

Aboriginal Society in Southern California

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**Some of our sources have chosen to italicize Cahuilla words and others not; while one source italicizes both Cahuilla and Spanish words. For the sake of consistency, we have chosen to italicize only Cahuilla words. The serious reader is advised to consult the original texts for an exact presentation.*

Palm Springs Cahuilla Creation Myth

*As told by Alejo Potencio, ceremonial chief, through Jolian Nortes, interpreter, immediately after the biennial mourning ceremony at Palm Springs, February, 1925.*²⁰³

In the beginning there was nothing but darkness. At times it was lighter but with no moon or stars. One was called *tukmiatahat* (female) the other *tukmiatelka* (male). Sounds, humming or thunder, were heard at times. Red, white, blue, and brown colors²⁰⁴ came all twisting to one point in the darkness. These were acting all together-twisting.²⁰⁵ These came together in one point to produce. This ball shook and whirled all together into one substance, which became two embryos wrapped in this placenta.²⁰⁶ This was formed in space and darkness. These were born prematurely, everything stopped for they were stillborn.

Then again all the lights whirled together, joined, and produced. This time the embryos grew fully-the children inside talked to one another. They asked each other, "What are we? We are *eskwatkwatwitcem*, and *estanamawitum*,"²⁰⁷ for at that time they did not know themselves. While they were in this sack they rolled back and forth;²⁰⁸ they stretched their arms and knees²⁰⁹ to make a hole²¹⁰ so they could get out.²¹¹ Then they named themselves *Mūkat* and *Temaīyauit*.

First their heads came out; they called themselves *teimūluka*; both heads came out at once. Then came out their shoulders, ribs, waist, thighs, knees, and ankles.²¹² Thus they came out of their house into the darkness, but they were unable to see one another in the dark space. As they sat in the dark *Temaīyauit* said, "I am older than you, for I heard the darkness making sounds."²¹³ *Mūkat* answered, "No! I am the older for I heard it first." Thus they began to quarrel. Then *Temaīyauit* said, "What can we do to eat our smoke and blow-aaah! Away the dark." *Mūkat* answered, "Why do you say you are older than I am? Take the pipe²¹⁴ from your heart,"²¹⁵

²⁰³ This myth includes the greater number of songs sung at the mourning ceremony. Each sentence given here forms one verse, including much repetition, and the song takes three nights to sing completely. It varies slightly from group to group, and the versions of any two widely separated Cahuilla groups are different in detail though the general motifs are the same. It is a highly impressive and solemn chant, rising at times to rare beauty, but usually sung in a monotonous rising and falling cadence.

²⁰⁴ *sel wīl, sel h'eu*: red; *tēvic wīl, tēvic he'u*: white; *tūkic heū, tūkic wīl*: blue; *tesit heū, tesit wīl*: brown.

²⁰⁵ *tahūhuñ-sūivee*.

²⁰⁶ *tcemsilayaa*: our placenta.

²⁰⁷ Archaic or esoteric. No meaning remembered.

²⁰⁸ *manamanatcemayahī*.

²⁰⁹ *wawalwawal-tcemeyahī*.

²¹⁰ *hataniamkavayūul*.

²¹¹ *tūnaltūnal-tcemeyahī*.

²¹² *sēka, amī, hemhūlūlū, hemees, hemtomī, hemī*.

²¹³ This was their mother's lullaby.

²¹⁴ *taīuūinumuli*, pipe.

out of your mouth.” So *Mūkat* took from his heart the black pipe,²¹⁶ and *Temaīyauit* took from his heart the white pipe.²¹⁷

Temaīyauit asked *Mūkat*, “What will we smoke in it?” *Mūkat* answered, “Why do you say you are old than I am? We can draw from our hearts tobacco.²¹⁸ Then we can eat and smoke it in our pipe.” He drew black tobacco²¹⁹ from his heart, and *Temaīyauit* drew white tobacco²²⁰ from his heart. Their pipes were solid, and *Temaīyauit* asked *Mūkat*, “How can we open up our pipes to eat and smoke tobacco?” *Mūkat* answered, “Why do you say you are older than I, if you do not know that with our whiskers we can bore a hole²²¹ through which to draw smoke?”²²² Then the hole was too big and the tobacco would not stay, but from their hearts they drew out white and black materials²²³ and made it smaller. All was settled, but they had no fire.

Then *Temaīyauit* asked *Mūkat*, “How can we light our tobacco to eat and smoke it?” and *Mūkat* answered, “You still say you are older than I am and yet do not know how to light your pipe! We can draw from our heart the sun from which we can light our pipe.” Then he began to draw the sun; from his mouth it came, but it slipped through his hands to his feet. Both tried to catch it, but it was too fast and got away and disappeared. It was lost in the darkness.

Then *Mūkat* drew out from his heart the West Light,²²⁴ and *Temaīyauit* drew from his heart the East Light.²²⁵ With these *Mūkat* lit his pipe. When he smoked the smoke drifted up and formed clouds. He blew it out in spreading puffs, and said, “This is to eat our hearts and kill our hearts!”

To find out who was the oldest he held up his pipe, saying, “I am holding it down.” *Temaīyauit* said, “Where are you?” looking on the ground. *Temaīyauit* tried to find it below, but *Mūkat* cheated him holding it up in the air. At last he reached it. *Mūkat* said, “You claim you are older but you are not old enough to know this!” *Temaīyauit* smoked until he had had enough, then he said, “I am holding it up,” but he held it on the ground. But *Mūkat* knew where it was, and right away reached and took it. This proved *Mūkat* was the oldest.

