

DIVERSITY IN COSMOLOGY: THE CASE OF THE WIND RIVER SHOSHONI

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ABSTRACT/RESUME

The cosmology of Wind River Shoshoni reflects two cultural traditions, those of the Great Basin and the Plains. The author reviews the history and contemporary cosmology of these people, noting both the hunting and horticulture elements of their cosmology. He concludes by noting that their view of the cosmos reflects very ancient and widespread traditions.

La cosmologie des Wind River Shoshoni évoque deux traditions culturelles, celles du Grand Bassin et des Plaines. L'auteur étudie l'histoire et la cosmologie contemporaine de ces gens, et constate les éléments de la chasse et de l'horticulture de leur cosmologie. Il conclut que leur conception du cosmos renvoie aux traditions très anciennes et bien répandues.

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The Problem

In cosmological research, a promising new branch of comparative religion, mythology and anthropology, attention is usually concentrated on static models in a particular society or on comparisons between such models in two or more societies. It is true that some researchers, like Claude Lévis-Strauss, have tried to conjure up dynamic processes through the analysis of binary structures in myths, but his results have a strong hypothetical character and have been subject to severe criticism. The following is an effort to reveal dynamics in cosmology through the analysis of combined historical data from archaeology, archival studies, and ethnological field research. The aim is to reconstruct the changes in cosmology during the past two hundred years among the Wind River Shoshoni Indians of Wyoming.¹ By this operation we also gain insights into basic cosmological thought in North America, albeit on a more speculative level.

The Wind River Shoshoni are interesting because in their recent history they have exchanged one traditional cosmology for another. Or perhaps it is better to say that one cosmology has suppressed another: the change has been done in such an incomplete way that traces of the older cosmological structure still coexist with the newer structure. On top of that, this latter cosmology has, during the last hundred years, been reinterpreted to suit an overlay of Christian beliefs. We are here concerned with the traditional cosmological patterns which are still recognizable today behind the Christian veneer.²

As we shall see, the Shoshoni cosmological systems can, in the last instance, be retraced from an ancient cosmology which was, we presume, once introduced with the first immigrants into America from Eurasia. Many thousand years later there was a subsequent split between different cosmological forms due to different factors. In particular, we can discern an opposition between two basic ideological perspectives, that of the hunters and that of the agriculturists. The two Shoshoni cosmologies are partly dependent on both these ideologies. How this could be so when in fact the Wind River Shoshoni were never agriculturists - except in modern Reservation days - is an enigma which will be explained in the following.

Cosmology will be understood here as both cosmogony, the theory of the creation of the world, and cosmology proper, the theory of the structure of the world (the *Universe*). In Shoshoni thought it is often difficult to separate one from the other.

The Cultural Complexity of the Wind River Shoshoni

In order to come to grips with Shoshoni cosmology, our first task will be to present their cultural complexity. Indeed, the very label "Wind River

Shoshoni" is of late origin and refers to several Shoshoni groups of different cultural origins.

In pre-reservation days all these groups were subsumed under the designations Wyoming Shoshoni or Eastern Shoshoni. They were all offshoots of the vast Shoshonean, or Numic-speaking population distributed all over the Great Basin area. The Shoshoni and Paiute of this area subsisted on sparse vegetational and animal resources, and their living standard was among the lowest in North America. They lived in family groups or small compounds, migrating among the places where food could be found. Their religion was little formalized, and was primarily characterized by the activities of medicine men and the homage of the Supreme Being at round dances.³ In the following, this cultural complex, ancestral to the modern Wind River Shoshoni, will be called the Basin culture.

Some five hundred years ago groups of Basin Shoshoni invaded the Rocky Mountain areas and the High Western Plains. In the craggy and wooded glens of the Idaho and Wyoming Rockies these Shoshoni became hunters of wild game, particularly Bighorn sheep. They kept together in small family clusters, and were known for their shyness and isolated existence. Sheepeaters was the name under which they were known. Their culture, although incompletely recorded, was a variant of Basin and Plateau cultures (where the Plateau represents hunting and fishing and rituals connected therewith). Religious beliefs mainly followed the Basin pattern (Hultkrantz, 1966/67, 1981a).

