Ethnobotany of the Northern Cheyenne: Medicinal Plants

Gabriel Ruben Bernier

The University of Montana

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Ethnobotany of the Northern Cheyenne:
Medicinal Plants

by

Gabriel Ruben Bernier
B.A. Tufts University, 2000

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

2004

Approved by:

[Signature]
Chairperson

[Signature]
Dean, Graduate School

10-26-04
Date
This thesis provides a concise list of medicinal plants used by the Northern Cheyenne, historically and presently. The information herein has been garnered from extant ethnobotanical literature covering the Northern Cheyenne, and whittled to provide an introductory guide to Cheyenne plant medicines.

It includes limited information on preparations and indications for use, as well as illustrations and distribution of these plants. Each plant is identified by its Cheyenne name, western taxonomic nomenclature, and western folk name.

Furthermore, a discussion of the Northern Cheyenne worldview is presented to provide a context through which one might interpret the medicinal action of each plant, as this varies from the directly physiological to the spiritual, and from personal well-being to tribal health.

This thesis provides a refined source of information that exists scattered throughout the literature on the Northern Cheyenne, Cheyenne ethnobotany, and the botany of United States' prairie flora to facilitate future research particularly in the areas of Northern Cheyenne medicine and herbal healing.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis provides a synthesis of the literature on Northern Cheyenne medical ethnobotany. It describes aspects of the Northern Cheyenne’s cosmology to provide a framework for understanding Cheyenne notions of health, disease, and medicine. The bulk of this thesis is a list of plant medicines with brief descriptions of their preparations and uses to the degree that the extant literature has made that available. What I hope to have accomplished is to have contributed to the community a concise list of medical botanicals used by the Northern Cheyenne.

Several researchers have written on the general ethnobotany of the Northern Cheyenne. Their studies include industrial uses of plants and plants harvested as food in addition to medicinal plant use (Grinnell 1923; Hart 1981; Moerman 1998). The major ethnographic texts discuss general cultural practices of the Northern Cheyenne (Grinnell 1923; Moore 1996; Powell 1969; Schlesier 1987). These texts provide much of the information used in this thesis including descriptions of the ideology through which plants and ceremonies act as medicine, and descriptions of Cheyenne constructions of the notion of disease, as well as how these ideas have changed over time, especially through measures of forced, rapid cultural change instigated by the United States’ imperialistic and otherwise hegemonic actions.

This thesis privileges neither Cheyenne nor western concepts of health, disease or medicine, but honors both. In compiling a list of Cheyenne medicines, I must consider what is medicine, as well as health and disease, to the Cheyenne; simultaneously, respecting the cultural prescriptions through which I have cultivated my constructions of
these concepts, not to mention the language in which I am writing this thesis, I consider what these words mean in westernized America.

John Rowan, in his master’s thesis on four plants used by the Hualapai, set out to balance an etic approach with an emic one. In the former approach, the researcher inherently privileges his own cultural constructs, or systems of meaning, in observing and interpreting the cultural practices of another society, whereas, in the latter approach, the researcher privileges the native practitioner’s perspective on reality and meaning (Rowan 1997).

This thesis relies heavily on the ethnobotanical work of Jeffrey Hart, and Daniel Moerman, and the anthropological work of Charles Grinnell, John Moore, Karl Schlesier, and Peter Powell. These non-Cheyenne men have based their work on fieldwork among the Northern and Southern bands of Cheyenne, and on the work of anthropologists before them. Information such as what constitutes a healthy Cheyenne individual as well as a healthy Cheyenne community, Cheyenne notions of disease causality, and the interpretations of the medicine’s workings guide this thesis and honor Cheyenne systems of meaning, Cheyenne reality, and Cheyenne logic. Furthermore, this thesis recognizes the Cheyenne voices that have informed the western researchers upon whose work it rests. The work of Henrietta Mann and John Stands-In-Timber also influence this thesis. In these ways this thesis provides an emic interpretation.

This thesis honors western notions relevant to the topic in that it relies largely on the previous efforts of western researchers. Charles Grinnell did his fieldwork among the Cheyenne during a very contentious period in the history of anthropology. John Moore, still active academically, draws some criticism as asserting his expertise at the cost of
providing unbiased information (Kracht 1997:150). Regardless, these and other researchers have been able to make beneficial contributions to the academic community. I mention these points only to remind the reader that nothing in this text is to be interpreted as objective truth. The author of this thesis is simply another human being, living in a specific historic moment, ripe with its own politics. The research on which this thesis rests is based on the work of other human beings with their own subjective realities and historic contexts. Furthermore, the western culture in which the author of this thesis has been raised and currently lives has imbued him with its own logic and patterns of thinking. In these ways this thesis offers an etic interpretation.

The research for this thesis is based solely on the available literature. I have not conducted any interviews with members of the Northern Cheyenne knowledgeable in the areas of medicine, religion, or plants. This thesis is designed more to fine tune and manage what information has already been printed, than to contribute additional information. As such, there have been some complications.

The most notable issue is that of change over time. The pressures of encroaching Euro-Americans and the development of the reservation system in the latter half of the nineteenth century began a period of rapid cultural transformation for the Cheyenne as it did for all Native peoples of the American west (Moore 1996:266-284). For at least one hundred and fifty if not two hundred years before this time, the Cheyenne had had much of the northern plains as their territory from which to draw resources as a semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer society (Bamforth 1988: 91; Moore 1996:1-21). The Cheyenne’s adaptation to United States’ hegemony and the reservation system is a process that continues today, some one hundred and thirty years hence (Moore 1996: 285-325).
Consequently, cultural information as well as interpretations are still changing at higher rates than if outside pressures that limit political sovereignty and access to resources were not so strong. It becomes difficult to isolate a culture, a necessarily dynamic phenomenon, in time, for the sake of the written word—and problematic to label periods of a culture’s process of change without attaching unwanted meanings.

A term like ‘traditional’ is problematic in that it prefigures the force of change in the hands of the oppressor, or at least implies that change is a step away from cultural autonomy. It ignores or shadows internal change and adaptation as survival strategies against such cultural oppression. “There is, in such matters, no simple progression from “traditional” to “modern,” but a twisting, spasmodic, unmethodical movement which turns as often toward repossessing the emotions of the past as disowning them” (Geertz 1973:319). When issues of control over resources are considered, emotional attachments to terms like “traditional” and “modern,” or the notion that there is some evolutionary progression fall completely apart. For example, the Northern Cheyenne adopted cattle ranching with a herd of a thousand cows and forty bulls in 1903. This foreign practice was adopted into the society’s mode of economic production. By 1912, the herd had grown to twelve thousand. Under pressure from less successful non-Cheyenne ranchers, the United States federal government seized control of Cheyenne ranching in 1914 and through such “mistakes” as leaving the cattle on mountain ridges in the middle of winter, the herd was reduced to one third its size. In 1924, the federal government sold off the rest of the herd, and “opened the reservation to white lessees, who only had to pay ten cents per acre, half as much as on surrounding grassland” until the United States had once again successfully driven the Cheyenne into a situation of forced dependency and forced
economic underdevelopment (Moore 1996:282-3). I offer this historical vignette provide an example of internal cultural change and change that is forced upon a society by an oppressor, and illustrate the complications of terms like “traditional” and “modern.”

What has been difficult in conducting this research solely from the literature has been in identifying continuity and changes in the use of certain plants. In drawing from Grinnell’s fieldwork in the early part of the twentieth century, I cannot determine to what degree any of that information is relevant to a current Cheyenne reality. Jeffery Hart conducted ethnobotanical fieldwork in the nineteen-seventies among the Northern Cheyenne and published a thorough article covering the use of almost one hundred and forty plants (1981). However, he also used previously published resources such as that of Grinnell, and so his list of useful plants contains those perhaps relegated to memory as well as those currently used. Daniel Moerman has compiled a mammoth work covering indigenous uses of plants across the cultures and ecosystems of North America (1998). Though recent in its completion and publication, it also draws from old sources, disregarding the tremendous changes that Native American people have enacted and endured in the last several hundred years. Jeffrey Hart’s article, “Ethnobotany of the Northern Cheyenne of Montana,” based on his fieldwork in the 1970’s, remains the most recent addition to the published literature on Cheyenne plant use that relies on members of the Cheyenne community as resources. Consequently, the difficulty arises in determining whether or not the use of any of these plants has been discontinued within the last thirty years.

In addition to cultural and social changes, the Great Plains have undergone tremendous ecological changes since Europeans brought themselves, their animals, their
diseases and their beliefs with them. In the United States as a whole, “it is commonly estimated that about five hundred plant and animal species have become extinct” since 1492, and that as many as nine thousand species may be at risk of extinction within the near future (Licht 1997:21). The tallgrass prairie ecosystem, in particular, has undergone tremendous changes since Euroamericans began heavily populating the area. This is not to say that the rise of Plains Indians cultures (intrinsically linked by the horse to European invasion) was the rise of some utopian relationship between human societies and the ecosystem in which they were developing, but that the long-term impact of that lifestyle will remain forever untested. What is historically tested is that one hundred and five vascular plant and animal species of the tallgrass prairie biome are on Minnesota’s state endangered, threatened or special concern list (Licht 1997:21-2).

The other complication I have found has been with the consistency of available information. Descriptions of uses and preparations of medicinal plants vary from being fairly specific to quite vague. However, a very positive aspect of the limitations on this information is that since precise measurements and processes are not anywhere revealed, a work such as this thesis can provide background information, but cannot usurp control from the Cheyenne of information gathered over hundreds of years and preserved within their culture. This should not lead to legal issues over intellectual property rights, nor ecological concerns such as excessive harvesting, nor the well-established pattern of relations between the United States and Native American nations wherein the United States exploits Native resources while limiting Native access to those resources and denying just compensation.
As a final note, this thesis is not intended to be the definitive guide to Cheyenne plant medicines, nor to medicinal plants of the northern plains. Plants are powerful creatures and should always be respected. More precise information on preparations and dosages should be sought elsewhere before using any botanicals mentioned herein.
Chapter 2: Cheyenne Worldview in Relation to Medicinal Practices

In describing The Cheyenne Universe, anthropologists such as Karl Schlesier and John Moore divide it along a vertical axis as well as horizontal axes (Schlesier 1987; Moore 1996). The vertical axis forms a spectrum from abstract to material as it goes from the uppermost, Blue Sky-Spaces to the underworld. The horizontal axes, which follow a particularly Cheyenne interpretation of what the west calls the cardinal directions, relate more directly or immediately to earthly phenomena. However, in dividing the universe in this way, it is important to remember the interrelation of its parts. If the spiritual forces along the cardinal directions are concerned with the manifestation of earthly events, then those along the vertical axis are concerned with the essence of being, the animation of the players of those events.

Vertically, the universe, *Hestanov*, “is divided by the earth’s surface into *Heamahestanov*, the World Above and *Atonoom*, the underworld” (Moore, 1996:203). These two parts are subdivided into regions that form the graduation from abstract to material. The uppermost region of *Heamahestanov* is *Otatavoom*, the Blue Sky-Space. At the top of *Otatavoom* resides Maheo, the Creator. Maheo is purely spiritual in essence, purely abstract or non-physical. Maheo is the mystery and wonder, the inexplicable fact of life and the beauty of the world, its forms, its creatures. Maheo is beyond the dichotomy of sacred and profane (Powell 1969:864). “Maheo is so great we cannot begin to describe Him. We have never seen Him, but we know He is God over all” (Powell 1969:433).

Maheo is manifested in, among other creatures, the Sun and Moon, Atovsz and Ameonito respectively, and in the spirits of the cardinal directions. Moore refers to
Atovsz and Ameonito as “two ‘suns’” which I interpret as an understanding of equality between the sun and moon, that each is essentially the same as the other, but that one is born daily in the life-giving east, and the other is born monthly in the west, the region concerned with matters of death (Moore 1996:203). The names Atovsz and Ameonito refer to the sun and moon in their spiritual incarnations, as Maiyun, spirits who have direct communication with Maheo, whereas the words eshe’e (sun) and taeshe’e (night sun) refer to the sun and moon, respectively, as “bod[ies] of light” (Schlesier 1987:8).

Also occupying the Blue Sky-Space are the stars of the night sky, most prominently, the cluster of stars known in the west as the Pleiades (Manohotoxceo) and the band across the sky, the Milky Way. The spirits or souls of dead Cheyenne travel this band, Seameo, on their way to the land of the dead, described by Grinnell as a place where “the dead live as they lived on earth—they chase buffalo, hunt other game, and go to war” (Grinnell 1924:91). Not all those who have died take this route; “the souls of those who die at their own hand, or who were exceptionally evil during life, must travel down a particular branch of Seameo which leads to nothingness” (Moore 1996:204). Manohotoxceo, the morning and evening stars, and “scratching stars” (shooting stars) are mentioned in Cheyenne ceremonies as well as several constellations different from those in the western world including the Circle of Stars, the Beaver, and the Heart (Moore 1996:205).

Although the Holy Birds, Maheonevekseo, including but not limited to the thunderbird, the magpie (the sacred messenger) and four kinds of birds introduced to the cosmology through Peyotism, the macaw, the Mexican turkey, the scissor-tailed flycatcher, and the waterbird (anhinga) do not reside in Otatavoom, these birds are
capable of penetrating this uppermost region of the Cheyenne universe (Moore 1986:190; 1996:204). They act as agents of *Otatavoom*’s spiritual forces, communicating their “moods and intentions” to Cheyennes who are willing to hear and are skilled in interpreting their messages (Moore 1996:204).

Below *Otatavoom* is *Setovoom*, the Nearer Sky-Space. *Setovoom* is where such phenomena as clouds, dust devils, and tornadoes take form. It is also home to the Great Birds, *Maxevekseo*, and the tops of hills and mountains. *Setovoom* mediates between earth’s surface, *Taxtavoom*, and the Blue Sky-Space, *Otatavoom*. The clouds in *Setovoom* predict changes in weather and the seasons, changes decided upon by Maheo. Communications between Cheyenne and agents in the Blue Sky-Space are carried through *Setovoom* by ravens and magpies; these and other birds predict changes in earthly events and reveal the locations of other people, say friendly or antagonistic groups, as well as animals, such as those that might be hunted.

The space that people and small birds occupy, through which “dust rises from horses and vehicles, where objects can be thrown, where bullets and arrows can be shot” is known as *Taxtavoom* (Moore 1996:205). *Taxtavoom* makes “physical life possible through its power of Omc-tomhestoz, the gift or quality of breath” (Schlesier 1978:6). For this it is considered a great gift, as it enters the lungs of people and animals “keeping them alive and moving, even when asleep” (Moore 1996:205).

*Taxtavoom* is the lowest region of *Heamakestanov*, the World Above, and it meets *Votostoom*, the region between the surface and the Deep Earth, *Nsthoaman*. *Votostoom* is the upper layer of *Atonoom*, the Underworld. It is here where “plants and their roots grow, where insects and animals burrow” and also is the place where the caves
of animals including bears and buffaloes live. Sunlit water and its inhabitants also comprise Votostoom; rocks and other geological surface features, thought to be non-living in the west, are included in the Votostoom’s living world.

Below Votostoom and providing substance to the world is Nsthoaman. Non-living, and non-spiritual insofar as spirit implies animation and abstract essence, Nsthoaman is entirely substantial and material. Nsthoaman is accessible or revealed in rocky, barren mountain peaks, sandbars, stretches of desert and cave interiors (Moore 1996:205-206; Schlesier 1987:6). Despite Nsthoaman’s “biophysical sterility,” the essence of the female principle in Cheyenne cosmology or Heestoz, within the deep earth layer is represented by a grandmotherly spiritual force known as Esceheman (Schlesier 1987:6).