Then they smoked, and *Temaīyauit* asked *Mūkat* what they should do next. *Mūkat* answered, “We can draw from our heart the center pole of the world,”²²⁶ and from their hearts they both drew it. “Lift it up, stand it up, your center pole of the world, our center pole of the world. Make it stand, your heart of the world, our heart of the world,” they said. They put it into the air but it would not stand. They then drew from their hearts all kinds of snakes²²⁷ to hold the center pole of the world. These they told to hold it but they could not. Then they put two huge rocks²²⁸ together to hold it but still it moved.

²¹⁵ *tcemsuñ a*, from our heart.

²¹⁶ *ulitunikic*.

²¹⁷ *ulitevicnikic*.

²¹⁸ *pīwut*.

²¹⁹ *pīwut tūlnikic*.

²²⁰ *pīwut tēwicnikic*.

²²¹ *penliwalwaane*, bore a hole.

²²² *penhusossone*, to draw on a pipe.

²²³ *temalhu uhū*, *temal pikikī*, *tūlkūsivivamal* (archaic), *kanawal tūlawal*: black; *tēwic nikic*: white.

²²⁴ *kauwīkut*.

²²⁵ *tamīkut*.

²²⁶ *whiyanahut*, translated as the “center pole of the world,” or “heart of the world,” and described as a tremendously enlarged shaman’s wand, with which they effect cures and perform magic. It was “like a Bishop’s mitre” and symbolized the power of the creators.

²²⁷ *palukūwit*, *temesuwut*, all kinds of snakes.

²²⁸ *hauwaiyauwut* and *temamlawut*.

Then from their hearts they drew all kinds of web-spinning spiders,²²⁹ and these ran their webs from the top of the pole in all directions, and at last the center pole of the world stood firm.

Both said, "It is all still, our heart of the world, your heart of the world," and they began to climb up it, saying, "We, *Mūkat* and *Temaiyauit*, are climbing up!" Still farther up they sing, "*Mūkat*, *Temaiyauit*, going up, up, farther up we are going!" Halfway up the center pole they sing again, and still singing they come nearly to the top, always calling themselves by name. Then, still calling their names, they reach the top, and sing, "We, *Mūkat* and *Temaiyauit*, are sitting on the top, on the point of the center pole of the world." From the top they looked down and saw clouds of smoke²³⁰ rolling up from the place whence they had come.

Temaiyauit asked where the smoke came from. *Mūkat* answered, "It is settling²³¹ in the place where we were lying and comes from our afterbirth."²³² It is black blood, red blood, fresh blood, smallpox, colds and sore throat, cramps in the back, boils, mumps, hives and itches, inflamed and sore eyes, blindness, acute body pains, palsy and twitching, consumption, venereal disease, rheumatism, emaciations, swelling of the body,²³³ and all other sicknesses." All these were the clouds of smoke coming from the place where they came into being. Then *Mūkat* said, "We will give power to man or woman, so that each sickness can be cured by someone that has power. These will be the doctors."²³⁴

Mūkat was on the west side of the center pole of the world and *Temaiyauit* on the east side. *Mūkat* asked *Temaiyauit*, "Which direction shall be the oldest?" *Temaiyauit* answered, "We will name that direction where you are now." *Mūkat* then said, "I am older than you, so first of the directions is the west,²³⁵ then the north,²³⁶ south,²³⁷ and east."²³⁸ Thus it is that when people come into the ceremonial house they blow west, north, south, and east.

Temaiyauit said, "How can we make the earth?" *Mūkat* answered, "You see I am older than you, for we can draw the earth from our heart." And he drew black earth²³⁹ from his heart, and *Temaiyauit* drew white earth²⁴⁰ from his. This earth they put on top of the center pole of the world but it rolled off and was lost. From their hearts they drew all black and all white spiders,²⁴¹ who spread webs in all directions. So for a second time they drew black and white earth from their hearts and placed it on the top. To spread this earth they drew forth from their hearts all the kinds of ants²⁴² who spread out the earth on all sides. To make it faster they drew out two whirlwinds²⁴³ that rapidly completed the spreading out of the black and white earth. Thus was the whole earth made, but it moved and would not stay still. The ants were too light, they could not hold it

²²⁹ *whalwhalwitem*, *kuītukwitem*.

²³⁰ *mūlikalipa*, *hauakalapa*: smoke rolling in clouds.

²³¹ *tcmkonive*, *tcmwenive*: settling.

²³² *tcmstilayaa*: our placenta; *tcmkalapī*: our afterbirth.

²³³ *ewul tūlnikic*: black blood; *ewul selnikic*: red blood; *ewul palnikic*: fresh blood; *lūmūil*: smallpox; *k'ekū*: cold and sore throat; *tcewiwinut*: cramps in the back; *tcuklalunit*: boils; *pahaieuluwinut*: mumps or swollen sore throat; *kisawinut*: hives or itch; *miwinut*: inflamed eyes; *tawawinut*: blindness; *mūwhinut*: acute body pain; *tawekkūskalet*: palsy, twitching; *tcatawawinut*: consumption; *ūūmuwinut*: venereal disease; *lumīwinut*: rheumatism; *whawhinut*: emaciation; *paticwinut*: swelling of the body.

