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**THE CHEYENNE NATION – PEOPLE OF THE GREAT PLAINS**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracoval samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The object of this undergraduate thesis is to describe the unique culture, history and actual life and problems of the Cheyenne, one of the Great Plains tribes.

The thesis is separated to three main sections. The first section describes the origin and early history of the Cheyenne nation. The second section of this thesis is called The Cheyenne culture and it is divided into three parts. The first one refers to Cheyenne warfare, including description of war societies, strategies and the image of a Cheyenne warrior compared to the romantic image given by films and literature. The other two parts refer to the social organisation of the tribes in the history and in present days, as well as to very specific religious beliefs, traditions and ceremonies of the Cheyenne. The last section of this thesis is also divided into three parts. The first part describes the history of the conflicts between the Cheyenne and the white culture, focusing on some of the most important moments of the so-called Indian Wars. Then there are two parts focusing on the life in reservations, first one refers to the early years of reservation system, the second one and the last of this thesis describes the actual situation and problems of the Cheyenne.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Native Americans and their specific culture are a very important part of the history of Northern America. When we focus on the history of the United States of America and the formation of both the country and its nation, we find out that the conflicts, mutual lack of understanding and complicated relations led to many lingering problems. Nowadays the Native Americans, both in cities or in reservations, are one of the most problematic of all American populations. In this thesis I am going to study the way of life of the Cheyennes (but similarly other Great Plains tribes) to the reservations and also to name the actual problem of Cheyenne communities, e. g. alcoholism which is a generally known and discussed issue of Native Americans.

Although there are almost six hundred Native American tribes in the USA, the tribes of the Great Plains are the best known and popular thanks to romantic literature and many films. The Sioux, the Apache, the Comanche, the Pawnee, the Crow and of course the Cheyenne. I think the Great Plains tribes are what people imagine as a symbol of the “Indian” and the “wild west” with all their freedom, excellent riding skills and beautiful culture. I think that thanks to Karel May the Apache tribe is the most popular one in Europe, especially in the Czech Republic. But when I had to choose a tribe that I would like to focus on, I decided to describe the Cheyenne. The reason was Thomas Berger’s *Little Big Man*, my lifelong favourite novel. Different authors give us completely different image of the Native American – on the one hand we get the image of them as honest, peaceful people living in harmony with the nature, on the other hand we can read about barbarian hordes which steal horses, murder hardworking settlers and cut their scalps. In my thesis I would like to compare the romantic images of the Cheyenne with the historical facts. As interested in the popular myth of taking sculps, I am going to focus more in detail on the Cheyenne warriors. They are generally pictured as honest and fair warriors, especially when compared to settlers or later the US army soldiers.

Thanks to the hippie movement of the 1960’s the Native American culture, mainly their religious beliefs and ceremonies, became very popular. I would like to dedicate a part of this thesis to the most important ceremonies of the Cheyenne, their religious beliefs and values that are based on ancient stories. Many of the described ceremonies are misunderstood as they were practised by amateurs who often abused the parts of the ceremony that are interesting for the western people who were looking for a “new way” of life. A typical example is the Peyote ceremony or the Sweat Lodge which are nowadays often practiced with

the participation of white Americans. I would like to find out their real purpose and course.

There were many conflicts and battles between the Cheyenne (often together with other tribes) and the white settlers, later with the US army. Because I write about the Cheyenne I am going to mention some of the most important conflicts. The Sand Creek Massacre, a black moment of both Cheyenne and American history (similarly to Wounded Knee Massacre) in 1864 and one important victory of the Cheyenne – the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, generally known as Custer’s Last Stand. I would like to focus more on the Sand Creek Massacre and answer the question: “How did it change the opinions of young American nation about the Native Americans?”

I would also like to research the social organisation of the groups and the tribes both from the historical point of view and the actual situation and possible problems. I would like to find out if there are any similarities with western governments and their political “squabbles.” Also the place of a women and family life of the Cheyenne is an interesting topic I am going to focus on.

There are many myths and fixed romantic ideas about the Cheyenne. In my thesis I am going to find out the truth about some of them with the help of literature and anthropological works of respected authors. I would like to find out how much was the unique Cheyenne nature changed or destroyed by the arrival of the white settlers to America, alternatively what has remained of it.

## **THE ORIGIN OF THE CHEYENNE TRIBE**

According to linguistic researches, mentioned by P.J. Moore (Moore, 2003, p. 22), the ancestors of the Cheyenne nation belonged to the westernmost tribes of the Algonquian language family, more precisely to its east-algonquian sub-group together with the Arapaho and the Appaloua (generally known as “Blacklegs”). The Algonquian tribes inhabited the territories in the north-east of the Great Lakes. People of these tribes lived there in fixed villages and cultivated the soil, which means that they lived in agrarian society.

For a long time, the name “Cheyenne” was supposed to be derived from the French word “chien” (dog). This fact seems very probable, because an important part of the tribe was the soldier society of the *Dog Soldiers*. But at the present we know that the name is an abbreviation of the Sioux term *Shá hí'yé na* – “red talkers,” a term used by the Dakota translators (helping the first white explorers) to describe all the tribes which were not able to understand. People of the tribes with intelligible language were called “white talkers.”

The Cheyenne tribe is comprised by the descendants of two closely related tribes – the *Tsistsistas* (Cheyenne *proper*) and the *Suh'tai*, who had joined the Cheyennes after they crossed the Missouri river. Another name for the Cheyennes was *Ní óm áhé tân iu* - the Sandhill Men (Grinnel, 1972, vol. I, p. 2). Today the reminders of the Cheyenne tribes are divided into two main groups: Southern Cheyenne (enrolled in The Arapaho and Cheyenne Tribes in Oklahoma) and Northern Cheyenne (enrolled in the Northern Cheyenne Tribe of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Montana).

There were many names of the tribes and ethnic groups occupying the Great Lakes territory, besides these names were changing through the history and according to people who used them. Our general knowledge of early Cheyenne history is therefore quite vague. That is why I am going to focus more on the period after 1680, which means after the first contacts with the Whites.

### **The migration and importance of horses in the Great Plains tribes cultures**

The first mentions about the Cheyenne tribe in historical documents dates back to the seventeenth century. It tells us, that the tribe lived between the Mississippi river and the Mille Lacs. In 1680 Louis (Lewis) Hennepin, a French Franciscan, set out from the French camp Crèvecoeur to explore the territory in the north-west, which was occupied by the Dakotas (*Issatios*). Among the Dakota villages he found the villages of the “*Nation of the Chien*,” “*Chaienaton*” or “*Chaiena*”). Undoubtedly these people were not the Cree or the Ojibwa, because these tribes, being French trading partners, were called *Saulters* by the French

(Moore, 2003, p. 23).

There are no archeological evidences to help us to distinguish the Cheyenne and the Dakota cultures, but we can suppose that they were very similar, as both tribes lived in the same natural conditions. The Cheyenne tradition reminds this period as the time, when they lived “at a great lake.” We can hear about it in several Cheyenne Tales:

The Cheyennes formerly lived under the ground. They were in a great cave; it was dark, but a distant light was seen, and travelling toward it they found an opening and came out upon the earth. At first the light hurt their eyes, but it was not always light. There were night and day. They found themselves in a new country, rough and strange, where rocks and stones were strewn all over the ground. Small animals with long ears – rabbits – were seen, and killed for food, and for a long time these were their only support. Their robes, or coverings for warmth, were made of rabbit-skins, and their shelters were made of the stones which were so abundant. They journeyed on and came to a large river on which timber grew. Here a star fell from the sky and set fire to the timber, and this way the Cheyennes learned of fire, to cook by and for warmth. They continued to travel and came to the shores of a great water where were found many things showing that other people had camped there. Hammers and axes of stone were found hidden in the soil, and wooden tent-pins were standing in the ground, even to the water’s edge. The Cheyennes remained here for a long time. (Grinnel, 1972, vol. I, p. 4-5)

Food was provided by gathering the “wild rice” (*Zizania aquatica*) and by hunting, mostly buffalos, whose meat was sliced and sun-dried. People also hunted other animals (deers, bears, turkeys, beavers etc.) and fished (Moore, 2003, p. 24). But at least a part of the Cheyennes started to live in a completely different way and lived in earthen habitations and started farming around rivers. One of the most famous fortified villages, which is supposed to be of a Cheyenne origin, is *the Biesterfeldt locality*.

Very soon, the Ojibwa tribe aquired a leading position as a traditional partner of the French, who had started founding new villages on the southern shores of lake Superior. The Ojibwas began to attack the Dakotas (and also the Cheyennes as their allies) and forced them to move westwards and southwards. This was one of the reasons leading to changes in the life of the Cheyennes.

As I mentioned before, buffalo hunting was very important to support the tribe with food. But as the Cheyennes lived in permanent villages, this hunting was very complicated. First of all it was seasonal - the hunters had to wait for the return of the buffalo herds and then travel to find them. A part of the tribe stayed in the village to protect it, including warriors to protect the village against enemy tribes. It was also difficult to prepare the meat and to transport it back to the village.