Though Cheyenne gender constructs may not be considered to be dichotomous insofar as the people who manifest them occupy a more pluralistic space—various androgynous shamans subvert a strict polarization of gender—there is however, a masculine-feminine spectrum that overlaps the vertical axis of the Cheyenne worldview. Maheo is purely masculine, and the characters of the Blue Sky-Space perhaps only slightly less so. Each layer of Heamahestanov is increasingly feminine as it reaches Atonoom which is even more so, culminating in the purely feminine reaches of Nsthoaman, the Deep Earth. The characters above the surface of the earth are predominantly masculine, and those below are predominantly feminine, rendering the surface as the balance of masculine and feminine, energetic and material, abstract and substantial (Moore 1996:204-206; Schlesier 1987:4-6). This seems to mirror the male and female roles in reproduction in that the male role, from an outside perspective, is
much less visible than the female role, that a man offers the abstract elements of life and
living, and the woman manages the substantial, material aspects as the fetus develops in
her womb.

Men and women embody this gender construct insofar as it offers an
interpretation of the flow of energy from Maheo, and in turn, an interpretation of such
human behaviors as transgendering and bisexuality. Despite their femininity, women are
not denied access to the abstract energy of Maheo and the Blue Sky-Space, contrary to
what Pahr wrote in her master’s thesis (Pahr 1997:57). There are priestesses and female
healers as well as men who perform these functions, and sexual intimacy between lovers
is regarded as the transference of what Moore calls “Cosmic energy,” that is, Maheo’s

Maheo’s energy, *Exhaustoz*, flows in one direction, down from his realm through
the spectrum of spirits and the layers of the universe. Its flow is like that of water down
mountains: it comes to a standstill at the end of winter, “when the earth dies,” and must
be renewed each year (Moore 1996:213).

*Exhaustoz* is transmitted to Atovsz and Ameonito who fuel the sun, *eshe’e* and
moon, *taeshe’e*, and push the seasons through their cycle. *Exhaustoz* is also transmitted to
Nemevota for rain and to Nonoma for thunderstorms. The flow is guided either directly
or through spirits to sacred birds (high-flying and predatory birds) and animals, who
might, if treated with respect, transfer the energy to humans. *Exhaustoz* is directly
communicated between Atovsz and the earth in the form of sunlight, causing plants to
grow (Moore 1996:212).
Humans can tap into Exhastoz at any level, the higher levels being more powerful but the process of connection being more difficult and dangerous. A Cheyenne can pray directly to Maheo, and in doing this will often put him/herself closer to the blue Sky-Space and to Maheo by ascending a mountaintop or the sacred mountain, Nowahwus (Bear Butte, South Dakota). When someone prays like this s/he is looking for advice or assistance from spiritual powers who may, if they are inclined, deliver Exhastoz from Maheo.

Another way to receive Exhastoz is to become a pledger or dancer in one of the major ceremonies. The energy comes through participation, either directly or through a person who is serving as an instructor to a noviciate. In the case of healing illness, a doctor who has a unique relationship with a specific spirit, or animal, or plant, or combination of these, will transmit special manifestations of Exhastoz (Moore 1996:213).

Exhastoz being finite, it is generally used by the solicitor for a single purpose. A person is seeking assistance for a specific task or event when s/he channels Exhastoz in these ways. However, energy is also transmitted through sexual intimacy, through affectionate contact, or shaking hands, hugging, or even being in the presence of an elder or a priest (Moore 1996:213).

The horizontal axes of Cheyenne cosmology serve to house spirits who manage Maheo’s energy. These Makeyum are Maheo’s servants and have been since before the creation of the earth. After its creation, the sacred persons were sent to guard the earth, one at each corner (Powell 1969:434-435). The horizontal axes lead to these points and follow a distinctly Cheyenne set of cardinal directions. With each direction is associated a color; creatures and objects of these colors follow this association. The cardinal
directions are defined by human experience, not mathematical formula, and so they differ slightly from those of the western world. For example, the Cheyenne east is a little southward of the western world’s east as the sun, Atovsz, tends to favor the south on its daily and seasonal travels (Moore 1996:206).

*Hesen*, the east, is the direction from which the life-giving sun rises daily. Red or yellow is the color of Hesen as these are the prominent colors of sunrise. Moore offers the red-headed woodpecker, yellow-shafted flickers, red willows, red catlinite (the stone used for the bowl of smoking pipes), the human penis, and blood as some objects and creatures associated with *Hesen*, and Hesenota, the spirit of the east (1996:206).

Opposite in direction as well as in meaning is *Onxsovon* and its spirit Onxsovota, the west. It is here where the sun dies each day, and here where the moon is born each month. Its associated colors are that of the sunset—purple, violet, dark blue, and black. Paralleling the death of the sun each day, *Onxsovon* symbolizes death, darkness and the fear of death. The moon and its light is associated with death but offers protection from it; the waxing moon particularly offers such protection, as do animals wearing its crescent shape. Examples of this include the crescent claws of predators and the black design on the neck of the flicker. The summer’s crescent moon is symbolic of buffalo horns and indicates that it is time for the major ceremonies to begin (Moore 1996:207).

*Hesen* and *Onxsovon* operate as opposite sides of the same fundamental notion: living/dying—they are complementary. The north, *Notam*, and south, *Sovan*, operate similarly, as complements to each other, operating on a seasonal basis. Notamota is responsible for the winter and its difficult weather, as well as the shift from summer to winter as he pushes Atovsz further and further south after the summer solstice. It takes
Atovsz until the winter solstice to regain enough strength to return northward, bringing thunderstorms and the south winds with him (Moore 1996:207). White, the color of snow is the color of the north, while Sovota’s color is green. The color symbolism along the north-south axis needs to be understood as one set—focusing on the change from one color to another, as the green of plants is covered in snow, and uncovered (Moore 1996:207-208).

As the flow of Maheo’s energy works its way down the vertical axis, it works its way down a hierarchy of spiritual forces. Maheo is represented in Atovsz (Sun) and Ameonito (Moon) and the spirits of the cardinal directions. These Maiyun and Maheyuno are represented in lesser spirits or manifestations such as Nemevota (Rain), Nonoma (Thunder) and Hoimaha (Frost). Maheo’s energy becomes increasingly material as it approaches the surface of the earth; the creatures of the Blue Sky-Space, Otatavoom, flying closer to a purer state of Maheo act as messengers between the Cheyenne and Maheo. These include the golden eagle, the gyrfalcon, and, oddly, the magpie. Maiyun of the Near Sky-Space manifest themselves through the spirits of the wolf, the raven, the red-headed woodpecker, dragonfly, and others, While the spirits of bears, badgers and buffaloes are manifestations of the maiyun associated with Escheheman, the spirit of the Deep Earth (Schlesier 1987:8).

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1 Peter J. Powell, in his text Sweet Medicine describes the colors associated with the cardinal directions as different from those outlined by John H. Moore and discussed above. Powell attributes the color white to the East, or more specifically the Southeast (Hesenota) symbolizing light and life. The Southwest, Sovota, is given the color red associated with warmth. Onxsovon, the Northwest, is a “rich, golden yellow” associated with “perfection, ripeness, beauty” and the Northeast, Notamota is given the color black, “symbolizing coldness, inertia, and death” (436).

2 I say oddly because the magpie does not fly so high as the other birds: it tends to occupy the space described as Taxtavoom. Magpie, however, is seen as a sacred messenger between the Cheyenne and Maheo as it “comes near to human habitation and overhears their conversations” (Moore 1986:181).
Within the Deep Earth, *Nsthoaman*, are the animal caverns, *Heszevoxsz*, wherein the animal spirits are gathered. These spirits, *Hematasoomao*, are part of the chain of spiritual forces acting out Maheo’s energy and design. The *Hematasoomao* are released from *Nsthoaman* in the physical form of the creatures of the animal kingdom, or are refused rebirth, as is increasingly the case given “the destruction of the earth waged by industrial nations. After the self-destruction of the global mass of human population, the *Maiyun* are to rehabilitate physical conditions on earth and reopen the *Heszevoxsz*” (Schlesier 1987:5-6).

These *Maiyun* are associated with each species and each protects his species. They are male and work under the *Maiyun* of the Blue Sky-Space and the Deep Earth, making themselves visible on important occasions as enormous animals of their species. They withhold game as punishment or harm the abusive hunter; conversely, they grant righteous Cheyennes with special privileges, or offer their creatures to be taken as food (Schlesier 1987:8-9).

The Cheyenne notion of species is different than that of western science. It is a system of categories that recognizes reproductive consistency, but also classifies different stages of an animal that undergoes a significant metamorphosis or change in appearance as different species. This is a function of the religious and symbolic importance of animal species in Cheyenne cosmology. “When the appearance of an individual bird changes, its symbolic importance changes, and therefore its species also changes (Moore 1986:184).

The vertical axis of the Cheyenne cosmological structure plays a large role in the taxonomy of animals, determining the sacredness of an animal and its ability to help
people based on the level of the axis it occupies. The sacred birds of the Blue Sky-Space, *Otatavoom*, are known as *Maheonevekseo*. Below them are the *Maxavekseo*, “great birds” which are mostly large predatory birds who inhabit the Nearer Sky-Space. Closer to the earth, in *Tuxtavoom*, are the *Xamaevekseo*, the ordinary birds such as songbirds and groundbirds (Moore 1996:210). The holy birds of the Blue Sky-Space are the most powerful and potentially the most beneficial to people of all the birds. Other animals are encountered in visions or dreams, offering the person instructions, which, should s/he follow them, will allow that person access to the animal’s medicine. That animal becomes a personal spiritual helper (Stands in Timber & Liberty 1967:104).

Deer have significant power. Grinnell describes the power of mule-deer as that of shooting “disease-arrows” from the cavities beneath its eyes. Furthermore, “if a doctor carries the tail of one it will help him so to afflict a person whom he may wish to harm.” Conversely, a mule-deer’s power can be used positively and Grinnell also points out that a white-tail deer’s power is beneficial in love affairs (1923:104). Elk have similar power to a mule-deer, but stronger. Antelope are entirely beneficial, to dream of one being fortunate for the person dreaming. Grinnell attributes the reverence for beavers to the intelligence they demonstrate in building their dams and lodges, but mentions no specific spiritual power. Skunks, however, possess power as doctors use their hides to hold medicine, their tails being tied to horses in times of war, and their images being “engraved in ornament on the seeds employed by women in gambling” and painted on robes and lodges (Grinnell 1923:104-105).

The badger is greatly revered as long ago it talked to people it encountered on the prairie, offering advice and suggestions on how to live. An invitation to smoke and to eat
is thought to be extended to the badger when it is offered to the *Maheyuno* of the corners of the earth, to Esceheman and to Maheo. The bear is also greatly respected as a powerful medicine animal with the ability to heal itself and other bears (Grinnell 1923:105).

Wolves and coyotes, too, have long been respected by the Cheyenne with a slight preference for Coyote, perhaps as Grinnell suggests, for his intelligence. Long ago, no one would kill wolves or coyotes and some people could interpret their howling (Grinnell 1923:105).

Grinnell includes owls in a list of birds whose power has been called upon in war; however, Moore and Schlesier do not include owls amongst Cheyenne bird taxonomy, excepting the short-eared owl which falls into the Cheyenne category known as *Aenoo*, containing mostly what the western world refers to as hawks. The short-eared owl is perhaps placed in this group because it is “diurnal and because it eats rattlesnakes, which are an object of Cheyenne curiosity” (Grinnell 1923:105; Moore 1986:186; 1996:211; Schlesier 1987:9). Instead, owls are considered *Mistai*, dark spirits or spooks who have “come into the world through the misuse of shamanistic power” (Moore 1986:186; Schlesier 1987:9). Powell explains *Mistai* as “spirits derived from the dead” but are “not the ghosts of particular people” (1969:440). Owls are harbingers of death, and are generally seen as inherently evil. They bother the lone Cheyenne walking through the night, taunting the sojourner with the flapping of their wings (Straus 1978:4). Straus offers the idea that “there may well be some connection between owls and those who behaved in evil ways but are now deceased, perhaps even with murderers, the arch-sinners among traditional Cheyennes” (1978:4). The only proper way to deal with owls
is to kill them in an effort to purge the earth, and Seana (the village at the end of the Milky Way that awaits Cheyenne who have died) of such evil beings (Straus 1978:4).

Cheyenne life is tribal life in that an individual strives to fully develop him- or herself as an individual but with regard to the tribe. Always at the center of focus is the tribe. Ideally, one strives to benefit the community in which s/he spends his/her life. In death, one does this as well. “A ‘good death’ is a tribal death,—one which serves a tribal purpose and exemplifies tribal values; a good death contributes to the tribal solidarity and provides for the security of the self within the tribal community” (Straus 1978:5). The only sorrow associated with death is that of loneliness. “Loneliness is considered to be the universal condition of mankind, the inescapable consequences of Ma?heo?o’s gift of human consciousness” (Straus 1978:5). As in life, exile from the community is the greatest punishment, and in death this destiny awaits those who have acted against the tribe, taking their own life or that of another Cheyenne.

Upon dying, a Cheyenne loses his or her humanness, or material self, but not his/her tribal identity and deeper self. Human life is understood as a process, and death is as well. Sexual reproduction is only part of the process of bringing new life to earth; in addition to the male and female contributions of blood and substance is the “animating life principle” supplied by Maheo. Maheo may recall this blessing at any time between conception and birth. With its first breath, the newborn infant “draws in his consciousness and his ability to communicate verbally, and thus his only access to power in a world where he is otherwise weak and ignorant.” The breath that sustains life, Maheo’s second blessing and a special gift to humans, is known as Omotome, translated as breath/air and also word (Straus 1978:2).
During the first twelve years, a Cheyenne’s *Hematasooma* develops. This is a Cheyenne’s “spiritual potential” which consists of four parts (Schlesier 1987:9). Two of these four parts are good and two are crazy; the former represent the organized, cultured aspects of Cheyenne life, and the latter recognize humans as animals (Straus 1978:2). There is the Good Spirit, the Thoughtful Spirit, the Crazy Spirit, and the Tantalizer (Sooktis 1976:14). These four spirits are at constant tension within an individual, driving him or her to act in the variety of ways an individual acts throughout his/her life. The power of the Good Spirit is characterized by patience and compassion. Through this spirit an elder will allow a youth to make mistakes and not give up trying to teach him or her. The Thoughtful Spirit directs a person in honest communication that is positive and constructive. The Crazy Spirit’s power is expressed through harsh, angry words, thoughtless anger and violence. It is this spirit that works to distract an individual from hearing the patience and honesty spoken by the Thoughtful and Good Spirits. The fourth spirit of *Hematasooma* is the Tantalizer, whose tempting toward bad action or speech can be either hurtful or helpful, causing injury or humor, and works to challenge an individual. This spirit is a joker, similar in ways to the Trickster archetype (Sooktis 1976:14).

Upon recognizing one’s own responsibility in choosing to honor the good aspects over the crazy aspects, and accepting Cheyenne ethics and ways, personhood is attained. Birth alone does not ensure status as a person; participation in tribal society does. As such, personhood is acknowledged as a process (Straus 1978:2-3). These first twelve years are the years during which a child “wanders” through the Cheyenne world, learns
the language, the culture, and begins to become aware of his or her belonging to the tribe (Sooktis 1976:7).

From this point until a Cheyenne reaches about twenty-eight years of age, a person is considered to be exploring. Traditionally, a major part of this period is marriage. In addition, this period is a time of finding one’s path and how to best serve the tribe. Once a path is chosen, one begins to follow it.

From about twenty-nine to sixty-five years of age, one might involve him- or herself in the responsibilities of raising a family, of managing a household, and assuming a role within the tribe. In addition, this is a time when many people make a personal connection with Maheo, and develop their own communication with spiritual forces. This period is sometimes referred to as the age to do things (Sooktis 1976:12). Finally, should one travel this long on earth, one would reach the age of wisdom, become an elder. In this time, a person is often reminded of past events and people who have already left the earth (Sooktis 1976:12). Like the very young Cheyenne, the elders are described as “close to the spirit” (Straus 1978:3).