²³⁴ *pūelem*: doctors.

²³⁵ *kauikanvic*.

²³⁶ *temankawic*.

²³⁷ *kitcamkawic*.

²³⁸ *tamīkawic*.

²³⁹ *temul tūlnikic*: earth, black.

²⁴⁰ *temul tēwicnikic*: earth, white.

²⁴¹ *kuītūwhitum*: black spiders; *whalwhalwitum*: white spiders.

²⁴² *kūvicniwitum*, *anwitum*.

²⁴³ *tenauakatem*, *kōtiaālem*.

steady. From their hearts *Mūkat* and *Temaīyauit* drew the ocean²⁴⁴ and placed it all around the world, and likewise they drew out *pana tewelevelum* and *papakniwitum*, the two water demons, and placed them in the ocean. All water creatures they put into the ocean, and, last of all they drew the sacred seaweed mat,²⁴⁵ the sacred dancing feathers of the doctors,²⁴⁶ the “water apron”²⁴⁷ and “water tail”²⁴⁸ and placed these in the ocean. Thus by their combined weight the last quivers of the earth were stilled, and it was flat as a table.

From their hearts again they drew the sky²⁴⁹ but it swayed and flapped in the wind. They blew their saliva²⁵⁰ to the sky and thus made the stars²⁵¹ which held the sky in place. Then they put the two whirlwinds at the edge of the earth, and they held the bottom of the sky firmly in place.

The creators determined to make creatures²⁵² for the earth. *Temaīyauit* drew coyote²⁵³ from his heart for he was the first assistant.²⁵⁴ *Mūkat* drew the horned owl,²⁵⁵ who could see in the darkness from his heart. *Mūkat* had black mud and *Temaīyauit* white mud to make creatures from, and they each commenced to make the body of a man. *Mūkat* worked slowly and carefully, modeling a fine body such as men have now. *Temaīyauit* worked rapidly making a rude body with a belly on both sides, eyes on both sides, and hands like the paws of a dog. The creators worked in the darkness, and the horned owl sat watching them. When a body was finished the owl would say, “M-M-M! It is finished,” and coyote would come and put it away, putting those created by *Mūkat* in one place, and those by *Temaīyauit* in another. The latter worked three times as fast as the former, and had a great number of crude bodies finished, compared to the few good bodies make by *Mūkat*. All this took a long, long time.

Finally *Mūkat* stopped and drew the moon²⁵⁶ from his heart and it became faintly light so they could see their creatures. *Mūkat* looked at those made by *Temaīyauit* and said, “No wonder you have finished them so quickly, you are not doing good work!” *Temaīyauit* wished to know why, and *Mūkat* said, “They have two faces, eyes all around, bellies on both sides, feet pointing both ways and hands like a dog’s paws!” *Temaīyauit* answered, “That is right, it is good, but your work is not good. One face and all parts on one side are not right for they cannot see behind. Mine can see coming and going. Open fingers will let food slip through, mine will hold anything.” *Mūkat* replied, “Yes, but they can draw their hands together and hold anything. Your creatures cannot carry anything for they have no back or shoulders, they cannot hold an arrow to the bow or draw it back, for they are like a dog.” “But,” said *Temaīyauit*, “there will be no shooting.” “Yes, there will be, later on,”²⁵⁷ said *Mūkat*.

“But there will be no death,” said *Temaīyauit*. *Mūkat* answered, “Yes, there will be death.” “Then,” said *Temaīyauit*, “if they die, they shall come back.” “If they come back they shall smell like dead things,” answered *Mūkat*. *Temaīyauit* said, “then they can wash with white clay,²⁵⁸ and smoke their bodies with burning salt

²⁴⁴ *pal nūkut*.

²⁴⁵ *pānā maīswut*, a mat that is wrapped around the fetish bundles, and from which images of the dead are made.

²⁴⁶ *pānā tciatum*, feathers used by shamans.

²⁴⁷ *pānā wāva*, significance unknown. An archaic or esoteric term.

²⁴⁸ *pānā hekwas*, significance unknown. An archaic or esoteric term.

²⁴⁹ *tūkvac*, also means “iron,” because it is black before the sun comes up.

²⁵⁰ *hemhañā*.

²⁵¹ *sūūwitem*.

²⁵² *nūkatem*.

²⁵³ *īsil*.

²⁵⁴ *paha*, the ceremonial assistant of the clan chief.

²⁵⁵ *mūut*.

²⁵⁶ *menyil*.

²⁵⁷ *temal hemūwan*: earth, coming to the top; *temal paākwān*: earth, coming generations.

²⁵⁸ *ūlīwut*, *tēviwīt*.

grass²⁵⁹ and willow²⁶⁰ and become clean and good smelling.” “If they do this the world will be too small,” answered *Mūkat*. *Temaīyauit* said, “We can then spread it wider.” “Yes, but there will not be enough food for all of them,” answered *Mūkat*. “They can eat earth,” said *Temaīyauit*. “But they will then eat up all the earth,” answered *Mūkat*. *Temaīyauit* replied, “No, for by our power it will be swelling again.” This was the end of the dispute.