The majority of the Wyoming Shoshoni turned into Plains Indians and developed a composite culture. The basis was furnished by Basin elements, covering parts of material-technological culture and of religion. The adoption of Plains elements such as the horse and the Plains Indian ceremonial complex changed much of the material and social culture, and brought about new religious concepts and rituals, including the Sun Dance. During the nineteenth century the Plains Shoshoni, as they were sometimes called, were organized by leaders such as Yellow Hand and Washakie, into a tribe with warlike qualities. The latter dominated the scene during the period from 1840 to 1900, but had only a slight impact on religious beliefs. Ethnologists have been doubtful whether this hybrid Shoshoni culture really should be identified as a Plains Indian culture, as Basin influence remained so strong. Perhaps it could be better to say that it represents a link between two cultural worlds (Hultkrantz, 1949).⁴

A third group of Wyoming Shoshoni were the "dove eaters" (*haivodika*) in the Bridger Basin, composed of a group of Shoshoni, some Iroquois and some white trappers (Hultkrantz, 1975). They will be passed over in this account as they were much acculturated.

When the Wind River Reservation was established in 1868, at Chief Washakie's request, all the three Shoshoni divisions in Wyoming were joined there under Washakie's guidance. That is, most Sheepeaters in the Yellowstone Park area were transferred to Lemhi, Idaho, whereas the Sheepeaters of the Wind River Mountains went to Wind River. After this resettlement one can speak of the Wind River Indians, the Plains Shoshoni constituting the dominant ethnic and cultural element. Today, when there is scholarly reference to the historical Wind River Shoshoni culture, it is generally the old Plains Shoshoni culture that is meant. It is evident, however, that on the Reservation the latter has been imbued with other Shoshoni traits, particularly mythological tales and some religious beliefs. Part of these cultural elements probably originated with the Sheepeaters, who more strictly retained their ancient Basin heritage than their mounted cousins on the Plains.

The composite nature of Wind River Shoshoni culture to some extent faces the student of their cosmology with a delicate situation. However, even if we accept the Wind River Shoshoni as the true inheritors of the culture carried by the Plains Shoshoni (which I think we can safely do), we have to deal with another difficulty. The fact remains that the Plains Shoshoni, and their inheritors, the Wind River Shoshoni, have had a double cosmology, in which two cosmological systems often oppose and contradict each other.

Cosmogony

Wind River Shoshoni cosmogony is only partly traceable. Versions of the flood myth, spread over large parts of the world, occur in the Great Basin and also among the Wind River Shoshoni. In one variant known to the latter, a higher being makes the earth out of mud from the bottom of the primeval sea. We notice here that it is a matter of the waters of creation; there is also a myth of a flood that swept over mankind later on, but this will be bypassed here (Hultkrantz, 1896a:638). It is possible to state that the myth of the primeval waters, being a migratory tale, has no immediate connection with Shoshoni cosmology. Nature mythologists would probably find it absurd that such an outspoken inland people would link creation with the sea, just as another inland population, the Central Asian peoples, do. (This is a good illustration of the incorrectness of the nature-mythological school [Dorson, 1958; Hultkrantz, 1982a]).

There is a great confusion as to who the creator could be. Like other Shoshoni west of the mountains, the Wind River Shoshoni believe in a Supreme Being, "Our Father" (*tam apo*). He is clearly interpreted as the creator in the Sun Dance and the Peyote religion, two later additions to

Shoshoni religious practice, the Peyote religion actually operating as an alternative or successor to traditional Shoshoni religion. If we keep to the traditional religion but eliminate the Sun Dance, the creator concept seems less clearcut. Certainly, there has been a belief in the Supreme Being as the holder of the Universe, and as the last resource to turn to when disaster threatened.⁵ Otherwise, the Shoshoni prayed to their guardian spirits. Each male Shoshoni was exhorted to seek a guardian spirit, in the common Plains Indian fashion (Hultkrantz, 1986b). The Supreme Being did not figure in this vision quest pattern, however, until very recent times. Nobody discussed Our Father. He was taken for granted. It is therefore difficult to know whether he was conceived as the creator of the world. I was, however, told the legend of how Our Father revealed himself as creator:

A man got away from his people. He was on his way to another group of Indians. It took him some time to get there. He came through a canyon, and stopped under a cliff. Then he heard a voice there. It said, "Now, my friend, you must go back to your people. I am the creator talking to you. You go on home and tell the people that I am *tam apo* who talked to you. Tell the people to be good to one another. I created Mother Earth for you to live on. She will feed you. All that grows on her is yours. For that reason you should mention her in your prayers. The water comes from Mother Earth. That's her vein. Therefore you should pray to her. And you must worship me, you must not worship anything else but my voice. Remember that I am the creator." That's how they came to find out there was a creator (Interview with J.T., 1957).

