

NOTES ON SOME CHEYENNE SONGS

By GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL

All Indians are musicians to a greater or less extent. They possess a few noisy musical instruments, such as drums, rattles, whistles, bullroarers, and the like, and often at night from the hill-sides comes the plaintive music of the flute, where the Indian lover is playing for the pleasure of his sweetheart, or in the hope that he may call her out from the lodge. But, after all, most of their music is vocal. Most of the instrumental music of the Cheyennes is in some degree ceremonial, or is expressed under the influence of strong emotions. The warrior, going into battle, whistles shrilly on an instrument made from the wing-bone of the war eagle. The doctor, working over a dying patient, rattles ardently, in the hope that he may drive away the evil spirits. The musicians, at the dance, pound with fervor on their drums; but while all of these sounds preserve time, they are not harmonious.

The flute players no doubt performed chiefly for their own satisfaction—for the enjoyment which they had in making music. They never played in the day time. Some men wandered about playing all night long. Early in the evening they were heard playing out on the hills, at a distance from the camp, the music moving along from height to height until it had encircled the camp. Later in the night music was heard closer, often immediately outside the circle, and moving around it. Toward morning it might sound within the circle and in the middle of the camp, and at daylight it ceased.

Some young men used flutes or large whistles made for them by men who were supposed to possess peculiar powers, and such flutes had the property of charming the girl the man loved, and made her love him.

The Cheyennes have a vast number of songs. Many of these are, in fact, prayers, but prayers set to music, like the white man's hymns. Often these religious songs are airs merely, without words,

but many of them have words. Some may consist of an air, hummed or sung, in the midst of which may be inserted one or two words, apparently without significance. There are mourning songs, sung for the dead in praise of him who has gone, and telling of the sorrow of the survivors, and of the suffering which his loss entails. There are also children's songs, sung by men or women for the amusement of children, or as lullabies. Dance songs are usually without words, but serve as music to accompany the drum which beats time for the dancers. Morning songs are sung by individuals, usually early in the morning, just after they have awakened and before they arise.

Besides these, there are songs of love, of war, and of adventure. Wolf songs, so called—said to have been learned from the wolves and perhaps remotely in imitation of the howling of these animals—are songs of travel, of roaming about, and were commonly sung by scouts or young men who were out looking for enemies, since a scout was called a "wolf." Then, too, there are doctoring songs, sung by healers while working over their patients. They are religious songs.

The number of religious songs is very great, for all Indians have an elaborate and complicated ritual connected with their religious ceremonies. At the present day only the older men, and indeed but few of them, are acquainted with these songs, since, as the old ceremonies are no longer practised, the young men learn neither the ceremony nor the songs which go with it.

The wolf songs were sung by scouts, or by young men alone on the prairie, whether traveling or looking for enemies, or often, I am told, by men when they felt depressed, downhearted, lonely, or discouraged. It is perhaps for this reason that these songs contain frequent references to the singer's sweetheart. On the other hand, the words of many of them seem to be addressed by a leader to his followers, in order to encourage them. Some of these songs are supposed to be sung by a girl, and addressed to her lover. Of these, one of the most pleasing, as well for its air as for its words, is the one beginning "*Tá mts s̄ vá in,*" a translation of which is, "Put your arms around me, I am not looking," and the meaning is, that if the girl saw that her lover was about to embrace her, she

would feel obliged to repulse him, but she wished him to put his arms around her, and now that she was not looking, he might do so without fear of rebuke. Another wolf war-song, supposed to be sung by a man traveling about, says, "My love, it is I who am singing. Do you hear me?" Another one, by a leader addressing his followers, says, "Take courage; do not be frightened; follow where you see me riding my white horse." In another song by a leader to his followers, he says, "Friends, take courage, I see my sweetheart." The view is, that the mention of the sweetheart's name may bring him luck.

A man traveling alone, sang, "I do not see my love," and then changing his address, went on, "Come out of your lodge, so that I may see you"; and again changing it, said, as he discovered her, "Aha, I do see you." Still another runs, "My love, come out of the lodge, I am searching for you"; another, "My love, come out into the prairie, so that I may come near you and meet you"; and another, "My love, do not scold me, I love only you." While these songs were commonly sung during a war journey, or even by people who are alone, away from the camp, they were sung also by young men who are sitting on the hills close to the village, and for no other purpose than their own amusement.

