

Hidatsa

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The Hidatsa are native to the North American Plains, and traditionally lived in semipermanent villages along the upper Missouri River and its tributaries in what is now northwestern North Dakota. Since 1868, the Hidatsa (along with the Mandan and Arikara) have lived on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota. This entry focuses on Hidatsa society as it existed prior to the last major smallpox outbreak of 1837, which decimated the Hidatsa population and marked the beginning of more intensive and frequent contact with Europeans and Americans, and subsequent cultural change. This entry relies mainly on information collected by principal ethnographic authority Alfred W. Bowers, who completed fieldwork at Fort Berthold Reservation from 1932-1933. Bowers used the memories of older informants, archaeological data, and early records to reconstruct the period of time prior to 1837. Historically, the Hidatsa lived in three independent villages along the Knife River: Hidatsa-proper, Awatixa, and Awakawi. Each village was led by a council composed of chiefs and ceremonial and war leaders; top leadership positions were held by the owners of certain sacred ceremonial bundles specific to each village. The three villages had a tribal council (of about 10 members) charged with defense against common enemies and the general welfare of the villages. The Hidatsa did not have a clear distinction between secular and religious roles: ceremonial leaders held status equal with or greater than that of chiefs. Social organization centered around elaborate clan and age-grade systems. A clan was a named matrilineal group associated with its own traditions and mythology and was responsible for taking care of its members. Clans cut across villages, and were important aspects of social, economic, and ceremonial life. Additionally, "...the entire male and female population was arranged in a series of groupings based on age. For the greater part of the population, these groups were formally organized with names, symbols of membership, songs, and prescribed rites and rules of behavior" (Bowers, 1954:174). Both men and women had religious societies within the age-grade system, and men also had military societies. An individual's clan and age-grade determined his or her position/role in the village, as well as social and ceremonial duties. The Hidatsa have an extensive and elaborate ceremonial system associated with various supernatural beings, natural phenomena, and agricultural and subsistence cycles. It is important to note that "at the base of all Hidatsa religious activities and concepts is the belief in individual and group-owned supernatural powers which are controlled according to long-standing rules" (Bowers, 1965:282). These supernatural powers are acquired from supernatural beings during vision experiences, and are associated with either tribal or personal sacred bundles. The owner of a sacred/ritual bundle also possesses the associated myth and ceremonial procedures. The owner thus leads the associated ceremony and is responsible for knowing where it lies in the ceremonial cycle (e.g. which ceremonies precede and follow). The ceremonial system is open to the occasional introduction of new bundle rites (the result of purchase or vision experiences). Because Hidatsa religious beliefs and practices are interwoven throughout society as a whole, this entry considers the religious group to be coterminous with Hidatsa society itself.



Date Range: 1816 CE - 1840 CE

Region: Hidatsa territory

Region tags: North America, United States of America

Hidatsa territory, ca. 1836 (see map on page 12 of Bowers, 1965).

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Bowers, A.W. 1965. Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization. *Bulletin of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 194:1-528.
- Source 2: Matthews, W. 1877. *Ethnography and Philology of the Hidatsa Indians*. U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey Miscellaneous Publication, 7:1-239. [Reprinted 1971: New York].

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

— Yes

Notes: "The first reference in the literature to the Hidatsa as an independent tribal group was made by Thompson (1916, pp.209-242), who visited the villages of this tribe and of the Mandan in 1797. Prior to that time...tribal differences apparently were not recognized by the early White traders..." (Bowers, 1965:10). "It is likely that all the Europeans who came to these tribes in the early days were from the Hudson Bay Territory, and that they were mostly traders; but, in 1804, it seems that there were some whites sojourning in their country as hunters and trappers...In 1832, the first steamer reached the Mandan villages, and after that, for about thirty years, but one or two steamers a year went thus far up the river" (Matthews, 1877:30). Both Matthews (1877:30-31) and Bowers (1965:3-4) note that extensive contact with Europeans and subsequent cultural changes did not occur until after 1837.



Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

— No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1649, Frequency of Internal Warfare, Resolved Rating, indicates that "internal warfare seems to be absent or rare." Additionally, SCCS Variable 1654, Pacification, indicates that the Hidatsa are "inferred to be unpacified because warfare frequency is greater than or equal to three." Source of information: Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004.



Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

— Yes

Notes: SCCS Variable 1650, Frequency of External Warfare (Resolved Rating), was originally coded to be 4.75, which is between a code of 4 (external warfare seems to occur every particular season) and 5 (external warfare occurs almost constantly and at any time of the year). Source of information: Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004.

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating that the Hidatsa would actively proselytize and recruit new members.

Does the religion have official political support

— Yes

Notes: "One's ritual possessions were so much a part of his daily life that whenever someone is mentioned, people today recall both his ritual rites and other records...In time, each personal achievement was expressed in terms of the supernatural" (Bowers, 1965: 374).



Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

— Yes

Notes: Traditionally, there was a considerable overlap between chiefs and religious leaders, and both positions held equivalent influence. SCCS Variable 1745 (Religio-political overlap), indicates that "religious specialists participate in decision making at the level of maximal political authority" (Lang, 1998; Retrieved from Divale, 2004). In the village of Awatixa, "The village was, however, divided into four 'wards,' each under the supernatural protection of a prominent man selected for his part in the ceremonies conducted for the gods of the direction which he represented. These four men, known as 'protectors of the people,' were esteemed ceremonial leaders and occupied a status position equal with that of the two village chiefs and other select members of the village council distinguished either for their knowledge of sacred lore or for distinction in warfare" (Bowers, 1965:32).

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

— Estimated population, numeric: 1330

Notes: Bowers, 1965:11

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

— Yes

Notes: In the village of Awatixa, "The village was, however, divided into four 'wards,' each under the supernatural protection of a prominent man selected for his part in the ceremonies conducted for the gods of the direction which he represented. These four men, known as 'protectors of the people,' were esteemed ceremonial leaders and occupied a status position equal with that of the two village chiefs and other select members of the village council distinguished either for their knowledge of sacred lore

or for distinction in warfare" (Bowers, 1965:32). In the villages of Hidatsa-proper and Awaxawi, "authority was vested in a council of headmen who had attained eminence by the performance of rites or successes in warfare. The top leadership of the council was represented by the owner of the Earthnaming bundle, who organized the rites relating to various buffalo-calling ceremonies which defined village hunting territorial rights, and the principal war leader. Thus the socioceremonial and the war-making activities of the village were symbolically separate as represented by two head men. Traditionally, the top leaders of the ceremonial activities are said to have held precedence over the war leaders...villages were divided into four 'wards' with a bundle owner, whose gods were of the direction selected, serving as 'protector of the people.' " (Bowers, 1965:32-33). "Another organized group was that of the berdaches. These people were men who, during their late teens and after many dreams from the Holy-Woman-Above, changed their clothing to that worn by women and assumed special roles in the community. They usually formed attachments to older men, generally men without children and having trouble keeping their wives, and set up separate households. At the time this study was made, informants could remember two such people in the generation above them, but they had heard that in former times there were sometimes as many as 15 to 25 berdaches in their villages. Since the berdaches were viewed as mystic possessors of unique ritual instructions secured directly from the mysterious Holy Woman, they were treated as a special class of religious leaders...The berdaches comprised the most active ceremonial class in the village. Their roles in ceremonies were many and exceeded those of the most distinguished tribal ceremonial leaders" (Bowers, 1965:166-167).

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

— Yes

Notes: "Men were not normally born with supernatural powers. Until they were old enough to seek visions and to obtain supernatural powers by other means, the supernatural powers of their relatives' sacred bundles protected them" (Bowers, 1965:284).

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in past lives:

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a belief in reincarnation.

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in the current life:

— Yes

Notes: "Although supernatural power was usually manifested by visions, it was believed that those who fasted often or performed other power-seeking activities without the benefit of visions also were possessors of this power even though they had no symbols to show for their efforts" (Bowers, 1965:285).

↳ Powers are inherited:

— Yes

Notes: "It was thought that a male child eventually ought to receive vision instructions to take over his father's ceremonial bundles and rites" (Bowers, 1965:285).

↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:

— No

Notes: "It was the privilege of each household to send an older person [to the council meetings] to express opinions. In the event that a number of related households opposed the proposition, measures were taken to win their approval or the matter was dropped. We find, for example, instances of peace emissaries being received by the council but acceptance being delayed until those households which had recently lost members in warfare against the tribe had indicated their willingness to accept the peace offerings" (Bowers, 1965:33-34).

