



# A YAQUI FOLKLORE MAP



as told by FELIPE MOLINA & MINI KACZKURKIN  
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## BATNATEKA YORISUWAKAME

**WHAT WAS RESPECTED IN THE BEGINNING** ✨ Long ago there were Surem — tiny people who lived peacefully in the Wilderness World (Huya Ania). The Surem worshipped the sun. Achai Taa'a (Father Sun) is the center. ✨ Suawaka is a fat dwarf who lives in the sky. He carries light and a rainbow. Some people say that when Achai Taa'a argues with Maala Mecha (Mother Moon), that is thunder, and Suawaka leaves. When the argument is over, Suawaka returns to the sky with his rain-bow. ✨ There is an Enchanted World (Yo Ania) inhabited by animals. The one with the most spiritual power is the deer (maso), who comes from the Flower World (Sea Ania). He is very helpful and brings good news. The Deer Dancer is king of the fiesta. The goat is the creature closest to nature, and today's Pascola Dancer wears a goat mask to remind Yaquis of the Wilderness World.

## U HUYA NOKAME

**THE TALKING TREE** ✨ One day a young deer was walking on the desert near Angry Mountain (Omteme Kawi), in the Wilderness World, when he saw a tree shaking and heard a murmuring sound. He went to the leader of the Surem and told him the tree was trying to speak. The leader thought he could interpret the tree's message, but it was in a language he did not understand. Other elders came, but they could not understand the tree either. ✨ A young girl in the village, Yomumuli, had dreamed that one day she would be the only one who could interpret a talking tree. She had not understood the dream at the time, but now she came and knelt down respectfully to listen. The tree told her what the future of the people would be.

Up to this time there had been no war and no fighting. Now the Surem would have to face the rest of the world. The tree predicted monsters that would ride steel rails, and big birds that would drop eggs to kill everyone around. The Surem who wished to remain pure would have to leave. Those who wanted to stay in the world would have to change. Suawaka sent a bright meteor close to the earth. Some of the people ran to find shelter in the shade. Others wanted to hide underground. An explosion parted the sea between two waves, and the Surem who could not face the light were led by Suawaka to the bottom of the sea, where they were turned into animals and could live close to Achai Taa'a in the Enchanted World. Those who stayed became Yoemen, or Yaquis. ✨ Yaqui people still see Surem, usually out of the corners of their eyes. A few years ago, during a fiesta at New Pascua, an old man walked away from the village. His people thought he was out having a good time. When he didn't return, they became concerned and called a search party, but there was no sign of him anywhere. Then — there he was, walking towards his home! He told them he had become lost on the desert when he was met by a group of little people wearing white shifts, and with long, tangled hair. They spoke a strange language, but they were friendly and took him by the hand, leading him back to the edge of New Pascua village. ✨ It is believed that Surem appear when someone needs help.

## TAKALAIM

**FORKED MOUNTAIN** ✨ This is an enchanted mountain where Yaqui people go to get their talents — special gifts such as musical ability or unusual strength. On Takalaim there is a cave that leads to the Enchanted World where the Surem now live. People who go there must find their way through the many rooms of the cave, and some modern Yaquis feel they are too far from the old ways to succeed. ✨ Takalaim has two peaks. There are many stories about how it got that way. Some people say Suawaka threw down a bolt of lightning to kill a snake and split the mountain in half. ✨ There are several enchanted mountains in Sonora. One is Yasiikwe, southwest of Las Guasimas. There are Soore, and Tetam and Habwekapo. There are also sacred mountains, such as Samawaka and To-itakusepo. These are high places where people can go to meditate, but they are not enchanted. ✨ In Tucson, Yaquis have found a way to get talents without traveling hundreds of miles to an enchanted mountain. They go into the desert and meditate. Yaquis believe that the mind is so strong that a person who wants badly enough to have special powers will, simply by concentrating and believing it possible. Powers allow Yaquis to see things other people can't see. A child with special powers is respected more than a rich man.

Other legends are recorded by Mini Valenzuela Kaczurkin in *Yoeme: Lore of the Arizona Yaqui People* and by Ruth Giddings in *Yaqui Myths and Legends*. Other information is available at the Pascua Yaqui Library, New Pascua Village.

## BWE'U WIKIT

**THE BIG EVIL BIRD** ✨ At Otam Kawi, a giant eagle, larger than the village, terrified the people. He would swoop down and eat them, or their animals, or their food. They were in such danger that they had to hide during the day, and at night they could not have their fiestas or do anything that would attract the attention of the big, evil bird. ✨ There was a tiny person, a young man, in that village who had supernatural powers. He had begun to talk when he was one week old. He walked at two weeks. And at three weeks he was hunting. His mother told him that she had dreamed he would save the village. The boy took three arrows and a bow, all made of special wood, and killed the bird. The struck bird fluttered over to the mountain peak that was his favorite perch and died there. People say that you can still see his giant bones. Sometimes this place is called Bones Mountain.

## U O' WIRISU

**THE MAN WHO BECAME A BUZZARD** ✨ In Bahkom lived a man who was dissatisfied with his life. He saw the birds fly and wished he could be free, above the ground. There was also a buzzard in that place who was envious of people. He saw them walking around and thought it would be nice to be lazy like that and still have food. ✨ Each thought the other had an easier life, and so they agreed to change places. But the man soon learned that it was not easy for a bird to find food when he had no weapons. He had to eat what others had left. Therefore, he smelled like a buzzard. ✨ Meanwhile, the buzzard found out that the other people depended on him, but he still smelled like a buzzard, so couldn't even keep a wife. Besides, he could no longer see over the mountain. He felt like a stone. The two decided they would trade places and go back to what they had been.