This legend closely follows the Shoshoni pattern. Indeed, it seems to relate a conventional vision experience in which visions were sought beneath rock drawings. We may suspect that the legend is not too old, since Our Father is not typically part of the spiritual gallery of vision quests. The enigmatic words about worshipping only the creator's voice refer to the immaterial essence of the godhead.

If creation of the cosmos is badly known, mythology does have much to say about the planning of the world once it had been created. It should be noted that the mythology is basically a heritage from the Basin culture, where myths have a pronounced humorous character. The myths about the beginning of the world belong to the so-called Trickster cycle. As I have tried to show in several connections, the trickster is the comic side of the

culture hero, the elaboration by the raconteur of the weak points in the culture hero's deeds (Hultkrantz, 1960, 1979:32-39, 1984a, 1984b). The particular trickster traits will not be dwelt upon here. It is the culture hero as such that attracts our attention.

In Shoshoni mythology the culture hero roles are carried by two personages, Wolf and Coyote. They are supposed to be brothers. American mythologies depart from the presupposition that in ancient, primordial times the active beings were animals, or rather, animal-like creatures with strong anthropomorphic features, both physically and mentally. The Shoshoni think that Wolf and Coyote conducted the primeval, mythic people, the former as camp-leader and the latter as his announcer (this is probably a later conception, modelled on Plains Indian social organization). While Coyote is part culture hero and part trickster, Wolf appears as a benevolent being and a substitute of the high god, Our Father. Indeed, many Shoshoni groups west of the mountains call their Supreme Being Wolf, or refer to Wolf as Our Father. One of my informants called Wolf *pia apo* "big father", and Coyote *tel apo*, "little father". For the historian of religions it is easy to see that two patterns, the hierarchical God and culture hero pattern on one side, and the twin-god pattern on the other, have crossed each other here.

It is the task of the culture hero(es) to transform the world so that it will be fit for humans to live in, and to transmit to the first men knowledge and social and religious institutions. Several myths include just these motifs, but also the creation and recreation of man and animals - something that is thus not connected with the creation of the world. There are, however, cosmogonic features in some of the myths; for instance, the story of how the mythic mountain sheep, the jackrabbits, and Coyote himself turned into star constellations or stars. These myths which have long been enigmatic to research, or taken as evidence of a basic astral mythology, seem to mark the end of the mythic age, the definite divorce between the age of the gods on earth and the age of humans.⁶ This break is marked by two events: the primeval divine beings withdrawing to the sky, and the other beings left on earth being divided up, and reshaped, into animals and men. There ended mythic time, and there history began.

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Hultkrantz, 1986a:637-40), the whole traditional mythology of the Wind River Shoshoni is rooted in the Basin nature and culture. There are a few references to Coyote and the Sun Dance, but otherwise the landscape, the fauna, and the story themes belong to the world beyond the Shining Mountains. In fact, in many respects mythology conflicts with the historical Plains Shoshoni culture. Inquiries I made, for in-

stance among the Shoshoni about the relationships between the Supreme Being and mythical Wolf, and the answers I received were stamped by much confusion (Hultkrantz, 1960:558-62; Hultkrantz, 1981b:41-43). When the Shoshoni tell the origin story of the Sun Dance it is not a myth they tell, if by myth we mean an account regarded as true which relates about divine beings in primeval times. They tell a legend, that is, an allegedly historical tale about the meeting of human and supernatural beings in historical times. This is remarkable, as the Sun Dance really comprehends the Shoshoni philosophy of the Universe.

