Chapter Fourteen

THE SACRED SIGNIFICANCE OF WIND CAVE AND ITS ENVIRONS

Probably no area speaks to the controversy over the sacredness of the Black Hills better than Wind Cave and its environs, which include the Race Track, the Buffalo Gap, and the Hot Springs. The identification of Wind Cave as a sacred site appears to be recent, at least from the vantage point of published sources, even though this is not the sense one gets from tribal elders White Bull, Left Hand Bear, Charlie Eagle Louse, Wounded Horse, Stella Swift Bird, Jake Herman, Edgar Red Cloud, Joseph Black Elk, and James LaPointe, who spoke or wrote about it from the 1930s to the 1970s. From their perspective, the stories they shared were part of the traditions of their ancestors, some extending back many generations. Still, we were unable to uncover any narratives about the cave's spiritual significance published before 1951, although there are unpublished documents from 1937 that give evidence of the cave's sacredness to the Lakotas and one article (Freeland 1938b) that alludes to its spiritual importance. Also, a couple of articles (Bohi 1962; Pilcher 1964) document some of the reverential ways the Lakotas approached the cave in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the same time period, a number of references can be found on the sacred nature of the cavern formations underneath the Black Hills and also the general spiritual meanings assigned to caves in Lakota and Cheyenne traditions (Bushotter in Dorsey, J. 1894:476-477; Walker 1917:82; Sage in Haflen and Haflen 1956:268-272; Parkman in Feltskog 1969:156-157; Boller 1972:327; Knappen in Krause and Olson 1974:19; Curtis in Krause and Olson 1974:129, 150; Burrows in Krause and Olson 1974:192; Little Wound in Walker 1980:67, 124; Short Bull in Walker 1980:144).

Knowledge about the Race Track, the Buffalo Gap, and the Hot Springs is associated with a long written legacy that stretches back to the late nineteenth century when they were mentioned in the writings of white settlers, government agents, and ethnographers. One Lakota, Amos Bad Heart Bull (and Blish 1967:89), marked them on a map of the Black Hills that he drew at the end of the nineteenth century. All of these sites are conceptually connected to Wind Cave and, in some cases, they are a part of the same story. Indeed, one might argue that the cave's position in Lakota cosmology cannot be adequately understood without reference to these other sites. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to discuss the broader basis and unity of the spiritual ideas that are attached to this area of the Black Hills and, more specifically, to describe their relation to the various sacred stories associated with Wind Cave.

Much of the discussion that follows focuses on Lakota traditions because these are the best documented in published sources, but it also includes reference to the Cheyennes who hold a strong spiritual connection to the area as well. Other tribal nations known to have occupied and traveled this area, particularly the Arapahos, Arikaras, Kiowas, Poncas, and Plains Apaches are considered here only indirectly. Although these tribal nations may have some sort of religious attachment to this area, it has not been recorded in any of the published or unpublished materials reviewed for this report.

I. THE TEXTS

The region where Wind Cave National Park is located speaks very powerfully to four fundamental Lakota cultural precepts about the workings of the cosmos. Each of these precepts is distinct yet integrally related, and taken together, they form the foundation of much Lakota intellectual and religious thought. The first precept has to do with the origin and regeneration of life, as it is understood metaphorically in the image of the bison, an animal on whose existence the Lakotas and other tribal nations of the region depended for their livelihood and sense of identity. The second one is related to understandings of how the universe is given form and motion through the actions of the Four Winds, and how, in particular, the North Wind, *Waziyata*, is linked to regeneration and the breath of life. The third covers basic knowledge about how the celestial, earthly, and subterranean planes of the universe are interconnected, as revealed not only in the myth cycles of orphan boys, variously named Falling Star, Stone Boy, Blood Clot, and Ironhawk, but also in stories about nations of diminutive or gigantic stature who co-occupy spaces in the cosmos. The final has to do with the circular order of the universe and its expression in the topography of the Black Hills, in the conduct of religious ceremonies, and in the structure of sacred texts, most notably, the story of the Great Race.

A. The Origin and Home of the Bison

Every human culture has centralizing metaphors that serve as the foundation upon which they build their most fundamental ontological notions about what is reality, what it means to exist, and what are the origins of life. Centralizing metaphors act as condensation points around which manifold ideas get imagined, expressed, and acted upon. They are synergistic, weaving and integrating a common concept through different areas of experience. They not only underscore a culture's dominant values but also help realize its greatest hopes and highest aspirations. In Lakota (and also in Arapaho and Cheyenne) traditions, the bison, the winds, the earth, and the circle all serve as centralizing metaphors or holy symbols which can be used to represent an aspect of the other and which, in turn, speak to the workings of the universe (Schlesier 1987:4-12; Moore, J. 1996:204-212; New Holy 1997:114-118; Anderson, J. 2000, 2001).

Without question, the buffalo is a dominant and centralizing metaphor in Lakota philosophy. Its appearance is ubiquitous in their sacred stories of creation and renewal. Its spiritual essence, *ton*, is called up in nearly every significant ceremonial event, and its presence is imagined over many landscapes that make up the Lakotas' historic territorial range. The Black Hills is one of the geographic locations where this imagery stands out because they have long been understood as the birthplace and home of the buffalo.

Like Bear Butte, as described by Forbes-Boyte (1996:13), the Black Hills constitute a hierophany: they stand as the physical manifestation of the sacred that, in this particular space, is envisioned in the symbolic image of a buffalo. The Buffalo Gap, one of the gateways through which the bison historically left their home in the spring with newborn calves and returned in winter, is the opening to the birth canal. Today, its neighboring sites, Wind Cave and Hot Springs, are imagined as the womb (*tatamani*) and milk (*asanpi*) of the buffalo, respectively (Goodman 1992:61). Harney Peak and Pe Sla at the center of the Hills constitute the heart of the buffalo (Goodman 1992:12; New Holy 1997:154). Outlier sites in the northern reaches of the Hills, Bear Butte, Bear Lodge Butte, and Inyan Kara, comprise the buffalo's head (Goodman 1992:13). Indeed, the entire Hills stand metaphorically for the body of the buffalo, which in some representations is envisioned as *Pte* (buffalo cow) and in others as *Tatanka* (bison bull). Some of this figurative imagining has appeared only recently in the published literature, but the

general idea of the Black Hills as having an animate presence appears much earlier in Standing Bear's writings (1978:43-45) and in Black Elk's words (DeMallie 1984:296, 310). It is an idea that is also consistent with Cheyenne and Kiowa notions of a spiritual bison figure that guards the animals in the cavern formations underneath the Black Hills (Mooney 1979:239; Schlesier 1987: 82, 102-104).[1]

The notion that the Buffalo Gap is a passageway connected to the bison's place of origin is not only old but also consistent over time. In Lakota, this site is called *Pte Tali Yapa* (Bad Heart Bull and Blish 1967:280) or alternatively, *Pte Ta Tiyopa* [Doorway of the Bison Cow] and *Tatanka Tiyope* [Doorway of the Bison Bull] (Black Elk, C. 1986a:210). It is also known as *He Okiksahe* [The Ridge with a Cut or Wedge], and the land inside it is called *Tatanka makalhpaya* [The Stomping Grounds of the Bison Bull][2] (Little Cloud in Stars, Iron Shell and Buechel 1978:95; Lone Wolf in Stars, Iron Shell and Buechel 1978:242). In 1915, Little Cloud (in Stars, Iron Shell and Buechel 1978:95-97) told Father Eugene Buechel a story of a spiritual nature associated with the Buffalo Gap. It is translated from the Lakota as follows:

> In this way they made buffalo medicine. They called the place the "stomping grounds of the buffalo."
>
> There was a village at the Buffalo Gap and they were rich in dried beef. Now, one day a man there stated, "On this day, the [buffalo will make something?] and from the tipi in the middle of this camp two horns will come straight out of it, so go to the tipi quickly, before anything happens."
>
> Now, a man saw a buffalo head with horns coming along the outside of the tent circle, snorting repeatedly for quite a ways, so before anything else happened, he went to where the people were gathered inside the tent circle. He had a rifle and came up to them on horseback showed them how to load the small leaden bullets in the rifle. Then he trotted over to the door of the tipi, and they gave him a branch in return and set it in the ground like a pole.
>
> Now the buffalo came and began rubbing against the pole,[3] during which time a man on a horse came out of the right side of his body as one being born. Suddenly the buffalo fell and lay face down as though asleep. Then, he stood and began to stagger as he was bleeding from the nose and mouth[4] and then grunted and ran away. Shortly, he returned to where the pole was and began rubbing against it again. Then a yellow haired man came out of the left side of his body and again the buffalo fell down and was bleeding badly from the nose and mouth. He staggered to stand and went into the tipi. The people raised the walls of the tipi so they could see the back part of it. The buffalo was laying face downward so they set a big wood bowl filled with water in front of him. He began to drink and drink until he emptied it. They

[1] The Kiowa also envisioned the Black Hills and their surroundings in the image of a buffalo's internal organs. According to Harrington (1939:168), they had four names for landforms in the region, which represented the parts of a buffalo, which sacrificed itself for seven children fleeing a mad bear. As they ran away from the bear, the children threw its parts to the bear, including the 1) *Sadlka'e k'oup* [leaftripe], 2) *'Aakya'e* [honeycomb tripe], 3) *Biimsadl* [hairlike part of the tripe], and 4) *tsoudlpakhae* [brain sack skin]. Each of these organs became landforms of similar appearance. The particular landforms to which they refer, however, remain unknown.

[2] The word, "*makalhpaya"* refers to a place where the earth has been compressed. Again, credit for the translation of this word and *He Okiksahe* is given to Yvonne Kelly with the assistance of Jerry Dearly.

[3] There are several significant images in this story, one of which is the allusion to the Sun Dance center pole and its power of rejuvenation. It may also allude to a common habit of bison to rub their bodies against trees and poles.

[4] Bison are associated with the color red, in part because of the red mucus that exudes from a cow's nose after she gives birth and that she licks on her newly born calf. This substance is symbolically important to the Lakotas, and Black Elk (in Brown 1971:134-135) specifically mentioned it in reference to the visionary origins of the Throwing the Ball Ceremony.

> filled it again and again he emptied it. Then he stood, grunted, walked in a circle in the tipi, came back to the bowl, shook his shoulders and fell in front of it.
>
> Then the first man took the bowl and the people stood up and continued to stand around the buffalo. Then they saw two flattened bullets, one small and one large. Then the man said, "Look, the first one went into the throat and the other one went into the back." And then, there was a hole in the middle of this bone and on account of the amount of blood coming out of it, this last bullet must be the one that did him in."
>
> The wounds were still freshly bleeding and then the man said, "As I stand here, they are looking well! The wounds are closing up." Now the buffalo snorted and ate a medicine that was lying by his hoof, then rolled around before standing up. Then the people all saw something that was very holy. In the doorway of the tipi stood a man just like you.[5]

The meaning of this narrative, cloaked in the imagery of wounds and warfare, is actually a story about the continuity of life as an ongoing exchange between death and birth. The juxtaposition of death and birth is revealed in the close connection between the buffalo's life-threatening injury, as symbolized in the blood flowing from its nose and mouth, and its ability to heal itself, allowing for its ultimate transformation into human form. Humanity and the bison are related as one because human materialization is embodied literally in the spiritual presence and the organic essence, the blood, of the bison. Universally, blood is a sign that stands for the principal of life in death. The death of one material form, the buffalo, gives rise to the birth of another, humans, but the two are not discrete because they are conjoined in the same life-perpetuating process. It is this immortal, perpetual cycle (motion) of life that mysteriously revealed itself in the story that took place at the Buffalo Gap, a canyon widely reputed to metaphorically stand for the birth canal.

Although nearby Wind Cave does not appear in Little Cloud's story, its connection to this metaphysical event becomes obvious in other texts that link the two places together. As LaPointe writes (1976:85):

> ..Lakota legends say, that at one time, there was no such gap there. But, through the ages, as countless herds of hungry and thirsty animals came out of the Wind Cave, they would make a wild dash eastward to get to the cool waters and lush grasses. Legends say, that after countless years the sharp hooves of the stampeding herds have cut down a high ridge into a narrow gorge. Thus it has become known as the *Pte Tetiopa* (doorway of the buffalo).

There is also a more recent source that confirms the connection of the Buffalo Gap to Wind Cave. In their 1987 book *Black Hills: Sacred Hills* published by Tipi Press of St. Joseph's Indian School in Chamberlain, South Dakota, Tom Charging Eagle and Ron Zeilinger (n.p) connected the Buffalo Gap to Wind Cave when they wrote:

> In another part of the hills, to the South, is a place called 'Wind Cave.' It is an opening large enough for a man to enter the earth below. On certain stormy days, this hole in the earth makes a breathing sound.
>
> We have a legend that from here [Wind Cave] the buffalo came. It is said that they came forth from this cave no larger than ants, but grew to full size in a very short time.

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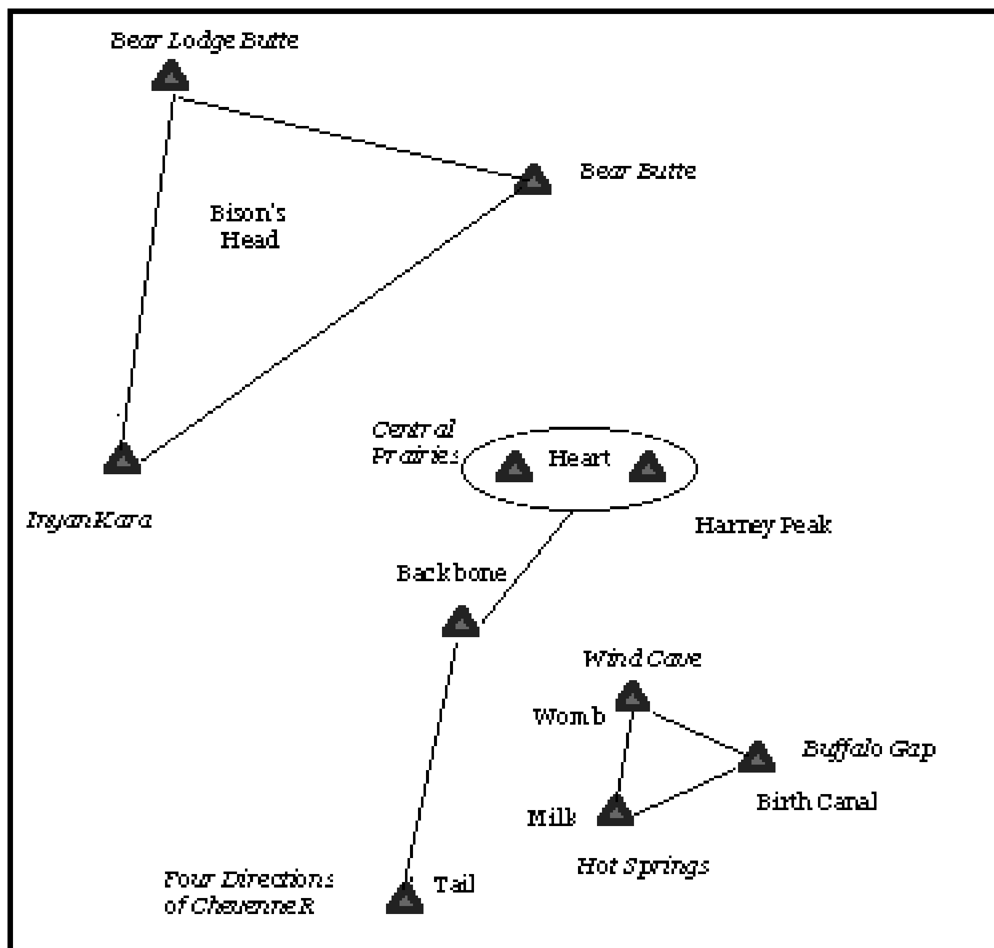
[5] Story translated by Yvonne Kelly with the assistance of Jerry Dearly. This translation gives a different sense of this story than the one done by Paul Manhart. Manhart's efforts to translate Buechel's texts are sometimes awkward and at times misleading.

They came forth in great numbers running down the valley to the plains beyond, making a path through the hills as they went. In this way, they created the place known as the 'Buffalo Gap.' "

That the Buffalo Gap and other passageways through the Hogback[6] were the exits through which animals moved after they were newly born to reach their grassland feeding grounds during the spring and the entrances through which they traveled to winter at locations along the Race Track is an old idea. As noted in previous chapters, early nineteenth-century white observers, such as Antoine Pierre Tabeau and Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, noted these annual movements. More recently, Linea Sundstrom (1990:322-325) suggests in her writings on rock art that these gateways probably represented transitional spaces, which metaphorically call forth images of fertility and birth, and which, in the process, reveal a possible connection to ritual observances associated with the life cycle.

FIGURE 25. The Black Hills as the Body of a Bison



[6] Gilbert Walking Bull (1980:25) uses the term "*Pte-tah ti-yo-pa* (gateway of the buffalos" to refer to the canyon at Deadwood, South Dakota.

Modern Lakotas clearly attach importance to the Buffalo Gap in their ceremonial observances. Historically, the movement of bison through this gap in the spring marked the beginning of a major ritual cycle (Looking Horse in Parlow 1983a: 42-43; Goodman 1992:7). It signaled the time when Lakotas started to enter the Hills to conduct ceremonies near Harney Peak and at *Pe Sla* (Black Elk, C. 1992a:50). According to Arvol Looking Horse (in Parlow 1983a:42), the Lakotas entered the Black Hills at the Buffalo Gap en route to Harney Peak. Even though bison no longer pass through this gateway, the arrival of the vernal equinox is still celebrated with a special pipe ceremony that, according to one of the tribal cultural preservation officers with whom we spoke, is held at locations near the Buffalo Gap (Albers & Kittelson 2002).

In the past, this area was probably associated with the spiritual performances of the *Tatanka kagapi* [Buffalo Makers or Imitators] described earlier (Lone Wolf in Stars, Iron Shell and Buechel 1978:242-245), and it would not be surprising to learn that it had some association with certain kinds of sweatlodge performances connected to the Cheyennes' *Isiwunhetániu* [Buffalo Men] (Grinnell 1914; Anderson 1956). The significance of the Buffalo Gap is something the Lakotas share with the Cheyennes, suggesting that its importance extends back to the documented presence of both the Cheyennes and Suhtaios in this area by the mid-eighteenth century. According to Wesley Whiteman who was in his eighties when he shared his knowledge of Cheyenne traditions with Warren Schwartz (1988:72), the Buffalo Gap is the sacred origin place of the Sun Dance, the site where the buffalo first performed this dance after the Great Race and taught its teachings and performance to humans. This link is also found in other sources on the Cheyennes (Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967:23; Powell 1969:2:472-478). The Cheyenne women's quilling society is tied to this location as well because the buffalo wife's husband, who is the central character in certain Race Track stories, founded it.

Also consistent over time is the idea that the buffalo's place of origin is a cave, a hole (in Lakota this word can be used as a synonym for cave), a spring, or other subterranean location (Buechel 1970:331, 551; Moore, J. 1996:211, see also, Chapter Twelve for more details). Some of the earliest recorded stories of this association among the Lakotas come from tribal elders who worked with James Walker at the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Walker recorded several stories[7] that describe a link between bison and caves. Left Heron, *Hokacatka* or *Makula*, whose mother was a member of the Oglala Gopher Band and whose father was a Minneconjou (Walker 1980:103 n1), told Walker one of these (Left Heron in Walker 1917:183-190, 1980:109-118).[8] In this story a man marries a woman who is a buffalo. As Left Heron (in Walker 1983:113) puts it, "They traveled together and came to mountains where there was a cave. They went down through the cave and came to the regions under the world. There they saw a camp with many people." These were the *Pte Oyate*, the Buffalo People, which the man freed from their oppressive rulers. The Buffalo People were very happy about this, and they offered to make the man their head chief. He agreed, but said he hunted for his family on the earth, and they needed a way to have food if he was not there to provide for them. The buffalo said they would go to the man's family

[7] The version published in Elaine Jahner's edited collection (Walker 1983) of James Walker's manuscripts of Lakota myths is closer to the original version than the one Walker translated and edited for publication in 1917. Many important geographic references, including the buffalo living inside of a cave in the mountains, are absent in the 1917 version.

