Chapter 5

Cheyenne Ethnohistory and Historical Ethnography

5.1 Introduction

The word Cheyenne is of foreign origin, derived from the Dakota word *sha-hi'ye-la*, meaning "Red Talkers" or "People of an alien speech". Aboriginally, the Cheyenne refer to themselves as *Tse-tsehese-staestse* or "People."[1] The linguistic distinction between the Northern Cheyenne and their Southern Cheyenne relatives living today in western Oklahoma reflect their social separation that began during the late 1820's. The fissioning of the Cheyenne into northern and southern tribal divisions as we discussed in Chapter Two, was a direct result of European contact.

The Cheyenne speak an Algonquian language, one of five Algonquian languages spoken on the Great Plains.[2] Despite belonging to the same language family, these languages are considerably differentiated making them mutually unintelligible. Before the pre-reservation period, there existed at least two major dialects. Cheyenne was spoken by the *Tse-tsehese-staestse* proper and *Suhtai* was spoken by the *So?taa?e*, a related tribal-nation that was incorporated eventually into the Cheyenne. The Arapaho also were close social and cultural neighbors, though strong ties historically were also formed with the Teton Sioux, especially among the Northern Cheyenne. Warfare with other neighbors was constant after about 1800, especially with the Crow, Shoshone, Ute, Pawnee, and Kiowa. After 1854, the Cheyenne fought a series of major battles with the United States military, militia, and American settlers before being forced onto their respective reservations.[3]

Numbering about 4000 in historic times, the Cheyenne were about average in size for a Plains tribe until reduced by nineteenth century epidemics and warfare.[4] By the end of the nineteenth century the Cheyenne had undergone major social, political, and economic transformations.[5]

5.2 Culture History

Associating the Cheyenne with specific prehistoric traditions is difficult because of the scarcity of knowledge concerning them prior to written records. According to oral tradition, in conjunction with the earliest historical accounts, the Cheyenne originally lived west of the Great Lakes in present Minnesota. They lived in bark-covered lodges, subsisting on wild rice, gathering wild plants, horticulture, and hunting game. Occasionally hunters would travel to the edge of the plains and hunt bison.[6]

Pressured by the Chippewa and Assiniboine, armed with guns by fur traders, Cheyenne bands migrated west, eventually reaching the Missouri River. Individual bands arrived on the Northern Plains in a broad front over more than a century. Cheyenne oral tradition notes that these early migrants arrived on foot, perhaps as early as the mid-seventeenth century.

Some bands settled in earth lodge communities along the Middle Missouri River and other river systems. The shift from hunting and gathering to settled horticultural existence among well-established Missouri River tribes provided important stimulus to cultural growth and change. New political skills were acquired, and major ceremonial complexes adapted to Cheyenne use. The Cheyenne council of chiefs probably originated here; and the Mandan *Okipa* ceremony and Hidatsa Sacred Arrow traditions would influence their ceremonial complex and political structures.[7]

As some Cheyenne bands lived along the Middle Missouri river system, other Cheyenne bands continued to move west, adopting a nomadic life way, oriented toward bison. Gradually the Middle Missouri River villages abandoned their life way, joining

the nomadic Cheyenne bands. Three factors contributed to this transformation. First the Cheyenne traded and raided for horses from the Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache giving them increased access to rich game resources not firmly claimed by other tribes. Second the trading opportunities were better on the Great Plains, as the Arikara, Mandan and Hidatsa controlled the Middle Missouri trade. Last, their move to the Great Plains allowed them to escape the increasing hostilities of the Dakota Sioux bands.[8] The Cheyenne moved into a new ecological setting for which they were well equipped with new technology, especially horses and guns and, new social organization based upon fresh political and religious ideas.