Temaīyauit was angry because he always lost in every dispute. He said, “I will go to the bottom of the earth, whence I came, and take all my creatures with me, the earth,²⁶¹ sky,²⁶² and all my other creations.” *Mūkat* answered, “You can take yours, but all mine will stay.” Then *Temaīyauit* blew, and his breath opened the earth. His creatures went down with him, all save the moon,²⁶³ the palm,²⁶⁴ coyote, the wood duck,²⁶⁵ and a few others. He tried to take earth and sky with him; a fierce wind blew and the earth shook all over, while the sky bent and swayed. *Mūkat* put one knee on the ground, held one hand on all his creatures, and with the other held up the sky. He cried, “hi! hi! hi!” which is the way all people do now when the earthquake comes. In the struggle all the mountains and canyons appeared on the earth’s surface, stream beds were formed, and water came out and filled them. At last *Temaīyauit* disappeared below, all became quiet, and the earth stopped shaking, but its rough uneven surface remains until today.

Then all *Mūkat*’s creatures became alive. While it was still dark the white people had stolen away to the north, during the time *Mūkat* held up the sky. The sun²⁶⁶ suddenly appeared, and all *Mūkat*’s creatures were so frightened they began to chatter like blackbirds each in a different language. *Mūkat* could not understand any of these, but hearing one man, *kiathwasimut*, speak the Cahuilla language²⁶⁷ he pressed him to his side, and let the others run around. This man was the ancestor of the Cahuilla people, and now lives in the abode of the sun,²⁶⁶ moon,²⁶³ and evening star.²⁶⁸ Thus only the Cahuillas, speak the original language. Among these creatures was one with red hair²⁶⁹ and a white clean face; he was cranky and crying, always running about. *Mūkat* saw this, and he took a long²⁷⁰ and a short stick.²⁷¹ The first he put between the creature’s legs like a horse, the second he put in his hand like a whip. Then the creature ran back and forth, going farther and farther away, until at last he disappeared into the north where all his party had gone before. Then *Mūkat* put all his creatures into the ceremonial house²⁷² for it was night. Far away to the north they saw a light, and all the creatures asked *Mūkat*, “What is that light in the north which we see now?” “Yes,” he replied, “those are your older brothers and your younger brothers, your older sisters and your younger sisters. They went away at night. They did not hear me, they did not ask me. They are devils!”²⁷³ They have four names.”²⁷⁴

²⁵⁹ *hañawit*.

²⁶⁰ *sahawut*.

²⁶¹ *temal*.

²⁶² *tūkvac*.

²⁶³ *menyil*.

²⁶⁴ *mawul*.

²⁶⁵ *sassēmūl*.

²⁶⁶ *tamit*.

²⁶⁷ *īvīatim*.

²⁶⁸ *sūwut pīniwus*.

²⁶⁹ *ūlika*, *selnikic*: head, red.

²⁷⁰ *kelawut*, *somatikic*: stick, long

²⁷¹ *kelawut*, *voksekaipi*: stick, short.

²⁷² *kicamawut*: translated “big house.”

²⁷³ *tēwellevelem*.

²⁷⁴ *mūwhinut*, *pahīwawit*, *kwawinit*: archaic; *tēwullevelem*: devils.

When the sun arose in the east the dog²⁷⁵ was talking, but then he became dumb. He knows everything in his heart, but he cannot say one word. The sun came up very hot. Some of *Mūkat*'s children were burned black, some burned red (well done, well cooked), but in the north where the white people were, it was cold, and they remained raw and white.

The moon was the only woman among all *Mūkat*'s creatures. Every morning she would go away from the ceremonial house to a clean sandy place, where with woven grass string²⁷⁶ she showed all the creatures how to make cat's cradles. Then she would put one group of people on one side and say, "you are coyote people,"²⁷⁷ and the others she would call wildcat people.²⁷⁸ She told the coyote people to sing against the wildcat people as though they were singing enemy songs. Then the wildcat people would begin to dance; then they would do it the other way around. This was a game. She told them to build a little brush house and put one creature in the house to be chief.²⁷⁹ Then she told another group to come from far away singing and dancing to the house. This was the way they should do later through all the generations to come. She also taught them to run, jump, wrestle, throw balls of mud at one another, and to flip pebbles at one another from their finger tips. Certain ones she picked out and said, "You are women. You must grind, and feed these others, who are men, that come dancing to the house."

At sunset they would return to the ceremonial house, dancing as they came. Among them was one called, *tevicnikictumelmii*, who always kicked the rattlesnake²⁸⁰ when he came in. The latter could not play with the other creatures because he could not walk. *Mūkat* took pity on the rattlesnake and gave him a cactus thorn²⁸¹ in his mouth as a fang. When all the other creatures were gone, *Mūkat* took his ceremonial staff²⁸² and told the snake to bite it. This the rattlesnake did, but his fang broke off. Then *Mūkat* pulled out a black whisker and put it in as a fang, but it broke off. So he pulled out a gray whisker and with this fang the rattlesnake bit through the ceremonial staff and blood came out of it. *Mūkat* told the snake to bite his enemy and then crawl away to the mountain and stay in his hole. All was ready. When all the creatures came back from their playground *tevicnikicteumelmii* laughed and kicked the snake, which bit him. *Tevicnikicteumelmii* died at once, and the snake crawled away to his hole in the mountain, where he has always stayed since rattling and biting, as the enemy of all *Mūkat*'s creatures.