There is, indeed, no Plains culture cosmogony among the Wyoming Shoshoni. If we pinpoint the stronghold of Plains Indian religion to the Sun Dance complex, which I think is justified, then we can observe that in the prayers of this Dance there is a general conviction that the Supreme Being, *tam apo*, is the creator, but that he is in particular the ruler of the Universe. No story, myth, or legend tells us how he did his work. The hints in traditional mythology are apparently sufficient here, although on a different level. For this mythology is viewed with some scepticism in Sun Dance circles, and more critical persons assert that the stories of Wolf and Coyote are just fables. These persons have not, however, replaced this mythology with any other.

Some Plains Indian Sun Dances, like the Sun Dance of the Arapaho, neighbours of the Shoshoni on the Wind River Reservation, reveal through the structure of the dancing lodge the creation of the world, and the original use of the centre pole is alluded to through different symbols (Hultkrantz, 1973:15f.). The Northern Arapaho place their most sacred medicine, the flat-pipe, in the dance lodge, thus symbolizing the creator who, with the flatpipe in his hand, arranged the world by having the birds dive for mud in the primeval sea (Dorsey, 1903:191-212). The Sun Dance is, in this case, a recreation of the world. And, as we have learned from Mircea Eliade, recreation here stands for creation: the two concepts are identical, for the sacred time of the origin of the world is present in the cultic reproductions of today.

Can we deduce the same ideology from the Shoshoni Sun Dance? Before settling that question, we must look more closely at Shoshoni cosmology, their ideas of the structure of the world.

Cosmological patterns

The difficulties of interpreting Wind River Shoshoni cosmogony are considerable because of the dual culture-historical roots, and the degradation of the inherited mythology. The difficulties in disclosing cosmology proper

are even greater, in spite of the fact that cosmology usually has more practical connections with ruling value systems. However, the Shoshoni picture is not only divided but fragmentary, possibly due to Christian impact. There is much information to be gained on gods and spirits, but I could not get any unified account of cosmology from my informants. It has to be reconstructed.

Let us first see what the ancestral Basin cosmology looked like. In a perusal of the evidence Sven Liljeblad recognizes "a cosmic duality at the bottom of all existence," an opposition between man's world on the surface of this earth, and a subterranean world populated by spirits, ghosts and game-animals. On the other hand, he reports no belief in a supernatural heavenly world (Liljeblad, 1986:652). Liljeblad admits, however, there are myths telling us that mythological beings have been transferred to the sky (Ibid.:656f). This circumstance, together with the fact that there is a sacred-pole complex among the Basin peoples (see below), makes us wonder whether or not there was in reality a three-tiered Universe in this area as there was in many others. We shall soon return to the meaning of the sacred pole.

Certainly, Wind River Shoshoni mythology bears witness to the existence of three world levels, underground, ground and sky. However, as in mythology we are confronted by divine beings, animals and men living together in the cosmic beginning, the scene of events is this earth. As we have seen, the earth described in myths looks much like the Great Basin landscape. As I have pointed out elsewhere, however, there is a discrepancy between the world view of mythology and that of traditional religion (Hultkrantz, 1981 b:28-47). The former is good for the tales, but insufficient for current reality. Mythology forms a configuration of its own, different from and sometimes contradictory to practical religion.

Practical religion contains all those beliefs and rituals which belong to everyday life, including the great ritual occasions. While it is true that many of the customs and rites are authorized by the culture hero's behaviour and proclamations, in the myths most authorizations are derived from visionary experiences of human heroes in the past. It is in this way that Plains religious features have been sanctioned and adopted in Shoshoni religion.

A survey of Wind River Shoshoni religious beliefs shows that most spiritual beings are divided between the upper world and this world. The underworld is toned down, as is demonstrated in the following table (see further, Hultkrantz, 1981 b:21-23):

Upper world (the sky and air):

Our Father and his manifestations (sun and moon)
 Thunder and Lightning
 Wind spirits

Middle world:

Puha, that is, all the spirits which grant man supernatural power in the vision quest, almost all of them zoomorphic
 Spirits of dangerous places, usually malevolent
 Disease-giving dwarf spirits
 Wandering ghosts

Lower world (under surface of earth)

Mother Earth (identical with the earth)
 Water buffaloes in lakes and rivers, and other water beings

Figure 1

As can be seen from the table, the upper world is the residence of important spirits. Whatever place Our Father might have had in Basin culture days, he is here clearly placed in the sky. My informants denied that this was a construction brought about by Christian teaching. Thunder, Lightning and Winds are spirits of the air, closer to earth. Most spirits, however, belong to the terrestrial plane, or, more cautiously formulated, they manifest themselves there to man. There is an innumerable host of guardian spirits, some of whom (such as Thunder, Lightning and the Winds) also appear on higher levels as well. Of the underground spirits some, like the water spirits, may also be counted among the beings of this world. Mother Earth is the earth itself (except in mythology); thus she may also be seen as part of this world. Her position in the Shoshoni pantheon needs further investigation.

