

In Sun's Likeness and Power: Cheyenne Accounts of Shield and Tipi Heraldry.* James Mooney. Transcribed and edited by Father Peter J. Powell. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013. 1320 pp.

Review by Janet Catherine Berlo

In the fields of Plains Indian art and ethnography, the work of Smithsonian anthropologist James Mooney (1861-1921) is legendary. His magisterial fact-finding work, “The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890” (1896), and “Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians” (1898) are cornerstones of the discipline. Much of the collaborative work he did with the great Kiowa artist Silver Horn (1860-1940) remained unpublished until Candace Greene’s *Silver Horn: Master Illustrator of the Kiowas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001).

Mooney’s equally detailed research on Kiowa and Cheyenne shields and tipis is well known, but not because it has been well published. Many scholars have made pilgrimages to the National Anthropological Archives to study his notebooks filled with drawings and difficult-to-decipher texts. A few articles have been published on parts of this material, but it has remained for Father Peter Powell, ethnographer, Episcopalian priest, and adopted Cheyenne (Tsitsistas and So’taeo’o) historian to make this work fully accessible to others and put it in its cultural framework. The notation “transcribed and edited by” hardly begins to cover the work done by this indefatigable scholar.

Volume One contains a lengthy “Introduction” (1:1-53) by Powell describing the place of shields in culture, their sacred character, their imagery, and shield-making ceremonies. He describes Cheyenne shields as “living beings, radiating supernatural power for protection and blessing” (1:5). Here and elsewhere in the volumes numerous full-page black and white historical photos bring to life the individuals discussed in the texts. The introduction is followed by 145 color plates of shield drawings, ledger drawings, drawings of painted horses, body paint, and painted tipis. Each is accompanied by Mooney’s notes (and, in some cases, other Cheyenne accounts), which are amply footnoted where Powell can offer additional insight. Together, these add immeasurably to our knowledge of Cheyenne graphic arts and iconography.

Volume 2 opens with a small black and white record of each color plate from volume 1, accompanied by additional notes by Powell (2:1-52). This is followed by perhaps the most specialized aspect of the work, a Cheyenne Orthography (2:53-97) that brings together Mooney’s spelling of Cheyenne words with those provided by modern Cheyenne elders and linguists.

Simply called an epilogue, the significance of the final section of this publication is muted (2:101-226). Titled “James Mooney’s Study of Cheyenne Shield Heraldry,” it more properly belongs at the start of this opus, to introduce the scope of Mooney’s achievement and the depth of Powell’s knowledge. Even those who have read *The Indian Man* (1984), L.G. Moses’ biography of James Mooney, will be grateful for Powell’s very detailed account of Mooney’s

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Plains research, commencing with his Ghost Dance inquiries in 1891, his work among the Kiowa, and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition and the 1898 Indian Congress at Omaha (2:101-159). Powell devotes the most space, of course, to Mooney's work with the Cheyenne from 1901-1906 (2:161-226). All of this makes for fascinating reading. At 125 pages and more than 300 footnotes, the Epilogue warrants being issued as a separate inexpensive paperback with a few images for those scholars and students who can not afford the costly boxed set.

Powell's knowledge of Cheyenne history and religion is unparalleled. No one else could have completed this project. Born in 1928 and interested in Plains Indian art since his childhood, he began collaborating with the Cheyenne in 1955. In addition to numerous articles and catalogue essays, his other major works (like this one, well-illustrated two-volume boxed sets) are *Sweet Medicine: The Continuing Role of the Sacred Arrows, the Sun Dance and the Sacred Buffalo Hat in Northern Cheyenne History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969) and *People of the Sacred Mountain: A History of the Northern Cheyenne Chiefs and Warrior Societies, 1830-1879* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979) which won the National Book Award in the field of history.

Father Powell's final words in volume 2 provide a fitting characterization of the importance of this project—finally published more than a century after Mooney stopped work on it. Powell writes that the miniature shield drawings and volumes of notes “are by far the richest source of knowledge concerning the sacred nature of Cheyenne heraldry to be found anywhere... Most important of all, they are a glorious testimony to the sanctity, power, and beauty of the Cheyenne People and Cheyenne Way” (2:226). Today, when we all are appropriately concerned about the ethics of proprietary information and access to knowledge, it is important to note that the editor describes the beginning of his work in 1955 with a promise to the Tsitsistas and So'taeo' chiefs, headmen, and priests “to be instructed by them and to record that which they wished to be preserved for the generations to come.” In 1967, tribal historian John Stands in Timber (1884-1967) adopted Powell and named him his successor, so Powell describes the work as “a family obligation” as well (1:xiii). Moreover, this illustrious priest and scholar holds rank as one of the traditional chiefs of the Northern Cheyenne.

In 1971, while at work on *People of the Sacred Mountains*, Powell began to transcribe Mooney's often illegible and abbreviated field notes. He returned to this task in 1988 as a Smithsonian Senior Fellow (though he describes this work as, for many years, being fit into the margins of his full-time job as pastor to Chicago's Native community, and modestly apologizes for its shortcomings). Published 25 years after his return to the study of Cheyenne heraldry, this handsome and informative work of scholarship stands as a substantial tribute both to James Mooney and to Father Powell himself. We are grateful for their erudition and devotion to the intellectual and spiritual life of the Tsitsistas and So'taeo' people.

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