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THE VARYING CULTURE OF THE NORTHERN CHEYENNE

by

VERNE DUSENBERRY

B. S. Montana State College, 1927

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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1956

Approved by

Milton Colvin  
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Writing may be a solitary work, but any writer of factual material is dependent upon others for the information he presents. So it is with this study.

Had it not been for the interest and the hospitality of Carl Pearson, Superintendent of the Northern Cheyenne Agency at Lame Deer, I would have never met the Cheyenne or known their story. To Pearson and to his wife, Ruth, I am much indebted, not only for my introduction to the tribe, but as well, for their generous hospitality when I am in Lame Deer, and for their genuine interest in the work I am doing by making available all resources possible. W. R. Hopperstad, social worker for the Northern Cheyenne, has also been most helpful to me as has Frank Cady, owner of the second-hand store at Lame Deer. Mr. Cady's business place becomes the central clearing agency for me when I am working in Lame Deer, for at his place I can find where various Indian people are located. Mr. Cady always cheerfully assists in helping make the arrangements for me to meet them.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Northern Cheyenne, numbering approximately two thousand people, live on their reservation in parts of Big Horn and Rosebud counties in southeastern Montana. Their agency, Lane Deer, is approximately sixty-five miles south of Forsyth, Montana, and one hundred and five miles southeast of Billings.

Although I have spent nearly twenty years in rather close association with Indian people in Montana, it was not until the summer of 1954 that I first met the Cheyenne. Having had a Northern Cheyenne student in one of my classes part of the preceding quarter and feeling confident that knowing one person would be helpful in meeting others, I went to their annual Sun Dance. And I was totally unprepared for what I found.

Instead of the friendly cooperation that I usually encounter when I go to a strange reservation, I received monosyllabic replies when I asked for my former student. (Months later, I learned that he was in a hospital on the Wind River reservation in Wyoming.) Instead of hearing the native language spoken only by a few of the older people, I heard nothing but the Cheyenne tongue being used. Instead of seeing dark-skinned people with varying degrees of color, I saw a people all of whom were dark. (Later, I learned that 80 percent of them are listed on the agency rolls as full bloods.) Instead of seeing an ostentatious display of wealth reflected in dress and in automobiles, I saw poorly garbed individuals driving old and delapidated cars. And I saw horses everywhere with youngsters riding

them barebacked with the aplomb and grace that one associates with Indian riders—but what one rarely sees on reservations today.

I remained but two days. The rebuffs were courteous but firm. At first, after I had returned home, I was puzzled by the attitude that I had seen, but then I decided that I had found a people who were still Indians—perhaps as Indian as any that could be found in the Northwest. Certainly, more Indian than any in Montana.

Later in the summer, I wrote to the superintendent, Carl Pearson, who not only cordially invited me to return to the reservation but informed me that many of the old records of the Northern Cheyenne were available at Lame Deer and that I would be welcome to use them. When the summer session ended, I went back to Lame Deer. Through the efforts of the superintendent, I met two of the tribal leaders—John Stands-in-Timber and the late Eugene Fisher, then president of the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council. They were extremely cooperative and friendly. From them and from the old records I secured sufficient information for an article on the Northern Cheyenne which I later published. The two weeks I spent on the reservation at that time opened many doors that two months before looked closed to me forever.

Since then, I have visited the reservation several times. Many of the Northern Cheyenne read my article and commented to me pleasantly about it. Others have volunteered other information to me. While now I feel that the Northern Cheyenne are as friendly and cooperative and courteous as any Indian people whom I have met, I am still convinced that they are more nearly allied with the past than are any other tribe whom I have visited. When the time came for me to make a study of an Indian tribe in the Northwest, I chose the Northern Cheyenne because of this

personal reaction, this intuitive feeling--that they are Indians.

To make a complete study of their acculturation would have been a project too big for the time allotted. Consequently, I decided to see if I could determine if anything in their history indicated the resistance to change that a cursory acquaintanceship with the Northern Cheyenne today seemed to show. To my surprise, I found the Cheyenne to have been an adaptable people, and, as my reading progressed, ones whose culture has been varied and changing.

Basically, the study is one of enculturation. To understand why the Northern Cheyenne are more Indian-like in their attitude today, one has to study the process of enculturation as it operates on mature people. Herskovits defines enculturation<sup>1</sup> as being that process that "marks off man from other creatures," and "the means of which he achieves competence in his culture." He elaborates upon the definition further by saying that "the enculturation of the individual in the early years of his life is the prime mechanism making for cultural stability, while the process, as it operates on more mature folk, is highly important in inducing change."

Enculturation, then, operates on two levels. In a person's early life he is conditioned to the basic pattern of his culture. He learns the language and the manners of his people and adjusts himself to the established institutions of his culture. As Herskovits says, "He has little to say.... He is the instrument, not the player."<sup>2</sup> In later life, enculturation involves reconditioning. Changes in recognized procedures,

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<sup>1</sup>M. J. Herskovits, Cultural Anthropology, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 327.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 433.

new concepts, reorientation of points of view--all or any may come only when people agree on the desirability or the need for the change. It is a conscious change accomplished after the individuals consider and decide to make the change. But the significant thing about the change is that it is one that comes into being when an individual or a group wants that change.

The present-day Northern Cheyenne lives in a culture years removed from the nomadic-Plains life. In many instances, three generations have passed since any Cheyenne knew that life. Yet the young Cheyenne seems to be conditioned to the culture that his great-grandfathers knew. And, as he matures, he appears to reject the innovations that have been presented or are being presented to him because he fails to see that they are advantageous to him. Unlike his Crow neighbors, whose lands border him to the West, he does not appear to see how the acceptance of the white man's plans benefit him. Because the Crows have always cooperated with the white man, the Northern Cheyenne holds them in contempt. He also differs from his closest friends--the Arapaho, a tribe into which he frequently marries. The Arapaho, like the Cheyenne, are approximately 80 percent full-blooded Indians. Unlike the Cheyenne, the Arapaho have adopted the English language, cooperate with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, manage their own concerns successfully, and have a progressive and rewarding economy.<sup>1</sup>

In this study, I have made a survey of the historical development

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Mrs. Jessie Donaldson Schultz, March 10, 1956. Mrs. Schultz, an anthropologist, has just retired from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. For the last ten years she was social worker on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming where the Arapaho live.

of the Cheyenne and a study of the internal dynamics of various aspects of tribal life. In the first three chapters, I have covered the Cheyenne contacts with the white men and with other Indian tribes. I have attempted to point out how the successive movements of the Cheyenne reflect their ability to accept new innovations and, as well, how--especially during the reservation period--they have rejected certain of the ideas presented to them. In the next three chapters I have taken certain features of their culture (reported from the writing of early ethnographers, especially George Bird Grinnell) and then presented the same phase of the subject that I have gained from present-day Cheyenne. And, in viewing these aspects one may see how the mechanism of enculturation among the Cheyenne has led to change, in some instances, while in others it has led to the heart of conservatism.

## CHAPTER I

### LEGENDS AND MEMORIES OF A SEDENTARY PEOPLE

#### From Prehistory Until 1825

Water. Water and Sky. Nothing more.

No grass, no trees, nothing but water and sky. No animals, no people. Suddenly, a Person appears floating on the water. Around him are birds--swans, geese, ducks, and all the birds that swim. The Person becomes tired of water and calls the birds to him and asks them to look for some earth. The larger birds dive down, only to return with nothing. One by one they try it. Nothing happens. Finally, a small duck dives down and returns with a bit of mud on its bill. He swims happily to the Person and gives him the mud. The Person takes the mud in his hands and works it with his fingers until it is dry. The mud grows in quantity as the Person works it. Soon he has a large handful of it. This he sprinkles over the water and makes little piles of it here and there on the water. The dust forms land, and the Person leans back and watches it grow and grow and grow until it spreads as far as he can see. Suddenly, all is land, solid land. And, the earth is created.

Heamma Wihio--the Person, the Creator--is lonesome as he looks at all the endless land he has just made. He creates two people--a man and a woman--and stands between them with his back toward the rising sun. The woman is to his right, the North, and the man stands to his left, the South.



"Where the woman is," he said, "it will be cold. You will freeze. Only a few animals will live there and the grass and the trees will not grow. You, Woman, will control Hoimaha, the winter man or storm--the power that brings the cold and the snow. He will bring sickness and death, yet he will obey you. Your hair, Woman, will always be gray, yet you will never grow old."

"Man," Heamma Wihio continued, "you will represent the Sun and typify Summer. Where you live, everything will be good. All kinds of birds and animals will live there plentifully. And the bushes and the grasses and the timbers will be many. You are young and you will never grow older. But you will never have the power the Woman does. Hoimaha will obey her and will control you, too, for every year the Sun will be defeated. Winter will drive you away."

Man and Woman moved to their respective lodgings. Heamma Wiheo was left alone again. So, out of his loneliness, he created other people. And these people multiplied and became the Tsi-tsi-tsas,<sup>1</sup> those related to one another, those similarly bred. Our people. Us.<sup>2</sup> And some day the Dakota would call them Sha-hi'ye-na, people of alien speech; and the white man would corrupt that name and call them, Cheyenne.

Where or when all of this happened, the Cheyenne do not know. Emerging from the cloudy mist of another legend is the story of their having lived in a land that was perpetually covered with ice and snow. Trying to escape the continual rule of Hoimaha, they started eastward

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<sup>1</sup>George Bird Grinnell, "Some Early Cheyenne Tales," *Journal of American Folklore*, XX (1907) 170-172.

<sup>2</sup>George Bird Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), I, 2-3.

toward the Sun. After many years, they came to a narrow neck of sea at a time when the water was frozen. As the people were about half way across the frozen water, one of the young women discovered a horn sticking out of the ice.

The ice took her fancy. Even in these difficult times of moving, the women and the children made sliding sticks from horns and managed to enjoy life a little more. The girl wanted this horn, for it was large and long, and would make a splendid sliding stick. She tried to pull the horn out of the ice, but the harder she pulled, the tighter the horn seemed to be imbedded. Finally, she called to her relatives for assistance. Some of the men came and helped her. But, like her, they were unable to pull the horn out. Then, they began to cut the horn, for they liked the girl and wanted to make her happy. As they cut deeper into the horn, blood spurted out in great gushes. The people were frightened and grouped together on both sides of the men who had been cutting the horn. Just as they realized that the horn must be that of a monster, they felt a great tremor and knew that the monster must be struggling below the frozen water. Before anyone could do anything about moving away, the ice suddenly broke, the horn disappeared, and a great chasm appeared. Some of the people were drowned. Many of them found themselves before an ever-widening channel of water so they had to retreat to the land from which they had come. Those on the side toward the Sun watched their friends retreat; then, saddened by the inseparable gulf between them, they took flight onward in pursuit of the Sun and moved into the East and the New Land. Never have these people--the Tsi-tsi-stas--forgotten this story. Their descendants,

telling the story today,<sup>1</sup> are puzzled by the implications of this division. These people today know that the Cheyenne tribe is the result of the absorption of a kindred-speaking group, the Sutaio; they also know that their own tribe has been divided--the Northern Cheyenne in Montana and the Southern Cheyenne in Oklahoma.

Tradition and legend continue. Without any explanation of how they reached there, the Cheyenne tell another story of another time when they lived near a big lake far to the North, yet in a place less cold than their former habitat. Men constructed seines from willows to catch fish, and women pounded the fish bones and made oil. Fish and oil were the main sources of food.<sup>2</sup> Then, another legend. The tribe had moved southwestwardly and the men were hunters. Aside from fish, they lived on rabbits, wild fowl and eggs, and, especially in the autumn, fat skunks. For a long time they seemed to have lived in this country where maple-sugar trees grew, and they had learned the secret of extracting the sirup from the tree. Even in much later times, they alone of the Plains Indians knew how to tap a box-elder tree and to boil the sap and use it--even to sweeten coffee after the advent of that commodity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Rufus Wallowing, Lame Deer, Montana, August 30, 1955. Mr. Wallowing gave credit to Frank Old Bird, a member of the Southern Cheyenne tribe who at the approximate age of eighty visited his northern brethren in 1951 and related the story.

<sup>2</sup>George F. Will, "The Cheyenne Indians in North Dakota," Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, VII (1914). Mr. Will expresses his gratitude to George E. Hyde of Omaha, Nebraska, for the use of many of the traditions that Hyde had secured from older Cheyenne people. Grinnell states that in their buffalo-hunting days, the Cheyenne--unlike other Plains Indians--caught fish and enjoyed eating them. He wonders if their liking for fish might be traceable to their earlier Northeastern home. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 149.

<sup>3</sup>Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 149.

From these intangibles we may assume (and the assumption is based on vague references) that the Cheyenne may have lived somewhere in the region of the North Atlantic or Hudson's Bay. If we can make that assumption, we can surmise a series of movements that eventually led them to the mid-central region of what is now the United States where historical references begin. Mooney advances the theory<sup>1</sup> that the prime cause for their upheaval and southwestern migration could be attributed to the increasing pressure of the Cree after the establishment of the English trading posts on Hudson's Bay beginning about 1668. With the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670, inter-tribal warfare began on a large scale, and the advantage rested with the Cree who had the wealth of the newly-formed company behind them. The Assiniboine, driven into an alliance with the Cree in 1679, became implacable foes of their relatives, the Dakota. That alliance, plus their normal enemies--the Objibway--forced the Dakota northwestward, and in all likelihood caused the Cheyenne to move--perhaps in the vanguard.

As all writers who treat with these early historical movements of the Cheyenne are dependent upon practically the same sources, this one will be no exception. Jablow<sup>2</sup> relates how LaSalle reported the arrival of a group of Indians at Fort Crevecoeur (near present-day Peoria, Illinois) in February, 1680. These Indians, known as the Chaa, came purportedly to seek trade relations with him. La Salle does not mention who called these Indians Chaa, but according to Jablow,

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<sup>1</sup>James Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians," Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, I, (1907) 3357-442.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Jablow, "The Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations, 1795-1844." Monographs of the American Ethnological Society, XIX, (New York: J. J. Augustin) 2.

it could be a corruption of Sha-hi'-ye-na--the Dakota word for the Cheyenne. If that hypothesis is correct, and the Chaa who visited La Salle are the Cheyenne, they are several miles away from the first actually-recorded geographical area recorded for them. As Chaiena, the name of the tribe appears on a map made by Joliet and Franquelin prior to 1673, and the location is on the east side of the Mississippi above the mouth of the Wisconsin River.<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1700, the date generally assigned as the time the Cheyenne moved westward into what is now North Dakota, they were reputedly living along the Minnesota River.<sup>2</sup>

Archaeological research has cleared much of the confusion about the early movement of the Cheyenne by establishing their residence at the big bend of the Sheyenne River in the state of North Dakota during the eighteenth century. And, not only the fact that they were living there but the fact that they lived the lives of sedentary horticulturists has been well established. In 1930, the Columbia University-North Dakota Historical Society expedition under the direction of Dr. W. D. Strong of Columbia University, began its series of excavations of a site in east-central North Dakota about 12 miles southeast of the present town of Lisbon and on the Sheyenne River where it makes its big bend. Dr. Strong's report is most inclusive:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>E. D. Neill, The History of Minnesota: From the Earliest Explorations to the Present Time. (Minneapolis: 1883) 154.

<sup>2</sup>Will, op. cit., Mr. Will states that Franquelin's map of 1688 places the Cheyenne on the Minnesota River.

<sup>3</sup>William Duncan Strong, "From History to Prehistory in the Northern Great Plains," Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, 100, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1940) 371-374.

The site is located on a river terrace with a steep bank on the north facing the former channel of the Sheyenne River. There are the rings of about 70 houses surrounded by a deep ditch or moat which surrounds the village except along the steep river bank. Our excavations tested the ditch, seven houses, and numerous cache pits. The ditch proved to have had a width of almost 10 feet and a depth of almost 5 feet. There were no bastions...and no positive evidence of a stockade.... The houses...were all circular earth lodges with four central posts set in an almost exact square and a central fireplace.... Many of the post molds contained wood in good condition and were tamped in place with bison or other large bones. Charred beams were particularly abundant. All houses...had been burned.

Contact materials from this site include a few glass beads (most of which were inset in pottery as a decoration!), one piece of glass, a trigger guard ornament from a British or a French gun of early eighteenth century manufacture and 13 lance, arrow, and knife blades made of brass and iron.... The one gunpart...was drilled to be worn as a decoration, and the finding of only one dubious gun flint suggest that the Cheyenne were either without or were weak in regard to firearms at this time.

Pottery was fairly abundant at the site...3,767 sherds being removed. No complete or restorable vessels were found. Cheyenne pottery is predominantly of a light one, passing through various shades of buff and tan to mottled gray-black and black.... The great majority of the sherds indicate vertical grass wiping of the necks and horizontal paddle markings on the body.... Cheyenne pottery (in surface treatment) resembles the later sedentary Plains treatment but in decoration it seems more Woodland.

Summarizing his report on the Cheyenne village, Dr. Strong continues:

In brief, the Cheyenne at this period were both agriculturists and hunters. They lived in fixed fortified villages, used a four-post earth lodge, and possessed a culture very similar to that of the semi-sedentary Caddoan and Siouan peoples of the eastern Plains. Their ceramics are of a northeastern type and, in their use of birchbark, shell knives or scrapers, stemmed arrow points, and a few other traits, they also differed from their sedentary Missouri River neighbors. However, their earth lodges and basic culture were so similar to the latter that contacts must have been close.

Long before these scientific observations of Strong's were reported, other writers mentioned the location of the site. Hayden, writing in 1863, spoke of the Sheyenne River as being one of the most important branches of the Missouri, for that river "seems to be the starting point of our knowledge of the Sheyenne Indians."<sup>1</sup> Grinnell

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<sup>1</sup>F. V. Hayden, "Contributions to the Ethnography and Philology of the Indian Tribes of the Missouri Valley," Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, XII, (1863) 274-320.

points out that Dakota and Cheyenne tradition places at least twelve villages along the Missouri River and its tributaries in North Dakota.<sup>1</sup> He further states that as late as 1850 the Dakota called the site along the Sheyenne River Sha-Hi'-e-na-woj-upi, "where the Cheyenne plant corn."<sup>2</sup> Mooney, whose acquaintanceship with the Cheyenne extended for nearly twenty years (1885-1905), likewise mentioned the Sheyenne River site and added that during the time the tribe lived in permanent villages, they subsisted chiefly on corn of their own planting, and on fish and ducks from the lakes.<sup>3</sup>

It is Grinnell, perhaps, who has explored the habits of the Cheyenne more thoroughly than anyone else. During his many years of close association with them, he found old women who still remembered how their mothers had made pots during the years of residence along the Missouri River. One of the last of these pots was buried with an old woman on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in 1896.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Grinnell quotes the testimony of informants who told him of how they had farmed regularly at various spots along the Missouri, the Grand, the Little Missouri, the North Platte, and the Laramie rivers. These old men and women (who died between 1900 and 1915) were explicit in telling how the crops were planted--one grain at each corner of a square with one grain in the center, and that the grains were all planted with the soft end up. He also received information that as late as 1850 the Cheyenne put in crops of corn along a broad flat on the Platte River in

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<sup>1</sup>George Bird Grinnell, "Early Cheyenne Villages," American Anthropologist, n.s., XX, (1918), 379.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 365.

<sup>3</sup>Mooney, op. cit., 368.

<sup>4</sup>Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 368.

the general vicinity of Fort Laramie. Another evidence of their corn culture appeared in the Corn Dance which was participated in by young men and women carrying a sacred ear of corn on a stick. Grinnell discovered that the dance was continued until 1876.<sup>1</sup>

When the Cheyenne left their sedentary life and their village homes to adopt the wandering nomadic life of buffalo hunters is both speculative and argumentative. Strong believes that 1750 might be the approximate date of the abandonment of the Sheyenne site that he had excavated.<sup>2</sup> Other writers, particularly Grinnell, state that the end of the eighteenth century is a more nearly accurate time. That they were living in villages at the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806) is also reflected in Grinnell when he says, "It was perhaps a mere accident that Lewis and Clark did not come upon an occupied Cheyenne village."<sup>3</sup> Grinnell and Mooney both attribute the departure of the Cheyenne to the Assiniboine. Swanton, however, writes "...the Cheyenne town was...destroyed...by a body of Chippewa Indians led by Sheshepaskut, head chief of those bands of Chippewa which were forcing their way southwest at the end of the eighteenth century."<sup>4</sup> Swanton's authority is David Thompson who in his Narrative of His Exploration in Western America, 1784-1812 relates a story told him by Jean Baptiste Cadotte, a young half-breed trapper who was with the Chippewa at the time of the destruction of the Sheyenne-Cheyenne village.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 252-254.

<sup>2</sup>Strong, op. cit., 375

<sup>3</sup>Grinnell, "Early Cheyenne Villages," op. cit., 379

<sup>4</sup>J. R. Swanton, "Some Neglected Data Bearing on Cheyenne, Chippewa, and Dakota History." American Anthropologist, n.s. XXXIII, (1930), 157.



According to Cadotte--as told to Thompson and quoted by Swanton --the Chippewa did not like the Cheyenne but badly needed their corn and vegetables as trade items. Several of the Chippewa were killed and at first the Chippewa blamed the Dakota; but at one of their regular trading periods, some of the Chippewa saw fresh scalps that they recognized as belonging to their own people hanging in the Cheyenne village. A council of the Chippewa followed, and their decision was to destroy the Cheyenne village. The following spring, when the Cheyenne men were hunting, the Chippewa swooped down and killed everyone in the village except three women. Likewise, they looted everything in the village that appealed to them before setting fire to it. This incident, according to these sources, took place about 1790.<sup>1</sup>

Too much significance should not be placed on the exact timing of the departure of the Cheyenne from their village homes, however, for evidence shows that there was no mass migration westward. Following the advent of the horse and the supply of trade goods, various groups left at irregular intervals. Perhaps the movement started by one band from a village going out on the plains to hunt and then returning to their village with a meat supply for their relatives. Undoubtedly, these hunting trips became longer and longer, and, gradually, as the hunters wandered westward, they reached the Black Hills. Abounding with a fabulous supply of game, liberally sprinkled with flowing streams of clear water, comfortably protected from the winds of the Plains and from the watchful eyes of roaming enemies, and, no doubt appealing to the spiritual nature of the Cheyenne as well, the Black Hills unquestionably provided an enticing picture to the villagers as the hunters told the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 158

tales about it. Thus, perhaps, another group would leave to seek its riches in that strangely-provident land.

Grinnell has given us the clearest picture of the probable movement of the Cheyenne westward when he wrote:<sup>1</sup>

The tribal movement in fact may almost be compared to the familiar actions of a flock of feeding blackbirds...walking over a field in a broad front. The birds in the rear ranks constantly rise on the wing and fly over their fellows to alight just in front of them, where the ground has not been passed over and the food has not been consumed, while the whole front walks forward. In the same way--though slowly--the rearmost camps of the migrating Cheyenne were constantly moving onward and passing those in advance of them in the hope of finding new regions where food might easily be had.

That they were not early weaned from their former diet is evidenced by the report of Loisel's who stated that they "Roam over the prairies west of the Missouri in this side of the Black Hills from which they come regularly to visit their old and faithful friends at the beginning of August, the Ricaras."<sup>2</sup> He also states that while the trade-good commodities of the "Ricaras" attract the Cheyenne, they are more interested in the maize, tobacco, beans, and pumpkins that the Arikaras could provide them. The prairie turnip, cut in pieces, dried, and pounded into flour by the Cheyenne women, was bartered to the Arikaras for vegetables at a profit of three to four measures for one, according to Loisel, who also pointed out that the Cheyenne were difficult traders. These "savages" were disdainful of his wares and prided themselves on being ignorant. Loisel's irritation shows most clearly that the Cheyenne's attitude "...has been conducive to my detriment in the slight trade with the Caninanbiches (Arapaho) and others who obstinately defer to their (the Cheyenne's) judgment."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Grinnell, "Early Cheyenne Villages, "op. cit.", 379.

<sup>2</sup>E. H. Abel (ed.), Tabeau's Narrative of Loisel's Expedition to the Upper Missouri, (Norman: Oklahoma Press, 1939) 153.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 153.

Loisel's years on the Plains covered events beginning in 1795, so we have a picture of the Cheyenne, or at least some bands of them, fairly well established west of the Missouri. We see that they are dependent in part upon the food of their sedentary former neighbors, the Arikaras; we also can see that a friendship had been established with the Arapaho, a tribe with whom the Cheyenne maintained a close relationship throughout the buffalo period. Even today, the Southern branches of the two tribes are together in Oklahoma; the Northern Cheyenne maintain a closer relationship with the Northern Arapaho of the Wind River reservation in Wyoming than with any other tribe of Indians.

Sometime after the Cheyenne reached the Plains and occupied the territory between the Missouri River and the Black Hills, their numbers were increased by the addition of another tribe, the Sutaio. Again, one must depend upon legend for the story of the union of the two tribes. Rufus Wallowing of Lame Deer, Montana, a well-informed member of the tribe and past president of the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council, tells the following story about the Sutaio:<sup>1</sup>

A long time ago at some place east of the Black Hills, the Cheyennes were fighting another tribe of Indians when suddenly the other Indians let out a whoop and started yelling to each other. The Cheyennes recognized that their enemies were speaking the same language, so they stopped fighting and got acquainted. So, from that time on, the Sutaio travelled with the Cheyennes and camped close by. They always remained a little separate but they finally intermarried with the Cheyennes and the Sutaio died out.

Mooney believed that the Sutaio were identical with the Staetan described by Lewis and Clark who mention them as "a small tribe of 100 men

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, August 28, 1955.

and 400 souls" living along the Missouri,<sup>1</sup> and indicated that it was not until approximately 1833 that the two tribes united.<sup>2</sup> He added further that the Sutaio retained their distinctive dialect, dress, and ceremonies, and camped apart until about 1851. This information parallels that of Grinnell who describes the Sutaio language as being "rougher, harsher, and more guttural" than the Cheyenne.<sup>3</sup> Grinnell was also able to secure a description of the clothing worn by the Sutaio at the time of the union of the two tribes. According to his findings, the Sutaio clothes were made much more crudely. The men did not wear a breechcloth, as did all of the Cheyenne as far back as memory extends, but rather wore flaps that hung down from the belt in the front. Moccasins came from one piece of buckskin with a parfleche sole fastened to it. The traditional pattern for the Cheyenne moccasin utilized two pieces. Sutaio women dressed in hides that were tied together at the sides rather than sewed. His date to the union of the tribes, "after 1832", coincided almost exactly with the one given by Mooney.

The meaning of the name Sutaio is obscured, and the original connotation seems to be forgotten. Before his death in 1947, Dr. Rodolphe Petter, whose work with the Cheyenne language was extensive, believed that the word probably indicated "people left behind."<sup>4</sup> Others have thought that it came from the same root as is-suht which means ridge or hill. Willis Rowland, official interpreter for the Cheyenne for many

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<sup>1</sup>R. G. Thwaite (ed.) Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, (New York: 1905) VI, 101-102.

<sup>2</sup>Mooney, op. cit., 370.

<sup>3</sup>Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 170.

<sup>4</sup>Personal Interview, Mrs. Rodolphe Petter, Lama Deer, Montana August 29, 1955.

years, felt that it carried the implication of "backward" or "behind."<sup>1</sup>

The Sutaio's richest contribution to the Cheyenne, however, is in the religious life, for two of their greatest ceremonies became associated with those of the Cheyenne. Best known is that of the Medicine Lodge, the Cheyenne counterpart of the Sun Dance. As elaborate as this ceremony became and as integral a part of Cheyenne life as it was at the time of the white contact, the knowledge of the Medicine Lodge came from the Sutaio. It had been taught to them by their cultural hero, Standing On the Ground, who is sometimes referred to as Red Tassel of Corn or Straight Horns.<sup>2</sup>

Ranking almost in significance with the Medicine Lodge is the Sacred Hat, the Is'se-wun. Old-time Sutaio claimed that the extinction of their tribe resulted as a punishment to them for having once abandoned a priest of the Sacred Hat in his old age.<sup>3</sup> Be that as it may, the Sacred Hat has occupied a conspicuous place in the life of the Cheyenne, especially the Northern Cheyenne. It was reposing in its tipi within the camp circle along the Little Big Horn that day in June, 1876, when the Seventh Cavalry disturbed the peace and contentment of the Cheyenne people<sup>4</sup> and changed forever their way of life. It remained in the North, carefully guarded at Fort Keogh,<sup>5</sup> during the days of exile of the Northern Cheyenne in the years that followed the

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<sup>1</sup>Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 95.

<sup>2</sup>Grinnell, "Some Early Cheyenne Tales," op. cit., 170.

<sup>3</sup>Mooney, op. cit., 370.

<sup>4</sup>T. B. Marquis, A Warrior Who Fought Custer, (Minneapolis: Midwest, 1931), 198.

<sup>5</sup>Personal Interview, John Stands-in-Timber, Lame Deer, Montana, September 11, 1954.

Custer fight. Today, it is kept in a special tipi at Birney, Montana, guarded by Josie Headswift, herself of Sutaio descent.

Thus, during the late years of the eighteenth century or the early years of the nineteenth, the Cheyenne left their permanent villages along the Missouri and its tributaries and became nomadic hunters. They enriched their spiritual life by adopting the ceremonial of the Medicine Lodge and the Sacred Hat through the absorption of a cognate tribe, and emerged upon the Plains fortified for their sobriquet, "The Fighting Cheyenne."