[8] Left Heron narrated a number of different versions of this story to James Walker and Ella Deloria. All of the versions share a common narrative structure and similar themes, including references to the old man, *Waziya*, and the old woman, *Wakanka*, and the tension between the Buffalo Wife and the Corn Wife. Some scholars (Rice 1994) interpret the story in terms of the light it sheds on the dynamics of Lakota kinship. This is certainly one important way to approach it. However, embedded in this story and the tensions between the Corn Wife and the Buffalo Wife is a historical story about migrations and the role that marriages between nations play in these movements (see Chapter Fifteen). The stories, although sharing a common thematic structure, are played out in varied ways and lead to different sorts of ceremonial outcomes, including the origin of the Sun Dance, *Wiwanyan wacipi.*

and offer themselves as food. According to Left Heron (in Walker 1983:117), this was how the buffalo came to the Lakota people

In the years Left Heron[9] was sharing different versions of the Buffalo wife story with James Walker and Ella Deloria (1978:86-89; in Rice 1994:67-126), Father Eugene Buechel recorded a variant of the story from Asa Bad Yellow Hair (in Little Cloud in Stars, Iron Shell and Buechel 1978:66-68 [also in Buechel and Manhart 1998:91-96]). In Asa Bad Yellow Hair's version, recorded in 1915, the hero discovers that his mother-in-law lives in a cave in the hills where she has taken many men captive and killed them.[10] The hero slays his mother-in-law and brings the men back to life. This particular version is very similar to a Cheyenne Sweet Medicine story that takes place at a cave in the southern Black Hills (Schlesier 1987:79).

What is important to emphasize about these stories is that the cave in question is located in the mountains or hills, which would have meant the Black Hills to most Lakotas of Left Heron and Yellow Hair's generation. There are many caves in the Hills, so on what grounds, other than what they learned from prior generations, might storytellers Jake Herman, Joseph Black Elk, and James LaPointe connect a female bison theme to Wind Cave? One answer is its proximity to the Buffalo Gap. Of all the caves in the region, which, incidentally, are understood by the Lakotas to be interconnected, Wind Cave is not only the most unusual, but it is one that can be reached by a direct route of travel along Beaver Creek. Indeed, as pointed out in Chapter Six, early settlers in the region knew about an old Indian trail that followed the Buffalo Gap and passed near Wind Cave (Tallent 1899:647).

Jake Herman related two slightly different and much abridged versions of the story that Left Heron told Walker. One appears in *Ehanni Ohunkanan: A Curriculum Resource Unit* (in One Feather 1972:149) as follows:

> The wind cave, where Wind Cave National Park is located, was a sacred cave where the buffalo lady dwelt. At first the Sioux feared the cave because they thought a giant lived in it. They thought that the wind, which blew in and out of the mouth of the cave was caused by a giant breathing. This giant invoked the providence of the Great Spirit to give him knowledge of the mysterious hidden powers of Mother Nature that lurked in the cave the Indians feared.
>
> One day, a medicine man stood at the mouth of the cave pondering, and suddenly, a vision appeared to him. A young Indian maiden told him she was the immortal buffalo lady from below the earth.
>
> The buffalo lady told the medicine man to tell his people that the cave was one of the sacred places of Paha Sapa. She said, "Tell your people to come to this cave and offer gifts and tokens by dropping them into the sacred cave. By your offerings the Great Spirit will provide your temporal wants by providing great herds of buffalo for your livelihood.

[9] In his Iron Hawk cycle, Left Heron (in Beckwith 1930:379-390; in Deloria, E. 1978) also includes an episode where the hero marries a bison woman and confronts his cannibalistic in-laws and their stone associates, including a Little Man.

[10] In 1915, Little Cloud and Lone Wolf also told Ivan Stars other narratives that fit the thematic structure of the Buffalo Wife genre of stories (in Stars, Iron Shell and Buechel 1978:90-93; 186-189; in Buechel and Manhart 1998:136-142:322-330).

In an undated manuscript held at the Wind Cave National Park Library, probably written in the 1960s, Herman (n.d.: Wind Cave National Park) tells the same story but in a slightly different manner:

> A medicine man of the Sioux tribe discovered the Wind Cave or *Wa-shun Wakan.* As he stood near the entrance of the cave a strong strange whistling sound came out of the cave by the strong current of wind that blew alternately from the mouth of the cave. He thought a giant lived in the cave and it was caused from his breathing. He feared he would be sucked into the cave and fled. At first the Sioux people were afraid to go near this cave. One day a handsome brave warrior was sent to the cave to find out if the giant still occupied the cave. As he came near the cave a beautiful lady appeared out of the cave and told him that she was the buffalo lady who possessed the mysterious power from below the earth and that she would provide for the Sioux people with game if they would dedicate this cave and offer tokens to the Great Spirit. Herds of buffalo would come out of the cave and migrate through Buffalo Gap into the Great Plains. This is a legend of the Wind Cave as told to me by Sioux Indians.

Herman's stories are noteworthy because they combine two different Lakota traditions about caves, one associated with a giant and the other a female bison figure (see Chapter Twelve).

The association of the Black Hills with a subterranean giant is an old idea recorded in the writings of several non-Indian observers in the last half of the nineteenth century (Denig in Ewers 1961:6; Boller 1972:327; Curtis in Krause and Olson 1974:129, 150). Herman suggests that the connection of Wind Cave to a giant is an older idea that no longer held currency among the Lakotas in the 1960s. This notion may well have been associated with the strong ties between the bison and *Waziya*, the Old Man, and/or his grandson, *Waziyata,* the North Wind, both of whom are commonly depicted as giant figures. It certainly corresponds with something James Owen Dorsey (1894: 468) alluded to when he commented: "They used to pray to him, but when they found that he did not heed them they desisted." James Walker (1917:91) also wrote about this too.

> The Buffalo People are those who dwell in the regions under the world and are the people of the Sun. *Waziya* was their chief, but when he was deposed they chose the Buffalo God to be their chief and He is so.

Although the significance of *Waziya* and his control over the bison may have been deemphasized, it is clear from material presented elsewhere (see Chapter Twelve) that the close connection between the two never actually disappeared from Lakota stories and liturgical texts.

In the last half of the twentieth century, the association of Wind Cave with a female bison figure appeared in other stories as well. In 1973, Henry Black Elk (in Theisz 1975:16-18) told a story very similar to Herman's. In his narrative, a large Lakota encampment, located at the edge of the Black Hills, is facing hunger. The leader of the camp instructs two young men to go out and look for food. They travel for many days and arrive at a hill where, as Black Elk continues the story:

> The two warriors stopped dead in their tracks as they got on top of the hill and not far away there was a howling sound, a sound that would scare anybody. As they went closer it was a huge cave, and from this very cave this sound came. It was a howling wind. So the two warriors approached the cave and they sat by the cave constantly hearing that sound that came out of the mouth of the cave. And the two warriors were so tired they fell asleep. Then during the night they awoke by a noise. So as they opened their eyes. There stood a beautiful Buffalo Maiden. She had on the most beautiful buckskin dress decorated in the best ornaments that you could see. And she said to the two warriors, 'You must go back to your

> people, to your encampment. Tell your chief and your medicine man to get some tokens and you will proceed back to this very cave with the tokens.'

The young men returned to their camp and told of their encounter. Tokens were collected for a gift, which the two young men and a medicine man brought back to the cave in the company of twenty warriors. When the medicine man approached the cave:

> The beautiful Buffalo Maiden appeared again in her white buckskin regalia. And when the medicine man gave the token to the beautiful Buffalo Maiden she said 'Your people will not hunger no more!' In that instant she disappeared into this very cave with the token and that weird sound that came from this cave suddenly ceased. And from this very cave a herd of buffalos came out. So the warriors went and killed some of the buffalos, but did not waste. They killed enough for the whole Sioux encampment to eat. And up to this day, this very cave is in *Paha Sapa* in the Black Hills. To me and to all of us it is known as Wind Cave.

Black Elk goes on to say that he learned this story from his grandfather, Nicholas, and his father, Ben, and that he wanted to pass it on to the children so that when they visit the cave they will know of the buffalo there. He also claims that this is a true story in the historic memory of the tribe and not a legend from the time of myth. Nonetheless, it is still a story that speaks of the kind of mysterious, *wakan* experience that attaches sacred significance to the place where it happened.

Three years later, James LaPointe (1976:79-80) described the cave in some detail. As he wrote:

> This place has been deep in the history of the original American for thousands of years before the advent of the white man. Like many other places in the Black Hills, this 'hole that breathes cool air' was a landmark.
>
> Lakota history says that medicine men of ancient times journeyed from far away lands to worship at Washun Niya, and to offer sacrifice. It was their belief that buffalo and other game animals came out of this cave, the animals being bred and supplied by mysterious beings that inhabited the underground regions.
>
> Singers of holy songs came here to capture the soft, sighing sounds that exuded from this great cavity of the earth. Legends say these were the whispering and the singing of those people who occupy underground lands. The Indian made flutes to imitate the pensive overtones of this hissing hole. Its breath was like a fall breeze. So say the Lakota.

Clearly LaPointe implies that knowledge of this cave and its whereabouts was held by the Lakotas and other American Indians for many millennia. He suggests that its spiritual status drew people from great distances to pray and learn sacred songs. This is precisely the kind of sacred communication or dream speech denoted by the word *hanbloglagia* described in an earlier chapter. Some of the Lakotas we spoke with told us that today some people could still hear the voices of the spirits who dwell in Wind Cave (Albers and Kittelson 2002).

LaPointe (1976:80-84) also tells a story in which a young man named *Taopi Gli* [Returns Home Wounded] is lured into the cave by a beautiful woman while he and a companion are hunting for deer.[11] When Taopi Gli disappears, his companion senses that he has been seduced

[11] This story is actually an amalgamation of themes from several different traditional narratives. Not only does it contain elements of the "Buffalo Wife" story recorded by James Walker and Ella Deloria, but it also incorporates aspects of narratives associated with the Blood-Clot Boy, Stone Boy, Iron Hawk, and Falling Star.

by the dreaded *Winyan Nupapika* [Double Woman] and races breathlessly back to their camp through a narrow canyon (quite possibly the Buffalo Gap) to alert others of Taopi Gli's fate. The elders decide to search for the "mysterious hole" into which Taopi Gli has disappeared. After all the village's ropes are gathered and assembled into long cables, they travel to Wind Cave and volunteers are repelled into the cave only to find "grotesque formations and eerie shadows." Finding no evidence of Taopi Gli, his family and friends gather together to grieve over him. A medicine man advises his grieving father to fast and cry for a vision in which he might learn of his son's fate. The father, a chief in his village, travels to *Hechinskayapi Paha* [Bighorn or Sheep Mountain], now Mount Coolidge (located in Custer State Park), where after four days and four nights, Falling Star appears to him and shows him through a series of dreamlike images that his son is alive and a member of the underground nation *Maka Mahe Oyate* and a ruler of these people. He also tells him that this marriage is a good omen. Since the underground nation are the "keepers and breeders of all game animals," Taopi Gli's people on earth will never go hungry. In interpreting the story LaPointe writes:

> For ages, according to Lakota legend, since the marriage of a surface man to a distinguished girl of the underground world, famines were unknown, because out of the mouth of the Wind Cave, never-ending hordes of buffalo and other game animals emerged as time went on. If its difficult to believe that large animals such as the buffalo are able to come out of such a small hole, legend explains that the animals came out like a string of tiny ants, but as they emerged and sucked in the invigorating surface air, in a very little time they expanded into their natural sizes. This indeed was true until the white man came, bringing along new conditions, disturbing ancient religious traditions, and burdening the natural world with entirely foreign ways of living (LaPointe 1976:84).

Here again, there is a strong connection between bison and other game animals with the subterranean world. Like Jake Herman and Henry Black Elk's narratives, LaPointe's version is noteworthy because of its obvious and very consistent links with Cheyenne stories of the Buffalo Gap and the Great Race as well as Left Heron's early narrative of the man who married a buffalo woman, entered a cave in the mountains, and visited the nest of a Thunderbird on a mountain peak. The fact that this is not a story of human emergence makes it no less important from a spiritual standpoint. Its sacredness comes from its association with the replenishment of the bison and the other game animals the Lakotas depended upon for their survival. It is also important spiritually because of its links to stories in the Falling Star cycle that are related to other sacred sites in the region, and, as indicated momentarily, one of them might even be connected to the region of the Buffalo Gap and Wind Cave.

Stories of a marriage between a human man and a woman of the underworld, often personified as a buffalo, are found among tribes throughout the Great Plains (Walker 1983:104; Parks 1996:165). Many stories about human-bison relations, even among the Lakotas, do not speak of any marriage between the underground buffalo and a human; they simply refer to encounters between humans and bison in their subterranean homes (Bushotter in Dorsey, J. 1894:476-477; Judson 1913:53; Short Bull in Walker 1980:144). The story of a male figure, usually a hunter, coming upon the underground home of the bison is a fundamental theme in many Lakota stories. But there is another variation on this theme, and this is the one most commonly told today in relation to Wind Cave.

It is the story of *Tokahe* and the emergence of the *Pte Oyate* [Buffalo People] or humans from the underworld. The story was told by the Oglala intellectual Long Knife (George Sword) to James Walker as part of a larger genesis story, which begins with *Inyan* (rock or stone) differentiating itself into earth and sky and then goes on to tell how all the major figures in the

Lakota pantheon came into being. It also includes the story of human genesis and the emergence of the *Oceti Sakowin,* the Seven Fires or divisions of the Sioux (Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota) peoples. In the segment of the story (Walker 1917:181-182) that covers the emergence of humans, *Wazi* [Old Man] and *Wakanka* [Old Woman] desire to gain more power and conspire with *Iktomi* [the spider or trickster] to have their beautiful daughter, *Ite* [Face], affiliated with one of the "gods." This daughter ends up marrying *Tate* [Wind], but eventually has a liaison with *Anpteu Wi* [Sun]. The adulterous affair angers their leader, *Skan* [Sky/Motion], who transforms the daughter into *Anog-Ite* [Two-Face] and banishes her along with *Iktomi* to the edge of the earth. Lonely for her people in the underworld, *Anog-Ite* conspires with *Iktomi* to bring them to the earth's surface. The story goes on to tell how *Iktomi* gathered up many soft, tanned skins and enlisted the help of the wolf to take these to the *Pte Oyate* [Buffalo people] who were still underground:

> Iktomi gave the pack [of skins] to a wolf and went with it to the entrance of the cave that opens down through the world. He told it to go and watch the people under the world and when it saw a strong and brave young man to speak with him alone and to give him the pack and tell him that there were plenty of such things in the world. It went through the cave and saw the camp of people far away. Before it came to the camp it met a strong young man (Walker 1917:181).

This young man was *Tokahe*, "The First." He showed the meat and skins to his people, and they wanted some for themselves. *Tokahe* chose some men to go on the surface of the earth and see if these things were really plentiful there. The wolf "led them through the cave and when they were on the earth, he led them to the lake[12] where the double-woman had her tipi" (Walker 1917:182). She served them a feast, and the wolf gathered up a lot of game so it appeared plentiful. After returning to the cave's entrance, the young man asked the wolf to take him back to his people. When the wolf returned, he told him "to wait and guide others who wished to come to the world, and when they had passed through the cave to lead them for food and water" (Walker 1917:182). The people of the underground debated if they should go and live on the earth.

> Six brave men chose to go with Tokahe. They took their women and children and went from camp. The wolf met them and guided them through the cave, all day. At night they came to a strange place and the children cried for food and drink. Then Iktomi appeared and laughed at their misery and Tokahe was shamed...In the morning the people did not know where to go. They were hungry and thirsty. Then the old man and woman appeared and they gave them food and drink. The old man led the people so they traveled swiftly and came to the region of the pines. Then he and the old woman showed them how to hunt the game and how to care for the meat and the skins, and how to make clothing and tipis. Thus Tokahe and his friends were the first people on the world and their children are the Lakota (Walker 1917:182).

After its original publication in 1917, an abridged version of this story appeared in Royal B. Hassrick's work (1964:205-217). In 1972, it was released in a body of curriculum material for use in Lakota schools. The story was not connected to Wind Cave, however, in either of these contexts. Instead, it was Jake Herman's narrative about the encounter of a human man with a buffalo woman that became identified with Wind Cave in the curriculum material assembled by Vivian One Feather (1972).

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[12] According to Fannie McAdam (1973:28), there once was a lake on the old Valentine ranch now inside park boundaries that was drained when the road to Custer State Park was built.

The first published connection of the *Tokahe*[13] story to Wind Cave that we could find is Marla Powers' book *Oglala Women* (1986:42-43, 50), in which an encapsulated version of the Long Knife narrative was given and the cave in question identified as Wind Cave. This story was also included in one of the appendices (Black Hills Steering Committee 1986:203) that accompany the testimony for the Bradley Bill, but here it is linked to the entire cavern formation underneath the Black Hills not just Wind Cave.[14] More recently, Karen Lone Hill of Oglala Lakota College wrote about Wind Cave in the *Encyclopedia of North American Indians* (1996:590-593) as follows:

> The Sioux contend that they have always lived in the northern Great Plains area. If there was a migration that occurred, they say, it was outward from the Black Hills into the outlying regions. The Black Hills have a strong religious significance for the *Oceti Sakowin* -- particularly the Lakotas, the chosen caretakers and protectors of the Black Hills -- because the Black Hills are the traditional birthplace of the Sioux Nation.
>
> According to tribal tradition, the Sioux originated within the Black Hills themselves. The story goes back to a time in history when they lived underground beneath the Black Hills. Eventually they were enticed to the surface of the earth, emerging through Wind Cave, in the southern Black Hills. Once they had emerged, they were unable to return to the place that had been their home for thousands of years. Their leader, whom they had left behind underground, foresaw the fate of his people and the hardships they would encounter and, sacrificing his safe existence, came to the surface in the form of the buffalo. And it was the buffalo that sustained the people during that early period; it provided food, clothing, shelter, and tools—all the necessities of life.

How Long Knife's genesis story became the defining narrative of Wind Cave rather than the one with a genealogy linked to Left Heron, Jake Herman (1974), Henry Black Elk (1975), and James LaPointe (1976) is unclear.[15] Today, however, there is no question that Long Knife's story and some of its close modern variants hold considerable sway among Lakotas/Dakotas living in reservation communities in Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota and among those who live in urban areas like the Twin Cities. As James Fenelon (1998:289) noted, this story was alluded to during a Sun Dance held at Prairie Island, Minnesota in 1994, when David Chief, a Lakota elder, remarked:

> We Lakota, and our relatives here the Dakota, originated from sacred places on earth, according to our scared traditional knowledge. The Pte Oyate, we as buffalo people, came out from the earth near the place where the holy winds blow out, very close to the Paha Sapa, the Black Hills, always known to us as the sacred "He Sapa."

Although Wind Cave is not specifically mentioned in a story that the Standing Rock religious leader Joe Flying By (in Parlow 1983a:37-38, 39) narrated in the 1980s, it bears repeating here

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[13] Earlier in 1953, it is curious that a delegation of Lakota who attended Wind Cave National Park's fiftieth anniversary celebration adopted and named the park's superintendent, Earl M. Semingson, *Tatanka Tokahe,* which can be translated as "First Born Bison Bull" (Bohi 1962:465). This suggests that the *Tokahe* story may have been associated with Wind Cave at least thirty years prior to any published reference to the association.

[14] In the 1930s, Standing Bear (1978:44-45), quoted in the last chapter, also alludes to the fact that the Black Hills are the site of the Lakotas' genesis as a people.