Mūkat told the moon to have his creatures make bows of wood and arrows of reeds,²⁸³ with no points on them, and to have them stand in two lines and shoot at each other with these arrows. Then *Mūkat* told them to sharpen the points of the arrows. He then told them to make rock arrow-straighteners²⁸⁴ and to make arrows of arrow-weed²⁸⁵ about two feet long, with stone arrow-points.²⁸⁶ These they were to shoot with short, strong, sycamore bows.²⁸⁷ He told them to stand in two lines and shoot at one another, but they were afraid because it looked dangerous. Then *takwic*²⁸⁸ said, "It is nothing. You cannot die from this," and he stuck

²⁷⁵ *awel*.

²⁷⁶ *witcut*.

²⁷⁷ *istam*: one moiety name.

²⁷⁸ *tūktum*: the other Cahuilla moiety.

²⁷⁹ *net*: clan ceremonial chief.

²⁸⁰ *sūwit*.

²⁸¹ *īwīul*.

²⁸² *whīyanahut*: shaman's wand. Also "the center pole of the world."

²⁸³ *hañal*.

²⁸⁴ *yēūnapic*.

²⁸⁵ *pāhal*.

²⁸⁶ *tamanīut*.

²⁸⁷ *isiltcukinup*.

²⁸⁸ The fire-ball demon, a great shaman, living on the top of San Jacinto peak.

an arrow through his body, pulling it out the other side. Then the hummingbird²⁸⁹ put a quiver²⁹⁰ on his back, and all shot at him, but they could not hit him for he was too small. He dodged each arrow and said, "See, it is nothing!" The Arkansas kingbird²⁹¹ and then the butterfly²⁹² did the same, and each said, "See, it is nothing!" So did the crow²⁹³ and the poor will,²⁹⁴ and they both dodged. Then the vulture²⁹⁵ tried it but he was too slow; they hit him, and he disappeared. Then the cony²⁹⁶ wanted to fight them all, and he cried, "Hurry up! Hurry up!" All the creatures began to shoot each other, hunting through the tall grass. *Mūkat* laughed, and said, "Now they are beginning to kill one another." They shot until both sides were nearly all killed. Then the remainder saw their dead comrades and began to cry loudly. (At this point in the song all women must wail loudly.)

Mūkat looked at the dead people whose bodies were quivering and shaking.²⁹⁷ Their spirits²⁹⁸ arose, but their bodies were dead, and the spirits did not know where to go. They looked toward the west, and it seemed to be all clear for them. They went flying to the west. But when they got there there was no gate, they had to stop and come back crying to their bodies. Then toward the north they did the same thing, and to the south, but in vain. They flew to the sky but again in vain. Finally they went to the east where *Temaīyauit* was. He answered them, "Yes," he said, "you are something. You are great devils."²⁹⁹ This is what I told *Mūkat*, that you would die and come back to life, but he always pushed away my word. Thus we created two kinds of clay³⁰⁰ and two herbs³⁰¹ to brush the body and make it clean. Go back again to earth as great devils." Hearing this they all hung their heads, and crying and wailing they came back to where their bodies lay. Among the creatures left alive was *muntakwut*, who was a powerful shaman. He took pity on the dead spirits and with his ceremonial staff bored a hole in the earth, opening the gate of *telmekic*.³⁰² When they saw this gate was opened all went below, "sounding their heart,"³⁰³ "sounding their body,"³⁰⁴ "making great breathings,"³⁰⁵ "fading away with noise,"³⁰⁶ "disappearing forever."³⁰⁷ To this place go all the spirits of the dead. This is the way *Mūkat* tricked and joked with his people.

All the people who were left on earth were very sad, but their teacher, the moon, was still with them. The moon was a naked, white, and beautifully formed woman. She slept apart from the other creatures. One night *Mūkat*, who had often watched her, leaned above her and touched her as he passed.³⁰⁸ Next morning the moon was weak, sleepy, and sore; she felt very sad. She planned to go away somewhere, but before going she spoke to all *Mūkat*'s creatures, saying, "I am going away, but you must go to the place where you used to

²⁸⁹ *tūtcil*.

²⁹⁰ *mamakwut*.

²⁹¹ *ultēhewic*.

²⁹² *malmul*.

²⁹³ *alwut*.

²⁹⁴ *pūlmic*, also called the night jar. The Cahuilla say this is the way he got his twisting flight.

²⁹⁵ *yuñavic*, the turkey vulture.

²⁹⁶ *ūlut*, also called the *pika*, or little chief hare.

²⁹⁷ *kulūkwit*, *wekhauwut*, *hemtahau*: "quivering and shaking are their bodies."

²⁹⁸ *hemteulave*.

²⁹⁹ *emetēwelevelatutcem*, *emeamnaalūtcm*: "you are becoming great devils."

³⁰⁰ *ūliwut*, *tēviwut*.

³⁰¹ *hañaaawit*, *sahawit*.

³⁰² "Neither heaven or hell, but the place where the dead go."

³⁰³ *melkelewihemsun*.

³⁰⁴ *melkelewīhemtahau*.

³⁰⁵ *tēwoñtalallaī*.

³⁰⁶ *talalāilyu*.

³⁰⁷ *n'nēēlu*.

