

A [sample entry](#) from the

Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature

(London & New York: Continuum, 2005)

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It is important to realize that the recitation of praise poetry does something to the poet and the receiver. Highly charged with diction, with powerful, startling metaphors, its effect is reciprocal. It confers status on both the individual who uses it and the one who receives it. It raises the individual to the level of the victor one celebrates. Praise poetry does not merely say something, it does something, psychologically and socially.

At the individual level it serves to build the self-esteem of its object, creating a sense of identity and worth in that person. Mutupo praise poetry is used to excite, delight and affirm. Shona women as agents shaping personal and communal destinies were subjects of this sacred literature. They were expected to give of self, as much as they expected to receive in the web of existence. Even in matters of intimacy, they celebrated the art of giving as they did of receiving. For example, excerpts from love praise poems for the Tembo Mazimbakupa (Zebra/Lion) celebrate giving and receiving equally for both woman and man:

Hekani Matendera
Maita VaMupanedende
Zvaitwa Mupiyaniwa
Muuya wangu munakunaku
Anenge muvsisivi wouchi
Kagwedu kenyama kanosara pasi
Maita VaMuroro
Hakani VaNyemba, Mubvana wa Chivazve.

Well done Zebra!
Hail, you who gives permission.
Thank you, Your Highness, generous giver.
My deepest gratitude, to you the interlaced one,
My elegant, exceedingly beautiful woman,
Who is like distilled, liquid honey.
Even my little piece of juicy steak is surpassed!
Thank you You Muroro,
Hail, you who belongs to the Nyemba Dynasty,
You mother of my child, yet forever daughter of
Chivazve clan.

Male Tembo Mazimbakupa

VaChipanegombe, mombe njuma,
Mukanditi, "Siya amai,
Tizoswera tichirezvana"
Nanhasi nyama tinongodya,
Nehorwe zvose zviripo,
Uchi tinongotamba nahwo,
Maita Matendera.

You who give by the big ladle, you hornless bull,
You invited me, "Leave your mother,
So that we can spend our days in each other's arms."

To this very day we are feasting on meat.
Francolins we have aplenty.
As for honey, we are swimming in it.
You have performed wonderfully, Matendera.
(Pongweni 1996: 126-34)

Mutupo praise poetry as a source among many encapsulates the Shona views on women in society. In this blueprint, women are to be givers and receivers at all levels of social experience. In this worldview all existing entities – women, men, nature, deity, animals – attain freedom and bliss through giving and receiving.

Tumani Nyajeka

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See also: African Religions and Nature Conservation; Animals.

Shoshone (Western North America)

Western Shoshone territory extends from what is now northern Wyoming into eastern Nevada and central Idaho, part of the North American cultural area known as the Great Basin. Great Basin cultures were based on water, the most vital component in a primarily desert region. The traditional Western Shoshone were also a nomadic people acclimatized to this diverse environment, seasonally harvesting such foodstuffs as seeds, berries, roots, piñon nuts, and other plant foods growing at known locations. Group names were commonly derived from geographic features and especially predominant local food resources.

Bighorn sheep were the most important hoofed mammal in the economy. Hunters monitored bighorn movements to determine the best spots in which to construct hunting blinds. The Western Shoshone also hunted dove, mockingbird, sage hen, quail, waterfowl, and rabbits, another important source of food and fur harvested seasonally. Black-tailed jackrabbits were found throughout Western Shoshone territory; white-tailed rabbits were scarcer. Two species of cottontail were also taken, as well as pocket gophers and ground squirrels. Antelope were generally hunted by communal driving. The Western Shoshone hunted both antelope and rabbits in an alternating schedule, giving them time to recover. The drives were one of the few occasions during which large groups of people gathered for festivals. Festivals, which generally included the Round Dance, were held whenever food was

abundant. Although primarily performed for pleasure, the Round Dance afforded opportunity for courtship and, in various localities, was thought to produce rain. During drives headmen, referred to as chiefs or directors, served only as long as their expertise was needed. To help with the drive a shaman could magically entice the animals along a V-shaped runway to the center of a corral constructed of brush, stone, and poles.

Western Shoshone spirituality is interwoven throughout their lives and culture. Their spirituality provides them with a direct link with the supernatural, and spiritual power is gained through visions and dreams. There are three kinds of Shoshone shamans: specialists who cure specific ailments; individuals whose powers only benefit themselves; and those with general curing ability. There are also two types of dreamed power: one involving a spirit helper, an animal or bird or natural object; another power acquired in dreams carried the ability to be expert in other conventional roles such as hunter, gatherer, warrior, etc.

Dr. Richard Stoffle has completed some of the best and most recent ethnography on Great Basin peoples that focuses on the principles underlying their cultures. A primary foundation of Western Shoshone culture is the concept of power, how it flows in the world, and what humans should do to maintain a balance with it. Supernatural power is viewed as the best explanation for the cultural significance of all things, how these things relate to one another, and how they are intellectually integrated. The Western Shoshone employ the concept of a living universe, a universe that is alive in the same way that humans are alive. It has physically discrete elements as well as power. A few general statements can be made about power:

- 1) Power exists throughout the universe, but like differences in human strength, it varies in intensity from element to element.
- 2) Power varies in its uses; it determines what different elements can do.
- 3) Power is networked. Different elements are connected, disconnected, and reconnected in different ways, occurring largely at the will of the elements with the power.
- 4) Power derives from the moment of creation and permeates the universe like spiderwebs ramifying power relationships between humans and the environment into one spiritual conformity.
- 5) Power exists and can move between three levels of the universe: upper (where powerful anthropomorphic beings live); middle (where people now live); and lower, where monsters reside.