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

— No

Notes: Myths and oral histories are important among the Hidatsa, but a formal scripture is not present. "A man was expected to become informed in tribal lore as he advanced in status. Beyond what he knew of tribal lore from the sacred bundles he had bought, he was expected to give feasts frequently to those possessing other sacred lore and to have these myths related. A few individuals who were unusually ambitious and possessed good memories frequently knew most of the sacred myths of the village...In addition to the central sacred myths which related ceremonies to each other in time and space and provided a rudimentary history of the various village groups, there were many myths of a semisacred or sacred character which occupied an indefinite position; some were freely told as good entertainment and often with a moral exalting generosity, others were related to certain bundle rites without actually comprising the central core of the rites" (Bowers, 1965:195-196).

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

— No

Notes: According to Murdock and Wilson (1972), column 6: large or impressive structures [note: identical to SCCS variable 66], "There are no structures in the community that are appreciably larger or more impressive than the usual residential dwelling." "The Hidatsa never preserved a fixed ceremonial area within the village, nor is there reference to lodge orientation within the camp area. Even in historic times, the Hidatsa had no ceremonial or tribal lodge for their ceremonies" (Bowers, 1965:22).

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

— Yes

Notes: "There are, in the village, two open spaces, which, although of irregular shape, may be called squares; one of these is in the Mandan, the other in the Arickaree quarter. Beside each square stands a large round 'medicine-lodge', or temple...which is used for purposes that, in a general way, are called religious" (Matthews, 1877:9).



Temples:

— No

Notes: "The Hidatsa never preserved a fixed ceremonial area within the village, nor is there reference to lodge orientation within the camp area. Even in historic times, the Hidatsa had no ceremonial or tribal lodge for their ceremonies" (Bowers, 1965:22).



Mass gathering point [plazas, courtyard, square. Places permanently demarcated using visible objects or structures]:

— Yes

Notes: "There are, in the village, two open spaces, which, although of irregular shape, may be called squares; one of these is in the Mandan, the other in the Arickaree quarter. Beside each square stands a large round 'medicine-lodge', or temple...which is used for purposes that, in a general way, are called religious" (Matthews, 1877:9).

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

— Yes

Notes: "Since their removal to their present village, they do not seem to have any very important local oracles to consult; but when they lived on Knife River, they had at least two such holy places. One of these was a famous holy stone, or 'Medicine rock' (Mihopas, or, Mandan, Mihopinis), which is described by Long and by Maximilian. It was some two or three days' journey from their residence. The Hidatsa now seldom refer to it, and I do not think they ever visit it. The other famous oracle, to which they now often refer, as they have still some fancies connected with it, was the Makadistati, or House of the Infants, a cavern, near the Knife River, which they supposed extended far into the earth, but whose entrance was only a span wide" (Matthews, 1877:50-51).



Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

— Yes

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body.

Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

— Yes

Notes: "It is believed by some of the Hidatsa that every human being has four souls in one. They account for the phenomena of gradual death, where the extremities are apparently dead while consciousness remains, by supposing the four souls to depart, one after another, at different times. When dissolution is complete, they say that all the souls are gone, and have joined together again outside of the body" (Matthews, 1877:50).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "In no area of Hidatsa culture were there so many diverse views as in that pertaining to the hereafter. All informants agreed that life in the hereafter was very much like that on earth" (Bowers, 1965:173).

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined "above" space:

– Yes

Notes: "Another view held by other informants was that many others were the descendants of the 13 initial family groups from the sky who established a village on Charred Body Creek below the present town of Washburn, N. Dak., led by Charred Body who had first discovered this land below" (Bowers, 1965:174).

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined "below" space:

– Yes

Notes: "Numerous informants spoke of the return and reunion of their people with those who were once left behind in very early times when the Hidatsa came up out of the ground at some place to the south-east. According to this tradition, the Hidatsa and all other Indians were at that time living underground. Finding an opening reaching to the land above, the people began moving upward to the surface of the earth. One woman heavy with child broke the vine by which they were ascending, separating the people. Many people believe that on death the individual returns to this land below" (Bowers, 1965:173).

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined horizontal space:

– Yes

Notes: "Another view, held by Four Dancers, was that the village of the dead was on the earth. He based his views on instructions and information given by the owners of the Earthnaming bundles. Other older informants believed that when they died they would return downstream to the mouth of the Knife River or to Devils Lake and join their deceased relatives there" (Bowers, 1965:174).