## CHAPTER II

### THE PLAINS AND WAR, 1825-1877

"In their wild and savage way they fought  
well for their country."  
--James Mooney, 1907

Maybe it is the apochryphal statement of Kit Carson's, "the durndest fighters and the finest gentlemen on the Plains." Maybe it is the alliteration of George Bird Grinnell's book title, The Fighting Cheyenne. But, mention the name of the Cheyenne to any generally well-informed person about the West, and his response will be a reference to their fighting ability. Commercial western writers in need of the name of a fierce Indian tribe to be encountered by the westward-rolling wagon trains delight in choosing the Cheyenne.<sup>1</sup> Or, a writer, when capitalizing upon the Indian theme,<sup>2</sup> selects the Cheyenne to exploit the success of the story and perpetuates the legend of Cheyenne savagery. And, in recollections gleaned from older Indians, their favorite tales seem to be those of their superior prowess in fighting. The younger ones, likewise, appear to enjoy identifying themselves with the glory that was their grandfathers; for example, at the street parade held in conjunction with the All-American Indian Days at Sheridan, Wyoming, in August, 1955, a gaily-decorated float filled with painted and bedecked

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<sup>1</sup>Recent in a long line of such novels is Massacre Trail, by A. A. Schroeder, (New York: Exposition Press, 1953).

<sup>2</sup>Dorothy M. Johnson, "War Shirt," Indian Country, (New York: Ballentine Books, 1953), 108-126.

Indians bore the slogan, "The Fighting Cheyenne," as they represented the Northern Cheyenne's contribution to the parade.

But twenty years is all the Cheyenne ever fought the white man. Twenty years, 1856 to 1876, is but a brief moment of their clouded history. Fierce they were during those years. And fierce they were to other Indians whom they encountered on the Plains. But their period of ferocity could not have lasted more than seventy-five years. Fifty years, perhaps, would be a closer estimate. If we follow Grinnell's theory that the movement from the sedentary homes to the buffalo-hunting nomadic culture was a slow and gradual one, and occurred band by band, then the years 1825 until 1876 would represent the golden period of the Cheyenne's existence upon the Plains. Although the first treaty was made between them and the government in 1825 when they were described as roving about the Cheyenne River from its mouth to the Black Hills, no incidental mention of them is made in the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs until 1835--although the reports have accounts of other Plains tribes and neighbors of the Cheyenne. The activity of the Cheyenne on the Plains during those years, however, gives credence to the theory of acculturation as proposed by anthropologists<sup>1</sup> who state that when a primitive society comes in association with white men, the material culture of the primitive society is the first to change. That change generally results in the flowering of the primitive's culture and is followed by a general depression once the white man has gained access to the lands and the resources of the primitive. Surely, the Cheyenne in their brief period of glory could

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<sup>1</sup>Professor Carling I. Malouf, department of anthropology, Montana State University, is an adherent of this theory.



be singled out as an excellent example of such theory. Quickly accepting the technology of European and American trade goods as provided by the white traders and mounted on horses diffused from the Southwest, the Cheyenne became a nomadic, buffalo-hunting people with all the characteristics of Plains Indians whose association with white traders had long preceded theirs.

While all early references<sup>1</sup> to the Cheyenne on the Plains place them in or near the Black Hills, it may be surprising to find them on the Upper Arkansas River by the early 1830's. But the building of Bent's Fort near the present site of Pueblo, Colorado, in 1838 had a distinctive effect upon the Cheyenne. One of the brothers and partners of the venture, William Bent, had met and traded with the Cheyenne earlier when they lived in the Western Black Hills. It was he (and his wife was a Cheyenne) who went to them and asked them to come to his fort to trade. As a result, the main body of the Cheyenne moved southward in the fall of 1833.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, the tribe divided--geographically, at least--for the Northern Cheyenne continued to live in the area between the headwaters of the North Platte and the Yellowstone. The Laramie Treaty of 1851 recognized the division of the Cheyenne by designating areas in the two regions--north and south--for the respective members of the tribe.

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<sup>1</sup>Washington Irving, Astoria, (Portland: Binford and Morts, Clatsop Edition, 1951) 193-194. Irving recounts the experience of W. P. Hunt who spent two weeks at the eastern base of the Black Hills with the Cheyenne as he was enroute overland from St. Louis to Astoria in 1811.

<sup>2</sup>The best account of the influence of Bent's Fort upon the Cheyenne is to be found in Bent's Fort by David Lavender, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1954). All historians mention Bent's Fort, however, as the decisive factor in the southern movement of the tribe and the subsequent division.

According to the Laramie Treaty, the Southern Cheyenne had been granted a territory that embraced large sections of Wyoming, Nebraska, and Western Kansas. About half of the present state of Colorado was also included--an area that contains the present sites of Denver, Leadville, and Pueblo. For all of this territory, the Cheyenne fought their subsequent wars. While it is not within the province of this paper to follow the fortunes of the Southern Cheyenne, it is necessary to outline briefly the encounters they experienced in order that one may understand the Northern Cheyenne.

As a point of digression, however, it should be understood that no ill-feeling or animosity existed between the two groups. The two groups came together frequently--their most sacred ceremony, the Renewal of the Arrows, could not be effected unless the entire tribe was together--and social and friendly relations were maintained in many ways. Their separation was merely one of mutual agreement and convenience. One group preferred the northern areas--no mention is ever made but it could be within the realm of possibility that they included some of the later arrivals on the Plains--while another and larger group decided to follow William Bent to the south. The groups were constantly visiting each other and were aware of the military maneuvers of each division. As will be pointed out later, this situation continued until the Custer battle of 1876, for the outstanding leader of the Cheyenne at that affair was a Southern Cheyenne, Lame White Man.

Once the Cheyenne were in the southern country, conflicts immediately began with members of other tribes in whose domain the Cheyenne were intruding. One of the most significant fights occurred sometime in the early 1830's with the Pawnee who were successful in

stealing the Sacred Arrows of the Cheyenne. Consistent fighting continued with the Kiowa--important engagements taking place in 1837 and 1838--until an alliance was formed with them in 1840.

It was the Northern Cheyenne, however, who first became entangled with the United States Army. In the spring of 1856, the Northern Cheyenne were encamped along the Upper Platte when the army surrounded them and accused them of stealing four horses belonging to an emigrant train. The Cheyenne admitted stealing three horses and promptly returned them, but the emigrants insisted that the fourth horse was theirs also. On the question of one horse, the Cheyenne and the army began a series of intermittent fights that lasted for a year and brought both divisions of the tribe together. Since the army defeated the Cheyenne in this first encounter, the Indians took refuge in the Black Hills, but little by little they worked their way down to their Southern brothers. Enroute, they did some plundering and killing, and once united, the tribe began a series of depredations. For an entire year the Kansas territory was plundered.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the army defeated the Cheyenne in an engagement headed by Col. E. V. Sumner in July, 1857. Referring to the Cheyenne treatment of prisoners whom they had taken during the affair, we find this statement by their agent, a man named Miller, in the report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1857:

Various reports came to my ears of the treatment of prisoners they (the Cheyenne) had taken during the summer, the details of which are too disgusting and horrible for repetition here. Suffice it to say, they were the most terrible that can be possible for even Indian iniquity in inventing modes of cruelty to conceive.

The following year, 1848, gold was discovered at Pike's Peak, and the inevitable rush followed--a crowd that within three years was

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1857, (Washington: Government Printing Office), 137-139.

estimated at 60,000 people.<sup>1</sup> As was bound to happen, adverse conditions resulted for the Cheyenne--their lands were appropriated, the wagon trains frightened their game from the normal habitat, and the Cheyenne were considered interlopers in their own territory. That they were extremely patient, however, is reflected in the fact that not a single engagement is reported during the next few years between them and the white emigrants or the United States army. Their agent, William Bent, insisted that the Cheyenne be protected, though, and finally, in 1861, representatives of the government arrived at Fort Wise, Colorado, to negotiate a treaty with them for a reservation and for annuity goods. The reservation set aside for them was definitely located in the south and southwest, as its southern limits was the northern boundary of New Mexico.<sup>2</sup> The Northern Cheyenne refused to sign the treaty, however, for they were still cognizant of their rights under the old Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 which contained the clause that no tribe would have to abandon any rights or claims that they had for other lands.

Smallpox apparently missed the Cheyenne during the terrible epidemic of 1837, but struck the Northern band in 1862 as they were camped with the Sioux along the upper reaches of the North Platte. Angered by the epidemic and blaming it upon the whites, they began a series of depredations until the government tried to compel the Northern Cheyenne to leave that area and join the southern group. Deprivation of all annuity supplies was the threat used by the government, but the

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1859, (Washington: Government Printing Office), 137-39.

<sup>2</sup>Eighteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, (Washington: Government Printing Office), 824.

Northern Cheyenne refused to be intimidated. They served notice that they would not leave their accustomed hunting grounds, for those grounds were theirs by treaty rights.<sup>1</sup> At the time, the Cheyenne, along with the Arapaho, and the Ogalala and Brule Sioux, were under the supervision of an agency on the Upper Platte, nine miles east of Fort Laramie.

The line of demarcation between the two divisions of the Cheyenne begin to appear now in the historical records. In general, the southern group are the "friendlies;" the northern group, the "hostiles." In August, 1864, the Northern Cheyenne as well as some Arapaho and Sioux made a raid down the Platte river and destroyed a considerable cavalry force west of Fort Kearney, Nebraska, and continued down the valley of the Little Blue killing settlers, attacking wagon trains, burning farmsteads, and wrecking any evidence of white settlement that they could find.<sup>2</sup> This raid fanned public sentiment in Colorado and resulted in the infamous massacre of a group of Southern Cheyenne by the Colorado Volunteers under the command of Col. Chivington.

Depending upon the protection promised them by Major Wyncoop, commanding officer at Fort Lyon, Colorado, and of Governor Evans of Colorado, a large group of friendly, Southern Cheyenne had withdrawn from the main body of the tribe and made their camp at Sand Creek, about twenty-five miles from Fort Lyon. Heading this camp of Cheyenne

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1863, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 131-132.

<sup>2</sup>Details of these raids and subsequent encounters are covered extensively in The Fighting Cheyenne by George Bird Grinnell (New York: Scribners, 1915) and summarized well in Mooney, op. cit.

(and some of their Arapaho friends) were the principal signers of the Fort Wise Treaty--Black Kettle and White Antelope. The total camp numbered about 500 people with two-thirds of the number being women and children. A white trader was camped with them. As evidence of their loyalty, they were flying a large American flag. Into this camp on the early morning of November 29, 1864, rode the Colorado Volunteers--nearly a thousand of them--under the command of Colonel Chivington, a former Methodist minister of Denver.

The result was one of the most atrocious massacres ever perpetrated by American forces. Mooney summarized the affair by saying:<sup>1</sup>

Children were brained and hacked to pieces, pregnant women were ripped open, stiffened corpses of men, women, and little children the next day were scalped, dismembered, and indecently mutilated, and the bloody scalps and members, hung at saddle bows and hatbands, carried into Denver and there paraded in a public theater.

In 1868, an Army Commission spent seventy-two days hearing evidence and its report wrote:<sup>2</sup>

It scarcely has its parallel in the records of Indian barbarity. Fleeing women holding up their hands and praying for mercy were shot down; infants were killed and scalped in derision; men were tortured and mutilated.

General Nelson A. Miles, long-time friend of the Cheyenne, said:<sup>3</sup> "It is perhaps the foulest and most unjustifiable crime in the annals of America."

The confidence of the Cheyenne in the white man and his promises

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<sup>1</sup>Mooney, op. cit., 386.

<sup>2</sup>The full quotation of the Commission is quoted from Paul Wellman, Death on the Prairie, (New York: Doubleday, 1934), 55-56.

<sup>3</sup>Nelson A. Miles, Personal Recollections, (Chicago: The Werner Company, 1897, 139.

was completely destroyed. Even though Black Kettle remained friendly and tried to thwart his young warriors, many of the Cheyenne joined their brothers to the North and for a year kept up a constant fight with the whites. Those left in the South attacked stage stations, burned towns, and destroyed telegraph lines while the Northern Cheyenne, under High Wolf, attacked the stockade that protected emigrants at Old Platte Bridge (now the site of Casper, Wyoming) and killed and destroyed the cavalry. This affair took place while General Conner was in the northern area scouting for hostile Indians, and found his only glory in attacking an innocent and peaceful band of Arapaho camped on the Tongue River near present Ranchester, Wyoming.

Finally, in October, 1865, the Southern Cheyenne were induced to come to a council on the Little Arkansas River and to make a peace treaty. According to the terms of that treaty, a temporary reserve for them was to be in the state of Kansas. For a while the Southern Cheyenne were quiet, but the Northern Cheyenne, their ranks increased by dissenters from the south, continued hostilities in company with the Sioux and the Arapaho. All went well in the south until the spring of 1867, when General Hancock destroyed a village of Cheyenne in an unprovoked attack which led to an immediate renewal of active hostilities until October, when a peace commission from Washington concluded a successful treaty and secured the promise of the Southern Cheyenne that they would move to a reserve in present Oklahoma. The following spring, a treaty negotiated at Fort Laramie contained the provision that the Northern Cheyenne could join their brothers in the South or could accept a home on the Big Sioux reservation in Dakota. They chose to live with the Sioux.

In the late summer of 1868, the Southern Cheyenne and the Arapaho began a series of raids in Kansas. Not much evidence is available as to why they became so activated, but settlers were killed, wagon trains burned, and women and children kidnapped, tortured and killed. When the events became almost a daily affair, General Sheridan, commander of the department, instituted vigorous measures against them. Colonel Forsyth struck them in September in eastern Colorado and held off the Cheyenne in a battle where one of the leading Southern Cheyenne Chiefs, Roman Nose, was killed. In late November, Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer took the field and his trail led him to the peaceful camp of Black Kettle. Without stopping to investigate who occupied the Cheyenne camp, Custer waited only until the dawn, then, dividing his men in his customary fashion, attacked. Black Kettle, holding a white flag in one hand and a protective paper in the other, was killed; Indians ran naked except for breechclouts into ice-covered streams where their legs and feet were cut by the broken ice. Children were trampled under the hoofs of the horses carrying the cavalry. One thousand buffalo robes, five hundred pounds of lead, five hundred pounds of powder, and five thousand arrows were destroyed as well as all of the tipis. Seven hundred Indian ponies were slaughtered.<sup>1</sup> Hundreds of prisoners—especially women and children—were taken.<sup>2</sup> This engagement is

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<sup>1</sup>Wellman, op. cit., 81-85.

<sup>2</sup>From among the prisoners in this battle, Custer is supposed to have taken a Cheyenne girl as his mistress for the winter and to have sired a son. While the story seems to be growing in popularity among current writers such as Mari Sandoz, old-time Northern Cheyenne deny it. Charles Sitting Man of Ashland, Montana, who at 86 recalled the events connected with the battle of the Little Big Horn and the subsequent dispersion of the Cheyenne emphatically disagrees with the idea that Custer has a half-Cheyenne son. Personal Interview, August 31, 1955.



commonly known as the Battle of the Washita and occurred at the present site of Cheyenne, Oklahoma.

Sporadic fighting continued throughout 1869. More of the Southern Cheyenne joined the Northern group in the Sioux country. By late autumn, the army succeeded in gathering together all of the remaining bands of Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho and took them to Fort Supply. The following spring, May, 1870, an agency was finally established for them with headquarters at Darlington, Oklahoma.<sup>1</sup> For four years, a dubious peace followed; then in June, 1874, a combined force of Comanche, Cheyenne, and Kiowa went on the warpath. Fighting continued until the Southern Cheyenne surrendered at Darlington on March 6, 1875, and were disarmed and their ponies confiscated. A month later, when certain ones among them were being manacled preparatory to being shipped south as prisoners, the Cheyenne bolted and securing some of their guns they had hidden before the surrender, attacked the army. Overpowered, most of the Indians surrendered but several of them eluded the army and headed for the north country.

One of the biggest drives behind the Cheyenne's movement to the north was the fact that their northern country was not so well travelled nor so heavily populated by white people. There in the north was a continuation of the old life--or rather, the life that the Cheyenne had adopted as their own. There in that northerly region, buffalo could be had easily. And, in the heart of the region were the Black Hills--for generations now, home for the Cheyenne. According to the terms of the Laramie Treaty of 1868, the Black Hills were to be

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1870, (Washington: Government Printing Office), 265.

inviolable to the white man forever. But, such was not to be.

In 1874, gold was discovered in the Black Hills, and Lt. Col. Custer headed an exploration into the area. In his wake, came thousands of gold-hungry prospectors in direct violation of treaty terms. Although the government attempted to purchase the territory from the Sioux and the Cheyenne, the Indians were adamant in their desire to keep the area uncontaminated by white men. Here had been the source of their mana; here were the scenes of their vision quests; here was a land that belonged to them. Now this country was violated and the Northern Cheyenne had to move.

When they left the Black Hills, they moved into the sheltered valleys of Montana which they considered to be theirs by treaty right. These valleys are long, narrow, timbered, well-watered, and at that time, inaccessible. Here flowed the Powder, the Tongue, and the Rosebud rivers--streams draining generally in a northeastwardly direction to the Yellowstone. The Powder and the Tongue have their source in Wyoming; the Rosebud in Montana. The Wolf and the Rosebud mountains lie in the region, are heavily timbered by Ponderosa pine, and provide good protection. The numerous streams feeding into these three main rivers have their source in narrow canyons with bottom lands rich in native grass. The entire region was well stocked with buffalo, and for two years practically the entire group of Northern Cheyenne lived abundantly, moving with the hunt from the Powder River to the Big Horn Mountains. Here in this isolated country they were unmolested; here where their kinsman from the south found them and related to them the troubles with the white, they decided to stay away from the confines of a reservation-- at least for a while.

Wooden Legs related<sup>1</sup> the thinking of the tribe at that time:

After we had been driven from the Black Hills and that country was given to the white people my father would not stay on any reservation. He said it was no use trying to make farms as the white people did. In the first place, that was not the Indian way of living. All of our teachings and beliefs were that land was not made to be owned in separate pieces by persons and that the plowing up and destruction of vegetation placed by the Great Medicine and the planting of other vegetation according to the ideas of white men was an interference with the plans of above. In the second place, it seemed that if the white people could take away from us the Black Hills after that country had been given us and accepted by us as ours forever, they might take away from us any other lands we should occupy whenever they might want these lands. In the third place, the last great treaty had allowed us to use all of the country between the Black Hills and the Big Horn river and mountains as hunting grounds so long as we did not resist the travelling of white people through it on their way to or from their lands beyond its borders. My father decided to act upon this agreement to us. He decided we should spend all of our time in the hunting region. We could do this, gaining our living this way, or we could be supported by rations given to us at the agency. He chose to stay away from all white people. His family all agreed with him. So, for more than a year before the great battle at the Little Big Horn we were all the time in the hunting lands.

The first inkling of trouble came from the Sioux. As their grievances mounted against the government, more and more bands of Sioux left their reservation and took refuge under their treaty rights in these same well-sheltered and well-stocked valleys where the Northern Cheyenne were living so comfortably. Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and lesser known leaders of the Teton Sioux had taken their groups away from the agencies. Finally, in December, 1875, the order came from the government that all Indians not living on reservations should be at their agencies by January 31, 1876, or the military would come for them. Since the winter was an extremely cold one, it probably would have been impossible for the Indians to comply had they wanted to do so, but none of them intended to leave their protective valleys. Furthermore, the Northern

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<sup>1</sup>Marquis, op. cit., 155-156.

Cheyenne could not comprehend why they should leave. Toward the end of February, 1876, Last Bull, a leading chief of one of the warrior societies, and his family trudged through the snow and cold to join the Northern Cheyenne. To them, Last Bull brought the disturbing news that the soldiers were coming to fight them. Who the soldiers were or from where they were coming, Last Bull did not know. Again relying upon Wooden Leg's account, we get a picture of the thinking of the Northern Cheyenne:<sup>1</sup>

We did not believe Last Bull's report. We thought somebody had told him what was not true. The treaty allowed us to hunt here as we might wish, so long as we did not make war upon the whites. We were not making war upon them. I had not seen any white man for many months. We were not looking for them. We were trying to stay away from all white people, and we wanted them to stay away from us. Our old men said that the reason the white people wanted us to leave off the roaming and hunting was that we should stay near them, so they could sell us more of their goods and their whisky. Our old men ever were urging the young men not to drink the whisky.

But Last Bull was right. General Terry, commanding the Department of the Dakota, was planning a three-prong pincer movement to capture the "hostile" Indians. With Gibbons advancing from the northwest, Custer from the northeast, and Crook from the south, it was Crook's men who found the Cheyenne on the west bank of the Powder River on March 17, 1876, and struck the first blow that ended two months later on the Little Big Horn. The Northern Cheyenne were left completely destitute in this encounter; all of their tipis, their food, their medicine bundles--everything they owned--were completely destroyed. Four days later they joined the Sioux who were camped farther down the Powder, and in that camp were the two great Teton leaders, Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull. The Cheyenne received gifts, food, lodging--everything necessary for their comfort. The

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 160.

Huncpapas especially were gracious to them. And so now, the Northern Cheyenne, who heretofore had been merely friends with the Sioux, became their steadfast allies.

During the next few months, the combined Northern Cheyenne-Huncpapa-Ogalala camp became augmented by others of the Teton Sioux. First came the Minneconjoux--long time friends of the Cheyenne. Then bands of the Brule, the Sans Arc, and the Blackfoot Sioux arrived. Historians frequently account for the arrival of these other bands as the movement of malcontents from the reservation. In part, such may be true, but each year, hundreds of the Teton Sioux had left their reservation to hunt in the northern country. Now meeting the large encampment of Sioux and Cheyenne, they merely joined them, for all of them dreaded and feared some form of retaliation by the soldiers. As spring advanced, Lane White Man and a large band of other Cheyenne from the Southern group arrived and joined the group. His position at first with the Northern Cheyenne seems to have been one of an advisor to the chiefs. Other bands of Cheyenne--from both the Northern group and the Southern group came in, all with stories of how the army was closing in on them.

Finally, on June 17, 1876, representatives of the combined forces of the Cheyenne and the Sioux met Crook on the upper reaches of the Rosebud and soundly defeated him. Crook had with him over a thousand soldiers plus several hundred Crow and Shoshoni warriors but he wisely withdrew his forces and returned south. The impact of this battle gave the Sioux and the Cheyenne the morale that they needed. They met the United States Army and routed them. Now, perhaps, they could live as they pleased. Of this encounter, Wooden Legs wrote:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 204..

We had beaten the white men soldiers. Our scouts had followed them far enough to learn that they were going further and further away from us. We did not know of any other soldiers hunting for us. If there were any, they now would be afraid to come.

The Indians moved to the Little Big Horn. They planned to spend several days in that vicinity because they had heard that great herds of antelope were grazing near the Big Horn River. In setting up their camp circles from North to South were first the Cheyenne, then the Ogalala, the Brule, the Sans Arc, the Minneconjou, the Blackfoot, and finally, at the extreme southern edge some two miles from the Cheyenne, the Huncpapa.<sup>1</sup> In the center of the Cheyenne circle was the medicine tipi containing the Sacred Hat presided over by its keeper, Coal Bear. Almost all of the leading Cheyenne chiefs were present including two of the four great chiefs, Old Bear and Dirty Moccasins. The other two great chiefs, Little Wolf and Dull Knife, were not present.

Now the Battle of the Little Big Horn has been fought in books too many times to be repeated again. Sufficient here is to say that it was the Huncpapa camp at the southern edge of the encampment that Reno and his men attacked. Some, but not many, of the Northern Cheyenne were involved in that fight. Rather, their forces crossed the river to attack the soldiers whom they saw riding along the hilltop. And, this group of soldiers included Lt. Col. Custer and his command. Although it was not necessary for him to do so, Lame White Man (the Southern Cheyenne) took the lead for the Cheyenne and was subsequently killed. Crazy Head was another leading Cheyenne war chief in this encounter.

The Northern Cheyenne have always maintained that they did not know the identity of the white soldiers until long after the battle. When they had killed the soldiers and had taken what belongings they

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 205.

needed--guns, bullets, tobacco, clothes, souvenirs--they struck their camps and moved once more upon the prairie. Charles Sitting Man, who at the age of eight was camped with his family in the Cheyenne circle, recalls<sup>1</sup> how his mother grabbed him and what belongings she could and went to the hills on the western side of the valley. From there, they could hear the bullets and see the dust. When the battle ended, they returned to the camp, dismantled it, and joined the other people moving westward.

Within a year, the Northern Cheyenne were rounded up. Some chose to live with General Miles at Fort Keogh; others went into Fort Robinson, Wyoming, and surrendered. It was there that Wooden Legs maintained that the tribe learned of the significance of the affair on the Little Big Horn. Those surrendering at Fort Robinson were marched to Oklahoma, where two years later one band, under the leadership of Little Wolf and Dull Knife, broke away and successfully eluding the military, made their way back. Because of the unfavorable publicity given to the army on account of its treatment of Dull Knife at Fort Robinson, pressure grew upon the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the extent that by 1883 all of the Northern Cheyenne in Oklahoma were allowed to return to the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota and were eventually returned to join the bands who had remained with Miles on the reservation established for them on the Rosebud.

Considerable emphasis has been given to the role of the Northern Cheyenne and their part in war during their Plains<sup>†</sup> period. It is an important period because of its briefness and intenseness. Secondly, to understand the Northern Cheyenne today, it is necessary to trace his wanderings as nearly as possible during that nomadic period and to under

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, August 29, 1955.

stand that many of the members of the Northern Cheyenne group are the descendants of men who left their southern group because of the incursions of the whites. Lastly, considerable detail is necessary in piecing together the role of the Cheyenne at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. This battle has become so important to them that without any prompting anyone of them will start talking about it when a person asks about their history. Men in their late seventies, born after the battle, will tell how in their childhood old men would sit and recount the stories of that battle over and over again. And these same men know the accounts of it. Yet, we have Wooden Leg's statement that the Cheyenne were not aware of the importance of that battle until nearly two years after it had been fought. True, the battle did disperse the bands and broke up their tribal government, for it was not until 1891 that they were all reunited. But by that time other forces had caused the old tightly-knit organization to disintegrate.

It seems as if the preoccupation with which the Cheyenne are involved concerning the Custer affair may be explained in two ways. First, they have assimilated some of the white man's attitudes about the battle. They know that all white men seem interested in it and are anxious to find out what they can about it. For fear of reprisals, the old men, or at least most of those who were involved in it, kept still before anyone whom they did not know. Now, the older Cheyenne seem to feel that they know the truth--something the white man has never known. Secondly, and perhaps more important, this preoccupation seems to fit the pattern of a revival movement. Writing of such movements in general, Herbert Blumer<sup>1</sup> says:

In revival movements people idealize the past, venerate the

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Blumer, "Social Movements," An Outline of the Principles of Sociology, ed. Robert E. Park, (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1946), 277-278.



ideal picture that they have, and seek to mold contemporary life in terms of this ideal picture. Such movements are explainable, apparently, as a response to a situation of frustration. In this situation people are experiencing a loss of self-respect. Since the future holds no promise for them to form a new respectful conception of themselves, they turn to the past in an effort to do so. By recalling past glories and achievements they can regain a modicum of self-respect and satisfaction.

As will be seen in a later section, when the life of the Northern Cheyenne is traced during the reservation period, there has been but little chance for them to regain their self respect. This idealization of the past--especially their triumphal role in the Battle of the Little Big Horn that is so important to the whites--may well be the means whereby they are sustaining their self respect.

Although frequent mention has been made of the quick adoption of Plains' traits by the Cheyenne, little specific information has been given as to what traits actually were borrowed. Generalizing only, we can say that the culture of the Cheyenne during their period on the Plains parallels closely that of other tribes. They depended upon the buffalo for food, clothing, shelter, utensils and other material needs; they followed the buffalo and thus acquired the mobility of the Plains Indian--the dependence upon the horse and the use of the skin tipi. Like other Plains tribes, a periodically functioning police force developed--the warrior societies--that functioned when the band or the tribe was on the move. The Great Medicine Lodge, or Sun Dance, was adopted enthusiastically by the Cheyenne once they were on the Plains, and as has already been pointed out, it is believed this ceremony was adopted from the Sutaio. The decorative art of the Cheyenne was also similar to that of other Plains tribes in that it emphasized straight-lined geometrical designs.

To treat the material culture of the Cheyenne during their years

on the Plains would be to recapitulate the material culture of any Plains tribe. Certain aspects of their social organization that developed during that period will be treated in later chapters of this report. The main emphasis upon the adoption of Plains culture should be on the rapidity with which the Cheyenne assimilated the culture from their neighbors. Mooney has expressed it well when he wrote:<sup>1</sup>

...a rare instance of a sedentary and agricultural people...transformed by pressure of circumstance within the historic period into a race of nomads and predatory hunters, with such entire change of habit and ceremony that the old life is remembered only in sacred tradition and would seem impossible of belief but for the connected documentary proof of the fact.

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<sup>1</sup>Mooney, op. cit., 361.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RESERVATION YEARS -- COOPERATION AND DESPAIR

1878 - 1955

"It was not really a good life in the early reservation days but it was better than it is now."

