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The Shoshone Ghost Dance and Numic Myth: Common Heritage, Common Themes

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The outer form and inner meaning of Wind River Shoshone Ghost Dance are shaped by conceptions of nature and the relationship of people to the natural world. This paper examines Numic conceptions and images of nature in myth, shamanism, the Round Dance, and the Shoshone Ghost Dance, noting their close correspondence. Topics include the circle of nature and power, the power of song, dance, and language, nature and metaphor, and death and resurrection. Underlying concerns for food, weather, and health in myth, shamanism, the Round Dance, and Shoshone Ghost Dance songs further attest to the Numic nature of Wovoka's Ghost Dance religion and its performance by Wind River Shoshone in this century.

CONCEPTIONS of nature and the relationship of people to the natural world shape the outer form and inner meaning of Wind River Shoshone Ghost Dance songs and religion. This paper examines these conceptions and this relationship, and compares them with those in Numic myth, shamanism, and the Round Dance. I shall point out the many common features in all, and the particular set of topics and favored images that comprise their Numic family likeness.

The Great Basin, much of which is dry land with scarce food resources, is the historical and geographical backdrop for all that is to follow. Shoshone and Paiute cultures that took root there did so by surviving in small family groups who moved about, harvesting food as it ripened in different areas, and hunting when possible. The environment left an indelible mark on Great Basin culture and its focused concern for water, food, and health.

Ancestors of the Wind River Shoshone people migrated onto the Plains by the early sixteenth century, assumed Plains culture and life in the eighteenth century, and settled on the Wind River reservation in Wyoming by the end of the nineteenth century. The transition to re-

servation life was traumatic. Disease brought the population to its lowest ebb, and due, in part, to a lack of water on the reservation, early attempts at farming subsequently failed. People supplemented government food rations by gathering wild foods and hunting. The Wind River Shoshone post-Basin experience has served only to validate the ancient concerns of their Basin origins.

THE SHOSHONE GHOST DANCE AND THE 1890 GHOST DANCE MOVEMENT

It is important to realize key differences that separate the Shoshone Ghost Dance from the 1890 Ghost Dance movement as it is generally known. Perhaps one consequence of the massacre at Wounded Knee has been a wide distribution of information on Sioux performance of the religion. Sensational newspaper accounts of the time and later studies present Sioux Ghost Dance doctrine: resurrection of the dead, return of the buffalo and a free-roving Plains life, destruction of all non-Indians, and bulletproof Ghost Dance shirts. Wovoka, Northern Paiute Ghost Dance prophet, did predict the return of the dead and promise a new world of health, fecundity, and immortality. However, the Sioux Ghost Dance

assumed its own particular profile regarding the relationship to non-Indians, the importance of Ghost Dance shirts, and interpreting the new world to come in terms of Sioux Plains culture of the past. Great Basin origins of the religion and Wind River Shoshone performance as presented in this paper argue for a different profile, the consequence of a particular view of the natural world and their relationship to it—a Great Basin, Numic view.

I begin with the Shoshone Ghost Dance, or *Naraya*,¹ which literally refers to the side-shuffling step used by the dancers. Henceforth, I shall use this term when referring to the Wind River Shoshone Ghost Dance; it is accurate, specific, and preferred by the Shoshone. In contrast, the term “Ghost Dance” reflects knowledge of the religion from a Sioux perspective. It is a literal translation into English from the Sioux and other Plains languages (Mooney 1896: 791). As we shall see, ghosts were feared in the Great Basin. Wovoka and his Paiute converts drew on a long-standing Round Dance tradition and simply referred to the dance and religion as *Nānigūkwa*, dance in a circle (Mooney 1896: 791). Shoshone and Paiute terms, although different, refer to this same older tradition.

Emily Hill, an Eastern Shoshone woman from the Wind River reservation in Wyoming, has sung for me 147 *Naraya* songs and schooled me on their meaning:

Them songs is for, it's for the grass to grow again and grow good and trees grow good, green. Flowers grow good and berries, our berries. Some people say when our trees and grass and berries, old people says, “Well, we'll dance. We'll make our earth come, grow up and make more water, more water.” *Datevuntäg* means wake 'em up, wake 'em up. That song is for that [Vander n.d.].

The main function of the dance was to revitalize the natural world, to ensure plenty of rain, plants, and animals. In addition, *Naraya* performance was also used to prevent destructive storms and epidemics; on an individual basis, it

could help cure illness as well. The religion addressed underlying concerns for food, weather, and health. As we shall see, this is also true in Numic myth, shamanism, and the Round Dance performance.

Elsewhere (Vander n.d.), I have written at length about the origins of the *Naraya*, which I believe can be traced to the religious traditions of the Great Basin Round Dance. The *Naraya* may possibly have been relatively quiescent for a period of time in the mid-nineteenth century, but in any case it took on new life as the basis of the Shoshone variant of the 1890 Ghost Dance movement. Wovoka's Ghost Dance doctrine overlaid the *Naraya* with its predictions for the return of the dead and the destruction of this world at the advent of a pristine new world.

These prophecies never took place; discredited, Ghost Dance influence eroded but the underlying *Naraya* endured. By the time I met Emily Hill in 1977, she denied that the *Naraya* had ever had anything to do with Wovoka or any other non-Shoshone influence. Notably absent in Emily's statements given above is any reference to belief in the resurrection of the dead. Emily never talked about this except in relationship to translating two song texts that dealt explicitly with it. Resurrection was an important tenet in the Ghost Dance vision of Wovoka, and became a central focus in Plains Ghost Dance performance, whose song texts frequently imagined events in the spirit world of the dead. This is in sharp contrast to the placement and themes of the *Naraya* religion and its song texts.

NARAYA IMAGERY

I have analyzed 130 *Naraya* songs for which I have translations, noting and tallying their topics and imagery. For example, the topic-images in *Naraya* Song 1 are: bird, sky, grass/greenery, and water. Unlike a scientific measurement of physical properties, a count of topics and imagery is bound to contain a certain

amount of overlap and even arbitrariness.² Despite these fuzzy edges, I believe Table 1 is revealing.