By at least 1760, Cheyenne bands were unified in the vicinity of the Black Hills, South Dakota. It is at this location that Cheyenne religious and political structures took their historical form. According to oral traditions, a prophet, Sweet medicine, brought the Cheyenne the Sacred Arrows and mandates for living. It is during this time that the Cheyenne also encountered the *So?taa?e*, a closely related Algonquian tribe, who brought the Sacred Hat and the Sun Dance.[9] A buffalo economy permeated Cheyenne life and institutions, as did warfare with other Plains tribes. From the Black Hills the Cheyenne actively extended their territory south and west between the forks of the Platte River. Their invasion prompted wars with the Shoshone, Pawnee, and later, the Crow.

The separation of the Cheyenne into northern and southern divisions began in the early nineteenth century. The building of Bent's Fort and the founding of Fort William in 1834 on the North Platte River accelerated the fission.[10] Other factors also contributed to the Cheyenne's permanent division. The opening of the emigrant trails and the associated ecological destruction surrounding the trails, contracting infectious diseases, and differing political economic interests further forced the Cheyenne separation.[11] The 1851 treaty set the southern and northern Cheyenne divisions as politically distinct.[12]

The territory used by the Cheyenne changed rapidly since their migration to the Great Plains. By the 1830s, the territory occupied by the Cheyenne encompassed portions of the western Dakotas and eastern Montana, most of eastern Colorado,

Nebraska, Kansas, and Wyoming, into western Oklahoma. The Cheyenne often shared portions of this area with the Arapaho and Teton Dakota bands further north.[13] At times, they ranged further, sending occasional war parties north into Canada and south into Mexico for horses and captives.

The Rocky Mountains formed their historic western boundary. The area varies considerably, but it is generally marked by continental climate: hot summers and cold winters, with rainfall between eleven and fourteen inches. Short-grass Plains vegetation, broken by pine-covered heights in many areas, is characteristic, supporting the varied grazing fauna upon which the people depended for their livelihood.

5.3 Subsistence Economy

The focus of Cheyenne subsistence economy was centered on harvesting bison, other game, and gathering of available plant resources. Horticulture was once a major activity was largely abandoned after the adoption of the horse. Although some Cheyenne continued to practice casual horticulture after becoming nomadic, the practice was discontinued by the mid-nineteenth century.[14]

After the adoption of horses, hunting bison was conducted using two primary methods. Most of the year, when the bands scattered themselves across the landscape, small hunting groups or individuals would use the chase method.[15]

During the summer, when the Cheyenne gathered to conduct ceremonies, the leaders would organize a large communal endeavor. At this time, the organization and regulation of the hunt was under the strict jurisdiction of one of the military or men's societies. Another policed communal hunt would be done in the fall to gather supplies for winter camp and acquire prime bison robes for the spring trade.[16]

Although there were rare exceptions, hunting was considered men's work. During the hunt, mounted men would run into the herds, shooting bow and arrow or lancing the

bison. Aside from this method, the Cheyenne also impounded bison, used bison jumps, and during the winter, drive them into deep snowdrifts. These methods of hunting although were infrequent.[17]

While bison remained central to the Cheyenne subsistence economy, deer, elk, wild sheep, and antelope were also important sources of food and skins. Individuals usually hunted these animals, but large-scale cooperative drives did occur when the opportunity or necessity arose. Smaller animal species also were killed either for food as well as for their parts to make items. Their feathers, especially those of eagles, which required long hilltop vigils by solitary hunters in blinds baited with game.[18]

Trading and raiding emerged as important economic activities. Horses were not only valuable tool to carry out their life way, horses evolved into an important form of wealth. Central to Cheyenne economic life is the entire complex of raiding and warfare. Although the Cheyenne cared for and bred horses to increase their herds, raiding for them from enemy tribes, Anglos, and Mexicans became the most expedient way to increase your wealth. A man's and a family's wealth and status generally were reckoned in horses. While horseflesh served as a social indicator of status, unlike the Kiowa, an incipient class system did not develop among the Cheyenne, although some distinctions were beginning to appear in their society.[19]