Often, young men about to start on a war journey went about the camp singing songs which were recognized as those sung by people about to go to war. They might march about the circle of the lodges, and stopping before certain of them, sing these songs. From the lodge which was being serenaded, contributions to their equipment were handed out, such as two or three pairs of moccasins, a few arrows, half a dozen balls, or a little packet of powder. Such a song is the following: "Call them together before we go away, and we will dance till morning." This might be sung over and over many times as they marched through the camp. A party just leaving the village to go to war, might sing, "I am going to search for a man; if I find him, there will be fighting; perhaps he will kill me." This was sung again and again as they rode over the hills from the camp.

A successful war party, returning to the village, sang, just as they descended the hills close to the camp, and until their people

came out to meet them, a song of joy and triumph, "I have returned home; again I shall see my love." Or perhaps this, "All have returned alive; you all shall see your sweethearts"; and later, after they had come into the village, and perhaps were marching about it, such a song as this, "In the mountains I met with a man; I charged upon him and fought him and killed him, and took his scalp."

A warrior whose fortune while on the warpath had been bad, and who was therefore angry and discouraged, might sing, "My heart is angry, my love is lost." A dance song sung by the Fox Soldiers society had words which are in praise of youth, and to encourage valor, by pointing out the miseries of old age. They run as follows: "When a man gets old, his teeth are gone. I am afraid" (of that time), "I wish to die" (before it comes).

The doctoring songs are usually short and simple. The words are repeated over and over again, as in this one: "I know myself; I possess spiritual power." Another song, by a woman, says, "I know about things above; I possess spiritual power."

Beside all this, there are various animal songs, some of them religious, others merely invoking good fortune. A certain song, known as the horse song, may be sung over a horse, in order to make him strong, sound, and swift, for a particular occasion.

The examples given below are, I believe, fair specimens of Cheyenne songs. They were collected several years ago from the Northern Cheyennes. The translations to which I have been helped by my friends William Rowland and his son James Rowland, are offered for what they are worth, since I can lay claim to but little knowledge of the Cheyenne language.

I add brief grammatical notes to some of the songs, which were furnished me by a missionary, who requests that his name be not mentioned. His knowledge of the Cheyenne language is equaled by that of only one or two white men.

WAR SONG. (BY RIDGEWALKING AND OTHERS. GIRL SPEAKING.)

<i>Ksō wāh' ēwō,</i>	<i>īs tsī im'</i>	<i>nā ēh' hyā;</i>	<i>nā ī' shī mā hāāt.</i>
Young man,	wife	she is afraid of me;	I am getting old.

Ksu wāh' iss, 'little young man,' 'youth' (Latin, *juvenis*), perhaps 16 or 17 years of age. *His tsī im's,* 'his wife.' *Na ēi' hya,* 'she is afraid of me.'

TRANSLATION: Young man, his wife is afraid of me. I am growing old.

WOLF SONG. (BY THE SAME SINGERS.)

Ksō wāh' nā tūn' [father [daughter *ksō wāh' hīs tōh' nā tōh'*.
Young man daughter speaks] speaks] young man just like a man.

Hōwā tūm' [Father speaks].
Just the same.

Ksu wāh', 'young man' (Latin, *adolescens*), from 17 to 25 years of age.

WOLF SONG. (BY THE SAME SINGERS.)

Tā mīs' sī vā in, nīs' sā wō' māt.
Of your own accord me catch hold of, I am not looking at you.

Ta is the sign of the imperative. *Na wōm'*, 'I see him or her.' *Nas sa womo*, 'I do not see him or her.' *Nīs' sa wō' mātsi*, 'I do not see thee.'

TRANSLATION: Put your arms around me. I am not looking.

WOLF SONG

Nīs in i' o, hīs tān, iv' ā vōst, hō hūm ō ān'; iħk i' yōits.
My close friend, seized, it annoys her, you are doing wrong; it worries (me).

Nīs šin i', from *wīs sī*, 'with,' and *na nī i'*, 'I stand.' *I hīs' tān o*, 'he takes him or her.' *Iw' a wōst*, or *iv' a vōst*, very likely = *iv a vō' ish*, the feeling caused by being obliged to refuse a favor.