[15] In her introduction to the collection of myths gathered by James Walker (1983), Elaine Jahner (in Walker 1983:15-24) discusses at some length Ella Deloria's correspondence with Franz Boas regarding the origins of George Sword's tales. In contrast to the stories attributed to Left Heron, which were recognized by the Lakotas she interviewed in the 1930s, those linked to George Sword appear to have had no precedent. They were unfamiliar to most of the people she interviewed, leading her to believe that they were the unique creation of this very gifted writer and storyteller. It is not surprising, therefore, that the more recent *ohankakan* stories about Wind Cave, namely those of Jake Herman and James LaPointe, have more in common with Left Heron's "Buffalo Wife" stories than with Sword's "Tokahe" saga.

because it represents a modern variation of the *Tokahe* saga. It also conveys several fundamental themes that underlie Lakota understandings of the Black Hills and their relation to caves and bison. As he tells it:

> …The *Paha Sapa* was full of four-legged, and winged people, creeping people, small people and animals and there were no humans around. The Buffalo Nation, of brownish color, brown ones and red ones. And the King Buffalo are white ones. They are talking Buffalo People. One day they have a council and they ask one of the young buffalos, a brownish color one. In the Black Hills area, there are many caves. Some of them don't find these. Some are caved in. There are many caves that are hidden beneath the Black Hills. And there are many channels that are hidden beneath the earth. Maybe this is why we know that there are people under the Black Hills, *Paha Sapa.* There is life under that hills. They asked the brownish buffalo to make a journey to one of these entrance ways of the cave and make a noise, a buffalo call through this hole. Not actually going in, but making noise how the buffalo are making noise. On the other side of the place there are people. Somehow a young man was going other places and he heard this voice. He came to the entrance way, to the cave. It was this hole, but they didn't know about this. They came to this hole and it was dark in there but there was some kind of noise and he went in there but seemed like it was telling him to come. And he followed this voice until he came to an open place. And another world, another place of light. And all he saw was the shaggy people, the four-legged. They were standing looking at him. A strange person that come to this place. And the White Buffalo starts talking: *Kola Mitakuyapi* 'That's my relative, that's my friend.' They greet him. *Tanyan Yahi Yelo,* that means, 'you come here, that we greet you.' And the White Buffalo, the old one, said, 'we depend on older people to tell us what is true.'
>
> And that day on that time, that is what happened. The White Buffalo said, 'look over this place. This area. If you think you can live with your relatives here, you can do so. But first you must look over the place good. If you're satisfied you can go home, bring your family.' So he stayed with the Buffalo People for quite a while and he said he was going back to bring his family. And before leaving, the White Buffalo said, 'When you bring your family, we buffalos will feed you. They are going to offer themselves to you, that your peoples shall live. They'll feed you.' The young man went back to this hole. He went running—it was a distance—I don't know how deep. That hole, that tunnel went to another place. So this body went back to his own home and it seemed like the people already knew where he went to. All looking at him. So he made a speech to his family. Talked a good while. And they said they wanted to go that that place. 'Maybe a better place that we can live.' So they got ready packed their stuff and another meeting was called and there were six families wanted to come—and so there were seven now. Seven families were now getting ready. They all carried their stuff and they went through this hole and they came to the Buffalo People. At that time there was direction but they see the Sun. Sure enough six Buffalo People were in this area, white ones. And they were looking over to the other ones. So the two-legged person was in the middle. That was the beginning of the life of the Indian person.
>
> Indian people, when they came to this place, they looked for places to sleep when the sun goes down. The sun was moving and pretty soon it was on the other side. They don't know the directions. And there was no direction—they didn't say *'Wimahel Iyaye'* or sundown. Or sunrise. They don't know what this life is –that big ball of fire. And that white one is telling it to the people. So that's where they're taking the Sioux nation from this world. They're beginning to understand each other. In the meantime the other families, the children, they have things in mind that sometimes it's no good. Bad thoughts against somebody, against the shaggy buffalo. It's time to kill the buffalo, but these people are in the way of stealing. They are going to kill that buffalo. With spears. They are close enough to get them because they are friends and relatives. But things are getting bad. When they came to be among the buffalo, the buffalo are talking back. 'If you are fast enough that you can catch us, then you can eat. But you have to chase us and get us. Your mind is no good, we need to get away from you. '

> That happened. The people are getting hungry and cold. They eat anything. But they have to chase them.
>
> …This is the world that the Indian people came to. And when we're dead we will go back through this hole. So these are the legends, of the Lakota people. They are our relatives. The Buffalo people.

This story represents yet another variation of the primal relationship between humans, bison, and caves, and it is interesting because it combines elements appearing in the buffalo wife stories of Left Hand and in the *Tokahe* saga of George Sword. In stories related to or descended from Left Heron, humans already live on the earth's surface, but, through a marriage (or an encounter) of one of their own with a bison person, they are insured a plentiful supply of bison whose home of origin is reached through a cave opening. In the versions whose genealogical ancestry is connected to the Long Knife story, humans live underground and are drawn to the earth's surface. But the humans in this story are the *Pte Oyate*, the Buffalo Nation, who are transformed into their human form once they arrive on the earth's surface. As in Little Cloud's story associated with the Buffalo Gap, humans and buffalo are joined together as one. As reported earlier, in Chapter Nine, James Walker (1917:91) wrote about a common belief among the Lakotas that bison not only had the capacity to take on a human form, but they also had the power to "transmogrify" humans into bison and bring them to their underground homes. The different juxtapositionings of humans and bison in these stories probably does not matter in the larger scheme of things because all of the stories speak to the integral relatedness of the two. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Left Heron narrative is the one that is the most consistent with other Lakota and Cheyenne stories told about the general region of Wind Cave, which includes the Race Track and the Buffalo Gap.

There are many caves that dot the Black Hills and their surrounding environs. These caves are understood by modern Lakotas to be interconnected, as suggested in Joe Fly By's story (1983a) and by Charlotte Black Elk (1986a:209) when she applies the sacred term *Chantoyeya* [Arteries of the Heart] to the underground regions of the Black Hills.[16] Some Lakotas and Dakotas believe that all the caves in the Black Hills are interconnected and also linked to the ones in the Cave Hills. Theoretically, all of these caves are entrances to the spiritualized underworld that is the home of the buffalos, and also other game animals (Sioux Ranger District 2003:3.3.60-65). Therefore, all of them might be implicated in Lakota origin stories. But, once again, the fact that a cave, Wind Cave no less, is located upstream directly in the path of the Buffalo Gap, their sacred passageway into and out of the Black Hills, makes it easy to imagine how Lakotas and other tribal nations might have come to make a connection between the two, and how they linked them to stories of the Race Track as well.

There is also the relation of the bison to the home of *Inyan* or Stone, commonly associated with mountains, and their placement in rock structures under the earth (Walker 1917:82, 183). In fact, in the story of the Buffalo Wife that Walker published in 1917, the bison's tipi is made of stone (Walker 1917:183), and in the one published in 1983, it is identified even more specifically as a cave inside the mountains (Walker 1983:113). In the nineteenth century, the Black Hills were the mountains with which the Lakotas were most familiar. Since bison originated in stone formations under the earth, it is not surprising that Lakotas traditionally used stones to locate and summon them (Densmore 1918:210).[17] Although Rufus J. Pilcher (1964), a former superintendent

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[16] As described earlier, the Lakota and Arikara scouts told journalists on the Custer Expedition of a cave formation that ran under the Hills from one end to the other (Power in Krause and Olson 1974:87-88; Krause and Olson 1974:129, 150).

[17] This appears to have been a common practice among the tribal nations of the Plains. In the northwestern Plains of Canada, the Stoney and Cree used the fossilized shell, ammonite, to attract bison (Geist 1996:88).

of Wind Cave National Park, does not tell us why a group of Lakotas came to him in the early twentieth century to secure stones from the cave for healing, their motivation undoubtedly had to do with ubiquitous Lakota traditions linking bison with healing, stone, and the subterranean world. It may have also been related to the idea that the crystalline formations in caves were the material out of which *Taku Skanskan* formed the first man and woman of the *Pte Oyate* [Buffalo Nation] (Walker 1983:227-228), or to the mysterious white, ice-like stones George Bushotter (in Dorsey, J. 1889:153-154) describes.

Given its unique geophysical properties, it is also not coincidental that Wind Cave has been singled out as the primordial and quintessential place of Lakota origin stories about bison and humans. It appears to breathe, both taking in and releasing air. It mimics a life-sustaining function in humans and animals that is necessary to and definitive of life itself, something that Pete Catches (in Gonzalez 1996:67) explicitly linked in his statement (quoted in Chapter Nine) about how the Hills contain all of the fundamental spiritual forces necessary to life, and how Wind Cave is associated with the spirit that created breath. Lakota names for Wind Cave are many, but one is descriptive of this breath like quality, *Washun Niya* [Breathing Cave] (LaPointe 1976:79; Black Elk, C. 1986a:209). Another name, *Washun Wakan* [Holy Cave] (Herman n.d.; Swift Bird in Kadlecek 1981:148), simply marks the sacred nature of the place.

Both the breath-like quality of the cave and its association with bison is a significant theme of another genre of stories told about Wind Cave. Wind Cave was described in a story Stella Swift Bird narrated in the 1960s about her grandfather (in Kadlecek and Kadlecek 1981:147-148). It reads:

> Fast Thunder was a traveler. He and another man were coming back from the hills on the other side of Hot Springs. A buffalo was chasing them. There was no place to hide, for they were in a little draw with few pines. Grandfather prayed for his holy bear. As grandfather was leading, a short, little man with long hair came. He led them to a cave -- a spirit hole -- then he said, 'Just squeeze in, but don't come any farther.' They could feel the wind raw and blow. The little man disappeared. At that time they called it spirit hole, but now it is Wind Cave. When they went in Grandfather's heart was jumpy and the other man was crying. 'Don't be scared, pray.' Grandfather said. Grandfather took his bow to feel around, but it was a drop-off. The buffalo stuck in his head, but couldn't come in. All afternoon and all night they stayed as they were afraid to go out. But the buffalo had gone.

Unlike other accounts about Wind Cave, which take place in mythic times and are what the Lakota identify as *ohunkakan* stories, this is a *woyakapi* story of something that happened as a real historic experience. There is no implication that this is the cave from which either humans or bison originated. Like other narratives, however, it is connected with the appearance of a buffalo. This buffalo appears in the guise of *Gnaskinyan* [Crazy Buffalo], who is the hunter rather than the prey and conforms to the image of the killer bison that are the parents of the Buffalo Wife in the stories of Left Heron and Yellow Bad Hair. This figure also has a connection to Lakota and Cheyenne ideas about the giant "Two-Faces," including *Anog-Ite*, who eat humans and are sometimes linked to caves and Wind Cave in particular (Grinnell 1926, Ivan Stars in Stars, Iron Shell, and Buechel 1978:374-378 [also in Buechel and Manhart 1998:644-658]; Schlesier 1987:79).

A decade earlier on March 11, 1951, an article entitled "37 Years Haven't Dimmed the Memory of Being Lost in Wind Cave" was written by Joe Koller and published in the *Rapid City Journal*. Reprinted in 1970 in the *Wi-lyohi, Bulletin of the South Dakota Historical Society*, this is the earliest published reference we were able to find that explicitly links Wind Cave to a

Lakota story with spiritual significance. In this story (Wounded Horse in Koller 1970:1-2), which was told by Wounded Horse to R. J. Smith, a school superintendent at Pine Ridge, a group of hunters entered the Buffalo Gap in the Black Hills in search of buffalo. They found a herd being watched over by a white buffalo bull. The hunters held a council and decided to hunt down this bull and appointed two young men to make the kill. The old men held a Buffalo dance, and then the hunters isolated the white bull and led him to a place where the two hunters on horseback were waiting. The story goes on:

> It was a long chase. When the white bull tried to cut across a snow filled gully he was trapped. The two hunters closed in and bristled his back with shafts. Blood reddened the snow as he turned and charged his tormentors. The hunters retreated. The bull paused on a hilltop and stood there with head roped in exhaustion. He moved on again as the hunters approached.
>
> Their next chance came when the bull hid in a gulch. In the shelter of a rock, he was down and licking his wounds. The hunters came up on him on foot. Now they discovered a black hole beyond the rock that looked like a tunnel. Each man had one arrow left for the kill.
>
> As they crept up, the bull scented danger. He arose, blood dripping from his wounds and glared toward the hunters. As they were putting arrows on bow strings, the white buffalo tottered on a few yards and disappeared in the black tunnel.
>
> The hunters had no desire to corner a wounded buffalo in the dark. They stood peering into the hole when suddenly a blast of cold wind came out of it half freezing them with fear. They piled rocks over the cave and returned to their party. When told of the buffalo's strange action the Indians moved camp to the cave site and there kept vigil. The bull never came out.
>
> They closed up the hole, leaving only a little opening to permit the buffalo to breathe. They had felt the wind blow out, they had felt the wind return and blow into the cave so they named it "White Buffalo Cave, Home of the Wind God."

Wounded Horse's narrative is also not related to any of the stories that claim Wind Cave is the origin place of humans or bison. Instead, like Stella Swift Bird's account, it is a story about a mysterious event that took place at some point in historic time. What ties this story with others and makes it sacred is its reference to a white buffalo -- highly revered by the Lakotas, and an important figure in their historic mortuary practices (Curtis 1907-1930:3:110; Densmore 1918: 446).[18]

The idea that the cave was discovered is the theme of another story about Wind Cave, published in 1972, in Emerson Matson's *Legends of the Great Chiefs* and narrated by Edgar Red Cloud. This version, collected in the late 1960s, tells how two Lakotas, White Antelope and Red Wolf, discovered Wind Cave while chasing a white buffalo into the Black Hills (Red Cloud in Matson 1972:39-42). As the story goes, the hunters shoot it, but it disappears. The buffalo's tracks, however, lead to the entrance of what appears to be to a large cave with a strong wind coming from its opening. Red Wolf and his companion presume that the white buffalo fell into the cave, and decide to go down and look for it. Their rope, however, is not long enough to reach the bottom, so they return home and tell everyone what they found. Later, their chiefs return with them to find the cave. After a two-day journey, they locate it.

[18] As noted earlier, albino animals were commonly identified as the 'chiefs' of their species (Howard 1979:3). A white buffalo is the leader of the bison who bring humans to their land as revealed in Joe Flying By's story presented earlier. *Tatanka*, a member of the *Tobtob* and the spiritual leader or "chief" of the animals is often represented as a white buffalo (see Chapter Ten).

> Using longer and sturdier ropes, they lowered some men down through the hole and into the cavern. Deep in the cave, the party found the bones of many buffaloes. But they could find no trace of the great white buffalo.
>
> Later, a scout located the huge animal's unmistakable tracks leading from another entrance. Near the tracks were the four bloodstained arrows the hunters had used during the chase. The elusive white buffalo had escaped once again. But because the hunters had come so close to making a prize of him, he had left them a gift of a cave that could blow strong winds.
>
> The chiefs decided that the great white buffalo had earned his freedom. To hunt him now would bring bad medicine to their people. Instead, they would accept the gift of Wind Cave in the sacred Black Hills.

Here, too, is the implication that the Lakotas discovered, although some might be more inclined to say rediscovered, Wind Cave and apparently had not known of its existence since time immemorial, raising the question of whether this is the cave of the Lakota emergence story. Insofar as this narrative carries the wider cultural theme of a connection between caves and bison, particularly a white buffalo (often the form the spirit figure, *Tatanka,* assumes), it is consistent with a larger and older genre of stories that surround Wind Cave.

In contrast to some of the stories connected to Left Heron and Long Knife, which take place in a timeless mythical past, the narratives of Wounded Horse, Stella Swift Bird, and Edgar Red Cloud occur in lived experience as incidents remembered and connected to known historical figures. Two involve a white buffalo, a highly revered figure in Lakota culture, who is hunted but eludes capture by descending into the cave. Metaphorically speaking, in escaping death, the immortal buffalo releases life as signified by the breath-like action of the cave. In a broader sense, these stories are connected to the Long Knife and Left Heron narratives because all of them involve hunters, the act of hunting, and the food of the bison that is the fundamental source and origin of Lakota life, survival, and regeneration. Again, these are intrinsically linked to the Buffalo Gap and the Race Track story which is about how the universe gets ordered in such a way that humans are fed by the buffalo rather than being the buffalo's food.

The Swift Bird story involves yet another interesting twist on the overall theme of Wind Cave and the region of which it is a part. Here we have a buffalo that is not the prey but the one who stalks humans. This is an image of *Gnaskinyan*, a much reviled and feared spiritual figure because he inverts the "natural" order of things established by the primordial race of the animals, which began and ended at the Buffalo Gap. On the surface, this figure appears to represent a departure from the theme of buffalo offering life rather than bringing death. But it really isn't because many narratives about bison and humans, including those commonly associated with the Race Track, begin with antagonistic relationships between the two nations. Indeed, *Gnaskinyan* and his kind appear in two of Left Hand's versions of the Buffalo Wife story and also in Yellow Bad Hair's rendition.

Buffalo have the power to both give and withhold life, and the ambivalence that this evokes is a common motif in many Plains Indian stories. Raymond DeMallie (1982; 1994), Shepard Krech (1999:146-150), and John Moore (1996a:267) have written about how several tribal nations in the plains presumed that humans could never destroy the bison no matter what they did.[19] It was the bison themselves or the spiritual guardian of the bison, a female person like the

[19] Jeffery Ostler (1999) examines the range of explanations, both spiritual and practical, that the Lakotas advanced to explain the bison's sudden disappearance in the 1860s and 1870s.

Yellow-Haired woman and the water spirits of Cheyenne stories, or *Waziya*, the old man and his grandson, *Waziyata*, the North Wind, of the Lakotas that will their appearance or disappearance. From an American Indian perspective, drought or overkilling was never sufficient reason for the absence of bison. Bison were immortal, mysteriously giving and withholding their lives. They never died, they simply returned to their underground homes waiting for a propitious time to reappear on the earth's surface. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, after bison had nearly been exterminated on the Plains, some American Indians believed the bison were not extinct but had simply returned to their underground homes where someday they would be reborn and return to the earth's surface. It is perhaps ironic but certainly not fortuitous, at least from a Lakota perspective, that when the bison first reappeared in the Black Hills in 1913, it was at Wind Cave National Park, the very location where historically the bison returned to their home each winter awaiting rebirth and the movement to their grassland feeding grounds in the spring.

The Cheyennes also have a tradition about a cave in the southern Black Hills. Karl Schlesier (1987:79) writes about this cave as the place where the Cheyennes first experienced resistance in their movements to the Black Hills under the leadership of Sweet Medicine or *Motseyoef*:

> According to Tsistsistas tradition, they encountered the first resistance in the grasslands after they had moved to the Black Hills. These enemies are still called *haztova hotoxceo* (from *haztova*, 'both,' in the sense of 'on either side different,' and *hotexceo* 'stars.')--two face star people. They preyed on Tsistsistas camps, killed people, and ate their flesh. They appeared invincible until Motseyoef, using shaman power, and acting under the grant of the spirits of the region, found their hideout in a cave in the southern part of the Black Hills and entirely destroyed them. He restored the remains of slaughtered Tsistsistas to life in a sweatlodge which he conducted at the cave.

This story contains several themes that are associated in Lakota traditions with Wind Cave. The first is the link to underground spirits, the second to double figures, and the third to some form of reincarnation or regeneration. In fact, like *Motseyoef*, the Lakota's culture hero *Tokahe* is associated with using a sweatlodge for healing (Walker 1983:375). This theme is also closely linked to some of the Cheyenne and Lakota Stone Boy stories, where the hero brings his uncles back to life in a sweatlodge and kills the double-teeth bison in the Cheyenne version (Grinnell 1926:180) or *Iya* [a fabled gluttonous monster figure] in some Lakota renditions (Walker 1917:193-202, 1983: 140-154; Red Shirt 2002:79-82).

In this context, it should be noted that there are interesting parallels between the stories of *Tokahe* (Long Knife's narrative) or *Taopi Gli* (LaPointe's story) and Cheyenne and Suhtaio narratives of their culture heroes, Sweet Medicine and Stands On The Ground. In the various stories associated with these two culture heroes, they encounter an Old Man and an Old Woman in an underground cave and one marries their daughter. This daughter plays a critical role in keeping the Cheyennes supplied with bison and other game. An old man and old woman appear in Long Knife's origin story of *Tokahe's* emergence from a cave, as does the double-woman figure who is also present (or at least implied) in Left Heron and LaPointe's stories. While a marriage to an underground woman is absent in Long Knife's story of *Tokahe,* it is present in LaPointe's *Taopi Gli* narrative and in Left Heron's Buffalo Wife stories.

While there are similarities, there are differences too. For the Cheyennes, the cave where most of their sacred stories of animal emergence unfold is located at Bear Butte.[20] This is also the

[20] Some of the narratives associated with another Cheyenne culture hero, Stands On The Ground, however, take place at the Suhtaios' Black Mountain, the identity of which has not been specified in the literature.

place where *Motseyoef* [Sweet Medicine] learned the seven rituals associated with the stars of the Big Dipper. One of these was the *Massaum*, a ceremony that marked game regions and insured the fecundity of game; it was observed historically in the Black Hills (Schlesier 1987:88-109; Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:68-70).[21] For the Lakotas, the cave of origin for bison and humans is Wind Cave just west of the Race Track and the Buffalo Gap. Seven sacred Lakota ceremonies are also attached to seven stars in the Big Dipper, but these encompass the entire Hills and their two outlier formations, Bear Butte and Bear Lodge Butte. Also different from the Cheyennes, who concentrate many of their stories of origin and regeneration at one place and in relation to a unified set of figures, the Lakotas separate their stories of genesis and renewal. Wind Cave and its environs connect an underground female or male bison figure with primordial stories of animal and human origins. By contrast, the story of Lakota revitalization is associated with the White Buffalo Calf Woman, *Pte San Winyan*, a reincarnation of the celestial figure *Wohpe*. She is the one who brings the sacred pipe and its associated seven ceremonies to the Lakotas at Bear Lodge Butte.