--Charles Sitting Man, 1955

Less than a hundred years after the Cheyenne had abandoned their agricultural life along the Missouri River, a band of surrendered Northern Cheyenne were farming again--this time along the Yellowstone. One group, under the leadership of Two Moons, elected to remain with General Nelson A. Miles at Fort Keogh. A goodly number of the men enlisted and served as scouts under his command, and Miles, interested in the welfare of the group, made provision for the rest of them to engage in agriculture.

The Cheyenne group that came to Fort Keogh in the autumn of 1877 had to relinquish their horses and arms to the United States Army. Instead of merely confiscating the horses, General Miles sold them (numbering approximately 200), and with the proceeds (reported to have been \$2,224.00)<sup>1</sup> he purchased a herd of cattle for the Cheyenne. Actual farming, however, had to await for the spring of 1878 when Miles detailed soldiers to teach the Indians how to plant, loaned them some old plows

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<sup>1</sup>James S. Brisbin, "The Cheyenne Indians," Helena Weekly Herald, October 19, 1882, p. 6. (Reprinted from the Chicago Inter-Ocean, September 28, 1882.)

and harrows, and gave them some seed as well. An inventory of their produce for the first summer, 1878, was reported as follows:<sup>1</sup>

|                 |       |        |
|-----------------|-------|--------|
| Potatoes-----   | 1,000 | bushel |
| Turnips-----    | 150   | "      |
| Onions-----     | 15    | "      |
| Parsnips-----   | 10    | "      |
| Carrots-----    | 10    | "      |
| Corn-----       | 300   | "      |
| Cabbage-----    | 2,000 | heads  |
| Squash-----     | 4,500 |        |
| Watermelon----- | 1,000 |        |
| Pumpkin-----    | 300   |        |

Because of their good conduct and their cooperation, the Cheyenne were rearmed in 1879 and that winter were given a permit to hunt buffalo. Successful in the hunt, they sold the robes in Miles City markets and provided themselves as well with sufficient meat to last during the winter and spring. More and more Cheyenne were returning to the Yellowstone River country and to Fort Keogh, so the same practice continued until the summer of 1882. During the years, however, certain tribal members had received permission from General Miles to return to the valleys of the Rosebud and the Muddy and live there almost unmolested by white association.

In the spring of 1882, under the direction of Captain Ezra Ewers, all of the remaining Cheyenne families set out from Keogh for the Rosebud. Proceeds from the sale of buffalo hides had been used to purchase wagons and harness. Once on the Rosebud, Captain Ewers marked out lands for them to use, and even though the season was late for them to sow, they immediately began to plant some vegetables and crops. During the summer, thirty families built houses and reportedly received enough from their harvest to furnish them with food for the coming winter.<sup>2</sup> As Indians whose treaty rights had been forfeited because of their fight

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6.

against Custer, the Cheyenne had the privilege to homestead land in the public domain. Since this practice was possible for any non-treaty Indian, the Army officers encouraged and assisted the Cheyenne to settle, build homes, and break land in anticipation of homestead entries.

Commenting upon the removal of the Cheyenne to the Rosebud, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in his annual report for 1883 stated that he recommended the appointment of a special agent to take charge of the Indians temporarily. "Some of these Indians," he continued, "were for a time held under the surveillance of the military at Fort Keogh and during that time they were considered prisoners of war."<sup>1</sup> The comment of the Commissioner is interesting because the Cheyenne maintain that they never did surrender to Miles but rather agreed to remain with him and scout for him. Furthermore, Brisbin points out that one reason for the mass movement to the Rosebud arose from the fear of the Cheyenne that they would become a part of the Indian Service were they to continue to live in villages along the Yellowstone. "The officers of the Army assured them that the only way to avoid the calamity of an agent and the curse of the Indian Department," Brisbin wrote, "was to dissolve their tribal relations and take lands in severalty."<sup>2</sup>

That the Cheyenne did not find the haven they had expected nor

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1883, lxii, (Washington: Government Printing Office)

<sup>2</sup>Brisbin, op. cit. The statement is interesting to the author for it is the only place in the records of the Indian Bureau where he has found the words, "prisoners of war" related to the Northern Cheyenne. Even today, however, one frequently hears white residents state that the Northern Cheyenne are still held as "prisoners of war." Carl Pearson, Superintendent of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, reports that he has been asked many times why the Cheyenne are being held as "prisoners of war," and each time he has emphatically denied any truth to the allegation.

the freedom that the army officials had predicted for them is evidenced in the report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1885. "The creation of the new reserve has created much excitement and opposition among the settlers," he wrote. He stated further that a special investigator should be sent into Montana to determine the feasibility of allowing the Northern Cheyenne to remain in the area that had been set aside for them by Executive Order dated November 26, 1884. Special Agent Bannister went to the newly-created reservation and investigated whether a satisfactory home for the Northern Cheyenne could be found on the lands included within the boundaries as set forth in the Executive Order. In his report, he recommended that the Executive Order creating the reservation should be revoked and that negotiations should be opened with the Crow Indians for the purchase of part of the northeast corner of their reservation. His recommendation, however, was not carried out and the boundaries as established by the original Executive Order were followed.

Resentment against the Northern Cheyenne flared from many directions. Cattlemen accused the Indians of killing their stock although a special agent sent out by the government reported that the cattlemen were exaggerating the situation. In locating an area of land that he wished to live on (and in doing so under the direction of Captain Ewers), an Indian frequently chose some spot that he had known before during his buffalo-hunting days. Thus several families were located along the Tongue River east of the newly-defined boundary of the reservation. Consequently, even though they had built houses and had started cultivating the ground, they were ordered to quit the district and come into the reservation. Several white homesteaders in the area were particularly bitter, for now they too had to sell their holdings to the government. The press,

especially at Miles City, was extremely bitter and the land office at Miles City especially hostile. Typical of the difficulty that had developed over rights on the reservation is the following letter dated as late as 1892.<sup>1</sup>

Tongue River Agency, Mont.  
May 24, 1892

Hon. Commissioner of Indian Affairs  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I would again respectfully call your attention to the fact that the Land Agent at Miles City, Mont. continues to allow settlers to file on the Reservation, which is causing much discontentment and trouble among the Indians and unless these encroachments are stopped in a very short time, there is going to be an uprising among them. They have informed me that they will stand no longer and will fight for their rights as Gen'l Miles told them when they surrendered, that so long as they were peaceable they should not be disturbed by white settlers.

Last week I told an Indian (Crawling, by name) that he could move into an old abandoned house which is on a claim within the boundary lines of this reservation, according to the map you submitted to me on the 29 of March last for my guidance, which claim was filed upon a few months ago by one, Miss Katherine Linch, who has built a small house on said claim near the one the Indian was told to occupy. As the Indian who is a very peaceable fellow, was about to enter the house, Miss Linch's father, Patrick Linch, appeared with a drawn club threatening the Indian's life if he did not get away. Afterward I sent the Interpreter down to reason the case with Linch, and according to his, the Interpreter's statements, Linch would not talk to him but began a tirade of abuse and started at him with a drawn knife, threatening his life and causing him to retreat.

After these actions of Linch became circulated among the Indians they began to collect around the scene of the trouble, displaying much consternation and excitement, and to prevent further trouble the Commanding officer at the camp here placed a squad of troops on the claim while I and the Interpreter proceeded to Miles City and notified the U. S. Commissioner of the circumstances who took the Interpreter's affidavit and forwarded it on to Helena, Montana to the U. S. District attorney, for action. Linch has been living on the reservation for a number of years and claims to have located prior to the date of the Executive setting the reservation aside, and I have been told, has always been a disturbing element to every agent who has had charge of this agency, and not a fit person to deal with Indians.

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<sup>1</sup>Old Letter Files. Northern Cheyenne Agency. Lama Deer. Montana

I cannot talk with him from the fact that he is very unreasonable, always assuming the offensive. His son-in-law and prospective son-in-law are the parties who have located in the pasture I fenced off for the Agency cattle of which fact I informed you in letter of Dec. 26, 1891. There is also trouble existing between the Indians and another settler, (W. R. Poessey) who is trying to dispossess an Indian that was placed upon the land that Poessey claims by Capt. Ewers. And besides this homestead that Poessey claims, he has filed upon a Desert claim a mile north of the homestead, which is also on the reservation, and thickly settled with Indians. This claim is on the Rosebud River, is good hay land, and the Indians will not peaceably submit to its being taken from them.

All this trouble originates in the land office in Miles City where they say they are supposed to know nothing about the reservation and will allow settlers to locate anywhere within its limits.

A settler on Muddy Creek, also on the Reservation, has build a dam across the Creek thereby preventing the water from passing his ranch causing much complaining among the Indians residing below him on the same creek.

Mr. Lynch has also taken out a ditch on his ranch from Lame Deer Creek which, if he is allowed to proceed with the work, will cut off the water supply from those Indians living below the dam. Since this letter was begun the headmen of the tribe have notified me that on the 4th of June, our next issue day, they expect to get up a petition and forward to the "Great Father" asking him for redress and their rights be better protected.

Please inform me at the earliest possible date what steps I shall take to settle these difficulties, as some action will have to be taken at once.

Very respectfully,

John Tully  
U. S. Indian Agent

Situations such as these multiplied, and the Northern Cheyenne were confused. They had attempted to cooperate--first with the army, then with the various agents of the Indian Bureau. R. L. Upshaw, the first permanent agent for the Northern Cheyenne, described them during these early years in this manner:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for 1889,  
(Washington: Government Printing Office), 152.



The habits of the women as to chastity are almost universally good; better than white people. This fact is known throughout the country and is in great contrast with the morals of some of the neighboring tribes. The physician informs me that he has never had a single case of gonorrhoea or syphilis among them.

There has been very little drinking or drunkenness among these Indians which is greatly to the credit of their white neighbors who could sell them whiskey with very little danger of detection... the men are brave and honest, and from these qualities good material to build upon.

As has been pointed out earlier, the Cheyenne had forfeited the rights of their 1868 treaty by allying themselves with the Sioux in the Custer episode, and, therefore, were considered without treaty rights. The Army had encouraged them to settle along their favorite streams and, eventually, to homestead these lands. But, before any advance could be made in that direction, the government, by Executive Order, created a reservation for them. While the Army had encouraged them to farm and to raise cattle and thus to make a living for themselves, the Indian Bureau began, on October 11, 1886, to issue rations to them without the Indians having to perform any labor in exchange for the supplies.

Typical of the food issued are the following items taken from a voucher, Abstract D, "Issues to Indians," for the two-week period<sup>1</sup> ending December 5, 1891.

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| Beef          | 19,131 pounds |
| Baking Powder | 127½ "        |
| Coffee        | 510 "         |
| Sugar         | 893 "         |
| Soap          | 255 "         |
| Flour         | 6,377 "       |

Two hundred and twenty Indians were the recipients.

The Northern Cheyenne ate their assigned and monotonous diet. Now for the first time in their memories, they did not have to supply their own food. True, the old women amplified the government rations by securing

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<sup>1</sup>Old Files, Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lama Deer, Montana.

bulbs and plant food that they in turn had learned from their mothers. But the men were restless. The restrictions of the reservation regulations, the confinement to a fixed area, the lack of their accustomed buffalo meat all began to have an effect upon the Northern Cheyenne. All they could do now was to visit, but now it was no longer possible for them to go to the neighboring tribes or to see their relatives on other reservations. If one wanted to do so, he had to secure a pass from the agent who was usually reluctant to give one. And, when a tribal member had convinced the agent that the trip was a necessary one, there had to be a reply from the reservation that was to be visited.

Representative of the exchange of letters and of passes that were necessary for the Northern Cheyenne to secure before he left for a visit are these samples taken at random from the old files at the Northern Cheyenne agency at Lane Deer:

Ashland, Montana  
June 23, 1888

Mr. Embree--clerk at trader's store going to the Crow Agency on business. Last Mule is permitted to accompany him as guide. Last Mule will return with Mr. Embree.

R. L. Upshaw  
U. S. Agent

Ashland, Montana  
June 24, 1888

Hon. H. D. Gallagher  
U. S. Indian Agent  
Pine Ridge Dakota

Sir:

The following Cheyennes ask permission to visit your agency for the purposes stated.

Love Medicine-----To visit his mother, Centre Woman  
Black Medicine-----To see his sister, Kills Night

Greasy Dog Sweet  
 Medicine-----To get horses belonging to him  
 Blind Bull-----To see his father, Red Fish, a Sioux

Very respectfully,

R. L. Upshaw  
 U. S. Indian Agt.

Tongue River  
 July 25, 1888

Brave Wolf--having asked permission to visit the Crow Agency to get a horse belonging to him--the U. S. Agent for the Crows having assented by letter dated June 20, 1888, to his visit and authority having been granted by the Hon. Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs dated July 9, 1888--permission is granted him to visit said agency and be absent six days.

R. L. Upshaw  
 U. S. Agent.

All of their confusion, their frustration, and their puzzlement increased when in 1891, the remaining 276 Northern Cheyenne were transferred from the Pine Ridge Reservation to Lane Deer.<sup>1</sup> Now, after fourteen years, all the bands were home, and tales were told of the injustices and the tribulations of the years that had passed. Dull Knife's survivors could tell of the indiscriminate slaughter of their relatives at Fort Robinson twelve years before. Little Wolf's people could relate how they had outsmarted the United States Army throughout the long winter when they had lain hidden until they could take the trail again toward the Yellowstone, and of how they had finally laid down their arms to White Hat, Captain W. P. Clark of Fort Keogh. Incidents of the Custer fight could be re-told now with special emphasis, especially since the Northern Cheyenne realized how important that battle had become to the white people.<sup>2</sup> And these

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<sup>1</sup>Verne Dusenberry, "The Northern Cheyenne," Montana Magazine of History, Vol. V., No. 1, 1955. This account treats rather exhaustively the return of all the bands to Montana.

<sup>2</sup>Marquis, op. cit.

last-comers from the Pine Ridge could tell much about their years of sufferance there under the supervision of the Cheyenne-hating agent of the Sioux, McGillycuddy.

As these grievances against the white man mounted, dissatisfaction over details of supervision at Lane Deer became vocal with the arrival of the Pine Ridge group. Finally, the agent had to write to Washington for advice, as these letters from the files at Lane Deer indicate:

Tongue River Agency, Montana  
October the 5th, 1891

Hon. T. J. Morgan  
Comm. Ind. Affairs  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I regret to say that Little Chief and Standing Elk of the Northern Cheyennes just removed to this agency from Fort Keogh object to receiving their beef otherwise than on foot. They also want the beef hides to sell at the trader's store for their own benefit, claiming this is a treaty stipulation.

It has been and is still the custom at this agency to slaughter the beef in pens, put in the house overnight, and issue it to the respective families the following day. This has been satisfactory to the Indians located here and would seem to be the fairest of all. If I allow the Pine Ridge Indians to have their beef on foot I shall be compelled to allow the other Cheyennes the same privilege.

This is not a farmer's country and there are many range cattle, and I am of the opinion that the stock men in this vicinity would object to having beef turned loose to be shot by Indians as they would be liable to kill other than agency cattle.

Asking your advice in this matter,

I am very Respectfully

John Tully,  
U. S. Indian Agent

Tongue River, Montana  
November 2, 1891

Hon. T. J. Morgan  
Comm. Indian Affairs  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to herewith submit for your consideration my report of affairs relative to this agency, for the month ending October the 31, 1891.

Pine Ridge Cheyenne Indians in number 276 were received from Capt. Ewers Special Agent at Fort Keogh on the 3rd of October. They have located on different parts of the reservation and many of them are building houses.

Immediately after the arrival of the above-named Indians here, they demanded their beef on foot. At the same time saying they would receive it in no other way. At the last issue many of them refused to accept the beef that had been slaughtered for their benefit.

Little Chief, their apparent leader, seconded by Standing Elk is as I believe the principal in the disaffection. I am fearful that this Indian Little Chief is-going to be a disturbing element at this agency as he has been at others. Nothing seems to suit him. He appears to be desirous of spending the greater part of his time in roving from one agency to another and is imperatively insolent in his requests or rather demands.

I am very respectfully

John Tully  
U. S. Indian Agent

Not only was the economic life of the Cheyenne thrown out of balance, but other cultural universals were undergoing a change. Education and religion had come to the Northern Cheyenne through the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church and its mission of St. Labre near Ashland. That mission was established in 1886, and the Ursuline Sisters immediately opened a school. In his report for 1887, R. L. Upshaw wrote:<sup>1</sup>

I believe that the influence of the priests is of the greatest

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1887,  
(Washington: Government Printing Office) 147-148.

importance in bringing these people to a state of civilization of any value. A semi-civilized savage, copying all the vices of his white neighbors, will be a worse citizen than the barbarian pure and simple.

But apparently the Northern Cheyenne were reluctant to accept the school and the mission with the same eagerness as their agent desired for two years later he had to report:<sup>1</sup>

Montana  
Ashland, Oct 23d 1888

Hon John H. Aberly  
Commissioner of Indian Affairs  
Washington D. C.

Sir

I have to inform you that the St. Labre's Boarding School, at Ashland on Tongue River--20 miles from this agency, under control of "The board of Catholic Missions," was suspended by direction of Bishop Brondel on the 9th inst, to remain so for three months. This action was taken, so I am informed by the Rt. Revd Bishop, in order that the Indians may be brought to a better appreciation of the School by its temporary loss to them.

Very respectfully

R. L. Upshaw, U. S. Ind. Agt.

Whether closing the school had any effect upon the Northern Cheyenne and how much better they appreciated it after it was re-opened can only be conjectured. Included in his report for 1890, a new agent for them wrote to the Commissioner:<sup>2</sup>

St. Labre's Mission boarding school is managed under the auspices of the Catholic Bureau. Superintendent Father Van der Velden and Mother Superior have used their utmost endeavors to please the children but it is impossible.

I have punished three different families for taking children out of school by taking their rations from them until they return them. It worked well with two families, but the third I could not bring to time as friends came to the rescue and furnished them with the

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<sup>1</sup>Old Letter Files, Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lame Deer.

<sup>2</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1890, (Washington: Government Printing Office), 286.

wherewithal to keep soul and body together.

Four years of reservation life. Now the Cheyenne faced sending his children to school or having his rations reduced. That conditions did not improve too much for them during the decade of the 1890's is indicated by the reports of their agent. The following extract from his annual report gives some indication of the situation. Captain George W. H. Stouth wrote in 1896:<sup>1</sup>

The two years experience I have had with these Indians confirms my estimate of their capableness. If they only had the opportunity they would soon develop into citizenship, but unfortunately little has been done for their advancement.... They deserve more than they have received, for they have given up a great deal for a very little.

And in 1897, Captain Stouth reviewed the educational situation in this fashion: "There are 360 children of school age and the only opportunities for schooling are the St. Labre's Mission School, with a capacity of 35 pupils, and the Agency day school with a capacity of 20 pupils."

Religion, tied closely to education in those early years of the reservation, too, was puzzling to the Northern Cheyenne. The great Medicine Dance (or Sun Dance as it became popularly known) was prohibited; there was no opportunity now to visit the Southern Cheyenne to renew the Sacred Arrows. The Sacred Hat was with them in the North, but any ceremony connected with it had to be kept a secret from the white agent or the government employees. The Ghost Dance and the Messiah belief of the late eighties that had culminated so disastrously for their Dakota friends had not made any appreciable effect upon the Northern Cheyenne. Only Porcupine and a few of his followers sincerely believed in the new religion, for Porcupine had made the trip to see Wovoka and to learn that

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1896-97,  
(Washington: Government Printing Office)

precepts from that prophet.<sup>1</sup> Then, the Pine Ridge band believed that since they had secured permission to return to their relatives on the Tongue River Reservation just as the army started against the believers of the Messiah in 1890, their wishes had been granted them because they were not active participants in the cult.

But a decade later, they were questioning their wisdom. Porcupine began teaching again the things he had learned from the prophet, Wovoka. And this time, his teachings seem to have fallen on more fertile soil, for the Northern Cheyenne had seen the confusing years of white man's subjugation. A few whites had been killed, and there had been little retaliation. The Northern Cheyenne had been promised many things, yet but little had been given them. Finally, the agent, J. C. Clifford, wrote comprehensively of the difficulty that had materialized. These two letters, once again from the old files at the Northern Cheyenne Agency, are indicative of the restlessness of the Northern Cheyenne:

Tongue River Agency, Montana  
May 5, 1900

Hon. Commissioner,  
Indian Affairs  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I would respectfully call your attention to the fact that Porcupine and Crook, two Northern Cheyennes, living on Rosebud Creek, have for the past two months been secretly engaged in stirring up the Indians by advising them to pay no attention to the orders of the Agent, or the Hon. Commissioner, at Washington, but they must listen to them, that all those who do not listen to them and do as they tell them will surely die, that the resurrection is sure coming this summer, meaning that the Cheyennes who have died are all coming back, and that the whites will be all swept out of existence, such stuff is regarded as true by quite a number of Indians, and if permitted to go on is liable to result in serious trouble.

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<sup>1</sup>James Mooney, "The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890", Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896), 793-819.



On Monday last, I ordered the Police to bring Crook to the Agency for the purpose of talking to him and pointing out to him the wrong he was doing to the other Indians in taking the course he was; instead of coming to the agency quietly he collected about twenty or more of the worst element on Rosebud, headed by Beaver Claw, they rode into the agency armed to the teeth, with rifles, revolvers, knives, and stone clubs, (or skull crackers as they are sometimes called) they refused to go into the council room to talk. Beaver Claw standing close to Crook and advising him not to say anything he was told, the Police informs me that this man Beaver Claw declared on the way to the agency that they were coming down to kill the Interpreter and Captain of the Police, because they were too fast in reporting their misdeeds and deviltry.

Knowing that the slightest mistake might cause serious trouble and possibly bloodshed, if I attempted to use force in taking Crook into custody, I therefore directed the Police to notify all Indians to go home and remain there which they did.

Last week this man Crook was over on Tongue River lying to the Indians over there. The Police moved him on and he then went to Howling Wolf's place where he was kept for four days teaching his Messiah doctrine or lies. He then went back to Rosebud where he lives there practicing what he calls a fast of a number of days, which in fact is not a fast at all, but rather a feast, those who engage in those fasts eat nothing during the daylight, but during the night the young men are sent out to get something for the medicine men to eat. There being no game in the country, they bring in fresh beef. Not having any cattle of their own to kill, they must certainly kill cattle belonging to settlers, and stockmen. The Police have brought me plain and positive evidence of the killing of 18 head of cattle during the past three months, and say they are almost sure that all mischief and cattle killing is done by the Messiah men as they call them for feasting at night from what I can learn from the Interpreter who is a very reliable man. I am of the opinion that Porcupine is and has been the cause of all the trouble that people have had during the past years with the whites. From what I have heard among these people, I think the killing of the boy, Boyle, and Hoover was the result of the teachings of Porcupine.

In view of the case as it now stands I would make the following recommendation and urge that the same be acted upon at once. I would recommend that Porcupine, Crook, and Beaver Claw, be taken away, removed from this reservation and kept in close custody at such place as the Hon. Secretary of the Interior may direct until such times as they will be obedient and thoroughly cured of their false and dangerous ideas, if you can call them such.

Also, that a sufficient force of cavalry be sent here with instructions to disarm all the Rosebud Indians engaged in Porcupine's doings. The wild game being all killed off, they have no use for

firearms except to kill stock and to try and intimidate the Police with.

Very Respectfully,

J. C. Clifford  
U. S. Indian Agent

Tongue River Agency, Montana  
July 18, 1900

Honorable Commissioner  
Indian Affairs  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to inform you that I am in receipt of information that Porcupine and party have passed through the Shoshone reservation, Wyoming, and are said to have gone west over the mountains to Fort Hall reservation, Idaho. They are undoubtedly bent on making trouble and should be arrested and punished. Since the talk they had with Gen. Wade during his late flying trip here, Porcupine and his followers have been more aggressive in their actions. Bobtail Horse a few days ago said, "I am waiting for the letter from the Soldier chief (Gen. Wade) that was here; then we will have our sun dance." Howling Wolf has made the same assertion. The Indians that were at that council have the idea, and stick to it; that the "Soldier Chief" promised to help them get a Sun dance. In the notes of that talk reported by the police at the time, I find the following: Gen. Wade: "I will help you. I do not say that you can have it, only that I would help you." The foregoing was in reply to Howling Wolf who wanted a Sun dance with the rest of the speakers. Porcupine, having been the leader of the Messiah craze of 10 years ago, has made his followers believe that he is an inspired Medicine man, endowed with supernatural powers and can perform and do just what he tells them. On July 4, a delegation of his followers came in and insisted on having a Sun dance, which demand was promptly and peremptorily denied.

My judgment is that Porcupine should be arrested and kept in custody, away from this agency, until he is thoroughly cured of his false and dangerous doctrine.

Very respectfully

J. C. Clifford  
U. S. Agent

No evidence is found in the old records, however, to show that Porcupine was arrested or punished. Nonetheless, the Sun Dance was not renewed.

In 1904, the Mennonite Church sent a missionary to the reservation to minister to the Northern Cheyenne; since 1890, that denomination had been serving the Southern Cheyenne in Oklahoma. The first building to be constructed by the Mennonites for the Northern group was at Busby in 1905. The church, known as Bethany Mission, still continues. In 1907, an acre of ground at the agency headquarters at Lame Deer was given to the Mennonite society by the government. The late Rev. Rodolphe Petter arrived in Lame Deer in 1916 to take over the mission activities and remained there until his death in 1947. Because the Rev. Mr. Petter had been engaged in missionary work with the Southern Cheyenne for nearly sixteen years prior to his assignment in Montana and because the man was a highly trained linguist, he has done more, perhaps, than any other person in probing into the Cheyenne language. All of the early writers about the Cheyenne--Mooney, Dorsey, Grinnell--pay high tribute to Dr. Petter's work. Shortly before his death he published a monumental dictionary of the language, and in 1952, his widow published his manuscript on the grammar of the Cheyenne.

For over fifty years, then, the Mennonites have served the Northern Cheyenne. With their central station at Lame Deer, missions are also maintained at Ashland, Busby, and Birney. During the years, a few men have been ordained as ministers in the church; Milton Whiteman and his wife have been the most faithful of the members according to Mrs. Rodolph Petter, widow of the late missionary. No estimate can be computed as to the membership of the Mennonite Church since the Cheyenne are not noted for their complete faithfulness. No other Protestant denomination has ever tried to establish a mission on the reservation, so nominally all Northern Cheyenne are either Mennonites or Roman Catholics.

During the early years of the twentieth century, the natavistic movement of the peyote cult reached the Northern Cheyenne. According to John Stands-in-Timber,<sup>1</sup> the first meeting occurred in 1899. The Cheyenne were told to dress up in their best clothes and come to a "meeting" at a tipi erected near one of their houses. Magpie, as the story goes, came all arrayed with bells and feathers and war paint, for he had not realized that he was going to a church meeting. It was not until the winter of 1903 and 1904 that the group organized and regular meetings were held. From that time on, the cult, now affiliated with the Native American Church of the United States, has flourished. There appears to be some resentment on the part of the faithful Mennonites and Roman Catholics, as members of both churches have voiced the opinion that the peyotists control tribal elections. For example, when a special election was held in the spring of 1955 to elect a chairman of the Tribal Council because of the death of Eugene Fisher, the successful candidate was one who is closely affiliated with the Native American Church of the United States. Several non-peyotists stated that the candidate was elected because of the "peyote vote" and expressed the opinion that seventy-five percent of the Northern Cheyenne are members.

Though active in the peyote movement, most of the Cheyenne still maintain their membership in either of the two churches on the reservation. That they are extremely serious about legislation affecting the peyote is manifested, however, by their interest in having white people realize the position in which the Cheyenne may find themselves should the government outlaw the peyote. White people who show any interest in the church are veritably courted so that any report such individuals might give would be favorable. No particular age group seems evident at any of the meetings

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, December 16, 1955.

as men and women of all ages attend.

Technology, economy, education, religion--all these were changing in the decade that ended in 1900. Problems attendant to each one were unsolved. The Northern Cheyenne were confused and, in many instances, belligerent. Then, to confound them further, another action came to them that was basically good. By an Executive Order of March 19, 1900, the area of the reservation was increased to about 460,000 acres and the eastern boundary was extended to the west bank of the Tongue River. Settlers and homesteaders again were difficult to mollify, but in the end the government was reasonably successful in purchasing the land and the housing. The hostile attitude of some of the whites did little, though, to strengthen the friendship of the Indians toward the non-Indian. And the agent discovered that his troubles were not ended by the acquisition of the additional land as these letters attest:<sup>1</sup>

Tongue River Agency, Montana  
May 10, 1900

Honorable Commissioner  
Indian Affairs  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I received today from Mr. L. H. Stafford of Ashland, Custer County, Montana, the following letter:

May 6, 1900

I have purchased Section 13 or R. R. land on Otter Creek and one quarter is occupied by one Indian named Badger. Please have him to vacate as I want the grass for hay.

The land in question has been occupied by Badger, a Cheyenne Indian for a great number of years; the land is east of Tongue River, the present eastern reservation line. It surely is not right that the Indians living east of Tongue River should be dispossessed of their lands and homes without proper compensation. I am of the opinion that if the Northern Pacific R. R. is permitted to select lands upon which Indians reside that trouble will be the

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<sup>1</sup>Old Letter Files, Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lame Deer.

result of such action.