## UME YOEM BAKOCHIM

**THE SNAKE PEOPLE** ✨ A young boy, walking from Jori to Batakomsikapo, carelessly struck at a snake with a stick he was carrying. Suddenly he found himself in an unfamiliar village. There a group of people met him and led him to a place where he was told that, since he had hit a girl, he must stand trial and be punished. ✨ The boy said that he had not hit a girl, he had hit only a snake. But a girl was sitting there all bruised and bandaged and said that, indeed, he was the one who had struck her. The boy said he was sorry, that he would never do it again, and he was let go. ✨ It was explained to him later by his uncle that these were the Snake People. They could turn from crawling serpents into walking humans at will. He instructed the boy that all creatures have feelings and all creatures have rights. The boy could be punished for his thoughtless behavior. ✨ The boy promised he would never hurt any living creature again, whether it was walking or crawling, unless he had to protect himself or needed food. He kept the promise the rest of his life.

## CHUPIARIM

A chupiarim can be any kind of animal that has grown huge. Tarantulas, scorpions, fish and snakes are common. They travel in big winds (chabuscos) and live in teesom (caves). Chupiarim do not hurt people, although if one gets too close he can be sucked by the wind into the cave, where he will be eaten. Horses have disappeared that way. People out walking and exploring caves have come across their bones. When a chupiarim gets too big for a cave it goes into the sea, and that is why most sea creatures are so large.

## BAKOCHEBAMPO

**WATER OF THE SNAKES** ✨ This is San Carlos Bay. It is where all serpents live, and where Yaquis who commit certain sins are sent to live as Bakochim (serpents) forever. Many years ago there was a water hole on a nearby mountain where all the serpents came from. It is thought that this is now dry.

## U NAHSUA WAKAME Y' NAIKIMTEKAME

**THE BATTLE THAT SEPARATED YAQUIS** ✨ Many Yaqui people wished to remain in their own villages and have their own leaders. In 1900, Mexican soldiers came to these villages to round up those who would not recognize a treaty with the Governor of Sonora. They would be sent to the henequen plantations in the Yucatan. It is said that four-hundred Yaquis were killed at Masokoba, men, women and children. Some of them jumped to their deaths from mountain ledges rather than be captured. Others decided the only way they could live peacefully was to go to Arizona. Family groups straggled over the desert toward the border in numbers greater than ever before. They were granted asylum and settled in Yaqui communities that were being established along the Santa Cruz and Salt rivers. ✨ Gradually, Yaqui country was rebuilt under succeeding Sonoran governors and Mexican President Lazaro Gardenas. In 1978, the Yaquis in the United States were recognized as American Indians. The 200 acres which, in 1964, had been given to the Yaquis for New Pascua, was now a reservation. ✨ The original Yaqui villages were located east and south of Guaymas. These are shown on the map by ✨✨✨. Other colonies have been established on the gulf, north at Hermosillo, and in Arizona. ✨ Courses in Yaqui are taught at New Pascua and the other Arizona villages to keep the language in use. It is only since the time of the Jesuits that the language has been written.

## YOI MERI

**KILLED BY A MEXICAN** ✨ There is a modern hero recognized by Yaquis. He is a ghost. Yoi Meri was a brave fighter in the Yaqui-Mexican wars. He was shot during a battle, but to everyone's surprise he turned up again. The second time the Mexicans shot him they hanged him to be sure this time he was dead. But he appeared in the next war. Then they killed him and cut him into pieces and weighted him down and sank him in water. But, in the next big battle, they saw him again. Finally they gave up, and Yoi Meri still appears when and where he is needed.

## BAHKOT PAHKOLA

**SNAKE DANCER** ✨ A special power can be anything a person wants — musical talent, strength, or a kind of magic. There are people alive today who knew Bahkot Pahkola, a man who went to the Enchanted World and got power to make himself very small. He could even fit into a bottle.

## LA LLORONA

**THE WOMAN WHO CRIES** ✨ The tragic tale of La Llorona is told throughout Mexico. It is so popular among the Yaquis that almost everyone living in New Pascua claims to have seen or heard her. ✨ The most common story is that a young mother fell in love with a Spanish soldier who told her he would take her to Spain when he returned if she would get rid of her children. The woman took her children out in a rainstorm and drowned them in a flooded arroyo. But the soldier left without her, and so La Llorona wanders up and down the rivers and washes, crying for her babies. Many young mothers today will not take their children out near an arroyo during a rainstorm. They are afraid that La Llorona will steal them.

## PAHKOM

**FIESTAS** ✨ In a Yaqui village, whenever someone has a pot of beans, and someone else has a dozen tortillas, there will be a fiesta, and three-hundred people will expect to be fed. Yaquis don't wait for special days to celebrate. Being Yaqui is knowing that your people will often get together to share food, exchange stories, and talk about the past. ✨ One of the special fiesta times is All Soul's Day, November first, when a large table is spread with the favorite dishes and drinks and treats of relatives who are dead. It is believed their spirits come back for the feasting. These yearly celebrations are something like Thanksgiving dinners. No one is sad. That is because death is not considered the end, and those who die are never really gone. They are Hokim, stars. The stars in the sky are ancestors.

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