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1986

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*Great Plains Quarterly*. 895.

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# RITUAL PAGEANTRY IN THE AMERICAN WEST

## A WYOMING CASE STUDY

AUDREY C. SHALINSKY

Festivals that celebrate the founding of the town or a similar historical event of local or regional significance are common throughout the United States. In this paper I analyze the annual reenactment in Thermopolis, Wyoming, of the Shoshoni tribe's cession to the whites of control over several thermal springs, an event that led to the founding of the town.<sup>1</sup> I show that the reenactment is an idealized interpretation of various historical events recorded and portrayed in poetic form by a group of townspeople with the limited participation of a few Shoshoni families from Wind River Reservation. I argue that the local event is in effect a ritual performance in which the past is reworked to reflect and justify contemporary values and social situations, in this case, white control and development of the hot springs.

My analysis has been influenced by the

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[GPQ 6 (Winter 1986): 21–33.]

work of sociocultural anthropologists and folklorists who have described and interpreted the role of contemporary celebrations in American society. Celebrations are cultural performances, dramatic presentations of symbols that may contain elements of play and ritual. Townspeople in Thermopolis call their celebration the Gift of the Waters Pageant, implicitly pointing out the colorful and dramatic aspects of the presentation. The pageant is a type of cultural performance that appears to follow closely a ritual mode since ritual generally confirms the social order and is highly regulated.<sup>2</sup> Cultural performances provide occasions for a group to reflect upon and define itself, to dramatize collective myths and history, to present alternatives to the status quo, and to promote stability in some ways and change in others.<sup>3</sup> For Thermopolis, the reenactment promotes a particular view of history, a view that celebrates the Indians for their harmonious natural lifestyle while relegating them to the past. The reenactment also promotes the development of the springs since this development has appropriately occurred for the social good rather than for selfish economic gain.

My analysis proceeds in three parts. First, I

describe the historical background of the events reenacted in the pageant. This section demonstrates that the historical "facts" have been adjusted so that the pageant commemorates a Shoshoni farewell to the hot springs which never occurred. The pageant also celebrates a "free" gift by the Shoshonis that was, in fact, an economic transaction of \$60,000 in cash and goods. Next I describe the current presentation of the Gift of the Waters Pageant. A significant feature of the pageant involves the stress on authenticity, an ambiguous notion since white townswomen dress up as Indians in deerskin dresses with hand beaded designs. Finally I discuss the way in which the pageant appears to uphold traditional authority and white control and development of the hot springs.

#### THERMOPOLIS AND ITS SPRINGS

Thermopolis, population 3500, is a county seat for a ranching and oil producing area. The town grew up near the site of several thermal mineral springs. The first whites to see the hot springs area were probably fur trappers and scouts who, according to folklore, often confused the steam rising from the springs with Indian smoke signals.<sup>4</sup> Known to various Native American tribes and used for their healing properties, the springs were made part of the Shoshoni Wind River Reservation by treaty in 1868. At that time, the Shoshonis, who had never engaged in significant warfare against the whites, were rewarded with a reservation of over two million acres.

In the 1890s, whites who wanted permanent quarters near the springs squatted six miles downstream, just off reservation land. At the site of the springs itself, a transient tent city grew up. As early as 1891, local white settlers began to pressure the Shoshoni chief Washakie to sell the springs to the federal government. An 1891 agreement negotiated by the Indian Commission purchased the springs for \$5,000 but was not approved by Congress. Washakie continued to get requests from local white settlers and Wyoming State

Representative Frank Mondell to sell the springs and surrounding land. The treaty of 1896 negotiated by Indian Inspector James McLaughlin gave the springs and a ten-mile square of land surrounding them to the federal government for \$60,000 in cash, cattle, and other supplies.<sup>5</sup>

The treaty ceding the springs was signed at Fort Washakie, about seventy miles from present-day Thermopolis. While McLaughlin, the negotiator, did survey the springs area with a small party of Indians, there is no indication in treaty documents that any substantial portion of the tribe went to visit their property.<sup>6</sup> The pageant therefore does not reenact a historical event of a Shoshoni farewell to the springs.