I respectfully ask for instructions in the matter.

Very respectfully,

J. C. Clifford, Indian Agent

Tongue River Agency, Montana  
July 7, 1900

Honorable Commissioner  
Indian Affairs  
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I quote you a portion of letter from a large cattle outfit on Tongue River south of reservation line under date of June 30:

I understand that the Indians have been driving my cattle off of the head of Muddy; I write to you to ask you to put a stop to it. I do not want my cattle molested; it will be impossible to keep cattle from passing over an imaginary line until it is fenced. The cattle are in no way interfering with the Indians and they have no right to be milling them around. If you do not stop them, I will attempt to do so myself and thus trouble may be the result.

The cattle referred to were moved by my orders as they were reported as being on the Indian's hay ground and near their gardens (some gardens destroyed) upon this reserve.

The south line of the reservation should be surveyed and plainly marked with substantial posts or stone mounds placed about 1/4 mile apart which would exclude the possibility of any future dispute over "imaginary lines;" this should be done at once to avoid future complications.

Very respectfully,

J. C. Clifford  
U. S. Indian Agent

During these years of uncertainty, no definite habilitation program seems to have been developed for the Northern Cheyenne. Their sustenance still depended upon the ration issued by the government. In 1898, James McLaughlin, a special investigator for the government, was detailed to the reservation. While his prime purpose was to purchase

lands held by settlers, he also made a detailed study of the economic condition of the reservation and recommended that the government purchase 2000 head of two-year old heifers and 80 bulls. These animals, he recommended, should be issued to Indian families and an Indian-owned herd be developed. Five years later, 1903, the government acted upon McLaughlin's suggestion and purchased the cattle.

When five more years went by and the herd had developed into a number approximating 10,000 head, the government began to reduce the rations and to require the Northern Cheyenne to make up the rest of their food supply by working. "Instead of making up the difference by working," wrote their agent, "they made it up by slaughtering one another's cattle."<sup>1</sup> This situation continued until the arrival of an agent in 1914 named John M. Buntin who remained in that capacity until 1920. His administration seems to have been the golden period of agriculture on the Northern Cheyenne reservation, for the old men of the tribe point today to the excellent work done by Buntin.

From a summary report of his activities at the time of his transfer, dated January 2, 1920,<sup>2</sup> we find a review of his work. Upon his arrival, he ordered the cattle counted and found less than 3,500 of the 10,000 reported six years earlier (1908). Then, he visited each district and warned every Indian that if he were caught stealing, he would be arrested and prosecuted in Federal court. Of these activities, he wrote:

I took charge on December 1st, 1915, and within the next 37 days

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1908, (Washington, Government Printing Office).

<sup>2</sup> Old Files, Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lame Deer, Montana.

arrested 16 for cattle stealing, part of whom were prosecuted in Federal Court and the others in Indian court. This put a great check on cattle stealing.

Along with emphasizing the Federal offense of cattle stealing, Buntin made positive plans to increase the production of cattle by the Indians themselves. He ordered 100,000 acres of the reservation that faced toward the south and east fenced off so that stock would not graze in that area during the summer months and thus secured good feed for the herd during the winter. During the five years of his administration, the herd doubled in size, and he believed that the reservation could support 20,000 head of cattle.

Reduction of horses to make room for more cattle on the range was another feature of the Buntin plan. The Northern Cheyenne's love of horses was an extravagance they could not afford, Buntin thought, for the best price they could get for their horses would have been about \$10.00 apiece. Consequently, beginning in 1919, a systematic slaughter of ponies began. Beef rations were withdrawn entirely and about 100 head of ponies were killed each month for food consumption. "At first many of the leading Indians opposed the adoption of horse meat for food," he wrote, "but at this time (January 2, 1920) 90 percent of the Indians are using horse meat as a food." To insure the continuation of the diet during the winter months, Buntin had an ice house built near the agency, and there carcasses of the horses were stored for later consumption. For each animal killed, however, he did pay the Indian for the price of the hide, a figure that averaged about \$6.55. Buntin indicated that his proposal of reducing the herds of small horses for food should continue on the range.

Other changes relative to livestock were also effected during



Buntin's regime. Prior to his time, hay had been purchased from an appropriation fund, "Industry Among Indians." Now, the feed was charged to individual Indians.

In the spring of the year that Buntin arrived, the Northern Cheyenne were cultivating approximately 1200 acres of land. Five years later, over 6,000 acres were being farmed, and winter wheat, spring wheat, oats, alfalfa, and corn were being planted. Furthermore, summer fallow practices were instituted with the result that the yield of winter wheat increased from five to ten bushels per acre. Haying, too, was emphasized. One tract of about 350 acres was fenced and farmed by about fifteen Indians as a community enterprise. The divide between Ashland and the agency, a high plateau on the watershed between the Tongue River and Lane Deer Creek, was also tested for its productivity in growing winter wheat and hay.

During his first year as resident agent, Buntin had a flour mill constructed at Lane Deer. Writing about the success of the mill, Buntin said:<sup>1</sup>

I have required the Indians who raised wheat to first save out a sufficient quantity of their crop for seed and then to deposit not less than 500 pounds of wheat for each member of the family five years of age or over in the mill to be ground into flour. I have in most cases permitted the Indians to draw flour at the rate per month not to exceed their year's supply.... The flour mill has been very beneficial to the Indians and has done considerable to encourage them to raise wheat crops.

In the concluding paragraph of his final report, Buntin summarized his experiences with the Northern Cheyenne in this manner:<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion I will say that these Indians have responded better

<sup>1</sup>Old Files, Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lane Deer.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

to encouragement along agricultural lines than any full blood backward Indians with whom I have become acquainted; however, in order to keep them advancing it will take constant urging, teaching, and suggesting for a number of years to come. They seem to prefer raising hay to any other crop and hay should be the most important crop with wheat a close second.

Buntin's plans were never completely developed. He had apparently succeeded in winning the confidence of the Northern Cheyenne even to the extent of getting them to eat their horses. That he was not a dictator is evidenced by the degree of affection in which he is still remembered by the older tribal members who also point to his administration as being the one in which the Northern Cheyenne enjoyed the highest degree of prosperity. In fact, it is to this particular period that the older Indian refers when one asks what should be done to improve the economic condition of the reservation.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Buntin had enlisted the support of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to his program, for he urged the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Cato Sells, to come to the reservation and make recommendations. Sells spent two weeks with Buntin in 1915<sup>2</sup> and covered the entire reservation.

But a new administration in Washington brought a new Secretary of the Interior who in turn brought a new Commissioner of Indian Affairs. So again, as so many times before and since, the Northern Cheyenne (along with all Indians under the supervision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs) saw a new program instituted. With the Northern Cheyenne, Buntin's plan seems to have been set aside while an elaborate survey was made of the economic condition of individual Indians. Nothing in

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<sup>1</sup>Rufus Wallowing, Charles Sitting Man, Milton Whiteman, and John Stands-in-Timber are but a few of the old-time Northern Cheyenne who have mentioned this period as being the outstanding one in Cheyenne accomplishment.

<sup>2</sup>"The Northern Cheyenne," Ashland Pioneer Press, August 16, -1918.

the old files indicates that any particular use was made of the data, although it is assumed that the data was collected for statistical purposes. Two sample sheets indicate the comprehensiveness of the survey:<sup>1</sup>

Date of Survey                      June 1, 1923  
Willie Redeagle, b. 1901

1. Family History:  
He is single. Lives with his mother (b. 1872)
2. Physical Condition: Good
3. Home Place: 160 acres on the Rosebud, all fenced.  
7 acres under cultivation and 10 acres hay land.
4. Home Furnishings:  
cook stove                      bed and mattress
5. Implements:  
farm wagon                      stubble plow                      hay rake  
bobsled                      disk                      share in binder
6. Buildings:  
1-room log house
7. Stock:  
2 work horses                      2 broke ponies                      7 others
8. Farm operations:  
Mother raised 2 bu. potatoes, 3 bu. corn and  
cut some hay. They do no farming.
9. Future plans:  
None

Date of Survey                      June 1, 1923  
Edward Womanleggins, b. 1888

1. Family History:  
Family consists of self, wife and 2 step-children.
2. Physical Condition: Good
3. Home Place:  
80 acres of land on the Rosebud, fenced.
4. Buildings:  
1-room log house
5. Home Furnishings:  
cook stove                      heater                      bed and mattress  
3 chairs                      sewing machine
6. Implements  
farm wagon                      disc                      cultivator
7. Stock:  
6 broke ponies                      1 not broken
8. Farm Operations:  
Farmed 10 acres and raised 100 bu. wheat, 60 bushel  
oats and put up 10 tons of hay.
9. Future Plans:  
Married recently and settled down on his wife's  
land, which he expects to improve.

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<sup>1</sup>Old Files, Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lama Deer, Montana.

A new agent, C. B. Lohmiller, arrived in 1924. He discovered, among other things, that the Northern Cheyenne were still dependent in part upon shamanism. To stop that practice, he posted notices condemning such ideas and directed that they be stopped immediately. His warning notice follows:

TONGUE RIVER AGENCY.

Lame Deer, Mont.,

April 11, 1924.

TO INDIAN "MEDICINE MEN" AND THEIR DISCIPLES:

1. The practice of one Indian treating another, chewing his medicine and spitting it over the naked body of the patient is prohibited.
2. The custom of Indians who claim to be doctors sucking the bodies of the sick people is forbidden and considered an Indian offense.
3. The practice of the so called Indian doctors to initiate other Indians as Doctors and taking their ponies and pay for such services is prohibited. All such proceedings and ceremonies and collecting property is prohibited.
4. All ceremonies wherein the debauching of women forms a part and the collection of fees from candidates to become doctors is prohibited and considered an Indian offense.
5. All Indian doctors are forbidden from advising other Indians against farming, stock raising, putting their children in school or doing anything else which will prevent the Indians from progressing and becoming self-supporting, respectable people, are prohibited and will be considered an Indian offense.
6. No claim by an Indian for caring for the sick by another Indian will have any consideration in excess of \$3.00 per day. The services referred to here are cleaning up the patient, providing him or her with water, food, proper bedding, etc.,
7. The practice of Indian Doctors using a rattle box and singing to prevent a patient who is very weak from sleeping, is also considered an Indian Offense.
8. The practice of Indian medicine may be defined as treating for

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<sup>1</sup>Old Files, Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lame Deer.

a fee, paid directly or indirectly, or rendering any service for the sick, other than personal service, provided that nothing in this regulation shall prohibit the administration of simple remedies of well-known therapeutic effect. All forms of mysticism, conjuration, and all supernatural claims shall constitute a violation of the regulations of the superintendent.

9. There is no objection whatsoever to rendering friendly aid in caring for the sick and it is not intended to prohibit the administration of simple remedies of well-known therapeutic effect (herbs, native roots, etc.).

10. The expression "well known therapeutic effect" should be interpreted as the effect of said medicine in proper doses given for a definite purpose as for instance, the giving of castor oil or other laxative when the patient needs it, or quinine for chills and fever. The application of poultices, wet compresses, etc., would be allowed, but such practices as chewing up herbs and spitting the juice over the body of a patient will be considered an act intending to deceive and is positively forbidden.

11. Illness is not caused by evil spells placed upon one person by another and when a "Medicine Man" pretends that he can cause sickness in another by placing a "spell" upon him, or cure sickness by removing an evil "spell" such practices will be regarded as fraudulent and a violation of regulations.

12. Immoral, obscene, or indecent practices will not be tolerated also the beating or striking of a patient for the purpose of driving out the disease will not be allowed.

13. Personal service for the sick as doing such things for the patient and family or the family as will be of real service will be appreciated. People who are ill require rest and quiet, and anything that can be done to bring about favorable conditions in this respect will be appreciated.

14. From the foregoing, all those that are concerned are admonished to take notice and not violate any of the above instructions and if any violation of these orders occur and evidence is furnished to prove same, punishment will follow.

C. B. Lohmiller  
Superintendent.

What effect this notice had upon the Northern Cheyenne can only be conjectured. Lohmiller is perhaps best remembered for his efforts to open the reservation for allotment. In a letter dated January 9, 1926,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Old Letter Files, Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lame Deer.

he wrote as follows:

...allotment will be a boon for these people. It will be an incentive to cause them to improve their places and will relieve the obstacle of dilatoriness on their part. Also the saying, "Why should I enlarge my field," "Why should I make improvements, someone else will get it," etc., etc.

Apparently, he was sufficiently persuasive to convince the Northern Cheyenne that they should accept the provisions of the allotment act. The feeling began to be evidenced among them that they were being discriminated against. "Why should we be put aside? All other Indians in Montana, with the exception of the Rocky Boy, are allotted. What have we done that we should not be treated the same as other Indians?" wrote Pious Shoulderblade<sup>1</sup> on December 10, 1925. The late Eugene Fisher, president of the Tribal Council at the time of his death, March 3, 1955, recalled<sup>2</sup> that Lohmiller had told the Northern Cheyenne that they were "prisoners of war" but that they would not be so considered were they to accept the provisions of the allotment act. The Northern Cheyenne promptly told him that they did not know they were prisoners of war. But the allotment fever went on.

The allotment act passed and was signed June 3, 1926, but the actual allotting did not begin until 1930. According to the act, 160 acres were to be given to each enrolled Cheyenne. Half the acreage should be agricultural land and the remaining eighty acres were to be grazing or range land. Before the allotting was completed, however, officials and Indians discovered that there was not enough agricultural land to go around. Older Indians, especially those who had come to the area in the early 1880's, had always clustered around the creek bottoms

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<sup>1</sup>Letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Copy in Northern Cheyenne Agency files, Lama Deer, Montana.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, August 26, 1954.

and so they took their allotments where they had more or less acquired squatters' rights over the years. Thus, the younger Indians had to receive land that was all of range quality in the higher areas and along the divides between the various watersheds. Approximately one-half, or 234,774 acres, was allotted. Fortunately (as well as unlike what happened on other reservations) the remaining acreage--209,382 acres--was kept for tribal use and was not opened for homestead.

Timing, however, seemed wrong for the Northern Cheyenne. Just as they were allotted and settled on their land, the drouths and the depression of the 1930's enveloped them, and they had but little chance to develop their allotments. As a result, the majority of the inhabitants of the reservation left their allotments, and moved into the villages of Busby, Lame Deer, Birney, and Ashland and went to work with the ECW, the PWA, or some other project. Thus they were able to manage a livelihood fairly well. Then came the war, and during those years many of the older people lived off the money sent home by sons and daughters in the armed forces. Others went outside the reservation and secured well-paying jobs, but with the end of the war they were the first to be laid off.<sup>1</sup> Together with the returning veterans of World War II, these workers remain clustered around the villages and with but very few exceptions have failed to return to their allotments. In a study of 337 Northern Cheyenne families made by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1950 incomes were shown as follows:

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Sale of crop-----      | 12% |
| Sale of livestock----- | 28% |
| Leases-----            | 4%  |

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<sup>1</sup>These observations were made by the late Eugene Fisher in a personal interview, September 10, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>"Economic Conditions of the Northern Cheyenne," Bureau of Indian Affairs, Area Office, Billings, 1951.

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Labor-----         | 30% |
| Welfare-----       | 24% |
| Other sources----- | 2%  |

Improvement of roads in the reservation has brought some changes in the last two years. Until 1954, no black-topped highway had been constructed on the reservation. Since the completion of an excellent all-weather road from Ashland to Highway 87, a distance of approximately sixty-five miles, in the fall of 1954, a new lumber mill has been instituted at Lame Deer. Opening in the spring of 1955, the company employs thirty-five Northern Cheyenne men on an annual basis. During the first six months of its operation, absenteeism has been no greater than had the employees been white men. The Northern Cheyenne have also gained a reputation as being good fire fighters, and a number of them leave the reservation each summer to take employment with the Forest Service. Because of their cooperative attitude, the number employed each summer is increasing.<sup>1</sup> Several other men are employed during the summer months by cattlemen in the area.

But Lame Deer still has its hangers-on, and Jimtown<sup>2</sup> its habitues. On any day of pleasant weather, winter or summer, one may see the one street of Lame Deer filled with men, idling and visiting, as they stand in front of the two or three business firms or as they congregate in front of the Tribal Council office. The older men resent the fact that the young men are not working, but the younger ones--World War II veterans and younger--seem not to mind the criticism of their elders.

Social life is meager. An occasional movie shown in the tribal

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, R. H. Blackmer, U. S. Forest Service, Missoula, Montana.

<sup>2</sup>Jimtown is the name of a questionable bar located at the north gate of the reservation.



hall, basketball games between grade school teams, one or two Indian dances a year comprise the activities of the Northern Cheyenne at Lame Deer. A group of younger men, led primarily by agency employees of Indian descent, has organized a Young Men's Christian Fellowship Club which meets monthly and discusses problems pertinent to the community of Lame Deer. Non-sectarian, the emphasis is heavily slanted toward the furtherance of the Christian doctrine. Alarmed by the continual increase in the use of liquor by the younger men, a group of men have organized Alcoholics Anonymous and hold meetings each Thursday evening. An estimated forty men are being reached by this group.<sup>1</sup>

With the exception of these few activities, the younger Northern Cheyenne today has nothing to occupy his time, exercise his talents, or utilize his body. The older men look backward, talk about the past, and seek to perpetuate it. And that seems to characterize life in the Lame Deer community today.

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Harry Littlebird, February 2, 1956.

## CHAPTER IV

### POLITICAL STRUCTURE--THEN AND NOW

Political systems, or as Herskovits<sup>1</sup> calls them--the ordering of human relations, are phenomena found among all people and constitute one of the universal aspects of culture. The Northern Cheyenne were no exception. Their Council of Forty-four has attracted the attention of many writers who point to the Cheyenne as having one of the most skillfully developed governmental systems to exist among the Plains Indians. While there is no evidence that clans ever existed among the Cheyenne, the tribe was composed of ten distinctly exogamous bands. Like other Indians of the Plains, the Cheyenne had six military organizations; unlike others of their region, they had highly developed guilds for their women. Life for the pre-reservation Cheyenne was marshaled and systematized.

#### The Council of Forty-Four

The origin of the Council of Forty-four is lost. Mooney<sup>2</sup> found informants who related that the Cheyenne adopted it from a tribe whom they had encountered along the Missouri. According to Mooney's account, the Cheyenne met the Owu'qeo--a tribe hostile to them--camped on the bank of the Missouri River. In a winter expedition, when the

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<sup>1</sup>M. J. Herskovits, Cultural Anthropology, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 191.

<sup>2</sup>James Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians," op. cit., 371.

water was frozen, the Cheyenne attacked the Owu'geo, drove them onto the ice, and kept them there until their feet were frozen. Unable to flee, they were all massacred except one woman. Mooney believes that some of them may have escaped and joined other peoples, but as a tribe the Owu'geo never were reunited. The woman who was left became the wife of her captor, a chief of the Cheyenne, and in time rose to become his favorite. When she had learned the language sufficiently well to communicate with her husband, she told him about how her tribe had been governed. She explained that the government had been conducted by a council of forty-four chiefs who had been selected for their bravery, wisdom, and fine physical appearance. The Cheyenne chief was so impressed that, after lengthy conferrals with other tribal leaders, he had her set up a chief tipi, and trim and paint a bundle of chief sticks. Following her instructions, the Cheyenne thus elected their first council of forty-four chiefs.

Whatever the origin, sufficient evidence is at hand to know that the Cheyenne were governed by a council of chiefs whose prime duties were the care of widows and orphans, and the arbitrators of policy regarding peace, war, alliances and camp movements--especially when buffalo could not be found in their accustomed places. The chiefs were chosen for a term of ten years although any chief could succeed himself. While the positions could become hereditary, a son would have to be acceptable to the tribe before his position could be sustained. Furthermore, a son might decline the honor. Grinnell reports that Bull Hump, son of Dull Knife, declined in 1883 because he thought that

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 341.

chiefs were no longer needed.<sup>1</sup> Most authorities maintain that four representatives served from each of the ten bands, although Mooney<sup>2</sup> states that they were chosen from different bands without limitation of quota for a band.

Thus, the council was a continuing body of tribal trustees. Every ten years, a complete reorganization of the council was effected. During the winter of the tenth year, messengers went out and notified the bands that a chief renewal would be held the following summer. The bands would then converge at a designated spot. At the time of the election of the new chiefs, the council also selected four men from among the old-time chiefs--these men to be the counselors and leaders.<sup>3</sup> Men of influence and importance, these four head chiefs possessed little more actual authority than other members of the council. Their advice and opinions, however, usually received greater consideration than did those of the other forty.<sup>4</sup> While Dorsey stated that usually the four high chiefs were medicine men, Llewellyn and Hoebel<sup>5</sup> listed five main chiefs and stated that one of them represented Sweet Medicine, the cultural hero of the Cheyenne. According to these last-named investigators, the high priest was looked upon as the most holy man in the tribe. While he seemed to lack any special political authority, he was symbolically associated with the center of all directions, or the

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 341.

<sup>2</sup>James Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians," op. cit., 403.

<sup>3</sup>George A. Dorsey, The Cheyenne, (Field Museum Anthropological Series, IX, 1905, 1-186.

<sup>4</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 337.

<sup>5</sup>K. N. Llewellyn and E. A. Hoebel, The Cheyenne Way, (Norman: Oklahoma Press, 1941), 75.

Heart of the World.

Perhaps one of the best explanations of the Council of Forty-four may be found in the study made of the laws of the Cheyenne by Llewellyn and Hoebel:<sup>1</sup>

Soldiers other than military leaders were not barred from chiefship in the Council of Forty-four. This was necessary, of course, if the quality of the Council was to be held at a high level. But a soldier chief was never permitted to be a tribal chief at the same time. When a soldier chief was selected by the tribal Council to fill the place of a deceased head chief (one of the five priest-chiefs) as was frequently done (Little Wolf was the last to be so honored), he automatically retired from the leadership of his society and gave up all affiliation with his military brethren. The Cheyennes reiterate that the appointment of tribal chiefs is elevation to a position of responsibility to the entire tribe. We interpret the rule which separated the supreme tribal and the military chieftainships, preventing the vesting of power by any special interest group. It served to guarantee the principle of checks and balances as between the military and civil branches of the social organization.

In addition to the social obligations of the Council, we find that the Cheyenne related some functions to it that carried a religious connotation. For instance, the holiest object of the tribe was the Sacred Arrows. All ceremonies connected with the Renewal of the Arrows were controlled by the Council, a factor that gives credence to Dorsey's statement that the four high chiefs were medicine men. This quasi-religious effulgence seems to have bolstered the prestige of the Council, especially after the wars with the whites became more frequent and the power of the military societies appeared to grow.

The Council worked to the satisfaction of the Cheyenne. With careful consideration for members of the tribe, with a nice check on the activities of the military, with a flavor of religious authority or sanctity, the Council met the needs of the people. Since at no time

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 102.

does one find the population figure of the tribe to exceed 4,000 people, representation on the Council seems to have been about one for approximately every one hundred members. Democracy, then, can be added to the attributes of the organization. With the memory of this efficient structure in their minds, it is small wonder that in theory the Northern Cheyenne have clung to it.

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According to well-informed Cheyenne living today, the Council of Forty-four still exists.<sup>1</sup> Their cultural hero, Sweet Medicine, organized the Council and told the Cheyenne how it should operate. He further inaugurated the system of setting a stick in front of each person whose term was to last for ten years and indicated further that four of the group would have to serve for twenty years. Until 1851, the Cheyenne followed carefully these instructions of Sweet Medicine and remained a powerful and well-organized tribe. Following the Laramie Treaty of 1851, and the division of the tribe, no organization existed until 1869. That year, the two groups came together and reorganized, only to have that unity destroyed by the Battle of the Little Big Horn and the subsequent events.

Not until 1900 did another Council exist. The formation

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<sup>1</sup>Group interview conducted with four chiefs of the Northern Cheyenne at Lane Deer, Montana, December 13, 1955. John Stands-in-Timber, grandson of Lane White Man who led the Cheyenne forces at the Battle of the Little Big Horn and who was killed there, acted as interpreter and chief spokesman. Others in the group were Charles Kills Night, grandson of Little Wolf; Wilson Pine, descendent of High Wolf, one of the signers of the Treaty of 1825 (and whose portrait was later painted by Catlin), and John Medicine Top. Future references to this interview will be designated, "Group Interview, December 13, 1955."

occurred on the Northern Cheyenne reserve; a similar one followed shortly thereafter in the south. Since that time, forty chiefs have been elected every ten years on each of the two reservations. The election in 1940 saw an almost complete turnover of chiefs since most of the men elected in 1930 had died in the decade that followed. At the last election, held in 1950, the Northern Cheyenne decided to retain most of the chiefs for another ten years. Likewise, at the organizational meeting following the 1950 elections, four high chiefs were selected. Currently, these important officers are Frank Waters, who carries the medicine, Albert Magpie, Pat Spotted Wolf, and James Atwood. Selection of the forty chiefs is made according to the population of the five districts of the Northern Cheyenne reservation. Thus, while the elections are not dependent upon an even number from each district, members believe the present system to be more democratic.

The Council meets once a year and each meeting lasts from two to four days. Although the chiefs in each district may meet more frequently, the regular meeting place changes from year to year. At the annual meetings, the chiefs go through the ceremonies of the Council as have been told them by their forefathers and adhere as closely as possible to the pattern of the past. Religious ceremonies have become an integral part of the meetings; these observances take place within a special tent erected for the meeting. Just as in the past, forty-four sticks are used, one in front of each member. During the year, however, the sticks are kept in the Sacred Lodge housing the Sacred Hat at Birney. Medicine, especially sweet grass, is used at all the meetings, but it is especially important when the chiefs reorganize after each election.

At the chief renewal ceremony, five pipes are supposed to be used. Four of the pipes have special significance: one represents the Sun Dance, one the Animal Dance, one the Buffalo Ceremony of the Sweat Lodge, and the most sacred of all symbolizes the Renewal of the Sacred Arrows. To be qualified to smoke these pipes, a person has to have gone through each of these ceremonies at least four times. With the changing effects of the years, no one is now qualified to smoke all of these pipes, for no one is left on the reservation who has participated in all of these events. Consequently, the chiefs have adopted a fifth pipe that is a general representation of all four of them.

The pipe is purified first by sweet grass and each Chief smokes it only at the time of his inauguration in the Council. Unlike other pipes, this one is not passed around for the laws governing the ritual are very strict. After the pipe has been lighted from the medicine--kept at the center fire--it is first smoked by the four high chiefs who sit at the four cardinal directions. Then, after each of the four high priestly chiefs have smoked, each of the forty members of the Council comes to the center and smokes. When each individual member has come and each has partaken, all of them rise, form a circle in the center, and pass the pipe around with each chief smoking it. The same medicine is used for ten years, but it is changed with every organization. Not until the purification ceremonies have been completed do the four high chiefs instruct the other chiefs about the duties required and expected of them.

The duties of the present Council of Forty-four of the Northern Cheyenne are concerned primarily with the welfare of the people. New



chiefs are instructed to help the poor people, the widows, and the orphans. Likewise, the chiefs are told not to say anything unkind about tribal members, and, as well, to counsel people to prevent bad things from happening. Assistance wherever it is needed should be given; for example, if a chief is riding horseback down the road and overtakes an older person or a woman, he should dismount and offer his horse to the pedestrian. If a chief is driving his car along the road and sees anyone of the tribe walking, it is his duty to stop the car and to invite the person to ride. Even if the person's final destination should require the chief to drive several miles away from his route, he is still expected to do it. Each chief is indoctrinated with the idea that any private business (no matter how small it may be) pertinent to the welfare of the individuals of the tribe is his business.

At the meetings of the Council, people are urged to live together in peace, for people may only prosper when they are in harmony with each other. Matters relative to the present governing body are also discussed at the Council meetings. While the tribe itself is incorporated under the provisions of the Reorganization Act of 1934 as "The Northern Cheyenne Tribe of the Tongue River Reservation," many of the older residents feel that the Council constitutes a true body of advice, for its jurisdiction encompasses a much greater scope than does the Tribal Council. Many matters relative to the welfare of the tribe are discussed at Council meetings and certain changes are often submitted to the Tribal Council. At one time, the Council recommended that fewer elected representatives should serve on the Tribal Council. The tribe voted on the amendment and the number was

reduced. Spokesmen are occasionally selected to represent the Council and to go to the superintendent to inquire about problems of administration. Likewise, representatives of the Council are sent to the Area Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Billings to find out about the rights of the people. Such an instance occurred on December 17, 1955, when High Chief Pat Spotted Wolf and Chiefs Wilson Pine, John Medicine Top and John Stands-in-Timber drove to Billings to meet with the Area Director, John M. Cooper.<sup>1</sup>

Election to the Council of Forty-four is a significant thing in the lives of the men on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. The character of each young man nominated for membership is carefully considered by the electorate even to the point of rejecting a son or a grandson of a chief who is ready to retire. Young chiefs are still proposed by their fathers, but if the young man does not possess the character requirements deemed necessary for membership, some other worthy young man is chosen. Although its powers are generally weak and its authority not recognized by the government, the Council of Forty-four functions in the minds of the older Cheyenne as the best representative form of government. It had worked well for their ancestors; the present-day Cheyenne still believes that it works well for him.