By 1830 the Cheyenne occupied a central position in the trade network across the Great Plains, becoming a major conduit for horses and other goods. The Cheyenne functioned as middlemen between village tribes of the Middle Missouri River and tribes of the interior plains.[20]

Labor activities were divided and assigned on the basis of sex and age. Women's customary labor also involved making and moving the lodge, which was owned by women. Maintaining the tipi cover, making furnishings, and manufacturing and decorating clothing was central to women's household activities. Women decorated parfleches and tipi liners with geometric designs.[21]

Although hunting is considered primarily a man's activity, men and women shared butchering. Once the butchering was completed, the drying and storage of the meat was exclusively women's work. Women processed the hides and skins for clothing, lodge covers, and robes for trade. They also gathered fuel and carried water. Another aspect of women's labor is childcare.[22]

A critical labor activity performed by women was the gathering of wild plant foods. The most important root crops routinely harvested were the "Indian turnip" (*Psoralea lanceolata*), chokecherries (*Prunus melanocarpa*), and plums (*Prunus americana*). In season, a variety of wild plants and fruits were gathered in quantities. While some fruits were consumed immediately, most would be dried or mixed with meat and fat to make pemmican.[23] Aside from these major wild food sources, other plants were gathered for various purposes.[24]

Men made weapons, horse gear, ceremonial equipment and all material items associated with a man's activities. Men decorated bison robes, after being processed by women, with pictographs made by women. Men also made and painted war shields, tipi covers, and other goods that reflected personal exploits or medicine ways. After the acquisition of trade goods, ledger books were used in a similar manner.[25] In addition to hunting and warfare, participation in ceremonial life, including doctoring the sick, required the construction and maintenance of ceremonial items.

The sexual division of labor was reflected in how these items were adorned and decorated for use. Most items constructed by men were painted with realistic figures or designs. Bison robes for example, often were painted with of men and animals, documenting the wearer's personal exploits. Although manufactured by women, lodge covers also were adorned with realistic portrayals, reflecting the owner's prestige and societal status.

Women, more often than not, decorated their material goods using geometric designs or symbols. Parfleches, clothing, moccasins, and an array of other material goods were painted in this fashion.[26]

With respect to age, generally older people performed more skill oriented tasks reflective of the experience. Younger boys herded horses, assisted their older relatives, and prepared for adulthood. Girls assisted the mothers, aunts, and ad grandmothers in their labor tasks.[27]

5.4 Technology and Material Culture

By the early nineteenth century Cheyenne material culture, similar to other regional tribes, had been affected by the introduction of goods of European origin. The Cheyenne had access through trade at Bent's Fort, Fort William, and other posts access to trade guns, ammunition, knives, metal arrow points, awls, needles, kettles, cloth, and glass beads among other items. Despite the addition of these goods to the cultural inventory, much however, was still made from native materials.[28]

Before the bison's extinction, the Cheyenne lodge used a three-pole base, usually of lodgepole pine. The lodge cover was made from as many as 21 carefully tailored bison skins. Lodge furnishings included decorated skin linings, rush or willow backrests, and skin mattresses, bedding, and various storage containers.[29]

Men's clothing included leggings, shirts, and breechclouts. Women's clothing included dresses and the protective rope or string worn after puberty. Both sexes used moccasins and buffalo robes.[30]

Weapons produced from native materials included bows and arrows, quivers, lances, war clubs, and several kinds of shields. Horses gear included saddles, bridles, ropes, and the travois used for transportation. Baby cradles were made for infants. Pipes were made from bone and from stone (usually red catlinite.) Women's major tools were

root diggers and mauls, as well as four tanning implements: scrapers, fleshers,, abraders, and softening ropes. Trade goods, by the 1830s, had replaced pottery and utensils fashioned from animal materials, e.g. water skins of buffalo hide.[31]