The next step is to begin the journey to Naevoom or Seana, the land of the dead, found after four days of travel along Seameo, that band across the night sky known to the west as the Milky Way (Moore 1996:204, Straus 1978:3). To many westerners, dying may culminate in death, but in Cheyenne cosmology, the moment of death is merely a step in the process wherein the physical body is finally abandoned. The hematasooma, the four-part soul of a Cheyenne, is the first life-essence to leave the body. As its parts leave, the person undergoes changes in behavior and thinking. When all four parts have gone, the Omotome begins to depart the body, taking with it the person’s senses.
consciousness, and ultimately, breath. After both the *Omotome* and *Hematasooma* have
left the body, they reunite to begin the journey along *Seameo* (Straus 1978:3).

As a departed Cheyenne’s physical vehicle, his body, rots and partakes in the
processes of physical, earthly living as food for other creatures, Maheo’s first gift, “the
life principle” becomes “localized in the skeleton” wherein it remains, in a state of
dormancy, until the bones crumble away. Human skeletons are known to be animate, but
are unable to communicate in words with the living. The spirits of Cheyennes who have
passed, however, do communicate with the living, often in dreams, generally, to “warn,
advise, direct and give power to living human beings” (Straus 1978:4). The spirit selves
of departed Cheyennes do not stop being Cheyenne, except when a person has lived an
exceptionally hurtful and wrong life. In this case, the spirit does not take the fork of the
Milky Way that leads to *Seana*, but instead takes a different fork that leads to
nothingness. As in life, exile is the most severe consequence, considering that loneliness
is the central concern, and is saved for those who utterly fail to act with the tribe in mind.

Some of these spirits fall back to earth as “were-animals befitting the animal-like, a-
 moral manner in which they conducted their lives on the surface of the earth” (Straus
1978:4). The third destination for those who have passed away is reserved for medicine
people or shamans. They are buried facing Bear Butte, the sacred mountain, for this is
where they will go, becoming “nesemoono, personal spirits, who continue to guide and
instruct their people, assuming a variety of incarnations on the surface of the earth”
(Straus 1978:4).

Cheyenne selfhood and tribal identity continue along the path that is established
on earth long after the body is shed. A good death is one that benefits the tribe, “one
which serves a tribal purpose and exemplifies tribal values” (Straus 1978:5). A person simply moves from one strata of the cosmological structure to another as the physical, substantial elements deteriorate, and the abstract, spiritual elements persevere.

The hard part of living and dying that is fully neither one nor the other is disease. Grinnell claims that no one knows how disease came into the world, and Moore states that the Cheyenne have several theories (Grinnell 1923:126; Moore 1996:251). One idea is that “general health and well-being depend on participation in religious activities in a proper and legitimate manner, so that blessings proceed to everyone through legitimate channels” (Moore 1996:251). If a person errs in ritual performance, or treats a sacred object with disrespect, or fails to participate in a ceremony s/he will sicken; s/he or members of his/her family could also become sick and die. The power to live, animation, comes from Maheo. The rituals and ceremonies serve to channel this power properly to the inhabitants of earth; a disruption in its flow inhibits creatures from accessing Maheo’s life essence and without it they weaken, sicken, and die (Moore 1996:251). In the words of Henrietta Mann of the Southern Cheyenne.

As Cheyenne, we are made from the soil, the dirt, the dust of this land, and the winds of the four directions gave us the breath of life. The Great One created four sacred substances: sinew to hold the world together, sweetgrass as the beginning of plant life, buffalo fat which was the beginning of animal life, and finally, he created red Earth which was the substance of all things on Earth. These substances are sacred, and these four sacred beings were fused into something that looked like a ball. So he breathed on the ball four times to give it life.

This is the same thing that happens every year at our sundance — we bring down and renew the breath of life. That is our responsibility, to renew this Earth, and we do this through our ceremonies so that our Mother, our Grandmother, the Earth can continue to support us. We have ceremonial and spiritual responsibilities to renew the Earth (Taliman 2002).
The major ceremonies of the Cheyenne include the Arrow Ceremony of the Southern Cheyenne which is equated with the Sacred Hat Ceremony of the Northern Cheyenne—both are purifying ceremonies for the tribe; the Sun Dance, performed to renew the people and the earth; and the Massaum and Peyote ceremonies, both of which are ceremonies for health and healing (Moore 1996:213-214).

The Sacred Hat ceremony was brought to the Cheyenne by the Suhtai in the early 1800’s, a band of people who were taken into the Northern Cheyenne community (Weist 1971:128). Until the second half of the twentieth century, the Keeper of the Hat was always of Suhtai descent, but when no one of such lineage accepted the responsibility, the role went to a non-Suhtai (Weist 1971:129). It is this person’s responsibility to protect the Hat and the bundle in which it is wrapped. He (or occasionally she) is to live quietly, never really leave the Hat unattended, never to “mingle in crowds” (Weist 1971:129). He is chosen on the merits of his character, not by his religious role; “the keeper was supposed to be good-natured and honest and not get mad too easily” (Stands in Timber 1967:74). Essentially, the Keeper is to exemplify the model qualities for the tribe (Weist 1971:129). This is an important and honorable role to perform as “the welfare of the tribe is closely connected with the care the bundle receives. If it is well cared for, the tribe prospers; if it is abused, the tribe falters and disorganization and conflict occur (Weist 1971:128).

The Hat, as well as the Sacred Arrows, remains unwrapped in its bundle except in the major ceremonies, but sometimes the other objects in the bundle are used for special cases when stronger medicine is needed for the tribe (Stands in Timber 1967:76-78). Though the Arrows are to be renewed annually, the main ceremony for the Sacred Hat
has not been performed for generations such that none of the priests know it in its entirety, holding only some of the knowledge of its care and certain ritual acts associated with it (Moore 1996:218; Stands In Timber 1967:78). Moore makes no mention of the loss of knowledge concerning the renewal of the Sacred Hat, but does indicate that the renewal process is much less complicated than that of the Sacred Arrows and is not performed annually (1996:218).

The renewal ceremony for the Arrows ideally extends over four days, following four days of preparation, although this is often modified to accommodate the lives and lifestyles of those involved in the ceremony (Moore 196:217; Powell 1969:485-493). The Renewal ceremony includes the following acts, but is not performed in a set pattern: the Arrows represent the Cheyenne people, and so they are inspected for damage incurred through wrongful acts by members of the community. Food and prayers are offered to bless the people, the four directions and other spirits, and the soldier societies. Sweet grass is burned and tobacco smoked to carry prayers from priests to Maheo. The Sacred Arrows are exposed for Cheyenne men to see. The journey of Sweet Medicine, the Cheyenne culture hero and prophet, is recounted through “reference to sacred objects contained within the arrow bundle, including a lock of hair from Sweet Medicine’s head,” and his prophecies are recited. While ritual acts are being performed within the Arrow tipi, Cheyennes not involved in the performance of these acts renew “their personal and family sacred objects” by performing other rituals. The incorporation of the Sacred Hat, or at least reference to it, and the performance of acts by a priest of the Hat in the Arrow ceremony renews unity with the Suhtai and maintains that bond with a group
recognized as distinct from the Cheyenne but no less a part of the community (Moore 1996:214-218; Powell 1969:508).

The Arrow Ceremony reproduces the Cheyenne cosmological structure in several ways. There is constant reference to Maheo, prayers to whom rise up on the smoke of sweet grass and tobacco. Birds and animals are mentioned in reference to their spiritual characters and their species as a whole, not as individual players of earthly events. The Maiyun of the four directions “are invoked whenever water is drunk, by tracing a cross in the bucket of water with an eagle feather, and naming the four spirits and Maheo in the center.” Furthermore, the layout of the camp is arranged to “accommodate the transfer of energy from the sacred mountain to the Arrows” in order to renew the people’s access to Maheo’s energy. Priests and pledgers increase their personal control of Maheo’s energy by participating in the ceremony (Moore 1996:217-218).

Like the Sacred Hat ceremony, the Sun Dance, or Oxheheom (translated into English as New Life Lodge, or Life Generator Lodge) as it is known to the Cheyenne, is a ceremony concerned with the vitality and prosperity of the whole community, is comprised of many ritual acts the knowledge of which is heavily guarded, is “shrouded with supernatural power which is believed in by many but understood by few,” is performed only by certain members of the community but attended by as many as possible, ideally, all, and was introduced to the Cheyenne by the Suhtai (Moore 1996:220; Weist 1973:128-129).

There are two main parts to the Sun Dance ceremony, the first of which centers around the main pledger who has made a vow to Maheo, generally for help against an illness or some other distress, and who serves to “secure the blessings of Maheo for the
life and health not only of his family, but of everyone” (Moore 1996:220). The pledger, his wife, and the priests perform their part privately in a tipi. Largely their acts anticipate, on a small scale, the rituals performed in and around the arbor serving as centerpiece to the ceremony. These include a small altar mirroring the arbor, and the creation of mounds that reflect the creation of the earth (Moore 1996:221).

The second part of the ceremony occurs around the arbor and consists of fasting and dancing by men who have vowed to do so under the tutelage of an instructor, someone who has danced in at least four prior ceremonies. Generally this works out to between fifteen and thirty dancers and fewer instructors as an instructor will often take on more than one pledger. Many, if not all, important themes in Cheyenne cosmology and social structure are represented in the symbolism of the Sun Dance. The center pole of the arbor is a phallic symbol relating to the ceremony’s element of renewal, and the top layer of the ground is peeled away to reveal Nsthoaman, and the female spirit of the Deep Earth. “The twelve other vertical poles around the Sun Dance arbor, clockwise from the door, represent a person’s progression through life from child to elder, and the progression of the seasons, which for the prophet Sweet Medicine were the same thing.” Furthermore, all the important animals and plants are recognized and symbolized through the objects of the altar, the songs and prayers, and the paints used by the dancers. In part, the paint represents the four parts of the Hematasooma (Moore 1996:222-224).

The paints are called “green hail,” “white hail,” “green whirlwind,” and “white whirlwind” and are associated with the tremendous thunderstorms that roll across the plains in the fall and in the spring. The spring storms are characterized by a huge thunderhead rising up high into the sky in a form often resembling some recognizable
creature of the earth, the dark belly of the cloud lit up and shaking from the thunder and
lightning, and trailed by tornadoes interpreted as symbolic penises, the green-colored
hailstones thrown to the ground as semen—all of this is a magnificent act of earthly
procreation, as the green hailstones, symbolic of new life in their color, bring that new
life to the arid soil. Spring storms charge north from the warm, life-bearing south, and
battle, with help from Atovsz, against Notamota (North). Fall storms bear a white hail
(sleet) that successfully pushes the warm, southern forces back into remission for the
winter. The “whirlwind” paints represent the Green Darner, a dragonfly that changes its
color between green and white seasonally and hunts insects communally, “forming
tornado-shaped columns” in the process (Moore 1996:225-227).

The Massaum ceremony, which has not been performed since 1927, and was
abbreviated in its performance then and lacked the careful consideration and full,
informed participation by those involved, is another ceremony designed to renew
Maheo’s energy, but also involves the healing of individuals, and the renewal of the
Cheyenne’s contract with their world (Schlesier 1987:83-109). The ceremony would last
five days and symbolizes the creation of the universe and the development of the
relationship between the Cheyenne and the plants and animals that give them sustenance.

On the first day, a lodge is constructed that by the end of that day represents, or
becomes, the universe before creation. “It is built from the center,” around a tree that has
been ceremonially felled and set up, “and it represents the shell of the universe with its
central creative force, the Supreme Being Maheo, who is visualized in the symbol of the
tree” (Schlesier 1987:91).
The second day marks creation; this event or process is recreated when the male instructor, who has pledged in prior Massaum ceremonies, and who will later act as Nonoma, here represents Maheo and makes an indention with his thumb near the center pole of the lodge, and then four around it in the cardinal directions. Using a digging stick he unearths some sod from the center point and creates little mounds on the indentions, thus symbolizing the creation of the world from the center out. This act is extended to the poles of the lodge that have been arranged in the cardinal directions when bundles of white sage are tied to these poles, creating a line between the mounds and the poles. The Maiyun of the cardinal directions are recognized in paintings on both the outside and inside of the lodge covering, and a buffalo skull as Esceheman. With these present, the lodge becomes a spirit lodge (Schlesier 1987:92-96).

On the third day, the Cheyenne are welcomed to the earth and taught the ways of proper coexistence particularly through righteous hunting methods. Part of the ritual on this day is the marrying of Ehyophstah. In the story, Ehyophstah marries the younger and less skilled of two shamans; she is a buffalo spirit, and her marriage to the Shaman is the assistance that the Buffalo gave the Cheyenne when they moved from the Great Lakes to the Plains (Schlesier 1987:96-99; 77-78).

On the fourth day, the universe extends beyond the wolf lodge, set up in the middle of camp, a ring of tipis arranged in a circle around it with an opening facing Bear Butte to allow Maheo’s energy into the camp. The animal Maiyun come to be on this day, a male wolf and female wolf announce their arrival, running out from a ring of lodges within the outer circle of tipis, wherein the animals are preparing themselves; these lodges are the animal caves, the Heszevox (Schlesier 1987:99-103).
The fifth day is the day of the big hunt, when the *Heszevox* release all the animals onto the earth, and the participants sing and pray, walk and run through the camp.

After the animals had completed dance around Esceheman, Ehyophstah, and the Young Wolves, they filed out of the brush lanes and returned to the dens. While they were moving back, the doctoring portion of the Massaum began. Those in the Tsistsistas camp who were ill or disabled or who wanted a blessing directly from the animal spirits sat motionless in front of the lodges. When passing them, the animals performed brief shamanistic healing or cleansing rituals. Hohnuhka who were asked to doctor treated patients in their mysterious contrary way at this time (Schlesier 1987:104-109).

While the ceremonies of the Sacred Hat and Arrows, the Sun Dance, and Massaum ceremonies are concerned with the renewal of Maheo’s energy and the health of the community as a whole (with an element of personal healing in the Massaum and Sun Dance), the Half-Moon ceremony of Peyotism is entirely for personal healing, though it involves not just a single person. Peyotism, protected as a religious freedom from what has become the War on Drugs by the efforts of anthropologist James Mooney in the early twentieth century when he pressed Congress to recognize the Native American Church and its use of the hallucinogenic cactus, peyote, as a legitimate religious organization, blends some elements of traditional indigenous spirituality from the cultures of the Mexican desert, such as the Huichol, with elements of Christianity in the form of meetings called to address a particular illness of a particular individual (Moore 1996:232-234). The flowing description of the Half Moon ceremony is based on John Moore’s written description of the ceremony.

He or she who is ailing calls the meeting and provides as much of the paraphernalia, food, water and tobacco as s/he can, and puts up the tipi in which the ceremony will take place. One person, often called a “road man” leads the ceremony.
which begins at nightfall with Christian prayers and the eating of peyote buttons. The
participants line the edge of the tipi, with the road man, the chief drummer, and s/he who
is in charge of the incense opposite the door, and someone to watch the fire beside it.
The fire is in the middle, between the door and a crescent moon shaped mound of earth,
with a large peyote button, called “Chief Peyote” resting on it. The paraphernalia
includes a water drum (steel kettle half-filled with water); rattles; a fan made of feathers
from an eagle, macaw, anhinga; a staff and a drumstick (Moore 1996:232-234).