At the broadest level, the 320 topic-imagery elements divide into two unequal portions, with differing subject matter. The smaller portion clusters around Ghost Dance belief and Ghost Dance worlds: resurrection of the dead from their spirit world and a utopian world to come, presaged by thunder and earthquakes. The larger centers on the natural world, this world, in all its multitudinous forms, textured and colored through a prism of Great Basin worldview.

The two following examples are characteristic of that worldview: tiny evocative scenes, miniature ecologies that cite locus, plants, and animals. People rarely intrude:

Naraya Song 1

<i>Gwinan</i>	<i>gas</i>	<i>dugumbaiyu,</i>
Eagle's	wing	is skying,
<i>Gwinan</i>	<i>gas</i>	<i>dugumbaiyu.</i>
Eagle's	wing	is skying.
<i>Buhi ba</i>	<i>roanzi</i>	<i>marukandu havenòrë,</i>
Green water	shiny	under lying-moving,
<i>Buhi ba</i>	<i>roanzi</i>	<i>marukandu havenòrë.</i>
Green water	shiny	under lying-moving.

[Naraya Song 6 in Vander 1986:39-40].

Emily explained, "That eagle's flying, his wing's way up there in the sky, looking down to the earth and seeing the water shining. And the grass on the earth, green" (Vander 1986:40). The eagle is a sacred bird to the Shoshone and many other Native American tribes. The use of a fan made from an eagle wing is an essential part of traditional healing practices. Shoshone Sun Dancers blow on eagle bone whistles while dancing, and the Sun Dance Chief carries an eagle feather fan which he uses to brush away illness and to bless. The eagle's realm, the sky, is considered to be clean and free of all disease.

Green is the principal color used in Naraya songs, and refers to the vegetation that the songs and dance seek to bring. Finally, the text of

Naraya Song 1 mentions water, the most important image in Naraya songs. It appears in every conceivable form: in Song 1, it is ground water; in Song 2 (see page 178), it is weather-related water—sun showers. Emily commented on this text:

Our mountains, you know, it kind of sprinkles up the mountains like, towards the light. That's afternoon showers. It's raining, [but] not too much. And there's, on the mountains, there's them water pools. Just like lakes, but only smaller. You know how it is, puddles under them mountains. And those pine tree leaves all over on the water. Pine needles in the water. That's what it means. Clouds go over, clouds behind that—shadow, shadow on them puddle things. It gives that shade where the water puddles are [Vander n.d.].

With exquisite poetic economy, this puddle-text collects in its reflected image mountains, trees, greenery, sky-rain-water—the essence of Numic Naraya art and soul.

Animals besides eagles and birds are another major category in an inventory of Naraya song imagery, as shown in Song 3 (see page 178). Emily translated as follows:

Our Father's, our Creator's mountain lion walking around on the side of the mountain. All the animals, different kinds of animals that belong to Him—deer, elk, moose, mountain sheep, and antelope—little ones with the older ones—sitting down on the side of the mountain [Vander 1986:46].

"Our Father" was the way that many tribes addressed Wovoka. Among Great Basin tribes, and including the Wind River Shoshone, it is an old term and a conceptual entity, one that antedates the 1890 Ghost Dance movement.³ Prayers addressed to Our Father were spoken at Great Basin Round Dances of the past. These dances and the religious ceremony attached to them are an ancient tradition upon which the Paiute Ghost Dance is built, and which continued in the Naraya.

The mountain setting of this song and the preceding one is common in Naraya songs and

Table 1
TOPIC-IMAGERY TABLE OF 130 NARAYA SONGS

GHOST DANCE BELIEF AND WORLDS	COUNT OF TOPIC-IMAGES	THIS WORLD: NATURE	COUNT OF TOPIC-IMAGES
Our Father	5	water ⁴	52
new world	4	-ground	(27)
dead relatives	4	-weather	(25)
medicinal power	3	mountains	45
soul	2	animals (excl. birds)	34
resurrection	2	-young	(7)
spirit world	2	greenery or vegetation	32
mountain road for spirit	2	-food plants	(10)
thunder	2	-flowers	(2)
sacred power	2	trees or wood	29
earthquake	1	birds	17
whirlwind	1	-immature	(3)
Naraya performance	1	earth	17
song	1	rocks	15
sickness	1	sun or day	14
morning star	<u>1</u>	sky	7
		Milky Way	6
		people	6
		wind	5
		night	3
		silver	2
		feather	<u>2</u>
Totals	34		286

is meaningful.⁵ Brackett (1880:30) reported that the Shoshone believed the Wind River Shoshone Mountains to be the home of the spirits; from their heights one could actually view the land of the dead.

The special mention of young animals is relatively common in Naraya songs, and for this reason has its own subcategory in Table 1 (see above). Abundance of game depends upon numerous offspring. Articulated mention of them in song sings them into reality, just as mention of water and greenery sings water and greenery into reality. Emily explained this to me as follows:

They say when you sing those songs it makes berries grow! And makes grass grow. Make

water run. That's what they say. It makes water, won't get dried up. Grass grow and berries grow, plenty of berries in the fall. Everything: fish, anything. Sing for them. Let them, our elk and deer and all them. That's what it's for. It ain't any kind of song. It's for that. So our land won't get dry! Our berries won't dry up and die off. That's what it means [Vander n.d.].

