

# 1. Description

## 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

Cheyenne / Algic; Algonquian; Plains; Cheyenne (1)

## 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

ISO 639-3: chy (1)

## 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

In modern times the Northern Cheyenne reside on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation (Latitude: 45.532183 - Longitude: -106.679892) located around the small towns of Lame Deer and Ashland, Montana, in parts of Rosebud and Big Horn counties and The Cheyenne River Indian Reservation (Latitude: 45.08333 : Longitude: -101.12472 ) covering almost all of Dewey and Ziebach counties in South Dakota. In addition, many small parcels of off-reservation trust land are located in Stanley, Haakon, and Meade counties. The Southern Cheyenne reside on the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Reservation (Latitude: 35.6156047 - Longitude: -97.9944958) in Oklahoma (10). At the time of contact with Americans the Cheyenne cut a wide swath throughout the Great Plains with various bands ranging from South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and Oklahoma.

## 1.4 Brief history:

The Cheyenne are one of three groups of Native Americans of the Western Plains belonging to the Algonquian family. They refer to themselves as Tsistsistas meaning "The People" and several hundred years before settling in the Great Plains they resided in the woodland country of the western Great Lakes (likely in the vicinity of Lake Superior). Towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century they migrated westward, settling on the Red River where it forms the border between Minnesota and the Dakotas. For exactly how long is not known, but for several years they lived on the banks of the river, cultivating the ground and occupying earth lodges similar to those of the Rees and the Mandans, the latter of which they are known to have had a peaceful alliance with even after moving further west into the Plains (11, pg. 160). It is believed to be around this time that they learned to grow squash, corn, and beans and other agricultural products from their neighbors the Mandans and Rees. With the introduction of the horse the Cheyenne abandoned their sedentary lifestyle, pushing further into the Plains grasping a nomadic hunting and gathering lifestyle (3, pg. 1-2). Around 1830 the Cheyenne divided into the Northern and Southern Cheyenne, with the latter traveling Southwest into Colorado and Oklahoma and the former staying in the Dakotas. Constant contact remained between the two divisions as the two moved freely between the two with Northerners staying in Southern camps and vice versa. It was also not uncommon for family members to live in both camps. Formal relations with the U.S. government were marked by the signing of the 1825 Friendship Treaty and White-Cheyenne relations were generally amicable until the 1840s. During this decade, the Cheyenne witnessed a flood of Whites migrating along the Oregon Trail and the destruction of their environment and bison herds; they also contracted infectious diseases at this time. The Cheyenne and their allies responded by conducting a series of minor raids. To end Indian-Indian and Indian-White hostilities, the U.S. government negotiated the Treaty of 1851, making the division Between the Northern and Southern Cheyenne permanent. The reduction of their land base, the continuing invasion of Whites, and the construction of forts prompted the Cheyenne to fight. For the next twenty-five years, they waged war against the U.S. military and White settlers; the Southern Cheyenne surrendered in 1875 and Northern Cheyenne resistance ended in 1879. With the Southern Cheyenne settled on their reservation, the U.S. government attempted to reconsolidate the tribe by forcibly removing the Northern Cheyenne to Indian Territory. Culturally alienated, starving, and infected with dysentery, measles, and malaria, 257 Northern Cheyenne broke out and avoided capture until crossing the North Platte River. There they divided into two bands, both of which were eventually captured, with the remnants allowed to relocate in 1881 from Indian Territory to Pine Ridge Agency. In 1884, the Tongue River Reservation was established by executive order in southeastern Montana and all the Northern Cheyenne were reunited (4, pg. 1-10).

## 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

## 1.6 Ecology:

## 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

Currently the Northern Cheyenne have a registered tribal population of 9,970 with 4868 residing on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation (14). The Southern Cheyenne residing on the Cheyenne Arapaho Tribes Reservation have a combined population of 12,130, as of 2008. In 2003, about 8,000 of these identified as Cheyenne. With continued intermarriage, it is difficult to separate the tribes administratively (15).