B. The Lodge of the Winds and Waziya

Another common household term for Wind Cave is *Tate Waxun* [Cave of the Wind] (Black Elk, C. 1986a:209), while *Tatoye Oyurlokapi* [The Opening of the Four Winds] (Black Elk, C. 1986a:209) is a sacred name used only in the context of religious discourse, and it is the same one given in English but without a Lakota gloss by W.S. Campbell in his 1937 letter to the National Park Service (see Chapter Thirteen). Wounded Horse gave one other name in 1951 in a story published by Joe Koller (1970:2) as "White Buffalo Cave, Home of the Wind God." *Washun Pte San* would be the Lakota translation for first part of this name, while the second part, *Tate Tipi*, is clearly a synonym for the sacred ascription. The term 'White Buffalo Cave' is completely unique, although some of the stories associated with Wind Cave deal with a white buffalo. The connection of bison to breath, *ni* or *niya*, and to the Wind, *Tate*, and his four sons, but especially with *Waziya, Waziyata*, or *Yata,* the North Wind, is a pervasive theme in Lakota sacred stories and liturgical texts (see Chapter Nine).

As previously noted, the name *Tate* is closely linked to the verb *tate* meaning "to hunt" or "to chase." Two sons of *Tate,* the North Wind and the West Wind, are associated with *Taku Skanskan,* the spiritual figure that presides over movement, hunts, and war (Walker 1917:84; 1980:272). "*Ta*" is a generic term for food animals that is prefixed to three species of special importance to the Lakotas, *tatanka*, the buffalo, *tatoka*, the antelope, and *tahca*, the deer (Buechel 1970:472). All three of these species were known to seek shelter and winter along the Red Valley, entering the area by way of the Buffalo Gap. All three were also known to leave this gateway when they returned to the grasslands in the spring. As reported in Chapter Ten, the Lakotas drove antelope into a pit along the White River at Cache Butte less than fifty miles from the Buffalo Gap, and the buffalo herds who wintered in the Black Hills near Wind Cave moved in the spring to the grasslands on the upper reaches of the White and Niobrara rivers (Crow Dog in Kadlecek and Kadlecek 1981:96).

In Lakota cosmology, as Joseph E. Brown (1992:111-115) argues, there are complex sets of metaphorical relationships that connect the winds *qua* directions to specific animals.[22] According to Clark Wissler (1905:258), the Lakotas viewed the wind as a "great mystery" because "it was

[21] The Arapahos acquired their sacred bags and the spiritual knowledge associated with them when a man of their tribe came upon a cave, although its identity is not specified (Trenholm 1970:80).
[22] New Holy (1997:119-128) also shows their connections to the Lakota kinship order as it unfolds in their story of creation.

intangible and only visible in its effects." In answering the question why dragonflies, moths, a spider's web, the buffalo, and the elk have an essential relation to each other, Brown (1992:113-114) wrote:

> The unifying power underlying these disparate forms was seen to be the wind or whirlwind represented as Umi. That the moth had access to this power was evident in its wind-creating wings, and the cocoon was the container of this potential wind-power. The spider had access to this power because his ensnaring net stretches out to the four directions, which are conceived as the home of the four winds. The bison had the wind-power that he employed for his own purposes, while the elk's particular utilization of this wind-power was witnessed in his ability to 'whistle' in such a manner that cows were attracted to him.

Even more specifically, the Lakotas believed that a chrysalis, *wamniyomni*, caused whirlwinds, and these were located on the backbone of certain bison (Bushotter in Dorsey, J. 1889b:137). Essential to this cosmology is the idea that the winds are a central integrating and ordering principal in the universe, an idea that the Cheyennes and Arapahos also share. Wind is breath is life; it is the foundation of all movement, especially that which is associated with hunting and racing. Wind is embodied by its offspring, each with a direction and a duty. As discussed in previous chapters, different species of mammals, birds, and plants, are linked metaphorically and systematically to different winds in Lakota cosmology. Indeed, it might be said that some of their basic taxonomic principles are organized around their conceptualization of the Four Winds.

The Four Winds are considered highly *wakan* among the pantheon of the most influential spiritual beings, and, as such, they are appealed to in most every major ceremonial observance from *Hanbleceya* [vision seeking] (Black Elk in Brown 1971:44-66*;* Thunder Bear in Walker 1980:131; Walker 1980:133) to the *Hunkapi* [Making Relatives] (Black Elk in Brown 1971:101-116*;* Red Rabbit in Walker 1980:124-127; Walker 1980:210, 221). Their stories brought order, direction, and movement to the world, but they also represent some of the characteristics and contradictions in human behavior. Through their actions, the world is renewed, plants are created, and birds and animals are assigned their places in the world. So much about Lakota cosmology is collapsed in their notions of *Tate* and his sons, the Four Winds, and the fifth, the Whirlwind (Jahner in Walker 1983:200-203).

Of the Four Winds, *Waziyata*, the North Wind, is the one most often linked to Wind Cave. Except for one anomalous story found in the archives at the Wind Cave National Park Library entitled "The Cave of Waziya," which bears only a remote resemblance to Lakota traditions and was probably written by a non-Indian, most of the other stories about the Four Winds are not connected, at least explicitly, to Wind Cave. Nonetheless, they share certain fundamental motifs in common that are consistent with a broader spectrum of Lakota beliefs about the relationship between caves, bison, the winds, and breath as life-giving forces. We can presume that these stories apply in one way or another to the cave since it is specifically identified in some sources as the home of the Wind (Campbell 1937, Wounded Horse in Koller 1970:2; Black Elk, C. 1986a:209). There are two groups of stories relevant here, one is part of the Four Winds cycle in the Lakota genesis narrative recorded by James Walker, and another, discussed in the next section, is associated with Falling Star and other orphan boy figures.

The story of *Tokahe*'s emergence from a cave, which many Lakotas identify today as Wind Cave, and another about how the four directions were established as part of a sequence of creation stories that Long Knife (George Sword) shared with James Walker (1917:171-179; 1983:58-89, 157-162, 183-187, 200-205, 300-369; Dooling 2000). Since many of the figures who appear in the stories of the Four Winds are connected to, and, indeed, lead up to the Lakota genesis story,

it is not surprising that *Tate* and his sons are linked to the cave too. The creation stories collected by Walker were probably once restricted to the narrative repertoire of the *wicasa wakan* and not part of the general populace's storytelling traditions (Dooling 2000: ix). This may explain why they were not widely known or told in Lakota communities in the early twentieth century, and why they differ from other stories associated with this cave. Again, the very fact that a Lakota name for Wind Cave was identified as early as 1937 with the Winds suggests that at some point in time, the myth cycle of *Tate* and his sons, which begins with *Inyan*'s creation of the world and ends with *Tokahe's* emergence on earth, was associated with this cave.

In the Lakota story of creation, as told by George Sword or Long Knife, *Waziyata,* or simply *Yata* in sacred discourse, is the first-born son of *Tate* and *Ite* (later *Anog-Ite* or Two Face), daughter of *Waziya* (the old man, the wizard) and *Wakanka* (the old woman, the witch).[23] The last three figures play important roles in the *Tokahe* story too. *Tate* bestows on his firstborn son, *Waziyata*, the right to establish the first direction, but he ultimately fails because of his meanness and cowardliness. In challenging *Waziya* and ordering the magpie to befoul his grandfather, he loses his birthright (Walker 1917:172-173). After his younger brother, the West Wind, marks the first direction, he establishes his direction in the north. His name, *Waziyata*, has several levels of meaning, The direct translation is "toward the pine," but it can also mean on the side of *Wazi,* the old man with whom he is forever associated and from whom he gets his name (Walker 1917:157, 1983:84; Herman 1965a, 1965b; Powers, W. 1977:191-192). Indeed, his home is the dwelling place of his grandfather, although he never stays there (Walker 1983:89). He is the quintessential symbol of winter and is sometimes represented as a giant who hordes the buffalo and kills humans that try to approach them. He is identified with cold, snow, ice, and *warecayuhagila* [hail from the north] (Bushotter in Dorsey, J. 1889:155; Dorsey, J. 1894:468; Beckwith, M. 1930:407; Red Rabbit in Walker 1980:126). He also knows when the weather is going to change (Dorsey, J. 1894:468), which, incidentally, is something shared in common with Wind Cave's barometric features.

In many different sacred stories, *Waziyata* represents symbolically that part of the life cycle that is death, cold, winter, and rest, which bring forth and are necessary to *ni* [breath], new life, regeneration, and rebirth. He is associated with life that comes through death, and it is along his path that spirits travel after death from the south to the north in order to be reborn (see Chapter Twelve). In the Lakota creation story, his father, *Tate*, is the one who blocks the entrance to the spirit world so *Tokahe* and the other original people, the *Pte Oyate*, cannot return directly. This suggests Wind Cave, the place from which *Tokahe* comes (Walker 1983:373).[24] In one of his prayers, Black Elk (in Brown 1971:19-20) locates the home of *Waziya* in geographic proximity to the Thunders, who were widely known to frequent the area of Harney Peak. This prayer, which is said during a Spirit Releasing Ceremony, contains the following lines:

> O You, Thunder-being, there where Waziah has his lodge who comes with the purifying winds and who guards the health of the people; O baldheaded eagle of the north. Your wings never tire! There is a place for You too in this pipe, which will be offered to *Wakan-Tanka.* Help us, and give to us one of Your two sacred days (Black Elk in Brown 1971:20).

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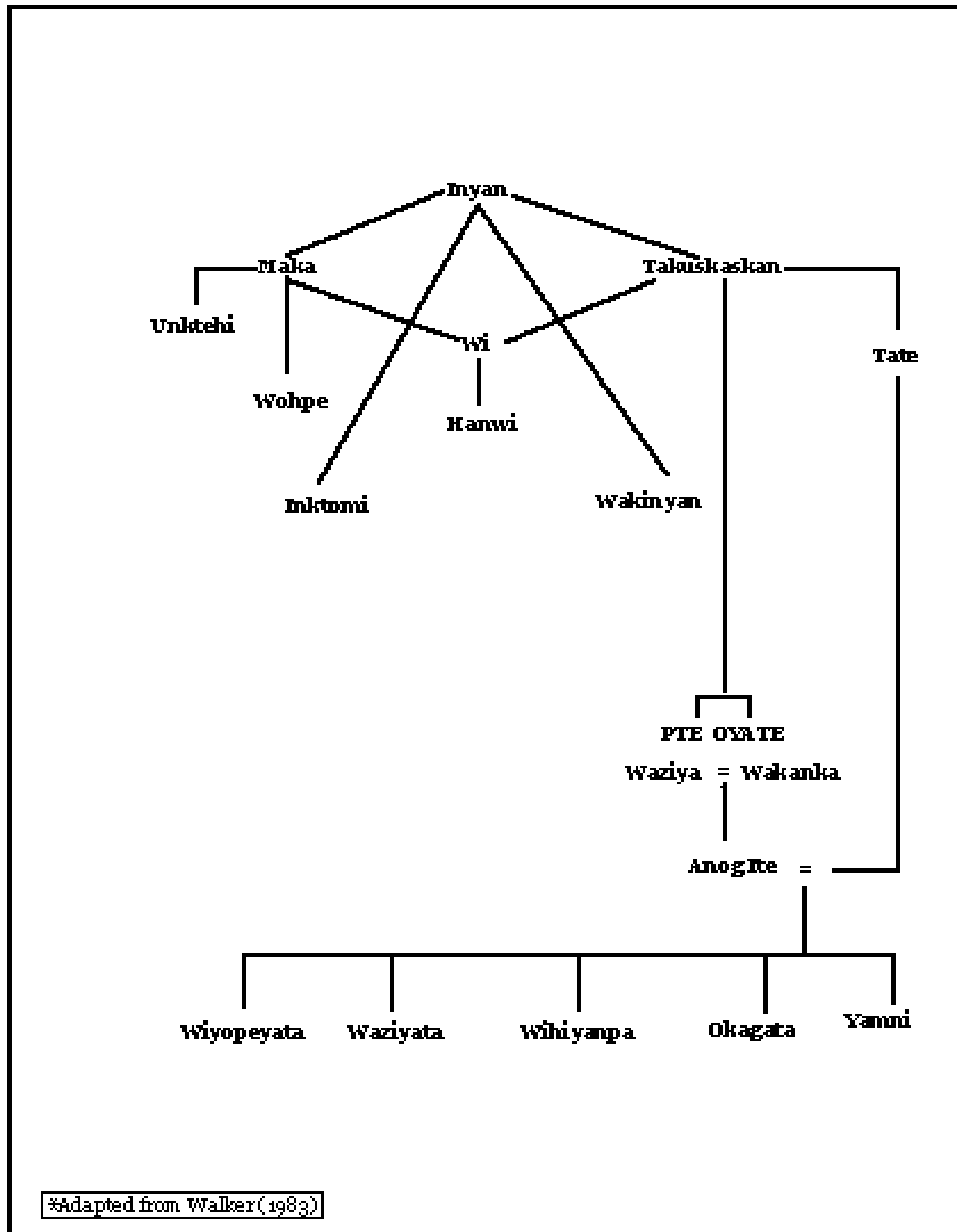
[23] Again, *Wakanka* and *Waziya* also appear in the Buffalo Wife stories.

[24] This idea also appears in Joe Flying By's story (in Parlow 1983a:39), quoted earlier, in which the hole or cave leading to the bison's underworld home is also the portal through which the deceased return to the spirit world.

Figure 26. Kinship Relations of Lakota Deities



As revealed in other chapters, *Waziyata'*s direction is linked not only with the bison but also with magpies, crows,[25] white owls, geese, bald eagles, coyotes, wolves, foxes, and tobacco (Dorsey, J. 1894:127, 232; Curtis 1907-30:77; Wissler 1912:19-20, 91; Walker 1917:172-173; Densmore 1918:67-68; Beckwith, M. 1930:412n2; Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear and Sword in Walker 1980:101; Red Rabbit in Walker 1980:125; Walker 1980:222, 231-232, 249, 1983:340, 344-345; Powers 1977:191, 1986:139-140; Brown 1992:35). Wolves, who followed the same movements as the buffalo, were also believed to produce wind *qua* breath [*ni*] in the form of fog when they howled, and so a time of dense mist and fog was known as a "wolf's day" (Wissler 1912:54, 91). In fact, the wolf served as an accomplice to *Inktomi* when he enticed *Tokahe* and the other *Pte Oyate* to move from their subterranean home at Wind Cave to the surface of the earth (Walker 1917:181-182).

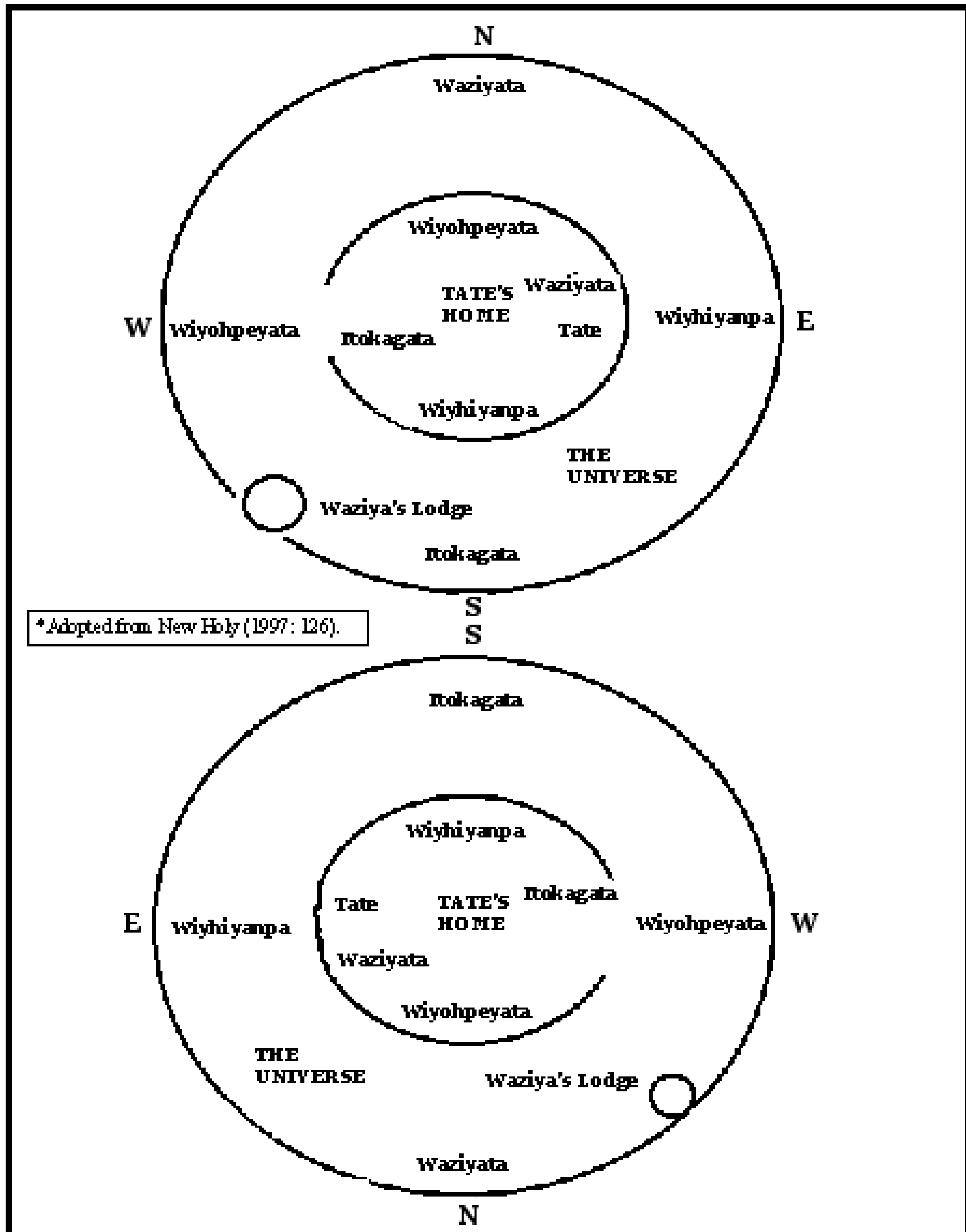
*Waziyata'*s color is red, but sometimes the color with which he is associated is reversed with that of the South Wind and becomes white (Black Elk in Neihardt 1961:26-27, 179; Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear, and Sword in Walker 1980:108-109). He is also reputed to do things in a contrary manner, going naked in the winter and wearing furs when it is hot, and as a result, the *Heyoka* sometimes imitated his actions (Dorsey, J. 1894:468). Indeed, *Heyoka* are believed to embrace the North Wind because both are known to do things backwards (Beckwith, M. 1930: 416n1).[26]

Waziyata is identified as a superhuman man of "uncertain moods who may do harm or good according to his humor" (Walker 1980:222). He is always at war with his younger brother, the South Wind, *Itokagata*, but sometimes he assists his other two brothers, the West and East Winds (Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear, and Sword in Walker 1980:108-109). He is the one who withholds and releases [*ni*] breath, which is life to the buffalo and to the people, and therefore, he can be viewed as stingy, selfish, and morose (Walker 1983:182, 313, 322, 330). He is characterized as a life-taker, filled with avarice and always killing things (Walker 1983:183). Yet, as many Lakota liturgical texts reveal, he is paradoxically a life-giver as well, the one who by taking life, purifies the earth over the winter months and guards the health of the people (Black Elk in Neihardt 1961:27; Black Elk in Brown 1971: 20, 119-120, 132). In this context, it is hard to avoid making an analogy to the north-south migrational movements of bison, which, according to Brown (1992:59), symbolized to the Lakotas "a coherent and integrated totality." As Edward Curtis (1907-30:3:77) put it, "Waziya" is the one "who sends the biting north wind and blinding snow and who also controls some of the mysterious movements of the buffalo." The travels of bison and other animals through the Buffalo Gap mirrored the movements of the seasons and the winds, which in the form of breath emanate from Wind Cave. By further analogy, these movements replicate the movements of spirits, who after death travel south towards the Milky Way but eventually return to the north in the underworld awaiting rebirth.