Not only the reasons mentioned before, but also many others led to the most important change in the up to then history of the Cheyenne tribe. During the eighteenth century most of the Cheyenne groups decided to abandon their previous way of life and start the migration through the Great Plains. The very positive effects of this decision were quite obvious. The nomadic tribe was able to hunt as a complex unit and the buffaloes were available during the whole year, because the tribe followed buffalo herds' migration trails.

There were also economical effects. The most important was the opportunity of participating in the long-distance trade. The Cheyennes began to mediate trade transactions between the riverine tribes (eg. Arikaree, Mandan) who possessed modern ranged weapons and the tribes of the Plains (eg. Apaches, Comanches) who kept enormous herds of horses. Another advantage was the possibility to move the whole village and all people to safety very fast and keep the tribe together in the case of any military attack. After the Cheyennes had left the agricultural way of existence behind, the inventory of all the belongings and tools they needed and used changed radically. Since that moment, two things were the most important property of the Cheyennes – a horse and a tepee.

There are two different Cheyenne explanations of how did the Cheyennes obtained the first horses. The Northern Cheyennes say that they got the horses from the Araphos. The southern tribes say that they acquired horses from the Apaches. The fact that both tribes use different word for the term “*horse*” supports the idea of both explanations being true: “The Northern Cheyennes use the word mo<sup>2</sup>éheno<sup>2</sup>ha, which means “tamed deer” literally, while the Southern Cheyennes use the word nahtótse, which means “my domestic animal” and they use the same word to talk about dogs (Moore, 2003, p. 48).”

The methods of training horses were completely different than the Anglo-American or Spanish tradititon. First of all, the horses were “tamed, domesticated” instead of being “broken in” (Moore, 2003, p. 49). The young boys who were supposed to attend to the horse herds treated them very in a very gentle way – they fondled the young horses, spoke to them and played with them. The owner of the young horse often visited it on the pasture, sang songs and smoked his pipe, breathing the smoke out towards the horse. These methods were

very productive to train the horses to specific purposes. The only purpose of a horse was to serve, that means to pull loads, to become a hunting or a war horse (as the Cheyennes used different horses for travelling, hunting or going to war).

All men (as well as women) of the Plains tribes were excellent riders. Thanks to literature and films about Native Americans, there exists a well-known image of riding horses without saddles. While Moore describes this idea as a complete myth, Grinnel tells us something else. According to Moore, horses without the saddles were ridden for fun by young boys on the pastures. It is almost impossible to ride a horse without the saddle during hunting or fighting. The Cheyennes used pads and saddles, the first ones were designed according to Spanish design (Moore, 2003, p. 48-49). On the other hand Grinnel describes the custom to go to war (or a *war path*) or hunting without the saddles (Grinnel, 1972, vol. I, p. 206). He describes all the horse-equipment of the Cheyenne tribe and even describes the special women saddles:

Women's saddles up to modern times were of Arab type – very high before and behind, and with pommel curved forward and cantle curved back. Both were usually flattened so as to be from four to six inches wide. Women's saddles were often of quillwork, and often had on the front of the pommel an upright projection on which a baby-board might be hung. Highly ornamented, fringed, quilled, and beaded saddle-cloths of tanned hide were used by well-to-do young women. (Grinnel, 1972, vol. I, p. 207)

As I mentioned in the previous text, horses were the most important property of a Cheyenne man, who was able to recognize his own horses in the enormous herds kept around the village. Horses were often used as a special form of a gift. For example, when one's son went on war path or hunting buffaloes for the first time and he succeeded, his father gave one or more horses to another member of the tribe. Another case was, when a young man wanted to marry a girl, he brought horses (especially stolen horses were precious) to her father's lodge. In the following chapters I am going to describe the custom of piercing children's ears, but this ritual was also often followed by horse giving as described by Grinnel:

A father who was very fond of his child, and could afford it, might have the child's ears pierced several times. He might give a horse each to two or three different men for the same service. In one reported case, a man gave eight horses for this purpose. Such liberality showed the man's affection for his

child, and caused him to be talked about and praised.  
(Grinnel, 1972, vol. I, p. 106)

## **THE CHEYENNE CULTURE**

### **Cheyenne warfare**

Warriors have always had a specific position in the tribe, even in modern times. Many Native American soldiers fighting in World War II, Korea, Vietnam or in Persian Gulf held very respected positions in Cheyenne society, they often became leaders of war societies or held specific religious posts. During the war in Vietnam and in Persian Gulf Cheyenne warriors brought their war medicine with them and they practised war rituals and ceremonies. But these modern warriors do not tell stories about their own war experience. It is the tradition of Cheyenne wars and warfare in the nineteenth century, that still remains the most important.

According to Moore (Moore, 2003, P. 117) all the plain tribes used very similar practises and strategies, but the Cheyennes centralized them and applied them in widely. They used also methods, which we can call psychological war. Standing face to face the lines of the enemy fighters, a group of young men with no weapons, except their “*teeth and nails*” (Moore, 2003, p. 117) ran across the war field and attacked the enemies. The other Cheyenne warriors stayed calm and did not help them in any case. This way they persuaded the enemy of the fact, that they do not count casualties and that they came to that war ready to die.

War societies were groups of warriors with specific position, rituals and fighting methods. They were organized military force of the camp and acted often also as its police force. These bands included a large number (but not all) of the ambitious men of the tribe, from youth to old age. The high status of members of these societies can be proved by the fact, that there existed the *nít úhkeâ* – female soldiers, who served them. They were described by Grinnel:

To each soldier band belonged four young women, usually girls – though some might be married – of a good family. They joined in the dance, and sometimes sat by the singers and sang with them. If the soldiers made a dance, or went from one place to another, feasting, the women were with them, but if the camp was moving the girls traveled with their families. Their duties were chiefly social; that is to say, they were present at meetings of the band, took part in the singing and dancing, and sometimes cooked for the soldiers. They were not

necessarily related to anyone in the band, but were supposed to be girls of the best families in the camp. (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 50)

There were many of these societies, Grimmel mentions (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 56-63) *Fox Soldiers (Wohksehetaniu)*, whose men carried the kit-fox skin and used stone arrow points, *Elk-horn scrapers (Himoweyuhkis)* or *Red Shields (Mahohewas)*, who carried red shields with buffalo-heads painted on them. But the most famous of these bands were *Dog Soldiers (Hotamitanuu)*, men with the dog ropes.

Since they came from different groups, the members of this band might marry among themselves, although in ancient times care was taken that relatives should by no means marry among themselves. But what made the Dog Soldiers so famous and feared was their specific way how to fight their enemies. The men carried a dog rope to battle, they used it to make a circle around them and did not leave this prepared spot in any case, no matter what happened during the fight or how many enemies were attacking them.

In battle, the man who carried the dog rope, if he dismounted to fight, might stick the pin in the ground, and by doing so he pledged himself not to retreat from the spot unless some one of his own party pulled up the pin. He himself might not pull it up, on penalty of proving himself a coward – losing his manhood – and being thenceforth the laughing-stock of the camp. His own people might free him, but if they did not, he must die on that spot. Only brave men carried the dog rope, for he who had one must use it, and to use it might mean death. (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 69)

In the following text I am going to focus on the Cheyenne weapons. There were respected men of the tribe who made the arrows and some of them made the bows as well. The bows did not differ much from those designed for hunting. But the best bows were those, that were usually bought from the mountain tribes (e.g. the Shoshones) – compound, made of horn, wood and tendon. They were very similar to modern compound bows – easy to pull and very effective. These bows were able to kill on the distance of more than two hundred metres. The war arrows were longer than the hunting ones, so that they could have been pulled out of a body and used again more easily. They were mostly made of willow tree wood and the plumage was usually made of the feathers of the birds of prey (e.g. eagles), so that the magical power of those was acquired. The points of the arrows were made of flint in the ancient period, but later steel was used, gained from the hoops of the barrels. In the museum

we can also see the points made of “glass insulators of telegraph lines in many colour variations” (Moore, 2003, p. 119).

The Cheyennes used the pistols and carbines since they had come to the plains, but did not use them much, because they were quite rare and not easy to use, especially on a horseback. They were mostly used to intimidate the enemy. Since the half of the nineteenth century the Cheyennes had the breech-loaders and repeaters, often very nicely decorated, which were better to use on a horseback and used them in fights with the US army.

The lance was the “favourite weapon of the Cheyennes” (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 186). But as Moore states (Moore, 2003, p. 121), most of them were not used as weapons, but as ceremonial and religious items. Very often they were not used to kill enemies, but to count a cup or they symbolized the personal war medicine of their keepers. But there were also straight lances, which were used in battles to stab enemies.

Thanks to films and literature, one of the most generally known weapons used by Native Americans were axes, not as much popular were clubs. The main difference between an axe and a club was that axes served to cut the enemy and the club to hit him. The heads of axes were made of stones (found in a proper shape already or worked to it). In the seventeenth and eighteenth century the French and British merchants sold the Cheyennes the heads made of brass, iron or steel (Moore, 2003, p. 124). Most of them were used as cutting weapons. Original Cheyenne knives in the seventeenth century were made of flint, later the tribes bought knives made of steel, which were not so fragile and did not break so easily. They were the basic weapon of each warrior used in close personal fights.