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of a belief in reincarnation.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: "It was the duty of the people of the father's clan to take care of and handle all of the funeral

arrangements. First of all there was the preparation of the body. The manner of disposal was largely a family custom inherited from their family lines going back to the three original village groups on the Knife River. The Hidatsa recognized that there were a number of different traditional methods of disposing of the dead. They were well aware of the fact that more people were buried in the ground at Hidatsa village on the Knife River than at the other villages" (Bowers, 1963:169).

↳ Cremation:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of cremation.

↳ Mummification:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of mummification.

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: "The manner of disposal was largely a family custom inherited from their family lines going back to the three original village groups on the Knife River. The Hidatsa recognized that there were a number of different traditional methods of disposing of the dead. They were well aware of the fact that more people were buried in the ground at Hidatsa village on the Knife River than at the other villages" (Bowers, 1963:169).

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of cannibalism.

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating that corpses were ever fed to animals.

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:

– Yes

Notes: "Another closely related practice was to paint the skull and set it on a nest of soft sage in one of the skull circles near the village" (Bowers, 1965:170).

↳ Other intensive (in terms of time or resources expended) treatment of corpse :

– Yes [specify]: "...above ground in trees, on scaffolds, or under overhanging rocks" (see notes below)

Notes: "The other method of disposal was above ground in trees, on scaffolds, or under overhanging rocks. When living in winter camps, it was common to place the dead in trees. During the summer months, while occupying the permanent villages, scaffolds were erected

on a four-post frame at the edge of the village. The area might contain both burials and scaffolds. In some instances all the members of some households would be placed on scaffolds, while all the members of other households would be buried in the ground. In other instances a households might practice both scaffold disposal and internment" (Bowers, 1965:170).

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of co-sacrifices in burials.

Are grave goods present:

— Yes

Notes: "A man's ceremonial bundles were treated in two ways. Those that were of a personal nature and that had been established by the deceased on the basis of his dreams or as gifts from a near relative were generally wrapped in the bundle with the body or hung on one of the posts of the scaffold. In no instance were they kept around the lodge or treated lightly by the survivors. Tribal bundles associated with the long-standing ceremonies were viewed as tribal property and were kept by the nearest relative" (Bowers, 1965:171).



Personal effects:

— Yes

Notes: "The Hidatsa did not tend to place much personal property with the bodies; a man's favorite firearms, bow and arrows, pipe, personal sacred bundle, and paints of various colors were the most common articles. When an individual was placed on a scaffold, it was common for those having distinctive military records to request that the symbols associated with these records be painted on the posts. Food of the type a man would carry on a long journey was usually placed in a dish or bag with the body" (Bowers, 1965:171-172).

Are formal burials present:

— Yes

Notes: See questions below for more information regarding formal burials among the Hidatsa.



In cemetery:

— Yes

Notes: "The mourners and the participants would meet at the deceased's lodge and move to the burial grounds in a procession. At the head would be those carrying the body, immediately followed by the nearest relatives" (Bowers, 1965:172).



Family tomb-crypt:

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of family tomb-crypts.

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

— Yes

Notes: "Occasionally a small child was buried at the outer edge of the lodge, believing that a child would be lonely away from his close relatives" (Bowers, 1965:171).

↳ Other formal burial type:

— Yes [specify]: earth mound

Notes: "There are also traditions of earth burials made in mounds of mounds built over the burial in the outline of the individual's 'spirit god'" (Bowers, 1965:171).

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

— Yes

Notes: "In theory, all supernatural powers have their origin at the beginning of time when the earth or 'in between' land was made over by the mythological beings for man's occupation. At that time First Creator, with the assistance of other mysterious persons, created numerous gods from whom the Hidatsa could acquire supernatural powers and thus survive by performing various rites" (Bowers, 1965:282). "The Thunder ceremonies comprise a closely related group of separate rites performed to those supernatural beings believed to 'possess the power' of producing thunder and lightning. These supernatural beings comprise two groups, the sky gods and the water gods, between whom there were endless conflicts during the mythological period. The welfare of the Hidatsa was generally believed to be dependent on the outcome of these contests. There was a wide range of contests between the supernatural, chiefly involving Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies, Two Men, Packs Antelope, Eagle People, and various water spirits such as large snakes, toads, turtles, mink, beavers, otters, and muskrats" (Bowers, 1965:358).