Nīsšin i' ō, 'close friend,' 'chum'; and refers to the peculiar and very strong attachments formed between young men. Damon and Pythias or David and Jonathan give the idea.

TRANSLATION: My close friend, your taking that girl in your arms annoys her. You are doing wrong and it troubles me.

WOLF WAR SONGS. (BY TALL BULL. SUNG BY A MAN TRAVELING ABOUT.)

Nāh mēh' ōn, nā; nī nīs' ?
My love, it is I (who am singing); do you hear me ?

Nāh mēh' on, from *na me ho'to*, 'I love him or her.' *Nī nīs' t*, 'Do you hear me ?' (Latin, *audire*). *Nī nīs' o mon i*, 'Do you hear (understand) me ?' (Latin, *intelligere*.)

WOLF SONG. (A LEADER IS ADDRESSING HIS FOLLOWERS.)

Shī vī tǎn ǝ' ūts, *tsī vī hēh' pǝ yūts,* *nǎn ǝ' hyō vē* *ītsī*
 Keep trying, (do) not be frightened, I it is who
 wōhkpē *tā* *hō'ists.*
 white horse rides.

Shī vī tǎn ots', imperative plural—'Exert yourself,' 'Courage';
Stsi vī hēh' po yots,—future imperative—'do not be frightened';
 the present is, *ni vī hēh' po yots*. *Na neh' ov*, 'it is I.'

TRANSLATION: Take courage; do not be frightened. Follow me where you see me riding my white horse.

WOLF SONG. (LEADER ADDRESSES HIS FOLLOWERS. THE MENTION OF HIS SWEETHEART MAY BRING HIM GOOD FORTUNE.)

Hǝ'wā, *shī vī tǎn ǝ' ūts,* *nā mēh* *nā vōm'.*
 Friend, keep trying, my love I see (her).

Na mēh' = na mēh' ǝn. (See above.)

TRANSLATION: Friend, take courage. I see my sweetheart.

WOLF SONG

Na mēh' o na sǎi wōs' tā; *hyǝ' in* *nā tā wōm'.*
 My love I do not see her; come out I see her.

Hǝ' in, 'Come out!' (imperative); *Na nihk o i*, 'I come out';
Nanihk o i, 'I come'; *Na ho i*, 'I arrive'; *Nani hets hiam i*, 'I
 come slowly'; *Na am' i*, 'I walk'; *Na ho ǝs' to i*, 'I come out (of
 bushes)'; *Na ǝs' tsi*, 'I enter'; *Na ǝssi wōn i*, 'I crawl (go) under';
Na ǝmi wōn i, 'I creep'; *Na a i*, 'I go upstairs'; *Na anho i*, 'I
 go downstairs'; *Na hōōm i*, 'I go behind'; *Na ta' o i*, 'I go out.'

Nā tā wōm', 'I see her.' The *ta* is emphatic; hence, 'I do see her.'

TRANSLATION: I do not see my love. (To her:) Come out of your lodge. I do see her.

WOLF SONG

Another wolf song has the same words as the last with the addition of—

Nī tō sī wōm'.
 I want to see you.

Nī to sī vom' signifies 'I am about to see you'; or, perhaps, 'I need to see you'; 'I wish to see you.' *Tǝ' sī* gives all those shades; it is invariable.

TRANSLATION : I wish to see you.

WOLF SONG

Tā is tǎn' *ī wō sǐ' mā.*
Seize and kiss her.

Tā is tǎn' = *ta hīs' tane*, imperative of *na hīs' tan*, 'I take him or her.' *Tā* may also be rendered by 'go' or 'do,' as in *na ta wom*, above.

TRANSLATION : Put your arms around her and kiss her.

MEDICINE LODGE SONG. (SUNG IN THE MEDICINE LODGE.)

Ītsi vī ī ūhk' ūt, *ī' ā mā ī yū'.*
Nothing bad say, it is sacred.

Ītsi vī ī ūhk' ūt is perhaps *sī vī ūhk'*, 'Do not talk.' *Ī' ā mā* *yū'* is for *ī' ā mā hī yūn' ī*, 'it is medicine'; 'it is sacred.'

TRANSLATION : Do not say anything bad. This place is sacred.