It can be argued that the Black Hills stand for the homes of the Four Winds. This is clearly implied by Leonard Crow Dog (and Erdoes 1995:5) when he said that four chiefs reside in the Hills, "a medicine man, a man of knowledge, a warrior, and a hunter." I would propose that the hunter represents the North Wind, the warrior the West Wind, the man of wisdom the East Wind, and the medicine man, the South Wind. If this association is correct, then the Black Hills may be

[25] As revealed later, the crow and magpie are primary players in the famous story of the Great Race that , in some versions, begins and ends at the Buffalo Gap.
[26] Usually *Heyoka* are linked to the West Wind, since it is the Thunders who cause them to act in a contrary fashion.

FIGURE 27. The Order of the Four Winds



seen in yet another way as a hierophany, a physical metaphor for the establishment of order and motion in the universe by *Tate* and his five sons.[27] It can be hypothesized even further that specific sites in the Black Hills metaphorically mark the homes of the Four Winds. New Holy (1997:125-128) describes and diagrams the spatial relationships between the Winds in terms of two intersecting circles, one representing the lodge of their father, *Tate*, and the other marked by the trail their grandfather, *Wazi*, blazes in his endless wanderings on the edge of the earth. In connecting the positions of the Winds to specific landscape features, we must bear in mind that these shift depending on their point of reference. In some cases, they appear inverted, and this is because, as Robert Hall (1997:133) explains, the directional coordinates of the sky and the underworld are often opposite those on the earth's surface.

In Long Knife's story, the Winds come to a great mountain with a trail around it and a fire on the highest mountain peak, and it is from this place that they mark their directional positions in the world (Sword in Walker 1983:81). During his wanderings while awaiting a star message from *Taku Skanskan*, Wazi creates the circular trail at the worlds' edge on which the brothers travel. *Waziyata* gives up his birthright to mark the first direction to his younger brother, the West Wind, *Wiyohpeyata* [toward the place where the sun falls off] or *Eya*. (Powers, W. 1977: 192). The West Wind establishes his home at a flat spot on top of a mountain near the nest of the Thunders (Sword in Walker 1983:83), an area widely associated with Harney Peak in Lakota traditions. Although Harney Peak is actually on the east side of the Black Hills from the perspective of the directional coordinates on the earth's surface, these are reversed in the celestial and subterranean worlds. A common cosmological notion throughout North America is that when night comes to the earth's surface, the Sun travels to the subterranean world where it is daylight (Hall 1997:133-134). In Lakota traditions, the Sun stays in the underworld at night with his friends, the buffalo (Bushotter in Dorsey, J. 1889:154; Little Wound in Walker 1987:67). In the subterranean world, the order of the universe is reversed, and thus, it makes sense that Wind Cave, the home of *Waziyata*, is located on the southeastern edge of the Hills and that Harney Peak, the Home of *Wiyohpeyata,* the West Wind, is on the eastern side of the Hills. Also, the West Wind (the Thunders)[28] and the North Wind commonly act in opposite, contrary, or inverted ways, and as a result, both are associated with the *Heyoka.*

Itokagata or *Okaga*, the South Wind's home, is not explicitly associated with any specific locale in the Black Hills. His home is located generically at the center of the world near meadows and springs. He made the seeds, flowers, and fruits, he is connected to warm weather, and his season is summer (Powers 1977:193, 1986:139; Red Rabbit in Walker 1980:127; Sword in Walker 1983:71,72; Little Wound in Walker 1980:159; Walker 1980:162, 183, 184, 301, 309, 313). One possible location for his home is the region of *Pe Sla,* which is also called *Heraka blaye* [Elk flats] (Black Elk, C. 1986a:208). Elk are often identified as the helpers of the South Wind (Densmore 1918:176-178; Hassrick 1964:116, 146; Powers 1986:139). In fact, the ceremony that modern Lakotas associate with this location, *Okslataya Wowahwala* [Peace at Bare Spot], is certainly consistent with the symbolism associated with *Itokagata*, especially the offerings to the plants and birds (Goodman 1992:8, 13, 16).[29] The home of the East Wind, *Wiyhiyanpa or Yanpa* [The Place Where the Sun Rises], has no obvious geographic referents in the Black

[27] Pete Catches (in Parlow 1983a:2-4; in Gonzalez 1996:67) also talks about the Hills in reference to important spiritual figures, which he identifies as seven in number rather than four.

[28] As William Powers (1986:36) and Martha Beckwith (1930:407-408) write, the Lakotas believe in the existence of Thunders who come from the left or east and who produce the fiercest storms.

[29] Another possible location for the South Wind is the Buffalo Gap, and Hot Springs area, which, as hypothesized in the next Chapter, may be linked to the Cheyennes' Southeast Wind. Instead of a semi-annual struggle between the Old Man of Winter and the Sun of Cheyenne cosmology, the Lakotas often allude to this conflict as a battle between Waziyata and Itokagata.

Hills either. In some texts he dwells in the mountains (Walker 1983:161), but in others his abode is an island in a lake or river (Red Rabbit in Walker 1980:126).[30] *Yamni*, the Whirlwind, has no set location but is frequently linked to *Wohpe*, who becomes the companion of *Itokagata* at the center of the world.

Curiously, when Black Elk (in Brown 1971:134-135) describes the Throwing of the Ball Ceremony, he changes the directional coordinates of *Waziyata* to the East. He says that when the girl tosses the ball in the Four Directions, she first throws it "towards the place where the giant lives, towards the place where the sun comes up."[31] In another context, however, he talks about the giant's home in the north. At first glance, this appears to be an inconsistency, but it is not if one understands two things: one that the directional coordinates change depending on the point of reference, and two, that they are sometimes expressed, as they often are in Cheyenne texts, as the medial positions between the cardinal points on the compass (e.g., NW, SW, SE, NE). This would locate *Waziyata's* domicile in the direction of the southeast on the earth's surface.

In Cheyenne traditions, the old man of winter is known as *Homiaha.* The old woman of the North or Nadir, suggesting the figure of *Esceheman* or Grandmother Earth, controls his actions (Grinnell 1926:189-190). As with the Lakotas, the north and the nadir of the earth are interchangeable. When *Ma'heo* created the cosmos, he made this woman and also a man who guarded the south /zenith and directed the actions of the Thunders. The female and male poles of the cosmos stand in perpetual conflict, as evidenced in the continual cycle of movement between the fall/winter and spring/summer seasons which each of these figures respectively controls (Grinnell 1907:171-172; 1926:243-244; Moore, J. 1996:207-208).

C. The Portals Between the Underworld and the Sky World

In Cheyenne and Lakota cosmologies, the universe can be understood to exist in a constant state of motion, revolving around the axis of a horizontal elliptical plane and a vertical one. The intersections of the planes, the points where they cross or connect, are powerful positions charged with energy and movement. As day turns to night and as one season gives way to another, the planes come together, bringing celestial and subterranean spaces into contact and, in the process, releasing powerful forces (Goodman 1992; Moore, J. 1996). The Sky and other celestial figures, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, in Lakota cosmology have counterparts and companions in the underworld and on earth (Schlesier 1987; Goodman 1992; Sundstrom 1996). In Lakota traditions, there are a number of important mediating figures who link sky spaces with the tiers of the earth and the underworld. Besides the Winds, the most famous of these is *Wohpe* [Meteor], who appears as a central figure in the stories of the Four Winds, who reappears as the *Pte San Winyan*, the White Buffalo Calf Woman, and who is considered one of the Lakotas' primary spiritual benefactors through her gift of the sacred pipe. Another figure is the orphan boy, who appears among the Lakota as *Wicahpi Hinhpaya* [Falling Star], and who, like *Inyan Hoksila* [Stone Boy], *Cetan Maza* [Iron Hawk], or *Weota Hoksila* [Blood Clot Boy], has miraculous origins. Falling Star and Stone Boy are the subject of several story cycles among the Lakotas, some of which are nearly identical to those of the Cheyennes (Grinnell 1926:178-199, 206-211). These are recorded for tribes throughout the Plains, and sometimes, they are told in relation to specific geographic features in tribal environments. The Lakota and the Cheyennes situate several of their stories in the Black Hills.

[30] Another possibility is Castle Rock because of its association with owls, one of the East Winds' helpers.
[31] This is significant in terms of the association of the Buffalo Gap with the sun.

In the Falling Star cycle, the orphan boy is descended from an earth woman who marries a star. In the Lakota version told by Nicholas Black Elk (in DeMallie 1984:401-408), his mother is admonished not to dig too deeply for turnips lest she open a hole in the sky. She does so anyways and falls through the hole to the earth and dies. Her son miraculously survives and is raised by the meadowlarks. When he reaches adulthood, the orphan is sent on a quest where he encounters dangers and saves the people of various villages. One of the places on his journey is identified as Rapid Creek (Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:406), and another can be easily read as the interiors of the Hills near *Pe Sla* (Sundstrom 1997:195).[32] The first location he arrives at is not identified by name or location, but its characters and topographical features unmistakably situate it in the neighborhood of the Buffalo Gap and Wind Cave (Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:401-402). Here, Falling Star helps a village whose people are starving and being killed by *Waziya* whenever they go in search of buffalo. Falling Star eventually disables and slays the giant so that the people are able to hunt without fear of death from his bow and arrow.[33] One of the giant's children remains alive, escaping into a crack in the earth's surface where he remains visible by his "frost" or breath, *niya*[34] Even though winter still remains alive, it now retreats, allowing humans to approach the buffalo. This is confirmed by a nearly identical Falling Star story told by Iron Shell in 1904 of an encounter with *Waziya,* who is hoarding the buffalo (in Stars, Iron Shell, and Buechel 1978:24-36 [also in Buechel and Manhart 1998:45-63]). In this version, the children disappear into a "cave." Each of the villages Falling Star[35] saves represents the stars on the Big Dipper constellation. The first village is connected to the story of the buffalo and *Waziya*. Interestingly, it represents the star called *Tokahe*, the First Buffalo Man, who emerged from the underworld at Wind Cave (Black Elk, C. 1992a:58). The Lakota have a very similar story about *Waziya* and his offspring associated with another hero figure, Blood Clot Boy (Curtis 1907-30: 3:111-118).

In the Cheyenne Falling Star cycles[36] recorded by George Bird Grinnell (1921, 1926:182-193) and Richard Randolph (1937:37-42), the hero also slays the Winter Man, *Homiaha*, whose children survive in a crack in the earth's surface where they appear as frost, possibly an allusion to the gypsum formations in the Hills.[37] He saves another village from a water monster that

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[32] Other versions of the same story exist, for example, among the Cheyennes (Grinnell 1926:182-193) and the Dakotas of Minnesota (Riggs 1893:83-94). What is different about Black Elk's story is the particular way in which he describes the geography of the area through which Falling Star travels. In one episode, he specifically identifies one of the places in Falling Star's journey as Rapid Creek but other locations can be inferred from the descriptions too.

[33] The origin of the bow and arrow is tied to the Race Track in a tradition that Black Elk (in DeMallie 1984:307-316) tells.

[34] Note the similarity here to more recent stories, described earlier in this chapter, about Wind Cave where a slain white buffalo retreats to the cave and releases its breath.

[35] Arvol Looking Horse (in Parlow 1983a: 42-43), the Keeper of the Sacred Buffalo Calf Pipe, talked about the importance of Falling Star to the Lakotas as follows:

> What we're seeing is *Wicakiyuhapi* [to have trust or faith in something] everywhere. North Star, *Wicahpiowsonjila* – Falling Star's father, in some stories, fixed in one place in the sky-why? Sorrow of the death of his wife first. Second, because he's faithful and steadfast to the Lakota people and continues to send power and love to them. The Falling Star story is dignity to the Lakota people because it says you have a human mother but you have a divine father. Your father was a star, *waniya*—and your mother was of earth. And when we say, we're part spirit and part matter –the story of Falling Star tells the same story [*translation ours*].

Stars are known as the *woniya* [breath of life] of *Wakan Tanka* [The Creator], and Falling Star symbolizes this. His birth is connected to another significant life-giving symbol in Lakota traditions, the *tipsila* or prairie turnip [*Psorelea esculanta*], a plant with intriguing symbolic connections to celestial and subterranean spaces.

[36] In Cheyenne stories, the mother of Falling Star reaches the stars while climbing a tree in pursuit of a porcupine, an animal whose quills also represent the breath of life and the power of the sun.

[37] The Cheyenne identify one of their ceremonial objects made of gypsum as frost (Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:54).

inhabits a lake, which in a similar Sweet Medicine story is Bear Butte Lake,[38] and he confronts an owl monster, commonly tied in Lakota and Cheyenne traditions to the high elevation interiors of the Black Hills. Finally, he encounters the Double Eyes and returns people to life in a sweatlodge. A similar event is recorded in a Sweet Medicine story associated with the Two Faces who lived in a cave in the southern Black Hills (Schlesier 1987:79).[39]

Another orphan boy figure of earthly origins is Stone Boy. In Lakota traditions, he is connected to the Buffalo Gap and other gateways into the Hills. Severt Young Bear (and Theisz 1994:29)[40] describes the association as follows:

> *Tohan inyan Hoksi takpapi na mahipya sabya hahwoke.*' That means that whenever buffalos started chasing the Stone Boy and the dark clouds are flying by, buffalo herds start to migrate into the Black Hills because they know winter is coming. The clouds they talk about are winter clouds; towards the end of fall, dark clouds blow real fast. They call them *mahpiya sabya kahwoke.*

This same idea was also expressed by one of Raymond Bucko's Lakota advisors who said:

> Then I go towards the north, the *thathaka oyate* ['buffalo people']. I see these whenever the winter storm-clouds are like buffalo. I learned this through the elders: *Wana thathaka oyate khichiksa* ['now the buffalo people play around'], *ukiye* [come back']. They bring back the white blanket of snow for *uci makha* ['grandmother earth'] (Bucko 1999:208).

George Sword or Long Knife (in Walker 1983:89-99) recounts a Stone Boy story that explains the connection. After recounting Stone Boy's origins and some of his miraculous feats, Sword tells how Stone Boy kills four white buffalo girls one winter. Their grandfather seeks revenge for their death and retaliates when the "brown clouds" start to arrive over his territory. In the confrontation, Stone boy slays the old bull. He returns home and tells his uncles to build enclosures, and after they do so, the brown clouds drift in and with them come buffalo from all directions. Stone Boy and his people drive the buffalo into pounds and slay them. In her version of the Stone Boy story, Kate Blue Thunder (in Theisz 1975:58-59) describes the old bull as "mean," implying *gnaskiyan*. She also tells about the brown clouds, "*Sicangu mahpiya*." Although the clouds are not mentioned in Old Walker's text (in Buechel 1978:53-78 [also Buechel and Manhart 1998:5-20]), he tells of a bull warning the buffalo to come back home to the hills, "*Heyata ko po*," in order to avoid Stone Boy's fence [*cunkaske*].

In another Lakota Stone Boy story, narrated by Bad Wound (in Walker 1917:193-202, 1983: 140-154), the hero conquers *Iya*, a gluttonous monster. As in the Sword text, the story cycle

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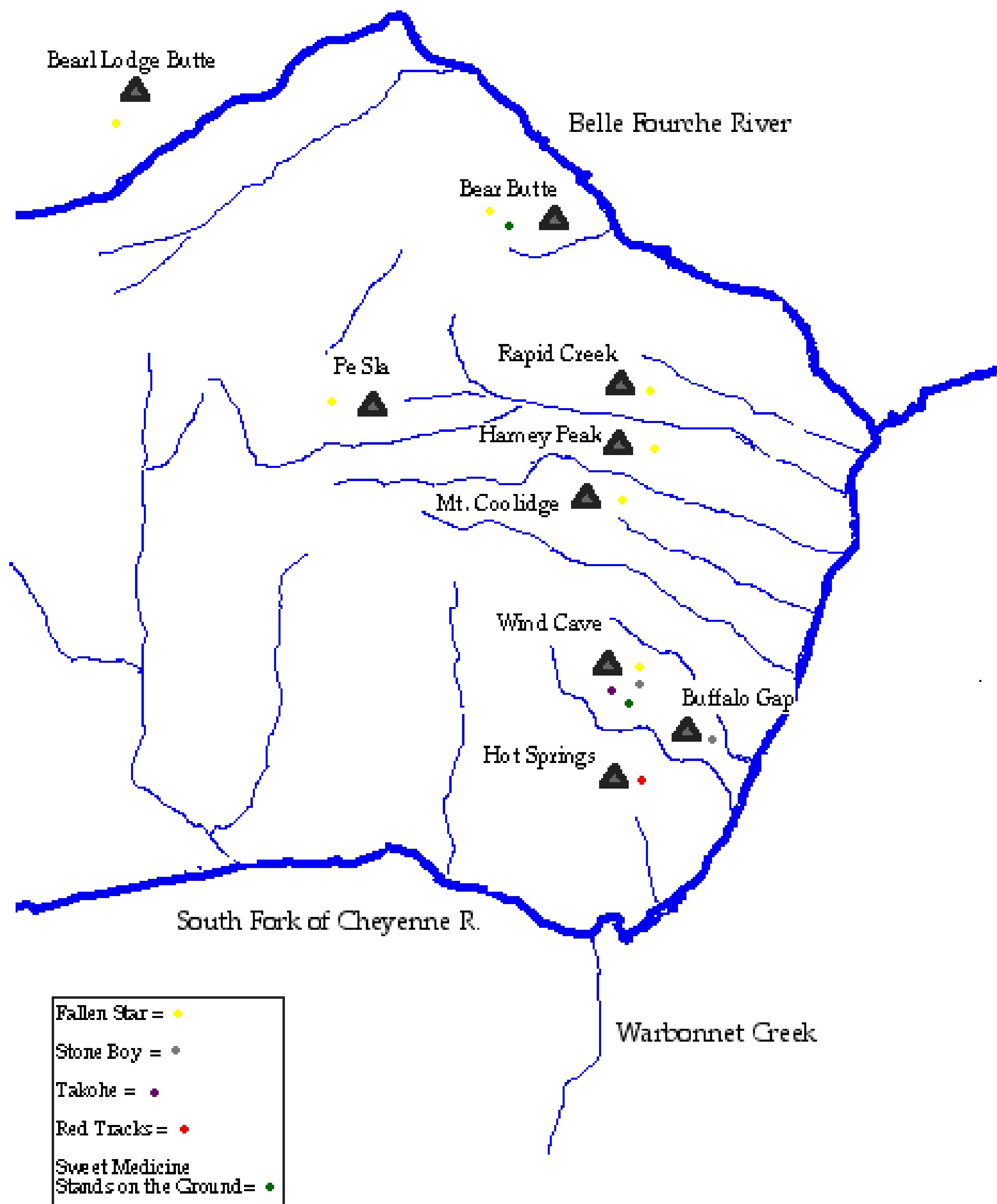
[38] A similar confrontation between a water monster and a hero figure at Bear Butte Lake is recorded for the Plains Apaches (McAllister 1965).
[39] In the Falling Star cycle collected by Richard Randolph (1937:27) from Oneha, a Cheyenne woman in her nineties, she tells of the hero going north into the Black Hills to find his mother's people, and it is in this area that most of his heroic encounters with various monsters unfold.
[40] Old Walker told one version of the story where the bison chase Stone Boy in 1904 to Father Eugene Buechel (in Stars, Iron Shell, and Buechel 1978:53-62; also in Buechel and Manhart 1998:5-20). The Buffalo Gap, however, is not specifically identified in this rendition. In the same time period, Naopi-sica told James Walker (1917:193-203) a Stone Boy story in which some events also take place in a mountainous environment similar to the area of the Buffalo Gap (cf. Wissler 1907:199 for another version of this tale).