³⁰⁸ The informant used these words. They do not make clear what happened, for that was a great sin of the creator.

play.³⁰⁹ Go there and play as before. In the evening you will see me in the west, then you must say ha! ha! ha! ha! and run to the water to bathe. Remember this always.” Then she disappeared and no one saw or knew what became of her. In a short while they saw the new moon rise in the west, and they cried, “ha! ha! ha! ha!” as she had told them and ran to bathe.

Some of his creatures now began to plan how they could stop their creator *Mūkat* from playing more evil tricks on them. They knew that he had told the rattlesnake to kill them that he had told them to kill one another with arrows, and lastly, that he had mistreated the moon and caused her to leave. So while they were all in the place where the moon had taught them to play they planned to get rid of *Mūkat*. Then the flicker³¹⁰ cried, “*pium*,” which meant, “Don’t talk so much but go and poison him.” All agreed to this, so they planned to watch him at night time. They came into the house dancing, and told *tataksil* (a little lizard that hides in cracks in the wood) to watch the creator; for the lizard alone was not afraid to watch *Mūkat* at night. He hid in a crack in the center post³¹¹ while all the others were dancing around it. All night he stayed there, watching.

At midnight, all were asleep as *Mūkat* had commanded them, save the little lizard who kept watch. *Mūkat* got up, took his pipe,³¹² lit it and smoked, blowing clouds of smoke over all his creatures to make them sleep soundly. Three times he blew smoke over them. Then he set his pipe down, and taking his ceremonial staff stood up. All the floor of the ceremonial house was covered with his creatures. First he stepped at their feet,³¹³ then between their legs,³¹⁴ then next to their arms,³¹⁵ then above their heads,³¹⁶ and so walked out. All this time the lizard was watching.

Mūkat went at once to the ocean, where two logs crossed above the water, and here defecated.³¹⁷ Lizard saw him do this, and heard the noise when this *kwaimuitci*³¹⁷ hit the water. Three times *Mūkat* did this, and each time it was followed by a sound like thunder in the ocean. Then *Mūkat* returned into the house, stepping in the same places that he had coming out, but he did not see the lizard who was watching. In the dawn all the creatures awoke, danced around the center post, and the lizard joined them. They all went out to their sandy playground, dancing. There the lizard told them all that he had seen that night.

So they planned to poison *Mūkat* through his own excrement, and they told the water skipper³¹⁸ to stay below the place where the creator sat at night when he came down to the ocean. He tried to do this, but the great waves washed him away. Then another small water creature³¹⁹ attempted it, but failed. Finally, the blue frog³²⁰ tried it, and stayed in spite of the ocean’s attempt to drive him away. Here he stayed until midnight, when the creator came out as he always did. His first *kwaimuitci* hit the water and splashed but there was no sound like thunder in the ocean, for the frog had taken it before it hit bottom. Then *Mūkat* was very frightened, and with his ceremonial staff felt down in the water to see what was beneath him. He scratched the frog’s back leaving three white marks there. Half of the *kwaimuitci* was left in the water and all the water creatures scattered it over the great ocean. Half of it was brought to land, and all the land creatures one by one scattered it over the earth. Thus it could not be put together again and *Mūkat* could not be made well.

³⁰⁹ *kanīsunwīt, līwīkauwut.*

³¹⁰ *tavic.*

³¹¹ *paīnut.*

³¹² *ūlī.*

³¹³ *hemiñā.*

³¹⁴ *pal kicnallalva.*

³¹⁵ *hemkwalmuñā.*

³¹⁶ *hemulukna.*

³¹⁷ *paamilyawi, kwaimuitci:* “this tobacco, he eats and drops down.”

³¹⁸ *puñatcauatcau.*

³¹⁹ *pañawawulwawul.*

³²⁰ *wahaatukicnikic.*

Mūkat sang to himself, “I felt sick in that water. My body became cold, swollen and weak. Either this water or my house makes me sick.” All his creatures stayed in the ceremonial house watching him. Coyote was his nurse, and tended *Mūkat*. He dug a hole in the ground, made a fire in it, and then put the creator in, covering him up. Day and night he did this for *Mūkat*, and thus he learned all of *Mūkat*’s songs. The others slept all night so they did not learn *Mūkat*’s songs.

Mūkat grew sicker and sicker, and he called the horse fly³²¹ to suck³²² his blood. This was the first time this was ever done. It did him no good. Then he called the sow bugs³²³ and the dragon flies³²⁴ to doctor him. These two failed, so he tried the water snake,³²⁵ the gopher snake,³²⁶ the red racer,³²⁷ and the king snake,³²⁸ all of whom failed. All of these had only pretended to help him for they all wanted *Mūkat* to die.

Then he told his creatures to tell the west wind,³²⁹ that belonged to him, to come and help him. The west wind came, like a hurricane, with a great dust storm. *Mūkat* was afraid, but the west wind went into his body, and for a while he was better; but it was too strong; he was being blown away. He told the white-throated swift,³³⁰ which he named “wind meeter,”³³¹ to go meet the west wind and tell it to go away for he was afraid. This same thing happened with the north, south, and east winds in succession.