MEDICINE LODGE SONG

Māi yūn' āsts *nī vō' īsh;* *shī vā' tūm;* *nī vīs' tūm.*
Spiritual powers be propitious to me; take pity; help (me).

Mā ī yūn' āsts, direct address. *Nī vō' īsh*, probably for *nīh vō' vīshs*, 'be propitious to me'; from *na vo vei ho*, 'I am propitious.' *Shī va' tum*, probably *nshī va' tam*, 'have pity on me'; singular imperative, from *na nshī vī tām'*, 'I have pity on him.' *Nī vīs' tūm* = *nīh vīs' tām*, 'help me,' from *na vīs' tām*.

TRANSLATION : Spiritual powers, be propitious to me. Take pity on me. Help me.

ANGRY WARRIOR'S SONG

Nā hāh' *īst ā ūts* *na mēh' o* *īv ōn' ī yūts.*
Angry heart my love is lost.

Na hāh' īst a' ots, probably *nā hā' bsv' sta a' ots*, 'I am angry in my heart'; from *na*, 'I'; *ha bsv' a*, 'bad'; *nah ststs'*, 'my heart'; *ōts*, suffix meaning 'growing,' 'becoming.'

TRANSLATION : My heart is angry. My love is lost.

WOLF SONG

Na mēh' ōn *hōw' ūhk,* *nīn nīs' ī vōm.*
My love come out, I am searching for you.

How' uhk is perhaps for *ho ihn'sts*, or *ho' ahksts*, 'come out quickly or hurriedly,' from *na ho ahk*. *Ni nit's i vom*, probably *nī nōh tsi' wōm*, 'I look for you,' from *na nōh'tsi wom*, 'I look for him.'

TRANSLATION: My love, come out of the lodge; I am searching (only) for you.

SONG OF SUCCESSFUL RETURNING PARTY, BY TALL BULL, ISSUES, WOLF, LITTLE WHITE MAN. (SUNG BY THE PARTY JUST AS THEY DESCEND THE HILLS CLOSE TO CAMP, AND UNTIL THEIR PEOPLE COME OUT TO MEET THEM.)

Nā i' shō yūts, *nāts hō' sī vōm* *na mēh' ōn.*
I have arrived, again I shall see my love.

Nā' ishō yūts, is *nā ish ho eyohts*: *na*, 'I'; *ish*, 'already'; *hō ēy ōhts*, 'come back'; with the distinct meaning of coming up on the other side of a hill or mountain. *Nāts hō' sī vōm* should be *na tos hōssi wom*: *na*, 'I'; *tos* (ellipsis for *tō'si*), 'about'; *hō'si*, 'again'; *wōm*, 'see him or her.'

TRANSLATION: I have returned home. Again I shall see my love.

WOLF SONG

Hō' wē, *na mēh' ōn* *na wis'si wō.*
Friend, my love I with her.

Ho we is singular and seems to be used only as a vocative. *Na wissi wo*, 'I with her.'

TRANSLATION: Friend, my love is with me.

SONG OF RETURNING WAR PARTY

Nist hkwīst *nī vō' ish* *ī'v hōw yūts,* *nīts' hō sī vōm* *na mēh' ōn.*
All of us living have returned, you will see again your love.

Nist o hkwits, 'all we,' or 'all of us.' *Nits hōsi vom* should be *nī tos hōssi wom'ov*, 'you are again about to see her.'

TRANSLATION: All have returned alive. You all shall again see your sweethearts.

SONG OF RETURNING WAR PARTY

Wō' is tān ī *nā hō ī hyō'tō* *hō hō nāh' īv,* *Nāh' ā ī yūts,* *na mī' ūt.*
A man follow in the mountains, I rush on him, I fight.

Wō' is tān' i nā nāh', hī mīk' ō na' ist' ān.
 A man I kill, his head (*i. e.*, scalp) I take.

Wo is tan i, 'a man.' *Na hoi hyot'* = *is na hoi hōts'*, 'I follow him.' *Hō hō nāh' w*, 'on the stone'; from *hō hō na'*, 'stone,' and *iva*, 'on' or 'in': 'on the stone'; that is, 'on the stony mountain,' the Big Horn mountain, to which generally they add the word *mōhk' ta*, 'black'; *i. e.*, the black stone, meaning Big Horn mountains. *Na mi' ut* is for *na mi yōt*, 'I fight him.' *Hī mīk'*, 'head' or 'hair'; hence, 'scalp'; the tense is present, and there is question of one person only.