Figure 1 does not show the location of the dead, except as wandering ghosts. Most information holds that the dead are situated apart from this world, beyond the western mountains, or in the sky, or somewhere else. There are reports of an underground land of the dead, just as in the Great Basin, but this idea is not generally accepted. However, a more common belief claims that the dead have to pass through a dark tunnel in order to reach the land beyond.⁷

This reduction of a three-level cosmology to a dual cosmology between heaven and earth represents a Plains Indian conception, as will soon be observed. In fact, all the spirits noted in the table are compatible with a Plains Indian perspective, although many of them (like Our Father, many guardian spirits, dangerous place spirits, dwarf spirits, and water buffalos) are of Basic origin. Several of the latter, like Our Father, have been adjusted to the Plains

pattern. Thus, Our Father has become activated (largely through the Sun Dance, I presume), and his association with the sky has become more fixed.

Two rituals give further evidence of Wind River Shoshoni cosmology: the smoking ritual and the Sun Dance. Both have been elaborated in Plains Indian culture, and the Shoshoni have obviously taken them over from other Plains tribes.⁸ Their Sun Dance, however, had a predecessor of pure Basin origin, the Father Dance.

The smoking ritual, which apparently existed before the formation of the Plains cultural component, introduces all major prayers and ceremonies. The sacred pipe, circulating among the participants, is directed towards the four sacred directions, zenith and nadir. Here, in this ancient ritual, we thus return to the three cosmic levels. The pipe ceremony is supposed to appease all the powers of the Universe and to create harmony between them and man. It is common to all Plains tribes, and is now found in many others as well.

The Father Dance was still in force during the end of the nineteenth century. It was *an instance* of the old Great Basin round dance, and as such a thanksgiving to Our Father for the bounty during the past year, and a prayer for continued blessings during the year to come. The members of the tribe danced sideways in a circle around a hemlock or cedar tree, planted for the purpose. Ritual poles, possibly filling the same function, have occurred among the Great Basin peoples, where they had the same central position as the pole of the Father Dance (Hultkrantz, 1986a:634). A brush enclosure was built around the tree. Although it is tempting to interpret this airy structure as a cosmic model, we have no information allowing us to do so. It is different with the centre post. Careful research has elucidated that the ritual replica of the mythic world-axis, or world-tree, is distributed over the northern parts of Eurasia, and throughout North and South America.⁹ The Basin posts and the Wind River Shoshoni cedar tree would well fit into this wide distribution. Again, there is no overt information about their meaning, but the circumstances suggest the interpretation made here (Hultkrantz, 1981 b:276-78).

The Sun Dance, which was introduced from other Plains Indians in the early nineteenth century, has a clear cosmic symbolism. According to my informants, the Sun Dance Lodge, a round structure of brush with twelve roof poles hinged on a centre post, is a symbol of the world:

It is round because it is the world. The rafters are supposed to extend over the earth. It is the first place where the humans could pray (Hultkrantz, 1981 b:249).

The centre pole is the most sacred part of the Lodge. It serves as an intermediary between man and the Supreme Being. Prayers to the latter follow the pole upwards, and power radiates from it. It represents God and his powers. On a side-rafter there is a stuffed eagle, symbol of the sky and the chief of the birds. It is probably that formerly it had its place on the top of the centre post (cf. below, note 10). Lower down on the sacred pole an attached buffalo head represents the four-legged animals, the chief food of man in pre-reservation times (Hultkrantz, 1981 b:252, 254, 255). The upper part of the pole is forked and indicates that it stands for the Milky Way, which is as we know similarly divided into two branches. According to Shoshoni beliefs the Milky Way is the path trodden by the dead on their way to the world beyond. The sacred pole is thus a ritual replica of this road. Now, the Milky Way is called in Shoshoni *tugungu:himp*, "the backbone of the sky." This name apparently refers to the *axis mundi* that keeps up the sky. The implication is, of course, that the sacred pole is the world pole. 1°