Raw materials were made into items made for games and other amusements. The women's seed game utilized a small basket and marked plum stones. The hand game required marked sticks or bones. A netted wheel was used in a game played by men. Toys included balls, dolls, sleds, and tops. For the "finger game" there was a device for tossing and impaling the bones of a deer. Musical instruments, played chiefly by men, included drums, rattles, wing-bone whistles, and wooden flutes. Many of these things were made and used well into the reservation period.[32]

5.5 Life Cycle

Among the Cheyenne, ritual activity marking life cycle events was not strongly developed, although certain traditions were observed at birth, puberty, and death. When giving birth, other women or sometimes midwives attended to mother while in labor. Men remained away during the birth. The umbilical cord, when dried and fell off it was dried. The umbilical cord was preserved in a small buckskin bag, often nicely beaded, and saved until the child grew up. Infants were carried on cradleboards or in blanket slings upon their mother's backs. By six months of age, the child's ears were pierced ceremonially at some public gathering, and gifts were given away in his honor. At five or six years he received a formal name, drawn from his father's relatives. Additional names were often received at a later time, in honor of some noteworthy achievement.[33]

There was no immediate presentation or naming ceremony for the infant. Informal baby names and nicknames continued in use for several years. Sometime after the infant's first birthday up to age five or six, the child's ears were pierced in a ceremony. Gifts were publicly given in the child's honor. At this time, the child received a formal name. Traditionally the father's oldest sister selected the name. The name although was always drawn from the father's side. Over a person's life, men and

women could publicly change their name to reflect an honor or noteworthy achievement.[34]

At puberty, different customs prevailed for boys and for girls. With the onset of puberty, a horse was given away in honor of a young girl's first menstrual period. Isolation in a menstrual lodge was required and each month thereafter. Afterwards, young girls were carefully chaperoned everywhere, since virginity was expected. She also was given a protective rope or chastity belt that was worn from puberty until marriage. After marriage she was expected to wear the belt when her husband was away hunting or on raiding parties. The Cheyenne emphasis on women's virginity and chastity was unique among most Plains tribes.[35]

For boys there was no formal ceremony marking the transition to adulthood. Cheyenne boys were evaluated based on adult accomplishments. Boys were urged to become hunters and warriors very early. Many boys began going on war parties at age 12 or 13 and hunting as soon as possible. If they were successful in their effort, his male relatives would give a horse away in their honor or the boy may receive a new formal name to mark the accomplishment. Many adolescent boys also would vision quest to seek their personal medicine for spiritual power, most often seeking visions would be as young adults.[36]

Death was not marked by major ceremony. The deceased, finely dressed, lashed in robes or blankets and carried by travois to the burial location. Preferred burial locations were cliff faces or rock crevices. However tree burials and scaffold burials did occur. On select occasions a tipi was erected and used, but usually was reserved for a prominent person. Personal effects were left with the body. Common grave offerings included weapons, smoking gear, and other personal possessions. A horse was sometimes killed in honor of an important warrior at the burial site.[37] Men killed in warfare were generally left on the prairie to be consumed by predators. The spirit of the dead was believed to travel up the "Hanging Road or Milky Way to *Seyan*, the camp of the dead in the stars.

Women cut their hair and gashed themselves in mourning, especially if the deceased had been killed in war. Men loosened their hair and wore old clothing to show their grief. All possessions of the bereaved household were given away, leaving the mourning family destitute. After a year, the household was refurnished with gifts of necessary items from other families.[38]

5.6 Marriage, Family, and Kinship

According to Cheyenne tradition, marriage to a relative of any degree was forbidden. The marriage prohibition often dictated that marriage between different bands. The practice of band exogamy predominated until it was altered by warfare and introduced diseases. However, it remained the ideal marital pattern.[39]

Among the Cheyenne, premarital sex was not permitted. Courtship was a formal affair, often lasting several years. Young Cheyenne women, to protect their reputation and their chastity, were carefully chaperoned by their relatives. Interested suitors therefore had to wait sometimes for hours for brief talks with them or rendezvous with the young woman.[40]

