first half establish the second half as a reversal of the first. This reversal on a grand scale is necessary to reverse, in the final outcome, the initial separation and inferiority of the royal dynasty, as well as the creation of hierarchy through the synthesis of categories.

To understand what specific relationships and actions specifically become reversed, we must look at each half of the narrative. The first half of the narrative serves to establish the categories involved in the RM and their original characteristics or traits, and to combine the various categories until a successful union of the right categories in the proper arrangement has been attained. In the first half, the failure of the marriages and the success of the marriage to Zurumban’s daughters establish the right categories, the correct group that can ennoble the royal dynasty. The marriage to Zurumban’s daughters, as the final marriage, establishes the correct combination of opposed elements. Zurumban is the priest/lord favored by the goddess Xaratanga, the goddess of the earth and fertility. Zurumban is also originally from Xaráquaro, and this establishes a paradigmatic relationship with the marriage to the Xaráquaro woman. It therefore also
establishes this marriage of Chichimec (Tariacuri’s identity prior to his marriage to Zurumban’s daughters) and Islander characters. The marriage also involves the transfer of the wealth of the autochthons as the Chichimecs are ennobled by the marriage. The marriage remains intact despite the attempts by the Corínguaros to appropriate the riches, and the attempted intervention by the Corínguaros further links this marriage to the marriage to the Xaráquaro woman. The fact that the marriage remains intact, however, indicates that this marriage has finally and permanently achieved a productive union of opposed characters. Tariacuri represents this synthesis due to his parentage and the marriage to Zurumban’s daughters as he pivots from a Chichimec to an Islander.

The first half of the narrative also documents the internalization or collapsing of the scale of the proper Chichimec-Islander union from first the level of the separate groups in Episodes 3 through 9 to the level of a royal dynasty internally differentiated into Chichimec and Islander characters in Episodes 10 through 12 (Zetaco and Aramen, and Tariacuri, respectively). By the end of the first half, however, only Tariacuri remains. Having began as an Islander in contrast only to his Chichimec cousins Zetaco and Aramen, Tariacuri’s “Chichimecness” intensifies through his marriage to the Corínguaro princess only to be reversed by his pivoting and switch to an Islander identity in contrast to Zurumban. Tariacuri, as the lone member of the royal dynasty at the end of the first half, replaces the progenitor of the royal dynasty, Hireticátame (as represented in the “family tree” of the royal dynasty [RM 1956:169, 1970 plate 44]). Therefore the royal dynasty has moved from a purely Chichimec character to a character that possesses both Chichimec and Islander qualities, once again shrinking the scale of this duality. Also, in the first half of the narrative the royal dynasty relies on marriages to other groups to
reproduce itself. The offspring within the dynasty are explicitly the result of marriages between members of the dynastic line and women of other categories.

The royal dynasty differentiates itself first into senior and junior lines and later into a senior “Chichimec” line and a junior “Islander” line. Due to the deaths of his cousins, by the end of the first half of the narrative Tariacuri stands alone as the sole representative of the royal dynasty. At different times in the narrative he demonstrates the ability to be both fully Chichimec and fully Islander.

Whereas in the first half of the narrative the story works to establish the correct relationship between the Chichimecs and other groups, the second half accomplishes a recreation of the proper relationship within the royal dynasty. The last marriage to the daughters of Zurumban allows the royal dynasty to reproduce itself and the differentiation it has achieved up until this point. In the second half of the narrative the Chichimecs attempt to reproduce this external combination with members of the royal dynasty. The first instance is Tariacuri’s reunification with his nephews Hiripan and Tangaxoan. Tariacuri as the Islander element in the royal dynasty is senior to the Chichimec nephews. Hiripan and Tangaxoan are next paired with Zapiuátame and his group of Islanders. While they are successful, this combination is not of the right categories because the Islanders are not part of the royal dynasty. This combination would result in an arrangement of power sharing between the Chichimecs and Islanders. The Islanders are then replaced by Hiquingaxe, Tariacuri’s younger son. This union combines Chichimec and Islander elements within the royal dynasty and thus establishes this group as the only group to embody both identities.
Furthermore, in the second half the royal dynasty does not engage into any marriage relationships in contrast to the first half. The royal dynasty becomes able to reproduce itself without the aid of any other group, as Hiripan and Tangaxoan appear from nowhere and are purposefully made to seem dead by their absence up until their reunion with Tariacuri. Similarly the introduction of Hiquingaxe is presented without mention of his birth. Indeed, Tariacuri’s wives, the daughters of Zurumban, remark following Tariacuri’s pivoting that Tariacuri did not sleep with them, and that he is crazy and does not have sex. Also, Hiripan falls from the tree in Episode 29 and is revived with the aid of Tangaxoan and Hiripan. Having procured Zurumban’s daughters and the concomitant feminine riches permanently, Tariacuri and the royal dynasty more generally possess the autochthonous power to complement their original outsider power and therefore the ability to reproduce this duality within the royal dynasty. By not entering into marriage relationships, the royal dynasty demonstrates its ability to reproduce itself indefinitely to the exclusion of the other groups of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin Area. The royal dynasty is the only entity that embodies the hierarchically superior synthesis of the proper categories, and will remain that way, preserving its legitimate authority.