After surmounting heavy opposition to the new treaty in the House of Representatives, Congressman Mondell was informed by senators that the treaty was doomed, since they were opposed to creating any additional hot springs federal reserves. Taking their advice, Mondell prepared an amendment that ceded the land to homesteaders and a one-mile square around the springs to the state of Wyoming rather than to the federal government. This amendment passed Congress in 1897. Over the next few years, the town of Thermopolis was built, and a new state park, including the springs and the one-mile square, was laid out.

In 1898 a state law gave the State Board of Charities and Reform control of the park and the right to retain one-fourth of the water from the largest spring for use in a free health spa. From Billings, Montana, to Denver, Colorado, newspaper editors of the period agitated for free facilities in the park and free camping. They wrote that Chief Washakie of the Shoshonis signed the treaty ceding the springs so that men of all races, creeds, and colors could have benefit of the healing waters.<sup>7</sup>

Nothing in the treaty or in the verbatim record of the negotiations indicates Washakie or the government representative McLaughlin meant to specify free access to the water for everyone. In fact, there is no mention of *free* use at all. The Big Horn Hot Springs were to

be reserved “for the use and benefit of the general public, the Indians to be allowed to enjoy the advantages of the conveniences that may be erected thereat.”<sup>8</sup> Though it does not appear in the negotiation record, it is possible that Washakie was seeking to protect his people’s right of access to the springs and bathing facilities, but he seems to have been most concerned with compensation. The Arapahos, also residents on the Wind River Reservation and present at the treaty negotiations, have long pointed out that it was their chief, Sharp Nose, who was most conciliatory to the negotiator McLaughlin.<sup>9</sup> An article in the unratified treaty of 1891 appears to protect the right of access for the indigent under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior. This treaty was negotiated by a special commission composed of prominent local settlers, but it is not clear at whose stipulation the article about free use was incorporated.<sup>10</sup>

Ever since the construction of the park facilities in 1898, Big Spring, the largest in the park, has supplied water for the free state bathhouse and two commercial swimming pools. Since many of the 30,000 annual visitors to the state bathhouse are not residents of Thermopolis, tourism provides part of the economic livelihood for the area, but residents disagree on its importance. During a controversy in 1982, the state park superintendent, who opposed using the geothermal source to develop a city heating system, called in a water specialist when, to his eye, the water level in Big Spring dropped after geothermal testing. He feared that Thermopolis would become a “ghost town” if the resource ceased to exist. On the other hand, a letter to the newspaper criticized the superintendent for disregarding the county’s economic base, ranching, farming, and energy-related concerns. The letter writer, himself in oil-related industry, conducted an informal survey and discovered that 35 percent of the community’s population worked in oil services or for oil companies. The writer concluded that because of its “aesthetic value,” it would be tragic if Big Spring were lost but that the town would survive the death

of the springs. The letter writer made a clear distinction between economic activities providing people with livelihood, and the less important aesthetic value of the springs.<sup>11</sup>

Free use of the resource has always been controversial. Townspeople have pointed out in letters to the local newspaper that, with free camping and free bathing, some visitors do not actually contribute to the local economy. These people favor the abolition of free camping, arguing that the practice was not specified in the treaty. Similarly, there have been recurrent attempts to change the status of the bathhouse so that only Wyoming residents are allowed to use the facilities free of charge. Thus, townspeople differ on the financial benefits of the hot springs to the town.

#### THE PAGEANT

The Gift of the Waters Pageant was originally written in 1925 for the state Women’s Clubs convention held in Thermopolis. The author, Maria Montabe, a local white resident, spent one month on the Wind River Reservation so that her writing would reflect Shoshoni traditions. She later said, “Within two weeks, I had become a Real Indian and they gave me the name of Flower Girl . . . Indians were impressed that a foreigner should care enough to give time to honor their departed chieftain [Washakie].”<sup>12</sup> Montabe was a charter member of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. After moving away, she corresponded with several DAR members who urged that the pageant be made an annual event. Finally, in 1950, on its silver anniversary, the pageant was presented under the sponsorship of the DAR. Montabe returned to direct the event. Many customs currently associated with the pageant, including DAR participation and the gift of buffalo meat to the Shoshoni participants, date from this time. Through the 1950s, the pageant was a popular event that always attracted several thousand spectators. In subsequent years, numbers of participants and spectators decreased. Despite the apparent decline in the pageant, most

townspeople have participated as performers or spectators in the thirty-four years of its continued existence.