The leader of the ceremony asks each person to say why s/he is there, particularly
the person who has called the meeting. Peyote is eaten, tobacco smoked, and the songs
begin. A rattle is passed around and each person sings in turn, the drum following. The
music moves the circle and continues through the night, people phasing in their own
rattles after the first round. Eventually, a bucket of water is passed around, shared by the
participants. After this, everybody shares the visions that peyote brought them during the
ceremony, and naps, until they share a feast at noon. Finally, the tipi is taken down, but
the half moon and ashes are left to the elements (Moore 1996:232-234).

The peyote Half-Moon ceremony has been a relatively important part of
Cheyenne healing in the last several decades, particularly in dealing with alcoholism
(Moore 1996:251-252). This is fitting because, in addition to maintaining the flow of
Maheo’s energy, the Cheyenne have adopted notions of disease that come with the
introduction of diseases brought by people of European descent. Having no traditional
response to diabetes, alcoholism, and tuberculosis, for example, the Cheyenne have
accommodated the west’s medicines to deal with its diseases. The Native American
Church is an amalgamation of the west’s ideas, healing practices from other Native
American groups and the Cheyenne’s own beliefs. The contemporary western world tends to separate health and spirituality, however, in this case, and in a traditional Cheyenne perspective, the two are intertwined. The most frequent disease brought to the Native American Church for remedy is alcoholism, a disease that came with Europeans and European Americans; thus its remedy involves Christian prayer (Moore 1996:251-252).

Petitions to Maheo through the great ceremonies also serve to contribute beneficially to the curing of the west’s diseases. Often someone will pledge a Sun Dance or another ceremony to assist himself or a family member suffering with cancer. “Cheyenne religionists point with pride to people whose apparently hopeless conditions have cleared up after the performance of a Sun Dance or other ceremony in their behalf. Similar claims are made for the peyote religion” (Moore 1996:252).

Traditional, or non-European diseases were and are thought to be both spiritual and physical in nature, as alluded to above, and so the remedy is sought both spiritually and physically (Grinnell 1923:126). Grinnell writes that disease is thought to be shot as invisible arrows from angered or disrespected spirits (1923:126). As such, the spiritual aspect of the cure consists of two parts: scaring away the malignant spirits, and calling on beneficial spirits, the former of which often includes the removal of a physical manifestation of the disease agent (Grinnell 1923:126-127). This is generally performed by a doctor who has earned his title through a combination of Maheo’s choosing, through a dream or vision, and by his tutelage under an established doctor who has taught elements of his practice and personal pharmacopeia to him. The removal of the disease agent is preceded by a cleansing with a purifying smoke such as that of a combination of
ground juniper (sweet grass), certain mushrooms, and crushed bitterroot, and incorporates singing and praying, direct communication with spirits, urging those harmful to leave, and those beneficial to come (Grinnell 1923:127-130).

The physical component in traditional Cheyenne healing consists generally of the administering of herbs, often taken internally as a tea, or applied to surface wounds as a poultice; the Cheyenne, though willing to cut out an arrowhead or bullet, and quite capable of setting a broken bone, never included surgery and amputation among the options (Grinnell 1923:133, 147, 166). As a culture, The Cheyenne recognize their interrelation with the flora and fauna through the food network as an intimate connection to the world around them; living Cheyenne eat plants and animals and living plants and animals eat Cheyenne when they die (Schlesier 1987:12). Like the animals of the earth, plants are spiritual beings, and this contributes to the healing powers that some plants hold; a plant is or was often employed to impart some characteristic it possesses to a patient who lacks such an attribute in his illness (Grinnell 1923:167). Sometimes a plant’s spiritual power is related to its physical medicine, and other times it is a personal power revealed to an individual in a dream or vision. The physical healing capabilities of a plant are available to anyone and are of a much more common knowledge than plant spiritual powers (Grinnell 1923:134).

Plant taxonomy follows much the same pattern as that of birds in that it is aligned along the vertical axis. Domesticated and harvested plants whose food part is above ground, cultivated beans and wild berries, for example, are known as Zehono. Plants that remain primarily underground, whose roots are eaten, are referred to as Eseohonoz. Finally, the plants whose roots sprawl deep into Nsthoaman, such as cottonwoods and the
“big medicine” plant whose long, deep roots are exposed by eroded riverbanks are known as *Maheonezehoneo* (Moore 1996:211).
Chapter 3: Cheyenne Ethnobotany and Medicine

This chapter is comprised of a list of the Northern Cheyenne’s medicinal plants in relation to a worldview whose medicine does not stop at chemical reactions. I have included whatever information is available regarding each plant, chiefly its name in Cheyenne, its western taxonomic, or Latin, name, a translation of the Cheyenne name, since many Cheyenne plant names are descriptive of their characteristics or uses, and where available, a western common name for the plant.

I discuss the plant’s indications for use, and method or methods of preparation as a medicine. Included are plants whose medicine is a certain characteristic or abstract power thought to be transferable more by relation than by chemical reaction. However, since this actually applies as a general rule to most plants, it may be difficult to discern from the literature if any plants have been called upon in this way more readily than others. According to Grinnell, whose choice of words, if not his interpretations, of Cheyenne behaviors have been and should be called into question, describes a general rule of calling on a plant to pass on certain of its characteristics to a patient who is lacking in such characteristics:

Many of the plants are used less for their material than for their spiritual effect; in other words, in the treatment of the sick, as with many other things about which they feel they know very little, the Indians depend on the doctrine of signatures. A plant which possesses some property that the doctor wishes to have transferred to his patient to produce certain results, is steeped in cold or hot water and the fluid is administered to the patient with due ceremony, in the belief that this will bring about the desired result (1923:167).
Furthermore, I have not yet determined to what extent this practice continues. Also included are plants that are used either as food or tools in major ceremonies as these ceremonies are concerned with tribal health, and so must be thought of as medicine.

Where it can be determined within the limits of literature research, I have included what degree of current use each plant finds as medicine. In many cases this makes itself apparent. For example, plants used to treat smallpox would have seen much greater use around the start of the reservation era than now. As the medical issues have been increasingly western in origin, the remedies have been as well; consequently, many traditional medicines of teas, cold water infusions, and poultices have been forgotten or relegated only to memory in favor of western treatments, such as the Christian prayers in Peyote ceremonies to deal with alcoholism.

Of some 138 plants that Jeffrey Hart identified with members of the Northern Cheyenne in his ethnobotanical fieldwork in the mid-1970’s, ninety-three are used as medicine that acts materially with the body, as a purifying incense, or as a smoking mixture. In addition to this, six more plant species are used in ceremonies without also being used as material/physiological or directly spiritual medicine; the peyote cactus is left out of his discussion altogether (Hart 1981). Daniel Moerman lists ninety-eight medicinal plants including those with ceremonial and veterinary uses as well as “unspecified” uses and a category he labels “other” (Moerman 1998:645-646). Grinnell identifies sixty-three medicinal plants in The Cheyenne Indians (1923:166-191).

I have discussed Cheyenne diseases as opposed to western diseases, and their respective approaches to healing. To further the understanding of Cheyenne diseases, they can be divided along the lines of who is able to produce a remedy or who is called
upon to do so, as this also describes the perception of the disease’s causation. For more common illnesses like colds, or symptoms like fevers or coughs, most families, generations ago, had at least one member, male or female, knowledgeable in the use of plants for the purposes of making teas, powders or poultices. However, “for serious and protracted illnesses, the work of a specialist—a medicine man—was called upon” (Hart 1981:41). In these cases, the disease was thought to be caused by the intrusion of a foreign object, which might take the form of a pebble, a ball of hair, a thorn, or some other small thing that has been put there either by a shaman or the spirit of someone wicked who has been exiled from the eternal Cheyenne community, or is perhaps from another community. It was the job of the spiritual healer to remove the object (Hart 1981:41).

All diseases, no matter the severity, were a combination of spiritual and physical forces, as Taxtavoom, the atmosphere, the cosmological level over the surface of the earth upon which plants, animals, and Cheyenne dwell, is the partnership of the material and the abstract. Though most spiritual powers of the earth are represented in animals, some plants do carry spiritual powers “worthy of petitioning in prayer” (Hart 1981:43). Esceheman, the spirit of the Deep Earth, “was implored to make everything grow, especially the plants and herbs used in healing ceremonies, and the grasses upon which animals fed,” and so her spirit is present in all the plants (Hart 1981:43).

The list of medicinal plants begins on the next page, and is arranged alphabetically by scientific nomenclature.
Abies lasiocarpa (Hook.) Nutt. (fir)

Like the Juniper, it was thought that lightning would never strike a fir tree. Consequently, according to Mary Fisher, Mr. And Mrs. Charles White Dirt, and Wesley White Man, members of the Cheyenne community in Montana, its leaves were burned in much the same manner, both as a purifying incense and in alleviating the fear of thunder. Leaves would be burned while thunder was present in the sky, to protect an individual and give him or her confidence that s/he would not be struck by thunder’s companion.

Healers would burn the needles, its smoke and aroma frightening away the bad spirits that are harming the patient. The smoke would also make a doctor’s medicine stronger and more pure, and make the patient more receptive.

Occasionally a fir tree will exhibit a twig or two whose needles are a yellowish color. The yellow is caused by a fungus known to western scientists as Melampsorella elatina. Such branches would be burned as a purifying incense in ceremonies, including the Sun Dance. Perhaps due to its rarity, yellowed fir needles were often mixed with other herbs when burned on a coal, particularly with sweet grass, Hierochloe odorata (Grinnell 1923:169; Hart 1981:5-6). In addition to its uses as an adjuvant and as ceremonial medicine, Moerman acknowledges this species’ use as a stimulant and in witchcraft (1998:645-6).
*Me?eshkemaha?* (Sap)

*Acer negundo* L. (box-elder)

Box-elder held a functional purpose in the realm of medicine. It has long been esteemed for the sweet smell and persistence of it burning coals. Thus, according to Jim Little Bird, Ben Black Wolf, and Wilson Brady, members of Montana's Cheyenne community, it was box-elder coals preferred for burning incense in the making of medicine, and in the Sun Dance lodge to light the pipe. Furthermore, bowls made of box-elder have been used specifically for mixing medicine or as a sacred eating bowl since the time when metal, plastic and other mass-produced or commodity implements have become common (Hart 1981:13; Moerman 1998:645).

Box Elders are distributed widely across the United States, typically along streams and in canyons (Harrington 1998:342).

(Harrington 1998:343)
Hehaa-heseeo?otse (cough medicine)

*Achillea millefolium* L. (yarrow)

As indicated by Alex Black Horse, Wilson Brady, and Mr. And Mrs. Charles White Dirt of the Northern Cheyenne, yarrow would be enlisted to aid in coughs, colds, sore throats and even slight nausea. Similarly, it was used to deal with tuberculosis or other chronic respiratory illnesses. For these uses, the plant, fresh or dried, would be finely ground into a powder which was boiled to make a tea. The tea can also be drunk for heart and chest troubles. Yarrow, a diaphoretic, also induces sweating, and would be employed after a sweat bath. Yarrow would also be chewed and rubbed on the body to soothe it.

Crushed leaves can be used externally to stop bleeding, as well, and would be chewed and put in a person’s nostrils to stop a nosebleed (Hart 1981:18). Grinnell indicates yarrow’s use as a cough medicine and throat aid under the name *A. lanulosa* (1923:189). Moerman adds to this its use as a febrifuge and hemostat (1998:645-6).
Acorus calamus L. (sweet flag)

Bitter medicine can be used in a number of ways, but it seems its power is in the root. For any illness, the root is chewed and rubbed on the skin. A decoction of the root can be drunk for pain in the bowels. Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man of the Northern Cheyenne indicated that a tea is made of bitter medicine as a laxative and diuretic. Used in this way, the medical process also included a ceremony in a sweat lodge. The root is also pulverized and mixed with red willow bark, *Cornus stolonifera*, as a smoking blend. In this preparation, it is used to alleviate colds, headaches, and congestion.

Sometimes referred to as “ghost medicine” it would be tied to a child’s necklace or blanket to keep away ghosts and night spirits.

Interestingly, only certain Sun Dance priests could collect this plant, making offerings in the process. Also, it would have to be obtained outside of Cheyenne territory; it was known to grow in the water in “Sioux” territory (Grinnell 1923:171; Hart 1981:7; Moerman 1998:645-6).
Motseʔeotse (about raising children)

Actaea rubra (Ait.) Willd. (baneberry)

This is sweet medicine, named after the Cheyenne’s prophet who lived among them for four hundred and forty-five years. When he died, he put his power into this plant, and told the Cheyenne that it would help them raise their children. Sweet medicine is always kept with the Sacred Arrows and the Sacred Hat and in Sun Dance bundles to access his power.

Mary Fisher, Josephine Limpy, and Wesley White Man informed Hart that after childbirth, a mother would drink a tea made of sweet medicine, often mixed with Mertensia ciliata or bitter medicine (Oxytropis) to increase milk flow. Sweet medicine root is best harvested in late summer and would be scalded in water in which fat had been boiled thus coating the root in grease, to prevent it from losing its strength in drying. When used, the root was not powdered, but cut into small pieces and steeped in water. The tea is good for the blood and improves appetite.

Furthermore, according to Jim Spear of the Northern Cheyenne, Cheyennes who took sweet medicine are thought to grow up to be virtuous—strong, patient, thoughtful, and now, children growing up on cow’s milk are thought by Cheyennes to be losing these qualities and be ever more like cows.

Sweet medicine can also be used for sores when mixed with the roots of Psoralea esculenta, Psoralea agrophylla, Koeleria cristata and yellow medicine.

It was sometimes used in ceremonies to blind the enemy. Sweet medicine was chewed and blown in the four directions, and then toward the enemy (Hart 1981:33).

Grinnell refers to Sweet Medicine as A. arguta (1923:174).
Actaea rubra grows in moist wooded areas anywhere in the Rocky Mountains almost as high in elevation as the timberline. Also it grows in the plains of South Dakota and Alberta, and as far south and west as New Mexico and California (Harrington 1998:12).
Mo?ehe-moxeshene (elk mint or perfume)

Agastache foeniculum (Pursh) Kuntze (giant hyssop)

A tea made of the leaves was drunk for cardiac weakness and pains in the chest or lungs, say, from coughing, or for treating colds. This tea, according to Mary Fisher of the Northern Cheyenne, is also drunk for “dispirited heart” (Hart 1981:27).

Grinnell mentions this use for Agastache anethiodore (1923:186).

Mary Fisher also mentioned that when prepared differently it was used to break a fever. The powdered leaves were rubbed on the body to cool it, and a vapor bath of the leaves was used to induce sweating. Jim Spear and Wesley White Man, two other members of the Northern Cheyenne community, concurred.

A special medicinal mixture consisting of this plant and nine others is also mentioned (Hart 1981:27; Moerman 1998:645-6).

Giant Hyssop, *A.urticifolia* is shown in the illustration; the distribution map represents *Agastache foeniculum.*
Xaoe-hehestavo (skunk nuts); tohtoo?e-xaoe-nestavo (prairie skunk)

*Allium brevistylum* S. Wats, (wild onion)

The finely ground roots and stems of wild onions were applied as a poultice in the treatment of unopened carbuncles. If the carbuncle were opened, the powder would be boiled in an infusion to be poured over it to “clean out the pus clinging to the cavity” (Grinnell 1923:171; Hart 1981:12; Moerman 1998:645).