Traditionally a young man delayed his first marriage until he established himself as independent and war record. Once a young man made his intentions known to his family and if the family approved his choice, they assisted him in making a formal proposal. Horses loaded with gifts were tied outside the woman's lodge. If the horses and gifts were returned, it meant her family disapproved his proposal of marriage. If the marriage was acceptable, reciprocal gifts were given to the groom's family. In making the final decision concerning who a woman should marry, a woman's brother had great authority. Often, marriage was to one of his military society "brothers."[41]

If the proposal was accepted, the marriage took place shortly afterwards. As part of the ceremony, the bride's relatives returned gifts including additional horses. On one

of the horses, the young woman was led to her mother-in law's lodge. Here her husband's female kin, who made her wedding outfit, dressed her. His kinswomen also made for a new lodge and most of its furnishings for the new household.

After the wedding, it was customary for the newly wed couple to camp for a period of time next to the bride's family or matrilocal residence. Over the course of their history the Cheyenne changed postmarital residence patterns. During the bison robe period, bands tended to be matrilocal so sisters could stay together with their mother after marriage. As warfare increased, especially with Anglo Americans, some bands shifted to a patrilocal pattern so brothers, who were members of the same military society, could remain together.[42]

While living among his wife's kin, the husband followed the practice of avoiding his mother-in-law unless particular gift exchanges took place. The social taboo prevented him from speaking or interacting with her, unless particular gift exchanges took place. The bride also avoided her father-in-law. Within Cheyenne society, the greatest degree of social freedom existed among in-laws who might later marry. A man for example could freely interact with and joke with his sisters-in law. Conversely, a woman with her brothers-in law could do the same. In these social relationships, the joking could be coarse, sometimes sexually explicit. Within this kin arena, customary Cheyenne decorum was set aside.[43]

If a Cheyenne man decided to marry another wife, the second wife usually was the younger sister of the first wife. Sororal polygyny had a number of advantages, the most important being the strong alliance created between the two families. Wealthy men as well as political leaders most often had multiple wives, while most other Cheyenne unions remained monogamous.[44] The Cheyenne also practiced the levirate, whereby a widower married his dead wife's sister. A widow often married a dead husband's brother.

Either a wife or a husband could dissolve a marriage. A woman could terminate her union by eloping with another man or announce her intentions to marry another man.

Whether by elopement or the wife leaving to marry someone else, the new husband was expected to make a settlement of property with the former husband, usually involving horses.[45]

A husband could choose "throw away" his wife. At a public gathering he danced to a special song. As the song began to close, he hit the drum on the final beat while releasing the drumstick or throw his stick into the crowd. By throwing the drumstick into the crowd, he announced publicly that he was disposing of his wife. It was considered a public embarrassment to be thrown away in this manner. Such an event permanently disgraced her.[46]

The Cheyenne kinship system was bilateral, recognizing relatives through the father's ad mother's line. Among the nineteenth century Cheyenne there were no longer any clans or unilineal descent groups. Kinship terminology was bifurcate merging for the parent's generation with the term for "my father" (*neho?eehe*) extended to father's brothers and the term for "my mother" (*nahko?eehe*) extended to mother's sisters. However, fathers' sisters and mothers' brothers were called by distinct terms.[47]

Special terms were used for older brothers and sisters as opposed to younger siblings. Respect and avoidance also prevailed between a brother and his sisters. Cousins were equated with siblings. Brothers' children were termed "son" and "daughter", but sister's children were "nephew" and "niece". Equivalence between brothers was stressed, creating a wide-ranging and flexible group of male relatives. These male relatives cooperated in hunting and warfare. All respected older people were addressed as grandfather and grandmother. On the generational level of the grandparents, there is no distinction other than sex and two descending generations below ego there are no distinctions whatsoever. This kin system created a flexible kin network that was ideal for carrying out cooperative endeavors.[48]