# 2. Economy

## 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

## 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

## 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

Their main weapons prior to the arrival of Europeans and firearms and even after were the bow and arrow, a lance, a knife, and a shield for protection. The bows were made of wood or an animal's horn (buffalo, elk, and mt. sheep). *Juniperus Scopulorum*, a certain variation of a juniper tree was regarded as the best for furnishing the best wood for making bows. Knives were very rudimentary often made out of the strongest stone they could find (usually flint) or from bison ribs - the dorsal spines of buffalo with handles tied to them and the edge of the bone being rubbed down until it was sharp. The lance was a wooden staff generally six to seven feet long armed with a projectile point. Pre contact the point was a piece of flint or stone chipped into a point; post contact the projectile point could range from the blade of an old saber or bayonet to some piece of iron or steel that they shaped into a point, which were bound to the shaft with sinew. Above all else was the shield, which was simply a circular piece of dried and toughened bull hide. They were strong enough to deflect arrow and balls from smoothbore rifles and were originally carried

for that reason, however, with the advent of more advanced firearms the shield took on more of a spiritual protection as it was believed to possess strong spiritual powers such as endowing its owner with the powers of the animals that were painted on it. For example a shield adorned with eagle feathers was believed to give its owner the swiftness and courage of the bird (4, pg. 171-188).

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Men and women cooperate to supply food; however there is a very strict division of labor. With women as vegetable gatherers and makers of the home; whereas, men hunt, make weapons and wage war. Young boys and elder men in the household were often in charge of caring for the horse herd, while the elder women relieved the mother of child-care duties (3, pg. 59 & 64).

2.6 Land tenure:

Traditionally, any Cheyenne had the right to resources within their territory. Although portions of their territory were contested by other Plains Indians, the Cheyenne claimed and actively defended the region from the Yellowstone River to the Arkansas River. Within this territory, each band occupied and utilized a favored location, usually near major rivers (13).

2.7 Ceramics:

The Cheyenne were traditional without cooking baskets relying instead on the hide and/or paunch of an animal which either lined a hole in the ground or was suspended bag-like from sticks set in the ground above the fire. At some point in their early history they learned to make crude, rudimentary pottery. However, with the advent of trade with Europeans this practice soon passed out of use with only second hand accounts of how they were made. Broken Jaw Woman had this to say, "*My mother used to tell me of the time when we made earthen pots. They used a kind of stone, pounding it all up fine, and after mixing this with clay they wet the mixture with water. Taking a lump of the mixture they shaped it with their hands, first making a depression in it and with a fine smooth stick they patted out the inside of this depression until it was large enough; then with the stick they patted it all over the outside surface, and smoothed it. They fixed pieces on the upper part of the clay for handles . . . after the pot was dry they greased it all over inside and out with tallow . . . and covered it over with bark . . . which they set on fire. They let the pots burn until they were red hot and then took the fire away from them and left the pots there to cool slowly.*" (4, pg. 235-236).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

### 3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

### 4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

It **was the custom** that women did not have a second child or subsequent child until the first or youngest child reached ten years of age (4, pg. 149).

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, and dowry:

A male first makes his intentions, to marry, known to his kindred, if they do not agree with the women he has chosen they refuse to assist him; on the other hand if they do agree they will compile items such as clothing, blankets, guns, bows, arrows, and horses, then the most respected elder male or female will lead the horse/s to the selected females families tipi and ask the question (3, pg. 21).

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

Some of a man's personal possessions were buried with him, but all the remaining property was given to nonrelatives to who he was close with. The widow and her children retained nothing (12).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

The Cheyenne referred to homosexuals as "bemaneb", half-man, and half-women. Generally they acted as "doctors" and were highly respected and in some cases served as second wives in a man's household. They were especially sought after for war party due both to their medical skills and b/c they were viewed as entertaining. They were also sought after by suitors as they believed that no girl could resist their potions (3, pg. 77).

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

#### 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

Sexual coercion and rape is virtually non-existent in Cheyenne society, however, there is an institutionalized practice of gang-rape. When a woman is flagrantly adulterous the husband can disown her and “puts her out on the prairie” (any man can have her) he then invites all the unmarried men in his military society to “feast on the prairie”. There the woman is raped by each of them in turn (3, pg. 95).

#### 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

#### 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

In Cheyenne culture both males and females are sexually repressed, with very strict notions of proper conduct and are hypersensitive to what other members of the tribe think of them (3, pg. 20).