Shown here is *Allium Canadensis*; the distribution map shows the range *A. brevistylum*. (Kindscher 1992:26)
Moʔohtaa-vanoʔestse (black sage)

*Ambrosia psilostachya* DC. (ragweed)

For bowel cramps, to stop bloody stools, or for constipation as Wesley White Man suggested, and even colds, the leaves were finely ground, and a pinch of the powder was used to make a tea (Grinnell 1923:188; Hart 1981:18). In addition, Moerman includes this plant among analgesics (1998:645).
Hetane-menotse (man berry), Hetane-menøe-sheøe (man berry bush)

*Amelanchier alnifolia* Nutt. (service berry)

Bessie Elk Shoulder, Mary Fisher, and Josephine Limpy informed Hart that the fruits, pulverized, were added to medicinal mixtures, especially in efforts to restore a child’s lost appetite, or to make a healing tea (Grinnell 1923:176; Hart 1981:34; Moerman 1998:645-6).
**Anaphalis margaritacea (L.) B. & H.** (pearly-everlasting)

Pearly-everlasting’s leaves were used as a purifying incense; gifts to spirits were first cleansed in this smoke. Often, men would carry the dried and powdered flowers in medicine bundles, as it would protect them, give them strength, and energy. For this reason, it was also chewed and rubbed on the body. It would be used on horses for the same reason, to give energy and strength, in this case being put on the bottom of each hoof, and blown between the horses’ ears. No woman could touch this plant or it would nullify its energy, perhaps, because of this plant’s spiritual endowment as opposed to its material power (Grinnell 1923:187-8; Hart 1981:18; Moerman 1998:645-6).

(Erichsen-Brown 1979:402)
Anemone nuttalliana DC (pasqueflower)

Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy indicated to Hart that the root was cleaned and pulverized, and passed over the body of someone who was ill such that s/he was unconscious. The root is passed over the body in order to revive the person (Hart 1981:34; Moerman 1998:645-6).

(Britton 1913:v.2:102)
**Heove-heseeo?otse** (yellow medicine)

*Arabis glabra* (L.) *Bernh.* (rockcress)

A tea made of this plant was used as a general preventative, for colds, or to treat sick children (Grinnell 1923: 174-5; Hart 1981:24; Moerman 1998:645-6).

(Britton 1913:v.2:181)
No?aneonotse (mixture, additive leaf), ma?ke-menotse (red berry)

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi (L.) Spreng. (kinnikinnick)

These leaves, dried, are mixed with the inner bark of Cornus stolonifera, (red-osier dogwood, red willow) or tobacco as a smoking blend, according to several of Hart’s informants, including Alex Black Horse, Ben Black Wolf, Wilson Brady, Jim Little Bird, Mr. And Mrs. Charles White Dirt, and Wesley White Man.

The leaves were also involved in a mixture burnt to drive away the bad spirits that were making a person go mad.

For persistent pain in the back, especially from a sprain, the leaves, stems and berries were boiled in a tea, and the leaves alone would be wetted and applied to the sore spot (Hart 1981:25; Moerman 1998:645-6).

The berries would be mixed with those of Amelanchier alnifolia and Prunus virginiana among others as a medicine (Hart 1981:25).

Grinnell mentions that kinnikinnick is used as a diuretic when one’s kidneys are congested; this may be related to its use for back pain (1923:183).

A. uva-ursi tends to grow at the edge of forests, or in the shade; it is more common in the northern United States and in the mountains but is widely distributed across the country (Harrington 1998:348).

(Harrington 1998:348)
Hetane-vano?estse (man sage)

*Artemesia ludoviciana* Nutt. (prairie sage)

The leaves of this sage were crushed and used as a snuff for sinus attacks, nosebleeds, and headaches.

More importantly, is this sage’s role in ceremonies and as a general purifying plant. In almost every ceremonial lodge, it was spread along the floor and the leaves burned as incense. In this capacity it would drive away bad spirits, and dark dreams; it would sometimes be mixed with *Actaea rubra* to accomplish this task.

In purification, its smoke would be spread over people, utensils, or through a space. Contrary warriors relied on it to purify people or horses who had been accidentally touched by their special lances, or to cleanse the soil when they left a lodge. If a person had broken a taboo, s/he might be wiped clean of it with a bundle of this sage.

Beds of sage were stood and rested upon in the Sun Dance, from which the dancers would draw power. It was used to prevent thirst in the Sun Dance by wrapping it around the eagle bone whistles, and offerings of food were made to the spirits in this ceremony from bits of sage that had been dipped in the food. It was used to paint the dancers and again to wipe the paint off. In battles, shields would be passed ritualistically through its smoke. In the aforementioned ceremony to allay the fear of thunder, a half circle of sage would be spread around the thunder-resistant juniper tree and upon which the person walked during the ceremony, drawing forth a sacred blessing. According to Mary Fisher and Charles Sitting Man of the Northern Cheyenne, a person in a sweat lodge would dip a leafy stem in water, sprinkle some water on the hot rocks, and the branch would be whipped upon the participants’ bodies. In a peyote ceremony, petitioners rub sage on
their bodies to keep them from getting sick. These days, according to Mary Fisher of the Northern Cheyenne, hunters wipe their rifles with sage for much the same reasons (Hart 1981:19). Grinnell indicates its ceremonial use, referring to man sage as *A. gnaphalodes*, and Moerman additionally indicates its use as a respiratory aid (1998:645-6).

He?'e-vano?estse (woman sage)  
*Artemesia frigida* Willd. (fringed sage)  
This sage was used in connection with the sacred woman in the Sun Dance. It was also braided and worn as a head band to stop a nosebleed (Hart 1981:18). Moerman also indicates this sage’s use as a gynecological aid (1998:645).
Matanaa-vo'estse; matanaa-maxestse (mile plant; milk wood)

Asclepias speciosa Torr. (showy milkweed)

Welsey White Man reported that by boiling and straining the top part of the plant, an eyewash is prepared. This is applied to the eyes with a clean cloth, perhaps, supposed Hart. for snowblindness or general blindness (1981:15; Moerman 1998:645).
**Hestovootse-heseelotse** (ear medicine)

*Aster foliaceus* Lindl. (aster)

An infusion of aster stems would be dropped into an aching ear (Hart 1981:19).

Grinnell and Moerman both use the name *A. cusickii* for this plant (1923:187; 1998:645).
Ma?xe-heooovo?estse (big, scabby weed, plant)

*Astragalus* spp. (locoweed)

For poison ivy and other skin irritations caused by plants, the powdered stems and leaves of *A. nitidus* were sprinkled on the affected area (Grinnell 1923:179; Hart 1981:28).

*A. crassicarpus* has been used for animals having difficulty urinating. It is applied externally as an ointment.

Ben Black Wolf, Mary Fisher, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man, members of the Cheyenne community, indicated that this species has also been used by Snake Dancers (Hart 1981:28).

*A. adsurgens* also specifically has dermatological benefits (Moerman 1998:645).

*A. crassicarpus* and its distribution are shown here.
Hetone?e-heseeo?otse (bark medicine)

*Balsamorhiza incana* Nutt. and *B. sagittata* (Pursh) Nutt. (balsamroot)

For pains in the stomach and for colds, a tea was made of the leaves, roots, and stems. For headaches, a person would hold her head over the steam of this infusion.

In childbirth, a woman was given the root to facilitate the process (Grinnell 1923:189; Hart 1981:20). Moerman states that *B. sagittata* is used as a gynecological aid, an oral aid, a panacea, a throat aid, and a toothache remedy, and that both species of *Balsamorhiza* are used as an analgesic, a cold remedy, and in gastrointestinal issues (Moerman 1998:64-6).

*B. sagittata*, shown here, is found throughout the west in dry, rocky terrain (Kirk 1975:134).
Mehme-menotse (spicy berries)

*Berberis repens* Lindl. (barberry)

According to Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy of the Northern Cheyenne, the fruit of this plant was used in the preparation of various medicines, but no longer is (Hart 1981:15).

This plant is also referred to as *Mahonia repens* (Moerman 1998:646).

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*B. repens* grows on hillsides or slopes, and tends to prefer partial shade. It is found from Montana south to New Mexico and west to the Pacific Ocean in rugged, mountainous terrain (Harrington 1998:232).
Exaa-no?kane

*Calochortus gunnisonii* Wats. (mariposa lily)

Mary Fisher indicated to Jeffrey Hart that the bulbs of this plant were cut up, dried, and used in a medicinal mixture. Sometimes, a piece of the root would be put in the mouth of a horse before running the animal in a race (Hart 1981:12; Moerman 1998:646).

Illustrated at left are species of Mariposa Lily, *C. gunnisonii* and *C. nuttalii*. The distribution of *C. gunnisonii* is shown in the map below.

(Harrington 1998:160)
**Ota?tave-heseeo?otse** (blue medicine)

*Capsella bursa-pastoris* (L.) Medic. (shepherd’s purse)

A cold water infusion of the stems and leaves was drunk for headache. If taken without water, only a small amount is tolerable, as it burns the tongue (Hart 1981:24; Moerman 1998:645).

Grinnell mentions this plant as well for the same maladies under the name *Bursa bursa-pastoris* (1923:174).

*C. bursa-pastoris* has been introduced to North America, and like all introduced species it is now widely distributed throughout the continent, often thriving in areas where the native populations have been disturbed (Harrington 1998:67).

(Harrington 1998:58)
Mehne-mehno?estse (serpent or dragon plant)

Carex nebrascensis Dewey (sedge)

This plant, found in watery habitats, where unknowable beasts were/are believed to live, is and was used in the Sun Dance and Massaum ceremonies. It is symbolic food, stuffed into the eyes, nose and mouth cavities in the buffalo skull; it is ceremonial food offered to Esceheman. Similarly it is placed in the head cavity of the yellow-faced wolf. The sedge is tied with sinew in almost circular bundles and placed in the skull. Feeding Esceheman is part of a prayer that the vegetation continue to grow in plenty and be food for people and animals. In a situation where this sedge is not found, another grass that grows near water may be substituted (Hart 1981:7-8; Moerman 1998:645).
Chrysopsis villosa (Pursh) Nutt. (hairy golden-aster)

This was a milder medicine, employed when someone was simply feeling under the weather. It tends to induce sleep.

It would also be used, and could be used by anyone in this way, to drive away bad spirits from an individual or a house (Hart 1981:20).

Grinnell describes similar uses for C.foliosa; and Moerman does so for Heterotheca villosa, including as well, its use as a disinfectant (1923:187; 1998:646). I attribute this to ambiguities in western taxonomy.
Me?eshkaatseh?estse (hairy plant)

Chrysothamnus nauseosus (Pall.) Britt. (rabbit brush)

If a person had sores on his body, they were washed with an infusion of the leaves and stems; if it were not successful, it was rubbed on hard, and when it was really serious, such as with smallpox, it was drunk as a tea.

A tea was also made of the flowers, according to Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy of the Northern Cheyenne, mixed with a common sage, and used for coughs, colds, and even tuberculosis. Also for colds, rabbit brush would be burnt on coals and inhaled from under a blanket.

Rabbit brush would also be used by burning it on box-elder coals, the smoke driving away the cause of bad nightmares (Grinnell 1923:187; Hart 1981:20; Moerman 1998:645-6).
Heshko-vo?estse (thorny plant)

*Cirsium edule* Nutt. (thistle)

Considered a luxury food, thistle was once used as food in a Sun Dance, according to Mary Fisher of the Northern Cheyenne (Hart 1981:20).

Depicted here is *C. lanceolatum*, but despite there being between twenty and twenty-five species of thistle in the Rocky Mountains, most of them are very similar (Harrington 1998:166).
Nexo?e-mevehe (raw eating)

*Citrullus vulgaris* Schrad. (watermelon)

Wesley White Man informed Hart that watermelons were introduced to the Cheyenne in the 1880’s, at which point, the Cheyenne discovered that from the seeds a diuretic tea could be made (Hart 1981:24). Moerman refers to the watermelon as *C. lanatus* (1998:645).
"Aʔoome-hesono, maʔkoome-hesono" (red bark)  

*Cornus stolonifera* Michx. (red-osier dogwood)  

Several of Hart's informants, Alex Black Horse, Ben Black Wolf, Wilson Brady, Jim Little Bird, and Wesley White Man explained that the inner white bark would be dried, pulverized and mixed with tobacco and often other plants as well for smoking (Grinnell 1923:183; Hart 1981:23-4).

The altar in the Sun Dance is made from this dogwood. It is bent into the shape of the rainbows that catch the moisture that sustains life on the plains (Hart 1981:23-4).

*C. stolonifera* is found in the northern United States as well as the southern Rocky Mountains, typically along streams in the north as it prefers moist soil (Harrington 1998:354).
Seotse-mahaono

*Cucurbita* sp. (squash)

Obtained from Oklahoma, the rinds of ‘ghost melons’ served to make a tea drunk for a range of issues including kidney problems, venereal disease, tuberculosis, heart problems, earache, rheumatism, arthritis, and fever. This tea also works as a diuretic and laxative. Alex Black Horse, Ben Black Wolf, Wilson Brady, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man of the Northern Cheyenne explained that it is only administered by qualified ceremonial people such as Sun Dance priests and is used in conjunction with song and the use of a rattle (Hart 1981:24; Moerman 1998:645-6).
Mo?ohta-heseeo?otse (black medicine)

_Echinacea pallida_ Nutt. (coneflower)

Several of Hart’s informant’s, including Ben Black Wolf, Mary Fisher, Jim Little Bird, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man mentioned that echinacea root would be chewed for relief from toothache and cavities, and for colds. Chewing the root catalyzes saliva production and thus was used to hold off thirst; this is especially beneficial to Sun Dancers.

A tea made from powdered roots and leaves was drunk for a sore throat, mouth or gums.

For burns and fevers, a decoction of the boiled root applied externally gives a cooling effect.

When boiled with the roots of _Mentzelia laevicaulis_, Echinacea root was drunk as a tea for smallpox, rheumatism, arthritis, mumps, and measles, and a salve was made for the affected parts.

These roots would also be mixed with puffball spores (_Lycoperdon_ spp.) and skunk oil in the treatment of boils (Hart 1918:21). Moerman also mentions its use as a dietary aid (1998:645-6).

Grinnell and Moerman both also include _E. angustifolia_ among Cheyenne medicinal plants. Grinnell mentions its use for toothaches and sore gums, while Moerman indicates that it is also used as an orthopedic aid, while both species of _Echinacea_ are used for many of the same purposes (1923:188; 1998:645-6).
Shown above and in the distribution map is *E. angustifolia*. *E. pallida* tends to grow east of *E. angustifolia*, in open, rocky areas of the prairie between northeast Texas and southwest Wisconsin (Kindscher 1992:86).
Eleocharis sp. (spike rush)

According to Jim Spear and Wesley White Man of the Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana, this is a grass that can be substituted for sedge in the fashion described in the page for Carex nebrascensis. It is symbolic food used to feed Esceheman in the Sun Dance and Massaum ceremonies. It is also sometimes used in addition to sedge (Hart 1981:8). Grinnell makes no mention of this plant’s ceremonial uses, only its mundane, functional uses (1923:170).

(Britton 1913:v.1:315)
*Elymus cinereus* Scribn. & Merr. (wildrye)

Wildrye was used as bedding in such ceremonies as sweat lodges and the Sun Dance as indicated by members of the Northern Cheyenne community Alex Black Horse, Wilson Brady, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man. It is reported to remain cool, something which the dancers have found helpful (Hart 1981:8).

(http://www.plants.usda.gov)
Ma?e-heseeo?otse (red medicine)

Epilobium angustifolius L. (fireweed)

For rectal hemorrhage, a tea was made either from the dried and pulverized leaves (less potent) or roots (more potent) (Hart 1981:31; Moerman 1998:643).

This plant is also referred to as Chamaenerion angustifolium (Grinnell 1923:181).
Heheva?xestse (his tail weed) or mo in a am es se e ohk (elk, domesticated and medicine

*Equisetum arvense* L. (horsetail)

This is a horse medicine prepared as an infusion of the stems and leaves which is poured down the horse’s throat when s/he has a hard cough (Grinnell: 1923:169; Hart 1981:4; Moerman: 1998:646).

*Nestoeh-hestoto tse*

*Equisetum hyemale* L. (horsetail)

This other species of horsetail was also employed as a horse medicine (Hart 1981:4; Moerman 1998:646).