5.7 Social and Political Organization

The seasonal cycle and environment profoundly affected Cheyenne social arrangements. For the majority of the year, the tribe split into bands, each of which had a customary wintering ground along river systems. Each band (*Manaho*) contained several extended families (*VeestOtse*), living in adjacent lodges.[49]

Unique to Cheyenne social structure was the ten named bands that formed the foundation for their political structure. Every band had customary territories and favored wintering locations. Before being fragmented by episodes of infectious diseases and later, wars with the United States government, each band had usual camping places in the tribal circle, which symbolically represented a tipi door with an opening in the east or facing Bear Butte.[50] Through time, depending on historical and political circumstances bands fission and fused together. During such events, the bands were renamed.[51]

Cheyenne political structure was founded according to the instructions of Sweet Medicine. Sweet Medicine abolished the old system of paramount chiefs and established new men's societies and a chief's society. Uniting the bands under this new system he made the chief's responsible for their domestic well-being. He also decreed that the Sacred Arrows must be ritually renewed to atone for the killing of another Cheyenne. Sweet Medicine gave the responsibility of declaring war to the men's societies, keeping civil and military leadership.[52]

For electing the chiefs, each of the traditional bands was entitled to elect four tribal chiefs to ten-year terms. These chiefs, with four held over from the previous term, constituted the Council of 44. Additionally a Sweet Medicine Chief, custodian of a sacred medicine root, also was a council member. As a political council, they met as a body every summer making decisions about tribal movements, hunting locations, scheduling ceremonies, issues of warfare, and settle disputes. Tribal chiefs were proven warriors, but had to refrain from their war status. The chiefs were considered peace chiefs, separate from the military society leadership. Camp police and ceremonial assistance

were selected by the chiefs to enforce their decisions. Position ensured the integration and harmony of the entire tribe. The Arrow Keeper, never held daily political authority, but could intervene into any circumstance to resolve it.

Six men's societies were an important component of Cheyenne politics. Most men joined one of these societies, usually the one of their father. They were not secret but open in membership and conduct. The members were divided most of the year by band movements. Functioned most actively during the summer, especially when the tribe came together. To enforce their decisions about such matters, the Council called upon the Military Societies. Men's society members acted as the military arm of the Cheyenne people, fighting enemies, acting as camp police, maintaining internal order, assisting in ceremonials, and enforcing the decision of the Council of 44. They had shared ceremonies, rituals, songs, dances, regalia, and comradeship. Several societies had honorary membership of young women, selected for being virtuous in action and behavior. The women also had to be virgins. The women assisted the men.[53]

Originally only four Cheyenne men's societies existed. Sweet Medicine brought the Kit Foxes, Elks, Dog Soldiers, and Red Shields to the Cheyenne. Around 1815, the Cheyenne constituted a fifth military society, the Bowstrings or Wolf Warriors. The society was found primarily among the Southern Cheyenne. Among the Northern Cheyenne, the Crazy Dogs were organized about 1833.[54]

The Council Chiefs used the military society membership as a police arm to enforce decisions concerning hunting and warfare. They were evolving by 1850 into an important force in the formulation and execution of "public law" (involving the intervention of public officials in dispute settlement). Cheyenne law had "teeth": transgressors could be military societies were key agents here, as well as in formulating legal principles.[55]

In addition to the men's societies, there were the Contraries: a warrior group dedicated to heroism in battle, celibacy, and unusual speech or behavior utilizing reversed meanings.