#### 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

#### 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

#### 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

#### 4.22 Evidence for couvades

#### 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

#### 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

A man must respect his parents, sisters, and children-in-laws parents but must avoid his parents-in-law in particular his mother-in-law. Women had parallel respect relationships with their kindred except there was no avoidance of her parents-in-laws. In other words, the only family members avoid were the wives parents by her husband (6, pg. 141).

#### 4.24 Joking relationships?

Both males and females may joke “mildly” with their father’s sisters, mother’s brothers, grandfathers and brothers and must joke “roughly” with their brothers-in-law and sister-in-law (6, pg. 141).

#### 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

#### 4.26 Incest avoidance rules

The regulation of marriage is by kinship; blood relatives, no matter how distant are forbidden to marry (2, pg. 59).

#### 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

#### 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

Naming generally takes place a few days after birth and is the responsibility of the father’s relatives. Males are usually named after the father’s brother or some other older male relative. Females on the other hand are generally named after either the father’s sisters or grandmother. The names themselves usually refer to different activities or characteristics and /or to various animals or objects i.e. Black Kettle or Little Wolf (2, pg. 62-63).

#### 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

#### 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

Marriages seem to be arranged between the families, however it appears that this is not universal as females can have as many as five courtiers at one time, nevertheless the girls family has the final word over whether she and the male can be married. However, as mentioned above elopement was not uncommon with the couple traveling to the male’s older brother village (8) / (3, pg. 21).

#### 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

## Warfare/homicide

#### 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

#### 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

#### 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

#### 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

The Cheyenne formed many peaceful alliances among other plains tribes most notably the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Sioux, Arapaho, and the Comanche and Kiowa. On the other hand there were several tribes they despised most notably the Crow, Pawnee, Shoshone, Ute, Sac, fox, the Delaware and the majority of the other eastern Woodland tribes that had been displaced as a result of American expansion (3, pg. 69).

#### 4.18 Cannibalism?

## 5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

#### 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

#### 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

#### 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

Cheyenne political organization was unique among Plains equestrian peoples. They maintained a Council of Forty-four, leaders who made decisions for the entire tribe consisting forty headsmen (four from each of the ten bands) and four councilmen known as the old man chiefs. They were considered the wisest men and were often the tribal religious authorities. Each council member had equal authority and served for ten years. The Council of Forty-four met during the summer when the tribe congregated for ceremonies and decided on future tribal movements, relations with other tribes, the schedule of tribal Ceremonies, and important internal tribal matters. To carry out their decisions, the Council of Forty-four relied upon the six Cheyenne military societies. Membership in any of the military societies was open to all young men, although most boys joined their father's society. In addition, each society selected several young women, known for their chastity and virtue, who served as assistants in society

ceremonial functions. The six military societies were the Fox, Elk, Dog (Dog Soldiers), Red Shields (Bull Soldiers), Crazy Dogs, and Bowstrings a seventh society existed that consisted merely of the forty four chiefs of the council. They acted as the camps police force carrying out the orders of the chiefs who often consulted them about issues of war and peace (5, pg. 48-80).

#### 5.4 Post marital residence:

It was the general custom to in matrilocal post marital resident, however, if there was an elopement the couple usually ran off to the camp of the males older brother or mothers brother. The brother would consider this an honor and would thus with his wife take charge of the marriage (2, pg. 61)..

#### 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

#### 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

#### 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

Both males and females may joke "mildly" with their father's sisters, mother's brothers, grandfathers and brothers and must joke "roughly" with their brothers-in-law and sister-in-law (6, pg. 141).

#### 5.8 Village and house organization:

#### 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

#### 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

The Cheyenne traditionally slept on mattresses that were seven to eight foot long and four foot wide, formed from willow rods almost as thick as a man's forefinger, held together by long strands of sinew. The mats were then covered by some form of well-tanned hides or buffalo robes to make the surface more comfortable (4, pg. 241).

#### 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

#### 5.12 Trade:

#### 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

## 6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

### 6 Time allocation to RCR:

#### 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

#### 6.2 Stimulants:

#### 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

#### 6.4 Other rituals:

There were four major religious ceremonies: the renewal of Mahuts, the Hoxehe-vohomo' ehestotse (New Life Lodge or Sun Dance), the Massaum (Animal Dance), and Isiwun. Mahuts was given to the Cheyenne by their cultural hero, Mutsoyef (Sweet Medicine). The four Sacred Arrows included two "Man Arrows" for warfare and two "Bison Arrows" for hunting. The Arrows were renewed every few years, unless a murder took place or a pledger needed their blessing (8).

#### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

Creation Tale – "tells of a being that was floating on the surface of the water, water birds, swan, ducks and other birds that could swim already existed. The person called to these birds and asked them to bring him some earth. He then placed little piles of mud on the water and they became land and grew and grew and spread until it was everywhere. After the ground was firm he took from his right side a rib and made a man and took from his left side a rib and made a woman (1, pg. 210).

#### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

The Cheyenne employed four main musical instruments: drums, rattles, flutes and whistles. Three different types of drums are used by the Cheyenne, the Peyote drum, an ordinary hand drum and a large drum suspended from four stakes. Flutes were made from two pieces of cedar or similar wood, with six holes drilled into it. At the lower end a head of an animal such as a snake or duck was attached to the flute. Sources are conflicting as to whether actual heads were placed on there or if they were carved on instead (7, pg. 23-26).

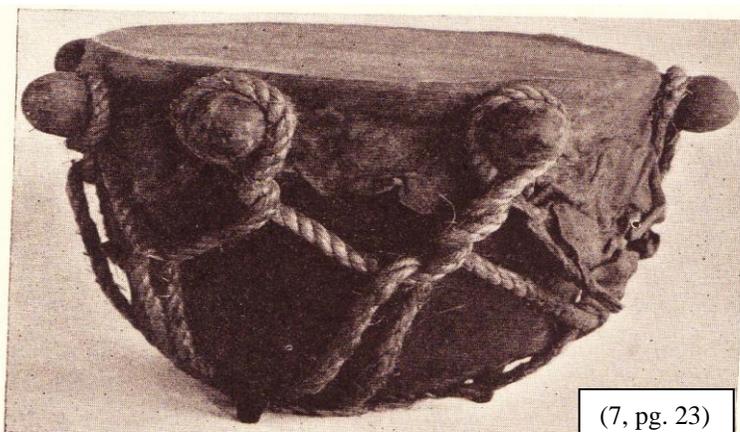
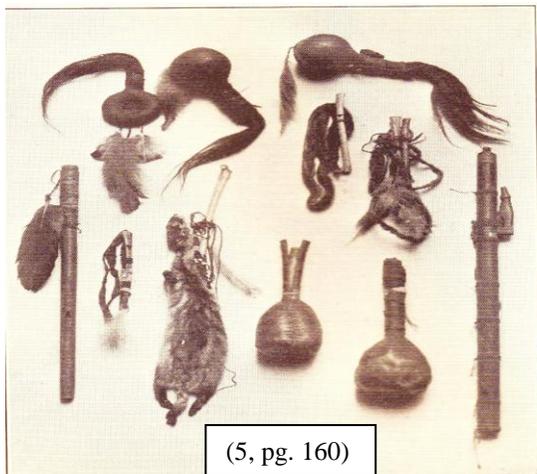


Fig. 1—A Peyote drum. Gift to Southwest Museum by Mr. S. C. Eastwood. (This drum is illustrated also in Curtis, E. S., North American Indian, vol. 19, folio pl. 278.)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Cheyenne believed that death, like disease, could have a natural or spiritual causation. As a cultural phenomenon, death was a spiritual process. At birth, Ma'he'o provided the child with the "gift of breath/power" ( omotome ) and "spiritual potential" ( mahta'sooma). These two gifts are developed through life. As a person ages, the process is reversed. Mahta'sooma leaves the body, resulting in behavior and cognitive changes. Next omotome departs, bringing on death. The spirit of the deceased then travels up the long fork of the Milky Way to Seana, the camp of the dead. If the dead individual was an outcast, died in a violent accident or by suicide, or was an unredeemed sinner, he or she would travel the "suicide road," the short fork of the Milky Way. Others would return to earth as malevolent spirits (8). The burial took place soon after death b/c of the fear of ghosts; dead bodies were not kept about. They believed that the dead person having become a ghost was likely to linger near the body and might take away the spirit of somebody standing near. The body was generally placed on a scaffold in a tree on a scaffold on poles in the prairie, but it wasn't uncommon to place them in caves or crevices or to simply pile rock over the body. If a male died in war the female relatives would cut their hair, and/or gash their legs no washing the blood away for an extended period of time. Conversely male relatives would simply unbraided their hair and where it loose (4, pg. 160-163)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there tekonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