Distribution shown for *E. hyemale*.

(Erichsen-Brown 1979:225)
**Ma?oma?ohtse-heseeo?otse** (pink colored medicine)  

**Erigeron salsuginosus** (Richards) **Gray** (fleabane)  

For dizziness, drowsiness, or backache, a hot infusion of the dried and pulverized roots, stems and flowers of this plant is prepared. The patient sits under a blanket over the steam from the infusion, and sweats. When the ache is between the shoulders, one can also wet the sore part and drink some of the infusion. Fleabane is also used as a stimulant. This plant could be *E. Peregrinus* (Pursh) Greene (Grinnell 1923:187; Hart 1981:21; Moerman 1998:645-6).

Shown here in illustration and in the distribution map is *E. philadelphicus*. (Kindscher 1992:96)
When a woman’s menses ran too long, a strong tea made of the powdered stems and flowers was drunk to correct the situation. As little as one or two tablespoons is reported to act at once (Grinnell 1923:172; Hart 1981:32; Moerman 1998:645).
*He?kone-mo?kohta?ene* (strong turnip)

*Frasera speciosa* Dougl. (giant frasera)

This plant was used to treat diarrhea. For a mild case, a tea would be made from the dried and powdered leaves; one made from the dried, pulverized roots was made for more severe cases (Grinnell 1923:184; Hart 1981:26; Moerman 645).

(F. speciosa is found throughout the west at elevations over five thousand feet in moist to somewhat dry open areas (Kirk 1975:70).)

(http://www.plants.usda.gov)


Mo?to?e

Fraxinus pennsylvanica Marsh. (green ash)

Ash served a functional purpose in the construction of medicinal tools. Ben Black Wolf, Mary Fisher, Jim Little Bird, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man suggested that it was used for the posts of Sun Dance lodges and for pipestems, as well as for whistles worn by Contrary Society members (Hart 1981:31).

(Erichsen-Brown 1979:84)
Matomene-vo?estse (nosebleed plant), matomene-heseeo?otse (nosebleed medicine)

*Geranium richardsonii* Fish. & Trautv.

The pulverized leaf was rubbed on the nose and the powder snuffed into the nostrils to stop a nosebleed. The roots, dried and pulverized, also make a medicinal infusion drunk by the patient (Grinnell 1923:179-80; Hart 1981:26; Moerman 1998:645).
**Ma?kehaha-novaso**

*Glycyrrhiza lepidota* Pursh (licorice)

Mary Fisher, Josephine Lumpy, and Wesley White Man, some of Hart’s informants, indicated that for diarrhea and an upset stomach, licorice tea is a remedy; it is made from the roots, peeled and dried, and from the leaves. This medicine is described as having a drying effect.

Licorice also has a cooling effect, for which it is used in sweat lodges and Sun Dances (Hart 1981:28; Moerman 1998:645).
Hoʔeetohkonah

*Grindelia squarrosa* (Pursh) Dunal (gumweed)

Ben Black Wolf, Mary Fisher, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man, some of Hart’s informants indicated that the flowering tops of gumweed were boiled and applied externally in cases of skin diseases, sores, or scabs. It could also be used as a remedy for snowblindness. In this case, the gummy residue would be rubbed on the eyelids (Hart 1981:21; Moerman 1998:645).

(Kindscher 1992:119)
**Ho?e-noono** (earth bulb, tuber)

**Helianthus spp.** (sunflower)

Sunflowers played a role in the Massaum ceremony, primarily, according to Mary Fisher and Charles Sitting Man of the Northern Cheyenne, as decoration (Hart 1981:21; Moerman 1998:645).

\[ H. \text{tuberosa} \] is represented here in the illustration and in the distribution map. (Kindscher 1987:130)
**Heove-heseeo?otse**

*Heuchera ovalifolia* Nutt. (alumroot)

Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy explained to Hart that the root, dried and powdered was used medicinally. It was rubbed on the skin for rheumatism, and applied externally also for poison ivy and other skin rashes. It apparently gives the skin a "gummy feeling."

The tops of the plant were also powdered and made into a medicinal tea, for further assistance with the same conditions (Grinnell 1923:176; Hart 1981:38).

Moerman refers to this plant as *H. cylindrical* and indicates the same uses (1998:645).

![Illustrated at left, and represented in the distribution map is *H. richarsonii*.](Kindscher 1992:122)
Ve?ho?otsetse

Hierochloe odorata (L.) Beauv. (sweet grass)

Sweet grass is used as a purifying, ceremonial incense, most importantly in the Sacred Arrow ceremony. When Sweet Medicine brought the arrows out of the sacred mountain, he first purified the outside world with sweet grass to make it ready for the Arrows. For this reason sweet grass is burned in the Arrow renewal ceremony. It is also used in this ceremony as a brush to paint the straight pipe. Jeffrey Hart quotes an informant of his, Jim Spear, on mention of sweet grass in this Cheyenne creation story:

The first things made were the stars, sun and moon. This creator, whom we call Maheo in our language, held out his left hand, and his power being such he got five strings of sinew. He laid them down. And next he put down sweet grass, this being laid down the same way he had sinew. Then he produced buffalo tallow. Then he produced red paint. He put that on there. Then he started to put these things together. He rolled that into a ball. The he blew on it four times. The fourth time he let it go. And it grew and grew. This is the earth. This is the first one. So we have this earth. There was water on it, grass, trees, and everything that grows. Maheo has the power to do that (Hart 1981:9).

In other ceremonies, sweet grass is used also for its purifying effect, and in painting. In the old days, in going to battle a warrior would bless or purify his shield in the smoke of sweet grass, or if he had been visited by a menstruating woman, would put himself through a purifying ceremony before battling. Contrary warriors would purify their lances likewise, and rattles used in healing ceremonies were frequently passed through its smoke as well. Sweet grass incense could also be used to prevent evil from entering one’s home. Hart’s informant, Jim Spear, indicated that sweet grass probably occurred less frequently then, in the mid-1970’s, than it had in previous times because the Cheyenne were losing their old ways (Hart 1981:9-10; Moerman 1998:645-6).
identifies sweet grass as *Torresia odorata* L., and indicates essentially the same uses (1923:170).
Ve?e-shestoto?e

*Juniperus scopulorum* Sarg. (Rocky Mountain juniper)

This species of juniper has many uses which were described to Jeffrey Hart by members of the Northern Cheyenne community including Bessie Elk Shoulder, Charles Sitting Man, Josephine Limpy, Mary Fisher, and Wesley White Man. The leaves are burnt as a purifying incense in many ceremonies including the Sun Dance, in which the instructors, pledger, crier, buffalo skull and robe are all bathed in Juniper’s purifying smoke. This juniper is, or was, also believed to have a special relationship, or power, with Thunder, that prevented it from ever being struck. Consequently this juniper was petitioned in ceremony to alleviate a person’s fear of thunder; a ceremony that took place around a lone juniper and burned juniper leaves as incense. Juniper leaves were also burnt at childbirth to help promote delivery.

For colds, including a cough or throat discomfort, fever and tonsillitis, a tea is made from the boughs or the fleshy cones and the steam from this hot infusion is used as a vaporizer. Furthermore, the fleshy cones can also be chewed for relief from such ailments.

If the longing one might feel for a lover can be considered an ailment, then I must also include the use of flutes made of juniper wood as love medicine. The use of juniper wood in this case may be more about the wood’s functionality as a material than about abstract powers it may have, for these flutes are made only by special men who have the peculiar ability to charm a girl and make her return the love a man feels for her. An argument for the juniper wood containing love medicine is that another kind of flute is
made of this wood, not by men with special powers, but is nonetheless instrumental in the courting process.

Juniper, an evergreen, also represents youthfulness because it does not fall victim to the autumn’s withering—its leaves remain young and vibrant while other trees’ leaves grow old and die.

*Heshkove-shestoto*e (thorny?)

*Juniperus communis* L. (common juniper) also *Juniperus Siberica* Burgsd. (Grinnell 1923:169)

*Evoneesheno-shestoto*e

*Juniperus horizontalis* Moench (creeping juniper)

Creeping Juniper was also specifically used as medicinal tea in the same manner that the Rocky Mountain Juniper was used. Jeffrey Hart believes that the three species of juniper were all used similarly (1981:4-5).

**Depicted here is the end of a branch of the smallish tree *J. scopularum* which grows in dry, rocky bluffs and ridges from Alberta to British Columbia in Canada, south to New Mexico and Arizona (Harrington 1998:242).**

(Harrington 1998:243)
**Naaseto-vo?estse** (sacred plant)

**Koeleria cristata** Pers. (koeleria)

Koeleria was used for healing cuts when mixed with red clay, *Psoralea agrophylla*, and an unknown yellow plant from Oklahoma.

Its most important use, according to Hart, is in the Sun Dance. Roughly half of Jeffrey Hart’s Northern Cheyenne informants discussed this sacred plant’s ceremonial use, summarized by Hart as follows: “the flowering culms were gathered when relatively short, about six to eight inches in height. Sun Dance instructors wetted the flower heads with their mouths and then blew upon the shoulders and feet of the dancers to give them further supernatural strength.” Each dancer would also keep a flower at the back of his head to keep from getting tired while engaged in the ceremony. The plant would also be used as a brush to paint the dancers (Hart 1981:10). Moerman identifies this plant as *Koeleria macrantha* and indicates the same uses (1998:645-6).
Hoahea-notahtsestotse; noahea-nohtsetotse (trying to revive; put feeling in)

*Lithospermum linearifolium* Goldie (stoneseed)

Medicines made of this plant were used to bring a person back to his body. A powder was made from the ground stems, leaves, and roots and rubbed on the affected body parts to treat paralysis. Or for the same condition, another preparation could be used: the leaves, still green, are wrapped in a cotton cloth, crushed between a person’s teeth, and rubbed on the affected parts.

Irrationality, as an illness, could be dealt with by making a hot water infusion of this plant’s stems, leaves and roots, and rubbing it on the face and head.

This plant can also be used as a stimulant. The plant is chewed really fine and spit and blown into a weary person’s face, and rubbed on his or her chest (Grinnell 1923:185; Hart 1981:15). Moerman indicates the same uses but under the name *Lithospermum incisum* (1998:645-6)

*L. incisum* is shown here. (Kindscher 1992:141)
Lithospermum ruderale Dougl. (stoneseed)

Rheumatic pains were dealt with by applying a wetted poultice containing a powder of the pulverized leaves and stems. It would be kept on as long as possible or frequently applied if it were too cumbersome.

As long as the skin were not broken, it could also be used to relieve any pain (Grinnell 1923:185; Hart 1981:16; Moerman 1998:645).

(Britton 1913:v.3:88)
Motsenestotse

*Lomatium dissectum* (Nutt.) Mathias and Constance (biscuit-root)

A pinch of pulverized root would be brewed into about a pint of tea to be drunk for chest pains or other internal disorders. For milder symptoms, a less potent infusion can be made from the pulverized stems and leaves (Hart 1981:40).

'It is also an anti-rheumatic used externally (Moerman 1998:645-6).

Another name for this plant is *Leptotaenia multifida* (Grinnell 1923:182).

*Lomatium orientale* C. & R. (biscuit-root)

To relieve pain in the bowels or to treat diarrhea, the leaves and roots are powdered and either infused in a tea or taken dry. This was generally used for children, but a more potent tea was sometimes made for older people.

It has also been identified as *Cogswellia orientalis* (Hart 1981:40; Moerman 1998:645-6).
*Lomatium* sp. (biscuit-root)

Providing a cooling effect and greasy feeling, an infusion of the powdered root was applied externally as a poultice to reduce swelling (Hart 1981:40; Moerman 1998:645).

Shown here and in the distribution map is *L.foeniculaceum*.
Lophophora williamsii (peyote)

I discussed the use of peyote in the previous chapter in a description of the half moon ceremony of the Native American Church. The peyote cactus is indigenous to north-east Mexico and south Texas, from just north of San Luis Potosi, to just north of the Rio Grande river, from Jimenez in the west, almost to the Gulf of Mexico. It grows either in clusters, or singly, but close to the ground in either case, and from a long taproot. The whole plant need not be killed in harvesting, as several “buttons” can be cut from it and over time others will grow from the remaining plant. The “buttons” are the tops of the cactus; after being cut from the base, they are dried and eaten for their hallucinogenic, or entheogenic (to see, or be brought to god) properties (Stewart 1987:10-11).

Both the cactus and the religion, Peyotism, were brought to the Northern Cheyenne from a member of the southern band named Leonard Tyler by 1889. Entheogenic use of Peyote spread north to what was becoming Oklahoma during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The southern band’s contact with other southern Plains tribes, as well as the Carlisle and other Indian schools are likely vehicles for the spread of Peyotism to the Northern Cheyenne (Stewart 1987:183).

To reiterate what was discussed in the previous chapter, peyote is used in personal, not tribal, healing ceremonies, most frequently, and quite effectively to deal with alcoholism.
The map at right shows Peyote's (shown above) distribution in 1926 in the solid line, and its range in 1969 in the shaded area (Stewart 1987:10).
Hehpano

Lycoperdon sp. (puffball mushroom)

According to Hart’s sources Alex Black Horse, Wilson Brady, and Mary Fisher of the Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana, the puffball was used for its spores. They were employed for skin problems such as boils, rashes and sores. If a sore were infected, the spores would be applied directly, and a hot stone was then applied, the heat drawing out the poison. The spores were used more or less as a baby powder for rashes. Regarding boils, the spores would be mixed with the pulverized root of *Echinacea pallida* and skunk oil and applied after the boil had been sucked on the outside until it had come to a head at which point it was lanced, and the pus squeezed out (Hart 1981:3).
Matanaa-heseeso?otse (milk medicine), Matanaa-maxestse (milk wood)

Lygodesmia juncea (Pursh) D. Don (rush skeletonweed)

A bluish-colored tea is made from the dried stems. According to Hart's informants Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy, it is drunk by pregnant and nursing mothers as it increases milkflow, “imparts a feeling of contentment to the mother” and holds an “inner power” that keeps or makes a child healthy. Motse?eotse, Actaea rubra, is used similarly and often in conjunction with milk medicine (Grinnell 1923:191; Hart 1981:22). To this, Moerman adds its use as a psychological aid (perhaps the “feeling of contentment” described above, and its uses as a gynecological aid (1998:465-6).
Ma?xepeneseeo?otse (big medicine)

_Lygodesmia spinosa_ Nutt, (spiny skeletonweed)

Although this is a powerful medicine, its preparation and use did not require a specialist. It is considered very important, as, according John Stands-In-Timber, it is used in making almost every medicine. In isolation, or in conjunction with other plants, it can be used for colds, as indicated by Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy of the Northern Cheyenne. In this case the root is pulverized and boiled and a hot infusion is prepared. The ailing person sits under a blanket amidst the infusion’s vapor and sweats; some of the infusion is also drunk. This method is also employed for mumps, and tuberculosis (Hart 1981:22). Part of the action of this plant, also known as _Stephanomeria spinosa_, is as a diaphoretic (Moerman 1998:645).
Madia glomerata Hook. (tarweed)

This is love medicine. Men would often keep the dried plants present as the aroma alone was enough to attract a partner. However, if this were not strong enough, a hot infusion could also be used as a vapor under a blanket.

Ben Black Wolf, Jim Little Bird, Charles Sitting Man, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man indicated that it could also be used in this method to treat venereal disease; a tea of the stems and leaves would also be drunk in this case.

For perverted, or over-sexed individuals, a special ceremony involving this plant would be performed (Hart 1981:22; Moerman 1998:645-6).
*Onone-voneshe-moxeshene* (prairie dog mint)

*Matricaria matricarioides* (Less.) Porter (pineapple weed)

The flowering tops were often used as an ingredient in medicinal mixtures.

