

From where I sit today, in the gold-blue-magenta sanctuary of a place called *Sewawailo*, I now see my journey as so aptly embodied in the winding and unwinding of a ‘Maypole,’ or as it is known to the Yaqui of the Sonoran regions of this and the adjacent land, the *ropo’otei*. At this point in my journey, I have yet to see this ceremony in person, but Doña Gloria and Ettore DeGrazia paint the picture thusly:

In an open plaza—whether desert hardpan or weathered concrete—a dozen traditionally costumed dancers hold in their hands individual ribbons of cloth, long and brightly colored, their upper ends anchored to the apex of a tall pole set vertically in their midst. As half the dancers move clockwise around the pole, the other half move counter-clockwise, each dancer moving in intricate pattern and fluency, in and out of the opposing orbit of dancers as they encircle the pole with their long strands of color—first the winding up (the *aztekam*), enshrouding the pole, and then the winding down (the *wikopam*), once again clearing the pole to its bare essence. The entire process is known as the *ropo’otiam*.

It is a ceremony that blends both Yaqui and Catholic symbolism during the bright new days of spring, but as I am not yet risen so far as to fully comprehend either its meaning or its significance, and as it is still the heart of what is hopefully the most pivotal winter of my life, it will be a few months before I have such an opportunity.

I believe my use of this device and process, though, will make sense as I complete this record; as a structural framework I believe it both apt and instructive. And as in both the *aztekam* and the *wikopam*, I will begin in the middle, at the apex of the already enshrouded pole, where the strands of knowing wind their way both upward and down, forward and back: for both *learning* and *unlearning* have defined my journey. Clearing my personal pole of its encumbering, enshrouding intricacies can perhaps best be represented by the twelve words spoken into a handheld digital recorder. My use of a digital recorder—an essential tool in the development of this entire narrative—will soon be explained. While I sat wrapped in bandages and splints on a frozen park bench in the middle of a frozen world on a frozen day in December:

As I said then: “*My name is Jasper Freeze, and I’ve got to find the sun.*”