Though the pageant gives its name to the entire celebration, other events provide the performance genres of spectacle, festival, and game that anthropologists have described in complex societies.<sup>13</sup> Kiddie and adult parades, melodrama and horse show performances, a demolition derby, and a sidewalk sale with fund-raising booths are typically part of the town celebration. In particular, the horse show with its matched riders and colorful banners and costumes, and the demolition derby with its painted cars crashing into each other are spectacles in their size, grandeur, color, and clear demarcation of participants and spectators. For these events, the participants are outsiders and the several thousand people in the audience are local. In contrast, ritual—the performance mode emphasized in the Gift of the Waters Pageant—is problematic in the contemporary town context. A ritual is supposed to communicate the message of truth and the ultimate concerns of the sacred.<sup>14</sup> But not all in Thermopolis agree on the significance of the hot springs. The ritual is important for certain constituencies in the town, but not for all. Those who are involved in the pageant, especially the DAR women, are viewed as conservators of tradition. They are also viewed as “superstructuring the celebration”; that is, the pageant is seen as emphasizing the good, virtuous, and proper side rather than providing a critical or cathartic release.<sup>15</sup>

The Shoshonis who participate in the pageant appear to do so for economic reasons. A tribal member notes that this event has no sacred connotations for them. They receive a cash payment for their participation and some buffalo meat. They also have the opportunity for additional income from dancing at the parade and posing for photographs near their teepees in the state park. The Arapahos who also lived on the Wind River reservation have never been asked to participate by the town organizers, nor do they have any desire to do so.

Though the Shoshonis have always taken part, only three extended families have been involved at various times. The first family quit to participate in another celebration elsewhere, to the dismay of the pageant organizers. In 1978, the second Shoshoni family quit because of “the attitude and behavior of some of the people of [the town].”<sup>16</sup> In a letter to the local newspaper, the Shoshoni writer said that the Shoshoni participants were not on welfare as most people seemed to think and that they were insulted and harassed almost from the time they set up their tents to the time they left. Many residents held negative stereotyped views of Native Americans as frequently drunk and lazy, the writer asserted.

With the exception of the “Director of the Shoshone Indians,” a family leader of the Shoshoni participants, the organization behind the scenes—including the officers of the corporation with ownership rights, publicity, costumes, direction, and equipment—is in the hands of town residents. Some townspeople pointed out that the actual running of the event was in the hands of two women, both prominent civic and social leaders for over ten years. One of these women was an elected political official. Adding to the strong feeling of tradition and continuity is the fact that some individuals, including DAR women, have participated in the event every year since its annual production began in 1950.

#### THE PAGEANT AS PERFORMANCE

The Gift of the Waters Pageant takes place for two late afternoon performances the first weekend in August. An audience of approximately two hundred sees each performance. The setting for the pageant is the base of a small red cliff in the state park near Thermopolis. The base of the cliff is the site of Big Spring, the largest spring in the land cession. A small shed painted to blend with the cliff serves as a loudspeaker terminal. Young Thermopolis boys dressed as Indians light signal fires from the top of the cliff to inaugurate the drama.

## PERFORMERS AND COSTUMES

There are three divisions or social categories of performers: the narrator, the women's chorus, and the Indians, some of whom have individualized roles. These categories are distinguished by dress; they also enter the scene before the audience separately. The narrator comes before the audience first. He makes general introductions and retires to the offstage loudspeaker from which he reads the pageant poem, a recounting of the Shoshoni farewell to the springs. The Shoshonis enter second. The men line up facing the audience; the women and children sit on the ground to the audience's left. Later, the women's chorus enters from behind a small ridge.

