

## TRIBAL SIGN

The Cheyenne tribal sign, made by drawing the right index finger several times across the left forefinger, is commonly interpreted "cut fingers" or "cut wrists," and is said to be derived from their custom of cutting off the fingers and hands of slain enemies. Although the same practice was found among other tribes, the Cheyenne were particularly distinguished in this regard. In Mackenzie's great fight with the Cheyenne in Wyoming, in 1876, two necklaces made of human fingers were found in the captured Indian camp, together with a small bag filled with hands cut from the bodies of children of the Shoshoni tribe, their enemies. One of these necklaces was afterward deposited in the National Museum at Washington. (See *Bourke* in *Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*.) Some competent Indian authorities say, however, that the sign is intended to indicate "stripe people," or "striped-arrow people," referring to the fact that the Cheyenne usually feathered their arrows with the striped feathers of the wild turkey. This agrees with the interpretation of the name for the Cheyenne in several different languages.

## SKETCH OF THE TRIBE

The Cheyenne are one of the westernmost tribes of the great Algonquian stock. In one of their ghost songs they sing of the "turtle river," on which they say they once lived. (*Cheyenne song 3*.) From several evidences this seems to be identical with the Saint Croix, which forms the boundary between Wisconsin and Minnesota. This statement agrees with the opinion of Clark (*Indian Sign Language*), who locates their earliest tradition in the neighborhood of Saint Anthony falls. They were driven out by the Sioux and forced toward the northwest, where they came in contact with the Asiniboin (called by them Hohe'), with whom they were never afterward at peace. At a later period, according to Lewis and Clark, they lived on the Cheyenne branch of Red river, in northern Minnesota, whence they were again driven by the Sioux into the prairie.

In 1805 they wandered about the head of Cheyenne river of Dakota and in the Black hills, and were at war with the Sioux, though at peace with most other tribes. Since then they have pushed on to the west and south, always in close confederation with the Arapaho. These two tribes say they have never known a time when they were not associated. About forty years ago, in Wyoming, the band since known as the northern Cheyenne separated from the others (Clark), and have since lived chiefly in Montana or with the Sioux, with whom the Cheyenne made peace about sixty years ago. The other and larger portion of the tribe continued to range chiefly on the lands of the Arkansas and Canadian in Colorado and the western part of

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S. A. Dorsey's  
"Sun Dance"  
where the Cheyennes  
formerly carried  
all their children

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