TRANSLATION: I follow a man in the mountains. I charge upon him. I fight him. I kill him, and take his scalp.

SONG BY SOLDIER WOLF

Na mēh' o, tūhk' tā ā' mī yūts nī tehō' i hyō' tō.
 My love, (on) open ground walk out me toward (each other) come together.

Tūhk' to is probably for *tōhk te*, 'anywhere,' 'in the open ground' (Latin, *ruri*).

TRANSLATION: My love, come out into the prairie, so that I can come near you and meet you.

FOX SOLDIER DANCE SONG, BY WILD HOG. (SUNG BY A YOUNG MAN.)

Mā ā kis' hī vē' ist i wān' i na ē' hō hō wān' i.
 Old man teeth gone I am afraid he is not.

Mā ā kis' is for *ma ha' kiss*, 'old man.' *Na vē' is*, 'my tooth'; *hī vē' is*, 'his tooth'; *hī vē' ists*, 'his teeth.' *Ho wan' i* = *ho wan e' i*, 'he is not.'

TRANSLATION: When a man gets old his teeth are gone. I am afraid (of that time). I want to die (before it comes).

WOLF SONGS, BY TALL BULL

Tā ō nōm' na mēh' ō. Tās iv' hō nā mēh' ō?
 Call my love. Where is my love?

nā sāt' its ish i wōm'.
 I not have (yet) seen (her).

Hō = *hyō*.

TRANSLATION: Where is my love? I have not seen her.

Na mēh' o nī wī ē tō tūhk' im; na mīh hyū'.
 My love me do not scold; I you love.

TRANSLATION: Do not find fault with me, my love. I love you alone.

Hō'wā, Ōh nī hā Nūt' kēhē nā tō' sī wīs tōm'.
 Friend, Omaha Soldier woman I shall marry.

(Repeat three times.)

TRANSLATION: Friend, I am going to marry the Omaha Soldier woman (*i. e.*, a woman who takes a certain part in the Omaha Soldier Society dance).

SONGS OF FAREWELL, BY A LARGE WAR PARTY. (SUNG AFTER THEY HAVE MOUNTED AND ARE RIDING OUT AND AWAY FROM THE VILLAGE.)

Wō' is tān ī nā tōs' ī nūt' sī vōm nā māh vōm'. Tā mēh' ūhk
 A man I shall search for I if see (him). There will be
ī vā in, nāhts ī nūhk ī nāh'.
 fighting, perhaps killed (me).

TRANSLATION: I am going to look for a man. If I find him there will be fighting. Perhaps I shall be killed. (Repeat over and over again till they get away from the camp.)

(SUNG BY THE PARTY WHILE WALKING ABOUT THE CAMP THE NIGHT BEFORE THEY SET OUT ON THEIR JOURNEY.)

Tā ō nō' mī, its is sāt' āssī yūts, tā vōn hō sō' ists.
 Call him (together), he not being gone, till morning a dance is.

(Repeat indefinitely.)

TRANSLATION: Call them together, before we go away, and we will dance till morning.

DOCTORING SONG, BY BRAVE WOLF

Nī' to na hīn' in, na mā ī yūn'.
 My body I know, I am spiritual.
 (myself)

TRANSLATION: I know myself. I possess spiritual power.

DOCTORING SONG, BY BRAVE WOLF'S WIFE

Hē ām' na hīn' ī, nā mā ī yūn'.
 Above I know, I am spiritual.

He am a, 'above.'

TRANSLATION: I know about the things above. I possess spiritual power.

WOLF SONG

Na tās' hōt sī yōh', nīt ōs' wīs tōm', tō' sī mī hyūt's.
I will work, you I will marry, will love you.

Nīto'si, Nīto'si.

TRANSLATION: I will work; I will marry you; I will love you.

WOLF SONG

A mīn ūh'kī, nī mī hyūt' ; hīn ō wāh tchīs āb sī' vās tā' ūt' ?
A mīn ūh'ki, I love you; why is bad heart?

TRANSLATION: Amīnūh'kī, I love you. Why are you angry ?