Some of the warriors carried a whip or a lasso, mostly used to get the enemy off the horse. Much more used were different kinds of sticks, mainly used to count a coup on enemies running off the battle field. The manufacturing of shields was connected with several magical rituals, shields were believed to carry magical power related to warrior’s dreams or his searching for vision. It was typical to decorate the shield with symbols of one’s spiritual experience. These shields were covered with a special pouch made of deer skin and they were uncovered only in the time of a battle. If the warrior, who created a shield, succeeded in battle with it, he was allowed to initiate four other warriors to manufacturing the same shield, usually his younger relatives.

Now I would like to disprove another popular myth about the Cheyennes (as well as all the plain tribes). It is often said in literature and films, that the most notable achievement of a warrior was to be the first to strike the enemy, kill the enemy and cut off its scalp. According to Grinnel’s researches (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 28) among the plain tribes, to kill an enemy

was good because of reducing the number of enemy tribes' warriors, but otherwise the act of killing a warrior was relatively unimportant. Usually there was no time to stop fighting and take scalps during the battle. If a warrior did so, the scalp was more a kind of a trophy, a souvenir, something to dance over. The scalps were often taken by little boys or women after the battle. We can say that the role of scalps is often overestimated.

The most important thing was, who touched (hit) the enemy as first (second, third). The system of Cheyenne war tributes was based on the system of counting coups (a word used by french merchants and explorers, french word for "touch, hit"), as well as in other plains tribes, but the Cheyenne system was a little different, because only the first three coups could be counted. There were practical reasons to use this system. First of all, as I mentioned, the system of tributes was not based on the number of killed enemies, but on the number of counted coups, because it was not always possible to discover whose hit killed the enemy (sometimes the first hit just hurt the enemy badly and it was easy to kill him for another warrior). The importance of counted coups was well described by Grinnel.

When an enemy was killed, each of those nearest to him tried to be the first to reach him and touch him, usually by striking the body with something held in the hand – a gun, bow, whip, or stick. Those who followed raced up and struck the body – as many as might desire to do so. Anyone who wished might scalp the death. In many instances no one could be certain who killed a particular enemy, while some boy might be told to take off a scalp. The chief applause was won by the man who could first touch the fallen enemy. In Indian estimation the bravest act that could be performed was to count coup on – to touch or strike – a living, unhurt man and to leave him alive, and this was frequently done. Cases are often told of where, when the lines of two opposing tribes faced each other in battle, some brave man rode out in front of his people, charged upon the enemy, ran through their line, struck one of them, and then, turning and riding back, joined his own party. (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 30)

Another reason to use this system was that it encouraged fast and aggressive attack of the Cheyenne warriors. Counted coups have been reminded at many occasions, nowadays it is called "telling war stories" (Moore, 2003, p. 130). But in modern wars there is not easy to find someone to confirm the counted coups.

Thanks to Thomas Berger and his novel *Little Big Man*, there is another very popular part of the warfare – a very specific group of Cheyenne warriors. They were merely individuals, known as *Hohn'uhk'e* – The Contraries, a word which conveys the idea of “doing precisely the reverse of what is said” (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 79). The Contraries acted by opposites:

These contraries acted by opposites. If they wished to signify assent, they said: “No.” If one requested a Contrary to go away, he came nearer. If asked to ride, he walked. If he called out to his woman: “Do not bring any more wood, we have plenty,” she knew that the wood in the lodge was exhausted and that more should be brought. (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 79-80)

They were braves of much importance, often entrusted with leadership in the battle. A man became a contrary because he feared the thunder (this idea was usually based on dreams or visions of that person). They were very brave warriors, they bore the usual weapons but besides, they carried a special lance – *Höhnukawo'*, shaped like a bow strung with two strings, but with a lance-head on one end, which had enormous spiritual power according to many Cheyenne stories:

My old friend, Brave Wolf, for many years a Contrary, became one through fear. For years, whenever a heavy thunderstorm was approaching, he always believed he saw, standing on the clouds, a man holding a Contrary lance in his raised lefthand. This vision caused him to fear the thunder – the lightning – and as from time to time it appeared to him more and more frequently, his fears grew stronger, so that, as he said, his fear of thunder became so great that he was foolish. At length, in a dream, the man that he had seen in the clouds told him that if he carried one of these bow –lances, he need no longer fear the Thunder. When the man told him this, he determined to have one.

(Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 80)

Their special way of life was beautifully, although a little ironically, described in Berger's *Little Big Man* (chapter 13, p. 173-174) and I personally expected that they were almost completely thought up by the author. So we can say that dealing with the contraries, Berger met the historical facts. There were usually two or three contraries in the tribe. On occasions they may have been four, but this is regarded as doubtful.

One of the aims of this thesis is to compare the romantic, idealized image of the Cheyennes with the historical reality. I think that one example is the image of an honest “Indian” warrior. Especially when compared to white soldiers, where the image is completely different – burning down whole villages, killing women and children. Many enemy tribes did not consider fighting so serious, they fought, counted coups, stole horses by occasion. But the Cheyennes are said to kill women and children, even to exterminate the complete tribe of Owuqueo. Their aggressive methods and war cruelty can be proved by the fact, that they controlled much larger tribal area then could be expected considering their population.

### **Social organisation**

There were two contrary demographical powers influencing the Cheyenne population in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Firstly, a sufficient amount of food, thanks to better access to buffalo meat, which lead to the growth of the population. Although the Cheyennes knew how to reduce natality, they did not need to do it. The more children the better, because there was enough food and plenty of work. Secondly, there were repeated epidemics of European diseases brought by the white people. According to Moore (Moore, 2003, p. 147) it would be exaggerated to state, that the Native Americans had no chance to fight these diseases, because their immune was different, although this idea is widely used as a fact. Thanks to common ancestors they had very similar immune reactions, so they were to a certain extent resistant to most of “white diseases.” But worse hygienic and nutritive conditions (mainly among the settled tribes, e.g. Arikara) led to catastrophic impacts of the epidemics of diseases, such as cholera or variola. The advantage of the Cheyennes was their nomadic way of life. They soon realized, that in the time of forthcoming epidemic, the best way to protect the group was to divide to individual families and spread. So they used the same method as when running away from a stronger enemy.

I have already mentioned the fact, that the Cheyenne tribe is composed of the Tsistsistas and the Suhtai, who were later absorbed by them. Grinnel speaks about the unproven existence of a third tribe: “...but some old men have declared that originally there was a third tribe, Hěts tsī o mīs’tāne, pipestem man. It has been suggested by one man that this last name was possible the same as Īssī o mē’tāne” (Grinnel, 1972, vol. I, p. 86). In the half of the nineteenth century there were ten Cheyenne groups of the average number of three hundred people. The largest group were the Omisis, the “Eaters.” Later members of the ten groups formed on the reservation and after that transformed into the modern reservation communities.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Cheyenne groups specialized. The southern ones caught horses, central ones focused on manufacturing blankets of buffalo fur and the northern ones owned guns and rifles thanks to trade.

Very often the Cheyennes searched their potential partners in distant groups. There were positive and negative reasons for this approach to marriage. First of all, the advantages of establishing new social and economical relations between the distant groups. It was a kind of protection against worse times. In the times of starving or enemy attack the members of the group were able to seek refuge among their relatives. A very difficult system of gift-changing between the families preceding the marriage ceremony was also advantageous for both sides, which gained the merchandise they had missed. Marriage, as it was traditionally arranged by fathers, was also used as a way of keeping peace and alliances (Moore, 2003, p. 154). I mentioned also negative motivations leading to marriages of members of distant groups. The most important was to avoid incest. The Cheyennes considered it forbidden to marry a related person, no matter how distant the relative was. Considering this fact, it was very often impossible to find a proper partner among the group.