↳ A supreme high god is present:

— Yes

Notes: SCCS Variable 238, Religion: high gods [Note: Equivalent to Ethnographic Atlas column 34], indicates that a high god is present but otiose (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004). "First Creator stories were told freely by both men and women and his magical acts were a constant source of entertainment. However important First Creator was in organizing the habitat for man's first existence, he was represented in certain rites only as the waiter. In spite of his traditional role of creating many things, there was no ceremony in which he occupied the principal position. Instead, he is the trickster who entertained the people while those spirits he created provided the psychological basis for the performance of the various rites" (Bowers, 1965:296).

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic:

— I don't know

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– No

Notes: No monarch is present among the Hidatsa.

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

Notes: No monarch is present among the Hidatsa.

↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:

– I don't know

↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 238, Religion: high gods [Note: Equivalent to Ethnographic Atlas column 34], indicates that a high god is present but otiose (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– I don't know

↳ The supreme high god possesses hunger:

– I don't know

↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:

– Yes

Notes: "In spite of [the First Creator's] traditional role of creating many things, there was no ceremony in which he occupied the principal position" (Bowers, 1965:296).

↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the high god communicates with the living. The high god appears to be an otiose being.

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: "They [the Hidatsa] believe in the existence and visibility of human and other ghosts, yet they seem to have no terror of graveyards and but little of mortuary remains" (Matthews, 1877:49). Although human spirits are identified as being present, they are not described in further detail.

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

— Yes

Notes: "They [the Hidatsa] believe in the existence and visibility of human and other ghosts, yet they seem to have no terror of graveyards and but little of mortuary remains" (Matthews, 1877:49).

↳ Previously human spirits have knowledge of this world:

— I don't know

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

— I don't know

↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

— I don't know

↳ Human spirits have memory of life:

— I don't know

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living:

— I don't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

— Yes

Notes: "According to native traditions, shortly after First Creator and Lone Man had created the earth and the male animals, a mysterious or holy woman named Village-Old-Woman living in the southland learned of this new land. She resolved to create females of each species created by First Creator and Lone Man in order to perpetuate life, and to give the people female creatures to worship. For each species of living males created by the other two culture heroes, she created females to serve as gods as well as food for the people who were to inhabit the earth" (Bowers, 1965:323).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:

— Yes

Notes: "The fall dances, by contrast, ushered out the summer garden period. Dances at that time were said to please the water birds which, as messengers of the Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies, upon reaching their winter homes with the corn spirits whom they guided south, reported the various offerings that had been made to her. As a token of her thanks for these offerings, it was believed she would send the winter buffaloes near the village so that the people could live well until the next crop could be planted and harvested" (Bowers, 1965:346-347).

- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to particular domain of human affairs:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted within the sample region:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted outside of sample region:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):
 - I don't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):
 - I don't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):
 - I don't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings knows your basic character (personal essence):
 - I don't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):
 - I don't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
 - I don't know

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

— Yes

Notes: "It was believed that when a man saw a coil of sweetgrass in the brush he should look away, otherwise the Village-Old-Woman or the female deities whom she created would cause his mind to weaken so that he would have no relief until he 'changed his sex'" (Bowers, 1965:326). "The myth of Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies provided the basis for native beliefs and practices for the propagation of the cultivated crops and she was considered the 'goddess' of all vegetation...The Hidatsa thought of her as the custodian of all vegetation that ripens or shed its leaves in the fall and is 'rejuvenated' in the spring with the northern flights of the waterbirds which she accompanied. She was equally regarded as the 'producer' of wild fruit crops; occasionally, offerings of calicoes and meat were offered to the shrubs and bushes. Many of the unorganized household rites relating to her showed considerable variability" (Bowers, 1965:338).

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

— Yes

Notes: "In the mythology, Woman Above is usually associated with her brother the Sun because both were believed to be vindictive and jealous, sending good luck to the enemy when offerings were not made to them; both were cannibals and arranged battles in order to eat the victims; both consumed the flesh of dead animals; and both were responsible for hot winds that destroyed the crops...The Woman Above was considered opposite in character to the Holy Women. Whereas the Holy Women were thought of as benevolent spirits, the Woman Above was thought of as an evil-dispositioned spirit to whom curing rites with Woman Above bundles were directed chiefly to avoid misfortunes such as miscarriages, premature births, insanity, and paralysis" (Bowers, 1965:330).