Naraya song texts are akin to Japanese haiku (Liljeblad 1986:647; Vander 1988:19). All is accomplished with brevity and compression and is suggestive of various interpretations. This is in accord with Liljeblad's description of Round Dance songs and Crum's comments on Shoshone poetry songs sung at social dances⁶ (Crum 1980:5; Liljeblad 1986:647). In the case of Naraya texts, sometimes only the person who

Naraya Song 2

<i>Dave</i>	<i>bauwah</i>	<i>doiyave</i>	<i>dave</i>	<i>bauwah</i>	<i>doiyave</i>	<i>ena,</i>
Sun, day	rain	mountains	sun, day	rain	mountains	(vocable),
<i>Dave</i>	<i>bauwah</i>	<i>doiyave</i>	<i>dave</i>	<i>bauwah</i>	<i>doiyave</i>	<i>ena.</i>
Sun, day	rain	mountains	sun, day	rain	mountains	(vocable).
<i>Wongo</i>	<i>sügi</i>	<i>babai-eya</i>	<i>wegin</i>	<i>dogando</i>	<i>dave</i>	
Pine	needles	puddles	side	?low place, deep	sun, day	
	<i>bauwah</i>	<i>doiyave</i>	<i>ena.</i>			
	rain	mountains	(vocable).			

[Vander n.d.]

Naraya Song 3

<i>Damë</i>	<i>Apande</i>	<i>doiya</i>	<i>rukuvich,</i>		
Our	Father's	mountain	lion,		
<i>Doiya</i>	<i>dïvana</i>	<i>dukaig</i>	<i>miyawaindë</i>	<i>yaiyo</i>	<i>waindë.</i>
Mountain	side	below	walking down	yowling	(vocable).
<i>Damë</i>	<i>Apande</i>	<i>doiya</i>	<i>rukuvich,</i>		
Our	Father's	mountain	lion,		
<i>Doiya</i>	<i>dïvana</i>	<i>dukaig</i>	<i>miyawaindë</i>	<i>yaiyo</i>	<i>waindë.</i>
Mountain	side	below	walking down	yowling	(vocable).
<i>Damë</i>	<i>Apan-</i>	<i>bitë</i>		<i>wazum-</i>	
Our	Father's	(affectionate dim. ending)		game animals	
		<i>bitë dua-</i>	<i>n- zi garidno</i>	<i>waindë,</i>	
		(dim.) child	(dim.) sitting	(vocable),	
<i>Damë</i>	<i>Apan-</i>	<i>bitë</i>		<i>wazum-</i>	
Our	Father's	(affectionate dim. ending)		game animals	
		<i>bitë dua-</i>	<i>n- zi garidno</i>	<i>wainda.</i>	
		(dim.) child	(dim.) sitting	(vocable).	

[Naraya Song 8 in Vander 1986:45-46].

received the song in a dream knew all of its meanings (Vander 1988:15).

NATURE AND POWER IN NUMIC MYTH AND THE NARAYA

Because there is such a wealth of Numic myth literature, it was impossible to do an analogous tally of its subjects and imagery in this article. Nevertheless, it is clear that the first seven items on the Naraya nature list (Table

1)—water in all its forms, mountains, animals, grass/greenery, trees, rocks, and birds—appear abundantly in Numic myth as well.

Before continuing with the analysis of the common understanding of nature in Numic myth and the Naraya, it is important to point out some distinctions between the two regarding their subject matter. First, people appear infrequently in both Naraya songs and Numic myth. (The absence of people in Naraya songs sets Naraya and

Paiute Ghost Dance songs apart from Plains Ghost Dance songs in which the reverse is true. People appear in virtually every Plains Ghost Dance song.) Second, animals abound in Numic myth and the Naraya, but there is a difference between them: such main characters in Numic myth as Wolf, Coyote, and Cottontail inhabit the world at an earlier time when birds, animals, and even rocks could talk (Lowie 1924a:228, 229; Kelly 1932:137; Smith 1940:119, 193; Steward 1943a:257; Shimkin 1947:329; Fowler and Fowler 1971:241; Johnson 1975:12), and these mythic characters are well-delineated individual personalities: they are animals qua people and are unlike the generic animals that appear in Naraya songs. One finds neither Coyote nor his bawdiness in Naraya songs. Nor does one find the negative destructive potential for power that appears in Numic tales; for example, water babies who drown their victims (Smith 1940:111; Shimkin 1947:332). This dark underside of power and water is also totally absent in Naraya songs.

These differences aside, Numic myth and the Naraya share a basic understanding of how the natural world works. Both presuppose a circle of nature and power, a system of cause and effect with its own laws and conventions outside the purview of modern science. Beneath physical nature, which sustains life, resides a metaphysical nature, a source of power found in plants, birds and other animals, mountains, rocks, caves, springs, lakes, lightning, etc. (Lowie 1909:223-224; Steward 1933:312; Harris 1940:55; Johnson 1975:45; Hultkrantz 1981:39, 1986:631, 1987:47, 51, 60; Liljeblad 1986:644; Shimkin 1986:325). Thus, a serviceberry branch on a house has power to protect it from thunder (Steward 1943b:353); thunder has power to cure Oriole (Fowler and Fowler 1971:92); mole has power to cause thunder (Steward 1943b:353). Animal characters in Numic myth, despite their ability to talk and their anthropomorphic familiarity, are still animals and have metaphysical

power over the natural world. Cottontail kills the sun and makes a new one (Steward 1943b:390). Beaver and Muskrat create the world (Liljeblad 1969:50). Whippoorwill's song and dance turn frog into the moon (Fowler and Fowler 1971:221). A dead frog laid on its back brings rain; placed right side up, it stops rain (Steward 1943b:354).

This last example demonstrates the power to influence weather, the control of rain. Water in every form—fog, snow, ice, rain, rivers, lakes—plays an important part in Numic myth and was the most frequent topic and image in the chart of Naraya songs (Table 1). It is a potent source of power. Springs and lakes are a traditional place to seek vision and power (Kelly 1932:190). In the Wind River Shoshone Sun Dance, a vision of water is interpreted as a sign and symbol of power (Jorgensen 1972:207-210; Voget 1984:211, 259; Vander 1988:64, 100-101). Resurrection of the dead in Numic myth is commonly achieved by use of water or damp ground (Lowie 1909:261, 1924a:210, 213, 231; Steward 1936:431, 1943a:298; Kelly 1938:382; Smith 1940:58, 167; Hultkrantz 1961:215; Fowler and Fowler 1971:222).