All the events, actions and ceremonials preceding the marriage are very complex and difficult to be described briefly, so I am going to mention only the basic ones. As I mentioned before, marriage was often arranged by parents, but children were not necessarily forced to it against their will. When a young man (usually at the age of twenty to twenty-five) decided to court a girl (usually younger, at the age of sixteen to twenty) he liked, he visited her publicly or talked to her at night over the wall of her lodge. The girl could discourage the man by her behaviour or tell her parents to do it. If both of them wanted to get married, many discussions between particular members of the families followed, as well as possible gift-changing. These ceremonies usually took several month (Moore, 2003, p. 156). The wedding ceremony had a clear symbolical meaning. It expressed not only the connection between the groom and the bride, but also the new relation between the whole families. The wedding ceremony of different Native American tribes was many times shown in films, a part of it was described by Grinnel:

The girl was now put on one of the best horses, which was led by a woman not related to her, and her mother followed behind, leading a number of the horses, all of which wore ropes or bridles. The other horses were all led by women. Before they reached the lodge of the young man's father, some of his relatives came out, carrying a fine blanket, which was spread on the ground; the girl was

lifted from the horse and swet in the middle of the blanket, and the young men, taking it by the corners and edges, carried her into the lodge. Sometimes, instead of carrying her in the blanket, the horse which she rode was led close to the lodge door; the women ran out from the lodge; the girl dismounted, put her arms about her mother-in-law's neck, from behind; other women took hold of her ankles, and lifted her feet from the ground, and she was thus carried into the lodge without stepping across the threshold. This was all done in silence. When the girl set out she was dressed in fine new clothing, but after she had been taken into her mother-in-law's lodge, the sisters or cousins of her husband took her to the back of the lodge, removed the clothing that she wore, and dressed her in new clothing they had made, combing and rebranding her hair, painting her face, and hanging about her various ornaments as gifts. The husband's mother had of course prepared food, and when the young people had seated themselves side by side, she offered it to them. That prepared for the girl was cut into small pieces by the mother-in-law, so that the girl need make no effort in eating. (Grinnel, 1972, vol. I, p. 143-144)

The system of family relationship among the Cheyennes is a complicated issue. First of all, all the sisters and all the brothers as well are considered to be a group. This system influences all relations of a family. When a little Cheyenne child uses the word "mother (*náhko'e*)," it addresses not just its biological mother but also all its sisters. When it says "father (*ného'e*)," it means all its father's brothers. When speaking about uncles or aunts, it is simple to guess whether it means father's or mother's siblings. According to Moore (Moore, 2003, p. 156-157) the roots of this system are connected with the pre-reservation history of the tribes. Thanks to many dangers people faced (such as wars, diseases, hunting etc.) parents often died before a child reached adulthood and adoptions among the family were necessary. This tradition demanded a man to marry his brother's widow (even in the case he had already been married) and vice versa a woman to marry her sister's widower. This system of living together with siblings, their partners and children is called *family group*.

The life of family groups was further complicated by many other traditions and principles. One of the most important was the idea of respect (Moore 2003: 160). In the context of a family group this led to extremes – some members of the family were never allowed to speak directly to each other (e. g. an adult man and his older sister use a mediator to communicate even nowadays). More significant distance is kept between men and their

mothers-in-law. They were not supposed to be in one house at the same time. Moore mentions a true story of his Cheyenne friend:

My old friend Sam Buffalo tells a story of meeting his mother-in-law in the city. They were both driving their cars and stopped at the red light. When Sam realised his mother-in-law stopped on his right, he quickly looked away and she did the same. They were both waiting for several minutes, then Sam got out of the car, opened the hood and pretended an engine failure. Then she finally left. (Moore, 2003, p. 161)

On the other hand there is another feature of this system, called “jocular relationships.” These are very often kept between brothers and sisters-in-law. It is surprising that a man who is not allowed to say a word to his mother-in-law can joke with his sister-in-law, even with a strong erotic subtext as mentioned also by Moore:

Woman says to his brother-in-law that if she was his second wife, she would forbid him all his impertinence. Man replies that she should get ready as he is going to visit her next night and everybody laughs. ... During a ceremony in 1987 people were forced to wait for food in the sun. Someone said they would use a bed sheet to cover and a man offered his sister's-in-law shirt proclaiming it to be large enough to cover them all. (Moore, 2003, p. 161)

Moore sees the roots of this in the former polygamy. All this joking is within the borders of Cheyenne culture and everyone appreciates it.

Grinnel mentions the possibility of divorce. If a man found it impossible to live peaceably with his wife, he might divorce her. This was done in a public fashion, notifying everyone that he abandoned all rights to her that he might possess. Usually in the dance lodge or during the gathering of his soldier society, he danced by himself, holding a stick in his hand. He danced up to the drum, struck the drum with the stick, threw the stick up in the air or towards a group of men in the lodge and shouted: “There goes my wife, I throw her away! Whoever gets that stick may have her.” Sometimes he added that a horse goes with the stick (Grinnel, 1972, vol. I, p. 153). To be treated publicly in this way was a disgrace for the woman.

A woman was definitely not considered to be the property of the man she married in no sense. But when a man divorced his wife and anyone else wanted to marry her, he had to settle with the husband often paying him what he had given for the woman. If someone stole

another man's wife (or took her after her husband had thrown her away), he was expected to send an old man with a filled pipe early, telling him to ask for what the husband wishes. If the husband smoked, the matter was settled amicably.

Many Cheyenne men dreamed about becoming the head of a big group. In the ancient history of the tribes, they realized this by marrying more wives, preferably sisters and forcing their brothers to do the same. This way the core of the family group was created. After that they enticed other young men by offering them their own daughters and granddaughters. More than one of the leading groups began this way, e.g. Óevemanaho, Wotapio (Moore, 2003, p. 162). This trend continues, but it modified. Since the tribes had moved to reservations, the Cheyenne men are still building big family groups by having more children and living with their partners. Nowadays these family groups live more like a working community – some members are employed and work for regular salary, the others do the housework, look after children or do anything important for the rest of the family. The leaders of these group are able to act on the behalf of the family with authorities and organisations. A community like that is called *bunch* and its members usually share the same neighbourhood.

Thanks to a special census, taken in 1880, we are able to imagine the division of labours, which were typical in times of the migration. The group comprised of three hundred people. There were two masters of ceremonies, three healers and three of their learners, one pipe maker, five arrow makers, five herb collectors (women), four midwives, two butchers, seventy hunters/warriors, eighty housewives, twenty-five reapers (older girls), ten girls to bring the wood, sixty-five young boys as herd keepers and twenty-five younger girls to bring water( Moore 2003: 163-164). Bringing water was an important job, it is an interesting fact, that the Cheyennes did not use water that stood all night – they called it dead.

Another interesting fact found out thanks to the mentioned census in 1880 was that noone called himself a tribe chief. The reason for that is the typical cheyenne modesty. The actual chiefs let the others to inform strangers who they are. There were men called *manavabe*, which can be translated as the “family head” – an informal title refering to age and authority of a man in the group, who made decisions. This term can be easily mistaken for “headsman,” which has been used to call the leaders of warrior societies. As Moore declares (Moore 2003: 164) today the meaning of the title “chief” is different today than it used to be in the past. Today this title is used only to call the members of the *Council of Forty-Four*. The number of members is explained by Grinnel:

Among the Cheyennes there were forty-four chiefs – four principal chiefs, and four from each of the ten bands of the people. The four chiefs of each band, who were in constant touch with their own constituents, knew and accurately reflected their opinions. Each group was thus equally represented in the council of the chiefs, and presumably by men of sufficient intelligence and influence effectively to present its views to the council. The four head chiefs – though usually men of special influence and importance – possessed, in weighty matters, little more actual authority than other members of the council, yet from their position, and the qualities which had raised them to that position, their advice and opinions usually received greater consideration than those of the speakers. (Grinnel 1972, vol. I, p. 337)

There still are disputes over the origin and authority of this council, as well as the eligibility to become a chief, even among modern Cheyennes. Mostly the question of the heredity of this title in comparison with the system of proportional representation. But there are no disputes over the ideal of a chief's principles and behaviour. They are expected not to lose temper, to be modest, full of humility and first of all to be generous in distributing their own property in the name of the public service.

An illustrative example of this ideal was John Black Owl mentioned by John H. Moore (Moore, 2003, p. 165). When they first met (about 1975), John Black Owl was cleaning around the tribe compound near Concho, Oklahoma. At other occasions Moore saw him working at the burial site in the same place and he supposed him to be a paid janitor. Much later Moore visited the council meeting and found out he was a very respected tribe chief. John Black Owl lived in an old house with his wife. The house was permanently full of people who were bringing food, taking food, giving John money, requesting money, clothes furniture etc. John had no personal possessions. When he died there were thousands of people at the funeral of this kind and peaceful man often called "Super Chief" by people who loved and admired him.

Even nowadays, the meeting of the council is a subject of a very complicated ceremonial etiquette. Very important is the age and the social status of the chiefs which affects the entrance to meeting place, the order of particular speeches (the oldest and most respected men speak as the last ones) and all the appropriate ceremonies. Theoretically a new chief should be elected by all the current chiefs during the annual meetings, but the election often takes place during special meeting and it is done by just a part of the chiefs. This

election may not be accepted by the council (Moore 2003: 169). Some chiefs who do not meet the demands mentioned above may not be accepted by other members of the tribe.