Furthermore, the productive and proper unity of the Chichimec and Islander categories that is achieved through the first half of the narrative is accomplished at the smallest possible scale, the scale of one man. The unity that Tariacuri embodies by the end of the first half must be externalized through the course of the second half of the narrative. The small scale created in the first half of the narrative is thus reversed to larger and larger scales in the second half. This process results first in the externalization of Tariacuri’s duality to the scale of the royal dynasty with the reintroduction of Hiripan
and Tangaxoan and later with the advent of Hiunningaxe as sacrificer, penultimately on
the cosmic scale in the union of the deities Curicaueri and Xaratanga as deities favoring
the royal dynasty, and ultimately at the scale of the entire unified (Chichimec and
Islander) empire.

The total structure of the narrative of the RM, then, can be viewed as one of
reversals and the creation of hierarchy embodied by novel third terms or wholes that
encompass the parts of society. Through the combined syntagmatic and paradigmatic
aspects of the narrative, it is evident that the reversal of both the political separation and
separation in space of the Chichimecs to the north and outside the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin
is achieved. In order to accomplish especially the former, a new, hierarchically superior
element must be created that has the ability to create order and subsequently place itself
at the top of that order. Through the reversals and pivoting, first a Chichimec character is
pivoted to an Islander character at the same time that a synthesis of the two categories is
created, reversing their initial separation. The outcomes of these initial reversals are then
themselves reversed, and the unity that has been subsumed by only one character is
externalized to the greatest social (and cosmic) extents possible, but at the same time the
hierarchically superior third term, now the royal dynasty, remains itself autonomous and
existing at the pinnacle of the larger society it has constructed.

Rethinking “History” and “Ethnicity” in the Relación de Michoacán

To return to my two paired theses as discussed in the Introduction, the analysis
presented here demonstrates that the “historical narrative” contained within the RM
should no longer be regarded as literal history and the “ethnic” labels employed
throughout the narrative cannot be viewed as demarcating ethnic groups in the traditional,
primordialist sense. Instead, the narrative constitutes a structurally ordered narrative that,
through the interdependency of its syntagmatic and paradigmatic aspects, creates and explains the nature of hierarchy in Tarascan society. Possessing many similarities to the Stranger-King stories as identified by Sahlins (1985) and others (see Chapter 4), the structure enables the narrative to create hierarchy and thus reverse the initial conditions of the narrative. It performs this by first establishing elementary categories, in this case the categories of Chichimecs and Islanders are the most important, and then combining them until a synthesis is achieved. Furthermore, the Chichimec and Islander categories themselves are merely the expression of differentiated elementary forms that are the necessary preconditions of a hierarchically superior synthesis.

In this way, the “ethnic” labels used throughout the RM–Chichimec and Islander—and the characters that are assigned these names are not static categories but change through the course of the narrative as dictated by the structure. Through the coordinated movements and actions, Chichimec as an identity is constructed by contrast to the Islanders in multiple dimensions: up in contrast to down, outside in contrast to inside, north in contrast to south, and movement in contrast to immobility. The ultimate categories are syntheses of these oppositions, although the labels are the same. For example, characters lose some of their “Chichimecness” when they change from one to the other. In this way, Tariacuri becomes an Islander when he is simultaneously down, inside, south, and immobile. This is confirmed by the remarks of Curátame and Tariacuri’s own admission when Curátame calls Tariacuri an Islander.

These labels do not automatically assign the characters an identity as one or the other. Neither is decent from other Chichimec or Islander characters the primary factor in the creation of the identity, although it does function as one of the ways in which a
synthesis of the two categories is created. Therefore the labels do not constitute ethnic
groups in the primordialist sense of immutable group identities owing their existence to
essentialized differences derived from kinship or a related factor. Rather, the Chichimec
and Islander identities are symbolic constructs, composed of the various contextual
juxtapositions of the narrative. Their existence as categories within the RM is the result
of the need to construct opposed identities at the beginning of the narrative that can be
synthesized, forming a complementary duality and a hierarchically superior entity that
encompasses both elementary categories, as outlined in the Stranger-King stories.