Characters in Numic myth also have power over water and weather; for example, Black Hawk's wife could control fog and thin ice (Steward 1936:389). Myth-telling itself has power and affects the weather (Lowie 1909:323; Smith 1940:2034; Steward 1943b:391). Shimkin (1947:329-330) reported that Wind River Shoshone myths are told in the daytime or else it will storm, told by a summer-born person or else it will be cold, told in full or else it will storm, and end with hints of melting snow, which is the result of proper myth-telling. Hultkrantz (1976:147) added that myth is told in the winter in order to hasten spring and bring fertility.

Like myth-telling, Naraya performance was also thought to affect weather, bringing more water. Emily Hill's earlier comments and the

following quote from Lowie (1915:817) document this: "The Shoshone believe it always keeps storming when the [Naraya] dance is performed; thus last winter (1911) it was snowing all the time because of several performances." In his vision of God in which he learned about the Ghost Dance, Wovoka also received five songs with power to cause clouds, snowfall, showers, storms, and clear weather (Mooney 1896:772-773). Speaking to Cheyenne and Arapaho delegates who had come to learn the new religion, Wovoka promised them plenty of rain and snow (Mooney 1896:781).

The importance of weather, especially water-related weather, in Numic life and thought is reflected in the presence of Northern Paiute origin stories for snow, hail, rain, rainbow, and even water itself, as shown by the following story (Fowler and Fowler 1971:219-220). At first people searched all over but could not find any water. Finally they opened a tree and there was water. "The father tells them that . . . hereafter to look in the green spots on the ground and they will find water . . ." (Fowler and Fowler 1971:219).

In Numic myth and Round Dance performance, water, trees, and greenery entwine in association and meaning. Wind River Shoshone placed a cedar tree and an evergreen in the center of the dance circle for the Naraya and Round Dances of the past (Mooney 1896:809; Olden 1923:37; Hultkrantz 1986:634). We have already heard Emily's connection between Naraya performance and water and plants. White Knife Shoshone placed a green willow pole in the center of their Round Dance, which, according to Harris (1940:53), "symbolized the verdure of the earth." We see this connection of water, trees, and greenery with food in Steward's report of the placement of a pine-nut tree with green cones in the center of the Round Dance circle in order to insure the pine-nut harvest (Steward 1941:352). It is these religious aspects of the Round Dance, the concerns they ad-

dressed, and their religious form and expression, that inform the Paiute Ghost Dance and Naraya performance.

Two of nine Paiute Ghost Dance songs published by Mooney (1896:1054-1055) are devoted exclusively to willows, grasses, cottonwoods, and greenery. Mooney (1896:797) wrote that on one occasion Wovoka gave green grass as a present to a Sioux delegation. A glimpse of the land of the dead in Numic myth shows a happy, green, and grassy place, and by implication, a well-watered place, a place with trees (Brackett 1880:330; Lowie 1924a:208; Steward 1933:307, 1943:287; Harris 1940:66; Hultkrantz 1976:146). For Wind River Shoshone, even the road to the land of the dead has grass. Naraya Song 10 (Vander 1986:53) described the green mountain pass that the whirlwind-shrouded soul travels to God's home. In summary, water, trees, and greenery strongly associate with one another and with power, and are important topics and images in both Numic myth and Naraya songs.

Two final Shoshone examples further demonstrate these points. The special associations between tree, water, and power are clearly seen in the Sun Dance ceremony. Shoshone use a cottonwood tree for the center pole of the Sun Dance Lodge. Jorgensen (1972:182) explained the symbolic relationship in this context, "The center pole is the medium through which supernatural power is channelled. The center pole is also believed to have supernatural power of its own. . . . In all instances . . . power is equated with water."

Richard Engavo, an elderly Shoshone man, articulated the close association of greenery to water to power in his comments on the timing of the Sun Dance, past and present. They reinforce and complement the tree-water-power triad discussed above:

The Shoshones used to have their Sun Dance in June, when the sweet sage leaves were damp and green. Everything was green and everything was damp. But now, along in July [when the Sun

Dance is currently held], everything's burned up. Everything has no leaves on it; it's all dried up. Just has no power, nothing in it [Vander 1988: 100-101].

People are part of nature, too, and tap into the world of power, either as passive recipient of it from a guardian spirit (Steward 1934:424; Park 1938:22; Smith 1940:199; Hultkrantz 1987:52) or as active seeker of a vision by going to a special place in nature associated with power (Lowie 1924b:294; Kelly 1932:190; Park 1938:22, 118; Harris 1940:57; Steward 1943b: 345). (For Wind River Shoshone, Dinwoody Canyon, with its lake and rocks bearing ancient petroglyphs, is such a place [Shimkin 1986: 325].)

The Power of Song

Power from the natural world, often identified as a spirit, manifests itself in a dream or vision, communicating and transferring power with song (Park 1938:22-23, 47; Smith 1940: 199; Steward 1941:254, 259, 353, 1943:282, 345; Stewart 1941:413; Hultkrantz 1956:201, 1987:54; Liljeblad 1957:32; Fowler and Fowler 1971:246; Vander 1988:13). There is ample documentation for dreamed origins of song in the Shoshone Naraya and the Ghost Dance of other tribes (Mooney 1896:923, 953; Spier 1935:8; Hultkrantz 1951:32; Dobyns and Euler 1967:7; Vander 1988:13-14). Round Dance songs were also received in dream (Liljeblad 1986:649). Underscoring the importance of song for Shoshone shamans of Nevada, Steward (1941:259) wrote, "Vision gave not only spirit helpers, but songs (which were the most potent element in the power)." Park (1938:22-23) reinforced the importance and close connections of dream, power, and song: "The central idea in the acquisition of supernatural power is dream experience. . . . [Nick Downington, a Paviotso shaman] learns his songs when the spirit comes and sings to him," and "There seems . . . to be an emphasis on auditory experience in dreams."