The function of the chief is lifelong, but the chiefs can decide to retire. When it happens, another is elected to complete the forty members of the council. Except these ordinary chiefs, there are four “Old Man Chiefs,” chosen of those older and respected chiefs. Since 1895, when the Northern Cheyennes concluded that the division of the Northern and Southern Cheyennes is permanent, there are two councils: in Oklahoma and in Montana. Although the councils can have up to 44 members, in the last twenty-five years they usually do not have more than twenty or thirty members. In 1903 the American anthropologist George Amos Dorsey met two leading personalities of those times, De Forest Antelope and Bushy Head and had the opportunity to record the “duties” of the chiefs:

Now listen to me! When the old chiefs wore out, they appointed you to carry on their leadership. We, who are here representing the sacred magicians of old and the sacred arrows and the sacred sun, earth and animals, have this day advised you and placed every man, woman and child of the Cheyenne tribe in your care. When it is necessary you will not help only your own tribe, but all other Indians. You have been appointed on account of your bravery, character, and courage. In the future you will cause no disturbance or help to cause a disturbance among your own people. If another member of the tribe kills your own brother, take your pipe and smoke it to the Great medicine, and you will prevent disturbance. Do not notice your brother’s murderer. If your young men look despairing, and lonely, take your pipe and pledge yourself to perform the Great Medicine-Arrow ceremony, in order that the Great Medicine will bless you and your people, because of your remembrance of him. (Dorsey, 1905, p. 14)

Not many facts about the family life of the Cheyennes are so often misunderstood as the position of women. Because women were constantly occupied with preparing food, making clothes, keeping fire and all other necessary works around the family and the camp. They were often described as almost slaves of the men. On the other hand there is the ironical picture of Native American (the mentioned woman – Olga is not of Indian origin, but as the author points out, she soon became a very typical one) woman in Thomas Berger’s *Little big man* (Chapter 17, p. 229) and many other to be seen in films. The fact is, that in the eyes of the first white anthropologists, women did all the work and men were usually seen sitting,

talking and smoking their pipes. As the task of the women was to provide the family, the task of the man was hunting and going to war path. Men occupation was hard and dangerous. But for white people hunting has been regarded as sport or recreation as they were not forced to hunt to survive.

The truth is that man and woman were partners and the situation of women was very similar to that of white women. Cheyenne women were often treated better by their husbands. Grinnel describes Cheyenne women as the rulers of the camp who were far more conservative than the men (Grinnel, 1972, vol. I, p. 129-129). Women could not become the members of the chief council or members of the war societies – although some young women were occasionally chosen as “sisters” or “decorations” they did not have any influence on the society (Moore, 2003, p. 171). But there were at some leading roles women could held thanks to their age, experience and personal qualities.

The most frequent and the one which has remained until nowadays is the position of the head of the family, although women holding this position are not called the head, but the “grandmothers” of the families. Nowadays there are many “grandmothers” thanks to the fact that women usually live longer than men do. They assume the attributes of a chief and use their authority to make decisions about the family (who will work for salary, where will who live, who will participate in ceremonies etc.), although they often act on the behalf of their sons or nephews who are the official head of the family. This status of grandmother, sometimes called “the Chief of women” used to be much more related to ceremonies and presented in public than it is today.

Another role appropriate for older women was the leader of a “woman society,” which were a sort of crafts societies. Women in these societies were sewing, working with beads or making tepees superintended by older experienced women. Today a young woman who wants to learn to work with beads, e. g. to make moccasines, has to start apprenticeship at an older women, then she is considered to be the member of her society (Moore, 2003, p. 173). The members of these societies are very often relatives in maternal line. The members of the group are allowed to use specific patterns and methods which are considered to be a personal property of a concrete woman. Although the most conservative part of the Cheyenne society respect the ownership of patterns, some woman use other women’s patterns or they copy them from books and museum displays.

The system of giving and accepting names in the Cheyenne culture is complex and interesting. It differs from in many ways not only from white culture (in Cheyenne culture names changes during live), but it also differs from other tribes of the Great Plains

(Cheyennes usually use names that are specific for man or female sex). This system is often misunderstood by authors of books and films who give the indian characters names that sounds funny or makes no sense to the Cheyennes (Moore, 2003, p. 173). The origin of a cheyenne name can be related to nature or it can be reflective of specific personal look and behavior of a person. Men names are usually derived of cosmic and meteorological phenomenons or the birds of prey and predatory animals, women are more often named after animals or elements of nature that are more united with the ground.

As I mentioned above, there were moments in a life that often led to a change of name. Boys get a more significant name when they reach pubescence (nowadays usually when they graduate from high school). This name is given to them by the oldest sister of their father. Until that moment boys' names are usually related to a children nickname of a famous man's ancestor. Unlike the boys, girls usually get a birth name which they use for the rest of their lives. Both men and women have a right to change their names on specific occasions, because traditional names are considered to be a personal property. Someone (e.g. a seriously ill person) can be given a loan of a name. A dead person is never called by a personal name for at least one year from his or her death. The specific Cheyenne sense of humour is obvious in names they give persons they do not like, e.g. the the officers of the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs, anthropologist or missionaries. Moore mentions the folowing examples:

Wife of a former reservation administrator once proudly told me, that her indian is *Hoxa<sup>2</sup>kesta<sup>2</sup>e* (“an ill vagina”), which se translated as “beautiful doe.”  
Another examples in English: Bold Eagle, Big bottom, Pustule, No legs etc.  
(Moore, 2003, p. 177)

### **Religious beliefs and ceremonies**

To understand better the Cheyenne culture and avoid mutual lack of understanding we have to know the basic facts about the society, history as well as moral, religious and aesthetic values of the Cheyennes. It is obvious from the previous text that devotion to family and personal bravery are two of the most important values of the Cheyennes. But there are more of them and it is useful to briefly describe them, because this helps us to understand better the Cheyenne stories which are an important part of the culture.

A very typical feature of Cheyenne behaviour is personal modesty. Individuals are still a part of the family, they are expectected to work and use personal skills for the reputation of the family. A Cheyenne does not try to be the first e.g. in the queue, their children do not like

to present their knowledge among the other etc. Sometimes this modesty is incomprehensible for us. This modesty demands a good Cheyenne to answer every direct question positively, because a negative answer is impolite to the questioner. That is why Cheyennes try to avoid such questions. When non-Indian asks a Cheyenne to meet, they get the positive answer and then they are surprised that the Cheyenne did not show up (Moore, 2003, p. 184). Hospitality is another value. Any guest invited to a Cheyenne family is treated very hospitably, a guest is expected to eat and drink with the family and there are mutual gifts being given.

Unlike the Anglo-American culture among Cheyennes the aged people are appreciated for experience. Respect to them is very important and very common until nowadays. More important than the real age is to become parents and grandparents which is a symbol of the senior role. This respect is a precondition for another value that I would like to mention. The idea of "*medicine*." This term is very frequent and it is rather difficult to explain. We use it to describe some kind of herbs or personal amulets or talismans (e.g. for warriors it was very important to have a good medicine). But the term also covers all the complex of knowledge symbolized by the object. A lot of skills (e.g. bead appliques) must be taught by older, experienced woman or man (e.g. war medicine). A potential learner is expected to come with respect to such person and bring an appropriate gift.

Another part of the culture where the Cheyennes differ from Anglo-American society is the idea of sharing. Within the family sharing is natural and does not include only food, but also clothes, jewelry or cars. The proprietary bond to any object is not that strong as it is in Anglo-American families. Moore mentions a Cheyenne woman having fun while watching children in the kindergarten: "White men are funny. They spend a half of time explaining the children which toys are theirs and the other half of the time forcing them to share them with others" (Moore 2003:182). Between the families it is not so natural but it is still a duty to share with any other Cheyenne in need.

I have already mentioned the poem "war path." The term "path" in general describes a specific model, line or course a specific man chooses to keep in his life. A man who decides to be a soldier follows a soldier's path. A student who decides to gain education and a well paid job follows a "white men path" etc. What is important for the Cheyennes is to keep following the path and not to follow more than one path at the same time. That means to avoid "mixing" the paths, which is a problem of young people nowadays – following the thoughts that are incompatible with the Cheyenne doctrine.

Cheyenne children are often taught these values by telling stories. There are stories for children we could call fairy-tales, which include a deep moral lesson. Children are taught

respect to older people, that brave and honest behaviour will be rewarded or about the nature around them. Famous stories are the ones about “Fallen star” or “Little buffalo calf”. But there are also stories which are much more serious and can be told only by qualified people by special ceremonies. The most important story which formed the religious beliefs and the form of ceremonies is the *Legend of Sweet Medicine*. It is very long and there are more versions of these legends, both Grinnel and Moore present two versions that differs only in details, but there are also very different versions. It explains the origin of the four original medicine – arrows possessing magic of the Great Medicine.

Very briefly it is the story of the Prophet called *Motsé<sup>2</sup>eóeve* (Metzeyeuff – Dorsey, 1905, p. 1), *the Sweet Medicine*. Hundreds of years ago a boy was born in the Cheyenne tribe. Since his babyhood he possessed great mental power; he also had supernatural powers. To show everyone who he was he cut off his head with a bow string during the dance and was (according to his own instructions) brought back to life as narrated by Grinnel:

Sweet Medicine said: “I shall go, anyway, and shall wear my new buffalo-robe. I shall carry your bow, and its string shall be about my neck.” His father said, “What are you going to do with a bowstring around your neck?” The boy answered: “I am going to break my neck. Also I must have my buffalo-robe painted red. I wish you paint me just as I tell you.”... Sweet Medicine kept time with his bowstring around his neck; and the first thing they knew, his head fell to the ground. His eyes were open, and he was looking about at the people. His body was standing, his bowstring still in his hands... Sweet Medicine’s father took the boy’s body and placed it on the ground, and put back the head in its place, lying toward where the sun rises, and covered him with his robe. After a little time, Sweet Medicine raised the buffalo-robe from his body, stood up and faced the sunrise. (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 346-347)

He grew older and one day people killed many buffalos. The miraculous young man killed a giant bull and he skinned it. A big chief came and wanted the skin, *Motsé<sup>2</sup>eóeve* refused to give him the skin, because he needed it to make a robe, but he offered the chief the meat. There was a fight and *Motsé<sup>2</sup>eóeve* killed the chief. After that he had to leave the tribe and to escape his pursuers many times, he used his supernatural powers transforming himself into different animals.