A Contrary carried a special bow-lance in battle and was subject to "no-flight" rules; i.e. he might not retreat from a battle position unless ritually released. Only a few existed in the tribe at one time.[56]

Cheyenne men and women also had numerous other associations organized usually around a specific purpose. Men's associations focused chiefly upon warfare and healing. These were secret societies. Associations such as the Buffalo Men,, the Horse Men, Deer Men, and numerous others had spiritual powers and conducted rituals to heal.[57]

Women had their own associations, not based on kin relations but of shared skills, usually making material items for camp use or trade. There were women's societies for moccasin making, manufacturing lodge covers, or trade articles. The most honored and important was the Quilling Society. Only its members to join recruited the women of the greatest skill and achievement.[58]

5.8 Religion and Ideology

The Cheyenne worldview is a dynamic, operative system with structurally interrelated components. The philosophical foundations of Cheyenne religious thought derive from the prophesies of Sweet Medicine and other sacred oral traditions. It was Sweet Medicine, who gave the Cheyenne a social contract wherein all people comprehend their relationship to society and the universe. These relationships must be maintained and expressed through the performance of ceremonies. The sacred and profane universe are structured and maintained by these ceremonies. According to Cheyenne belief, the renewal and structuring of the Cheyenne universe is necessary if the Cheyenne world is to continue through time. If their sacred relationship with their world is not maintained, the Cheyenne people will face eventually the destruction of their society and their universe.

Hestanov is the term for their universe. This universe is divided further into the World Above and World Below. Bridging these two worlds is *Vostostoom*, the Earth-Surface Dome.[59] It is the region beginning on the grass surface of the earth and ending where the roots of trees and grasses terminate. The zenith was the home of the Creator (*Ma?heo?o*), while the nadir embodied the female principle (*He? estOtse*). Their existed a spiritual and material continuum from zenith to nadir, with the nadir associated with the material substance and the zenith spiritual.

Below *Vostostoom* is the Deep Earth or *Nsthoman*. It is the region where roots of trees and grasses end marks both the surface of the world below and the lowest part of the earth surface dome, the transition zone of the world above. *Nsthoman* is considered the substance for physical life. Penetrating deep earth are sacred caves (*maheonoxsz*) where humans and Cheyenne prophets such as Sweet Medicine sought spiritual knowledge and received sacred gifts from powerful spirit beings. Sacred caves are models for spirit lodges, such the Wolf Lodge of the Massaum ceremony or the New Life Lodge (Sun Dance). The most prominent cave is located at Bear Butte, where the spirits of all animal species reside underground and they are released in physical form[60]

At the horizon where the earth and sky meet in each of the four directions a spirit lived (*maiyuno*). Each of the realms is associated with various creatures, colors, and other phenomena. They provide order and connections between the sacred and profane worlds. Plant and animal forms are intertwined with the levels of the universe, with social order, and reproduction of life.

The creator or *Ma?heo?* is the source of energy (*ExAhestOtse*) in the universe, which is transmitted to other anthropomorphic spirits, including the sun, moon, four directions, animals, birds, and plants. Humans can share in this energy through supplication, prayer, sacrifice (fasting), participating in sacred ceremonies. Doctors for example, gained powers to heal by establishing certain relationships with particular spirits, animals, or plants. The cosmic energy was understood to be finite, becoming

exhausted by winter's end---requiring renewal by sacred ceremonies held during the summer.[61]

Although there were numerous minor ceremonies and rituals, the Cheyenne conducted four major tribal ceremonies. The most important was the Arrow Renewal ceremony. The ceremonial performance rested on the personal biography of Sweet Medicine (*Motse?eoeve*), who came to the Cheyenne when they lived in the Black Hills. He brought the spiritual heritage to the tribe. At bear Butte he was taken into a sacred cave by supernatural beings that delivered to him the four Sacred Arrows (*Maahotse*). These included two man arrows for warfare and two buffalo arrows to provide sustenance through hunting.[62]

The renewal of the *Maahotse* was the most important of all ceremonies. It took place almost every summer. The Sacred Arrows would be renewed more frequently out of necessity. One reason for a renewal ceremony was homicide particularly the killing of a Cheyenne at the hands of another Cheyenne. Intra-tribal killing was considered a criminal offense, defiling the arrows, driving away game, and jeopardizing the life and health of all Cheyenne. It was further believed that the victim's putrefying flesh corrupted not only the murderer, who carried a stench from his act, but the entire Cheyenne tribe. This societal chaos and pollution would not be corrected until the Arrow Keeper conducted the renewal ceremony. Thus the Arrow renewal ceremony took place almost every summer or more than once if a homicide occurred. On other occasions a pledger could ask to have the arrows renewed to halt family misfortune or tragedy.[63]