Wesley White Man indicated that in the Sun Dance, a mixture containing the tops of pineapple weed would be chewed up and blown on the participants for its cooling effect (Hart 1981:22).


(Britton 1913:v.3:521)
*Mahpe-moxeshene* (water mint or perfume)

*Mentha arvensis* L. (mint)

Mint is used in a variety of ways, mostly medicinal. As a tea it is taken for nausea, to prevent vomiting. It is also taken, as Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man, some of Hart’s informants suggested, to strengthen heart muscles and stimulate vital organs.

Mint was believed to improve one’s love life; it is unclear whether this refers to sexual performance or other aspects of one’s “love life.”

Ceremonially, mint appears in peyote prayers and Sun Dances; mixed with sage in the former, and as a cooling bed upon which the dancers stand in the latter (Hart 1981:27-28).

It is also used as an antiemetic and a dermatological aid (Moerman 1998:645-6).
*Vo?ome-heseeo?otse* (white medicine)

*Mentzelia laevicaulis* (Dougl.) T. & G. (blazing star)

This was never used alone, always in medicinal mixtures. The root was the powerful part; dug before the plant had flowered it was used in cases of fevers, earaches, rheumatism, arthritis and more complicated illnesses, according to Mary Fisher, Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man of the Northern Cheyenne community. A tea made from the roots was taken for mumps, measles, and smallpox, and a salve was applied externally to the affected areas.

This root was also chewed for thirst prevention (Hart 1981:30; Moernan 1998:645-6).
Matanaa-vo?estse; matanaa-maxestse (mile plant; milk wood)

*Mertensia ciliata* (James) G. Don (bluebell)

To treat measles and smallpox, an infusion of the leaves was drunk. One made from the powdered root would be drunk to relieve the itching associated with smallpox.

A different infusion containing this plant, and *Actaea rubia* and *Asclepias tuberosus*, would be drunk to increase milk flow in nursing mothers (Grinnell 1923:184-5; Hart 1981:16; Moerman 1998:645).

![Map of plant distribution](http://www.plants.usda.gov)
Veʔohke-moxeshene (bitter mint or perfume)

Monarda fisulosa L.

This mint was, in older days, used as an incense when mixed with Abies lasioscarpa, though it is unclear how medicinal or purifying this may have been (Hart 1981:28). Under the name M. menthefolia, this plant is mentioned for its ceremonial use (Grinnell 1923:186).

It apparently also holds uses as a dermatological aid and in veterinary medicine (Moerman 1998:645-6).

*Nicotiana* sp. (tobacco)

Long ago, the Cheyenne cultivated their own tobacco, and mixed it with the bark of *Cornus stolonifera* and buffalo grease, adding some powdered buffalo chips for proper burning.

Alex Black Horse and Wilson Brady of the Northern Cheyenne explained that tobacco was also applied as a poultice to treat sores (Hart 1981:39; Moerman 1998:645).

(Harrington 1998:360-2)

(http://www.plants.usda.gov)
Onosmodium occidentale MacKenzie [possibly *O. molle* Michx.] (false gromwell)

The leaves and stems would be pulverized, mixed with a little bit of grease and rubbed on numb skin to restore life, or to treat lumbago (Grinnell:1923:185-6; Hart 1981:16). Moerman indicates the uses of *O. molle* as an external antirheumatic, a dermatological aid, and an orthopedic aid (1998:645).

(Britton 1913:v.3:91)

Illustrated here and represented in the distribution map is *O. molle*.
Oplapanax horridus

The root of this plant can be mixed with tobacco and smoked to work as an analgesic, particularly used for headaches. It is also referred to as *Fatsia horrida* (Moerman 1998:645).

*O. horridus* is most readily found between Oregon and Alaska along moist stream embankments in the mountains (Kirk 1975:209).

(http://www.plants.usda.gov)
Mahtamahaa? ehe(o?) (old lady)

*Osmorhiza chilensis* H. & A. and *O. longistylus* (Torr.) DC (sweet-root)

This is used as an ingredient in all medicines. Mary Fisher explained that the root could be chewed, or a tea of its leaves drunk for relief from colds. Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man mentioned that it is also used if someone has ingested too much peyote, as it will “bring one around.”

The pulverized leaves, stems, and/or roots of *O. longistylus* and *O. obtuse* can be made into a tea to treat tightness of the stomach, and the roots in particular can be used to treat kidney problems, as the roots create a stronger medicine than do the leaves (Grinnell 1923:181; Hart 1981:41; Moerman 1998:645-6).

*Osmorhiza berteroi* is used in a similar fashion (Moerman 1998:645-6).

(O. longistylus grows from Quebec to Saskatchewan, south to Georgia and Texas, west to Colorado, in moist wooded areas (Eriehsen-Brown 1979:365).)
Ve?ohke-heseeo?otse (bitter medicine)

_**Oxytropis**_ spp. (crazyweed)

This is another plant used to increase milk flow in nursing mothers. The root is powdered and from it a tea is made. It apparently also makes the mother’s milk more agreeable to the child. In this preparation it is mixed with _Actaea rubra_ or _Mertensia ciliata_ when the other is not available (Grinnell 1923:179; Hart 1981:29; Moerman 1998:645-6).
Ka?eshkoneatse?ohke-mane-?estse (child take motion drink weed)

Parnassia fimbriata Konig. (fringed grass-of-parnassus)

When babies appeared dull or had an upset stomach, a tea of these leaves powdered would be given to them (Grinnell 1923:176; Hart 1981.38, Moennau 1998:645-6).
Ma?e-heseeo?otse (red medicine)

Pedicularis groenlandica Retz. (elephant's head)

The leaves and stems would be boiled for a long time to make a tea which someone drinks for treating a cough (Grinnell 1923:187; Hart 1981:39; Moerman 1998:645).

(Britton 1913:v.3:223)
O nuhkis e’ e yo (contrary medicine)

Pentaphylloides floribunda

Referred to as Dasiphora fruticosa (L.) by Grinnell, he describes the use of this plant as similar to other contrary medicine. The leaves are dried, after which time they are ground into a powder. The powder can be rubbed over the hands and body, or an infusion of the powder in cold water can be rubbed over the body—either method is used to protect the contrary society member from the scalding hot water into which he thrusts his hands to fetch boiling meat as part of the ceremony (Grinnell 1923:176-7; Moerman 1998:645).
Ano-neve-e?tose (four grow together)

*Perideria gairdneri* (H. & A.) Math. (yampah)

Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy explained that the roots were used as an ingredient in medicines (Hart 1981:41; Moerman 1998:646). Grinnell mentioned that they were boiled with the roots, stems and leaves of *Balsamhoriza sagittata* (Grinnell 1923:182).

Yampah grows in the open space of meadows, slopes, and valleys or in partial shade from Canada to New Mexico, and between Arizona and California (Harrington 1998:192).
*Heshkovaneo?o*

*Phlox multiflora* A. Nels. (phlox)

The pulverized leaves and flowers were used in a warm water infusion to produce a stimulant. The fluid was rubbed over the body, some it was drunk, and it would restore a light, vibrant feeling to the patient (Grinnell 1923:184; Hart 1981:32; Moerman 1998:646).
Meameotona (drooping around)

Picea engelmannii Parry (Englemann Spruce)

Spruce gum could be used as love medicine. A man in love with a woman who did not care for him would give her some spruce gum; if she chewed it, her thoughts would be directed toward him constantly (Hart 1981:6).

(http://www.plants.usda.gov)
Shestoto?e (tree) shestoto?e-menotse (cones)

*Pinus ponderosa* Dougl. (ponderosa pine)

Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy of the Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana indicated to Jeffrey Hart that Pine gum was used as a salve or ointment for sores and scabby skin. The gum was also used, more technologically than medically, in instruments that were used medically such as whistles used in the Sun Dance and flutes used as love medicine (Hart 1981:6; Moerman 1998:645).
Me?hooma-no?estse

*Polytrichum juniperinum* L. (moss)

Mary Fisher, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man of the Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana indicated to Jeff Hart that this moss was an ingredient in many medicine, although its action is not explained (Hart 1981:4).
Xamaa-hoohtsetse (large tree), Metse(o?o) (young tree), Hoohtsetse-menotse (fruits)

*Populus deltoides* Marsh. (cottonwood)

The cottonwood is a sacred plant. It serves as the center pole of the Sun Dance ceremony. It used to be that the tree chosen to be the center pole was prepared following strict guidelines: A scout who had previously reported on an enemy’s whereabouts would locate and select the tree. The cutting was done ceremoniously by someone who had struck an enemy with a hatchet; he would approach the tree as if to cut it four times while reciting his achievement. Also in the Sun Dance a four-foot long cottonwood stick was placed near the buffalo skull as a symbolic root digger.

A cottonwood pole was also the center of the Massaum lodge and received the prayers for all living things (Hart 1981:36-37).
Veshkee’e

*Populus tremuloides* Michx. (aspen)

Aspen trunks were laid against the crotches of ash trunk posts in construction of the Sun Dance lodge (Hart 1981:37).

(Erichsen-Brown 1979:99)

*P. tremuloides* is widely distributed across the western half of North America from Alaska to northern Mexico, and in eastern Canada. To a lesser degree it is found in the eastern United States (Erichsen-Brown 1979:99).

(http://www.plants.usda.gov)
Vano?e-moxeshe-ho?he (sage mint soup)

Potentilla fruticosa L. (shrubby cinquefoil)

Only holy people could use and prepare the deadly arrow poison derived from this plant. The poison brewed from the leaves was thought to go directly to the heart. In addition to dipping arrows into the poison, it was also put into porcupine quills and shot into the mouth.

Like red globemallow, shrubby cinquefoil was used to protect the hands when thrust into a kettle of boiling water. It was either rubbed directly on the body, as a powder made from the finely ground dried leaves, or rubbed on the body as a cold water infusion. It was said to protect the body from severe, but temporary heat (Hart 1981:35).

(Britton 1913:v.2:262)
Ma?xe-menotse (big berry), Mae-meno?estse (big berry bush)

*Prunus americana* Marsh.

Mary Fisher and Charles Sitting Man indicated that the fruits were crushed, mixed with salt that was obtained from Oklahoma, and used as part of a medicinal mixture to treat a kind of mouth disease (Hart 1981:35).

In addition, Moerman indicates a ceremonial use (1998:645).
Menotse (berries), Meno?estse (berries bush)

Prunus virginiana L. (chokecherry)

Bessie Elk Shoulder and Mary Fisher explained to Hart that unripened chokecherries are helpful for children with diarrhea when eaten as is. When ripe berries were pulverized, they were used as an ingredient in medicines, especially to help a child regain his lost appetite.

Chokecherry branches held uses in many ceremonies, including that of the Sun Dance altar, and as an offering to the center pole of the lodge. One branch is used for each of the 145 songs sung in the Arrow Renewal ceremony. Symbolically, the branches were used in the ceremonies so that they continue to grow (Hart 1981:35-36; Moerman 1998:645-6).
Mary Fisher told Hart a story explaining why this plant is called ‘devil’s turnip.’ As the story goes, long ago, some young girls went out looking for turnips (*P. esculenta*) and each time they thought they found one, it turned out to be false. This kept happening and they kept going farther and farther away from camp, until, finally, a medicine man realized they were being led away by the devil who had taken form as this plant, and warned some people who went to rescue them.

Despite its association with the devil, it does provide a treatment for a fever. When the fever is not too bad, one can drink a tea of the leaves and stems finely ground. When the fever is more severe, the powder is mixed with grease and rubbed on the body (Grinnell 1923:178; Hart 1981:29).

Moerman classifies this plant as *Pediomelum argophylla* (1998:645).

Mohk’ta en (black face)

*Psoralea lanceolata* Pursh. (Indian turnip)

This appears in certain ceremonies. Long ago, the roots were dug up with root diggers, the memory of which is preserved in the ceremonies where the act is also associated with the earth’s continued fertility (Grinnell 1923:178).

Moerman refers to this plant as *Psoralidium lanceolatum* (1998:645).
Moʔohtaʔeno, moʔkohtaʔeno

Psoralea esculenta Pursh (Indian breadroot)

In addition to its uses as a food, Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy explained to Hart that this turnip served as an ingredient in medicinal mixtures including one for burns that also contains ‘bear mint’ and Koeleria cristata.

Mary Fisher also suggested that it was part of a diarrhea medicine.

Moerman refers to this plant as Pediomelum esculentum (1998:645-6).

Ceremonially, this turnip played a part long ago within a certain religious order. In a yearly animal dance, those participating would flagellate themselves with this plant, as part of a petition for tribal prosperity (Hart 1981:30).
Matomene-heseeo?otse

*Pterospora andromedea* Nutt. (pine-drops)

To prevent hemorrhage of the lungs and nose, an infusion of the ground stems and leaves of this plant would be made. The infusion was drunk, when cold, to act on the lungs, and some was sniffed up the nose and put on the head for nosebleed (Grinnell 1923:183; Hart 1981:25).

In addition, it is used as a disinfectant and a dermatological aid (Moerman 1998:645-6).
She?shenovotse-heseeo?otse (rattlesnake medicine)

*Ratibida columnifera* (Nutt.) Woot. & Standl. (coneflower)

Boiling the leaves and stems creates a yellow solution that is applied externally to draw out the poison of a rattlesnake bite and relieve its pain.

This solution could also be used to remedy poison ivy rashes (Grinnell 1923:188-9; Hart 1981:23; Moerman 1998:645-6).

(Kindscher 1992:180)

(Kindscher 1992:179)
No?aneone-ma?ke-menotse (mixing red berries)

*Rhus glabra* L. (sumac)

Sumac leaves were occasionally smoked with tobacco; this was the case in the Sun Dance in the 1940's, but Jim Spear of the Northern Cheyenne indicated that the taste is quite bitter so this is not often done (Grinnell 1923:180; Hart 1981:14).
These leaves are used in a variety of ways. They can be dried and mixed with tobacco in a smoking blend, or when tobacco is not available, they can be mixed with *Arctostaphylos uva ursi* and the inner bark of *Cornus stolonifera* (Grinnell 1923:180; Hart 1981:14).

The leaves can be boiled to make a diuretic tea, and the fruits eaten to relieve the pain of a toothache. Hart also mentions its use in a medicine to deal with bleeding, the preparation of which is unknown.

This plant also plays a role in several horse medicines. The berries would be rubbed in four directions on a horse having trouble urinating, or to prevent racing horses from getting tired. Also in racing, it was thought to make weary a horse positioned ahead.

Finally, this plant was used to protect the hands in retrieving dog meat from a boiling pot of water in various ceremonies (Hart 1981:14). In addition to these uses, Hart's informants, Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man, as well as the ethnobotanist Moerman indicate skunkbush's use as a cold remedy, a hemostat, and a reproductive aid (Hart 1981:14; Moerman 1998: 645-6).

*R. trilobata* is found in the western part of the United States, from Iowa to California, in valleys and plains as well as hills and canyons (Harrington 1998:261).
*Henene* (fruit), *Heneno?e* (bush)

*Rosa* spp. (wild rose)

Ben Black Wolf, Mary Fisher, Jim Spear and Wesley White Man explained that the inner bark and the roots can be boiled into a tea to treat diarrhea and stomach trouble (Hart 1981:36).

Moerman also describes the plants of this genus as eye medicine (1998:645-6).

*Rosa arkansana* is illustrated here and represented in the distribution map.
Hohaso?e

*Rumex crispus* L. (yellow dock)

For hemorrhaging lungs, a tea would be made from a pinch of the pulverized root.

A poultice could be made from the dried root, wetted, and placed on a sore or wound (Grinnell 1923:172; Hart 1981:32; Moerman 1998:645-6).