The Cheyenne world was a dynamic, operative system with interrelated components. Within the Cheyenne universe ( Hestanov), the world was divided into seven major levels. Spirit-beings ( maiyun ) reside in this universe and their sacredness is relative to their relationship to Ma'he'o, the creator of all physical and spiritual life in Hestanov. These levels are intersected by the Maiheyuno, a Personal spirit residing at each of the cardinal directions. Ri-ous animals, birds, and plants are manifestations of these spirit-beings. In Cheyenne religious expression, aspects of these spirit-beings or the spirit-beings themselves are entwined symbolically with plant and animal forms portrayed in Cheyenne ceremonies (8).

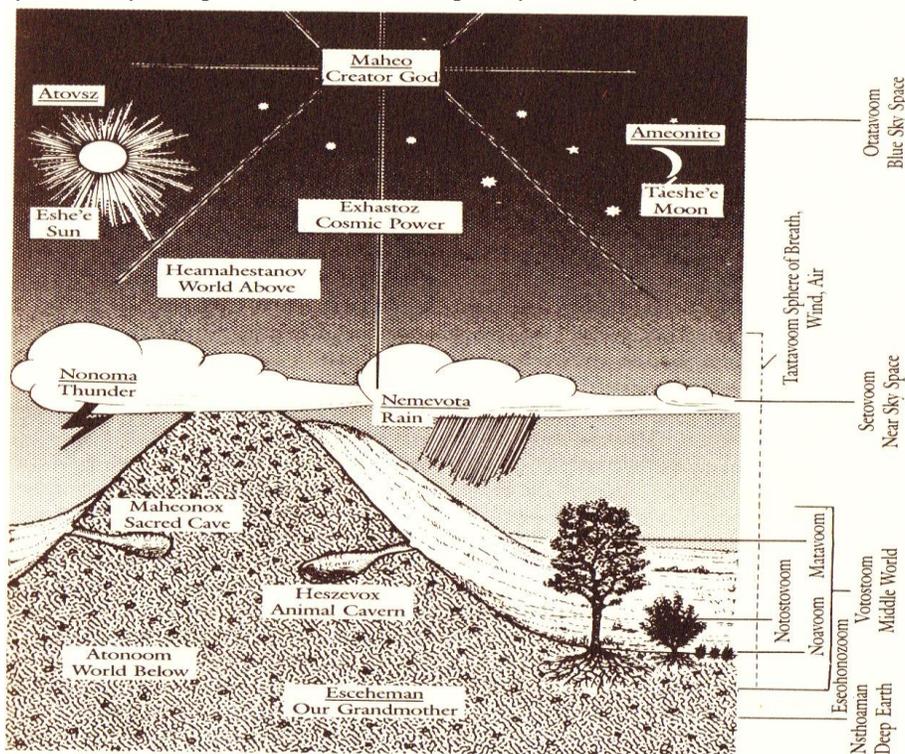


FIG. 1. The Tsistsistas universe, *hestanov*. *Hestanov*, the generally visible world includes *matasoombestanov*, the generally invisible world of spirits. Underlined words denote the personal ceremonial names of spirits (*maiyun*) who represent powerful potencies in the world. *Nsthoaman*, the deep earth, begins below the region of roots but includes surface areas free of vegetation such as high mountains. Mountain peaks are especially sacred places because there the deep earth and the near sky space come into direct contact.

## **7. Adornment**

- 7.1 Body paint:
- 7.2 Piercings:
- 7.3 Haircut:
- 7.4 Scarification:
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:
- 7.8 Missionary effect:
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## **8. Kinship systems**

- 8.1 Sibling classification system:
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate:

In former times both Sororate and levirate were practiced. Younger sisters were potential second wives upon reaching puberty or taking their sister's place in the event of death. Likewise a brother of a deceased husband might marry his brother's widow. These institutions were by no means compulsory, but if a wife died, her family would usually want the husband to continue as a son-in-law and the wife's brother would arrange for a younger sister to be taken as a wife. Similarly if a husband died his family would want to keep the children close to them and therefore a younger brother would often marry the widow (2, pg. 61).

- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

### **9. Other interesting cultural features (list them)**

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