The power of song to affect nature pervades Numic culture: its myth, the Naraya and Wovoka's conception of the Ghost Dance, religious aspects (prayerful and ceremonial) of the Round Dance, and shamanism. In myth, song moves heavenly bodies: Duck sings up the sun (Kelly 1938:420). Song affects the weather: Cottontail gets wind through singing (Steward 1943a:285), and the song of Owl and Duck makes the weather clear (Steward 1936:417). Song creates: Hawk and Fish-eater sing and shake a rattle to create the earth (Steward 1936:364). Song resurrects the dead: [Blue] Jay, who was dismembered, comes back to life singing (Fowler and Fowler 1971:93).

Moving from myth to the world of people, we see that song is a crucial link in the circle of nature and power. If water, trees, and greenery form one configuration in Numic thought and culture, then song, dance, and words form another. Power inheres in both configurations: nature in the first, human in the second. In dream, people receive power with song, or as song, from some part of nature. Thus empowered and instructed, they sing and affect the natural world, the weather, fertility, and the health of their ecosystem. Thus, the shaman's song helps cure illness (Kelly 1932:192), charms antelope to a desired place or enclosure (Kelly 1932:83-84), and can change the weather (Kelly 1932:202, 1939:159; Park 1938:60).

The Power of Dance

Song is not the only human vehicle and expression of power. The role of dance in myth is as important as the song it accompanies. Song and dance together transform frog into moon (Fowler and Fowler 1971:221), save Magpie (Steward 1936:383), resurrect Mumpich's dead wife and child (Fowler and Fowler 1971:260), drive illness away from the prairie-dog village (a reference to the Comanche Ghost [Father] Dance in myth [Lowie 1909:274-275]), and bring rain to the *Tan-tau-wats*, or Southerners (Fowler and

Fowler 1971:87). Dance also plays a role in two principal tasks of Numic shamans mentioned earlier: curing (Park 1938:51, 122) and antelope charming (Kelly 1932:83; Park 1938:63).

Dance is, of course, the central activity of the Naraya and Round Dances of the past. Naraya concerns for water and weather, plants and animals that comprised the Shoshone diet, and health were of the same ilk as the Round Dance performances of the past that included prayers for rain, food, and health (Lowie 1915:217-218; Olden 1923:37-38; Steward 1938:45-46, 106-107, 139, 193; Harris 1940:53; Park 1941:184-186, 191-192, 199; Liljebblad 1969:52; Hittman 1973:248, 258; Hultkrantz 1976:144-145, 147-148, 1986:630-631, 634).

The Power of Language and Thought

The prayers of the Round Dance and the articulated images of Naraya song texts bring us to the last, but certainly not least, in our song-dance-words configuration: words, either spoken aloud or silent in thought. The following statements about the potency of ritual language in Navajo culture are very much to the point as regards Numic notions of language and its potential efficacy. Witherspoon (1977:34) wrote, "In the Navajo view of the world, language is not a mirror of reality: reality is a mirror of language. The language of Navajo ritual is performative, not descriptive. Ritual language does not describe how things are; it determines how they will be." This is true in Numic myth, shamanistic performance, Round Dance prayers, and Naraya song texts. In all Numic enterprise, thinking and speaking will make it so. Myth is rife with the silent or spoken wishes of its characters, which bring the desired result (e.g., Steward 1936:365, 396, 398, 407, 420; Kelly 1938:385, 393, 435; Smith 1940:141; Steward 1943b:297; Fowler and Fowler 1971:84). As Smith (1940:10) noted about Basin mythology, wishes center on food and resurrection. Weather is important, too. Through

thought and speech, myth characters influence the rain (Lowie 1915:252), snow (Kelly 1938:393), storms (Steward 1943b:390), wind (Kelly 1932:414), and sun (Miller 1972:51).

The text of the following Round Dance song expresses desire for flowing water. It exemplifies the "performative" role of language. Note the verb progression as it moves from "should" to "will."

Ya hai yaheya yaheyaheya streams should begin running
Streams will begin running
Down from the mountains streams will begin running
Streams will begin running
[Hill 1992:120-122,⁷ recorded from a Southern Paiute singer, Anna Whiskers, by Robert Franklin and Pamela Bunte].

In addition to words and thought, a brief and fascinating possibility can be seen for human emotion to impact nature as well. In a Southern Numic tale collected by Powell, the wrath of elder brother, Shin-au-av, causes the earth to rock, storm, lightning, and thunder (Fowler and Fowler 1971:80).

Words go directly to the person or object addressed. For example, Cottontail says, "You, Sun. You're not going to be like that anymore [too hot]. You are going to be good" (Miller 1972:51). Not only in myth, but also in their everyday life, Numic people speak directly to nature. Both Millie Guina and Angelina Wagon, Wind River Shoshone women with whom I have lived, talk to the wind and clouds, telling them to move off. People spoke to whirlwinds, which they believed were inhabited by the ghost or spirit of the dead, telling them to depart (Park 1938:40; Steward 1943b:353; Hultkrantz 1976:46; Vander 1986:53). People spoke prayers to plants used for curing before picking them (Liljebblad 1986:642-643). Shamans sang their wishes before the antelope hunt: "The antelope are coming; I scent them coming through the canyon" (Kelly 1932:85). Round Dances of the Paviotso included "Prayers or 'talking' for rain, seed, game, and other blessings" (Park 1941:184).

Likewise, Harris (1940:53) wrote that a leader of the fall or summer Round Dance "would ask for rain; that the earth bring forth berries, seeds, plants; that the hills be covered with green and growing things; that the streams be stocked with fish; that the valleys and ranges abound with deer, antelope and mountain sheep." Steward (1943) quoted the text of a Lemhi Shoshone prayer song in which the direct address to nature is explicit. The song was performed two times during the course of an evening's Round Dance. "As the sun sank each man 'brushed evil from himself,' while singing, Kwian (eagle feather) gwasi (tail)⁸ hupi (stick) nzia (?), which was addressed to nature or to the maker of green things" (Steward 1943b:287).

