

At the same time the Shyenne River site was occupied, some other Cheyenne lived in earth lodge villages on the Missouri River, near present Fort Yates, North Dakota, close to the Arikara. Perhaps others were already beginning to live on the Plains. Some of the western groups may have become acquainted with the Plains culture of pre-horse days, which involved the use of portable skin lodges, transport by dog travois, and intensive utilization of hide, bone, and other animal parts for items of material culture. Cheyenne traditions indicate that they may have participated in such a life. At any rate the Cheyenne acquired horses rapidly the latter part of the eighteenth century and soon all groups moved out on the Plains and became involved in the brisk intertribal trade going on between the village tribes of the upper Missouri River and the nomadic tribes of the Plains.

Horses were brought to the northern Plains by the Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache and Comanche, who obtained them by raiding the Spanish settlements of the Southwest. These southern tribes visited the village Indians of the upper Missouri occasionally, trading horses for guns, and dried meat and hides for horticultural produce. Sometime after 1800 the Cheyenne became closely associated with the Arapaho, who probably preceded them to the Plains. Both tribes began to trade regularly with the Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache and Comanche in the Black Hills area, and with the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara of the upper Missouri. Thus the Cheyenne and Arapaho, along with the Suhtai, became middlemen in the diffusion of horses from south to north, and of guns and other trade goods from north to south on the Plains.

The Cheyenne may have known the Suhtai when both tribes lived in the east; but at any rate the tribes met on the Plains. The nature of their alliance was so close that the two tribes eventually merged, the Suhtai retaining an identity as a band division of the Cheyenne. It may have