The cosmological symbolism is quite clear. The vault of heaven rests on the world pole, and the Supreme Being sends down his blessings to mankind along it. Mankind is enclosed in this earthly world, which is bounded by the blue sky. At death people travel along the world pole up into the heavenly realm. This is a dualistic world picture, manifesting an opposition between this world and the one above. This symbolism is concisely expressed in the two flags appended to the forks of the centre pole. One of them is of a darker colour, usually blue; the other one is whitish. According to one of my most knowledgeable informants, they stand for dark and light, night and day, earth and sky (Hultkrantz, 1981b:256). The Sun Dance symbolism thus reinforces what we have observed before, the dualism heaven-earth, with little consideration to the underworld. In fact, the only reference to the underworld in the Sun Dance ritual, besides the aforementioned smoking ritual, is the ceremonial leader's offering of tobacco to Mother Earth (Hultkrantz, 1981 b:40 [illustration]).

It is now possible to discuss the question posed earlier whether the Sun Dance Lodge of the Wind River Shoshoni supplies the ideology of creation symbolized in other Plains Indian Sun Dance Lodges. We have seen that so far it models cosmology. It is therefore easy to conclude that the Sun Dance itself has a cosmogonic import: that it reproduces the creation process. However, this is not at all obvious from the information at hand. First of all, there is in the Sun Dance structure no reference to creation, and, having noted the vague statements about creation among the Shoshoni, we can hardly imagine that the Shoshoni Sun Dance goal was re-creation. The Shoshoni themselves motivate their Sun Dancing with a desire for being blessed with a long life, and they send prayers for good luck, success in

war, and cure for diseases (Hultkrantz, 1981b:242).¹¹ Secondly, the cosmological elements of the Sun Dance ceremonial structure may very well have been taken over already with the incorporation of the Sun Dance, and without the Shoshoni understanding the meaning of the original symbolism for the ritual (Hultkrantz, 1981b:262f).

Concluding Reflections

Our survey has brought us from the Great Basin culture, mirrored in the mythology of the Wyoming Shoshoni, to the Plains culture as evidenced in the beliefs and rituals of these Shoshoni. We are here faced with a composite cosmology derived from two different sources and therefore not homogeneous. Indeed, there are difficult contradictions in the cosmological pattern.

Seen in a larger perspective, this situation represents a clash between two major ideologies in aboriginal North America. These are the hunting religions and the agricultural religions. As it is impossible to discuss them extensively in this context, I would refer to my elaborations on the subject in a recent work (Hultkrantz, 1987). Some simple statements may suffice here. The hunting ideology, which is characterized by its occupation with animal spirits, its search for spiritual power and shamanism, is basically a continuation of North Eurasian hunting culture. Within this culture there is a cosmology that has become well-known because of its close relationship to shamanism in this area. Its more prominent constituents are the world pole, the three world tiers, and the four sacred directions (Hultkrantz, 1981c:17).

The agricultural ideology, again, is marked by concerns about rain and fertility, ritualism and priest speculation. An *elaborate* pattern of cosmic symbolism, based upon the old hunting cosmology but extended and more integrative, has been worked out by ritual specialists. Its application in ritual has resulted in a complicated ceremonialism with an abundance of vegetation symbols. This ideology originated in Mesoamerica and spread during the first thousand years of our Christian chronology to the Southwest and the East.

The reader might well ask what this has to do with Shoshoni cosmology. Were the Shoshoni ever agriculturists? The answer is no, or probably no; but they were secondarily influenced by agricultural cosmology. First of all, when the Shoshoni migrated from their ancient country of origin in the southern Great Basin they might have been influenced from the enigmatic Fremont culture in Utah, an agricultural complex that was extinguished about 1300.¹² We may, for instance, speculate that the Shoshoni tales of the dead in the underworld, a characteristic feature of agricultural mythology,

derive from this source. This is, however, a very uncertain case. As well, agricultural religious features made their way into the Plains cosmological pattern. The Plains culture is made up of both hunters from the north and west and agriculturists from the south and east. Although we may differentiate between agricultural Prairie tribes and equestrian hunters on the High Plains, we see an amalgamation between them in ceremonialism and cosmology. ¹³The intricate ceremonialism of the Sun Dance springs from the spiritual horizons of both hunters and planters. In this blend the subterrestrian world domains have become suppressed in the Dance ideology, the outcome of the hunters' perspectives.