At the renewal camp every person was required to keep silent for four days of the ceremony. During which the Arrow keeper would perform the renewal as prayers were repeated for the people. At the conclusion of the ceremony men, never women were invited to view the arrows after which they were returned to the Arrow Tipi.[64]

Because of their sacred powers surrounding warfare through the man arrows, if the entire Cheyenne wanted to annihilate an enemy, *Maahotse* would be carried into the

battle, carried on the lance of a chosen warrior. Over the course of their history, *Maahotse* was carried six times into battle against enemies.[65]

The "New Life Lodge," (*HestOsanestOste; Hoxeheome*) or Sun Dance was held each summer. It was a world renewal ceremony. During the ceremony the universe is symbolically unveiled. Sacred actions and prayers were done for the welfare of the people, to increase the resources they require, and to establish the world order.[66] A leading priest instructed the main "pledger" of the ceremony. Other priests assisted in events lasting a week or more. Each dancer paid an experienced instructor to help him throughout. Procedure included preparation of materials in the *Noceom* or Lone Tepee; construction of the Sun Dance lodge around a central pole; construction of an earth altar; and periods of singing and dancing. During four days the participants took neither food nor water. Highlights included sunrise dances, and the exhibition of personal charms and bravery on the last day. Self-torture occurred at this time: dancers' chests were pierced by their assistants, and fastened by thongs to the center pole. They hung back upon these thongs until the flesh gave way.[67] Despite the Sun Dance's religious complexity, *Maahotse* and *Esevone* remain the most venerated Cheyenne sacred objects. Originally, *Isiwun* was a *So?taa?e* sacred object, therefore the "Hat Keeper" by tradition has been of *So?taa?e* descent.

A major sacred entity guiding Cheyenne life is the Sacred Medicine Hat. The Sacred Hat (*Esevone*), which is a headdress made of a buffalo hide and horns. The Medicine Hat was a horned cap or headdress of buffalo hide. Kept in a special tepee by a priest of Suhtai descent, it was important to women, and to a steady food supply--especially of buffalo. The Hat bundle was opened occasionally, in ceremonies now forgotten. It shared honors with the Arrows upon occasion, as a talisman to be carried into battle. After tribal division it remained in the North.[68]

The final ceremony was the Massaum (*mAsEhaome*) or "Crazy Lodge." The ceremony portrays the tradition of Yellow-Haired Girl, who taught the Cheyenne how to obtain the animals that they required for food, clothing, and religious purposes. During

the ceremony, medicine men and women dressed in outfits emblematic of various animals—representing the healing powers that they possessed as shamans.[69]

Beyond these four major complexes, Cheyenne religion included numerous aspects of healing and medicine. Ritual was customary in such things as preparation for warfare; tanning of a white buffalo hide; observation of taboos; and the offering of individual sacrifice.[70]

Supernatural belief covered a tremendous area. Spiritual beings included deities, ghosts, souls of the departed, and water spirits and monsters. Animals were believed to possess many powers. Amulets and charms were used widely. Such beliefs were embedded in a variety of tales told to children, and repeated throughout life.[71] The Cheyenne also possessed a rich and diverse body of oral traditions. Some traditions were sacred in nature, but others were for instruction of children. Still others were told for entertainment and social purposes.[72]

5.9 Conclusion

As with other aspects of pre-reservation life ways, the onset of the reservation period brought religious changes. Mennonite, Roman Catholic missionaries, and the Society of Friends introduced Christianity, as missionaries and government officials intermittently oppressed traditional Cheyenne religious practices and beliefs.[73]

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