The narrator, dressed as a mountain man in fringed buckskin, is the only white man in the performance. For many of the performances since 1950, a single individual, a prominent local businessman and elected town official, has taken this role. Approximately thirty Shoshonis, a single extended family, are in fancy dress. The men wear feather headdresses; the women's clothes are made of brightly colored cloth. A women's chorus composed of Thermopolis women is dressed as Indians. Most of these twenty women are active in civic affairs, some are in the DAR. Teenage girls sometimes participate with their mothers. These women, some of them wearing black wigs, are dressed in handsewn deerskin dresses. A number of costumes have beadwork designs. These clothes are not at all similar to those worn by the Shoshonis, yet they are readily recognizable as "Indian" clothes. The pageant organizers pointed with pride at the authenticity of the deerskin dresses. Originally the women's chorus wore ruddy makeup on their faces, arms, and legs to look more like Indians. However, this practice has now disappeared.

This costuming partially parallels Ronald Grimes's finding on the festival in Santa Fe, where there was great effort to produce authentic Spanish costumes, but the Pueblo Indians wore Plains Indian headdresses and

Navajo clothes and people darkened their skins to play Indians.<sup>17</sup> Grimes notes that this depiction of Indians indicates racial ambivalence and ethnic rivalry. In the case of the pageant, white women dress up as Indians, not as modern Indians, but in dress more "authentic" than real Indians now wear. This attempt to "out-Indian" the Indians indicates the attempt to disenfranchise the Shoshonis by emphasizing that whites respect the values the Indian lifestyle upheld, especially harmony with nature, and that whites will take over these traditions so that the Indians themselves are no longer needed in a caretaker role.

The position of the women's chorus is ambiguous and is interpreted variously by different segments of the audience. Townspeople are aware that these are white women dressed as Indians and comments pointing out friends or relatives can be heard. On the other hand, some spectators, from outside the local area, may not be aware that they are seeing white women dressed as Indians in addition to "real" Indians. Informants from the women's chorus reported that they are sometimes asked to pose for photographs with the Shoshonis. A travel guide written by an outsider shows a picture of the women's chorus in the pageant, labeled as "Shoshoni maidens."<sup>18</sup>

## SCRIPT AND THEMES

The poetic narration is recited by the unseen narrator. The poem directs the various activities of the participants in a story that ties together the scenes. Scene 1 includes a call to the audience to be witness to the gift of the waters:

You, who love the winds of summer  
Singing, sobbing through the pine trees  
And the lure of open spaces  
The great call of rushing waters  
Listen to this tale depicted,  
Harken to this Gift of Waters,  
The Great Gift of the Shoshonis  
To the Tibos, foreign brothers.<sup>19</sup>

In this scene, the Shoshonis are also called to

gather for their farewell.

Continuing poetic narration in Scene 2 then directs the Shoshoni who plays the medicine man to bless the water in preparation for the gift.

Down the northward slope of mountain  
Comes Shoshone man of healing,  
Comes to bless the smoking water  
And to bless Shoshone People.

This scene also contains the water ceremony in which the Shoshoni participants ritually drink the spring water from a bowl.

In Scene 3, the Indians portrayed by the white women's chorus express their loss in a chanted prayer to *Dama Upa*—the Shoshoni reference to God, "Our Father"—that He hear their cry for mercy. "*Dama Upa, Dama Upa. Hear our cry lest we die.*" In Scene 4, the gift is made by Washakie, chief when the treaty session was made. The Shoshonis then, via the continuing narration, bid farewell to their springs.

Basically, the poem develops three interwoven themes: that the Shoshonis made a gift of their hot springs because they knew it would benefit mankind; that the springs have healing



FIG. 1. *Thermopolis women's chorus in Indian dress with Shoshonis as medicine man and attendants.* Photo courtesy of Audrey C. Shalinsky.

qualities; and that all peoples are brothers who share in God's bounty. The themes are interwoven by the emphasis given to the role of Chief Washakie, portrayed as a wise, generous man who not only willingly gave up the springs to his white brothers, but also specified in the treaty that some of the water should be reserved for free public use.

