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## Review of The Wolves of Heaven: Cheyenne Shamanism, Ceremonies, and Prehistoric Origins.

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*The Wolves of Heaven: Cheyenne Shamanism, Ceremonies, and Prehistoric Origins.* By Karl H. Schlesier. Drawings by *Wah-pah-nah-yah*, Dick West. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987. Illustrations, maps, preface, bibliography, index. xviii + 214 pp. \$25.00.

Karl Schlesier contends that the Cheyennes (or, as he prefers, the Tsistsistas, excluding the Suhtai branch of Northern Cheyennes) made their "perfect adaptation" to the northern Plains long before the 1700s. Indeed, he argues that the Tsistsistas emerged as an ethnic group on the Plains about 500 B.C., attaining an identity through observances of a ceremony, the *Massaum*, which continued to be celebrated into the early twentieth century. The *Massaum* is represented as having constituted the set of sacred relations between the people and the universe. With respect to the plains environment in particular, Schlesier represents the *Massaum* as having been the model, with the force of law, for the manner of tribal hunting of herd animals in surrounds and impoundments.

Schlesier seeks to demonstrate that the worldview embodied in the *Massaum* originated very anciently among the peoples of the Algonquian language family. To this end he compares the *Massaum* to rituals of other Algonquian-speaking tribes. He also tries to carry the argument back to the northern Siberian areas from which peoples first entered North America, comparing elements of the shamanistic worldview of northern Siberian tribes with elements of Tsistsista worldview, emphasizing the shaman's role in keeping ethnic groups in harmony with their territories and with the forms of life, and the spiritual forces characteristic of the territories.

These comparative analyses are the most illuminating feature of the book, but they can hardly be taken to demonstrate conclusively the extraordinary longevity of a particular ritual. Similarly, Schlesier's use of archeological data is intriguing but does not adequately prove his thesis. He is trying to cover a very great period of time, and he would need much more detailed evidence to cover it convincingly, to lead us with surety along the trace of a single people

through well over a thousand years. In any case, a proof of ethnic continuity would not in itself prove the importance for that continuity of a particular ritual. But I hasten to add that such criticisms as these cannot be considered fatal to such a bold new thesis as Schlesier's, part of the value of which is simply that it is bold and new, that it challenges us to defend with intellectual adequacy our old perspectives and conceptions, rather than merely to be on the defensive about them.

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