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## Review of The Cheyenne

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*The Cheyenne*. By Stan Hoig. Indians of North America, edited by Frank W. Porter III. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989. Maps, illustrations, photographs, bibliography, glossary, index. 111 pp. \$15.95.

*The Cheyenne* by Stan Hoig is one volume in Chelsea House Publishers' series on Indians of North America. The purpose of these volumes, according to general series editor Frank W. Porter III, is to examine the problems that developed as a result of Native American-European contact and to provide all Americans with a greater comprehension of the issues and conflicts involving American Indians today. If we evaluate this work against the series' goals, we must conclude that *The Cheyenne* is a somewhat disappointing effort.

The first seven chapters are a standard chronicling of Cheyenne-white relations, especially military conflicts, from approximately 1806 to the 1880s. This time frame spans the period of the most intense cultural contact between the Cheyenne and Euro-Americans. Although his study is rich in military detail, Hoig most often portrays the Cheyenne people as passive actors in their own history, desperately

reacting to the onslaught of encroaching civilization. This is unfortunate, for the reader never comes to understand Cheyenne motivations for the choices that were made or how Cheyenne cultural dynamics were affected by the Euro-American presence. Ironically, this passive treatment of Cheyenne behavior supports the popular myth of the "noble savage" helplessly resisting westward expansion that Porter wants to destroy.

The numerous inaccuracies with respect to Cheyenne culture, cultural behavior, and historical events also detract from the work. With regard to culture, Hoig describes Cheyenne military societies as clubs (p. 22), misrepresents the ceremonial purpose of the Sun Dance and Massaum (pp. 27-28), and says the Cheyenne were said to have clans during the nineteenth century. In reasoning about a Council Chief's refusal to protest against another Cheyenne man's stealing his wife, the author writes "their compassion was beyond reason" (p. 23). Instead of interpreting such behavior in a cultural context, he leaves the reader with a shallow psychological explanation. Finally, important Cheyenne historical events are not accurately described. For example, Hoig claims (p. 36) that the Cheyenne never recovered their sacred arrows after losing them in a battle with Pawnee, although the Cheyenne did retrieve two of the arrows through Sioux intermediaries. In sum, if the goal of the series is to provide the general reader with an accurate portrayal of Cheyenne culture and history, such distortions are intolerable.

The final chapter in the book synthesizes the Cheyenne experience in the modern era (c. 1880 to present). Once again, Hoig fails in his overview. The reader is left with the impression that Cheyenne culture and society died with the 1890 Ghost Dance. Quite the contrary, the Southern and Northern Cheyenne people are viable not only demographically but culturally as well.

The two most striking qualities about the book are the lavish illustrations and readability. Aside from these positive notes, *The Cheyenne* is an overly simplistic and often inaccurate ac-

count of Cheyenne culture and history. If, as Porter has argued (p. 11), "all Americans must learn the history of the relations between the Indians and the federal government, recognize the unique legal status of the Indians, and understand the heritage and cultures of the Indians of North America," should not readers be entitled to a culture history which is both accurate in fact and places Indian people center stage, rather than as a backdrop to western expansion?

At best *The Cheyenne* should be considered a popular history. What is most unfortunate is that the general reading public will again consume a popular account about the Cheyenne people that is reminiscent of the western literary genre of "civilization's" conquest over "savagery" and is, at times, factually inaccurate.

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