Power disperses through networks of relationships among the elements of the universe, including types of air,

water, rocks, minerals, topographic features, plants, and animals. Each element and its types make their own relationships, much like people do and for similar reasons of purpose and attraction. Elements have different personalities, intensities, and relationships with people and other elements, relationships that resemble spiderwebs. At various points in the web power gathers, producing powerful places which humans recognize and employ in rituals. Power flows like water and often follows water, yet they two are not identical. Human intervention can alter these networks of power; thus, the Western Shoshone are very concerned about the proper uses of natural resources (elements) of their environments. Improper uses can result in loss of access to such resources. Therefore, the Western Shoshone believe they must establish respectful relations with their environment and its resources in order to survive and maintain the balance of the universe. Every Western Shoshone child is admonished to explain his or her actions before touching, picking, hunting, or otherwise disrupting the element's balance: "do not move a stone without asking its permission"; "a plant will not give medicine or nourishment unless you explain why it will be picked"; "animals killed without their permission will not give themselves to a hunter again"; "never speak loud on the mountain or throw rocks in the water"; and "think of why things are as they are before you change them for personal needs." Rituals accompany all changes in relations between humans and elements of the universe in order that an essential balance be preserved.

For the Western Shoshone the physical and spiritual interactions among people, places, and resources create a phenomenon which anthropologists now call the cultural landscape, an idea that people, through repeated interactions with their surroundings, develop images or ideas of the land and share an understanding of its form and content that is transferred over generations. In the cultural landscape of the Great Basin of the Western Shoshone, power moved over the open deserts, along a web of waterways and connected the mountains to the sky and the depths of the Earth. Establishing and maintaining spiritual relationships between the elements in the Basin enabled the Western Shoshone to develop a nomadic lifestyle able to follow the waxing and waning of resources, to utilize their diverse landscape, and to maintain an essential balance of respect for the resources that enabled survival in a very challenging environment.

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- See also: Bison Restoration and Native American Traditions; Lakota; Paiute Culture; Spirit of Sage Council.

Siam's Forest Monasteries

Forest monasticism has been established in Siam, currently called Thailand, for at least eight centuries. According to the historical record, this tradition was transmitted from Sri Lanka in the thirteenth century. Since then the Siamese *Sangha* (monastic order) has been categorized into village dwelling (*gamavasi*) and forest dwelling (*araññavasi*). While the former were entrusted with the task of studying scriptures, the latter were concerned primarily with practicing meditation.

The tradition of forest monasticism can be traced back to the time of the Buddha, who regularly admonished the monks to live in seclusion and practice meditation for the sake of enlightenment. Many monks developed the custom of forest wandering and living in caves for intensive periods of practice. Although permanent monasteries were eventually established where monks could settle for long periods, many of them were built in the forests, far from the villages and towns. Over time, these forest dwellings developed into a distinct tradition, one quite different from village dwelling.

In forest monasteries, monks are expected to live austerely and to observe the monastic code (*Vinaya*) strictly. Contact with the outer world is discouraged, except for daily alms rounds in nearby villages and occasional teachings, while periodic wandering in remote forests is an important part of the spiritual training of such monks. The forest is conducive to meditation practice because its solitude not only brings calmness to the mind but also helps develop insight into the profound nature of life and the world. According to the Buddha, the external nature or environment is inseparable from the inner nature of mind. Contemplating the true characteristics of the former can lead to the realization of the latter's true nature, and thus enlightenment.

Forest monasticism in Siam faded into obscurity 200 years ago for various reasons, including the attempt to rationalize Buddhism in response to modernity. It was not until the 1960s that forest monks drew the attention of and won respect from modern, urban, educated elites. This was due to the growth of the forest monk movement led by Ajaan Man Phuurithatto (1870–1949). Throughout his monastic life Ajaan Man, along with his disciples, wandered extensively in the forests and penetrated into remote areas, many of which were never visited by Buddhist monks before. Many of his disciples later built forest monasteries in various parts of the country. With their strict practice and spiritual achievement, respect toward forest monks spread extensively through the villages, then into the cities and eventually even Bangkok.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906–1993) is another major contributor to the revival of Siamese forest monasticism. His monastery, Suan Mokkh, in the south of Thailand, has been a distinguished attempt to restore monasticism as practiced in the Buddha's time when monks were close to nature, meditated amidst nature, and developed insight from nature. He also combined scripture study and social awareness with meditation practice, instead of the sole focus on meditation followed by most forest monks.

During the past few decades, forest monasteries have increased in number. They are frequented by people from all walks of life who come with different purposes ranging from practicing meditation to merit making and seeking amulets and sacred objects from the forest monks who are believed to possess supernatural powers.

Apart from their spiritual value, forest monasteries in Siam nowadays play a significant role in ecology. Amidst the widespread deforestation, forest monasteries are rare places where forests have been preserved. Many forest monks not only conserve forests in their own temples, but have also become leaders in protecting community forests in various parts of the country.

Phra Paisal Visalo

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- See also: Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu; Buddhism – Engaged; Nhat Hanh, Thich; Payutto, Phra Dhammapitaka; Southeast Asia; Sivaraksa, Sulak; Thai Buddhist Monks.