During the climactic moment in Scene 4, the Shoshoni who plays the role of Washakie raises his hands in a gesture of blessing and declares:

I, Washakie, Chief of Shoshonis  
 Freely Give to the Great White Father  
 These waters, belov'd by my people  
 That all may receive the great blessing  
 Of Bodily health in the bathing.

Strikingly, the Shoshoni who plays Washakie reads these lines himself. He is the only Shoshoni who speaks aloud. Recognizing the universal brotherhood of man under God, Washakie willingly relinquishes what his people had been granted and says:

Redman or Tibo—The difference  
 Lies only in outward appearance—  
 The Great Power knoweth His children  
 By their hearts and knowing them loves  
 them. . .  
 So to you and your children's children  
 So long as this water remaineth  
 We give you—the great Bah-guewana.  
 Guard well and in freedom receiving  
 Hold safe for the free use of others.



FIG. 2. Shoshoni girl signing *Lord's Prayer* while member of women's chorus on bluff sings the words. Photo courtesy of Audrey C. Shalinsky.



In making the gift an act of charity, Washakie in the pageant sets a precedent that these special waters must forever be given freely. Further, the Shoshonis are comforted in their loss by knowing that all people will benefit.

Go now to your home, oh, my people—  
And live there at peace with your brother;  
Hearts glad—from the gift of the waters  
Where all men may bathe and be aided.

The implication is that the white man will be better able to develop the springs for the benefit of mankind.

The poem has a solemn, measured cadence that sets the general atmosphere of the pageant. The only other aural modes in the performance are the chants to *Dama Upa* by the women's chorus, which were originally part of the pageant poem, and a rendition of the Lord's Prayer performed by a member of the women's chorus. A Shoshoni girl offers a sign language version of the prayer. Recorded drums and chants, heard over the loudspeaker, accompany the Indian dances.

Overall, the poem emphasizes a sacred character in the proceedings. The water is always referred to as *Bah-guewana*, its Shoshoni name meaning "Smoking Waters," rather than the more prosaic common name, Big Spring. The property of smoke rising to heaven is elaborated with the frequent mention of mist from the water carrying prayers upward. The tempo and content of the poem and the various elements of Christianity indicate a conscious attempt at creating a quasi-ritual atmosphere.

#### ACTIVITIES

The first scene introduces the different categories of performers. These categories are spatially segregated until near the end of the pageant when they intermingle in the Shoshoni round dance. Certain of the Shoshoni men are singled out for prominence. One of these, the medicine man, takes his place on a small

rise above the spring. The Shoshoni portraying Washakie is centrally placed in the line of men. The scene ends with a dance by the Shoshoni women and children. The Shoshoni dances are part of a standardized repertoire and are not connected to the other activities in the scenes.

In Scene 2, a Shoshoni girl playing the Indian "Princess" and her two handmaidens leave their position in the seated group of women, and go to the spring to fill bowls with water. Then they approach Washakie. The medicine man descends from the rise overlooking the water, raises his hands and blesses the water, the Shoshonis, and all those present. The princess and the attendants give the Shoshoni men a taste of the water. Before drinking, Washakie pours some on the ground. Another Shoshoni girl steps to the front and performs the Lord's Prayer in sign language as a member of the women's chorus sings the accompaniment. Another Shoshoni dance ends this scene.

Scene 3 includes the song of the women's chorus to *Dama Upa* and two more Indian dances. In Scene 4, Washakie steps forward to a microphone and makes the gift. He reads the appropriate portion of the poem. Washakie also moves to the springs and says farewell with gestures. In Scene 5, Shoshoni boys shoot arrows, their final farewell to the springs.