Many times he appeared around the camp in many forms and still was chased. After some time he disappeared and there was a long time of starvation. Motsé<sup>?</sup>éóeve came back after a year and offered people buffalo meat. He told people about his visit to a sacred mountain inhabited by holy people. He wished to go back there with his new wife. He married a big chief's daughter and they went to the mountain together. The holy people welcomed him as their grandson. They showed him four men with a different look. Motse<sup>?</sup>éóeve was instructed to choose one of the men he would like to look like. He chose the red skinned man. Choosing any other he would live forever, but choosing this handsome man, he will die one day. Then he was given four medicine-arrows from the Great Medicine. They returned to the camp and showed the arrows to others. "Two of these arrows are to hunt buffalos and two of them to war. Make your arrows as these are made." He lived with his people for four generations, every spring he revealed himself to others as a child, in summer as a young man. Before he died he told people his prophecy:

I won't be with you for a long time. I have chosen a wrong person. I wanted to be handsome. Now, I am growing old. You must not, my people, forget what I tell you. After my death you must meet often, and when you do so, call my name. There comes a time, when you meet other people and you will fight them and kill every stranger. Every tribe will want the land of the others and you will fight all the time. Far in the south there is a strange animal, its long hair merges in with its neck and his tail touches the ground. You will ride this animal. The buffalos will disappear and when they will be gone, another animal you will have to eat will be spotted. When the end will be close, your people will be going grey very young and you will be forced to marry your relatives. You will reach a point when you will not be ashamed of anything and you will behave as mad. Soon you will find people among you that have hair all around their face and whose skin is white. When the time comes they will have control of you. The white people will be all around the country and you disappear in the end. (Moore, 2003, p. 200)

The religious beliefs and ceremonies are closely related to a very complicated system of cosmology and perception of the world, which is too extensive to be described in my thesis. The complicated cosmology divides space into more areas from the underground (the middle of Earth – symbol of the feminine principle – *hé'estótse*) up to the zenith (the seat of the God principle). Very important is the term *ma<sup>?</sup>heo<sup>?</sup>o*, which can be translated as God,

Creator or the Father of everything. The four Cardinal directions are significant parts of many ceremonies. They differ a little from our directions. There is east, *heseme*, the direction of the rising sun (more southward than ours); south, *Soovóne*, the direction bringing warm wind and thunderstorms; west, *onesoovóne*, where the Moon rises and north, *notáma*, bringing the winter weather. Each of these direction is dominated by a spirit.

To the Cheyennes everything alive is more or less holy according to how useful or spiritually the animal or the plant is. The highest position belongs to birds, especially the big birds of prey. Among the plants and trees the ones with roots deep under the ground are the most important, e.g. poplar trees. All the energy comes from *ma<sup>?</sup>heo<sup>?</sup>o* and is brought by *éxáhestotse*, which could be described as “Cheyenne electricity” (Moore, 2003, p. 213), which means it can be also dangerous and should be treated only by experienced people. Today a lot of Cheyenne uses the word “blessing” to describe this energy. It is first given from *ma<sup>?</sup>heo<sup>?</sup>o* to the spirits who use it to supply enough energy to keep the natural processes on Earth (sunshine, rain etc.). A part of this energy is transmitted to the holy animal that can transfer it to human beings. There are more ways how to enter this system of cosmic energy. People can obtain the energy directly from *ma<sup>?</sup>heo<sup>?</sup>o*, usually by fasting, climbing a mountain and praying on the top of it. The Cheyenne sacred mountain is *noahávose* (Donation Mountain), in the south-west of South Dakota, generally known as *Bear Butte*.

A Cheyenne can also become a guarantor of a dancer of one of the ceremonies and obtain energy thanks to his presence. Specific kinds of energy come during healing, it can be also transferred by intimate contact between people. This cosmic energy is limited and it must be renewed every year. With the approaching winter there were more deaths, which was believed to be connected with the disappearing energy (Moore, 2003, p. 215). Renewing the cosmic energy was the main purpose of many Cheyenne ceremonies.

There are many different ceremonies which are very complicated and almost impossible to describe, especially as a part of this short thesis. That is why I am going to focus on the most important ceremonies. According to the Cheyennes, the sacred arrows ceremony serves as purification of people, the Sun dance ceremony (Medicine lodge) to renew the nation and the *másáháome* (the Massaum Ceremony) together with the peyote ceremony serves to heal (Moore, 2003, p. 215).

First of all the sacred arrows ceremony is very important to the Cheyennes. This ceremony usually precedes the Sun Dance as the main motive of it, is to cleanse the sacred arrows, that means at the same time to clean the nation to make it worthy of obtaining the blessing of *ma<sup>?</sup>heo<sup>?</sup>o* during the Sun dance. The participants of the ceremony come with their

families and build their tents and teepees in a circle which is opened towards the Bear Butte. During the ceremony the sacred arrows are transferred from their own teepee to a special double teepee. The most important person is the guarantor of the ceremony (often a chief or master of ceremonies) who is responsible for it. He has to organize the ceremony and support all people who help with the organisation and also give them presents (to manage this he needs the help of women of his family). The story of the Sweet Medicine and the sacred arrows is mentioned above.

The ceremony itself theoretically takes four days (Moore, 2003, p. 218), but nowadays it is usually shortened for the weekend. It consists of many rituals and prayers. The arrows are checked to find damages caused by a murder or other crime, which may have happened among the tribe. If required they are repaired. Many prayers are presented – to the cardinal directions, to bird and animal spirits, the prophecy of Sweet Medicine is presented as well. Sweetgrass (*Hierochloe*) is burned and the rituals take place inside the special teepee, but also simultaneously they are held by all other Cheyennes to renew the power of their own or their families' sacred items. A significant part of the ceremony is the arrangement of the teepees which allows the transmission of energy from the mountain to the arrows. For the Northern Cheyennes a similar meaning as the symbol of the tribal existence are not only the arrows but also a Sacred Buffalo Hat (*évesone*). This tradition is of Suhtai origin, but a torso of some Suhtai groups belongs to the northern Cheyennes.

The Sun Dance is a ceremony which is common for almost all of the Plains tribes and there are also at least three versions of the Cheyenne Sun Dance. The ceremony is commonly called the *Medicine Lodge* and it bears its own name in each tribe, by which is practiced. According to Grinnel the term Sun dance comes from the Sioux (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 211). Nowadays it is a generally used term. Moore also mentions the terms *hoxéheome* or *New life lodge* or *New Generator Lodge* which are used among the Cheyennes (Moore, 2003, p. 221). Similarly to the previously mentioned ceremony, this one also should take four days, but it is usually shortened for a weekend. Also the purpose is very similar – to secure health and try to connect to the source of energy given by *ma'heo'o*. This is why (especially in Oklahoma) this ceremony usually follows the arrows ceremony on the same place. There is the main guarantor of the ceremony, but unlike the arrows ceremony it can be anyone – even a woman (if she finds a man representative to secure the rituals). It is often guaranteed by someone whose family was affected by a disease or a misfortune during the last year.

In the middle of the camp circle there is a special construction, a gazebo - the *arbor* of the Sun Dance. Similarly to other Cheyenne ceremonies the arrangement of the circle camp is very important and a significant part of the ceremony preparation is the choice of the trees (to build the arbor) done by the war societies, chiefs and seniors. The falic symbol in the middle of the arbor – the central pole is chosen first, on the top of it there is the “nest of all birds.” The sexual symbolism is very significant not only on the central pole (often decorated with figures with highlighted genitalia) but also on the altar. The altar is also decorated by natural symbols, most important of these symbols is the buffalo skull, but there are also eagle feathers and various herbs.

The ceremony itself contains exchanging food and gifts and a lot of ritual smoking. Except the guarantor, which is usually only one, there are men who made a commitment to fast and to dance in the second part of the ceremony. Every dancer has to find a mentor, someone who had danced at least four times before. The number of the dancers is limited only by the space of the ceremonial construction. Moore mentions that mostly there are fifteen to twenty-five dancers (Moore 2003: 223). The dance itself is not very difficult, but young men keep dancing without any food or water for several days. The dancers also need to have some ritual objects, e. g. enough colour, pipe made of eagle bone, a stick with a fork at the end suspending the pipe, a blanket or a pillow to sit on, wormwood (sagebrush), eagle feathers etc. – these represent the four spiritual powers, the shadows and the four cardinal directions. Very important is the body – painting of the dancers, which is changed four times during the ceremony. When the ceremony is over, the ceremonial arbor and the altar are dismantled and guarantor with the dancers distribute the used objects, which should secure the recipients health and long life.