FIGURE 28. Lakota and Cheyenne Culture Hero Sites



begins with four brothers[41] who live alone and carry on the work of women. One of the brothers gives birth to a girl from his big toe. When this woman grows into adulthood, she refuses to marry. The brothers tell her that they will keep her as their sister and provide for her forever. Each of the brothers goes out hunting but never returns. The woman, grief stricken by the loss of her brothers, climbs to the top of a hill where she mourns and discovers a white, crystal pebble. She swallows the stone, and it grows inside her as a boy child. When her son reaches adulthood, she holds a feast at which she announces her own and her son's miraculous origins. She tells the people her son is going on a long journey to find his uncles, and four of the guests give him special gifts to protect him in his travels. He journeys far to the West where he finds a valley filled with animals of many kinds and behind them mountains with a barren valley containing only a stone, a tree, and a small brown hill. Stone Boy challenges them and the stone and the tree that try to kill him. He then enters the lodge where he finds an old woman who tries to deceive him. Suspicious of her "forked tongue," he protects himself. She attempts to kill him but to no avail. Finally, she informs him that she is *Iya* and that she is beholden to only one master, the "living stone." Singing his death song, she tells him he will die from her poison. Stone Boy responds with his own song, in which he proclaims that he is the only living relative of the stone, that he is descended from the stone she threw away, and that he is her master. When the two struggle, Stone Boy discovers that the old woman is really a man. Taking control of *Iya*, he forces him to reveal the whereabouts of his uncles who the monster cannibalized. In order to bring the bones of his uncles back to life, Iya instructs him how to make a sweatlodge with the skins of the bear and coyote and a fire with limbs from the tree that tried to slay Stone Boy. After his uncles are reborn, *Iya* continues to threaten but Stone Boy prevails, stomping on his stomach until he vomits cherry pits which represent all the people *Iya* had sucked in with his breath. Throwing the cherry stones into the fire, he is able to revive the people. He then goes on to destroy *Iya* by stomping on his chest from which a great whirlwind is released and attacked by the Thunderbirds. Through all of this, *Iya* still survives and grows into a giant again, becoming so large that he nearly covers the entire valley. Now Stone Boy tramples him on the head and forces the breath out of his mouth. Although *Iya* takes hold of Stone Boy's feet, he is not strong enough to hold him. Henry Crow Dog tells a similar version, in which Stone Boy travels to the mountains and confronts the giant (in Erdoes 1976:108-116). Stone Boy's ability to conquer *Iya* appears to be a variation on the theme of Falling Star slaying *Waziya*. Indeed, *Waziya* and *Iya* often play parallel roles in Lakota stories, [42]making it difficult to separate them. This particular Stone Boy story has been described at some length because *Iya* is a central character in an anonymous text entitled, "The Cave of Waziya," located in the Wind Cave National Park Library.

The Cheyenne story of Stone Boy has many of the same characters and plots as some of the Lakota texts, except in their tale the hero has seven uncles (Grinnell 1926:178-182). All of the brothers go out to hunt for their sister, and an old woman kills all of them. While mourning their loss, the sister finds a "Sun Arrow," a piece of gypsum and swallows it. From this stone, the Stone Boy is conceived. As in the Lakota narratives, Stone Boy goes in pursuit of his uncles,

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[41] The number of brothers and the origin of their sister vary from one story to another and also some of the details of Stone Boy's journeys and encounters with dangerous spirit figures, but all share in common his miraculous stone origin.

[42] Marie McLaughlin's version (1916:179-196) of the Stone Boy story is very similar to Left Heron's rendition. Curiously, it contains references to two geographic place names. One is the Smoky Hills or *Paha Sota* and another to a waterway called Stone Boy Creek, *Wakpala Inyan Hoksila*. If Smoky Hills is an alternative name for the Black Hills, which is possible given the reports of huge billows of smoke issuing from their peaks in the 1830s, then Stone Boy Creek might have been a Lakota name for Beaver Creek. If it denotes other hills, such as the Cave Hills or the Slim Buttes area, it illustrates yet another example of how the same story can be placed in different but topographically similar geographic settings.

confronts the old cannibalistic woman, erects a sweatlodge, and brings his uncles back to life. After his uncles are reborn, Stone Boy accompanies them on a hunt where they kill two white buffalo, the sons of the double-toothed buffalo that Stone Boy slays.[43]

The attacks of cannibalistic figures either in the form of bison, an old woman, or the winter man, who may also stand for the North Wind, reveal the paradoxical nature of life and its dependence on death for survival. Here again, these figures are both life-givers and life-takers; winter brings death yet it is necessary for the renewal of life that is triggered by the Thunders and the Sun (fire). The earth, in the guise of an old woman, controls the bison, winter, and the cycles that bring about life through death. Stone Boy, Blood Clot Boy, and Falling Star mediate the elemental forces through which life is both destroyed and regenerated. The first two hero figures are most commonly tied to the origins of the sweatlodge, at least in Lakota traditions (Bucko 1999:147-154), and in some stories to the creation of pounds for hunting bison. Some of the texts, suggest the region of Wind Cave National Park; if not here, they unfold in topographic settings that appear like the Buffalo Gap or the Hot Springs. In fact, there's a location at Wind Cave National Park, identified on old GSL maps, as the "Giant's Thumb." Whether the origin of the name for this landform has any connection to local tribal traditions is unknown, but it is certainly consistent with tribal stories of the area.

These locations are also associated with other culture heroes, who appear later in cosmic time, notably *Tokahe* for the Lakotas and *Motseyoef* [Sweet Medicine] and possibly *Tomosivsi* [Stands on the Ground] for the Cheyennes. Thus, they are highly sacred earth centers where life is perpetuated in the cosmic struggles of the north/nadir and south/zenith that take place twice every year as the seasons change from summer to fall and from winter to spring. The forces that generate these cosmic transitions are often envisioned as figures of gigantic proportions, greater than life characters with the capacity to bring about life's ultimate destruction unless combated by countervailing powers and forces.[44] Falling Star, Blood Clot Boy, and Stone Boy, all of whom have miraculous origins, gain some of the knowledge and power to mediate or balance the dangers of these forces so that humans can overcome and survive their destructive powers.

Another cast of spiritual characters linked to the Wind Cave area are diminutive figures commonly called "Little People" in English. [45] Three stories about the cave refer to their presence. Since the Lakota names for these figures are not given in the texts, it is difficult to know what diminutive figures they represent. The different varieties of Little People, while potentially dangerous to humans, can be benefactors too. One of the Little People saved Swift Bird's grandfather, Fast Thunder, from a Crazy Buffalo at Wind Cave (in Kadlecek and Kadlecek 1981:148). In LaPointe's stories (1976:84), they breed the game animals in their underworld homes, and in a story whose attribution is unknown one directs a Lakota hunter to Wind Cave from the Hot Springs and drives *Waziya* from his home (Anonymous, n.d.: Wind Cave National

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[43] Many of Stone Boy's exploits, including making pounds, are associated in Arapaho texts with their culture hero, Found in the Grass (Dorsey and Kroeber 1903:341-387).

[44] There are many dangerous giant and/or cannibalistic figures in Lakota and Cheyenne traditions that represent the antithesis of the life-giving properties of the natural world. There are monster-like figures connected to water, caves, mountain peaks, and forests. In general, most of the locations that are conceptualized as earth-centers, places where powerful cosmic forces come together, have transformative possibilities that are both beneficial and dangerous to humans (Moore, J. 1974:165).

[45] These figures are described in greater depth in Chapter Eleven under the section that deals with spiritual beings linked to water and springs. They appear in Left Heron's Iron Hawk texts (in Beckwith 1930: 382-383:388-389), where they are associated with the *Ukce'gila* (the petrified water monsters of the Badlands). Of interest, the place in Left Heron's text where Iron Hawk meets a little man is in the context of the story where he marries a buffalo woman. Young Bear (and Theisz 1994:29) also talks about Little People in the Black Hills.

Park Archives). In one of the stories, the Little People are also associated with the neighboring Hot Springs. As La Pointe (1976:45) writes:

> The Little People bred game animals for human consumption and kept perpetual fires ablaze to heat the waters that flow up to the surface, thus keeping the flowers in bloom and the medicinal shrubs growing year around.

He goes on to describe the springs further:

> The lands nourished by the warm waters were fertile places of great value. Sweet smelling peppermint plants and pulpy rosebuds for tea abounded here. A profuse growth of medicinal herbs and leafy green for soups, and many kinds of edible tubers thrived around those areas. The open warm water streams attracted waterfowl and other game animals the year round. The Lakota say these oasis-like places were gifts of *Taku Wakan*, and they cleansed themselves in the mineral pools and drank the saline waters to maintain their health. They gave the name *Mini awoblu mokoche* (land of bubbling waters) to this part of the Black Hills, and they cared for it well...(LaPointe 1976:46).

Stella Swift Bird (Kadlacek and Kadlacek 1981:149) also claimed the Hot Springs had healing powers, although she did not associate them with Little People. She said:

> Hot Springs was called holy water or holy place. When people got sick they went there to drink the holy water. They drank four times and each time it had a different taste. They drank four mouthfuls and prayed.

Nor did Jake Herman (in One Feather 1974:149) identify the springs with Little People. In one story (Herman n.d.: Wind Cave National Park Archives), he wrote:

> A small band of Sioux buffalo hunters discovered the Hot Springs. This group came near the Hot Springs beneath a high rocky mountain wall and as they dismounted their ponies to rest they heard a laughing voice that echoes from the rocky walls. Then out from the rocky walls appeared two beautiful twin sisters. The sisters informed the hunters that they were mortal creatures that lived in the Black Hills and asked the hunters to follow them and they would lead them to the sacred place called Mini-Kata where the water was hot and had curative powers. When the twins led them to the springs they proceeded to tell and show the hunters how to use the springs and told them this. 'You tell your people to offer up tokens and never reveal this place to anyone but your people." The twin sisters then disappeared back into the rocky walls into the mysterious hidden powers of Mother Earth.

Herman goes on to tell how, in later years, a young warrior recklessly told a white man the whereabouts of the springs whose location the Lakotas kept secret. In exchange for a gray horse, he took the white man to the springs. After he returned to his camp, a thunderstorm approached and lightning killed his gray horse. The story concludes with the statement: "The Thunderbird had taken its toll." (A portion of this story also appears in One Feather 1972:149).

The Twin Sisters of this story are remarkably similar in their features to the Double-Woman, who also appears in LaPointe's story (1976:80-81) of Wind Cave. The Double-Woman, *Winyan Nunpapika*, was an important spiritual figure, often represented as a blacktail deer that took on the appearance of tall twin women (Dorsey, J. 1894:480; Tyon in Walker 1980:165-166). She was a patroness of Lakota quill workers, and images associated with her have been linked to

some of the rock art on the walls of nearby canyons in the Black Hills (Sundstrom 2002).[46] Another figure, which is often conflated with her but is different, is *Anog-Ite* (Double Face), who plays an important role in the story of *Tokahe* and the emergence of the *Pte Oyate* from their home at Wind Cave. This figure, usually portrayed as a female, is widely reported to harm pregnant women and lure lone hunters astray (Tyon, Garnett, Bear, Sword, and Blunt Horn in Walker 1980:107), but there are also male two-faces in Lakota/Dakota traditions (Dorsey, J. 1894:473-475; Bushotter in Dorsey 1889:151-153; Ivan Stars in Stars, Iron Shell, and Buechel 1978:374-378, [also in Buechel and Manhart 1998:644-658]) . In Cheyenne stories, some of the two-faces are associated with a cave in the southern Black Hills (Schlesier 1987:79). Like *Waziya*, the Two-Faces and the Double-Woman are often characterized as giants (Bushotter in Dorsey 1889:153).

In Lakota traditions, bluffs and springs that emerge out of rock outcroppings are commonly associated with the homes of Little People, the Double-Woman, and the first *Pte Oyate* woman, *Wakanka.* Any site of this order is bound to have some spiritual significance and use. It would not be surprising to learn, for example, that areas near Cold Spring Creek and the Twin Sisters Range [a name the Lakota sometimes use in English to refer to the Double-Woman] have sites of cultural significance. Indeed, just south of this range, outside park properties, is a place called "Witch Springs." In Cheyenne traditions, springs and water holes have connections to Little People and blacktail deer as well, and they are highly respected (Moore, J. 1974:164).

In the traditions of the Lakotas and other tribal peoples of the Great Plains, the proportions of spiritual figures often change across different planes of the universe. The spirits of the Buffalo Nation or *Pte Oyate*, for example, are tiny in their underworld home before they emerge on the earth's surface where they grow to their normal stature (Campbell 1937; LaPointe 1976:87; Charging Eagle and Zeilinger 1987). Spirits of the underworld and the sky world are often miniaturized or inflated to non-human sizes, perhaps as a rhetorical device to emphasize their mysterious, non-ordinary, or out-of-this-world status and power. Whatever the reason, the spirits associated with Wind Cave exist in miniaturized form, sometimes appearing as blue lights, although the sacred figures that govern their appearance and materialization are sometimes envisioned as gigantic in stature.

As discussed elsewhere, any place that connects the underground with the surface of the earth or anything that transverses these planes is sacred to the Lakotas (Powers, W. 1986:113). When the two stand in proximity, that is when plants, minerals, or animals inhabit locations near caves and springs, the effect of their *ton* is intensified. The area of Wind Cave is especially significant in this regard because bison, gypsum, and certain plants converge at this location in wondrous, powerful, and life-generating ways (Young Bear and Theisz 1994:128; Catches in Gonzalez 1996:67). Earth centers are the places that give rise to life in its materialized form, or to put it differently, give physical form to the spirit. Their association with death and rebirth, their circular form, and their extension across multiple tiers of the universe all come together in complex, symbolic ways to articulate a sense of great mystery. All of these things tie Wind Cave, the Buffalo Gap, and the Hot Springs together and to the area that is the Black Hills. What weaves them all together are the sacred stories about the genesis of bison and their relations with humans, the stories of the Four Winds, especially *Waziyata*, the North Wind, and his grandfather, *Waziya*, the various Orphan Boy narratives, and finally, the Great Race.

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[46] See also the discussions on deer in Chapter Ten and in Appendix A.

D. The Great Race and the Race Track

In Alexandra New Holy's analysis of the Black Hills (1997:128), the *cangleska*, the circle or hoop, is another centralizing metaphor within which time and space are unified in Lakota cosmology. It is the figurative geometric expression of life in all of its forms (DeMallie 1987:27, 80). Drawing on the words of Nicholas Black Elk, New Holy shows how the Black Hills stand for this circle of life and become *Og'naka I'Cante*, "the heart of everything that is." For her, the circular Race Track is a synergistic symbol inside of which *Paha Sapa*, [Black Hills], the *Wiwan-yang Wacipi* [Sun Dance], and the *Cangleska Oyate* [Hoop of the Nation] become indivisible and part of an essential oneness (New Holy 1997:133-137). She goes on to argue that the circle's sacred center, the *hocoka*, is understood as the "seventh direction," the place where the heart [*cante*] of a people, their land, and the universe come together with the use of the pipe [*cannupa*]. Through the prayers that are conveyed in the action of a pipe and its smoke, all time-spaces of the universe are connected, enfolded, and concentrated at a single point that is the center of life and its creations (New Holy 1997:138-143). Similarly, the performance of the Sun Dance draws all that is to its center, the *can wakan* [sacred tree], through prayer and ritual, thereby renewing the world (New Holy 1997:143-151). The center or altar, *hocoka*, the pipe, and the Sun Dance are also synergistically connected to the land and its heart. For the Lakotas, this heart is the Black Hills whose innermost center is located at their geologic core -- basically, the area that encompasses the three central prairies, Gilette, Reynolds, and Slate, known as *Pe Sla* [Bare Place][47] in Lakota and their surrounding peaks, Harney Peak and Castle Butte (New Holy 1987:151-156). This was the region to which the Lakotas traveled on a religious pilgrimage every seven years to perform a renewal ceremony known as *Okisataya Wowahwala* [Peace at Bare Spot],[48] a journey that started when the bison left their winter home along the Race Track and returned to the grasslands with their newborn calves through the opening at the Buffalo Gap (Goodman 1992: 50).

The landscape of the Black Hills can be envisioned as a series of four circles with the outermost circle bounded by the two branches of the Cheyenne River that nearly surround them. The next circle is formed by the Hogback with its many canyon gateways, which the animals typically used in their annual movements to and from the adjoining grasslands. The third circle is the Race Track where the animals wintered. The innermost circle is marked by the Hills' limestone and granite interiors, the place where forces of the cosmic nadir and zenith meet, begetting new life through the release of *ni* [breath].[49] Once life is reborn within the depths of the Hills and arrives on the earth's surface through the various cave openings which dot the Hills, its various manifestations need to be ordered to insure its survivance. The process of its ordering is what the famous story of the Race Track is about. There are many different versions of this story

[47] This spot must have been highly significant to the Lakotas. In contrast to their heavily forested surroundings, these open, treeless prairies must have appeared like *hocaka*, altars, which, in most Lakota and Cheyenne ceremonies, are areas inside a ceremonial circle where the vegetation has been stripped away and the ground unearthed and pulverized before the altar is constructed.

[48] The details surrounding the performance of this ceremony are not given. Its purpose is remarkably similar, however, to the Cheyennes' practice of the *Massaum* (Schlesier 1987), which was a ceremony dedicated to the renewal of plants and animals that also took place in the Black Hills.

[49] Early reports of the volumes of smoke issuing from the interior Hills in the 1830s may very well have made the Hills interiors appear as a colossal recharging of the universe, so powerful that, like a thunderstorm, it was capable of destroying everything in its path. This is reminiscent of John Moore's characterization (1996:225-226) of the Sun Dance as replicating the fertility structure of a thunderstorm, in which the thunders and their whirlwinds act as primal phallic forces impregnating the earth, so it can bring forth its plants and animals. Since the thunders dwell in the region of Harney Peak, the Black Hills can be imagined as a fertility structure as well, a place where life returns to be regenerated, reborn, and renewed.

among the Cheyennes and Lakotas. Most Cheyenne and Lakota renditions focus on how the race ordered the relationships between different animals and humans, thereby establishing certain basic categorical and cosmological distinctions in the universe.

Two versions of a Cheyenne-Suhtaio story begin with a marriage between a human man and a buffalo woman (Stands In Timber and Liberty 1967:19-24; Powell 1969:2:472-475).[50] For four nights, the man dreams of shooting a certain buffalo. After the fourth dream, he decides to find out what it means and goes out hunting. Just as he dreamed, he shoots a buffalo cow, and although wounded, she escapes him. He follows her tracks and finds her living in a lone tipi where she now appears to him as a beautiful woman. He marries her, and they have a son, but she leaves him. Once again, he follows her tracks, which lead to a high ridge where the man is able to see a herd of buffalo grazing below. His son, who is now a young yellow calf, approaches him and warns that the buffalo are going to kill him unless he can identify which of the young calves is his son. The son devises different signals so his father can recognize him. The father succeeds in singling out his son, but the buffalo persist in their efforts to get rid of him. They charge him and put him through more tests, but his human power is too strong for them. Finally, the buffalo decide to run a race against him, the outcome of which determines who is able to eat whom. The man is given a choice of running with either a black or red stick. On the advice of his son, he chooses the black one so he can follow the track along the inside of the Hogback. The buffalo select their fastest runner, Slim Walking Woman, to represent them. All the animals and birds arrive at this momentous race and paint themselves with different colors. They take sides, and the birds band together with humans. The animals race around the Black Hills, many collapsing from exhaustion. Slim Walking Woman maintains the lead throughout the race until the very end when Magpie flies past her and wins the race for humans. Before conceding, the buffalos perform one last act. They organize a Medicine Lodge (Sun Dance) that recreates the Great Race and then turn its knowledge over to humans (Powell 1969:2:477). As John Stands In Timber (and Liberty 1967:24) interprets it:

> That race gave mankind the right to use animal flesh for food and to be the master like the buffalo told him. If the animals had won they would have lived on his flesh instead. Man was thankful that he won. The Cheyennes have offered the Sun Dance every year since that time, remembering the Great Race and giving thanks to the Almighty for the way it turned out. They used to put little clay figures of all the animals around the center pole to represent them, but that part is not done anymore, although much of the ceremony is the same as in the earliest days.

In other Cheyenne versions (Kroeber 1900:161-162; Grinnell 1926:252-254; Randolph 1937: 189-192), the Great Race narrative is not preceded by any special human-bison relationship. Grinnell (1926, 241) identifies "The Race" as one of the earliest Cheyenne stories, and he places it under a different heading than the "Buffalo Wife" narrative. Similarly, John Ant's version (in Leman 1987:245-250) and one narrated by an unnamed Cheyenne (in Marquis and Limbaugh 1973:30-31) do not include the story of the "Buffalo Wife," nor does the one recorded by Richard Erdoes (and Ortiz 1984:390-392) from another unidentified Cheyenne person in 1968. As recorded and published by George Bird Grinnell in 1926 (252-254), the story reads:

> In the beginning the creator made first the earth, then the trees and the grass, and afterward he made the animals and the people and put them on earth. At that time the animals and people lived together as friends.