The notion that the water is sacred and healing is clearly portrayed by the major silent activity in the pageant, the ceremonial offering and drinking of the water. Though only Shoshoni men drink, this activity seems to resemble a Christian communion. The water is symbolically powerful and healing. It is precisely the power of the water that recompenses the Shoshonis for their sacrificial gift, since the people who come from around the world to be healed will bless the Shoshonis.<sup>20</sup> The charitable gift of the Shoshonis is clearly connected to the fact that the springs were themselves a gift to the Shoshonis from "Dama Upa."<sup>21</sup> A strong Christian component, including the Lord's Prayer, ties in the themes of universal brotherhood and universal healing. The



FIG. 3. *Shoshoni dancers*. Photo courtesy of Audrey C. Shalinsky.

theme of universal brotherhood under God culminates in the closing dance of the pageant, in which all the Shoshonis and the members of the women's chorus intermingle in the Shoshoni dance circle.

Only the exuberance of some of the Shoshoni dances breaks the somber and dignified atmosphere of the one-and-a-half-hour performance. Townspeople's major complaint about the pageant is that it is slow moving. However, the pacing works well for those involved in photographing the various symbolic acts and dances and the deliberation of each activity reinforces the ritual qualities of this event.

#### REINFORCEMENT OF DOMINANT SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Social anthropologist Victor Turner, a leading proponent of symbolic approaches to ritual and political processes, has applied aspects of the analysis of traditional rituals to public festivals and performances in more

complex societies, including the United States.<sup>22</sup> Turner argues that traditional rituals are marked by a mode of participation which he terms "communitas," the shared equalizing interaction of individuals who thereby "commune" and "communicate" with each other. In Turner's view, such interaction is a necessary alternative to the ordered hierarchical interaction that provides the basis for ordinary social relations in traditional societies.<sup>23</sup> Thus, societies need ritual for communitas, which builds social harmony, just as they need ordinary nonritual actions that depend on structured or hierarchical relationships. Like rituals, a pageant or cultural performance in a complex society may likewise focus on sacred values or ritual-like modes of behavior such as communitas.

In many calendrical rituals of traditional societies, at certain culturally defined points in the seasonal cycle, groups or categories of persons who habitually occupy low-status positions in the social structure are enjoined to exercise ritual authority over their superiors.<sup>24</sup>

This power reversal temporarily suspends ordinary social relations, diffuses tensions that result from social hierarchy, and thus maintains a kind of stable condition in which authority continues to control by relinquishing the control of ritual. Thus, temporary power reversal is another mode of increasing *communitas*.

The participants in Thermopolis's pageant—the narrator, who is a town official, and the chorus, which is composed of women frequently involved in civic activities and their daughters—view themselves and are viewed by others as conservators of tradition. One member of the chorus said her participation was a civic responsibility. Since these people also organize the event, they ensure an emphasis on traditional values and presumably ritual-like activities. Therefore, questions of tradition, social harmony, hierarchy, and *communitas* and their expression become significant. The women's chorus has always dressed as Indians but Shoshoni men and women never take the role of whites. Thus, ordinary hierarchical social relations and social distance are maintained. Using the term "corralled *communitas*" for a situation in which a continuous thread of social hierarchy is found in ritual, Turner notes that it is highly characteristic of long established and stable cultural systems such as civic groups in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

In the pageant's "corralled *communitas*," a power reversal is never completed. Shoshonis do not control the proceedings; rather the unseen narrator does. The Shoshoni men playing Washakie and the medicine men have important ritual parts, the former making the great gift and the latter blessing the water and the people. Shoshoni women also have important parts, passing around the bowl of healing water to the men and in one case reciting the Lord's Prayer in sign language. If this were the entire ritual, the argument for the role of Shoshoni men as ritual elders and for power reversal could be made. However, throughout these ritual events, the white male narrator is reciting the pageant poem and since the other participants follow his directions, his must be

seen as the overarching role. Furthermore, the white women dressed as Indians are not controlled by the Indians. Rather, they portray the Shoshoni expressions of sorrow and farewell attributed to them by the poem. They must express what the Indians themselves cannot express or do not even find significant. Thus, a dynamic tension is set up between Indian-white harmony and hierarchical social relations.