#### Bands

Writing as early as 1892, Mooney emphatically states that

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<sup>1</sup>The writer rode in the same car with Spotted Wolf, Pine, and Medicine Top from Lame Deer to Billings. Since all their conversation during the 105 miles ride was in Cheyenne, he does not know the import of the meeting.

no possible trace of clans existed among the Cheyenne.<sup>1</sup> To substantiate his statement further, Mooney says, "Mr. Ben Clark who has known and studied the Cheyenne for half a lifetime, states positively that they have no clans." He also offers as evidence the testimony of George Brent, a Cheyenne half blood whom Mooney labels "the best living authority on all that related to his tribe."<sup>2</sup>

Lineage of the Cheyenne was traced through the ten bands that constituted the camp circle. According to Grinnell,<sup>3</sup> the different groups were supposed to be bodies of kindred descendants of a common ancestor. While the Sutaio were considered as one of the ten bands, they were not thought of as being descended from the common ancestor as were the other nine. Perhaps the fact that the Sutaio became allied with the Cheyenne at a late period may explain the difference in their thinking. Grinnell also advances the theory that some bands are much older than others and believes that some of the groups are offshoots of the older ones.

Although differing as to the arrangement of the various bands in the camp circle, Mooney and Grinnell agree closely in their descriptions. Table I shows the lists as given by the two ethnographers.

Grinnell reports that the O-mis'sis received their name from the Southern Cheyenne bands who were critical of the food habits of the group. Seemingly careless about the kind of meat that they ate, the O-mis'sis were reported as late as 1850 to have kept buffalo humps until they began to spoil before they gave a feast. The Northern

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<sup>1</sup>James Mooney, "The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890," op. cit., 956.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 90.

TABLE I  
BAND DIVISIONS OF THE CHEYENNE

| Mooney  | Grinnell *  |
|---|---|
| 1. <u>Hevi-gu-ni-pahis</u> - "Aorta, closed by burning." This group once supposedly used the roasted aorta of the buffalo for a pipe. It was considered one of the most important bands. (Grinnell, Number 1)                                     | 1. <u>Vists'tsi-nih'pah</u> - Closed gullet or windpipe, or closed aorta. The women of this group sit on the ground with their feet to the left; all other women sit with their feet to the right. (Mooney, Number 1) |
| 2. <u>Sutaio</u> - (Grinnell, Number 8)   | 2. <u>Ow'i-ma-nah'</u> - Scabby band. (Mooney, Number 4)  |
| 3. <u>Hev-hait-a'neo</u> - Hair men, fur men. In earliest days they ranged farthest to the southwest and continued to wear fur robes for common dress after trade clothes had been adopted by the other bands. (Grinnell, Number 3)               | 3. <u>Hev'a-tan-iu</u> - "Pelt men, fur men." (Mooney, Number 3)  |
| 4. <u>Oi-vi-mana</u> - Scabby people. An offshoot of Number 3. Originated about 1840 when Chief Blue Horse became infected from having used a mangy buffalo hide for a saddle blanket. (Grinnell, Number 2)                                       | 4. <u>I-ssio-me-tan-iu</u> - Hill people or people on the ridge. This band seemed to prefer to camp on ridges. (Mooney, Number 5)   |
| 5. <u>His'io-me-ta-neo</u> - "Ridge Men." An offshoot of Number 3 and are supposed to be the result of inter-marriage with the Sutaio. (Grinnell, Number 4)   | 5. <u>Wu'ta-piu</u> - Sioux word meaning <u>eaters</u> . (Mooney, Number 6)   |
| 6. <u>Wo-tap-io</u> - Eaters. A small band supposedly of Sioux mixture stemming from Number 3. (Grinnell, Number 5)   | 6. <u>Hof'no-wa</u> - Poor people. (Mooney, Number 8)   |
| 7. <u>Mas-i-kota</u> - Corpse from scaffold. "Perhaps from the same root as "wrinkled" or "drawn up." One of the most important divisions; later, known as <u>Hota-mit'neo</u> , for all of the men joined the Dog Soldiers. (Grinnell, Number 9) | 7. <u>Ohk-to-unna</u> - Lower jaw protruding. (Mooney, Number 9)  |
| 8. <u>How-no-wa</u> - "Poor". Offshoot of Number 7. (Grinnell, Number 6)  | 8. <u>Sutaio</u> - (Mooney, Number 2)   |
| 9. <u>Oq-to-go'na</u> - Prominent lower jaws. Virtually extinct. (Grinnell, Number 7)   | 9. <u>Iah-sih'ko-ta</u> - Lying on side with knees drawn up. (Mooney, Number 7)   |
| 10. <u>C-mis-sis</u> - Eaters. Men were superior hunters and always eating. Largest and most important division of tribe and name used as synonym for Northern Cheyenne. (Grinnell, Number 10)  | 10. <u>O'mis'sis</u> - Eaters. The largest group within the tribe and constitutes the Northern group today. (Mooney, Number 10)   |

Source: James A. Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians, Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, I, 1906. 404-408.

George Bird Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, (Yale: 1923), I, 95-96.

Cheyenne, according to Grinnell, claimed that the name was given to them because of their prowess as hunters. Because their men were active, energetic, and successful hunters, the band always had plenty to eat and were always hospitable to all comers.

In the pre-white days (again drawing upon Grinnell for the source) rule were absolute about the forbiddance of marriage within tribal bands. A woman remained a member of the band to which she was born, and her children were likewise considered members of it. Though known by his own group or band name throughout his lifetime, a man always lived with his wife's group and his position there was just what he made it. Black Kettle, the famous peaceful chieftain killed by Custer's men at the Washita, was a Sutaio but became in time the chief of his wife's group. A reason given to Grinnell by old informants for the matrilocal residence was the fact that the chance always existed that a man might throw away his wife and take a new woman. Hence, the wife and children had to be taken care of by the wife's family. As late as 1902, Grinnell found that among fifty cases interviewed, the men and women belonged to different bands. And that further, each of these people felt that had they married within their own band, they would have considered themselves as being married to relatives. Practically all of them, however, expressed themselves to the effect that this rule did not apply to the Sutaio for among them custom permitted intermarriage.

Bands were an integral part of the life of the pre-reservation Cheyenne.

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Among the Northern Cheyenne today, all memory of band divisions

seems to have disappeared.<sup>1</sup> As concerned as the group is with the perpetuation of the Council of Forty-four, no one appears to remember that once ten bands of Cheyenne existed, and that from each of those ten bands, four chiefs were elected to membership on the Council. Neither do the members today register any indication that the bands had totemic origin. Any attempt to pronounce or to sound the names given by Grinnell or Mooney or to phrase questions to include sufficient detail to bring some recognition result only in confusion as far as the informants are concerned. The Sutaio they know; the Omis-sis are the Northern Cheyenne. That is all. Any question as to intermarriage is met with baffled looks of misunderstanding. Rufus Wallowing,<sup>2</sup> a well-informed tribesman, had no knowledge at all of band divisions except to state that he had heard the Southern Cheyenne referred to as the He-va-tan-ia (Number 3 in both Mooney's and Grinnell's classification.) To Wallowing, the He-va-tan-ia are "cotton men," a name he supposed was attributed to them because "they live in the south." The tabu against marriages among one's own band was as unknown to Wallowing as it had been to the four chiefs. He mentioned that intermarriage between members of the two divisions, the Northern and the Southern, is still quite common. Marriages with other tribes, he added, are "mostly with the Arapaho, some Sioux, and a few Crow."

On the Northern Cheyenne reservation, certain names have been given to the residents of various areas. Table II gives the current designations for various tribal members. From these districts, it will be remembered, the chiefs are elected to the Council of Forty-four in proportion to the population. Other than the convenience of referring to

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<sup>1</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, December 14, 1955.

TABLE II

## AREA NAMES FOR NORTHERN CHEYENNE RESIDENTS

| Grinnell  | John Stands-in-Timber  |
|---|--|
| 1. Scabby Band--Lower Tongue River. Badger, principal man of group, once had a skin disease.        | 1. Scabbies--Birney  |
| 2. Backward or Shy Band--Upper Tongue River. These people prefer to camp alone.                     | 2. Backwoodsies--Ashland   |
| 3. Black Lodges--Lame Deer. They were especially friendly with a band of Crows called Black Lodges. | 3. Black Lodges--Busby   |
| 4. Ree--Rosebud. Several men of this group have Arikara blood.                                      | 4. Ree--Lower Rosebud  |
|   | 5. Agency--Lame Deer<br>(Sometimes referred to as Lame Antelope's people.) |

Source: George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, (New Haven: Yale, 1923), I, 101.

Personal Interview, John Stands-in-Timber, August 27, 1954.

a person as being from a certain area, the names have little meaning. In no sense may they be interpreted as being successors to the bands of other days. Band divisions--among the Northern Cheyenne--are forgotten.

### The Military Societies

Like all Plains Indians, the Cheyenne developed a complex system of soldier organizations or warrior societies. In the literature on the tribe, no definite evidence is given to indicate the age of the societies, although Grinnell<sup>1</sup> states that four of them are ancient and are foreshadowed in the culture-hero stories. Generally, it is assumed that the military societies of the Plains Indians developed after the advent of the horse and reached their full flower following the contact with the white trader. Logically, it can be assumed that more need of the societies arose after the white wars began and bands or tribes became more apprehensive about their movements on the Plains. Table III indicates the military societies of the Cheyenne Indians.

Each of the military societies dressed distinctively, and, as well, had certain characteristics differentiating it. Grinnell gives considerable detail to each group, and the following abstracts describing each one are taken from his work.<sup>2</sup>

1. Fox Soldiers: Members of this group painted themselves black from the neck to the waist. Their arms, down to the elbows, were likewise painted black. When the Fox Soldiers gave dances the celebration lasted four days. The dancers did not go home, but remained at the lodge erected by them and did all of their eating and sleeping there.

Four wooden lances, painted black, constituted their ceremonial objects. Members also always carried with

<sup>1</sup>Geo. B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 101.

<sup>2</sup>Geo. B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, II, op. cit., 48.



TABLE III

## CHEYENNE MILITARY SOCIETIES

| Mooney   | Grinnell   |
|--|--|
| 1. <u>Hata-mito'neo</u> --Dog Men.<br>(Grinnell, Number 3)   | 1. <u>Woh-kseh'het-a-niu</u> --Kit Fox Men;<br>Fox Soldiers. (Mooney, Number 2)              |
| 2. <u>Wok-si-hi-taneo</u> --Fox Men.<br>(Grinnell, Number 1)   | 2. <u>Him'ow-e-yuk'kis</u> --Elk Soldiers<br>or Elk Scrapers. (Mooney, Number 3)             |
| 3. <u>Hi-moi-yo-qis</u> --"Those with<br>headed lances." Also, Coyote<br>Warriors. (Grinnell, Number<br>2) | 3. <u>Hota'mit-a'niu</u> --Dog Men. (Mooney,<br>Number 1)                                    |
| 4. <u>Ma-ho-hi'vas</u> --Red Shield<br>Owners. (Grinnell, Number 4)  | 4. <u>Ma-hohe-was</u> --Red Shields or<br>infrequently, Bull Soldiers.<br>(Mooney, Number 4) |
| 5. <u>Hi-ma-ta-no'his</u> --Those with<br>Bow Strings. (Grinnell,<br>Number 6)                             | 5. <u>Hot-ami-massay</u> --Crazy Dogs.<br>(Mooney, Number 6)                                 |
| 6. <u>Hc-tam-im-a-saw</u> --"Foolish<br>Dogs." (Grinnell, Number 5)  | 6. <u>Him-a-tano-his</u> --Strings. Some-<br>times Bow Strings. (Mooney,<br>Number 5)        |
|  | 7. <u>Wi-hu-nut-kiu</u> --Chief Soldiers.<br>(Not listed by Mooney)                          |

## Sources:

James A. Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians," *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, I, 1907. 413.

George Bird Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, (New Haven: Yale, 1923), II, 48.

them the skin of the kit fox.

2. Elk Horn Scrapers: These men were frequently called Blue Soldiers in later years because they all dressed in old army uniforms. This probably occurred after the group had been stationed at Fort Kearny.

Two crooked lances (with one end shaped like a shepherd's crook) and two straight lances all wrapped in otter skins were carried by the bravest men.

As a group, the Elk Horn Scrapers revered thunder.

3. Dog Soldiers: Many members of this group were half-breed Sioux and thus are referred to in some of the literature as "Cheyenne-Sioux." They wore bonnets of raven feathers (but no tails) and carried a dog-rope with them into battle.

In membership, the Dog Soldiers came from any of the ten bands, so the members could marry among themselves. The society also seems to have been under more discipline than were any of the other groups and usually kept by themselves. They were also more inclined to fight and were especially noted for the intensity of their hatred for the whites. Because they were well known by the white traders and military, the legend arose that the Cheyenne received their name from the French word for dog, chien. Likewise, the military prowess of this group gave rise to the idea that military soldiers of all Plains Indians were called "dog soldiers."

4. Red Shields: Membership in this particular society usually consisted of older men. Unlike the others, wherein men could change their affiliation if they so desired, one always remained a member of the Red Shields.

Their ceremonial objects consisted of two special straight lances and red shields which every member carried. They were the only organization to carry a shield peculiar to its group.

In dancing, the members wore hats or bonnets made from the skin of the heads of buffalo bulls, and the dancers imitated bulls by grunting and butting one another.

5. Crazy Dogs: The members of this band wore short buffalo robes both above and below the waist cut into strings about two feet long while all the members carried rawhide rattles.

About ten special straight lances wound with red cloth constituted their ceremonial objects.

When the group started dancing, they were obliged to go forward in whatever direction they might be headed. Occasionally, the direction might lead them into water. To prevent damage to them, their director usually rode a horse while the society was dancing.

Mooney states that the "Foolish Dogs" were usually younger or apprentice warriors, but no other reference exists to indicate that the Cheyenne had anything resembling age-grade societies.

6. Bow Strings: Owl Friend, who understood the howling of the wolves, established this society wherein the members dressed in the skins of animals. Mooney believed that it was one of the newer ones of the groups and that possibly it had been adopted from the Mandan.
7. Chief Soldiers: Only Grinnell lists this one and states that it was composed of the Council of Forty-four.

The Military societies were voluntary associations whose membership was open to all of the men of the tribe. A boy from thirteen to sixteen usually elected to join the society of his father, but he had the privilege of affiliating with any one of the six groups. Once a member of that group, the individual could not belong to any other one at the same time, although he was free to resign from his society if he decided to become a member of another group. A keen spirit of rivalry prevailed among the various groups with the Kit Fox soldiers always maintaining their superiority.

Each of the societies had its own officers,<sup>1</sup> two headmen and two servants. The two servants were called upon to carry messages between their society and the Council of Forty-four and ranked next to the head-chiefs in status. Leaders of the societies were chosen to die. If, by chance, the leaders lived, they retired from office by the time they reached the age of fifty. When a chief died in battle, his successor was chosen by the entire membership. If, however, he were elected to

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<sup>1</sup>Llewellyn and Hoebel, op. cit., 102.

the Council of Forty-four, he had to resign his chieftainship in his own military society.

The societies were the organized military force of the tribe. They enforced the orders of the chiefs, notified the various bands about the times set for such ceremonies as the Medicine Lodge (which they took turns in building) and the Renewal of the Arrows. Chiefs of the military societies were frequently consulted by the Council of Forty-four on matters pertinent to peace or to war. One of their most significant duties, however, was that of the assumption of police functions.

The societies were overseers, with police powers to enforce their direction. Theirs was the job to see that the camp moved promptly, to lead the marching column, to supervise the tearing down of lodges preparatory to moving, and to direct the buffalo hunts.<sup>2</sup> If the orders were given not to advance on the buffalo, the soldiers had the right to discipline anyone who might not obey. Such punishment could consist of ripping the tipis of the offending persons, killing their horses, or destroying their property.<sup>3</sup> If the person were innocent of a premature shot at a buffalo, he had the right to rush out while he held his hands up in protest. The soldiers then would conduct a search of his tipi. If he were guilty, however, he made no move but sat and watched the soldiers destroy his property. The power of the military men was absolute in such instances, and marks one of the few if not the only instance when the highly individualistic Dionysian Cheyenne submitted to the will of the group.

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<sup>1</sup>Llewellyn and Hoebel, *op. cit.*, 102.

<sup>2</sup>George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, II, *op. cit.*, 53-54.

<sup>3</sup>E. A. Hoebel, "Associations and the State in the Plains," *American Anthropologist*, n.s. XXXVIII, 1936, 434-435.

Each society included four young women as members. These girls--virgins, usually good looking, and always members of the best families--were called nut-uh-kea, female soldiers. They devoted themselves to the position in somewhat the same spirit as a nun does to the Church although they were not compelled to retain the position. They were regarded as sisters by the men of the society and were accorded every possible vestige of respect.

One other society might be mentioned, for it is occasionally confused with the military societies. Termed the Contraries, this group was not a band nor a guild nor a society; rather it was composed of individuals who were bound by certain beliefs. Usually, a few men of the tribe and those who especially feared thunder, carried a peculiar lance which was the special property of the Thunder. The spiritual power of the lance was very great. Usually, it was adorned with mysterious symbols of vital importance. The Northern Cheyenne Contraries used a stuffed tanager's head to adorn their lances.

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Today on the Northern Cheyenne reservation, three warrior societies exist. Known as "lodges" these three are the Elk Scrapers, the Foxes, and the Crazy Dogs.<sup>1</sup> The other three are in existence among the Southern Cheyenne. At all special ceremonies, the members dress as much as they can as the original members did; and, currently, they are making an effort to reproduce the outfits, including the lances. The All-American Indian Days celebration in Sheridan, Wyoming, is providing an incentive for the "people to bring back the old costumes and the old times.

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<sup>1</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Since the beginning of that affair--1953--much interest has developed among the Northern Cheyenne, and the soldier societies or lodges are developing a sense of rivalry as to which one may have the largest array of authentic clothes represented.

Each society now has twelve leaders and one main chief who cannot be a member of the Council of Forty-four but who can serve as an advisor. At present, each male over fifteen is a member of one of the three lodges. Generally, he belongs to the one his father or grandfather does. Also, since no initiation rites accompany membership, a boy automatically becomes a member when he reaches the age of fifteen.<sup>1</sup> That, at least was Dallas Littlehead's experience, for he is a member of the Elk Scrapers' lodge, more commonly referred to as the "Elks."

No evidence of police power is now found to exist among the various lodges. Rather, the duties of the chiefs now lie in their exhortation and advice given at meetings held about once a year. Such an assemblage is a general meeting for all of the members where the leaders "talk to the people and tell them about good manners and advise them not to get into trouble."<sup>2</sup> As nearly as the older men can recall, 1900 was the last year when the members were called out to exert their police powers. At that time, their agent, Clifford, was encountering difficulty with various Indians who were killing cattle belonging to white homesteaders. The members all went out and shot the horses of the persons who had been killing the cattle and by such action brought the cattle stealing to an end. One other function of the lodges of today relates to the Medicine Lodge, or as it is popularly known, the Sun Dance.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Dallas Littlehead, December 15, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>3</sup>Personal Interview, Dallas Littlehead, December 13, 1955.

The various lodges meet shortly before Sun Dance time, and the members discuss the details relative to the dance. Theirs is the decision that governs such things as the cutting of the sacred tree, the erection of the Sacred Lodge, the charging of the camp, and the selection of the drummers. In 1955, the Elks had supervision over the Sun Dance; in 1954, the Foxes were in charge.

Each warrior society counts four girls as special members of its organization. Currently, these girls--called princesses--are picked by the leaders of the lodge and are considered as sisters of the men. Today, they cannot marry without the consent of the lodge members. If one did, she would be disgraced before her people for disregarding the law.

Only two Contraries are left, Fred Last Bull and William Medicine Bull. These men still do everything the opposite way and engage in various ceremonies in order that they may be cured of their fear of thunder. Also, they act as clowns. For instance, at a horse race held at Birney, the Contraries bet all of their belongings--blankets and valuable trinkets--on a horse that did not appear too promising to the other spectators. Their favored horse came in last, far behind the others, but the Contraries were happy. They threw all of their belongings up in the air, waved their arms, and shouted merrily. Their horse had won!<sup>1</sup> Another time, at the annual Sun Dance, a sudden rain-storm came up and everyone ran for shelter. Not so with the Contraries. They stood in the rain and laughed heartily at the others for running. One of the members had an umbrella which he opened, but he held it on

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<sup>1</sup>Group Interview, December 15, 1955.

the opposite side of him from which the rain was coming. John Stands-in-Timber recalls<sup>1</sup> how once he was hauling lumber with a group of men that included a Contrary. At one point, the men had to dismount from the load in order that the team could pull the lumber wagon across a wet spot. All of the men jumped over the water save the Contrary, who despite his beaded moccasins, jumped into the water and laughed at the others for being so particular.

### Women's Societies

Unique among the Plains Indians were the various technological guilds that existed among the Cheyenne women. Mooney called them "distinct unions,"<sup>2</sup> and stated that these guilds had absolute control of all higher technology and decorative art of the tribe. Distinct organizations existed for teaching, cutting, fitting of garments; for each class of tipi decoration, for robe and curtain making, and for quill and bead designs; for parfleche decorations, as well as the more specialized moccasin and dress patterns. Grinnell describes these societies<sup>3</sup> as being very important, but not as intimate and close as those of the men. His interrogation revealed that those dealing with ceremonial decoration were the most important ones and included the best women quillers in the camp.

Each guild had a leader, a woman recognized as an expert in her art--and a woman of good temper and high repute as well. To gain admission into the society, a woman might make a vow to embellish a robe

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>James Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians," op. cit., 415.

<sup>3</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 159-60.



or to do something for some outstanding personage of the tribe. She would then realize that her ambition would mean a costly outlay of presents and feasts to the members of the guild to which she sought membership. Once admitted, the initiate learned every detail of the art, all of the technical terms, and all of the hidden symbolism of the design or of the nomenclature. When she had become sufficiently proficient to satisfy the exacting requirements of the leader, the girl was admitted into membership through special ceremonials and rituals that had been handed down from mythical times. In fact, Mooney<sup>1</sup> states that all meetings began with ceremonial prayers and elaborate rituals. Writing<sup>2</sup> about the ritualism associated with the tipi, Campbell stated:

The Cheyenne tipi is especially interesting, not only because the known conservatism of this tribe, but because Cheyenne tipi-making is an art controlled and perpetuated by these guilds and the constant association of the tipi with rituals...have prevented important change, whether of structure or decoration, until the present day.

Some women joined more than one guild. If a woman were really ambitious and capable, she could join as many of the organizations as she desired. Mooney expressed the idea<sup>3</sup> that women did not belong to very many of the guilds because of the heavy initiation fee charged.

Women who had been at war formed a society and held meetings at which no other woman or man was allowed to be present. Only a full-fledged participant was allowed to membership.<sup>4</sup> Were a band attached while encamped and the women forced to assist their husbands in protecting their property, such activity did not constitute eligibility for

<sup>1</sup>James Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians," *op. cit.*, 416.

<sup>2</sup>Stanley Campbell, "The Cheyenne Tipi," *American Anthropologist*, n.x. XVIII, 1915, 685.

<sup>3</sup>James Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians," *op. cit.*, 416.

<sup>4</sup>George B. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyenne*, (New York: Scribners, 1915).

membership in the exclusive society of female warriors. That privilege was bestowed only upon women who accompanied the men and participated in battle. The sister of Chief Comes-In-Sight saved his life at the Battle of the Rosebud by riding down and firing on the soldiers at the time of Crook's attack, June 17, 1876. Grinnell, giving a graphic account of the charge of this woman, relates<sup>1</sup> how she later became the wife of Black Coyote, a leader of one band of the Northern Cheyenne. He also tells the story of Yellow-Head Woman, a daughter of Stands-In-Timber, who took a prominent part in an important battle between the Cheyenne and the Shoshoni in 1868 and who lived until 1915.

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Today, women's societies linger only in the memories of the older residents.<sup>2</sup> The only remnant that might possibly be associated with them are the designs of the past. The beadworkers still use the original patterns, but the regular societies are forgotten. The last one to exist, and memories<sup>3</sup> cannot agree how long ago that one ceased to function, was that of tipi making. That ceremonial rites existed in order that membership could be attained is remembered. That is all.

Of the existence of women's warrior societies, the men recall clearer.<sup>4</sup> They especially remember the story of the time when the Cheyenne were camped along the North Platte river and the accusation against them that they had wrecked a Union Pacific freight train. The Army engaged Pawnee scouts to fight the Cheyenne. In a hard-fought encounter,

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Fighting Cheyenne, (New York: Scribners, 1915).

<sup>2</sup>Rufus Wallowing, Personal Interview, December 14, 1955.

<sup>3</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

a Cheyenne woman was captured by the Pawnee and given to a young boy to take back to the main body of the Pawnee. Once out of sight of the soldiers and the scouts, the Cheyenne woman suddenly gave a war whoop and whipped her horse which became frightened and jerked its rein out of the Pawnee boy's hands, for he was leading the horse upon which the captive woman was riding. She grabbed the reins, whipped her horse, and escaped her captor to return safely to camp. At the war dances in later years, she was like a man for she could pantomime and re-enact her experience. All four men at the interview saw her do it many times. She was Mrs. White Frog whose death occurred not many years ago--the exact date the men could not tell.

In World War II, two Northern Cheyenne girls enlisted in the Wacs, and considerable rejoicing was expressed on the reservation over the actions of these girls. Their parents were especially proud of their daughters, for these girls had manifested their true love for their brothers. That was the way it used to be--a girl went into war because she loved her brothers or her fiance.

The only organization open to women on the Northern Cheyenne reservation today is the War Mothers. One exists in each district but all of them have been organized since the Korean War.<sup>1</sup> When the boys return from service, the mothers have quite an elaborate ceremony honoring them. The old Victory Dance is given according to the Cheyenne custom of honoring their returning warriors. Gifts are also given them. The War Mothers, sponsor a series of bingo games to raise money to be spent on the Victory dances.

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Rufus Wallowing, December 14, 1955.

Other than the Society of War Mothers, the Cheyenne women have no activity outside the home. A group of them go to the Mennonite mission and sew one day a week, but it can scarcely be classified as social.<sup>1</sup> A few of the women belong to the Altar Society of the Roman Catholic Church, but again their activities are limited to raising funds for the Church.

So the Northern Cheyenne live their quiet lives, their human relations ordered by two codes--institutions from the by-gone days and adaptations of ideas borrowed from their association with the white men. They remember the past; they try to keep it fresh in the memories of themselves and to perpetuate it in the lives of their children. Although their Council of Forty-four has been succeeded by the governmentally-sanctioned Tribal Council, deference is paid to the older group and its structure still lives. Bands are forgotten, but military societies live, not to function as in the old days, but still alive. Women's societies are gone--almost forgotten. But of the political structure of the past, remnants still linger.

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<sup>1</sup> Personal Interview, W. R. Hopperstad, Social Worker, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northern Cheyenne Agency, December 16, 1955.

## CHAPTER V

### SOCIAL RELATIONS--PAST AND PRESENT

Babies are born. Children grow and learn the mores of their culture. Men and women court and marry. Death comes. As it was with all peoples, so it was with the Cheyenne. They developed their attitudes and set their standards about life and human relationships. And these beliefs continued, just as life continued, whether the Cheyenne were a sedentary farmer along the Missouri River, a fierce buffalo-hunting nomad on the Great Plains, or a ward of the government on the reservation. For each stage of the life cycle, the Cheyenne had a definite set of attitudes and beliefs. Peculiar to him were his convictions about murder within the tribe and about the chastity of their women. The old-time Cheyenne's social relations were ordered.

#### Conception, Pregnancy and Birth

Nothing in the literature of the Cheyenne indicates that the actual circumstances surrounding the birth of a child differed much from that of other Plains Indians. Women assisted the mother at the birth; a few tabus surrounded the father at the time of the birth of his child; the mother resumed her activity promptly after the delivery of the child. What does distinguish the Cheyenne is the spacing of births within a family.

"It was long the custom that a woman should not have a second child until her first child was about ten years of age," wrote Grinnell.<sup>1</sup> Then, when the mother became pregnant the second time, the father would make a public announcement and would give away a horse. "The people talked about it and praised the parents' self control."

It appears, however, that such action was not compulsory, for some parents had many children. Contraceptives were not used, and abortion was considered as murder. Apparently, a rigid sex abstinence was practiced the the abstinence was fortified by a holy vow. Llewellyn and Hoebel point out that the vow was "the crux of the practice.... Abstinence took on the character of a great sacrifice to Maiyun, comparable in every respect to fasting in the Sun Dance or staking one's self on the hill top."<sup>2</sup> These same investigators point out that closely allied with the religious vow was another--a promise of free development of the first child for five to ten years. Therefore, because of the sacred vows made to Maiyun and to the future of the child, the Cheyenne believed that death to the child would occur were the parents to have intercourse. That some of them did not have sex relations is indicated again by Llewellyn and Hoebel:<sup>3</sup>

One Cheyenne, in whom we repose the utmost confidence, declares that after the birth of his first child he lived fifteen years in perfect harmony with his wife without any sex relations and without strain. This man is one who greatly esteemed his position in the tribe. Persons who were lacking in the will to carry through were supposed not to make such vows. The revenge of the supernatural was there for those of that kind who did try it.

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 149.

<sup>2</sup>Llewellyn and Hoebel, op. cit., 262.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 263-264.