[50] The Arapahos have a race story, published by George Dorsey and Alfred Kroeber (1903:395-418), that involves a marriage between a human man and a bison woman. It is not identified with the Race Track of the Black Hills , however. Another story is related to Bear Lodge Butte, but the connection is not made in their texts (Ibid:152-153).

Yet after this, as you all know, the buffalo used to eat us people, and the animals as well. The Great Power thought that it would be a good thing to have a race of all the animals, to decide whether the buffalo should eat the people, or they the buffalo.

So at that time all creatures living upon the earth, Indians, buffalo, birds, and all animals were called together at a place east of the Black Hills, which we call the Race Track. It is near what white men now call the Buffalo Gap.

The story goes on to tell how the Magpie won the race for the people, giving them the right to eat the buffalo rather than become the buffalo's food.

Another early version, as told by an elderly Cheyenne to Thomas Marquis (and Limbaugh 1973:30-31), describes in some detail how the animals variously painted themselves, and it reads as follows:

In the Black Hills is a certain place where the Indians say, a long time ago all of the birds and animals had a race. Buffalo, deer, elk, antelope, bears, wolves, mountain sheep, crows, magpies, and other creatures entered the contest. In preparation, all of them painted themselves, each with its favorite colors. The meadow lark said: "I shall have the moon on my breast.' Ever since then the moon has given this bird's breast its color. The magpie and the crow were the last to put on their paints. The others had taken the bright hues, so these two had only the black and white. The magpie used white earth and charcoal. The crow blackened itself with only the charcoal. A slender and spirited deer pranced so lightly that all observers predicted, 'Surely this deer will win.'

The race continued throughout a whole day, from sunrise to sunset. The catbird stopped, alighted upon a bush, and said: 'It will be better if I stay here and sing for them." The buffalo slowed down to a walk, and from its mouth came so much froth that there are yet many places in that region where the ground is white and frothy. The lively deer became so tired that the blood flowing from its nose made red stains through the rocks and over the soil all over that country. The magpie and the crow kept flying all day and they won the race. Since then, the Cheyennes honor them by not eating their flesh.

The version collected by Alice Marriott (and Rachlin 1968:120-123) from two Southern Cheyennes, Mary Little Bear Inkanish and John Fletcher, clearly joins the ungulate species, elk, deer, and antelope, with the bison, and aligns raptors and carnivores with humans.[51] As John Moore (1984:296-297) points out in reference to the Cheyenne, although some elements found in the story vary from one narrator to another, the game animals and birds that appear are basically identical in all versions. In addition, the overall description and meaning of the race is the same. Generally speaking, the animals that painted themselves stood on the side of human beings, while those who did not were the opponents who ultimately lost the race and became the prey of humans.

John Ant's version (in Leman 1987:245-250) of the story, which is published in Cheyenne with a line-by-line English translation, has three interesting features. First, it tells how the man raced with the birds by "floating" with an eagle plume attached to the back of his head.[52] Second, it explains how, before the race began, various animals ran out of the hollow log of a large cotton-

[51] This version also links the Sun Dance to the Race Track story, but unlike the one told by the Northern Cheyenne, the race takes place after the performance of a Sun Dance.
[52] This is also a significant feature of a Lakota race story told by Left Heron (in Walker 1917:219-221) that appears to take place in the Black Hills too, and it is also associated with the magical abilities of a Lakota orphan hero (Beckwith 1930).

wood tree to find human meat.[53] Lastly, as in all other Race Track stories, it establishes the right of humans to consume bison and other game, and it also creates the prohibition against eating the animals that sided with humans. In this particular version, the allies of humans were a magpie, a crow, a blackbird, a sparrow, and a gopher.

Lakota versions of the Race Track story do not begin with the account of the man who marries a buffalo woman. As discussed earlier, the Buffalo woman tale as told by Left Heron and others at the beginning of the twentieth century is linked in later Lakota storytelling traditions to Wind Cave, which sits on a mountain a short distance to the west of the Race Track. Among the Lakotas, the Race Track story, which Charlotte Black Elk (1986c:200) calls *Otakuye Topa Wamaka Og'naka I'Cante Oki'inyanke* (Run of the Four Relations Around the Heart of Everything That Is), involves the same general message and many of the same animals found in Cheyenne stories. There are some interesting variations, however. For one, Lakota stories often start with the existence of a universal disharmony or chaos between humans and all of the animals, which the race seeks to redress. As LaPointe (1976:18-19) tells it, a council was held to confer on the matter:

> It was a memorable event because, in order to bring peace and order to the world, it was agreed that a race of immense magnitude was to be the solution. The race was to decide many things. It would result in sorting and separating the animals into their proper species by the smell of their bodies. It was to be a grand, epic feat of the ages.
>
> Thus, to all the *tatuya tona* (wind flows or directions), messengers were sent, in order to announce the great event. These messengers were chosen from among the swiftest birds, and from among animals that could run like the flight of a strong arrow. Meantime, other animals were detailed to find suitable ground for a circular racetrack, and lay out a course wide enough and long enough so that the many animals who were expected could take part in the race. There were strict rules established, to insure a fair and orderly event. Every animal would have a chance, whether small or clumsy, weak or strong.

Joseph White Bull, however, told Thomas Odell (1942:168) that the race took place because "the animals in the Black Hills became too numerous, and it was decided to eliminate some by having them run a race around the Black Hills." In one version, Magpie calls the council after overhearing the buffalos' plans to exterminate all the humans (Black Elk, C. 1986c:200-201). In another, it is a man who convenes the great meeting (LaPointe 1976:18-19). And in Nicholas Black Elk's rendition (in DeMallie 1984:309), the thunder-beings are the ones who instigate it.

In LaPointe's narrative (1976:17-20), there are also unique references to giant reptilian land animals closely related to the *Unktehi* of the waters, who get destroyed in the Great Race.[54] La Pointe (1976:19) writes:

> The Lakota say, that even to this day the remains of this ancient race track are still plainly visible, and there are many large bones still lying around along the historic track. The huge

[53] This parallels certain Kiowa stories (Mooney 1979) that link human and animal origins to hollow cottonwood logs. These logs might be seen as metaphoric equivalents to caves, and this is especially significant in relation to the Sun Dance where the center pole is a young cottonwood tree.

[54] Archie Fire (a.k.a Lame Deer) told Richard Erdoes another story in 1969 about the Black Hills that involves the *Unktehi* (Erdoes and Ortiz 1984:94-96). In this story, the water monsters were turned into stone, and a great flood drowned the people. One young girl survived, however, because an eagle took her to the highest stone pinnacle in the Black Hills and made her his wife. The association of fossilized animals, from dinasours to mastadoons, with ancient water spirits is widespread in L/Dakota traditions (Dorsey, J. 1894: 438-440.

bones of the *Unkcehe Ghila*, which, once upon a time, roamed these prairie lands, can be found in the badlands to the east and south of the Black Hills.

Their destruction came about as the Black Hills spewed rock and ashes into the air, killing many of the animals (LaPointe 1976:18-19).

In most of the published Lakota stories of the Great Race (Odell 1942:168; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:309), as with the Cheyenne, Magpie wins the race for humans, but in some Lakota versions, only the birds race with each other. As Little Cloud told one version of the story in Lakota to Father Eugene Buechel (in Stars, Iron Shell, and Buechel 1978:94-96),

Now, all the little birds and all their relatives will finish a race. Now, a crow announced it all over the world and returned home saying, "They are coming."

Then when they arrived, they all said: "Where is your Leader?" The others replied "Spotted Eagle is our leader," but they looked and they said, "Is he the one who will win?

We will go together but it is a long and difficult route."
Then the leader said: "The winners will have many good winters because they will get the best home, strong enough so snow can't get in and it will be good for many winters."

Then everyone was happy. Then a magpie stood and said: "Friends, I am slow, but because I am in need of a home, I will take part in this race." The leader responded saying: "Because all of you have come a long way, you will leave in two days."

Then he said, "At that time, you will leave *Mato Tipila* (Devil's Tower) and circle around the Hills, and return by the way through *He Okiksahe* (Buffalo Gap). Those of you who can go a long distance, wave your wings." He said this as they were leaving, but the best three to go the distance were the Big Hawk, the Eagle, and the Prairie Chicken and the slowest was the Magpie.

But, whoever wanted to win did not turn away and kept flapping his wings. First Big Hawk was sweating to death just sitting there. Then, after that time, eagle sat down and after that Prairie Chicken sat down. After that, all the little birds were sweating to death and one after the other, they say down. The Magpie went, and they each said:

"Turn back. As for me, because it is truly a long distance, I can not do it. The Magpie said; "I am slow, but I can fly through my country." Now, he was thinking that all the relatives would be indisposed, and he really called out while flying and was very happy at heart. Now a few were close to returning home and were half way. The Magpie was alone and the first to get home and now reached his goal.

At that time, all his relatives reached the finish line one right after the other. Then the leader called the Magpie and he went. The leader said: "Now you have won a home, but where do you want to make it?" Then he said, "I would want to be in the dense woods. Yes that is where I will be."

So that is how the Magpie won his race and acquired his nest, and for all his days lived in that home.

The Magpie was strong for flying alone. It is so. The end.[55]

[55] Yvonne Kelly translated this story with the assistance of Jerry Dearly. Again, this translation differs somewhat from Manhart's.

A more recent rendition of this version of the story is given by Gilbert Walking Bull (1980:6-8), and like Little Cloud's narrative, the race begins and ends at Bear Lodge Butte instead of the Buffalo Gap in Cheyenne traditions and in some of the Lakotas' as well.

The vast majority of the stories imply that only one race took place, although Eagle Shield's narrative (Densmore 1918:319) suggests that the animals gathered to race at this spot on more than one occasion. As he interpreted the story:

> The reason why the Black Hills were so long unknown to the white man was that Wakantanka [Great Spirit or Great Mystery] created them as a meeting place for the animals. The Indians had always known this and regarded the law of Wakantanka concerning it. By this law they were forbidden to kill any of the animals during the great gatherings. In the Black Hills there is a ridge of land around which is a smooth, grassy place called the 'race-course.' This is where the animals have the races, during their gatherings. Even small animals like the turtle are there. The crow is always first to arrive, and the other birds come before the animals, while insects and creatures like the frog travel slowly and arrive last. Sometimes it takes 10 years for all the animals to arrive, as they come from long distances and camp whenever winter overtakes them.

Lakota and Cheyenne stories similarly account for the Race Track's red soil as a vestige of the blood spilled by the animals in the heat of the race. The soil is called *neoma* [red earth] in Cheyenne (Randolph 1937:191; Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:51; Walking Bull 1980:9). While the Cheyennes symbolically mark and separate the Hogback from the Red Valley in their stories, Lakotas sometimes go beyond this and explain how the depression and some of its surrounding topographic features were formed as a result of the race. Indeed, in one story, the movement of the racers creates the Black Hills (LaPointe 1976:19). [56]

In some of the earlier Cheyenne and Lakota versions (Grinnell 1926:254; DeMallie 1984: 310), humans learn of the bow and arrow after wining the Great Race. It is interesting to note here that the Bow Society of the Lakotas was associated with a sacred race too, although there is nothing in the literature that explicitly connects the origins of this society to the story of the Great Race or the Race Track in the Black Hills (Blish 1934). In several Cheyenne stories, but not in any of the Lakota versions, the Great Race is associated with the beginnings of the Sun Dance. This ceremony was first performed by the buffalos, and after losing to humans, they turned it over to humans. Some say this happened at the Buffalo Gap (Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:72). A few writers have pointed out that many aspects of the Cheyennes' Sun Dance recreate elements of the Great Race (see Chapter Twelve) (Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967:24; Powell 1969:2:473 n4, 475 n5, 476 n6; 477-478).

Curiously, the Lakotas also have a story (Walker 1917:212-215; Red Shirt 2002:212) of how the buffalos taught human beings the Sun Dance, but this one took place in a cave at the home of the *Pte Oyate*, where a young man cohabits with a buffalo woman and learns the dance from her people. Later, he and his wife take this knowledge to his people, who, at first, refuse to accept it, even though they are starving. They finally approach the couple for help and learn the dance that brings the buffalo to their camp. Like the story of *Tokahe*, which is associated by many Lakotas with Wind Cave, *Wazi* and *Wakanka* are central characters in this narrative. Also, like the other stories of Wind Cave descended from Left Heron, this one involves a marriage between a hunter and a buffalo woman. Wind Cave is not explicitly identified in this story, nor was it ever mentioned in any of the other stories in the Walker collection, but its themes certainly match

[56] In Dakota and Lakota traditions, a similar theme of bison shedding their blood accounts for the red pipestone formations in Minnesota (Nicolett in Bray and Bray 1976:76).

those that are now connected to Wind Cave. This location is also consistent with Cheyenne stories of the origin of the Sun Dance at the Buffalo Gap. In fact, Olivia Pourier (in Neihardt and Utecht 2000:135), the granddaughter of Nichols Black Elk, reported that the Lakotas used to hold Sun Dances in the southeastern region of the Black Hills.

Another story collected by Edward and Mabel Kadlecek (1981:118) from Frank Kicking Bear in 1969 makes a similar connection between the Sun Dance and the Black Hills, although the animals involved are deer and elk instead of the bison:

> I will tell a short story about the Sun Dance. My grandfather, his name was Chagla, was the founder of the Sun Dance. He went to the Black Hills one time. As he went about the hills, he heard a dream and he followed the dream sound. As he went around, he saw all kinds of deer and elk dancing in a circle, and after the dance they paired up and went back in the hills. This was where he learned all the Sun dance songs. He saw that in the form of humans. This was the beginning of the Sun Dance. Through this Sun Dance they worship the Great Spirit, and it is the greatest religious gathering the Indians ever had.

Jake Herman (1965b:21) also connects the origins of the Sun Dance to the Black Hills. Indeed, most Lakotas and Cheyennes locate the original Sun Dance in the Black Hills, either at the Buffalo Gap or in the area of Bear Lodge Butte.

Several other Lakota and Cheyenne ceremonial observances are connected with caves too. In one story Little Wound told James Walker (1980:196) of the origins of the *Hunka* as follows:

> A shaman sought a vision. His vision was a ghost like cloud. He followed this ghost and it led him into a great hole in the earth. When they came into this hole it was like a great council tipi, and there were many people there. All were feasting and singing and giving presents. *Tate* and *Okaga* were there. They taught the shaman the songs and the ceremony. Then *Tate* carried him through the air back to his people and told him that when one chooses a *Hunka* or an *Ate*, then this ceremony and these songs should be performed.

Although there is nothing to specifically identify the cave in this story with Wind Cave, *Tate*, after whom Wind Cave is named, is a central character in the story. Also, *Tokahe*, the first human to come from Wind Cave, is linked to the *Hunka* (Walker 1983:378-379).

There is yet another Left Heron story recorded by James Walker (1917:219-221) that tells about the origins of foot racing. This narrative is quite different from the vast majority of stories related to the Race Track because it doesn't involve a race among the animals. Instead, it involves a race between a *wakan* runner and *Wakanka,* The Old Woman, identified in this story as the "Witch." Both are able to transform themselves into animals and both enlist the help of two Winds to win the race. Even though this isn't the story of the Great Race, it describes topographic features that appear remarkably like the Race Track. In the story the Witch tells everyone that "they would run once around a deep gully, then on level ground to the hills, and once around the hills and back through a gap in the hills to the place where they started" (Walker 1917:220). Nevertheless, it is one more example of the importance of foot racing, which in Lakota traditions often took place before hunts to ensure their success, suggesting that races were not simply recreational but spiritual in their outcome (Walker 1917:278-283, 1982:89).[57] Today, a strong connection is still being made between the Great Race and racing traditions in general and the identity of the Lakota peoples. As Young Bear (and Theisz 1994:29) tells it:

[57] A variety of different competitive games were played by the Lakotas to insure a successful outcome in hunting (Meeker 1901b; Walker 1905; 1906).

> It was brought up by some of these elderly (referring to Moses Two Bulls, Bunk Left Hand, Luke Weasel Bear, Franks Fools Crow and Dave Badger) that at one time long ago the birds and the two-leggeds had a race against the four-leggeds around the Black Hills. It was a natural track all around the Hills. The animals did this because of the sacredness of the Black Hills and also to show their stamina and endurance, to show how animals could endure hardship, run without water and food for a number of days, how some of the birds could float through the air and some have to fight hard flapping their own wings, and some animals have to crawl. But no matter how slow or how fast they went, the endurance was there. As they ran and hopped and flew and crawled, they wore a valley all around the Hills we now call the Race Track. Today there are marathon runs held by Lakota young people to honor the Black Hills and that the first great race all the way around the Hills. I think that's a great thing and a way of expressing identity.

Most of the published versions of the Race Track story represent only fragments of the original narratives whose conventional telling probably involved more elaborate story lines and a much richer body of detail. Despite variations in some of their characters, storylines, and outcomes, most of the narrators who tell the story agree that it laid down some of the fundamental characteristics of the animals, their species identification, and the nature of their relationships with each other, particularly who would become the hunter and the hunted. It is a story of epic stature, one that was narrated by the most accomplished storytellers (LaPointe 1976:17) and one whose recitation may have taken up to four nights to tell (Powell 1969:2:472 n1). It is also a story that alludes to one of the most powerful spiritual beings in the Lakota pantheon, *Taku Skanskan*, who guides all forms of motion. He is the one who invented races and who supervises their outcome; he presides over the movements of animals, war parties, and camps (Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear, and Sword in Walker 1980:107), and he is the guardian of *Tate*, the Wind.

All of the stories, however, support the view, widely held by the Lakotas and the Cheyennes, that the Black Hills stand within a sacred enclosure or circle, which is mirrored in the heavens by a great circle of stars,[58] also as known as the Race Track, *Ki inyanka ocanku* or the Sacred Hoop, *Cangleska wakan* (Goodman 1992:7).[59] Whether on earth inside the Black Hills or in the heavens inside a circle of seven stars, new life is created and reborn. Inside this circle is another constellation known as *Tayamni*, which includes *Tayamnipa* [The Head] in Pleiades; *Taya-mnisintu* [The Tail] or Sirius; *Tayamnitucuhu* [The Ribs], representing two stars, Rigel and Betle-guese; and *Tayamnicankahu* [The Backbone], the stars in Orion's belt (Buechel 1970:486).[60] The name *Tayamni* can be translated in several ways, one derived from the number three [*yamni*] and perhaps referring to three kinds of game [*ta*], or it can refer to a circular action [*yumni*] which is associated with the act of creation (Buechel 1970:674) and the Whirlwind, the Fifth son of *Tate* [Wind]. The last translation would best fit the idea that this region constitutes an area where game animals are conceived. The three stars forming the belt are associated with the region of *Pe Sla*, while the head represents one of the seven peaks in the Harney Range. Rigel at the eastern side

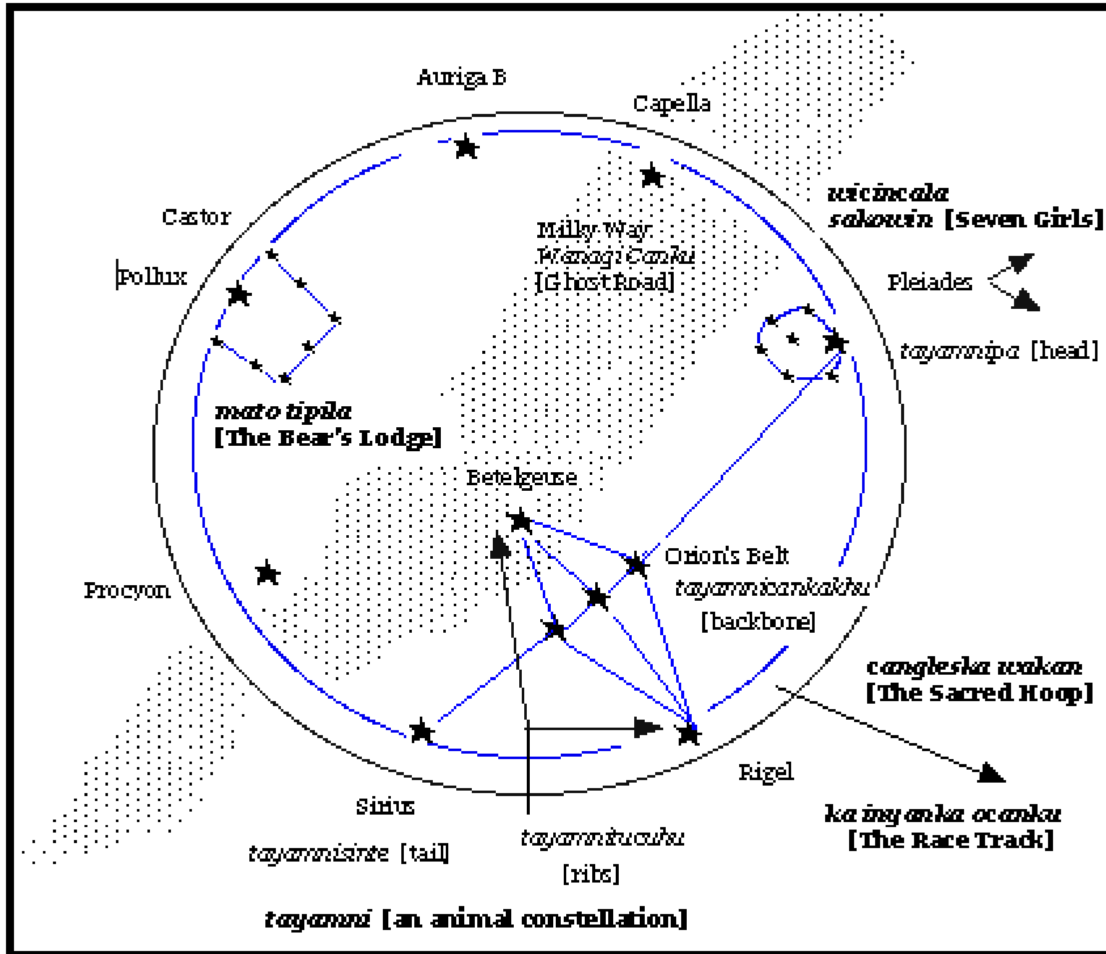
[58] Cheyennes know a circular constellation whose identifying stars are not described, nor have they been associated in the published literature with the Race Track (Petter 1913-15:1009; Moore, J. 1996:204).