Naraya song texts functioned in the same way as Cottontail's lecture to the sun, the medicine man's prayers to the plants, the shaman's song for antelope, the leader's prayers and the dancers' prayer songs at the Round Dance. Speaking of Naraya song on one occasion, Emily commented, "It's a religious song that you sing to God" (Vander 1988:12). But Damë Apë, Our Father, the Creator, appears in only six of 130 Naraya songs for which I have translation. Four of the six relate to Ghost Dance beliefs: this old earth, the spirit world, and the new world to come. One refers to Christ and one, in Naraya Song 3 quoted earlier, to Our Father's animal creations.

Again, I return to Emily's own words, which characteristically have no reference to Our Father, only to nature itself. Commenting on a song text that describes the setting sun, Emily said simply, "It's a prayer song to sun" (Vander 1986:48). Pertinent here is Liljeblad's statement concerning thanksgiving ceremonies in his article on Shoshone religious attitude: "Nature itself rather than any given deity was the receiver of the thanksgiving" (Liljeblad 1969:52).

Words and thoughts in myth, shamanism, Round Dance, Naraya, and everyday life have power. They bring into being their own image

of a healthy world filled with water, green vegetation, and abundant wildlife. They demonstrate the power of song, dance, and words to mold nature and create reality. Thus, the circle of nature and power is complete: from nature to people, from people to nature. Dream and performance are its time and place of transaction. Song, dance, and words are its medium of exchange.

GREAT BASIN CONCEPTIONS OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The concept of resurrection is a key tenet of the 1870 and 1890 Ghost Dance religions and their Paiute prophets. From her research with the Northern Paiute, or Paviotso, Du Bois (1939:3-4) reports an old, recurring pattern of shamans who predict return of the dead and perform miracles (weather control being a favorite). Du Bois (1939:3) agreed with Park's identification of what was new to the 1870 and 1890 Ghost Dance doctrine; namely, return of the dead in large numbers. The absence of resurrection belief in Emily's teaching to me and its rare appearance in her Naraya song repertoire suggest that by the early twentieth century the idea of resurrection survived only as a relic. We see the most overt and poignant expression of previous belief in large-scale resurrection in one Naraya song that describes all the dead mothers who, as they are coming back down to earth and life, look around for their children (Vander 1986:54-55).

Among the many instances of resurrection in Numic myth, which usually involves an individual character, there are also some interesting examples of large-scale resurrection. Hawk restores all the animals who had forfeited their lives in games with a successful gambler (Steward 1943a:282-283); Bat resurrects the sky brothers, a whole hunting camp of people, and Coyote (Steward 1943b:287-290); Wolf resurrects all of his men killed by another powerful character, Pū'ina'nū'ina (Steward 1936:420,

421); Tukini resurrects all his dead relatives (Steward 1936:431); a boy resurrects a whole tribe killed by the gambler, Centipede (Lowie 1924a:229-231); and finally, in "The Abandoned Boys," the younger of two brothers resurrects, with a wand and words, all the male relatives and friends of his tribe who had been killed (Fowler and Fowler 1971:91-92).

Resurrection in Numic thought is inseparable from the definition of death and the images of the soul that inform it. Accordingly, each person has a soul, in Shoshone called *mugua*. Departure of the soul from the body causes loss of consciousness, and this is equated with death and defines it (Mooney 1896:922; Lowie 1909:301; Kelly 1932:195; Steward 1943a:275; Hultkrantz 1951:21, 1987:59; Miller 1972:37). Shamans seek to restore life by going into a trance or dream and searching for the lost soul (Lowie 1924b:294; Kelly 1932:195; Park 1938:15, 27, 37, 41, 53). As Lowie (1924:294) described it, "the shaman would lie beside him [patient] and also 'die' for several hours." If successful, the shaman brings the soul back to the patient who regains consciousness, and is resurrected. Coyote, after arising from "death," says, "I have been sleeping" (Steward 1943a:290). The trances of Wovoka and Wodziwob (prophet of the 1870 Ghost Dance) were, in Numic terms, death, albeit temporary. In a letter written to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Frank Campbell described being present when Wodziwob was in a trance and watched as "Indians gathered around him and joined in song that was to guide the spirit back to the body" (Mooney 1896:703). (Note song's crucial role here—remniscent of the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice.)

NATURE AND METAPHOR

For their image of the soul, Numic cultures again turned to the natural world. Emily spoke of two images of the soul in relationship to Naraya songs. "The soul is like a fog when it gets out of the body," and, "When a person dies

they go in a dust whirlwind."⁹ Note that one is a water image, the other a dry image. *Mugua*, soul, is also identified with breath (Hultkrantz 1951:22). It is easy to see the connection of breath—moist and visible in cold air—with fog. Lowie (1909:226) charted the soul's progress, first as the *mugua* rises and looks ". . . like clouds" and is subsequently transformed into a *dzoap* (ghost). "A whirlwind is considered a ghost (*dzoap*). When a person dies, a whirlwind is caused thereby" (Lowie 1924b:297; see also Steward 1943b:353). Ghost-whirlwind, a dry image, was greatly feared as it was believed that ghosts were a source of illness and even death (Park 1938:40, 136; Steward 1943b:284-285).¹⁰

Fog is a frequent image that moves through Naraya songs. Similarly, Wovoka told a delegate of Cheyenne and Arapaho people, "Jesus is now upon the earth. He appears like a cloud. The dead are all alive again" (Mooney 1896:781). There is significance to this choice of image for the soul. If we consider the soul's journey out of the body, first as foggy breath and then as dusty whirlwind moving across the Milky Way to the land of the spirit (Kelly 1932:154, 1938:372; Fowler and Fowler 1971:242; Hultkrantz 1986:631), fog-soul is closest to life either as it leaves or returns to it. Myth tales in which resurrection is achieved through the use of water or damp ground is another manifestation of the close connections between moisture, soul, and life. Park (1938:19) reported that Wovoka's shamanistic power came, in fact, from two types of clouds, one high, the other dark and low.