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

— I don't know

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

— Yes

Notes: A variety of supernatural beings are present, including a high god, human spirits, and a variety of non-human gods/spirits. See question above, "Are supernatural beings present" for more details.

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

— I don't know

Notes: No ethnographic evidence of supernatural beings monitoring human behavior specifically

relating to social norms. Supernatural punishment (in the form of misfortunes, not meted out by a specific being) appears to occur as an automatic consequence to violating rules of rituals/rites. "All manners of misfortunes are said to have befallen those who did not fast properly or who, in other ways, violated the rules relating to the buffalo rites" (Bowers, 1965:54). "Ridicule or question of the potency of ritual acts was liable to result in minor injury--at least to the disbeliever...An individual should perform any rites for which he was otherwise qualified by inheritance, or at least pledge the ceremony when he received repeated vision instructions" (Bowers, 1965:283).

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence that supernatural beings would directly punish humans. It appears that the only form of supernatural punishment takes place automatically, not directed by a particular beings. "All manners of misfortunes are said to have befallen those who did not fast properly or who, in other ways, violated the rules relating to the buffalo rites" (Bowers, 1965:54). "Ridicule or question of the potency of ritual acts was liable to result in minor injury--at least to the disbeliever...An individual should perform any rites for which he was otherwise qualified by inheritance, or at least pledge the ceremony when he received repeated vision instructions" (Bowers, 1965:283).

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

— Yes

Notes: Limited ethnographic examples of supernatural reward are present. See questions below for available information. "The fall dances, by contrast, ushered out the summer garden period. Dances at that time were said to please the water birds which, as messengers of the Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies, upon reaching their winter homes with the corn spirits whom they guided south, reported the various offerings that had been made to her. As a token of her thanks for these offerings, it was believed she would send the winter buffaloes near the village so that the people could live well until the next crop could be planted and harvested" (Bowers, 1965:346-347).

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known:

— Yes

↳ Done only by high god:

— No

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

— I don't know

Notes: The only supernatural being described as the agent of supernatural reward is the Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies, but it is unclear if she alone rewards humans.

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

— Yes

Notes: "The fall dances, by contrast, ushered out the summer garden period. Dances at that time were said to please the water birds which, as messengers of the Old-Woman-

Who-Never-Dies, upon reaching their winter homes with the corn spirits whom they guided south, reported the various offerings that had been made to her. As a token of her thanks for these offerings, it was believed she would send the winter buffaloes near the village so that the people could live well until the next crop could be planted and harvested" (Bowers, 1965:346-347).

↳ Done randomly:
– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife:
– I don't know

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime:
– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of healthy crops or good weather:
– Yes

Notes: "The fall dances, by contrast, ushered out the summer garden period. Dances at that time were said to please the water birds which, as messengers of the Old-Woman-Who-Never-Dies, upon reaching their winter homes with the corn spirits whom they guided south, reported the various offerings that had been made to her. As a token of her thanks for these offerings, it was believed she would send the winter buffaloes near the village so that the people could live well until the next crop could be planted and harvested" (Bowers, 1965:346-347).

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of messianic beliefs.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of an eschatology.

Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "In the beginning all of nature was created for the benefit of the people but certain rules were laid down which the people must obey if they were to survive...At the base of all Hidatsa religious

activities and concepts is the belief in individual and group-owned supernatural powers which are controlled according to long-standing rules" (Bowers, 1965:282).

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of required celibacy.

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of castration.

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

— Yes

Notes: "Although supernatural power was usually manifested by visions, it was believed that those who fasted often or performed other power-seeking activities without the benefit of visions also were possessors of this power even though they had no symbols to show for their efforts...Hidatsa fasting efforts were constantly being channeled into formalized and preexisting ceremonial patterns, most of which they believed had existed since the beginning of time" (Bowers, 1965:285).

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of required food taboos.