[59] In one rendition of the Great Race story (Goble 1985), the Milky Way was created from the dust the animals raised in their race. In the 1980s, Paul Goble, a non-Indian, wrote many children's books based on tribal myths. His book *The Great Race of the Birds and Animals* (1985) was written for children, and represents a synthesis of the storylines found in different Cheyenne and Lakota versions of this story. He also published a version of the Buffalo Woman story (1984). We have not been able to find a connection to the Milky Way in any of the published stories we have studied, however.

[60] The sweat lodge is often described as the womb and ribs of mother earth (St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:48; Bucko 1999:76, 85, 148-149). Here, again, we find an example of the interchangeability of symbols, with the interiors of the Black Hills being conceived in the image of a sweatlodge *qua* animal womb that gives birth to *ni* , or the breath of life.

of the Race Track marks the backbone, while Betleguese represents the trail leading to Inyan Kara Mountain at Procyon in the west. The tail, Sirius, represents an exit in the southern Hills at the point where the Cheyenne River is believed to move in Four Directions; this exit follows a trail that moves south from the Central Prairies along Hells Canyon near Jewel Cave National

FIGURE 29. Lakota Star Map with Parallel Locations in Black Hills



*Adopted from Goodman (1992: 6).

Monument (Black Elk, C. 1992:50-51). There are two other stars that mark the circle, Pollux in the west at Bear Lodge Butte a.k.a. Devil's Tower and Capella[61] in the north that Charlotte Black Elk (1992:50, 53) identifies with the Buffalo Gap. All of these stars are marked by a double vortex image on Lakota star maps, indicating points of intersection between the sky and the earth (Goodman 1992:16), and all of them can be seen together during the winter months in the

[61] Curiously, the positioning of the Buffalo Gap star, Capella, on Black Elk's star map does not correspond with the location of this site in the Black Hills. It is the only site whose location on the earth's surface does not match. There is no explanation why this should be the case unless it represents the kind of inversion previously discussed in relation to the Four Winds.

northern sky. Capella[62] is an especially interesting star whose highest position in the sky corresponds with mid-winter. In spring it moves southeast towards the horizon where it stops in mid-

summer and returns in a northwesterly direction towards the zenith. It is one of the stars, along with Polaris, the North Star, that, according to Joachim Ekrutt (1990:133), "never sets in the higher latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere."

Another metaphoric allusion is the connection of the Race Track to the edge of a corral, in which the Black Hills is imagined as one huge hunting enclosure, where the Buffalo Gap forms the chute into which the animals are driven. Linea Sundstrom (2000) shows, quite convincingly, how this representation fits not only with the Cheyenne stories of the Race Track but also their *Massaum* [Animal Dance] ceremony. One can argue that the enclosure represented by the stories of the Buffalo Gap and Race Track is also connected to the tradition of the Sun Dance in Cheyenne traditions, not only because there are explicit references to this association in Cheyenne stories but also because of many other symbolic connections to their New Life Lodge or Sun *Oxheheom* (cf.: Chapter Twelve). Although many of the most famous stories about the first performance of the Sun Dance take place at sites on the northern end of the Hills, notably Sundance Mountain and Bear Lodge Butte, the fact remains that several traditions point to the Buffalo Gap and the Race Track as the setting for the Sun Dance's origins among the bison and the site of its transfer to humans.

The association of these two locations with the Sun Dance in Lakota and Cheyenne traditions does not appear to be coincidental. From the descriptions of Henry Newton and Walter Jenney (1880), the areas of the Buffalo Gap and Sundance Mountain hold peculiar gypsum/red clay formations. Recalling the discussion in Chapter Twelve, a line is traced around the Lakotas' Sun Dance altar and filled with red paint and then gypsum, mirroring how red clay and gypsum coexist in the geology of the Red Valley. Where present day Beaver Creek (then known as Amphibious Creek) passes the Race Track, the gypsum stratum are exceptionally wide and prominent (Newton and Jenney 1880:141-142), and in this area and the Sun Dance Hills, the seams of gypsum dissolve into sink holes and crevices (Newton and Jenney 1880:135, 146). It is not hard to imagine how these might have been thought of as openings to the underworld, places where the bison returned and emerged following the crystalline formations that led to and from their subterranean homes (Walker 1983:220-221, 222-223, 227-228). This is the stone, which the Cheyenne call a "Sun Arrow," that gave birth to Stone Boy (Grinnell 1926:179). There is also the allusion to these formations in one of the Cheyenne Great Race stories, which explains gypsum as the remnant of the froth that flowed from the mouth of the lead bison as she ran around the track (Marquis and Limbaugh 1973:30-31). The culture preservation staffs of Cheyenne and Lakota tribes have singled out the Race Track as a highly significant sacred site and one where all of the areas that follow its path require protection (Albers and Kittelson 2002).

II. UNITY IN DIVERSITY

At this point, it is important to ask why there is so much diversity in the stories that surround Wind Cave, the Race Track, and the neighboring Buffalo Gap and Hot Springs. One simple answer is that the variation reflects the diverse backgrounds, experiences, knowledge, and

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[62] Capella is an important star for other tribes as well, including the Crow and Pawnee. Curiously, the Pawnee believed that Capella, the Yellow Star, was one of their "Four Quarter" or "Four Wind" stars. These stars represented the "pillars" of heaven (Chamberlain 1982:94-96, 101, 103, 113, 178). The heliacal risings of other stars, including Aldebaran, Sirius, and Rigel, are important in Cheyenne ceremonialism (Schlesier 1987:83-87), and these are also aligned with some of the stone cairns, alignments, and medicine wheels in the northern Plains (Kehoe and Kehoe 1977:85-86).

narrating skills of their storytellers. Among the Lakotas, for example, differences in the way stories were told had to do with whether the storyteller was *ikce*, an ordinary person using everyday language, or someone with spiritual gifts, a *wicasa wakan*. Holy people were the ones who kept and told the most powerful spiritual stories because they were the ones who knew the sacred names and how to speak in a spiritual way (Jahner in Walker 1983:108). This sort of distinction was not unique to the Lakotas but typical of many American Indian storytelling traditions (Fogelson 1981:134; DeMallie 1984:401).

Another and more complex reason for this variation has to do with the differing cultural influences and genealogical histories of the groups in which particular stories were passed down from one generation to the next. As indicated before, the Lakotas have been an internally diverse peoples throughout their history. They lived in different locations, followed diverse kinds of adaptive strategies, and maintained varied relationships with other tribal nations. Some of the Oglalas, for example, were closely linked through intermarriage with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, others with the Poncas or Arikaras, while many had little connection with outside tribes at all. Variations such as these must have influenced their local cultural traditions and the ways different bands or families understood and related to the geographic landscapes they traveled and lived in. Indeed, Ella Deloria (in Rice 1993:11) wrote about the variations in the narrative traditions of the Lakota storytellers she consulted, and how she needed to accept this diversity as part of their distinctive interpretations and styles of narration.

Importantly, there has never been any single or "right" story associated with any of the places in the Black Hills that the Lakotas, Cheyennes, and other tribes hold sacred. There have always been, and probably always will be, different and competing stories. This variation not only reflects the fluidity and improvisational character of the kin-based social formations that made up their tribal ways of life for centuries but also the very nature of transmitting knowledge and tradition in oral rather than written form (Fowler 1987:19; DeMallie in Walker 1982:7; DeMallie 1984:82).

The varied stories about Wind Cave and the Race Track are no exception. There are significant differences in these stories that reveal the diverse threads of cultural influence under which local storytellers learned the narratives of these places or which reflect whether the storyteller was a common or holy person. Notwithstanding the variation, there are certain common themes that tie the stories together, that link them to other locations in the surrounding region, and that reveal a more encompassing and shared sense of meaning about the relationships between the land, its animals, plants, minerals, and the sky, its birds, winds, and stars. What the Lakotas and Cheyennes shared were certain cultural assumptions about caves, springs, breath as a life-giving force, animals, and humans that were woven together in a range of tapestry-like storytellings that made sense in relation to the unique topography of the Black Hills. Nearly fifty years ago, Robert Anderson (1956:99), when discussing the Buffalo Ceremony, wrote:

> Presently, all Cheyenne ceremonies share some elements with this one; perhaps none shares them all. But each ceremony represents a selection from a common fund of elements, and it is this selection and their distinctive ordering that makes any ceremony a recognizable and separate entity, standing apart from the total ceremonial and religious structure of which it is only an aspect…

More recently, Raymond DeMallie (; in Walker 1982:7, 1988:17) made a similar point in relation to the Lakotas when he argued that while Lakota culture carries a common set of ideas and principles, these are represented, interpreted, and actualized in varied ways according to individual experience (see also, Bucko 1999:101, 104, 109, 111). The idea of a foundational and

shared corpus of symbolic images and practices reworked in myriad ways to create new religious forms applies very well to the ways in which the Lakotas, Cheyennes, and other tribes in the region thought about and related to various sanctified landscapes in and around the Black Hills (New Holy 1997:27-28). A common body of ideas was transmitted and applied to specific kinds of landforms (see Chapter Twelve), and wherever people moved, they carried and reshaped this wisdom to the places they encountered that conformed to their ideas about certain topographic features. Caves, for example, were widely connected to the sanctity of breath, the bison, the North Wind, and regeneration.

Cultural assumptions of this order were known and understood well before the 1950s when stories about the sacred significance of Wind Cave made their first published appearance. For at least two hundred years, the Black Hills have been written about as the winter home of the animals, the place where new generations were reborn to repopulate the surrounding grasslands in the spring. For over a century, Cheyennes and Lakotas told or wrote stories about the association of the Hills with animal origins, regeneration and, by extension, the source of human life. Because these are quintessential stories about the great mystery, the Lakotas' *Wakan Tanka* or the Cheyennes' *Ma'heo*, they are sacred. Given the fact that they address basic questions about the ontological status of life itself, they are constituted in, constituted for, and constituted by a realm that is by definition spiritual. The idea of the Black Hills as a meeting place and home to the animals was widely known in the Plains; it was, as Sundstrom (1997:206) argues, a shared piece of knowledge that went with the landscape.

No matter how their details unfold, all of the stories associated with sites at Wind Cave National Park or in its vicinity are about "naming" and giving meaning to the world, placing it in order. As William Powers (1986:153) writes:

> Although the creation of the universe is seen by most people as a theological statement about firstcauses, one may look at the same stories profitably from the point of view of classification. The creation story in any culture is an attempt to put the chaotic universe that surrounds humans into some kind of order, and part of the mechanism used to accomplish this is the simple act of naming everything...The creation of culture including the Lakota, then, is tantamount to the classification of nature, and that act is what makes humans a special kind of animal. But for the Lakota, humans are perhaps not so distinctly separated from the animals, birds, reptiles, and other life forms that make up their universe.

Thus it is not surprising that the Lakota genesis and Race Track stories unfold at proximate locations, and as noted earlier, these locations share a fundamental connection to ideas of primal origin that in many ways distinguish them from landscapes at the northern end of the Black Hills that appear more connected to renewal and revitalization in more recent times.

III. IMPLICATIONS

It is true that many of the stories associated with the Black Hills are transportable, and that they can be, and probably have been, laid out in relation to other geographic landscapes. But it is also true that the Black Hills are exceptionally unique. They constitute a place that powerfully calls forth cosmological images that resonate with a particular intensity at this location. Once again, Linea Sundstrom (1996) is correct when she asserts that there are cultural ideas of this place that have gone with its territory irrespective of the identities of the tribal nations who hold them.

In its basic contours, some of the sacred knowledge associated with the Black Hills probably stretches back to prehistoric times. Yet, it is also clear that this knowledge has been refashioned over the centuries as new people have lived and new circumstances have unfolded within their shadows. Religious knowledge and practice are rarely static. Even though certain basic tenets and assumptions persist over time, these are changed in keeping with the cultures and conditions of the people who adopt them. To expect the Lakotas, Cheyennes, or the peoples of any other tribal nation to have harbored a geographically fixed and temporally static set of religious beliefs is not only naive, but it also denies these beliefs the very vitalism that gives people faith in them.

So what does all of this suggest for Wind Cave National Park? First of all, whether or not Wind Cave is the cave of the Lakota genesis story is not necessary for understanding the meaning and cultural significance of the region in which the park is located. All caves in the region connect to the underworld, and by definition, these subterranean sites are the homes of the bison wherever they are found. Many of the Lakota stories about Wind Cave could easily apply to other locations, but again, it is not coincidental that at some point in time they became attached to this particular cave. There is no question that the Lakotas, and probably before them the Cheyennes, Arapahos, Poncas, Kiowas, Plains Apaches, Comanches, and Arikaras, knew about this cave before Jesse and Tom Bingham "discovered" it in 1881. The cave is simply too close to a major access route for bison and humans in and out of the Black Hills to have escaped notice before the arrival of European Americans. It also stands in close proximity to a major hot springs and quarrying site, both of which certainly drew attention from the tribal nations who were known to live in this area. Indeed, according to Rufus Pilcher, (1964) who served as a ranger at Wind Cave National Park in the early 20th century, there were tipi rings and other surface remains of human habitation at the cave entrance and near the elevator, proving that some tribal peoples knew of the cave.

Over time, the Lakotas have associated a variety of sacred stories with this unusual site, some of which include the very origin of humankind. But whatever the story, all share a common theme: their association to the bison, the all-encompassing metaphor of life and cosmic awareness for the Lakotas. It is this theme that links the cave very directly to other sites in its immediate vicinity, the Race Track, the Buffalo Gap, and Hot Springs, which have sacred significance to the Cheyennes as well. While the cave is clearly important to the national park that bears its name, the park occupies a much larger area that includes the Race Track too. The stories of the Race Track are among the most sacred for both the Lakotas and the Cheyennes. In many versions, the Great Race begins and ends at the Buffalo Gap, which is located just outside the boundaries of the park. Although Wind Cave is explicitly connected to this site in some stories, it stands apart in others. Nonetheless, the two are linked implicitly to the idea that the lands on which the park stands are associated with sites of animal origin and places where the cosmic nature of relations between animals and humankind unfolded. There is no question that these stories hold great power for the Lakotas, Cheyennes, and probably other tribes known to have used the area as well, and there is also no question that, as a result, the places they refer to are held in reverence as well.

In an article entitled "Sacred Lands and Religious Freedom", originally published in 1991, Vine Deloria (1999:203-217) argues that there are two ways lands can be sanctified. One way is for something of momentous significance in human history to have taken place at a particular place. Deloria uses the Gettysburg National Cemetery as representative of this type of sacred space, and he argues that such places bring social cohesion to people and "remind them of the passage of the generations that have brought them to the present" (Deloria 1999:207). The second way a site is made sacred is by its association with a religious happening; it is a place where the holiest of holies is revealed to humans. Mount Horeb, where Moses received the ten

commandments, is such a place. In reference to the second type of sacred land, Deloria (1999: 107) writes:

> Some of the sites that traditional religious leaders visit are of a similar nature. Thus, the Buffalo Gap is at the southeastern edge of the Black Hills of South Dakota and marks the location where the buffalo emerged each spring to begin the ceremonial year of the Plains Indians. It may indeed be the starting point of the Great Race which determined the primacy between the two-leggeds and four-leggeds at the beginning of the world. Several mountains in New Mexico and Arizona mark places where the Pueblo, Hopi, and Navajo peoples completed their migrations, were told to settle, or where they first established their spiritual relationships with bear, deer, eagle and other forms of life who participate in ceremonials...

And then he goes on to say:

> This tradition tells us that there are, on this earth, some places of inherent sacredness, sites that are holy in and of themselves. Human societies come and go on this earth and any prolonged occupation of a geographical region will produce shrines and sacred sites discerned by the occupying people. One only need look at the shrines of present-day Europe and read the archaeology of the site to understand that before Catholic or Protestant churches were built in certain places other religions had established their shrines and temples on that spot. These Holy Places are locations where human beings have always gone to communicate and be with higher spiritual powers. This phenomenon is worldwide and all religions find that these places regenerate people and fill them with spiritual powers...
>
> Among the duties which must be performed at these Holy Places are ceremonies which the people have been commanded to perform in order that the earth itself and all its forms of life might survive. Some evidence of this sacred dimension, and of other sacred places, has come through in the testimony of traditional people at various times in this century when they have explained to non-Indians, in and out of court, that they must perform certain kinds of ceremonies at certain times and places in order that the sun may continue to shine, the earth prosper, and the stars remain in the heavens (Deloria, V. 1999:208-209).

In the Black Hills, there are a number of places of this order, including Bear Butte, Bear Lodge Butte, Wind Cave, the Race Track, and the Buffalo Gap. It is not surprising that traditional people among the Lakotas and Cheyenne nations have at various times and in different ways made requests to hold their religious observances at these and other sacred sites in the Hills. The strong spiritual connections that these groups have to the Race Track, the Buffalo Gap, and/or Wind Cave recommend Wind Cave National Park as a site for many different kinds of religious observance (see Chapter Twelve).

Beyond the specific character of places like Wind Cave National Park, we must be mindful of their relationships to the overall area that is the Black Hills. It is the more holistic sense of this entire area as the source of the universe's order and its animal/human beginnings that makes it such a culturally significant and emotionally powerful landscape. Raymond Fogelson (1981:133) states: "Traditional Native American notions about sacred space tend to be more transvaluative and flexible with respect to placement and boundaries. Rather than a fixed point, or set of fixed points, Native American rituals often emphasize movement between relative locations." Clearly, the Lakotas and Cheyennes' sense of the Black Hills is embedded in tightly integrated webs of relationship, often described through a language of kinship, where it is impossible to separate specific sites as divisible "points" in a landscape. Each place in the Black Hills flows into another through the actions and movements of the spiritual figures whose own relationships created the very designs or "charters" within which the symbiotic connections of tribal peoples to

the area are expressed and experienced in their own life-generating passages through this sacred land.

The geography of the Black Hills is sanctified because it reveals and mirrors fundamental precepts underlying the sacred cosmology of the Lakotas and Cheyennes. The Black Hills and many other sacred places within their reaches express a basic principle of cosmic unity that, in the sacred terminology of the Lakotas, make the Black Hills "the heart of everything that is." Their highest point, Harney Peak, is the heart, altar, and center of the larger consecrated circle, the Race Track that surrounds them. The Buffalo Gap is a sacred gateway into this sanctified space, while Wind Cave is the opening to the sacred womb and to the larger cavern structure that represents the arteries of the heart or circle. Through the sacred stories and texts enacted in the course of important ceremonial observances, Lakotas and Cheyennes recreate their own genesis by coming into direct contact with the material manifestations of the spiritual as these appear at significant sites or centers in the Black Hills, which simultaneously serve as an expression of game animals, the four directions, the relations between the celestial, earthly, and subterranean tiers of the universe, and, above all, the circular motion of the divine and everything that is.