Another very important ceremony is *māsahdome*, generally known as the Massaum ceremony, also called the Animal Dance, Buffalo Dance, Crazy Dance and Foolish Dance (Grinnel, 1972, vol. II, p. 285). It has not been organized since 1927, but it was reconstructed thanks to the anthropologist Karl H. Schlesier according to photographs and recounting of seniors. It basically retells the story of how the Cheyennes dominated the animals and took control over the plains. The participants of the ceremony played the roles of certain historical figures. It used to be an every year ceremony following the Sun Dance. Unlike the Sun Dance, which celebrates mostly the birds, Massaum celebrates more the four-legged animals.

There are more generally known rituals or traditions thanks to films or to some publications which pretend to be anthropological works and they describe the Cheyenne religious traditions in a very vague way. Moore mentions e. g. the book *Seven Arrows* by Hyemeyohstse Storm, which became very publicly popular and led to a conflict between the

publisher and most of the Cheyenne authorities (Moore, 2003, p. 201-202). One of these traditions is the fast on Bear Butte, a very personal ritual of a man (led by a mentor who absolved this journey four-times) who climbs up the mountain, sits there over night, smokes in regular intervals and waits for a vision. The idea of this vision is often misunderstood by non-indian. It is an inspiration given by the blow of the wind giving a general thought which must be completed and analysed with the mentor. But the most popular ritual, which is not only a Cheyenne one, is the Sweat Lodge, a ritual which serves to pray and clean both one's body and soul. It is very popular among young Cheyennes in big cities nowadays, but also among many non-indians looking for an exceptional experience. It is a fact that there have been many deaths caused by dehydration, hyperthermia or smoke inhalation thanks to amateurish leading of this ritual.

Very popular and often misunderstood is the Peyote Ceremony which is closely associated to the Native American Church, an indigenous religion, connecting the christian prayers which uses the peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*) to induce religious, shamanic or spiritual experience. Today it is the most widespread religion among the Native American in the USA. It is usually organized by someone who needs help because his own disease or who wants to help other people of his or her family. The ceremony contains of sitting at the fire over night, playing a drum and singing songs. The participants eat the buds of peyote and this brings hallucinogenic visions. The Native American Church shows the special relation of the Cheyennes to Christianity. The Cheyennes have never considered a religious belief to be sole, exclusive. Although a lot of them have been ready to accept Christianity, they have not been ready to abandon their traditional belief or ceremonies. To the Cheyennes Jesus was another spirit, another source of the *ma'heo'o* power. The opinion of most Cheyennes is that if participation in one religion is beneficial, participation in two or three religions is more beneficial (Moore, 2003, p. 271).

## THE WAY TO RESERVATIONS

The complicated relations between the Indian tribes and both the English and French settlers has been developing since the arrival of the first settlers to America. They did not meet any strong Indian resistance. What they found were the scattered and mutually belligerent tribes. A lot of Native Americans were lured by trade opportunities or frightened away by the military power of the settlers. When the chiefs realized the real situation it was too late to fight the English and forced them to leave. The first Puritans demonstrated their intentions in America by almost complete extermination of the Pequots in the 1630's. In 1699 there remained only eleven out of twenty - eight tribes described by John Smith in the colony of Virginia and only two thousand natives out of almost thirty thousand (Tindall, Shi, 1996, p. 65). As the history of the conflicts between the Native American tribes and the white colonists is too extensive to be described in this thesis, I am only going to try to find the roots of those and to mention the most important and generally known moments.

Romantic literature and the various historians have presented a very different image of the history of those conflicts. Of course it was an inevitable encounter of two civilisations. An agricultural and industrial civilisation equipped with modern technologies on the one hand. According to time and authors the colonists were presented as hardworking people cultivating land or as intruders chasing the vision of free land or gold with no regard to anything. On the other hand there was the civilisation of noble people of the Plains living in harmony with nature and keeping ancient traditions. But there was also another image of the Native Americans, describing them as barbarian hordes stealing cattle and murdering the peaceful colonists.

To me the destiny of the Plain tribes is tragic. They were constantly under pressure, leaving one hunting ground after another as the colonists were making their way westwards. This was their way to the reservations, they alternately believed the promises of the colonists and sign contracts with them just to be soon forced to fight for their land and rights. The main reason of the so called Indian wars was land. All the colonists coming to the "New world" came with the vision of free land (as there was not enough land available in Europe). In their eyes there was enough land for everyone. Blinded by the enormous area of fertile land they did not understand that they steal the land. The Plains tribes did not see the fertility of the land, because "all they have accepted of the European culture were horses and guns, these made them the true lords of the prairies." (Opatrný, 1990, p. 6).

In the first half of the nineteenth century the borders between the west and the east were constantly approaching. On the Great plains there were 250 000 Native Americans living off the enormous buffalo herds. The constant influx of colonists to “indian” land, slaughter of buffaloes and incomprehensible confidence in government’s promises alternately with many conflicts with the whites began the way to reservations. In 1851 the government passed the Indian Appropriations Act which created the Indian reservations in future Oklahoma. In the 1860’s the “Peace policy,” promoted by president Grant started the very controversial era of moving of various tribes of their ancestral homes to new parcels established specifically for this purpose. This was the era of many conflicts and wars, e. g. the Nez Perces War, one of the remarkable strategic operations in the history of indian warfare under the command of the famous chief Joseph, who was retreating for more than 1 500 miles to enormous superiority of government army (Tindall, Shi, 1995, p. 382). The era of Indian wars was definitely finished by the capturing of the famous Geronimo. The most important moments of these conflicts for the Cheyenne nation are mentioned below.

The General Allotment Act (Dawes Act) in 1887 that changed the system of granting land to tribes as a whole into granting smaller parcels of land to individual tribe member and that led to pilferage of most of the Indian land by estate speculators is often said to have destroyed more of the Cheyenne culture than battle or massacre. It was definitively terminated by the Indian Reorganisation Act (generally known as Indian New Deal) in 1934. It guaranteed new rights for Native Americans in the issues of their common holdings and tribal sovereignty.

### **Important battles and conflicts**

Three events are generally known and have been reminded repeatedly in films and literature. First of all, the Sand Creek Massacre. After the Treaty of Fort Laramie the Cheyenne and Arapho tribes were guaranteed a vast territory, including large parts of present-day Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska. In 1858 gold was found in Rocky mountains and the Gold Rush brought many European and American settlers to this Indian territory. In 1861 ten chiefs of the Southern Cheyennes and Araphos (Black Kettle and Little Raven were among them) signed the Treaty of Fort Wise and ceded most of the previously mentioned territories. This was not accepted by many soldier bands, including the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers. They refused it and continued to live and hunt in those areas which led to many conflicts with the settlers, who demanded to banish them. There were several battles between the Indian soldier and the regiment of volunteers and home guard under the command of John

M. Chivington, a Methodist preacher. He was an admired commander and opponent of slavery, but his opinions (as well as many Americans') about the Indian issue can be declared by his famous quotation:

Damn any man who sympathizes with Indians! ... I have come to kill Indians, and believe it is right and honorable to use any means under God's heaven to kill Indians. ... Kill and scalp all, big and little; nits make lice.

Col. John Milton Chivington

On the morning of November 29, 1864, 700 soldiers under Chivington's command arrived to a Cheyenne and Arapho campsite nearby Sand Creek under the pretence of searching for the Dog Soldiers who were responsible for several attacks against white settlers. But they were not in the campsite, as well as almost any soldiers who were hunting at that time. Regardless to the white and American flags flying over the camp Chivington started a furious attack killing everyone in the camp. The course and the acts of heroism of individual Indians were described many times. But the results of this massacre were obvious – there were 9 hurt Chivington's soldiers and more then 130 dead Indians – 105 out of that number were women and children (Opatrný, 1990, p. 108). The massacre was followed by an government investigation. Chivington, although he lost his army position and had to give up his political career, was not punished. The reason why this event was so important was the general public discussion which opened eyes to many white American and the Native Americans gained many sympathizers. At this place I should mention also the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890, although it is connected most with the Lakota.

Among all the conflicts and battles I have to mention the most famous one because it is a very remarkable moment for more Native American tribes and the most important part of the Great Sioux War – the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876, known also as *Custer's last stand*. This battle and especially Custer's actions and strategical decisions have been studied by many historians. There are many opinions about the character, personal qualities, abilities and competence of George Armstrong Custer and it is not a topic of my thesis. But undoubtedly he was a symbol and one of the greatest names of the Indian wars, he was admired by the Americans and at least respected by many Plains tribes as a worthy opponent. Not thinking of the consequences this Indian victory remains an important moment of not only Cheyenne, but also American history. It is called different by the Cheyennes - "the battle, where sister saved her brother" (thanks to one event that happened during the battle) -

and the Sioux , who call this battle “the battle with our Indian enemies,” thanks to the fact that the the Crow and the Shosone helped the American (Opatrný, 1990, p. 256).