The hunting tradition that is the base of Wind River Shoshoni cosmology has of course become very modified through ecological, structural and historical factors. It cannot be directly derived from old Eurasian hunting tradition. In the Plains it has, as we have seen, been mixed with agrarian cultural components. In the Great Basin it disappeared behind the curtains of the so-called Desert culture, with its emphasis on the collection of wild seeds and nuts and small game hunting (Jennings, 1964). In this area the disorganization of society as a consequence of progressive desiccation most probably brought about a dissolution of old cosmological concepts. Thus, the three world tiers are only vaguely recognized here, in spite of the occurrence of the sacred number three (see Figure 2). When the Shoshoni had more or less become Plains Indians, a dual pattern seems to have replaced the older threefold pattern. We perceive the following models of world structure:

Archaic Circumboreal	Great Basin	Plains	Wind River
Heaven	Heaven?	Heaven	Heaven
This world	This world	This world	This world
Underworld	Underworld	(Underworld)	(Underworld)

Figure 2

In all four cases, except possibly in the Basin, the world pillar or world tree joins the three worlds with each other. The sacred number is almost everywhere four, and is associated with the winds and the world-quarters. In the Archaic circumboreal it is also three, after the number of worlds, or three times three. Westernmost North America, including the Great Basin, favours the sacred number three besides four.

We have thus found that Shoshoni cosmology mirrors a dual heritage, one from the Great Basin and another from the Plains. Elements from hunting and horticultural ideologies have built up selected parts of these traditions. Still, there is a basic underlying world picture which embraces both of

these traditions, expressing a general orientation to cosmos that may be found in both the Old and the New Worlds, and that is apparently of great antiquity.

NOTES

1. The author conducted field research among these Indians and their close neighbours (Shoshonean groups in Idaho, and the Algonkian speaking Arapaho in Wyoming) between 1948 and 1958 and occasionally thereafter. For a general presentation of Wind River Shoshoni religion, see Hultkrantz (1987).
2. Christian influence probably started with the white trappers who married into Shoshoni families, and it was strengthened after the establishment of missions in the 1880's (Hultkrantz, 1981 b:213-22). Beliefs in God, in life after death, and in the symbolism of the Sun Dance changed considerably as a consequence.
3. For the ethnic and cultural composition of the Great Basin Indians, see D'Azevedo (1986). A survey of their religion from an ecological perspective is presented in Hultkrantz (1976), and from more general points of view in Hultkrantz (1986a).
4. Hultkrantz (1949). For an ethnographic presentation of the Plains Shoshoni, see Shimkin (1986). The historical development is delineated in Hultkrantz (1968).
5. On the belief in the Supreme Being among the Shoshoni, see Hultkrantz (1962, 1981 b:20-27).
6. For an interpretation also applicable to North American data, see Lawrence E. Sullivan, *South American Religions: An Orientation to Meaning* (forthcoming).
7. This motif may have its origin in a near-death experience. Hultkrantz (1982b).
8. Concerning the Sun Dance, see Shimkin (1953) and Hultkrantz (1981 b:213f., 240-42).
9. This research has been carried out by some German scholars, such as Wilhelm Schmidt, Josef Haekel, and Werner Muller. Cf. Hultkrantz (1979:109f).

10. Hultkrantz, 1981 b:251f. There is a reduplication of the name "backbone of the sky" in the rafter, with a forked end, to which the eagle is attached. It seems reasonable to imply that originally the eagle had its place at the top of the centre pole, most probably in the nest of willows which is constructed where the rafters of the "roof" meet (as we find in the Sun Dances of other Plains tribes).
11. Since about 1890, cure of diseases has been the major motivation for arranging Sun Dances.
12. For the Fremont culture, see Marwitt (1986).
13. Holder (1974), see for example pp. 129f. (on the Sun Dance).

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