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A long time ago, women used to have babies just as fast as it was possible for them to come. Sweet Medicine warned them not to allow babies to come too fast. From then on, women did not have their babies so fast, and that led to the belief that there should be a spacing between births. The old time spacing has not been done for a long time now. So, at least, is the opinion of the four chiefs.<sup>1</sup> According to them, babies are born about a year apart now. The old men all agreed that the first baby should be able to walk before the next one is born. "It's easier on the mother that way," was their explanation. In reply to a direct question about the effect of the Roman Catholic Church upon birth control, the old men all denied any relationship.

#### Naming

Sometime during the first year of his life the baby Cheyenne was given a pet name. Usually that name was one of endearment or one descriptive of some physical characteristic that the relatives fancied they saw in him. For example, Grinnell<sup>2</sup> uses mok'so-is or "pot belly." The name was not given in ridicule but sprung from fondness and love. When the child became six or seven years old, he received a more formal name. Usually that name was a good one given to the child in memory of some one of his father's relatives who had excelled himself in war. If the person were alive, he would present a horse to the child in honor of having a namesake. If he had been killed in battle or was dead, then

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<sup>1</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 107

some member of his family would make the presentation. Naming a child for some relative indicated prestige and honor for the individual whose name had been chosen.

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Today, babies are given but one name. That name, because of civil and Christian requirements, must become the sole and legal name that the individual bears. Secretly, however, each child is given an Indian name. In either case, it is quite common practice now to name a child for some cousin. A certain amount of ceremony still is attendant to the naming of the child, and the person whose name is used responds by giving a present to the child and by having a party for the relatives.<sup>1</sup>

Names and the insistence upon the dual system of naming have been confusing to the Cheyenne. Until 1890, the Cheyenne had but one name--that which had been given them by their parents or one which they had chosen later. From 1890 on, they had to choose a family name and add to it a personal name. Then, in some instances their names were rejected by missionaries as being improper or misleading. As a result, One Spirit's name became Monothy (from the Greek mono, thea spirit).<sup>2</sup> Another instance of confusion as a result of naming occurred in the family who had been known as Mexican Cheyenne. These were individuals from the Southern group who had intermarried with Mexicans and who, once they arrived on the Northern Cheyenne reservation, were simply and descriptively known as "Mexican Cheyenne." The missionaries changed their name to

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<sup>1</sup>Grup Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, Albert Monothy, September 12, 1954. Apparently, the translation did not matter in that the semantic difference would be unobserved by the Cheyenne!



King.<sup>1</sup> Such practices are not looked upon favorably by the majority of the Cheyenne.

### Education

Education for the young Cheyenne began during the first year of his life. He was taught to keep quiet, to practice self control and to be self effacing in the presence of elders, according to Grinnell.<sup>2</sup> Boys learned to ride as soon as they were able to walk and soon thereafter, they learned to swim. Girls practiced much the same skills. In addition, the children imitated the regular family life and were inculcated constantly by teaching of moral values held significant to the tribe.

These teachings consisted of advice and counsel. The child was told to do certain things because the act would be an advantage to him in later life. He was to pursue a certain course, he was told, because it would benefit him. Likewise, his pride and his ambition were appealed to. The examples of worthy men in the tribe were pointed to as being significant ones for the child to emulate. He learned that the respect of his fellow men was the most significant goal to achieve and that the contempt of his fellow tribesmen was a dreaded thing to avoid. Since he lived in a public group constantly, he was made to realize that he was always under the eyes of the other people and that most of the things he would do would be known to others. Therefore, for him to achieve his goal of praise from his fellows, he was thoroughly indoctrinated with the

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Edward King, September 13, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, op. cit., I, 108.

fact that public opinion was the promised reward for his good behavior. Along with the promise of being singled out and praised for conforming to the pattern established as being "good" was the threat of punishment if he misbehaved or brought "shame" upon his parents.

The social pressure stemming from the intimate relationships he displayed was the significant factor in his training. As Grinnell<sup>1</sup> points out, the Cheyenne child was taught no abstract principles of right and wrong. No hope of heaven was extended to him through his glorious principles of righteousness; no fear of hell was expounded to him. He was a tribesman, a young Cheyenne, and his actions must conform to that of the family, the lineage, the band, and the tribe.

When the boy became about twelve years old, some grandfather of the tribe began to talk to him and to advise him how to live. The advice given him at this time included precepts governing his manners and actions. For instance, if older people talked to him, he must listen to them and do as they told him or advised him to do. He also learned that obedience was a virtue he must strive to attain. Early every morning he must get up and go into the hills looking for the horses. "The sun should never find you in bed,"<sup>2</sup> became his motto, for at twelve, looking after the horses became the special charge of the boys. It was their duty never to lose them, nor--if they were picketed--to allow them to be without water. If some other boy in camp were sick and could not attend to his duties with the horses, it befell the other boys to do the chores that had to be done--and these duties must be accomplished without having to be told or reminded. Or, if someone needed a horse during the day, and directed the youngster to get it, the boy must start at once. All these things he must do willingly and gladly. And, by the same

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 117.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 117-118.

token, he must not do anything "bad" in camp nor quarrel with any of his fellows.

When he became a little older, the boy learned that his first duty was to hunt and to support his mother and his sisters. Sometime during his thirteenth or fourteenth year, he went on his first buffalo hunt, but before then he had been carefully instructed in the theory of buffalo hunting. He had been told how and where to ride, how he must conform to the wishes of the military society supervising the hunt, what would happen to him if he disobeyed the orders of the military chiefs, and, as well, where was the most vulnerable spot to aim in shooting the buffalo. Long before his first hunt, he had been bringing in small game, especially rabbits, that he had shot with his bow and arrow. Thus, he had received instruction in the care of his arms even before he had shot a buffalo. Now, the significance of making the bow, as well as caring for it, was explained to him. Therefore, by the time the boy was fifteen, he was versed in the arts of his people and ready for a vision quest for a guardian spirit to protect him in times of war and stress.

Similarly, the girls were well instructed, usually by a grandmother, or aunt, or mother of the individual. Like her brother, the girl learned the mores of the Cheyenne and discovered the potency of social pressures. Besides the moral values deemed important, she learned about the food supply and food preparation. Accompanying the women, she found out what plants were edible as well as how they were secured. At berry-picking time, she helped fill her mother's basket, and, as well, assisted in all the arts of preservation. Hides of the rabbits her brother had killed were given her that she might practice

tanning them. All this was done, partly in fun but mainly by example, that she would learn how food was secured and made palatable for the family.

At her first menstruation, the girl was isolated from her family. When she again became a part of the family unit, she found herself in a new position because now she was considered as a potential mother of a Cheyenne, so her status in the tribe had risen. At the same time, she found herself receiving endless lectures from her mother or aunt or grandmother about how she must now conduct herself. Chastity was drilled into her constantly by the women of the camp, and she soon learned that her freedom with boys, even her brothers, must be restricted because from now on she must always be respected by them.

To insure the respect, the girl began wearing the protective rope that continued part of her attire until her marriage. The rope, she was taught, must always be a part of her clothing. Grinnell describes<sup>1</sup> the device as being "...a small rope or line which passes about the waist, is knotted in front, passes down and backward between the thighs, and each branch is wound around the thigh down nearly to the knee." Not only did this rope give complete physical protection to a woman, but the girls were instructed that its presence insured freedom from being molested by men or boys. All men, despite their age, respected the belt. If at any time, anyone should violate it, it was the girl's duty to report it to her elders, even though it would mean death to the offender by the male relatives of the girl. The protective rope--or as it is frequently called, the chastity belt--became then a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 123.

symbol to the girl. Wearing it she was inviolate.

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"The Indian way was better," say the old men.<sup>1</sup> "The man taught his son and the woman taught her daughter. Besides that, there were the grandfathers. They were just like professors nowadays." In the old days, a child's education began at the age of five (the best time for one to start his education according to the chiefs), and he was taught the manners and morals that are important. He was told how to talk to visitors, how to walk over and invite a visitor to sit down, how to talk to young children nicely, how to pick them up and play with them. "You stroke a puppy and the mother dog wags her tail. She's glad. It's that way with a woman. She is glad when you talk to her little boy or girl."<sup>2</sup> The child also learned how to act if a visitor came in when the family was eating. He knew that he was expected to get a plate and offer it to the stranger and then to see that the stranger's plate was filled at all times. In doing all of these things, he learned how he might become well respected and well remembered by the people.

Furthermore, the child had as his model men in the community who were ideals for the young people. Such men are still singled out and pointed to by the elders of the Northern Cheyenne as examples for the younger generation. In the words of the old chiefs, the qualities of a good man are: "One who has not been in trouble, who doesn't drink, who has good sense, who has not been in court, who talks good and is kind to his relatives."

Schools on the reservation changed many of the habits of the

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<sup>1</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, John Stands-in-Timber, December 15, 1955.

people and have directed them from the "right way of living." When the Cheyenne were told that they must send their children to school, where they would become educated, the people heartily agreed. Education to them meant morals and manners. So, the youngsters went to school--and are still going--but what has happened? They return to their homes with few of the virtues of morality respected by the Cheyenne and none of the manners that are significant. Girls are impudent and chase the boys; the boys are not interested in learning what is "the right way to live," and all of them make fun of old-time Indian ways.

Too much reliance was placed upon the white school teachers who have not done the job that they should have. In the early days, especially, these teachers were all white people who acted as if "they were way up there," and appeared too good to teach Indians. They told the Cheyenne youngsters that nothing was good in their lives and they would have to change and be like white people. It has not worked well for the young Cheyenne because now he is getting no education any place.

Discipline is another matter that has fallen into disrepute since the schools came into existence. Whipping was the common method of punishment in the old days; Indian laws were severe and were respected. The schools changed all that, and now people do not pay any attention to any laws. In the homes, however, some attempt is still being made to discipline the child. In the old times, the threat of telling a little boy that his bad actions would have to be reported to an uncle was the most effective way in getting him to change his way. So was it with a little girl if she were told that her aunt would have to be informed about her naughtiness. Sometimes when the information was relayed to the uncle he would take the little boy down to the creek and

push the child's head into the water. That is still done occasionally and provides an effective cure for the child. Likewise, an aunt would wrap a blanket around the head of the little niece and would keep it there for some time. Once released, the child would promise her aunt that the actions would not be repeated. Such procedures work, even now, especially with pre-school children, but once the child comes under the influence of the white teacher, no remedy seems effective.

### Courtship and Marriage

"Whenever you find a woman that you love," a father would say to his son, "give her horses and marry her. Then, you'll be married in the right way. Whenever a man runs off with a woman, both are talked about and that is bad for both of you."

"When you see some man you like," a mother told her daughter, "you must not be foolish and run off with him. You must marry him decently. If you do so, you will become a good woman and will be a help to your brothers and your cousins."<sup>1</sup>

A Cheyenne boy, once he found a girl whom he loved, expected to court her for at least one year, although that year might extend into five. Although he might have known the girl all of his life, his overtures to her were never made directly. When the time came for him to show his interest, such occasion usually arose at a dance. According to Cheyenne custom, boys kept their faces covered while the women entered the dance tipi. Only the eyes of the young men were uncovered. During the preliminaries attendant to every dance, the young man watched the young lady whom he fancied for his future wife. If, during these times

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 12-121.

the young woman whom whom he had been watching returned his glances, he knew then that she, too, was interested in him.<sup>1</sup> Although both of them were embarrassed, this recognition was the first public assurance either of them had that a mutual interest had been aroused.

Very soon after the dance, within a matter of a few days at least, the young man would dress in all of his best clothes and would post himself in a conspicuous position somewhere near the girl's home lodge. Normally, he would stand there for hours, his blanket thrown over his head, speaking to no one. His position would also be a conspicuous one to the entire encampment. Finally, when the girl left the tipi (provided she was interested in him) she would find some excuse to walk past him. Once past, the boy then would throw his blanket back and run to catch up with her. Her favorable reaction would be to allow him to talk to her. Sometimes the two would stand and talk for hours, but always this conversation had to take place in a public place.

Following the conversation, the boy told his mother, or aunt, or grandmother, who in turn would go to interview the girl's mother or her closest female relative. Each of the women would discuss the fine qualities of her own child and finally would reach an agreement about the number of horses required to be given to the girl's parents.

Once the parental authority had been given, the matter became the public property of the tribe. Referral to the tribe seemed necessary so that all blood relationships could be checked. When the camp unit approved the matter went to the band where the same scrutiny was given

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<sup>1</sup>J. H. Segar, "Cheyenne Marriage Customs," Journal of American Folklore, XI, 1898, 298-301.



to the ancestry of both individuals. Once satisfied that no relationship existed, the band then gave its approval to the engagement. The affair then returned to the families for further consideration of horses.

Although the number of ponies had been discussed by the mothers of the couple at an early state of the romance, the engagement was not considered complete until the actual horses were delivered. The mother of the boy would arise rather early of the day appointed for the delivery of the horses, and would send one of her younger sons or some neighbor boy for the ones she had designated. And when the horses were in camp, she would comb their manes and tails and prepare them for the delivery to her prospective daughter-in-law's lodge. Satisfied that the horses were looking their best, she would lead them to the girl's camp and tie them as close as she could to the lodge. Not always did the girl's mother accept the ponies--they might be too scrawny and thin--thus an insult to her daughter; they might be a lesser number than had previously been agreed upon; or else--the girl might have changed her mind. Also, if the girl's mother accepted the tethered ponies too quickly, the people in the camp might think that the girl was too eager or the family too willing. Consequently, it was usually late afternoon before the mother of the girl would emerge from her tipi and move the horses over to her lodge and tie them to her tipi. If by chance the horses were still standing in the place the boy's mother had left them by the time the sun went down, then the boy knew that his suit had failed.<sup>1</sup>

Once the engagement was legal, the period of waiting began. The two never talked alone unless they were surrounded by other people or were in a conspicuous position in camp. The boy seldom made any

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 299.

overture to the girl directly; even gifts to her were given to her father or her brother. Likewise, while she might make mocassins, leggings, or robes for him, she would give them to his mother or sister.<sup>1</sup>

When the suitable time had elapsed and the families were satisfied with the conduct of the prospective bride and bridegroom, the boy went to the lodge of his fiancée and lay down near the entrance. Lying there curled up somewhat in the fashion of a dog, he would be soon noticed by some member of the family who in turn would notify the girl's mother.<sup>2</sup> The young man remained in the same position, apparently never looking at any movement of people going in or out of the tipi, until the girl's mother and other members of the family left the lodge. Satisfied that all of the family had left--and the departure of the mother usually signified that all of them were gone--he arose and went into the tipi. From that time on to all intents and purposes he was married, even though he might not have remained the night with the girl.

Upon his final acceptance by the family, the young man invited all of his young men friends to a feast prepared by his mother. The feast, while never a raucous one, was one of merriment and fun; but beyond the mere social aspect of it was his announcement that he was bidding farewell to his associates, and from then forward he would be found only beside his wife unless hunting or warfare took him forth.

Occasionally some unforeseen action changed the accepted method of courtship. For instance, if a young man were killed in battle, and one of his friends took special care of the body, an unmarried sister or female cousin of the deceased would be given to the boy who had shown

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 142.

<sup>2</sup>J. H. Segar, op. cit., 199.

consideration for the body of his friend. Such marriage did not necessitate the payment of horses because the boy had already demonstrated his character, so marriages in such instances were usually consummated within a month or two.

Following the marriage and the removal of the young man to the girl's lodge, the bride wore her protective string from ten to fifteen days. During that time, the husband respected the string just as seriously as he had done before. That waiting period after marriage was good, according to Grinnell's informants<sup>1</sup> who said, "The custom has the advantage of enabling the newly-married people to get used to each other and to sleeping together." Some of the men also told Grinnell that they used to lie awake all night, during these first weeks, talking to their newly-married wives. Seldom, if ever, did the waiting period extend beyond the fifteen-day limit.

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"A girl used to be strictly chaperoned. She slept beside her mother and behaved herself." An intensive conversation followed among the old chiefs as they apparently recalled the virtues that are lost. "Girls never walked around in twos or threes like they do now. And they didn't chase the boys, either. The days have come now when the girls disregard their parents' advice."

Engagements covered a long time in the old days, and every one of them had to be approved by the parents. A mother told her daughter what boy she should marry and the basis upon which parents objected or agreed to the marriage of their child seemed to rest upon

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 142.

the judgment, "if the parents were good people." The mother had more power than the father in deciding who was the better person for the child to marry, but that is lost today. Sometimes, the father's sister--the paternal aunt--would be the one who would give the consent. At still other times, the girl's brothers decided, and it would be they who would accept the horses. Like most everything else that was good, this practice too is lost.

Today, there is no time for betrothal or for long engagements. Most of the young people decide for themselves whom they wish to marry and sometimes run off to Forsyth or Miles City and get married by a justice of the peace without as much as telling the parents about it. Some of the couples do tell their parents, and then the marriages are solemnized in either the Roman Catholic Church or in the Mennonite Mission.

In the old days, the young couple always moved in with the girl's parents. Now, there is hardly room for that because the houses are so small. While some of them have to prepare a home before they are married, others just get married without thinking about what they are going to do or where they will live. As a result, they just move in to anyone's home where they can find room. Unfortunately, too many of the young fellows today do just that--they are the ones who have "nothing but boots and socks."<sup>1</sup>

Families quarrel considerably about money today.<sup>2</sup> When a man has several children and cannot support them, the wife frequently throws him out of the house, for then she can draw support from Aid to Dependent

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, John Stands-in-Timber, December 15, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, W. R. Hopperstad, December 16, 1955.

Children (well known on every Indian reservation in Montana as ADC). This income gives her some sense of security and is drawn in her name. Relief checks are likewise all made out in favor of the wife, for experience has shown that if the man gets the money, he will likely spend it all on himself.

Many women do not want their husbands to leave the reservation and find employment elsewhere because there is always the chance that they will not send the money home. And, once the man is gainfully employed, the wife cannot draw relief money. Sometimes arrangements are made in advance so that the family will be protected financially when the husband is employed off the reservation. For example, several men from the Northern Cheyenne reservation work with the United States Forest Service during the summer months. When the men are employed, arrangements are made with their supervisors so that all money due each individual will be held until the man returns to the reservation. The opportunity, then, for the wife to share in the earnings is greatly enhanced. Generalizing upon the subject, Hopperstad, social worker for the Northern Cheyenne, says that the frequent breakdown in marriages today may be attributed to money matters.

Although the Tribal Council has outlawed Indian marriages and maintain that all couples must be married by law, marriages according to the Indian pattern still goes on--although it is but an adaptation of the older one. Without any preceding ceremonies or announcements, a goodly number of young people, especially the ex-G. I's, are practicing it. A fellow merely starts living with a girl and occasionally marries her by law. Hopperstad estimates that one out of every five children on the reservation today is illegitimate in the strictly legal sense of the

word.

### Polygyny

Polygyny seemingly did not appeal to the Cheyenne. They adopted it more as a matter of expediency after the advent of the white trader. Plural marriage meant more robes for a man to market, and, when buffalo robes came into demand, a man found himself with more hides to have tanned than one woman could adequately do. The Cheyenne adopted the custom of plural marriage late in their buffalo-hunting time, but very few instances are recorded where a man ever had more than two wives. Grinnell<sup>1</sup> sites the case of Crooked Neck with his five wives but who gave three of them away when he became a member of the Council of Forty-four. Younger sisters were potential wives of an older sister's husband, but they were not always married to him.

Wooden Legs gave a poignant picture of what happened to elderly Cheyenne when the order came from Washington that all plural marriages had to be dissolved and the man had to take his choice of wives. Wooden Legs himself had two wives and, because he was a tribal judge, he had to make the decision first so that he might be an example for the tribe.

"A letter from Washington tells me that Indians having two or more wives must send away all but one," said the agent. "You as judge must do your part toward seeing that the Cheyennes do this."

My heart jumped around in my breast when he told me this. He went on talking further about the matter, but I could not pay close attention to him... Finally, I said to him:

"I have two wives. You must get some other man to serve as

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 153.

<sup>2</sup>T. B. Marquis. op. cit.. 366.

judge."

He sat there and looked straight at me, saying nothing for a little while. Then he began talking again.

"Somebody else as judge would make you send away one of your wives. It would be better if you yourself managed it. All of the Indians in the United States are going to be compelled to put aside their extra wives. Washington has sent the order."

I decided to keep the office of judge. It appeared there was no way of getting around the order, so I made up my mind to be the first one to send away my extra wife.... I took plenty of time to think about how I should let my wives know about what was coming. ... The first wife, the older one, had two daughters. The younger wife had no children. It seemed this younger one ought to leave me. I was in very low spirits. When a wagon came to get her and her personal packs I went out and sat on a knoll about a hundred yards away. I could not speak to her. It seemed I could not move. All I could do was just sit there and look down at the ground.

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The last polygynous marriages the old chiefs had heard of were about 1900. Today, the leverite or the sororate occurs once in a while, but no clear-cut pattern is established.

### Divorce

The Cheyenne recognized divorce in their tribal days although such practice seems to have occurred but infrequently. Although it was a rare thing for a man to do, Grinnell<sup>1</sup> reports that a man could announce publicly that he intended to abandon his wife. Usually, this announcement was made at a dance of one of the soldier societies whose members had already been notified. At a certain designated time, the singers began a particular song, and the man danced by himself. Suddenly he struck the drum with the stick he carried and then threw the stick away. "There goes my wife," he would call. "I throw her away. Whoever

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 152-153

gets that stick may have her." A woman so "thrown" away was in disgrace before the tribe and seldom if ever did any man in the camp attempt to catch the stick. The last ceremony of this type was held at Tongue River near the present town of Ashland in 1899.

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Divorces now go through courts. It is more frequent now than it was in the old days when the whole affair was easier, say the old men. Men do not announce their intention of leaving their wives now, and because the family group has been broken up, there is no chance to talk a man out of leaving his family as once the people did. When a man has legally divorced his wife, he is free to marry again. The practice of leaving one's legally-wedded wife and going to live with another woman and bearing children by her is not done on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. "The Crows do," say the old chiefs.<sup>1</sup>

When a couple separates, the wife goes to live with her people, and the man feels that he has done his duty. Just as when the mother dies, the father feels that he is free to remarry and that he has not responsibility toward the support of the children, reports Hopperstad. Part of the situation is economic, Hopperstad believes, for if the children are not around the father, he does not share in their lives nor their problems. According to Hopperstad as well as to Mr. and Mrs. James Millin,<sup>2</sup> men do leave their wives and families and live with other women. Such liaisons are usually temporary, according to these informants, and are not common practices among the Northern

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<sup>1</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, December 13, 1955. Mr. and Mrs. Millin own and operate the largest store in Lame Deer, The Trading Post.



Cheyenne.

### Women

Cheyenne women seem to have occupied an unique position. Nineteenth century recorders, steeped in the mores of their culture, were appalled and frequently repelled by the "immoderality" of the Plains Indian women. Yet, every writer remarked about the virtues of the Cheyenne women. "The word modesty is not even known among the Ricaras. The Cheyenne are reserved in this respect, even in their conversation."<sup>1</sup> So, at least we find Loisel writing in 1801. Teddy Blue, old-time Montana cowboy, succinctly summarized his reactions to the Cheyenne a century and a quarter later when he said "The Cheyennes were very strict with their women."<sup>2</sup> An anthropologist, Hoebel, writing in the mid-twentieth century, reported, "Among the American Indians of the Plains we find premarital unchastity the rule (except for the strict Cheyennes...)"<sup>3</sup> And Grinnell, to whom we have referred constantly in this paper, maintained that the Cheyenne were famous among all of the Western Indian tribes for their chastity. "She who has yielded is disgraced forever," was the essence of instruction for young women. It was something never to be forgotten. Seldom, if ever, would a young man marry her. The case of Calf Road, so well presented by Llewellyn and Hoebel,<sup>3</sup> is illustrative of how a woman might rehabilitate herself.

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<sup>1</sup>E. H. Abel, (ed.) op. cit., 181.

<sup>2</sup>E. C. Abbott and Helena H. Smith, We Pointed Them North, (Norman: Oklahoma Press, 1955), 148.

<sup>3</sup>E. A. Hoebel, Man in the Primitive World, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc.), 189.

<sup>4</sup>Llewellyn and Hoebel, op. cit., 210.

At one time she (Calf Road) was one of the Elk Society virgin maidens. When she disgraced herself, they cut her hair and turned her loose.... The salvation for such a girl was to throw herself on the mercy of an oldish, single man. If he cleansed her by giving a great religious ceremony before he married her, she became a respectable, if not wholly respected, matron.

Calf Road got a Samaritan to pledge her a Sun Dance. Then she, according to form, renounced her past life before the tribe. Her champion danced for her in the ceremony. The priest of the Sun Dance prayed to Maiyun to give her a new life. The holy pipe was smoked several times. When it was done, the leaders told her to go home, never to think or speak of her past. After the Sun Dance for Calf Road was given about 1865, she lived faultlessly with her husband for many years.

Women gossiped about her, but not to her face. So faultless was she that she irritated. "Look at that woman," the others whispered. "She used to be the biggest whore in the tribe. Now she thinks she is the only decent woman here."

Not only were the Cheyenne women chaste, but they were dominant figures in the home life of the earlier period. Grinnell's impressions, recorded after twenty-five years of close association with the Cheyenne, are:<sup>1</sup>

Among the Cheyenne, the women are the rulers of the camp. They act as a spur to the men, if they are slow in performing their duties. They are far more conservative than the men and often hold them back from hasty ill-advised action. If the sentiment of the women of the camp clearly points to a certain course as desirable, the men are quite sure to act as the women wish.

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Girls are still respected among the Northern Cheyenne. Warnings are given them to watch closely and to prize their virginity. "Babies born without fathers came about after the opening of the reservation," said John Stands-in-Timber. "Access to liquor helped that. Bad diseases came in after the reservation opened too. That is one reason why the Cheyenne do not like to marry the Crows because the fear of disease. The

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 128-129.

only marriages you see now between the two tribes is between educated young people."<sup>1</sup> Dallas Littlehead maintains that boys are still taught to respect the girls. Some of the boys do not, but when they don't they feel guilty because they know "they have gone against the teachings of their parents and grandparents."<sup>2</sup>

According to Rufus Wallowing,<sup>3</sup> the older virtues are forgotten because of the schools and the subsequent breakdown of parental authority. In general, however, he says that the woman still influences the home. She helps maintain the dignity of the home and tries "to keep it up to standard although many homes are not up to what they should be." W. R. Hopperstad's observations are that the wife dominates the home. She does not do it obviously, but she is definitely the force behind the man.

#### Death

The Cheyenne recognized death as being inevitable. When a person died, his relatives--sometimes assisted by his comrades--prepared the body of the deceased for burial. The corpse was carefully laid out, the body dressed neatly, the hair combed, and then the body wrapped in robes and blankets. Because of the fear of ghosts, burial occurred as soon as it was possible, the body usually being placed upon a scaffold. War implements and other valuables considered important by the deceased were buried with him by wrapping them in the blankets or robes covering

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, December 16, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, December 13, 1955. Littlehead's age, approximately twenty-two, gives a little insight into the statement.

<sup>3</sup>Personal Interview, December 15, 1955.

the body. After the burial, all of his property was given away, although relatives were forbidden to receive any.<sup>1</sup> The deceased's tipi, his horses, and even his children went to others in the band, although later his children would be reunited with their mother's people.

The surviving relatives displayed their grief through the dressing of their hair. Men left theirs unbraided; women cut theirs. Were a man killed in battle, his widow or his mother or sister gashed her legs to show her grief; if the man died from natural causes such practices were not followed.

The spirit of the dead man followed the trail where the footprints all pointed the same way and followed that trail until it came to the Milky Way. By following the Milky Way across the sky, the dead finally came to Se-yan', the place of the dead. There at Se-yan', the dead live much as they did on earth. They could chase buffalo, hunt other types of game, and go to war. All who die go to Se-yan', and all are equal there. No concept of reward nor punishment was present among the Cheyenne. All of the dead, however, except the suicides, simply went to Se-yan'.<sup>2</sup> People who were very ill, those especially who were unconscious, also travelled to Se-yan' but never quite reached it.

Hayden presents another concept about Cheyenne after life--one not recorded by any other ethnographer. He wrote:<sup>3</sup>

When a person dies, a portion returns to the earth, and any other part, the spirit, goes to the Great Spirit from which it had its origin. It then enters a child again and returns to this world; and

<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, II, op. cit., 91.

<sup>2</sup>F. V. Hayden, "Contributions to the Ethnography and Philology of the Indian Tribes of the Missouri Valley," Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, XII, 1863, 278.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 279.

should that being at any period during its lifetime walk over the dust of the former body, it also dies.

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When a man loses his relatives now, his friends help him to prepare the body for burial. Sometimes the body is taken to a funeral home in Forsyth or Miles City, but that does not happen very often, for the relatives believe that the body should remain where the individual dies and be taken care of by his relatives or friends. Shortly after a person dies, his friends come in and prepare a feast to be held in some other person's home. Others bring clothes, food, and dishes for the mourners. A chief talks to them and comforts them, and tells them to forget their sadness.

In the old days, the relatives and mourners painted their faces. Very seldom is that done now, although once in a long time someone will do it. Close members of the family do not braid their hair. ("They never did cut the hair because if they did that they feared they might lose their power. They used to be very strict about their braids.")<sup>1</sup> No one cuts his flesh now, although in other times, this practice was followed frequently. People inflicted the pain upon themselves because there was nothing to live for; sometimes the relatives would do this and then stay away from home for four days. Friends would have to get them and bring them home and feed them.