### **The first years on reservations**

There were many fights, revolts and conflicts on the way of the Cheyennes to the reservations, but after 1877 the Southern Cheyennes and a large part of the Northern Cheyennes were concentrated near Fort Reno in Oklahoma. The situation was worse for the Northern Cheyennes who were not used to a hot climate of Oklahoma. In 1878 a group of 300 Cheyennes lead by Little Wolf and Dull Knifer tried to made their way to the north and join the Lakota people, but this desperate revolt was cruelly punished. Finally in 1884 another reservation was establish for the Northern Cheyennes in Montana. The conditions in the reservations were terrible. The proud Cheyenne people were completely dependant on government allocations (mostly dried food, flour, sugar etc.), were taught how to and forced to become farmers. The system of allcations should have led to the independence of the tribes, but it was not working, e. g. when a hardworking family finally produced its own food, it lost the allocations. In addition, BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) was very corrupted. The hygienic conditions and low quality of allocations in both Montana and Oklahoma reservation caused many diseases, such as tuberculosis, conjunctivitis or dysentery and the mortality was rapidly growing. The government excused its mistakes by creating myths about non-existing imunity, “broken heart” of the Plains Indian leading to death or the inevitability of the extinction of the Indians (Moore, 2003, p. 270).

The Cheyennes also had to face the pressure of the government and missionaries about the traditional religion and ceremonies, as well as the education of Cheyenne children. They were forced to conversion and they were not allowed to organize traditional ceremonies. In that time they had to “camouflage” ceremonies, to give it other names like “Reservation market,” where they pretended to organize a display of Indian crafts and then they had to wait with the ceremony until the whites left. This prohibition was cancelled thanks to anthropologists, e. g. George Dorsey, James Mooney or G.B. Grinnel. They were forced to send their children to missionary and boarding schools all over the country. When they did not want to do it, they were usually forced by the army or by the bureaucrat who threatened them to stop the allocations.

## **Present-day life on reservations**

After 1930 the number of Plains tribes Native American started to rise and the government had to face the fact that they were not going to disappear silently as they were expected. An important change was brought by the above mentioned Indian Reorganisation Act (IRA) in 1934, sometimes called “New Deal” as it was connected with Roosevelt. An important person of IRA was John Collier who had to visit both the Northern and the Southern Cheyenne who were disappointed and distrustful of the U.S. government after more than fifty years of lies and deceptions. First the Northern, later followed by the Southern Cheyenne and the Araphos, established tribal governments. They soon started to use the federal financial grants to buy back the reservation land that had been sold to white people since 1932 which was more difficult for the Southern Cheyenne/Arapho reservation thanks to bigger political influence of white land owners. It is interesting that the establishing of tribal governments did not lead to any reduction of BIA which became bigger and more centralized.

Since IRA there have been many projects whose main task was to improve the quality of life on the reservations. Since 1930's there have been Cheyenne primary schools, although older children have to attend public schools (with some exceptions – e.g. the Dull Knife Memorial College run by Northern Cheyenne) and many Cheyenne parents fight to implement Cheyenne history and culture into the curriculum. The system of health care changed after the establishing of IHS (Indian Health Service) in 1955 which nowadays runs hospitals in both Oklahoma and Montana. The registered Cheyennes get a free health care in those facilities. There are two main actual health problems affecting the Cheyenne more than the average American population – alcoholism and diabetes. Both are difficult to cure as the problem is genetical, but since 1997 IHS runs the Special Diabetes Program for Indians. Alcoholism is a very specific problem, especially among the Southern Cheyenne and Arapho. There are many organisations trying to fight this problem and helping people with addiction. The problem of alcoholism (and recently also drugs abusing) seems to be closely related to actual social problems in not only Cheyenne, but almost all the Native American communities. One of the ways the Cheyenne face the general poverty are the pow-wow festivals with a charity character or more simple gift-giving ceremonies.

Many failures of federal Indian policy resulted in the highest levels of poverty compared to any other American population including a high rate of unemployment. Except the mentioned alcohol and drug abuse, the mortality rate is very high and I have also mentioned the low level of education among all the Native Americans. The Indian Gaming

Regulatory Act of 1988 brought the growth of standard of life to some tribes, but on the other hand (event though the reservations should serve as centres of cultural preservation and revitalisation) the unique culture of the Great Plains tribe is slowly disappearing with the Native Americans adapting to modern life.

## CONCLUSION

In the introduction of this undergraduate thesis I set myself several targets. The main task was to research facts about the specific Cheyenne culture and describe it. I soon made the discovery that it is too complex and extensive to be described in the extent of this thesis and I regretted that I did not choose a particular part of the Cheyenne culture to have enough time and space to explore it more in detail. During my literature research I found out many facts that were interesting to me, some of them were even surprising or almost shocking to me, e. g. the possibility and course of divorce among the Cheyennes that reminded me former Arabian habits and traditions. Finally I had to choose the facts that seemed to me to be important to understand better their specific culture and nature. Another fact which was completely new to me was the one that the Cheyennes (as well as other Great Plains tribes) used to live in an agricultural kind of society before they started migrating over the Plains. I also found out that the cultural habits, many traditions and ceremonies of the Cheyennes were very similar to other Great Plains tribes.

Another question I wanted to answer was how much of the romantic image of the Cheyenne is based on real facts. In the introduction I outlined some of the popularly held beliefs and myths about the Cheyenne. Actually I found out that quite a lot of them are more or less true. A good example is the soldier band of the Dog Warriors. They are often described as unbeatable warriors who never run away and fight naked, tight with the rope to the ground. According to more resources they really fought that way and they were the most dangerous and feared of all Cheyenne warriors. What I did not know was the fact that there were many soldier bands like them and those bands were an important part of the complicated social organisation of a tribe. I was surprised by the description of the Contraries. In his *Little Big Man* Thomas Berger described them in a way which seemed too comic to me, but their very special behaviour (acted by opposites) was described by more anthropologist very similarly. But on the other hand the image of a Cheyenne warrior presented by films and literature is actually too romantic and exaggerated. Comparing their warfare to the cruelty and callousness of many white soldiers is instrumental in creating this image. But among the other Plains tribes they were feared warriors who used the same cruelty against their enemies that was later used against them. This was one of the reasons why the Cheyenne controlled so large areas. Another popular myth is the one about Cheyenne taking scalps of the killed enemies. It is not a complete nonsense, but the reality was different. As I found out the warriors did not lose time by taking scalps during the battle. Very occasionally the scalps were cut off after the

battle by women and children. The most important value among the Cheyenne warriors was a counted coup. The system of counting coups was very complicated, but very fair. According to this system it was even not necessary to kill the enemy to count a coup on them. During the settling of North America the Indian warriors were presented as cool-blooded monsters, which was actually based on the stories of many white settlers. But those settlers often came to Indian land which was getting smaller and smaller, after many promises given to the Native Americans by the US government, e.g. after gold was found there. This image changed after the facts about the Sand Creek Massacre or the Massacre at Wounded Knee were published.

As I have already mentioned the social organisation of the tribe is quite complicated as well as the family members relations. During the modern history they have developed but there still are remains of how they used to work in the times of life on the Plains. Until nowadays there is the Council of forty-four, but similarly to some western democracies the authorities are often not accepted by all tribe members. The most important fact is that thanks to poverty, unemployment and other social problems the family life developed into a system of large families in which all the members help each other. This is one of the ways how the Cheyenne have faced the changes brought by the arrival of white people to America that led to life in the reservations or city communities.

Although the reservations should serve as a place of preservation of traditions and culture this is not happening. There are organisations and individuals, festivals and ceremonies that try to keep and preserve the beautiful and unique culture of the Cheyenne and other Great Plains tribes, but in the course of time too many wrong decisions and mistakes were done. Similarly to natives in other countries, e. g. Australia, despite numerous efforts to avoid it, the culture of the Cheyenne is slowly disappearing. To me the Great Plains Indians represented the freedom and wildness that made America so attractive in the eyes of us Europeans.

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## SUMMARY IN CZECH

Tématem této bakalářské práce je popis jednoho z indiánských kmenů tzv. Velkých plání, Šajenů. Práce je zaměřena především na původ a historii kmene, popis kultury, válečnictví a náboženství Šajenů. Část práce je pak věnována historickému vývoji vedoucímu k dnešnímu životu v rezervacích a popisu problémů, které v současné době postihují nejen Šajeny, ale také většinu ostatních původních Američanů.

Práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních kapitol. První z nich se věnuje původu kmene, názvu a jazyku a zaměřuje se na období tzv. velké migrace, kdy Šajeni opustili dosavadní zemědělský způsob života a začli kočovat po Velkých pláních.

Další kapitola je rozdělena na tři části. První z nich je věnována šajenskému válečnictví, a to včetně porovnání romantických představ nabízených romantickou literaturou s historickou realitou. Další část je věnována sociálním vztahům a organizaci kmene. Poslední část je věnována náboženství, náboženským představám a popisu nejdůležitějších ceremonií a rituálů.

Třetí kapitola je věnována postupnému přesouvání Šajenů a dalších kmenů do vznikajících rezervací. Obsahuje také popis nejznámějších bitev a konfliktů mezi Šajeny a americkou armádou. V poslední části této kapitoly se věnuji především aktuálnímu životu v rezervacích a jmenuji některé aktuální problémy, např. nezaměstnanost, nevzdělanost či alkoholismus. V závěru práce pak shnuji a hodnotím jednotlivé poznatky, případně se pokouším zodpovědět si otázky, které jsem si dal za cíl zodpovědět úvodu této bakalářské práce.