Then he said, “All my creatures³³² have tried to cure me but I am no better. I know now that I am about to die. Perhaps I shall die in the dark of the moon,³³³ or in the faint light of the new moon,³³⁴ or during the young crescent moon,³³⁵ or during the older crescent moon,³³⁶ or in the first week of the new moon,³³⁷ or when the moon has a cloudy ring around it,³³⁸ or during the clear half-moon,³³⁹ or when the half-moon has its rim parallel to the earth,³⁴⁰ or during the full moon when its spots show clearly,³⁴¹ or when the full moon comes from the east and is red,³⁴² or when it begins to wane and one side is flattened,³⁴³ or when it has half disappeared,³⁴⁴ or during the last dying moon.³⁴⁵

All the time *Mūkat* was sick coyote tended him. When he spat coyote would pretend to take it away, but he would really swallow it, and thus make *Mūkat* sicker and sicker. Coyote helped *Mūkat* move from one side to

³²¹ *pīpic*.

³²² *nemaīī*: sucking disease from a patient’s body.

³²³ *kumsewhitum*.

³²⁴ *wakaīullalvawit*.

³²⁵ *pasiwit*.

³²⁶ *pokawit*.

³²⁷ *tatahol*.

³²⁸ *wiulwakanawit*.

³²⁹ *yaikauinawhit*.

³³⁰ *sikukwinut*.

³³¹ *yainamkiwuc*.

³³² *nenukem, netavum*.

³³³ *sōūmenyil*.

³³⁴ *tēwi menyil*.

³³⁵ *sīva menyil*.

³³⁶ *tcaña menyil*.

³³⁷ *kaīvu menyil*.

³³⁸ *kava menyil*.

³³⁹ *liwi menyil*.

³⁴⁰ *tatca menyil*.

³⁴¹ *yelamenyil*.

³⁴² *tēvī menyil*.

³⁴³ *tese menyil*.

³⁴⁴ *kavī menyil*.

³⁴⁵ *tū menyil*.

another, from his face to his back, and helped him to sit up. When *Mūkat* was too weak to spit coyote would lick the saliva off with his tongue. When coyote was away *Mūkat* called all his creatures, and said, “My hands are growing cold, my heart is growing cold, I shall die soon. When I die coyote will try to eat me, for he is planning to do this while you sleep. Therefore, when I am dead tell coyote to go after the eastern fire³⁴⁶ which I drew from my heart to light my pipe. When he is gone have *hunawit*³⁴⁷ and *tekwawit*³⁴⁸ gather all kinds of wood, dig a hole, and prepare the burn my body. Take the palm³⁴⁹ and with a drill make fire.” When the palm, who was a woman, heard this she began to cry and complain that it was unfair to select her from among all the other creatures. But *Mūkat* continued, “The fly³⁵⁰ will bore for fire with a drill.³⁵¹ Then you can burn³⁵² me with my creature the fire.” That night *Mūkat* made all his creatures sleep, even coyote, and then he died.

In the morning coyote woke up. He felt *Mūkat*’s heart and knew that he was dead. He said, “I think it is all over with our creator!” All the other creatures woke up, saying, “He is dead! Our father, your father, is dead!” Then they all cried that there was nothing with which to burn their father, and they asked coyote, because he ran fast, to go after the east light. Coyote went away to the east after the fire. When he was out of sight they prepared the pit, gathered all kinds of wood, and catching the palm tree they threw her down and held her although she tried to escape. The fly took a stick and started to make fire, twirling it between his hands. First came water, then blood, and then fire. With this they kindled the fire, dragged the body of *Mūkat* to the pile, and put it on the burning wood. It burned.

They all stood in a close circle around the fire. Meanwhile coyote went toward the eastern edge of the world and tried to catch the fire, but it always ran just ahead of him. Finally he looked back and saw the smoke of *Mūkat*’s body burning. “I thought that might be the way!” he said, and he came back running very fast. All the people saw him coming, and shouted, “Here comes coyote” Do not let him in to the fire where *Mūkat* is burning.” “Turn around my brothers and sisters,” said coyote, “I am full of tears. Let me in! Let me in! I too want to see my father.” But they would not let him through. All of *Mūkat*’s body save the heart was burned. Then coyote said, “I will fly over you,” and he jumped over their heads into the fire. All *Mūkat*’s creatures pressed the creator’s heart into the flames with their sticks, but coyote reached it and scattered blood and fire, so that the people were burnt and pushed back. Then coyote ran out with the heart.

To the east he ran, carrying the heart.³⁵⁴ All the good runners, mountain lion,³⁵⁵ wolf,³⁵⁶ gray fox,³⁵⁷ and kit fox,³⁵⁸ followed him, but could not catch him. Then he called each by name, and said, “Stay away! Why do you, my brothers, pursue me?” Then he talked to the heart of the creator, saying, “I am carrying you upon the earth, to the edge of the world, to the point of earth and sky, to the bottom of the sky, to the bottom of the world.” All things tried to frighten him as he ran, but he said, “I am not afraid of you!” Then he swallowed the heart.³⁵⁹ He at once became very sick; he became emaciated and his ribs showed.

³⁴⁶ *tamikut*.

³⁴⁷ The large ancestor of the bear.

³⁴⁸ The large ancestor of the skunk.

³⁴⁹ *ninmaiwit*: one species of palm

³⁵⁰ *pīpic*.

³⁵¹ *kutmūvawut*: making fire with a drill.

³⁵² *nekwane*: also means “eat.”