All burials take place in the Lame Deer cemetery now. No one has been buried in the hills for at least thirty years. Some of the things that a person liked to have about him, especially his religious property, is not buried with him in the cemetery. Instead, they are

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<sup>1</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

taken into the hills and buried there. Once in a while, however, objects of value are buried in the cemetery at Lane Deer. For instance, Stump Horn owned the original stone that had always been carried by one of the Sutaio. It was an extremely sacred object--one that had been used in making all of the straight sacred pipes that the Sutaio had carried with them. It is possible that Erect Horns, their cultural hero, might have given it to a Sutaio. When Stump Horn died, his relatives did not know of the great significance of the stone. They realized it was something important to him, so they buried it with him in the grave at Lane Deer. Later, when it was too late to recover it, older men of the Sutaio told the family what they had done.<sup>1</sup>

#### Institutionalized Friendships

The Cheyenne followed the same practice as did many of the Plains Indians of "taking a friend." Two young men, always members of the same warrior society, adopted each other as brothers. The bond between them was strong enough that the parents of each boy recognized and regarded the relationship as being that of brothers. As they grew older, their horses and other property was regarded in common by both fellows. Sometimes, they made their home together. After one or both of them was married, the comradeship continued, generally for life. Differing from the custom of other Plains' tribes, no preliminary public announcement was made of the established friendship or brother adoption.<sup>2</sup>

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The habit of taking a friend still goes on. When boys grow

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<sup>1</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>James Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians", op. cit., 416.

up together and like each other very much, they decide to become brothers. Their sisters then become relatives. All of the older men of the Northern Cheyenne have "brothers" in this fashion. Although the practice is dying out to some extent, the young men still follow it.

### Berdaches

Very few references occur relative to berdaches among the Cheyenne. Grinnell<sup>1</sup> mentions that one or two existed in the days prior to the Custer affair. These men took up the ways of women, directed the old-time scalp dances, and were noted matchmakers. Their voices were usually pitched half way between that of the normal speaking voice of a man and that of a woman. They were called hee-man-eh<sup>1</sup>, half man, half woman.

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The Cheyenne had one, but the last recollection of him is of his death in 1877 or 1878. "The Crows still have them."<sup>2</sup> The word hee-man-eh is the same word that the Cheyenne use for coward.<sup>3</sup>

### Murder

No greater crime existed among the Cheyenne than that of murder. To the killer of another Cheyenne, a brand was attached forever. He became rotten inside so that his very breath was putrid, and his body gave off a bad smell.<sup>4</sup> Only a purification ceremony of the Sacred Arrows

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, II, op. cit., 39.

<sup>2</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>3</sup>Personal Interview, Dallas Littlehead, December 12, 1955.

<sup>4</sup>E. A. Hoebel, "Associations and the State in the Plains," op. cit., 435-436.

could make it possible for the Cheyenne to find buffalo, for the odor was sufficient to drive off the game. Hence, it became a problem for the whole tribe. To remedy that dilemma, the offending member faced banishment.

No enforcement was necessary, for the murderer recognized his doom. The time of exile seems to have varied from one to four years, but for the rest of his life he remained a marked man. Grinnell states<sup>1</sup> that even though the banished man might serve his exile and then return to the main camp or to his band, he never could use the same utensils as did the others. No one would smoke with him, no woman would live with him, and no man would talk to him. In actuality, he lost his membership in the tribe, and many times the man would take his wife and closest relatives and go to live with another tribe permanently. The Arapaho and the Sioux seem to have been the tribes favored. The ban against murderers extended to any other person, Indian or white, who might be married to a Cheyenne and who was living with the Cheyenne as Cheyenne.

Hoebel<sup>2</sup> describes murder among the Cheyenne as both a crime and a tort. He bases this conclusion upon the fact that tribal welfare rested in the holiness of the Sacred Medicine Arrows and the Sacred Hat. The death of a Cheyenne at the hands of another Cheyenne bloodied the Arrows. In fact, when the sacred objects were opened after an intra-tribal feud that resulted in murder, spots of blood were found to appear on the arrows. As long as the blood remained, no successful war parties

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 254-256.

<sup>2</sup>E. A. Hoebel, "Association and the State in the Plains," op. cit., 435-436.



could be conducted, and game shunned the country. The ritual of renewing the arrows effected the purification, but as has been pointed out previously, the effect could not be complete.

Abortion was murder to the Cheyenne, and if the guilty party were found she was treated as a murderer. Hoebel<sup>1</sup> describes a situation related by his informants and uses the instance to show the Cheyenne concept of murder and of their treatment of it by law. An aborted foetus was found in a camp. The discovery was made known to the chiefs who did nothing about it directly, but instead, they notified the soldier chiefs who planned the investigation. All of the women were ordered to assemble in public, strip to the waist, and expose their breasts for inspection. Each woman was scrutinized for lactation enlargements by the soldier chiefs. One girl who showed signs of recent pregnancy, admitted her guilt upon close questioning. By the chiefs' decision, she was judged guilty, was banished from the tribe, and the Arrows had to be renewed. Such action indicated, according to Hoebel, that the unborn child had legal tribal status, and as well, a legal personality. Furthermore, abortion was murder--murder that tainted the medicine. The situation thus became wholly criminal because violence had been done within the most intimate unit possible, the family. In this case, murder was a secret crime--a crime that demanded detection of the criminal.

Despite the heinousness of murder and the inflexible rule of banishment that faced a man, Hoebel points out that blood revenge existed. "The many cases in which blood revenge was visited during the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 436.

exile of the murderer, or before it could be imposed, show that the community law had not completely downed the private law."<sup>1</sup> No other evidence is found among ethnographers that such practice existed although Grinnell mentions that before banishment, the murderer was required to pay a fine to the dead man's relatives.<sup>2</sup>

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A murderer is still considered an outcast to the Northern Cheyenne.<sup>3</sup> While banishment for murder is still no longer thought of as a practical means of dealing with a murderer, some people<sup>4</sup> consider the term served in the Federal penitentiary as being a substitute for the ostracism of the past. Upon his return, he cannot go to any of the important meetings of the tribe nor can he smoke the pipe nor attend the Sun Dance. If he is a young man and has children at the time of the murder, those children are considered innocent; any children born after the murder are murderers and outcasts and remain so for the rest of their lives. The ban extends now to any member of the tribe. Even though the quantum of Indian blood be small, that person is still a Cheyenne and must be treated as a full-blooded Cheyenne. Nothing, however, is done to his property in these times; only the social pressure remains.

Abortion is still considered murder, and the Arrows must be renewed. Such occasions have happened on the reservation in recent years. For example, one woman was twice suspected of aborting. Nothing

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 436.

<sup>2</sup> George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, op. cit., 254.

<sup>3</sup> Personal Interview, John Stands-in-Timber, December 15, 1955.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

could be proved to show that she had done so, but the people have thought of her as a murderer and have had nothing to do with her since.<sup>1</sup> Rufus Wallowing<sup>2</sup> cited an instance that occurred in 1953. The wife of one of the fairly well-educated Cheyenne had a miscarriage, and the people thought that she had deliberately aborted. As a result, the Sun Dance at Busby nearly broke up.

The couple appeared at the Sun Dance as spectators, not participants. Leaders of the ceremonial approached them, told them of the rumors, and asked them to leave. The couple were told that they should go to Oklahoma, where the Sacred Arrows are kept, and have a purification ceremony. The husband demurred, only, he said, because of the expense involved. The Sun Dance leaders then called the Council of Forty-four into action and the chiefs arranged for offerings to be taken to provide the money. By midnight, the money had been given, sufficient to take the couple to Oklahoma.

The following day, the young couple returned and the man accepted the money. Before noon they had left, ostensibly for Oklahoma, and the rituals of the Great Medicine continued. That evening, to the astonishment of everyone in the encampment, the young couple returned; and the man's former agreeableness had turned to sullenness and defiance. Immediately, the chiefs ordered him out of the camp, and, at his refusal, a messenger departed to bring a Federal officer to the scene. When the officer arrived, he tried to arrest the young man who protested that nothing in the governmental codes had been violated and that no

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Rufus Wallowing, December 14, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

cause existed for his arrest. Finally, the officer agreed with him but advised him that he should go. Reluctantly, he did. Turning to the tribal leaders, the officer informed them that the young man had been right and that in the future it would be well were the tribe to have its own police force there.

Occurrences of murder have been rare among the Northern Cheyenne according to Mr. and Mrs. James Mullins,<sup>1</sup> mercantile owners at Busby and Lane Deer. Several instances are known whereby someone has been found dead, but no one would divulge the cause of the death. In each case the deaths have been associated with the individual's known propensity for liquor. In the last two years, two actual cases of suicide have been reported, as well as one attempted suicide.

Life moves in the same basic cycle for the Northern Cheyenne as it did for his forebears. New adaptations have come. The tribal members look back upon the old and incorporate what they can of it into the culture of the present.

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, December 12, 1955.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOME RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AND BELIEFS

Religion for the old-time Cheyenne was pragmatic; its function was to accomplish something. To attain the necessary success in war and peace, the Cheyenne depended upon two revered objects--the Medicine Arrows and the Sacred Hat. Likewise, the tribal members knew that other spirits occupied their land--those that might take the form of birds and were there to mock them. Or, they knew that certain places and certain ceremonies or certain numbers possessed supernatural power. Religion was to the Cheyenne, as to all primitive people, a technique for success. And, being such a technique, it was definitely material. It surrounded the Cheyenne in all his daily life.

#### Renewal of the Arrows

The Medicine Arrows were the most sacred of objects to the Cheyenne. Four in number, two of them--called "buffalo arrows"--represented food because from arrows the tribe procured food from the flesh of animals. The other two represented war and were known as "man arrows."<sup>1</sup> The shafts and the heads of the arrows were given to the Cheyenne by their cultural hero, Sweet Medicine; hence in the

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, "The Great Mysteries of the Cheyenne," American Anthropologist, n.s., XII, 1910, 542-543.

renewal ceremony, only the feathers and the sinew could be changed. The feathers of the red buffalo arrows were from the gray eagle; the black war arrows were feathered by the tail feathers of the golden eagle.

Renewing the Medicine Arrows was the most solemn religious ceremony that the Cheyenne knew. The operation consisted of taking the points from the arrows and replacing the winding with fresh sinew, as they added new feathers. The ceremony was done to prevent anticipated evil or "to put an end to misfortune."<sup>1</sup> In such instances the act might be interpreted as one of atonement or sacrifice. In addition, the arrows were renewed when many Cheyenne had fallen in battle or when one tribesman had killed another. In such cases, blood appeared on the arrows and could be seen by the keepers of the arrows when the sacred bundle was unwrapped.

Apparently, the ceremony did not occur with any regularity. It might take place but once every two years. Whenever it did happen, though, it was an occasion of kindness and good feeling for all the members of the tribe. Feasting went on continually, much visiting took place, and a general air of well-being pervaded the huge camp. When the actual work of the renewing was going on, everything was very quiet with all tribal members remaining within their lodges.<sup>2</sup>

For the ceremony, the Cheyenne built a large lodge in the center of the camp circle where all ten bands of the tribe were encamped. In this special lodge, only the keeper and his assistants worked at the renewal, although the old chiefs and the men who had previously taken part in the ceremony might be present. The bundle, carefully

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 545-546.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 547-548

wrapped in the skin of a coyote, was given by the keeper to the man who was pledged to renew the arrows. Then, with the assistance of four old-men helpers, he began the ceremony. As each step of the thirty-six different operations were made on the four arrows, four sticks were placed aside. Thus at the end of the ritual, 144 sticks were carefully arranged in a circle surrounding the priests and the man doing the work.

The ceremony itself took four days. During that time, the men working on the arrows were naked and were painted in various colors. No dogs could go into the lodge or show their heads inside the lodge area. On the fifth day, the arrows were taken out and tied to a forked pole set in the ground about fifty feet in front of the lodge. They were tied so that the two buffalo arrows were pointed upward and the two man arrows pointed downward. Only males could approach and look at them; women and children had to remain in the camping area.

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Although the Arrows are kept in Oklahoma with the Southern Cheyenne, the Renewal Ceremony has been carried out twice recently on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. Tensions of war seem to have been the cause of the renewal, for the first one occurred in 1941, the second in 1952.<sup>1</sup> With their young men being drafted and war imminent each year, the Northern Cheyenne felt the need to have the arrows renewed. Tribal members solicited money in sufficient amount to defray the expenses of the Keeper of the Arrows and his assistants who came from

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Rufus Wallowing, December 16, 1955.

Oklahoma to put on the ceremonies.

As in the past, a large camp was set up with the sacred lodge in the center. As nearly as it could possibly be done, the ritual followed the pattern of the past. In 1941, when the ceremony was held at Lane Deer, only the men of the tribe could see the arrows. All else was done according to the directions of the visitors who gave "very strict orders about how everyone should act." Northern Cheyenne men policed the lodge and carried whips to see that everything was done correctly. The second time the Keeper came from Oklahoma, in 1952, the affair was held at Busby and everything seemed more relaxed than it had been eleven years earlier. The arrows were displayed to the public--men, women, children,--in the sacred lodge. Strict orders controlled the way people could enter, however. Practically all of the Northern Cheyenne went to Busby for the "arrow worship" but most of them went merely out of curiosity. With the Sacred Hat on the Northern reserve, people are much more interested in it than they are in the arrows that have come to belong to the Southern Cheyenne in the thinking of the Northerners.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Sacred Hat

What the Medicine Arrows were to the Cheyenne, the Sacred Hat was to the Sutaio. After the incorporation of the Sutaio into the Cheyenne, the Sacred Hat came to be revered second only to the Arrows by the entire tribe. Called Is<sup>1</sup>si-wun in the Cheyenne tongue, the people all know that the Sutaio's cultural hero, Erect Horns, gave the Hat to them. As the Medicine Arrows gave a spiritual valuation and

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Rufus Wallowing, December 16, 1955.



connotation to the life of the Cheyenne, the Sacred Hat had to do with the immediate things of the camp--food, health, clothing, and shelter.<sup>1</sup> According to the instructions that Erect Horns gave to the Sutaio, the Hat had to remain always in the custody of a man. Furthermore, the Keeper of the Hat should bequeath his charge to his son. Occasions arose, however, when the Keeper died without an heir, and in such instances, the tribe appointed a guardian who was brave, quiet, and not given to wandering about.

The Keeper's lodge took on an aura of sacredness, and certain clearly defined rules of behaviour developed. No person ever stood up in the lodge; when he entered he walked to his place and sat down immediately. No one spoke in a loud voice; low tones were always used. Before a child entered the lodge, he had to be prayed over; so did any person who might accidentally throw a stick or stone against the lodge. If an enemy chanced to enter the lodge he was safe--safe as if he were in his own home.<sup>2</sup>

Certain tabus were observed. Within the Sacred Lodge that housed the Hat, no moisture could fall on the floor. A person could not throw water or spit or even blow his nose while inside the lodge, for if moisture by chance fell, a heavy rainfall would be certain to follow. Fire could not be activated by directly blowing on it; instead, a long stem with a hole in it had to be used or else a great wind would follow. Likewise, a person had to be very careful about not scratching himself with his fingernails else he would get the itch

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Brinnell, "The Great Mysteries of the Cheyenne," op. cit., 542.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 562.

in the spot he had scratched. All these, as well as minor tabus, were observed carefully by the Cheyenne.

In the old days, only three instances--each of great import--occasioned the Hat to be opened: when times of great sickness occurred; when the Medicine Arrows were renewed; and when the Hat was worn in battle. During times of illness, the Hat rested on a bed of white sage in the middle of a line of five buffalo chips. Tribesmen entered the lodge from the south, approached the Hat, offered a prayer, touched the Hat, passed their hands over their children, and then left at the Northern entrance. When the Arrows were being renewed, the Hat was moved outside and was open to the general view of the people. In time of war, large blue beads were glued on the Hat. Just before the war party started on its way, the Keeper examined the beads carefully. For each Cheyenne to be killed in the battle, a bead would stand up erectly on the Hat.<sup>1</sup>

In an intra-tribal row shortly before the Custer affair, a serious misfortune occurred to the Hat that has left its mark upon the Cheyenne people. Half Bear, who had been keeper of the Hat for a long time, died in 1869. By inheritance and by virtue of his character, Coal Bear, Half Bear's son, should have become the Keeper. Anticipating the possibility that Coal Bear might not be with the band at the time of his death, Half Bear instructed his friend, Broken Dishes, to care for the Hat until his son's return. By chance, Coal Bear was away on a hunting party at the time of his father's death, and when he returned to the camp, Broken Dishes refused to give up the custody of the Hat. Although the tribal leaders stormed and threatened, Broken Dishes remained

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 564.

firm, and, encouraged by his wife, refused to relinquish his custody of it. Once, when the group became particularly excited and demanding, Mrs. Broken Dishes angrily tore one of the horns from the Hat and sewed it inside the front of her dress. Finally, the Cheyenne became so incensed with the attitude of Broken Dishes and his wife that the Fox Soldiers forcibly took the Hat and gave it to Coal Bear, who did not discover the loss of the horn for some time after he had received it.<sup>1</sup>

When the tribe discovered that the Hat had been mutilated, they predicted that ill luck would descend upon the Broken Dish family and upon the tribe itself. As it happened, both Broken Dish and his wife died rather quickly thereafter. Following the seizure of the Hat at the hands of the Fox Soldiers, Broken Dish went to live with the Sioux--and died shortly. His widow, realizing what she had done by breaking the horn from the Hat, told her sister, Mrs. Dragging Otter, that she had committed the sacrilege. Very soon, Mrs. Broken Dishes died, and Mrs. Dragging Otter took the horn. Death occurred very shortly to her, and Dragging Otter, frantic by this time, took the horn to Oklahoma, gave it to his friend Three Fingers--and promptly died. Three Fingers kept it hidden until 1908 when he had it returned to the Northern Cheyenne and gave it to the Keeper, Wounded Eye.<sup>2</sup> Of greater impact upon the people, however, were the subsequent happenings to the tribe: the Guster fight, the capture, the exile in the south, the flight north, and the confinement upon the reservation.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 566-567.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 568.

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Today, the Hat sits in its solitary tipi in Birney, too sacred to be handled, too serious to be viewed, too accountable for a volunteer Keeper. When Wounded Eye, the Keeper who had succeeded Coal Bear, died, the Hat went to Black Bird and then to Rock Roads. When he died, his son Tom, who had been groomed for the Keeper's job, refused it, and the custody went to Sand Crane, a relative of Coal Bear. When he died, Tom Rock Roads was again offered the Hat, but again he refused it as did Red Cherries, so it was agreed that Head Swift should have it. Although an old man at the time he accepted the honor and the trust and kept the Hat until his death in 1952. Before his death, Head Swift told his daughter, Josie, to keep the Hat in her custody until the military societies agreed about the next Keeper. Although Head Swift has been dead for nearly four years, Josie reluctantly is still keeping it. And, her custody of it is, as every Cheyenne knows, in direct contradiction of the teaching of Erect Horns. A man must be the Keeper.

Josie Head Swift's life is a lonely one, for she must never leave the Hat unprotected. In a tipi beside her cabin the Hat rests, yet she must always see that someone is near on the few occasions that she leaves her home. The tipi has to be kept clean, the floor must be freshly sanded at all times, and prying eyes must be kept out.<sup>1</sup> Children are warned about the significance of the Hat and are not allowed to play around the area close to it.

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, John Stands-in-Timber, December 16, 1955. Once in the summer of 1954, the writer was in Birney, and spotting the solitary tipi in the Indian settlement on the western edge of the town, he asked about it. His Cheyenne friends told him its importance, but warned him that on no occasion must he go near enough to take a picture of it.

Once each year the Hat is moved to Lame Deer and its protecting tipi is pitched in the encampment at Sun Dance time. There, the same respect is accorded to it, although few of the present members have ever seen it. Twenty-five years ago, 1931, the Hat was opened for the last time. At the request of General Hugh Scott Leavitt, then U. S. Representative to Congress from the Eastern Montana Congressional District, and a representative from the Smithsonian Institution who was allowed to take pictures of the Hat.<sup>1</sup> The Cheyenne liked General Scott, trusted him, and as a distinct favor to him permitted him to see it.

During the quarter of a century that has passed, many discussions have been held about the possibility of opening the Hat again. During the severe winter of 1948-1949, the question arose. Some of the tribal members were literally starving, and the old men of the tribe wanted to open the Hat to see if such action would bring relief to the Cheyenne. Nothing, however was done. In the fall of 1954, the late Eugene Fisher, then president of the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council, started talking to the older men to elicit their interest in opening the Hat. Fisher believed that the significance of the Hat was being lost, and that only through a great ceremony would the younger people have the opportunity of seeing the Hat, learning of its history, and appreciating its worth. To that end, he called a meeting in the tribal office at Lame Deer and discussed the possibility.<sup>2</sup> Plans were being formulated, but Fisher's subsequent illness and death ended any practical application of his ideas.

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, Eugene Fisher, September 10, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>The writer was present at part of that meeting, September 13, 1954.

The older men respect the Hat, and the Birney residents believe that the Hat protects them from sickness. Most of the Birney people are of Sutaio descent, so they are especially pleased to have it in their district, yet no one of them will accept the responsibility of being its Keeper. Only two old men, Old Bull and Hollow Breast,<sup>1</sup> who is blind, know the secrets of the ceremonial sufficiently well to supervise the opening of the Hat. Consequently, until someone of Sutaio descent will accept the responsibility, the Hat is officially without a Keeper. The older men are worried; the younger men are afraid of the responsibility. The Hat seems to sit like a conscience upon all of the Northern Cheyenne.

#### Ta-soom<sup>†</sup>, Mistai, Spirits

A man's spirit--his shade, his shadow, his soul, or the spiritual part of him--is his ta-soom<sup>†</sup>.<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking, the ta-soom<sup>†</sup> is the spiritual part or the shadow of any animate thing--man, horse, bird, or dog. Inanimate things--trees, rocks, buildings--may cast shadows, but such shadows are clearly differentiated from those of living things. Among the Cheyenne, the ta-soom<sup>†</sup> may be seen in a man; for example, if a person is unconscious and lies there merely breathing, people may say, "His ta-soom<sup>†</sup> has been gone a long time; he is only just breathing."<sup>3</sup>

Ghosts are feared, but they do not do much harm. They like to

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, John Stands-in-Timber, December 16, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, II, op. cit., 93.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 100.

come around and frighten people; hence are considered more as a nuisance than anything else. The Cheyenne term for them, mistai, is inclusive enough to cover all these unseen phenomena that surround the people. While ghosts are believed to be from the dead, there is little in common between mistai and ta-soom<sup>1</sup>. Rather, mistai are those things that are rarely seen but often felt or heard. Frequently, they scratch or tap on the lodge skins or make strange and mysterious noises outside one's tipi.<sup>1</sup> Mistai may also mean a reference to the owl, a strange and unnatural bird. Some people who hear an owl cry may be able to tell what ghost it is speaking, so whenever the hoot is heard, the people listen carefully in order that they may distinguish the speaker.

Spirits and monsters also surround the people. Frequently, they live in springs and rivers or in the hills. Spirits are not harmful creatures even though they may be offended easily. In such case, they can do injury to human beings. Hence, sacrifices and prayers must be offered to them as appeasements. Grinnell<sup>2</sup> cites the example of the Painted Rocks on the west side of the Rosebud, six or seven miles below Lane Deer. Here pictures have been painted on the rocks, and to that spot the Northern Cheyenne frequently go to leave gifts to the spirits who have been painting the pictures.

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Just as the old-time Cheyenne lived in a world surrounded by unseen, but animate things, so does his descendent live today. "Ta-soom" is the spirit that every man has," said Wilson Pine.<sup>3</sup> "Spirits can make

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>3</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

you fight and get you in trouble. Or else, other people's spirits can be bad for you. Sometimes a man dies, and right after he is buried, his spirit stays around and disturbs other people."

"Yes," John Stands-in-Timber added, "when a person dies, his ta-soom<sup>f</sup> lasts four days on the earth. Then it follows the trail that leads to the Milky Way. The Milky Way takes the good spirits to Se-yan. That's the place where the dead people go. Now, when a person gets very sick, their ta-soom<sup>f</sup> might go to Se-yan while they are still breathing. But sometimes when a man dies very suddenly, it's bad. That man's ta-soom<sup>f</sup> may wander around and never find the road. Those are the spirits that bother people, too."

At the mention of the Cheyenne word, mistai, the four old chiefs looked at me carefully. They asked me to repeat my question. And, as I had done before, I chose the Cheyenne word, mistai, rather than the nearest English equivalent, ghost. The old men smiled, and conversed together lengthily in their native tongue. Occasionally, one would interrupt the other. Finally, John Stands-in-Timber said, "Ghosts are the spirits of the dead. You can't recognize the face or the body. The shadow is all that you can see."

"Once a haunting party was camped on Otter Creek," Tom Medicine Top interrupted--his only comment during the day. "About midnight, the four young men heard someone talking and singing in the cut bank below their camp. They went down to see who it was. Their horses were making a noise and they figured maybe someone was trying to steal them. They couldn't find anyone so they came back to their tipi and sat there joking with each other, saying maybe they'd been dreaming. About that time, while they was laughing and talking, someone



ran through their tipi, screaming and crying around. They couldn't see him but it sounded like he was dragging a big limb around with him. The horses started to stampede and they could hear them running away.

"Well, these fellows was pretty scared because the person who had run through their tipi kept yelling like a man, so they shot after him and tried to follow him. He'd be quiet for a while, then he'd yell again. They'd shoot, and then they'd hear him crying a long ways off. Finally, they gave up and went back to their camp. They didn't do much sleeping, but the next morning when it got light they went out and looked all around. They found out that they'd been camped near a grave. Then they knew that it was the spirit of the fellow who'd been buried there that had been disturbing them the night before."

Medicine Top finished his story. The old men talked together in Cheyenne for some time. Then Wilson Pine began a story, and presently John Stands-in-Timber interrupted him to interpret it.

"Once I was riding horseback up the Rosebud," said Mr. Pine, "and I stopped to get my supper. I tied my horse to a fence post and had just started across to get some wood to start a fire when I heard a voice. I hadn't seen anyone coming so I looked around but couldn't see anyone anywhere. I hollered out and asked who was there but I got no answer.

"About that time I started walking over in the direction the voice had come from and I heard someone coughing. I hollered again, but got no answer, so I stopped to listen. This person coughed again, this time real loud. I listened for a while and then started back toward my horse. The horse was going crazy, pulling back on the fence post and almost breaking it off. I run up to him and when I untied.

him he almost jerked the reins out of my hand before I could get on him.

"Some mistai or spirit was there. The horse heard him, same as me."

Silence again. I was just about ready to ask another question when the old men started talking. This time I discovered it was Charley Kills Night who was leading the conversation. With a little urging from my interpreter he continued with his story.

It seems as if there is a house at the forks of Muddy Creek, about eighteen miles from Lane Deer, in which no one will live. "Ray Harris lived there one time," Kills Night related. "One night he was gone and his wife and kids was home alone. After they'd gone to bed but before they'd gone to sleep, they heard a door open and close. They laid there awhile, being kind of scared, but they heard no one come in. Harris' missus told the kids they'd just thought they'd heard something and for them to go to sleep, when they heard someone knocking on the door. Mrs. Harris called out to the person knocking and asked who it was. She didn't get any answer so she got up and opened the door and looked out. There wasn't anyone there.

"The next day, Harris come home and his missus told him what had happened. He kind of made fun of her but the kids kept telling him she was right. That night, the same thing happened only the sound kept coming from the next room instead of from the outside. This kept on for quite a while. Finally, Harris and his family moved out and they came in town and lived. That was several years ago, but from that time on, no one will live in that house."

The old men nodded and talked about the house. I heard the word mistai used frequently. Finally, my interpreter told me that all

of them agreed in their knowledge that the house at the forks of the Muddy had never been occupied since the Harris family left because everyone knew that the spirits inhabit it.<sup>1</sup>

Owls mock people. The old men all agreed about that. John Stands-in-Timber told of an experience of his that illustrated the way owls cause trouble.

"Just at dusk one evening," John said, "I was riding along down Lane Deer Creek. Everything was quiet and my horse was going along good. All of a sudden, my horse whirled and ran back like it had been hit.

"I got off and held the horse until he quieted down. Then I got back on him and crossed over to the other side of the creek and started going along. I just got nicely going when the horse did the same thing he'd done before. I had to get off again and talk to that horse to get him to quit spooking. Then I got on him again and he went along fine until just as I reached the main road. That horse jumped then until I had to hang on to keep from being throwed off.

"About that time I spotted a hoot owl. I knew the cause of my trouble right away. Owls never hurt anyone. They just make fun of people and cause them trouble."

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<sup>1</sup>All of the above information was secured in the one group interview in Lane Deer on December 13, 1955. It came at the end of a long day of questioning. The informants had become somewhat restless, but as the subject of mistai was discussed, they appeared far more animated than they had been previously. I told them the story of how I had stopped at that house once some years before to inquire my direction to the line camp where John Stands-in-Timber works during the summer. They all laughed at my stopping there. Then, one of them asked if I took the fork to the right--the correct one--rather than the one to the left. When I replied that I had only guessed, they laughed again. Wilson Pine said the mistai hadn't played a trick on me because I was white; had I been an Indian and confused about the road, the mistai would have sent me up the wrong road.