Since the ritual symbolically reenacts a transfer of sovereignty, it functions to legitimize the present. In fact, present conditions are used to define and limit the past. Thus, the Shoshoni are not allowed to take over the ritual. Though they are necessary, they represent the past. This fact must not upset the control that contemporary Thermopolis has over its natural resource. The narrator as the representative of current social and political authority therefore has the dominant role in the pageant.

While the spatial relationships and activities of the various groups reflect contemporary social relations, the language of the poem in itself provides a partially contradictory set of ideas. The poem emphasizes the central role of Chief Washakie, who is credited with powerful leadership in the treaty negotiations. Washakie is said to specify healing for all people before he will give his gift to the white man. This portrayal of Washakie as noble and benevolent makes him a key symbol in the myth or "sacred charter" of the hot springs.<sup>26</sup> At one level, then, the pageant reenacts a myth; Washakie makes his gift and legitimizes the present existence of Thermopolis, provided that his lead is followed and free access to the healing source is continued.

The poem suggests that Thermopolis has maintained its sacred trust while ignoring the fact that the lack of monetary compensation for the town is an ongoing controversy and also ignoring the commercial development within the state park itself. The poem thus conveys a set of problematic messages. On the one hand, Washakie and the town are given an elevated role that does not correspond to

historical reality. On the other hand, the role is so elevating that contemporary economic realities are likewise ignored.

Washakie is further depicted in the poem as recognizing universal brotherhood and equality under God. According to Turner, *communitas* is defined as a kind of social bond in which there is communion of equal individuals rather than differentiating structural ties between individuals.<sup>27</sup> Washakie is therefore a kind of symbol that inaugurates *communitas*. Near the end of the pageant, the women's chorus and the Shoshonis intermingle in the round dance, the major symbolic activity that conveys *communitas* to the participants.

Turner has examined various sources from literate societies for the themes of *communitas*. He lists "such universal human values as peace and harmony between all men, fertility, health of mind and body, universal justice, comradeship and brotherhood between all men, the equality before God, the law or life force of men and women, young and old, and persons of all races and ethnic groups."<sup>28</sup> The poem thus appropriately develops the themes of *communitas* in commemoration of the Shoshonis' healing gift to the whites. However, the theme of *communitas* is not conveyed in costumes or spatial arrangement.

For townspeople who participate and watch, the social arrangements, activities, and words in the pageant reflect a virtuous and proper interpretation of the past and present. The past is represented by idealized portrayals of harmony between Indians and whites, by the lack of concern with money, and by a transfer of sovereignty that dignifies the contemporary control of a natural resource by those who represent the status quo. The present is represented by separation between Indians and whites and the mastery of nature via property rights.

## CONCLUSIONS

The highly regulated character of the pageant and its justification of contemporary social relations places it within the ritual mode

of performance. Its thirty-four consecutive performances argue for an enduring message, yet the level of participation has dropped considerably through the years. It may be that this is a ritual performance with symbols that have lost their "fire" but are "sufficiently viable to provide a sense of continuity and predictability."<sup>29</sup> Clearly, at one level of analysis, the pageant reinforces the value of harmony with nature and continuity with the Indians' tradition, and promotes the healing efficacy of the waters and their local significance. One notes that the social relations between Native Americans and the dominant white society are for this purpose presented in an idealized way, stressing brotherhood and goodwill, a view generally opposed to the townspeople's attitudes about Native Americans.

On another level, the message of the pageant legitimizes contemporary property relations and the continuing cultural use of a natural resource. This message is conveyed by differentiated costuming and the spatial separation of the performers. According to a study of Texas settlers in New Mexico, the homesteaders were characterized by an orientation to nature that defined the physical environment as something to be controlled and exploited by man for the attainment of his own ends. Similarly, man's mastery over nature was implicit in the pageant. The gift was made because the whites with their superior technology would be better able to serve mankind. The pageant's emphasis on mastery over nature for the social good seems to reflect an additional concern with legitimizing the position of those with power since they have presumably acted for the social good. The pageant's ritual linkages to traditional social structure and authority leaves it open to gradual loss of participation unless reorganization brings in new elements of spectacle and festival.<sup>30</sup>

Following the period of my research, the pageant was modified by the organizers. Notably, they attempted to increase the number of Indian dancers and to provide historical context. Though the pageant has not been

shortened, it now includes introductory historical scenes that explain the treaty ceding the hot springs and the origin of the pageant poem in 1925. The scenes, actors, and activities described here continue to form most of the pageant.