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*R. Crispus*, depicted above, is an introduced species of this genus and so grows as weeds do. in disturbed soil and gardens (Harrington 1998:90; Kindscher 1992:279). Shown in the map above is the distribution of the native species *R. venosus*.
*Heshexova?tovotse*

*Sagittaria cuneata* Sheld. (arrowhead)

As a horse medicine, it could be used as a charm for race horses by rubbing the dried leaves on their faces, or given to horses who were having trouble urinating. It was sometimes mixed with other medicines and put into a sick horse’s mouth, according to Mary Fisher of the Northern Cheyenne.

Arrowhead leaves were also an ingredient in medicinal mixtures for people (Hart 1981:6-7; Moerman 1998:646). Although, Grinnell mentions this plant, he does not indicate any medicinal uses for it (1923:170).

Depicted here is the species of Arrowhead, *C. latifolia*, found in shallow water along the edges of lakes and streams throughout most of the United States, generally at lower elevations in the Rocky Mountains (Harrington 1998:206-208).
Meno?keo?o

Salix amygdaloides Anders. and Salix spp. (willow)

A medicinal tea made from willow bark was drunk to treat diarrhea among other ailments, as indicated by Ben Black Wolf, Charles Sitting Man, and Mr. And Mrs. Charles White Dirt.

A strip of willow bark would be used as a bandage to stop a cut from bleeding.

Willow branches are used in constructing sweat lodges.

Willow branches were also used in the Sun Dance in various ways: growing near water, willow was believed to help thirsty Sun Dancers. To this end, stems would be wrapped around dancers’ waists, heads, wrists, and ankles. Furthermore, a black paint was made for the dancers from willow charcoal (Hart 1981:37-38).

Moerman also lists all species in the genus *Salix* as dermatological aids (1998:645).

Shown here and in the distribution map is *S. humilis*.

(Kindscher 1992:194)
Ve?ohke-vano?e (bitter sage)

*Sarcobatus vermiculatus* (Hook.) Torr. (greasewood)

According to Ben Black Wolf and Wesley White Man, greasewood sticks were used in a sort of acupuncture in which certain parts of the body were pierced. This ceremony could only be performed by specialists. It was believed, also, that greasewood sticks would draw out bad blood when a person’s system was afflicted with it.

Greasewood was also used to treat a horse’s sprained or bruised leg. There was a ceremony held for all horses in any kind of trouble, and after performing this, holes were punched in the horse’s shoulder with a greasewood stick and the healer would blow into them, causing the shoulder to swell. If the horse got up and shook itself, it would be all right.

As a tool involved in ceremonies, greasewood sticks would hold Sun Dancers’ whistles when not in use, and serve as a tamper for tobacco pipes (Hart 1981:17; Moerman 1998:64, 6).

*S. vermiculatus* is commonly found in the more arid areas of the west, particularly where there is alkaline soil (Kirk 1975:62).

(Kirk 1975:61)
Ve?ohke-heseeo?otse (bitter medicine)

Scirpus nevadensis Wats. (bulrush)

This plant is used similarly to two previously mentioned grasses, Eleocharis sp. and Carex nebrascensis, for the eyes, and nose of the buffalo skull in the Sun Dance altar, as described by members of the Northern Cheyenne community, Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man (Hart 1981:8; Moerman 1998:645). Here, again, Grinnell makes no mention of ceremonial use (1923:170).
*Heove-heseeo?otse* (yellow medicine)

*Senecio triangularis* Hook. (groundsels)

A sedating tea was made of the pulverized roots or leaves and drunk for chest pains (Grinnell 1923:190-1; Hart 1981:23; Moerman 1998:645-6).
Make-menotse (red berries)

*Shepherdia argentea* (Pursh) *Nutt.* (thorny buffalo-berry)

The fruits were dried, pulverized and used as an ingredient in medicinal mixtures (Hart 1981:24-5; Moerman 1998:646).

According to Ben Black Wolf, Mary Fisher, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man, the branches, more specifically, young shoots without thorns would be used to make the altar in the Sun Dance (Hart 1981:24-5).

(Kindscher 1987:210)

(Kindscher 1987:209)
Hestomoa?akan?ano

Sphaeralcea coccinea (Pursh) Rydb. (red globemallow)

Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear and Wesley White Man explained the use of this plant to Hart. Members of the contrary society used this plant in ceremonies. It was rubbed on their hands to protect them when they pulled dog meat out of boiling water in the Clown Dance. The plant chosen to be used in this ceremony had to have four stems, one for each cardinal direction.

Interestingly, when a Contrary Society member encountered one of these plants when he was out looking for wild turnips, it would be frightening (Hart 1981:31).

Moerman also indicates its use as an adjuvant (1998:645).

Another name for this plant is Malvastrum coccineum (Grinnell 1923:180).

(Kindscher 1992:208)
**Mehme-menotse** (spicy berries)

**Symphoricarpos albus** (L.) Blake (snowberry)

This plant held utilitarian purpose as it was used to make the Sun Dance altar, although Alex Black Horse, Wilson Brady, and Mary Fisher mentioned that some believed it to cause an itch similar to poison ivy (Hart 1981:17).

*Symphoricarpos sp.*, shown here, is found throughout the west in thickets and woods (Kirk 1975:129)
*Heove-heseeo’otse* (yellow medicine)

*Tanacetum vulgare* L. (tansy)

When someone felt weak they might drink a tea made of this plant’s pulverized flowers and leaves (Grinnell 1923:190; Hart 1981:23; Moerman 1998:646).

*Tanacetum vulgare* is originally from Europe where it grows wild and is cultivated (Grieve 1971:789).
Ma?e-hesee?otse (red medicine)

*Telesonix jamesii* (Torr.) Raf.

This plant would be rubbed by hand into a fine powder and boiled to make a tea for hemorrhages of the lungs (Hart 1981:38).
Mo?ehe-no?hame-heseeo?otse (horse medicine)

*Thalictrum sparsiflorum* Turcz.

According to Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear and Wesley White Man of the Northern Cheyenne, the flowers were used green or dried, and mixed with *Agastache* to make a perfume applied to a horse's mane and tail to boost the horse's endurance (Grinnell 1923:173-4; Hart 1981:34; Moerman 1998:646).
Thermopsis rhombifolia Nutt. (golden-banner)

The dried leaves were burnt and inhaled from under a blanket as a treatment for colds and headaches. Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man indicated that a tea was also made of the leaves (Hart 1981:30; Moerman 1998:645).

(Britton 1913:v.2:344)

(http://www.plants.usda.gov)
*Vo?heneotse-vo?e(stse)*, *vohpo?heneotse-vo?e. veta-no?e(stse)* (fat plant)

*Typha latifolia* L. (cattail)

To relieve abdominal cramps, a hot tea of the pulverized root and white base of the leaves might be drunk (Grinnell 1923:170; Hart 1981:13).

According to Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man, cattail leaves played a role in the Sun Dance, but perhaps more technologically, as they were used similarly to wild rye, that is, as a cooling bedding upon which the dancers could stand.

Antithetical to medicine, it was thought that if a person were to get any of the fluffy seeds in her eyes, s/he would develop cataracts (Hart 1981:13; Moerman 1998:645).

*Typha latifolia* is found in wetlands, marshes, shallow lakes and at the edges of streams throughout North America, generally under eight thousand feet elevation (Harrington 1998:220).

(http://www.plants.usda.gov)

(Harrington 1998:222)
Homeno?e (tree), oo?omeshe (tea made from the bark)

_Ulmus Americana_ L. (American elm)

The red, inner bark was used for making a tea reported by some, including Mary Fisher and Josephine Limpy, to be a mild stimulant like coffee, and by others, namely Ben Black Wolf, Jim Spear, and Wesley White Man, to guarantee children's stability. In the hope that the latter effect would be passed along to their anticipated children, pregnant women would drink this tea. It should also be mentioned that this tree is found near Bear Butte, the sacred mountain (Hart 1981:40).

Moerman indicates uses as a gynecological aid as well (1998:645-6).

_U. Americana_ is found in rich soil, particularly along streams, typically in southeastern Canada and in the eastern United States (Erichsen-Brown 1979:48).
Ma?ke-menotse (red berries)

Vaccinium scoparium Leiberg (whortleberry)

When a child had a poor appetite s/he would be given a small dose of the dried, pulverized berries before the first meal of the day. Roughly two tablespoons of the dried, pulverized stems and leaves were made into a tea for nausea or loss of appetite (Grinnell 1923:183-4; Hart 1981:25-26).

Moerman lists it as an antiemetic (1998:645-6).

V. scoparium is found at high elevations on mountain slopes in the northern Rocky Mountains of the United States and into Canada (Harrington 1998:289).
*Hestahpano?e*

**Yucca glauca Nutt.** (yucca)

Yucca root, dried, was boiled in preparing shampoo because it was thought to stimulate hair growth, be good for dandruff, and prevent baldness. Alex Black Horse, Ben Black Wolf, Mary Fisher, and Josephine Limpy indicated this to Jeffrey Hart.

Yucca seems to offer other benefits to the skin as well, being used for various outbreaks, poison ivy, sores, and scabs. In this way, the root was pulverized, mixed with an unknown medicine, and applied as a powder or wash (Hart 1981:12; Moerman 1998:645).
Hookohtsestse (raw corn)

Mahemenotse (cooked corn)

Tse-ho?oohee?estse mahaemenotse (boiled corn)

Ho?xestoha (corn balls)

Heove-enahano (corn meal; ‘yellow sauce’)

Heta?e-menonotse ooxaneohotse (hominy)

Xamaa-mahemenotse (Indian corn)

Paae-vahanoo?o (roast corn; ‘ashes baked’)

He?e-mahaeomenotse (squaw corn; ‘woman corn’)

Mahaemene-ma?ohkee?e (corn tassel)

Zea mays L. (corn, maize)

Generations after leaving what would become Minnesota, and their agricultural life there, the Cheyenne continued to grow corn when it seemed economical. The Cheyenne of the plains depended mostly on buffalo for their nutrition, but making the shift onto the plains was a process not an event. Raising crops was phased out as it became difficult on the plains for the women to remain in a settled camp, with some men there as defense, and a smaller band of hunters seeking buffalo and bringing the kill back to camp. However, the allure of corn must have been strong as reports indicate farming as late as 1865.

Correlated with the continued use of corn is the continued veneration of it. In the Massaum ceremony, five grains of corn were placed in respect to the four cardinal directions and the center pole of each lodge pole, and the center pole. The people could eat only after the spirits had eaten.
Prior to 1876, the Corn Dance was practiced and the Cheyenne kept sacred ears of corn grown from the original seeds that Esceheman gave them. Esceheman gave those original ears of corn to Erect Horns and Sweet Medicine, whose other names refer to this (Standing on the Ground, Red Tassel, Sweet Root Standing, and Rustling Corn Leaf). Hart contends that combining these men’s role in bringing corn to the Cheyenne with their role in teaching the Cheyenne how to hunt maintains the tribe’s identity with their older ways.

In capturing eagles, a practice that continued into the first half of the nineteenth century, the Cheyenne would prepare a ceremonial meal consisting in part of pulverized corn. This food brought blessings and success (Hart 1981:10-11).

(Hitchcock 1950)
These next several plants have not been identified in western taxonomic nomenclature.

*Vanoʔova*

This plant, so rare as to be found, arguably, only twice, and of such a striking appearance, with a foot-long stalk upon which a sunflower-shaped, but smaller, flower grows—the stalk has no limbs, only a cluster of small leaves near the ground, and in the dirt are two roots upwards of six inches long and resembling a man’s legs. “It had a very strong smell and had the color of the rainbow, and a glassy appearance. It glowed in the dark” (Hart 1981:52).

Its medicine is strong affecting a person visually, mentally and internally; it is possibly hallucinogenic.

The Cheyenne, after experimenting with this plant settled on its use as a horse medicine and by the Contrary warriors. Scattering this medicine in the air would slow down the other horses in a race, and using it conjunction with black medicine (*Echinacea pallida* and moss would strengthen a contrary warrior’s arms against the boiling water out which dog meat was pulled in the ceremonies (Hart 1981:52).

*Hetamestototse*

Sniffing the dried seeds of this plant, a member of the composite family, causes sneezing and works in this way as a decongestant. Sneezing in this case was thought to be good for headaches, earaches, pneumonia and the como, as well (Hart 1981:53).

*Heove-hesecoʔotse* (yellow medicine;)

Very bitter, a tea made by boiling this plant was drunk for tuberculosis and whooping cough as well for kidney problems, and the steam used as vaporizer under a blanket.

Yellow medicine could be mixed with other plants to treat cuts.
Vano?estse

This was used long ago. It is a kind of sage used by the Chief Society for lighting pipes, and used as a horse medicine; for this purpose the leaves were burned beneath the horse’s nose (Hart 1981:53).
Chapter 4: Conclusion

The complications I encountered in writing this thesis, as well as the patterns I noticed in the medicines of the Cheyenne, suggest possible directions for future research. First, given the constant threat that United States' hegemony puts on Cheyenne culture, it will continue to be difficult to assess the continued use of each medicine without frequent ethnobotanical fieldwork, or to determine which plants are remembered for their medicinal qualities but no longer enlisted for them, and which plants have been forgotten altogether. Furthermore, as the diseases increasingly become of western origin (alcoholism, diabetes) the remedies do as well; consequently, it would be interesting to determine if an herbalistic approach continues and adapts to new ailments or is set aside in favor of synthetic, Western, preparations. Do the limitations put on reservation Cheyenne's medical treatment by the current political system push the Cheyenne toward Western medicine, or withhold access to it?

Moore discusses the inefficacious Indian Health Services, mentioning that Cheyennes with health insurance prefer to see private doctors. He does not mention home health care or herbalism (Moore 1996:289-291)

The literature on Cheyenne plant medicines indicates the types of maladies that demand treatment. For instance, many plants have been used as remedies for a sore throat, a cough, or general cold symptoms. Medicines for nausea and skin irritations are also prevalent in the literature. Less common, but still available in medicines for oral health and psychological disorders. This may mean that colds, respiratory illnesses, and stomach distress have been more common problems among the Cheyenne, or it may mean that more plants of the northern plains are attuned to treating these conditions. The
relatively high number of remedies for impaired respiratory function may be related to smoking tobacco and the frequency with which that has been done and, historically, living in smoky tipis heated by wood fires, or that respiratory problems were frequent enough, but no more so than among any other society, to demand that the people find not only a plant or two to help, but several alternatives should the first options not present themselves.

Some plants, such as *Mentzelia laevicaulis*, are described as being used to treat tuberculosis, measles, mumps, or smallpox; they can be traced to a certain historical moment. Westerners brought these diseases to the Plains by the nineteenth century—diseases that reached epidemic proportions just before and as the reservation system was being established. Such medicinal plants, would not have been used in the seventeenth century and may only see use now for the treatment of other diseases.

The knowledge of herbal remedies can be a worthy ally for those Cheyenne who have neither health insurance for a western doctor, patience for the Indian Health Services, nor faith in synthetically prepared medicines. Considering that many synthetic medicines are modeled after plant medicines, and that harvesting wild plants costs only time and effort, the preservation of such knowledge may prove worthwhile.

One possible legal benefit that the Cheyenne might derive from this research and future research in this vein is that of preserving sacred lands. A substantial number of the plants discussed in this thesis are used ceremonially, red-osier dogwood for instance. The land in which these plants grow may need to be protected under historic preservation laws to ensure Cheyenne access to them.
Henrietta Mann, of the Southern Cheyenne estimates that three quarters of sacred sites are no longer available to Tribal people. In her words,

We’ve lost ninety-eight percent of our land base, so what’s wrong with keeping our sacred sites from development? When you are talking about Earth-based spirituality, the whole erosion of our land base threw us into cultural chaos. Without the land there is no sovereignty, without sovereignty there is no relationship, and without relationship there is no responsibility to the Earth (Taliman 2002).
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