³⁵⁴ There are many more songs about the flight of coyote, but only a clan of the coyote moiety may sing them. Alejo belonged to the *kauisiktum* clan of the wildcat moiety.

³⁵⁵ *tūkwit*.

³⁵⁶ *iswit*.

³⁵⁷ *kauwisic*.

³⁵⁸ *wilyul*.

³⁵⁹ The Desert Cahuilla say this occurred in the Painted canyon, near Mecca, which accounts for the red stained rocks there.

Some of *Mūkat*'s creatures who had gone away in search of food for their sick creator returned too late, and found the body of their father in ashes. Among these were *suuwit*,³⁶⁰ *elelelic*,³⁶¹ *witctcuic*,³⁶² *tuivonpic*,³⁶³ the jaguar,³⁶⁴ and the marsh hawk.³⁶⁵ They all cried loudly, and rolled in the ashes. Last of all returned the buzzard, who was slow and returned late. He did not cry, he became dumb, took the skin off his head, and with a stick bore a hole through his beak. After that he was always quiet, he could only hiss.

Then in the place where *Mūkat* was burned there began to grow all kinds of strange plants, but no one knew what they were. They were afraid to go near the place for a hot wind always blew there. One, *Palmitcawut*, a great shaman, said, "Why do you not go and ask our father what they are?" No one else would go so he followed the spirit of *Mūkat*. By the aid of his ceremonial staff he followed the trail of *Mūkat*'s spirit although whirlwinds had hidden the trail. In one place were thickets of prickly cactus and clumps of interlaced thorny vines, but at the touch of his ceremonial staff they opened up for him to pass. Far away on the horizon he saw a bright glow where the spirit of *Mūkat* was leaning against a rock. The creator's spirit spoke, "Who are you, that follows and makes me move on when I am lying still?" When the creator's spirit spoke *Palmitcawut* was dumb and could not answer, though *Mūkat* asked him several times. Finally he was able to speak: "Yes, I am the one who disturbs you while you rest, but we, your creatures, do not know what the strange things are that grow where your body was burned?" *Mūkat*'s spirit answered him, "Yes, that was the last thing I wanted to tell you, but you killed me before I could do so." Then he continued, "You need not be afraid of those things. They are from my body." He asked *Palmitcawut* to describe them and when he had finished the spirit of *Mūkat* said, "That big tree is tobacco. It is my heart. It can be cleaned with white clay,³⁶⁶ smoked in the big house to drive away evil spirits. The vines with yellow squashes are from my stomach, watermelons are from the pupil of my eye, corn is from my teeth, wheat is my lice eggs,³⁶⁷ beans are from my semen,³⁶⁸ and all other vegetables are from other parts of my body." (Thus when any vegetables are gathered and brought to the "big house" all the people must pray to the creator.)

Then he said, "I am in that big house. My spirit is there, my saliva is there. You can move the big house away and always live there." They did this and all *Mūkat*'s creatures stayed in the house weeping for their father. Then they began to wonder how they could make the image of their father. Meanwhile coyote was far away, being very sick. At last he took some wet short reeds,³⁶⁹ rolled them into a ball, and swallowed it. Then he vomited up all kinds of disease from his heart. Thus he got well. From far away he heard the people in the "big house" talking, planning to kill him when he came back. So coyote came near them and they saw him. He talked gently to them from far away and they listened. He said, "I have heard you wondering how to make our father's image. I will show you." And he gathered all kinds of flowers saying, "With these we can make the image of our father!" He was joking with them, making them forget their anger. He brought many kinds of flowers, but by the next morning they would all be dead. All this time he was planning what he should do. At last he remembered that he must go to the ocean and get *pana maiswut*,³⁷⁰ *pana hekwa*,³⁷¹ and *pana wiava*.³⁷² So he told the people he was going after these things.

³⁶⁰ One of the stars. Also named *pahahūwit*.

³⁶¹ Archaic.

³⁶² Archaic.

³⁶³ Archaic.

³⁶⁴ *tūkwut*.

³⁶⁵ *wesunauwit*, the marsh hawk, is gray because he rolled in the ashes.

³⁶⁶ *yūliwit*, *tēviwit*.

³⁶⁷ *nasawam*.

³⁶⁸ *nenevum*.

³⁶⁹ *simūtum*.

³⁷⁰ seaweed matting. The wrapping of the clan fetish bundles.

³⁷¹ water tail, archaic.

³⁷² water apron, archaic.

Then he went to the ocean which was far away. That evening he slept at the edge of the earth, and woke up very early thinking it was dawn. He called aloud, asking it not to become light right away. Then he began to sing because the surf was pounding in so hard that he could not go into it. He sang asking the ocean to stop pounding for a little while. Then he went into the water, and got those three things with which to make the image of *Mūkat*.³⁷³ These three things he brought back to the “big house.”

Then he began to make the image of his father. All *Mūkat*’s creatures were crying, and they sang songs as each part of the *maīswut* was cut and wrapped. Thus the image was made. They sang a song about moving it, standing it up, carrying it to the fire, placing it on the pile, lighting the fire, the smoking, the burning, the crumbling of the last ashes, the last of the burning. Then, covering the ashes with dirt, they sang the last song. All was over.

³⁷³ The *maīswut* was to be cut and wrapped with the other two, but what “water tail” and “water apron” were, no one at present knows. The *maīswut* is now usually made of tule or reed matting.