#### NOTES

Research for this paper was funded through a University of Wyoming Basic Research Grant and a Wyoming Council of the Humanities Fellowship. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings in December 1982. Dr. Anne Salter of the University of Wyoming Department of Anthropology and Dr. Eric Sandeen, director of the American Studies Program at the University of Wyoming, provided valuable comments on various drafts. Errors in description or analysis remain the author's.

1. My ethnographic research and interviewing was conducted as part of a 1981-83 study of several Wyoming towns and their celebrations. Research in Thermopolis focused on past and present pageant organizers and participants. In addition, I collected attitudes toward the springs' development, healing efficacy, and local significance. Historical data used in the analysis I collected from 1981 to 1983 at the historical archives in Cheyenne, Wyoming; the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie; and the public library, Thermopolis.

I have used the anthropologically preferred spelling *Shoshoni* throughout this paper although the variant spelling *Shoshone* is generally preferred by tribal members. The Arapahos, also resident on Wind River Reservation since 1877, frequently use the spelling *Arapahoe*. The Arapahos were placed on this reservation with the reluctant permission of Shoshoni Chief Washakie. They and the Shoshonis were traditional enemies. I have also used the terms *Indian* and *white* as they are in common use among the town population.

2. Frank Manning, *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives in Contemporary Cultural Performance* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1983), p. 7. For an early example of a town celebration as confirmation of the social order, see W. L. Warner, *The Family of God: A Symbolic Study of Christian Life in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 89-154.

3. John MacAloon, *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Perfor-*

*mance* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), p. 1.

4. Dorothy Milek, *The Gift of Bah Guewana* (Loveland, Colo.: Lithographic Press, 1975), p. 12.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 36

6. U.S. Congress, Senate. *Agreement with Certain Tribes of Indians*, S. Doc. 247, 54th Congress, 1st sess., 1896.

7. Milek, *Gift*, pp. 45-50.

8. U.S. Congress, Senate. *Agreement*, p. 2.

9. Tom Shakespeare, "Indian Writer Tells of Arapahoe Part in Historic Gift of Waters," *Thermopolis Independent Record*, 2 August 1951.

10. U.S. Congress, House. *Shoshone and Arapahoe Indians of the Shoshone or Wind River Reservation*, H. Doc. 70, 51st Congress, 1st sess., 1891-92.

11. The local newspaper, the *Independent Record*, covered this story in July 1982.

12. Jessie Duhig, "Indian Pageant Commemorates Gift of Springs by Washakie," *Independent Record*, 3 August 1950.

13. MacAloon, *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, p. 264.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

15. Ronald Grimes, "The Lifeblood of Public Festival: Fiestas and Public Exploration Projects," *Celebration, Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, ed. Victor Turner (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), p. 274.

16. Eva McAdams, "Letter," *Independent Record*, 3 August 1978.

17. Ronald Grimes, *Symbol and Conquest, Public Ritual and Drama in Santa Fe, New Mexico* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 173-74.

18. Mae Urbanek, *Ghost Trails of Wyoming* (Boulder, Colo.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1978), p. 227.

19. Maria Montabe, *Gift of the Waters* (Casper, Wyo.: Commercial Printing Co., 1925). The poem has been modified slightly in various scripts in the years of production.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

22. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 23-59.

23. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969).

24. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

25. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, p. 254.

26. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954), p. 101.

27. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 96.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

29. Sally F. Moore and Barbara Myerhoff, *Secular Ritual* (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1977), p. 14.

30. Evon Vogt, *Modern Homesteaders: The Life*

*of a Twentieth Century Frontier Community* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 174.