The old men are all familiar with the sacred rocks on the Rosebud, a few miles below the town of Lame Deer. Many figures are carved in the rocks, but no one can get to the top to see them clearly although the figure at the very top looks like a tipi. Besides the carvings, one can also see deer or animals or just a hand painted on the rocks, and yet the next time that he comes back, he will see different designs.

Many of the Cheyenne around Lame Deer go there and offer cloth or different articles because they know that the spirits live there. Sometimes the same people go back and find a ring or bracelet or something like that there.<sup>1</sup> All of it has a sort of religious significance, the old men say, and all of the Northern Cheyenne are aware of what the "spirit writing" means. Further questioning on my part could get no elaboration of the "meaning" of the "spirit writing" from the old men.

In an effort to get more information, I asked two of the younger tribesmen about the painted rocks. My first inquiry was directed to Delbert Seminole, a man about thirty-five and one of the leaders of the Native American Church of the United States at Lame Deer. He knew about them, would not say whether he had been there recently, and absolutely refused to show them to me.

"They are like moving pictures. You can walk around the rocks and each time you'll see a different picture there."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Group Interview, December 13, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, December 15, 1955.

I next asked Dallas Littlehead, aged about twenty-two, if he would take me to see the painted rocks. He said he did not know exactly where they were but he would find out and would be glad to show me. I also told him that since I knew he sketched rather nicely, I would get some crayons if he would make drawings of the figures for me. Prompted perhaps by my offer to pay him for making the sketches, he agreed to do it. We fixed an hour the following day when we would go.

That evening, Dallas appeared at my apartment. In a somewhat abashed fashion, he told me that he could not take me down to the painted rocks, for when he had inquired about their exact location and had told what he was going to do, he learned that he could not do it. The paintings cannot be copied, he had been told. A Cheyenne once tried to copy the pictures; that night he died. Since then, no Cheyenne has ever copied them. Dallas had also found out that the writings on the rocks change, and that people make sacred offerings to them.

"The medicine men go there to watch them and by watching the figures change, they can tell the future," Dallas added.<sup>1</sup> "They are down there on a ranch owned by a white man named Bailey. Maybe sometime he'll take you."

#### The Four Cardinal Directions

The four cardinal directions are significant to the Cheyenne. Four powerful spirits dwell at the four points of the compass. In

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Interview, December 15, 1955.

addition, the Cheyenne pays tribute to two other great spirits--the one above and the one below.<sup>1</sup> In smoking, the first six smokes are offered to these six powers. In order, however, that a person may live long and that his lodge may be firm on the ground and not blow down, he offers a sacrifice smoke to the four directions. In doing so, he recognizes the potency of the four spirits who typify themselves by the winds and exercise an influence over the lives and fortunes of the people.<sup>2</sup> In personifying the directions, the Cheyenne described the winds thusly: the North, where the cold wind comes from; the South, where the cold wind goes; the East, where the Sun comes from; the West, where the Sun goes over.<sup>3</sup>

Mooney<sup>4</sup> interprets the Cheyenne word for the four cardinal directions, niv-san-i-voc, as having its source from the word for four, niv, and cardinal points, stan-i-voo. According to him, the four points were symbolized by four equidistant triangles that pointed inward around the circumference of a circle.

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Four is important to the Cheyenne today, for, as it always was, it refers to the four corners of the world.<sup>5</sup> In pipe smoking, one always points first to the south, then to the west, to the north, to the east, and then straight up and straight down before inhaling any of the smoke himself. Likewise, certain definite directions are followed

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, II, op. cit., 88.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 90.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 94.

<sup>4</sup>James Mooney, "The Cheyenne Indians," op. cit., 411.

<sup>5</sup>Personal Interview, John Stands-in-Timber, December 16, 1955.

in purifying the body. The individual takes a puff from the pipe and touches the right shoulder twice, then the left shoulder twice, then up and down. So is it with any religious ceremony. One puts his hands out, palms up, and blows smoke on the four corners of the hand. The right hand is extended down to the left toe. From the toe, the individual brings his hand along the left leg, thigh, abdomen, and up to the armpits and shoulder. The left hand, after being purified by another puff on the four sides of the palm, is extended down to the right toe and the same procedure is followed. After the body is purified, the individual rubs his face.

All the young people know and respect the number four. At every gathering, be it the Sun Dance or meetings of the societies or any other place where sermons might be given, reference is always made to the four directions.

#### Symbolism of the Sweat Lodge

In taking a ceremonial sweat, the man is thought for the time being to give over his whole body and spirit to the great power. Then when he leaves the sweat house, and his body has been wiped off with white sage--the male sagebrush, he-ta-ne-wan-utz, his body again belongs to himself.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from its use for personal cleanliness, the sweat lodge symbolizes all the life-giving forces of the Cheyenne. The Sun, that has been shining for many years on the wood used in the fire to heat the stones for the sweat lodge, imparted to that wood much of its life and power. The fire, as it heated the stones, transmitted to them the sun's power that had been stored in the wood. When the hot stones are brought into the sweat lodge and the attendants sprinkle water on them,

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<sup>1</sup>George B. Grinnell, "The Cheyenne Medicine Lodge," American Anthropologist, n.s., XVI, 1914, 255.

the vapor that is given off from the hot stones carries with it the sun power which envelops and is inhaled by those who are sitting in the sweat lodge. Thus, the vapor reaches every part of the individual, within and without.<sup>1</sup> The burning of herbs such as sweet grass and sweet pine is done to set free the wholesome plant influences which have a medicinal as well as purifying effect on whatever is held in the smoke as it arises. These helpful influences are all from the sun, which in turn caused the plants to grow.

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The sweat bath is still used and the lodge is constructed much as it was in the past according to John Stands-in-Timber.<sup>2</sup> Generally, it is used for personal cleanliness although a few of the older men still think of it in terms of its religious significance. Most of the younger men, however, use it to bathe because "they have no bathrooms in their houses." The sweat lodge is a good place for doctors to treat their patients because the Spirit comes in there and speaks to them. "The Spirit belongs to the Great Power." No ceremony of any kind can take place on the Northern Cheyenne reservation today without the participants first taking a sweat bath.

The Great Buffalo ceremony, the one in which the sweat lodge is used, had almost disappeared from the Northern Cheyenne's memory until the fall of 1955. Since Daniel Old Bull's death, it seemed as if the ceremony could not be done again, for no one was sure about the instructions. However, George Brady conducted this one--the one done in

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<sup>1</sup>George Bird Grinnell, "A Buffalo Sweat Lodge," American Anthropologist, n.s., XXI, 1919, 363.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, December 16, 1955.



September, 1955, and held "up the Muddy"--and did it in an authentic manner. The ceremony begins in the evening and during that night the participants sing. The instructor talks to the man and wife who have vowed to put the ceremony on and explains to them what everything represents. The next morning, sometime before noon, the men bring willows into the tipi, and more ceremonial rituals follow. When the people come out of the tipi, and the stones and wood and everything have all been prepared, the instructor tells the man and his wife (who have vowed to do the ceremony) what should be done. The fires are lighted to heat the stones, the path is constructed through the fire leading to the sweat lodge, the buffalo head is placed beside the fire, and the participants are ready for the cleansing--spiritually, morally, mentally, and physically that follows through the sweat lodge ceremony.

Spirits and ghosts inhabit the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. The people respect them--they are part of their inheritance, just as are the Sacred Arrows, the Sacred Hat, and all the minor ceremonies that have been important to the Cheyenne for countless generations.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

As one reviews the varying culture of the Northern Cheyenne, he is struck by the adaptability of the tribe in the adoption of new traits and by the resistance of the tribe in the rejection of others. That these traits are not characteristic of the Cheyenne alone is evident in the statement of Herskovits<sup>1</sup> who says that no culture is static and that

...they (nonliterate peoples) have responded to the innovation in terms of their prior experience, accepting what has promised to be rewarding, and rejecting what seemed unworkable or disadvantageous. Where changes have been imposed on them, they have again responded in terms of their experience, with seeming complacency and inner rejection, or with open intransigence, or with a reconciliation of new form to traditional meaning.

Developing this concept further, Herskovits writes:<sup>2</sup>

We may say that the process of change in culture is universal; that the significance of change must be faced in any study of the nature of culture; and, moreover, that the analysis of dynamics would patently be impossible without postulating change. This, however, does not imply that cultural change can be studied as an isolated phenomenon. It is only one side of the shield; for change, by and of itself, is meaningless, until it is projected against a baseline, measured in time and intensity and in terms of its extensiveness. Above all, it must be contrasted to the phenomenon that is always opposed to it, the phenomenon of cultural stability--a phenomenon which, in its psychological aspects, is called conservatism.

From the study of the Northern Cheyenne, we can see these phenomena at

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<sup>1</sup>M. J. Herskovits, Man and His Works, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. 482.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 482-483.

work; we can see change and we can see conservatism both appearing in the historical development of the tribe and in the internal dynamics of the group.

The first changes that are apparent in the history of the Cheyenne people are only ones that can be assumed, for history does not record the movements of these people definitely. Their earliest ceramics, as well as their earliest artifacts that have been examined--birchbark, shell knives, and stemmed-arrow points--all show the influence of Northeastern Woodland culture. When and how these adoptions came, we have no idea. All we can see is that the influence was there when the tribe lived in a semi-sedentary fashion along the Missouri River and its tributaries. Some time far in the mist of their early wanderings they must have met other Woodland tribes and borrowed from them some of the material culture that seemed advantageous. We know nothing more.

The focus of their change becomes sharper once the Cheyenne moved along the Missouri, for now definite evidence has been left for archaeologists to interpret. Here along the rivers of the Upper Midwest, we know that the Cheyenne lived in earthen houses, that they planted corn, and that their lives were not too different from the Caddoan-Siouian groups--the Arikara, the Hidatsa, and the Mandan--whose culture flourished and has been recorded in historic times. Again, we can only assume the extent of the borrowing that the Cheyenne practiced from these other tribes. But until such time that evidence may be found to the contrary, we believe that not until the 1600's, when the Cheyenne were forced to the westward did they use earthen houses or practice agriculture. Proximity with these sedentary-river tribes seems to be the reasonable explanation for the change in the culture pattern of the Cheyenne. Pushed out of their habitat along

the Great Lakes region by the superior force of other tribes and their economy changed by the environmental characteristics of the new land, the Cheyenne could easily have observed the more or less secure culture of the river-dwelling people and could have seen it a promise. And in that promise of a rewarding life, came a change.

For more than a hundred years, the Cheyenne lived along the rivers. We cannot trace the acceptance of new ideas among them nor can we see how much they accepted the life of their neighbors. Nor do we know exactly when the change came to them again. The introduction of the horse--a time that can only be conjectured--must have been one of the factors that sent the first group out into the Plains and toward the Black Hills. Perhaps it was the Arikara who introduced them to the horse first, for our earliest records mention the Arikara as their "faithful friends." Who the Cheyenne's cultural godfather on the Plains was we do not know. It could have been more than one tribe. Learning about the horse and the mobility thus acquired from the use of the animal could have come first from the Arikara, the Mandan, or the Hidatsa--all of whom we know used the horse after its introduction while still maintaining their permanent homes along the Missouri. Very likely the Dakota had a distinct influence upon the change in the life of the Cheyenne, too, for the Dakota early assumed the characteristics of the mobile life of the buffalo-hunting nomad. The Arapaho, also, became their friends, once the horse had been acquired and the tribe spread to the Plains.

But from whomever the Cheyenne learned the attributes of Plains culture, we can see a definite force of enculturation going on. Historians and ethnographers marvel at the rapidity with which the Cheyenne changed so completely from one culture to another and Grinnell has recorded well the

"leap-frog" movement of groups from their sedentary homes along the rivers to the Plains. During that time, however, an internal change had been taking place. For here were men, in their mature years, conditioned to a way of life that was circumscribed by the small area near their earthen homes, suddenly moving away and adopting an entirely new culture. Such a reorientation of their point of view could have come only when they all agreed upon the desirability of the change. The destruction of their home or homes at the hands of the Chippewa could not have been the only factor, for when that event happened some of them were already established on the Plains if we accept the Grinnell theory. Only a conscious enculturative process could account for the rapidity of that cultural change.

During these successive introductions--the time and the influence of which we can only conjecture--we can see the Cheyenne as an adaptable people. But beginning with the years after the beginning of the nineteenth century, we can see a new influence in their lives--the advent of the Caucasoid. Once the records are available, one can read more specifically the weight of one group upon another. But in interpreting that weight, one must realize that the white man's attitudes changed during that time, and that the white man of 1820 had not the same attitude as did the white man of 1870.

The first white men whom the Cheyenne met--the ones whom the Cheyenne knew from 1800 until approximately 1850--were traders. Desirous of securing what furs they could from the Cheyenne, these men were willing to trade and to work with the Indians. And the Indians, in turn, received material benefits from the traders that were advantageous to them. During this period, the material culture of the Cheyenne, as well as that of all

Plains Indians, changed tremendously. With the white man's appliances, life became easier for the Cheyenne and thus all change seemed to be rewarding. The division of the tribe occurred during this period--again, the result of the influence of the white trader. William Bent, husband of a Cheyenne woman and half owner of Bent's Fort on the Upper Arkansas, influenced some of the Cheyenne to come to that area although nearly half of them remained in the region of the Black Hills. The fact that they did divide without a quarrel, but rather as a matter of expediency as far as their leaders were concerned, gives an indication that some of them were not yet reconciled to the advisability of the move. Some were ready for a change of locale, and saw in that change something to their advantage; others were content to remain where they were. Perhaps again we can interpret that division in the light of the enculturative process that was going on: Under the guidance of William Bent, one group agreed to move; others resisted the change of physical location and might perhaps be viewed as the more conservative element. Be that as it may, the Cheyenne still considered themselves as one unit even though they lived in different areas of the Plains.

From 1850 until 1878 the tenor of the white contact changed. Instead of traders who profited by their association with the Cheyenne and who in turn gave much to Cheyenne culture, United States Army officers controlled the destiny of the Indian people. This was the period of the first great Western expansion--the settlement of Oregon, the discovery of gold in Colorado, in Idaho, and in Montana. And, as these wagon trains moved westward frightening the game and destroying the favorite hunting grounds of the Plains Indians, new and bitter problems arose. By 1856, the Cheyenne engaged in their first fight with the United States Army--a quarrel

over the ownership of one horse. For twenty years the Cheyenne fought and raided and killed white settlers and emigrants. And during those twenty years of ferocity, they rejected all white offers for land settlement and programs. During that time, also, many of the southern group left their homes and moved to the north and became affiliated with those who had refused to leave the north country. In that movement, we can see the attempt to continue the cultural stability that the Cheyenne had known.

And, as the years progressed and the forces were being drawn toward the eventual climax at the Battle of the Little Big Horn, the power of the resistance to change is clearly defined. More and more of the Cheyenne moved into the sheltered valleys of Montana in order that they might be removed from white association. These were the "renegades"--out-laws from the reservations, intransigents--that the Army went out to find that spring of 1876 and to bring into the reserves. These people were the conservatives, practitioners of the phenomenon of cultural stability. Fortified by what they had believed to be honest treaty rights, they now withdrew from the white men to continue the way of life they had known--much of which had been borrowed from the white men.

The Battle of the Little Big Horn was a victory for the conservatives--Dakota and Cheyenne alike. But in that victory they ultimately lost everything--their homes, their lands, their material culture, their freedom. Out of it they have salvaged only their pride, the fact that they beat the white man's army in what became one of the greatest battles in the world of the white man. From their own evidence, one may see that the Cheyenne did not know the significance of the battle until nearly a year afterward. But the importance of it in later years--and one that extends into the present--gives credence to the theory of its being a

revival movement. By venerating the past, the later Cheyenne sees an almost invincible warrior in his ancestor, a product of a culture that was good. In this retrospect, the Cheyenne has become convinced that the values of the past were all satisfactory and seems to make no allowance for any borrowing or influence relative to how he had achieved that greatness.

If we characterize the various epochs of the Cheyenne's association with the white man, we can say that during the first period the Cheyenne borrowed and adapted freely and that during the second contact he refused to accept the innovations or restrictions of the white man. The third epoch, from 1878 to the present, one finds with but few exceptions almost a complete rejection of the white man's culture. But those exceptions are worthy of note, for they provide further examples of the enculturative process at work.

When the group under Two Moons came to Fort Keogh and surrendered to General Miles, they came only after a long deliberation among themselves. Miles wisely asked them to come; at no time did he threaten force. When finally three hundred and fifty of them did go, Miles had a program for them. The men could serve as scouts under him; rations would be furnished the others until they were self supporting. The Cheyenne accepted his terms even though this was a complete reversal of all the basic pattern of their culture. They agreed among themselves that change must come and that the pattern Miles outlined for them was desirable.

The results of those years with Miles along the Yellowstone are evidence of the change in the Cheyenne, or at least of their ability to change when that change is beneficial to them. Their rapid and willing cooperation in farming, their adaptation to an agricultural economy, and



their movement to the Rosebud area all seem to be the result of a positive program instituted for them and one to which they were willing to subscribe.

Not for over thirty years do we see another example of the willingness of the Cheyenne to adapt. When in 1914, their agent, John Buntin, inaugurated another positive program for them, they cooperated. Cattle stealing ended, the reservation fenced, the horse herds eliminated to make way for cattle (and the horses eliminated by the people agreeing to eat them), and farming practices introduced. Here again, the Cheyenne must have consulted among themselves and decided that the change was one of value for them. When confronted with a specific program in which they could see that the end would be rewarding to them, they reacted in favor of the innovation.

Of the other associations since the establishment of the reservation in 1884, the Cheyenne seem to have viewed the white man's way and found it lacking in the desirabilities they needed. The difficulties over land created by the early settlers, the land agents, and the Northern Pacific Railway; the fixed and monotonous diet supplied them by government rations; the inability to travel; the restrictions on their religious and educational practices; the countless surveys and plans outlined by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; the Allotment Act of 1926 followed by five years of waiting before the allotments were completed; the drouth, depression, and created work of the 1930's; the war and the disruption of the closely-knit family life of the 1940's--all have had their effect. Based on the conditioning that the Cheyenne had experienced in his youth, each of the successive introductions failed to recondition the tribal members. While that earlier conditioning had not given to the Cheyenne the stability in his culture that his parents or grandparents had known, his

conditioning to the fact that life was better before the advent of the whites became as vital a substitute for the stabilized culture he had never known. Thus, although Herskovits says no culture can be static, the Northern Cheyenne became fairly close to living in a static culture. His material culture did change, his dress and living accommodations changed, but his attitude remained as resistant as possible to the inroads of the white men and their ideas.

In the internal dynamics of the tribe one also sees the varying culture of the Cheyenne reflected. Until the reservation period one may see on every side the adaptation of new ideas and the willingness to change. In fact, it seems as if the Cheyenne have but three distinctive characteristics of their own: Sweet Medicine, the cultural hero; the Sacred Arrows; the unique position of women. All else appears to have been borrowed.

The political system reflects the borrowing practice. During the days along the Missouri and its tributaries, the tribe met and defeated the Owi'geo, but from a prisoner of that tribe they are supposed to have learned about the Council of Forty-four. Seeing the advantages of such an organization, the Cheyenne were quick to adopt it, and because it gave a sense of representation to their structure, the Council meetings became quasi-religious in nature. The Council of Forty-four were associated with the most sacred of ceremonies, the Renewal of the Arrows, and served as a focus for the tribe. The main link between the two divisions after the separation into the Southern and Northern groups was the annual meeting of the Council of Forty-four. With the numerous lapses that have occurred and the restrictions that have been placed upon it until it has lost its authority, the Council of Forty-four still is a significant factor in the

lives of the Northern Cheyenne on their reservation today. In the adoption and retention of this institution, we see the conditioning process going on, for while the Northern Cheyenne during the last fifty years have been reconditioned to an organization structure without the Council, the conditioning of the members is such that the Council cannot be abandoned.

No one knows just how the various bands of the Cheyenne (nine in number until the absorption of the Sutaio) originated. It may be assumed that the age-old fear of incest evolved in time into the exogamous bands that existed when the white men met the Cheyenne. Although completely forgotten now, the bands served their purpose until the wars began in 1856. With the displacements occurring after that time and the constant movements back and forth between the Northern and the Southern group, the bands lost their efficacy. No substitution was necessary in the minds of the Cheyenne. Instead of ten bands as of old, now there are only two--the Northern and the Southern--with the Sutaio mixed in among the two.

Military societies are another matter. Again, we can only assume that they came into existence after the tribe reached the Plains and that the Cheyenne borrowed the custom from some of the other tribes--the Dakota perhaps. Military societies were part of Plains Indian culture, and the Cheyenne could see the effectiveness of such an organization. During the earliest years of white contact, one reads but little about the power of the military societies among the Cheyenne. But the time of the second phase of white contact, 1850-1877, the military societies had grown in strength and in power. Constantly alerted to the dangers operating by the force of the United States Army, the military societies developed into fierce and dangerous fighters. To keep them in check, however, the Cheyenne instituted at about that time, the rule that the leader of the military

society could not be a member of the chief's council. More and more prestige went to the military societies, however, until the Custer battle. In the years that have followed since that affair, the military societies have been kept alive--at least in name. With three of them operating on the southern reserve and three among the northern group, the old-time Cheyenne (who never lived during the days of the real functioning of the societies) believes that the military groups or "lodges" have their distinct place in his society. Here once more is an example of the resistance to change. The military societies worked well in the old way of life; they should work well in the present. Hence, they will be kept.

Religion, too, provides a good example of the change in the life of the Cheyenne. Like the political structure it has varied and the Cheyenne have been willing to accept new concepts and new ideas when those ideas have been helpful to him. In the period of his pre-history, we know nothing about their beliefs save, as noted before, the fact the tribe had its cultural hero, Sweet Medicine, who gave them the Sacred Arrows. But, when the Sutaio was absorbed into the Cheyenne, the Medicine Lodge (or Sun Dance) became an integral part of Cheyenne life. So did the Sacred Hat. Because these institutions were promising to the Cheyenne, he accepted them and made them part of his own life. When Christianity appeared, the Cheyenne tried it. That it was not, nor never has been completely accepted in their culture, is reflected in the movement of Porcupine and his followers, in the retention of certain beliefs of their own, and in the fact that an estimated seventy-five percent of the Northern Cheyenne are members of the Native American Church of the United States. Here may be an example of a reconciliation of new form to traditional meaning. Lip service most of the Northern Cheyenne give to Christianity--

Roman Catholicism or Mennonitism. But in the light of their previous experience they have rejected much of Christianity because it does not seem workable or advantageous.

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Not only the older Cheyenne but a goodly number of his sons appear to live in two worlds: the outward culture of the white man and the inner culture of the tribe. Although the Council of Forty-four has been supplanted by the Tribal Council, the old council persists and perpetuates itself every ten years. While band divisions have been forgotten, military societies have become "lodges" and three of them--the Foxes, the Elks, and the Crazy Dogs--are represented on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. Women's guilds are gone; nothing comparable has taken their place in Cheyenne life.

Murder is rare on the reservation--the old attitude prevails. If one Cheyenne has the blood of another tribal member on his hands, he must be exiled from the tribe and the Arrows renewed. Certain aspects of the old life cycle persist; where changes have occurred, the present-day Cheyenne believe that the change has brought no benefit. Education is particularly distressing in the modern manner, for the old concepts of teaching manners and morals has been replaced by formalized study. And that study has not benefitted the young Cheyenne.

Although the Medicine Arrows are with the Southern Cheyenne in Oklahoma, their significance is not forgotten. Twice within recent years, southern tribal leaders have brought the Arrows to Montana for a renewal ceremony. Especially significant to the Northern Cheyenne is the Sacred Hat, now resting in Birney. Keeperless (for no woman can be the rightful Keeper) the Hat is in the temporary custody of Josie Headswift because no

Cheyenne will accept the responsibility of its care. Thus the Hat poses a serious problem to the tribe. Spirits and ghosts prevail. All of the older men are familiar with encounters that prove the existence of spirits and ghosts, and the younger men seem prone to accept the belief.

Thus the Northern Cheyenne reflects upon the greatness of his past--his military prowess, his well-run economy, his political organization, his religion, his education, and all of the details of the life that, in memory at least, worked to the advantage of the tribal members. Despite the programs and the policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the exhortations of the Christian churches, the educational facilities of the schools, the resources of the white man's technology, the Northern Cheyenne seems not yet convinced that he has gained from his associations in the white man's world.

The Cheyenne is a pragmatist. His history shows his ability to change. The varying culture patterns that are apparent in a study of his life since 1670 indicates many changes, but those changes are noticeable only when the change is advantageous to him. If he has been almost static during the last eighty years, if he lives in a border-line culture between two worlds, if he is an enigma to those who try to work with him and to understand him, then it is because he has rejected that which to him has seemed unworkable and disadvantageous. And in doing that, he is one with nonliterate peoples the world over. But in his tenaciousness, he is unique. It distinguishes him from the Plains Indians of Montana and of North America. It keeps him an Indian.

The End

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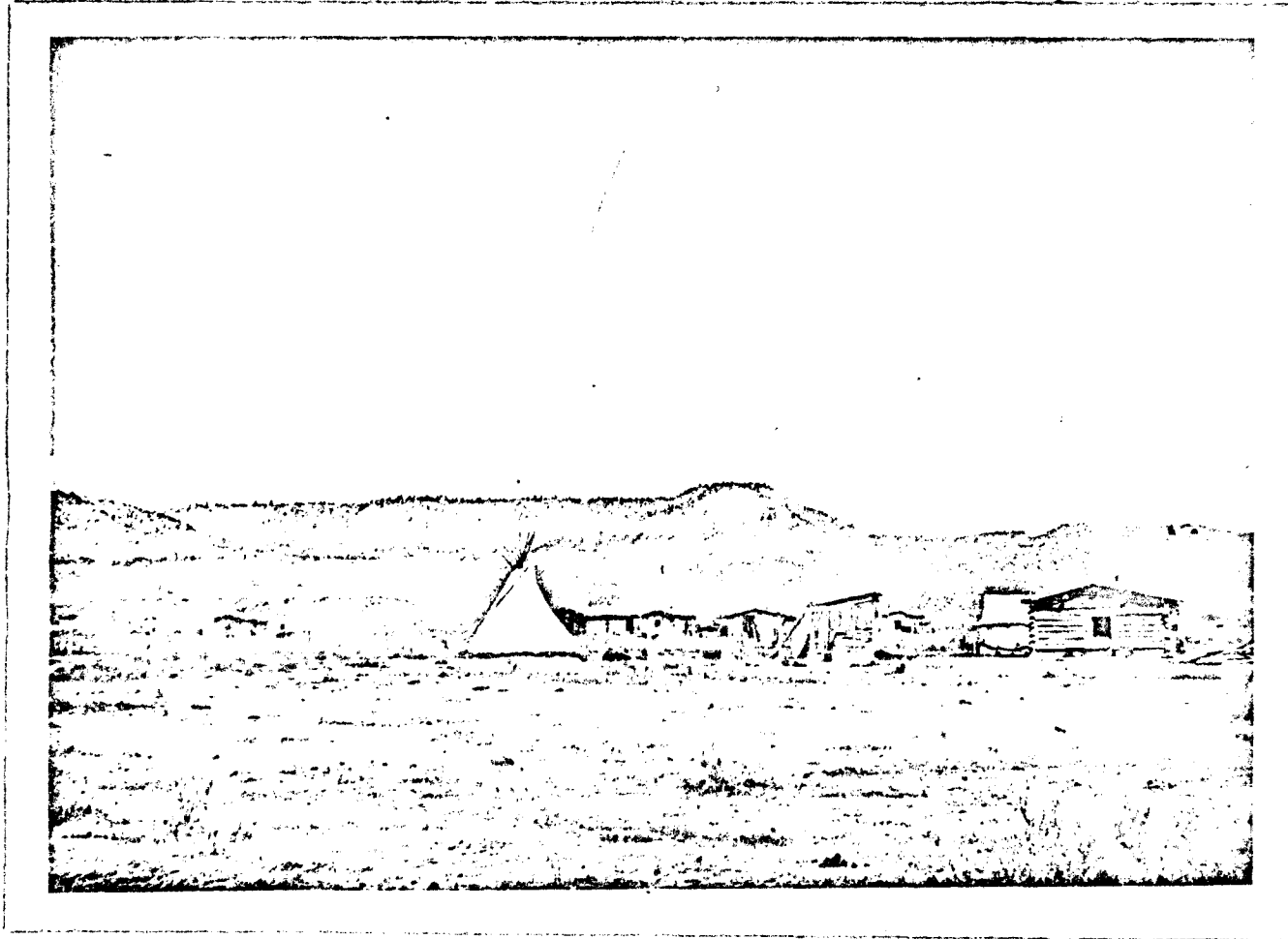


Group Interview: Left to right, John Stands-in-Timber, Wilson Pine,  
Charles Kills Night, Tom Medicine Top.



Charles Sitting Man of Ashland, Montana. At the age of eight, he was camped with his family along the Little Big Horn, and remembers the excitement, the noise, and the confusion of the Custer attack. Photo taken by author, August, 1955.

III



The tipi housing the Sacred Hat in Birney, Montana.