Nature provides images and metaphor for human experience. The previous discussion of the soul as fog and whirlwind is one example. Sometimes it is the other way around—human form and experience provide metaphor for nature. Many Shoshone, including the Wind River, call the Milky Way the "backbone"¹¹ of the sky (Steward 1943b:353; Hultkrantz 1986:631, 1987:59). Metaphors for the origins and move-

ment of other heavenly bodies were also drawn from human and animal anatomy and physiology. Stars come from the sun's kidney, and falling stars and snails are star excrement (Steward 1943b:353). The most striking example of nature cast in human form appears in Naraya Song 4:

Naraya Song 4

<i>Evi-n</i>	<i>denüpi</i>	<i>evi-n</i>	<i>denüpi,</i>
White chalk	man	white chalk	man,
<i>Evi-n</i>	<i>denüpi</i>	<i>evi-n</i>	<i>denüpi.</i>
White chalk	man	white chalk	man.
<i>Hupi-n</i>	<i>denüpi</i>	<i>yörino,</i>	
Wood, stick	man	keep flying on together,	
<i>Hupi-n</i>	<i>denüpi</i>	<i>yörino.</i>	
Wood, stick	man	keep flying on together.	

[appears as Naraya Song 1 in Vander 1988:14].

Emily reported that, "Evi, means that white chalk [sometimes referred to as clay or white paint, which is made from it] . . . It's for the Sun Dance—white, smells good. . . . That man's made of that kind, and man made of wood. Yörino—get up, up, flying on" (Vander 1988:15).

There is plentiful documentation for the many uses of *evi* throughout the Great Basin. Like eagle feathers, *evi* was an essential part of the shaman's equipment. It was felt to be "very potent in aiding the recovery of the sick" (Park 1938:56, 130). Shamans painted the patient (Steward 1943b:283), or painted themselves according to dreamed instructions (Park 1938:28). Wind River Shoshone Sun Dancers also painted themselves with *evi* in their Sun Dance (Lowie 1919:394; Shimkin 1953:422; Weeks 1961:100; Jorgensen 1972:183). "Any sickness will thus be dried out" (Shimkin 1939:108). *Evi* purifies: Nevada Shoshone used it after a burial or bad dream (Steward 1941:263). Lowie (1909:217) reported the use of white clay on the forehead of male dancers in a Northern Shoshone version of the Round Dance, the Nuakin

Dance. Havasupai Ghost Dancers washed and painted their bodies with white clay prior to a Ghost Dance performance (Dobyns and Euler 1967:26). Wovoka himself gave a visiting Sioux delegation white paint and advised them: "They must use the sacred red and white paint and the sacred grass (possibly sagebrush) which he gave them, and in the spring, when the green grass came, their people who were gone before would return, and they would see their friends again" (Mooney 1896:821). Wovoka drew on shamanistic use of white paint for health and moved beyond its ordinary realm of power to the extraordinary—resurrecting the dead.

We do not know whether the dreamed vision for Naraya Song 4 invested Chalk Man with this further power, or whether he worked within the more usual sphere of the shaman's power to heal (Vander 1988:15). In any case, health is the topic and chalk is the image for the first half of the song. Health was a focus of the Naraya and the Basin Round Dance whose tradition it continued, as well as a focus of shamanistic practice.

I believe the key for understanding the meaning and imagery of the second half of the song, Wood or Stick Man, is to be found in the Round Dance prayer song already quoted. "Kwinan (eagle feather) *gwasi* (tail) *hupi* (stick) *nzia* (?), which was addressed to nature or to the maker of green things" (Steward 1943b:287). Wood or Stick Man is the maker of green things, a personification of the vegetative force in life.¹² Naraya Song 4 directly addresses concerns for health and plant life in personified form. It epitomizes a Numic image of nature and their relationship to it.

The interchangeable flow of images and metaphors from people to nature and nature to people reflects an intimate identity with the natural world. One Northern Paiute man, Joe Green, explained the shaman's power as a concrete result from mythic times, when there was no defining separation between people and other animals: "A long time ago, all the animals

were Indians (they could talk). I think that is why the animals help the people to be shamans" (Park 1938:16). A sense of remembered kinship informs this explanation.

Another expression of the connectedness of all parts of nature to one another appears in Numic taxonomy for animals, both in myth and in Naraya song texts. In the "Race to Koso Springs," people of the sky were to race ground animals. Sky people included Sun, the stars, and birds; ground animals were Fox, Beetle, and Frog (Steward 1936:436). Environmental habitat, not anatomical structure, is the essential criterion for classification. This same taxonomy appears in a Shoshone creation story. There was nothing but water, and God called out, "Water-people, where are you?" (Liljeblad 1969:50). Beaver, Otter, and Muskrat responded. Muskrat dived to the bottom to bring up mud from which God made the earth (Liljeblad 1969:50). We see the identical classification elaborated further in a Naraya song text that Emily translated as follows: "Ba nūwī-tsi¹³-d means beaver, muskrat, and fish, them ducks, weasel—all those water people, and they come out, front of you" (Vander 1988:21-22).

My discussion throughout has centered on the natural world one sees in Naraya songs and Numic myth. The absence of selected parts of the natural world—horses and buffaloes—is also noteworthy, especially among the Northern Shoshone and Wind River Shoshone people who layered on top of their Basin heritage active participation in Plains culture. A medicine man explained the absence of buffaloes in myth, "because the buffalo was never an Indian" (Lowie 1909:236). We can infer that there had not been enough time to ripen the sense of kinship to the buffalo enjoyed by other animals, alluded to earlier by Joe Green. Plains experience as buffalo hunters, which began in the eighteenth century, did not seep into Shoshone myth.

I conclude with the solitary buffalo text in Emily's Naraya repertoire (Naraya Song 5 on

page 187). The subject is unique, but not its substance. Emily noted that: "White salty ground—those stickers that looks like—they're tall but they're different from sage brush. That's what they eat, those buffaloes" (Vander n.d.). The interdependence of place, plants, and animals is all very specific: damp, alkaline soil and greasewood plants whose leaves are food for the buffalo. This, then, is "buffalo" land. Plains life is not evoked. There are no people and the buffalo is not imagined being hunted as it is in the following Sioux Ghost Dance song:

Now they are about to chase the buffalo,
Now they are about to chase the buffalo,
Grandmother, give me back my bow,
Grandmother, give me back my bow,
The father says so, the father says so.
[Mooney 1896:1070].

