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specific People under study. Instead of investigating how Coast Salish religious values shape Indian decision-making, Amoss presents a general view of the psycho-social impact of unverifiable religious beliefs. The Coast Salish, on the other hand, operate in a world constantly verified by religious experience. In order to understand Coast Salish decision-making—for motivation lies at the core of historical investigations—the scholar must understand the Coast Salish world. While Amoss succeeds in presenting an informative discussion of spirit dancing, the task remains to incorporate such a religious perspective into a richer Northwest coast history. The religious focus of the Coast Salish must be accepted as the starting point for a discussion of their development.

Roger Bowerman
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Chief Left Hand, Southern Arapaho. By Margaret Coel. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981. 338 pp. Cloth. \$17.50

In *Chief Left Hand, Southern Arapaho* Margaret Coel has written a romanticized historical biography of the well-known, nineteenth century Arapaho leader. Relying heavily on published secondary sources, in conjunction with some primary manuscript material, Coel has made a disappointing effort to portray the life of Left Hand from his birth to his death.

The book is basically divided into two sections. The first section depicts Left Hand's childhood and his eventual ascendency to leadership among the Southern Arapahoes. The first chapter begins with a concise but rather simplistic description of Arapaho culture. Since sources on Left Hand's early life are scant, the author uses general information on Arapaho culture to draw inferences about his childhood. She suggests that there is some evidence that the young Left Hand was closely associated with John Poisal, a trader who married Left Hand's sister. The future Arapaho leader learned to speak English from Poisal and, Coel argues, thereby gained the essential skills which pushed him into the forefront of nineteenth century Southern Arapaho relations with Anglo-Americans.

Left Hand's recognition as a political leader came during a

period of turmoil on the Central Plains. The band leader witnessed the settlement of emigrants in the Central Plains and the growing military presence on Arapaho and Cheyenne lands. Left Hand acknowledged the inevitability of White settlement on the Plains and the changes that it would bring to the Arapaho way of life.

Coel weaves Left Hand's political life into the development of Colorado as a territory and thereby gives the book a regional orientation. Within the historical context of Colorado politics and economic development she shows how the Southern Arapaho leader sought to resolve peacefully the ensuing cultural conflicts that are characteristic of many frontier situations.

The remainder of the book focuses on the Chief's attempt to accommodate the Southern Arapahoes to their rapidly changing way of life as a result of Anglo-American expansion westward. In the late 1850s, for example, Left Hand, accompanied by his family, travelled to Nebraska and Iowa to observe frontier agricultural practices firsthand. Left Hand believed that the Southern Arapahoes might adopt White agricultural techniques as a subsistence base on the newly proposed federal reservation. On the completion of his journey Left Hand concluded that tilling the soil would not suit the Arapahoes. He felt instead that the federal government should teach them cattle ranching, an occupation that Left Hand believed would be more suitable to his people. His proposals along these lines were largely ignored by the Peace Commissioners in later treaty negotiations. On this and other occasions the Southern Arapaho leader labored to maintain some measure of a peaceful coexistence between the two cultures. Left Hand can be called what E. Adamson Hoebel and others have identified as a "Council Chief" among the Cheyenne, rather than a Soldier Chief. Such a leader acted as a protector of his people and, during times of conflict, sought resolutions that would benefit the tribe. In times of open conflict with frontier settlers, Left Hand associated politically with "council" Arapahoes and allied with Southern Cheyenne leaders who shared similar, pacific political goals. Left Hand's final act for peace was at Sand Creek. In an effort to secure an amicable agreement and restore peace to the Central Plains, Left Hand joined Black Kettle and the majority of the Southern Cheyenne peace faction at Sand Creek. It was there, Coel argues, that Left Hand was critically wounded, later dying among the Smokey

Hill camps of the Cheyennes and the Sioux. Thus, Left Hand was killed continuing his efforts toward peace for the Southern Arapahoes.

Although the central purpose of the book is to present a historical biography of Left Hand, much of this work is devoted to the description of the events surrounding the Sand Creek Massacre. In these chapters Coel unfortunately relegates Left Hand to the sidelines. The author instead shifts her attention to the personal politics and profiteering of two of Colorado's founding Fathers—Colonel John Chivington and John Evans, the territorial governor. Coel details the two men's manipulation of Indian affairs for their private gain. She aptly points out the relationship between frontier *laissez faire* and the Plains Indian wars. Decisive victories against the Indians possibly could bring about national recognition which could then be manipulated into political position and profit. In the author's view, the Sand Creek Massacre derived out of both men's ambition, although the incident left both men politically discredited.