The analysis presented here has shown that the narrative is a structurally self-
contained whole in which the structure provides for and motivates the individual actions
and events of the story. No longer can the Relación de Michoacán be viewed simply as
literal history. The creation of hierarchy within the narrative by its interrelationship of
the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic aspects is important in this respect. Through the
establishment of larger and larger units composed of smaller units, the narrative creates
hierarchy by the same means that the characters and categories of the narrative create
hierarchy, by the encompassment of lesser parts. The paradigmatic and syntagmatic
relationships within and between the halves of the narrative that reveal the two halves as
paradigms and the second as the reversal of the first necessitate the construction of
linkages in two “directions,” both within each half and between the halves,
simultaneously. The linkages that are created require the inclusion of numerous details
and actions that relate to one another. Therefore the “richness of detail” that Kirchhoff
(1956) believed could only be explained by the astounding historical memory of the
priests is revealed as a product of the structure of the narrative.
The fundamental meaning of the narrative is the creation and establishment of hierarchical relationships. The royal dynasty exists at the pinnacle of Tarascan society because it is a whole that has come, as a product of its own legendary history, to encompass the various groups that constitute Tarascan society. Therefore this is the only group with the legitimate authority to rule. Just as the RM is about the creation of hierarchy, however, it is also about the maintenance of such hierarchical relationships.

Through its semi-miraculous ability to reproduce itself in the second half of the narrative, the royal dynasty demonstrates its ability to perpetuate itself indefinitely. Without the aid (specifically without entering into marriage relationships) of other groups, the royal line preserves a level of distance between itself and the lesser nobles of Tarascan society, to say nothing of the commoners as well.
APPENDIX A
CHARACTERS AND DEITIES IN THE RM

Aramen- younger brother of Zetaco, son of Uapéani, elder cousin of Taríacuri.

Auíanime- female goddess who visits the wife of a noble from Itziparamuco, instigating the disaster that leads ultimately to the abandonment of that town.

Caricaten- lord of Xaráquaro; his wife has affair with Aramen.

Chanhorí- lord of Corínguaro throughout much of the story.

Chapa- noble from Corínguaro who establishes himself in Etúquaro, to the east of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin, after Taríacuri gives him a part of Curicaueri.

Curátame- Taríacuri’s eldest son by Corínguaro wife, he is lord in Pátzcuaro briefly but later his father orders his murder, carried out by Tangaxoan.


Hireticátame- first Chichimec leader, originating from Zacapu, marries a woman from Naranjan and is killed by his in-laws.

Hiripan- orphaned son of Zetaco (or Aramen), elder brother to Tangaxoan, sets up his capital at Ihuatzio.

Hiquingaxe- son of Taríacuri (and presumably Zurumban’s daughter), becomes sacrificer with Hiripan and Tangaxoan; sets up his capital in Pátzcuaro.

Hivacha- son of Zurumban (see below) and lord of Zirahuén; his insult of not giving Hiripan, Tangaxoan, and Hiquingaxe food and blankets instigates these three men to form an alliance to defeat him.

Naca- messenger of Zurumban who is sacrificed by Taríacuri and whose body parts are distributed among Taríacuri’s enemies under a ruse.

Pauácume- younger brother of Uapéani, marries the daughter of the fisher from Xaráquaro; helps found Pátzcuaro, is murdered by Corínguaros.

Sicuirancha- son of Hireticátame and Naranjan woman; first Chichimec to settle within the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin, at Uayameo.
Tangaxoan- orphaned son of Zetaco (or Aramen), younger brother to Hiripan, sets up his capital at Tzintzuntzan.

Tariacuri- son of Pauácume and fisherman’s daughter, the central figure throughout most of the narrative; through his marriage to Zurumban’s daughters and advice to his nephews, he is greatly responsible for the creation of a unified empire.

Uapéani- elder brother of Pauácume (see above).

Uatzoriquare- patron deity of the Naranjans, Hireticátame’s wife brings an idol of this deity in the flight to Zichaxuquero; a Tudela (RM 1956:20) explains that the god’s name means heat.


Xarátanga- patron deity of Tzintzuntzan and later Tariaran, she eventually favors Tangaxoan in a dream; a fertility, fishing, and earth goddess, she is also associated with the moon (Corona Núñez 1957:74, Pollard 1991:170).

Zapiuátame- Islander who places himself and followers under Curicaueri’s (and therefore Tariacuri’s) protection; he and his people join Hiripan and Tangaxoan on forays.

Zetaco- older brother of Aramen (see above).

Zurumban- a native of Xaráquaro, is favored by the goddess Xarátanga and moves her seat to Tariaran; Tariacuri tricks him into eating his own slave Naca, and later he gives his daughters to Tariacuri in marriage.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

David Haskell graduated from Reynoldsburg High School in Reynoldsburg, Ohio in June of 1997. He took a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology from the Ohio State University in June of 2000. David is currently enrolled in the anthropology graduate program at the University of Florida and has been admitted to candidacy in the doctoral program there.