The two buffalo texts stand in sharp relief to one another, worlds apart, or more accurately, worldviews apart. The Naraya buffalo scene touches all the Numic bases—land, water, plant, greenery, and animal. Life of the natural world is the issue, not a way of life. Herein lies the difference.

CONCLUSION

Numic myth and Naraya religious belief share a common understanding of the natural world and the place of people within it. Metaphysical power originates in nature from animate and inanimate sources. Water in every form is particularly important, and in myth and in Naraya songs is closely associated with trees, greenery, and beyond to intimations of food. Power from nature is transferred in human dream as song, words, and dance. Human performance of these talismans of power affect physical outcome in the natural world. There is direct address between people and the natural world. Nature is understood as an inseparable ecological entity, which finds reflection and expression in animal taxonomy and in Round Dance and Naraya song texts. There is reciprocity between the images

Naraya Song 5

<i>Damèn de</i>	<i>gwitsu-no</i>	<i>sogop</i>	<i>mande</i>	<i>sogop</i>
Our ?small	buffalo	earth, land	?	earth, land
	<i>mande</i>	<i>sogop</i>	<i>mande</i>	<i>ena,</i>
	?	earth, land	?	(vocable),
<i>Damèn de</i>	<i>gwitsu-no</i>	<i>sogop</i>	<i>mande</i>	<i>sogop</i>
Our ?small	buffalo	earth, land	?	earth, land
	<i>mande</i>	<i>sogop</i>	<i>mande</i>	<i>ena.</i>
	?	earth, land	?	(vocable).
<i>Dono</i> ¹⁴	<i>ba- ru</i>	<i>sīgi</i>	<i>mande,</i>	
Greasewood	water-?black	leaves	?	
<i>Dono-</i>	<i>ba- ru</i>	<i>sīgi</i>	<i>mande</i>	<i>ena yaiyowaindë.</i>
Greasewood	water-?black	leaves	?	(vocables).

[Vander n.d.]

and metaphors for people and the natural world; they are flip sides of the same coin. Nature is articulated in human terms, and human experience is envisioned as natural phenomena. Finally, central concerns for water, weather, food, and health appear in variant forms and emphases in the major expressions of Numic life: myth, shamanism, Round Dance, Naraya, and Wovoka's Paiute conception of the Ghost Dance.

NOTES

1. The following orthography applies (correspondence with English vowels is only approximate.)

- a as in father
- e as in pay
- ē as in above
- i as in elite
- ī as in sit
- o as in no
- ò as in law
- u as in lute
- ū as in put
- ai as in Thailand
- oi as in noise

Accent generally falls on the first syllable and every other syllable after that.

2. Several examples will suffice. Morning star is in the Ghost Dance column because of its strong Ghost Dance associations. It could, but does not, appear in the Nature column under star. Similarly, earthquake, thunder, and whirlwind are also placed in the Ghost Dance column, and not in the Nature column.

3. Because my focus in this brief article is on Great Basin culture, I do not discuss all the possible sources and meanings of "Our Father" in the 1890 Ghost Dance and the Naraya. Likewise, my discussion of resurrection in this paper looks at Great Basin understandings of the term, and does not include a wealth of scholarship (e.g., Spier and Mooney) that examines influences from other Native American groups and from Euro-Americans. These issues are treated in depth by Vander (n.d.).

4. I divide water, the most common element in Naraya songs, into two smaller categories: surface water and weather-related water.

5. Gelo (1990) discussed the many Comanche and Numic associations of power and good fortune with mountains or high places. Comanches are actually Wind River Shoshone people who split off from their relatives and moved down to the Southern Plains in the early eighteenth century (Shimkin 1941:19). In another example from Numic culture, Goss (1972:128) published a chart entitled, "The Ute View of the World," an ecological hierarchy of land, animals, and associated colors. Here, too, mountains are at the top, surpassed only by the sky above. Interestingly, mountains are associated with the mountain lion, as is the case in Naraya Song 3.

6. "They are often detailed descriptions of what the authors observed in their environment, with several levels of meanings" (Crum 1980:5).

7. I have used Jane Hill's (1992) English translation for "streams should begin running" and "streams will begin running." However, in all other ways I strictly follow the form and layout of the text as indicated in the original by Franklin and Bunte (1988), which differs slightly in Hill's (1992) presentation of it.

8. These are the first two words of Naraya Song 1.
9. See also Steward (1943:281).

10. Interestingly, ghosts could also be the source of power to cure ghost-induced illness (Park 1938:79, 97).

11. Likewise, the Wind River Shoshone also refer to the first rafter placed from the Sun Dance center-pole to the outer posts of the Lodge as the "back-bone." It marks the important east-west axis (Shimkin 1939:74; Jorgensen 1972:211).

12. The comments of Powers (1986:33) on Oglala Sioux sacred language are relevant to the language and their figurative form in Naraya Song 4. "From the standpoint of verbal stylistics, however, most terms employed in sacred language are generated out of familiar words to which occult meanings have been assigned, as well as other kinds of verbal ornamentations. As one form of trope, metaphor plays an important part in the creation of sacred language."

13. It is interesting to see the analysis of this suffix by Crum (1980:17), a native Shoshone speaker and linguist:

Grammatically, the -ttsi suffix is a diminutive noun suffix. However, Shoshoni speakers commonly use it for special emphasis denoting endearment, high esteem, reverence, as well as for the notion of smallness. In poetry songs the suffix -ttsi is used as a poetic device. My opinion is based on the fact that Shoshoni people have a warm attachment to nature. . . . The use of the suffix -ttsi is one way for Shoshoni poet singers to express this warm attitude.

14. Steward (1938:309) listed *tonovi* for greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*); Sapir (1931:686) listed *tono-va-ts* for greasewood spring.

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