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

— No

Notes: Painful bodily alterations were present and commonly practiced, but were not mandatory. "Men rarely cut off the tips of their fingers in mourning; they, however, did do this when fasting for visions and supernatural powers" (Bowers, 1965:172). "I found no evidence that one was ever forcibly tortured and the thought of physical compulsion was contrary to native beliefs that vision quests should be sought voluntarily. Informants were in agreement that men formerly submitted to physical torture more frequently began at an earlier age, citing the greater number of weals observed on their older relatives" (Bowers, 1965:284). Also see Bowers, 1965:55-56.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her

actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

— No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

— Yes

Notes: "In the beginning all of nature was created for the benefit of the people but certain rules were laid down which the people must obey if they were to survive. The society theoretically survived by virtue of the supernatural powers acquired by various means: fasting; ritual performances; feasts; ceremonial purchases from other tribes; and a rigid conformance to the tribal rules of individual and group conduct...An individual should perform any rites for which he was otherwise qualified by inheritance, or at least pledge the ceremony when he received repeated vision instructions" (Bowers, 1965:282-283).



On average, for large-scale rituals how many participants gather in one location:

— I don't know



Are there orthopraxy checks:

Orthopraxy checks are mechanisms used to ensure that rituals are performed in a standardized way, e.g. through the supervisory prominence of a professionalized priesthood or other system of governance, appeal to texts detailing the proper procedure, etc.

— Yes

Notes: "No individual or small group of individuals knew all of the parts of either the myths or the ceremonies deriving from them. Instead, a bundle owner would know all of the details of the particular ceremony in which he held rights and its position in the series with respect to the ceremonies immediately preceding and succeeding his own. Thus, the entire sacred myth was divided into segments which were entrusted for preservation to various individual of the group" (Bowers, 1965:294).

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

— A chiefdom

Notes: "The Hidatsa employed the term 'chief' to designate anyone who, by virtue of his authority at any particular moment was recognized as leader of a group of people, whether a segment of the village group, a village group, or the entire population of the three villages and such other organized groups as might be residing with the Hidatsa at that particular time" (Bowers, 1965:26). "For mutual defense against common enemies, around 1797 or 1798, the three villages established a tribal council composed of the most distinguished war leaders of each village...their duties were concerned only with general matters concerning warfare and the mutual assistance of the villages. They made peace with neighboring villages and discouraged efforts of the enemy to make alliances with one village to the exclusion of the others. This tribal council was first established before 1800 and continued until the three village groups united to build Fishhook Village in 1845" (Bowers, 1965:27). "The village representatives of the tribal council were outstanding individuals, respected primarily for their good judgement and military accomplishments, who were members of their respective village councils from which they received their authority" (ibid, pg. 28). All three traditional villages (Hidatsa-proper, Awaxawi, and Awatixa) were led by a council of leaders. For Hidatsa-proper and Awaxawi, this was in the form of a council of headmen with the top leadership held by the owner of the Earthnaming bundle (in charge of ceremonies), as well as the war leader. For the Awatixa, highest rank was held by the owners of the Knife clan bundle and Waterbuster clan bundle. All three villages were divided into four "wards", each led by a ceremonial leader. See Bowers, 1965:31-33.

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

— No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 20 (Food Storage) food is stored in individual households (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

— No

Notes: SCCS Variable 14 (Routes of Land Transport) indicates that unimproved trails were used (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004). Presumably, transportation infrastructure is not present.

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

— No

Notes: SCCS Variable 14 (Routes of Land Transport) indicates that unimproved trails were used (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004). Presumably, transportation infrastructure is not present.

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– Yes

Notes: According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), column 10, police [note: equivalent to SCCS Variable 90], "police functions are specialized and institutionalized on at least some level or levels of political integration." "...we have seen that prior to 1837, each village group had its own council and police force and operated pretty much as an independent group with prescribed territory on the Missouri for permanent summer villages and separate hunting territory" (Bowers, 1965:37).

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Notes: According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), column 9, judiciary [note: equivalent to SCCS Variable 89], "supreme judicial authority is lacking at any level above that of the local community."

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: The Hidatsa rely primarily on "intensive agriculture, using fertilization, crop rotation, or other techniques to shorten or eliminate fallow period", and hunting supplements the diet. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Hunting (including marine animals)

– Large-scale agriculture (e.g., monocropping, organized irrigation systems)

Notes: The Hidatsa rely primarily on "intensive agriculture, using fertilization, crop rotation, or other techniques to shorten or eliminate fallow period", and hunting supplements the diet. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.