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# Cora people

The **Cora** are an indigenous ethnic group of North Western Mexico which live in the municipality El Nayar, Rosamorada, Ruiz, Tepec, in the Mexican state of Nayarit, Mezquitlan in Durango and in a few settlements in the neighboring state of Jalisco. They call themselves *náayerite* (plural; *náayeri* singular),<sup>[1]</sup> whence the name of the present day Mexican state of Nayarit. They reside within a series of *comunidades indígenas* (colonial land grants) and *ejidos* (contemporary agricultural communes). The 2000 Mexican census reported that there were 24,390 people who were members of Cora-speaking households, these being defined as households where at least one parent or elder claims to speak the Cora language. Of these 24 thousand, 67 percent (16,357) were reported to speak Cora, 17 percent were nonspeakers, and the remaining 16 percent were unspecified with regard to their language.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Cora cultivate maize, beans, and amaranth and they raise some cattle.

## History

The Cora live in the rugged mountain and canyon country of Nayarit and across the border in neighboring Jalisco, Durango, and Sinaloa. In the early 18th century they were an anomaly in that they had never permitted Catholic missionaries to live in their country. They had become a pagan island in a sea of Christian Indians and Hispanic culture. In 1716, a Spanish expedition to attempt to bring the Cora under Spanish control failed. However, in 1722, the Spanish returned in force and the Cora yielded. According to Spanish accounts many of them became Christian and practice, up until the present, "Catholic-derived customs."<sup>[3]</sup>

## Religion

The Cora religion is a syncretism between the pre-Conquest religion and Catholicism.

The ancestral Cora religion has three principal divinities. The supreme god is the sun god, *Tayau*, "our father". He travels across the sky during the day, sitting down in his golden throne at noon. Clouds are believed to be smoke from his pipe. In earlier times the priests of *Tayau*, the *tonatí*, were the highest authority of the Cora communities. His wife is *Tetewan*, the underworld goddess associated with the moon, rain, and the

### Cora Naáyarite (singular: Naáyari)



A group of Cora people photographed by Carl Sofus Lumholtz in 1896.

#### Total population

Mexico: 24,390  
(Mexican census 2000)  
(figure includes members of households where at least one parent or elder is a self-declared speaker of the Cora language)

#### Regions with significant populations

Mexico (states of Nayarit, Jalisco, Durango), United States (Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Arizona)

#### Languages

Cora, Spanish, English

#### Religion

Syncretism, Animism, Peyotism, and Roman Catholic, Jehovah Witness

#### Related ethnic groups

Tepehuanes and Huicholes



Manniquen of a masked Cora "Judas" dancer at the Museo Nacional de la Máscara.

west. Her alternate names are *Hurima* and *Nasisa*. Their son, *Sautari*, "the flower picker", is associated with maize and the afternoon. Other names for him are *Hatsikan*, "big brother", *Tahás*, and *Ora*. He is also associated with Jesus Christ.

Some Cora myths clearly have Mesoamerican origins; for example, the myth of the creation of the fifth sun. Others are shared with the geographically and linguistically adjacent Huichol; for example, the myth of the human race being the offspring of a man and a dog-woman who were the only survivors of a mythical cataclysmic deluge.



location of the Cora territory in present-day Mexico

## Language

The Cora language belongs to the Corachol languages branch of the

Uto-Aztecan language family.

According to INALI, it has eight dialects:<sup>[4]</sup>

- Rosarito (spoken in the Rosamorada settlement of Rosarito)
- Dolores (spoken in the El Nayar settlement of Dolores)
- Meseño spoken in Mesa del Nayar and surrounding communities
- Jesús María (spoken in the El Nayar settlements of Boca de Arroyo Santiago (Juan López), and Jesús María)
- Francisqueño (spoken in the El Nayar settlement of San Francisco)
- Tereseño spoken in Santa Teresa del Nayar
- Presideño spoken in Presidio de los Reyes and surrounding communities
- Corapeño spoken in San Juan COrapan and surrounding communities

## See also

- Huaynamota

## Notes

1. Jáuregui 2004:5
2. Jáuregui 2004:45
3. Coyle, Philip E. "The Customs of our Ancestros: Cora Religious Conversion and Millennailism, 2000-1722. *Ethnohistory* 45:3 (summer 1998), pp. 509-542
4. "Catálogo de las lenguas indígenas nacionales: Variantes lingüísticas de México con sus autodenominaciones y referencias geoestadísticas" ([https://www.inali.gob.mx/clin-inali/html/v\\_cor](https://www.inali.gob.mx/clin-inali/html/v_cor))

[a.html](#)).

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