The most striking quality of *Chief Left Hand* is that the book is unusually readable. This is the book's only redeeming value and overall the book has a number of weaknesses. Anthropologists and historians familiar with Plains Indian culture and the Southern Arapaho in particular will shudder at the author's interpretations. Sororal polygyny is regarded by Coel as a means of ensuring the security of the wife's younger sisters. (p. 23) Coel's psychological explanation ignores the more important functions of the practice in Southern Arapaho society in the increasing domestic output, maintaining beneficial intratribal and intertribal reciprocity ties, as well as reducing domestic conflicts. In lieu of the fact that Coel believes the Southern Arapaho always desired to maintain peace, due to their trading relationships with both Indians and Whites, it would seem that Coel has disregarded an important aspect of those trading relationships by her simple explanation. With respect to Black Kettle, a Southern Cheyenne band leader, Coel writes:

He was a member of the Sutaio, an elite band of progressive Cheyennes who had given the tribe the Sun Dance and other ceremonies. (p. 218)

It is true that Black Kettle was Sutaio and Dorsey claims the once-separate tribe did bring the Cheyenne the Sun Dance, but why were the Sutaio considered elite? If Coel is referring to the Cheyenne's adoption of the Sun Dance from the Sutaio, it must be noted that the Sutaio was once a separate tribe that was politically and socially incorporated into the Cheyenne camp circle as a Cheyenne band. Therefore, it is not unusual that certain aspects of Sutaio belief systems would be adopted by the Cheyennes. Coel's assertion that the Sutaio were progressive among the Cheyenne is similarly peculiar. Coel seems to be referring to Black Kettle's political role as a prominent leader of the Southern Cheyenne peace faction. What eludes Coel is that the Cheyennes ordinarily practiced band exogamy and that Black Kettle was the band leader of his wife's band, the Wotapio, not a Sutaio band.

In another example Coel misinterprets cultural data regarding Southern Arapaho political organization, a key aspect of Southern Arapaho society and central to assessing Left Hand's political role as a Southern Arapaho band leader. She asserts that the Arapahoes were politically organized by a tribal council consisting of the various band leaders from which a principal leader was selected to convey the council's decisions. (p. 37) In contrast Alfred Kroeber states that the Arapaho had no official principal leader. Therefore, each band leader could act independently, and the tribal council only spoke for the entire tribe when a consensus was adhered to by all the band leaders. The author did note, however, that leadership among the Southern Arapahoes was based on achieved rather than ascribed status. (pp. 35-36)

In most instances Coel has not taken the ethnographic information on the Southern Arapahoes and other Plains tribes beyond mere description; she is most often uncritical. The author consistently eschews interpretation of the cultural data, leading to overly simplistic explanations and, at times, misinterpretations of Plains Indian culture and the Southern Arapaho experience.

This naive comprehension of Plains Indian culture has also been carried over into her discussion of Left Hand. A lack of understanding of Southern Arapaho political organization has led the author to the conclusion that Left Hand was the principal leader of the Southern Arapaho. Coel ascribes undue

prominence to Left Hand. She argues that at the time of Sand Creek the Arapaho leader held the future welfare of the whole Arapaho people. (p. 296) It is significant, however, that Left Hand joined the Southern Cheyenne peace faction with only his family and a very few followers, indicating that his decision to travel to Sand Creek was not followed by the majority of his band.

The most serious shortcoming of the book is Coel's romantic embellishment of Plains Indian people and culture. As with many contemporary "popular" historians writing about Native Americans, Coel casts the Plains Indian into the stereotype of the Noble Savage in all his grandeur. In reference to Black Kettle in council Coel writes:

The Cheyenne chief rose to his medium height and pulled a blanket around his muscular body. At this time . . . Black Kettle was about fifty-seven years old, a man of strong character, serene and dignified. (p. 218)

Left Hand also is depicted in similar stereotyped fashion:

Confident and independent, free as only a person can be who knows who he is, Left Hand entered adulthood just as the Southern Arapaho world was about to be caught up in the bitter conflict that would alter forever the identity of his people. (p. 17)

Even Left Hand's death is colored by the author's romantic imagination about Plains Indian culture:

The children of his family lay there alongside the fine young warriors who had believed in him, their promising lives unfulfilled. The long years of work toward peace and understanding between the different peoples were lost. When death came to Left Hand shortly after he had reached Smokey Hills, it was probably not unwelcome. (p. 301)

Underlying the Noble Savage image contrived by Coel is the theme of "civilization's" conquest over "savagery." The theme is reminiscent of the romantic, western literary genre of the nineteenth century. Left Hand and his allies who sought amicable relations with Whites are portrayed by the author as

recognizing the inevitability of their Peoples' plight and the necessity to bow before the wave of "civilization." In this context Left Hand's political role as a Southern Arapaho band leader is static, one-dimensional and reactive only to the forces of frontier Anglo-America. Consequently Left Hand's life is seen as divorced from Arapaho culture and the reader does not come away with a clear understanding of what Left Hand's leadership actually meant for the Southern Arapaho people.

At best, then, *Chief Left Hand, Southern Arapaho* is a popular history which scholars and serious students of the Plains will find of little value. The romantic stereotypes that mar the text distort Coel's specific assessments of Left Hand's role as a band leader and the consequences of his decisions for the Southern Arapaho. The continuance of romanticized narratives such as this one contributes little to our knowledge of the Indian experience on the Plains. It is unfortunate that the only biography of Left Hand is just another romanticized, popular history.

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