

The Arapaho Dogmen ("Dog Soldiers")

→ During the time when our people the Arapaho (*Hinono'ei*) roamed freely throughout their territory (which included S.E. Montana, E. Wyoming, E. Colorado, W. Nebraska, W. Kansas, and parts of N. Texas), there existed among the Arapaho an elite and distinct society of warrior's known as the Dog Soldiers. Dog Soldiers maintained ferocious war traditions and engaged in a complex system of war honors that encouraged quick and decisive mortal combat either on foot or on horse.

→ They wore buckskin straps called 'ropes' (*seenook*) (*ceiyoo*-stem, referring to a 'leash or reins') and: "In battle the men wearing them would fasten the ends to the ground with an arrow or stick. When they are thus fastened, they did not flee, however great the danger, until a companion releases them and orders them away. The shaggy dog follows a similar practice. He remains in his place, even at imminent risk of death, until he is driven away." [Kroeber 1904:197].¹ This tradition was called being "staked out" ↓.

→ The senior/older "Dogs" were leaders in battle and: "When forming for the attack, they dismounted, and, driving their lances into the ground, tied themselves to them by means of straps, thus anchoring themselves in front of the battle. Here, they remained until, if the battle seemed lost, they themselves gave the order to retreat. Even then they waited until some of their own society released them by pulling the lances out of the ground and whipping them away from the place with a peculiar quirt carried only by private members of this division. No one was allowed to retreat without their permission, on penalty of disgrace, nor were they themselves allowed to retire unless released.... When pursued on the retreat, they must give up their horses to the women, if necessary, and either find other horses or turn and face the enemy alone on foot." [1896:988—89]. (also from: "The Four Hills of Life, Northern Arapaho Knowledge and Life Movement").

→ During battle, Dog Soldiers were expected never to retreat, and when being pursued by the enemy or the U.S. Army ("Cavalry") they were also expected to lay down their lives fighting to protect the people so that they could escape. These acts are why the U.S. Cavalry and other tribes called them suicide-soldiers. They would "stake themselves out" between the people and whatever danger was present. Our brothers and allies on the plains, the Cheyenne also had a warrior society similar to that of the Dogmen.

→ On November 29, 1864, in S.E. Colorado some 200 Arapaho and Cheyenne were brutally massacred by Colonel Chivington of the U.S. Volunteer Cavalry in what is now called the Sand Creek Massacre. The Cheyenne and Arapaho's were camped at Sand Creek at the request of the Governor of Colorado, to protect them from ongoing military campaigns against other bands of Cheyenne and Arapaho. After Sand Creek, the Cheyenne and Arapaho vigorously retaliated, attacking wagon trains, stations, settlements, and ranches along the South Platte River Trail (road) between Denver and the town of Julesburg. From 1865-69 the Arapaho/Cheyenne Dog Soldiers fought to close the Smoky Hill Trail (road) which, some say, illegally ran through their reservation in E. Colorado.

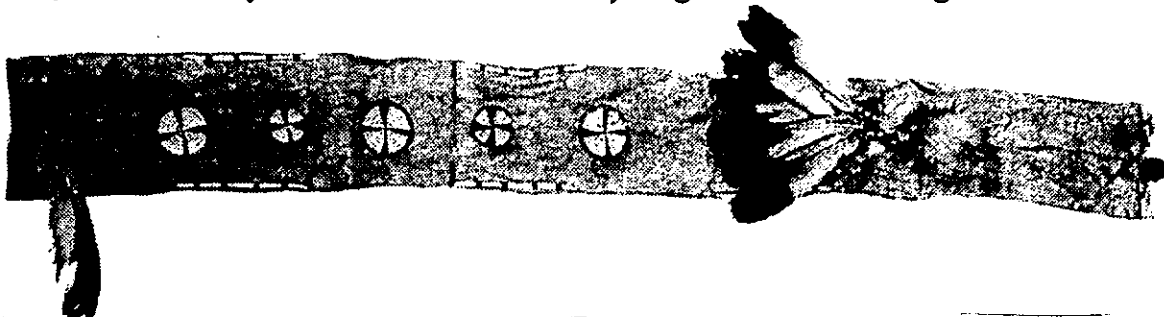
→ Later, on June 25, 1876, acting together as long-standing allies, the Northern Arapaho, Northern Cheyenne, and Sioux soundly handed the U.S. Cavalry (i.e., Colonel George A. Custer of the 7th Cavalry) its most embarrassing defeat at the hands of 1500-2000 warriors during the Battle of the Little Big Horn in Montana.

→ Bellow - is the only known picture of: "A ceremonial "no retreat" sash, Northern Arapaho, and collected in Sharp Nose's camp. N.d., but probably c. 1880. The Sash is of buckskin embellished with five quilled discs and eagle feathers. It went over the warrior's head and onto the battlefield; the end was pinned to the ground beyond which custom decreed he must not retreat. Courtesy, Catalogue No. 81-3319-14, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution."² Its length is most likely ten (10) to twelve (12) feet long when "staked out."

→ Because of their defiance, and ferocity, during the plains-Indian wars; the U.S. Cavalry set out on a specific military campaign to destroy all of the Dogmen. According to military historians, in 1869; a battle between the U.S. Cavalry and the Dogmen at Summit Springs Colorado decimated most of the Arapaho/Cheyenne Dog Soldiers.

→ In 1904, however, a noted historian (Cleaver Warden) studying the Northern Arapaho reported that the Dog-Lodge (*he3owo'oowu'*) ceremony took place on the Wind River Indian Reservation: "In the Dog Lodge ceremony initiates were Yellow Calf, Yellow Bear, Stone Breaker, Runs across Water, Sitting Bear, Red Sun, Wooden Legs, Fast Bird, Eagle Feather, Birds Head, Goodman, Eagle Breath, Nightman, Blow Away, Mule, and Coal."³

At this time, it is hard to say whether or not there are any Dog Soldiers left among the Northern Arapaho. . .



¹ From: Jeffrey D. Anderson "The Four Hills of Life, Northern Arapaho Knowledge and Life Movement" (University of Nebraska Press) Chapter 6, *The Men's Age-Grade System* (The Dog Lodge) page 157-161.

² Picture From: Virginia Sutter "Tell Me, Grandmother" *Traditions, Stories, and Cultures of Arapaho People* (University Press of Colorado (2004)), page 148.

³ From: Loretta Fowler "Arapaho Politics, 1851-1978, *Symbols In Crises Of Authority*" (University of Nebraska Press) Chapter 2, page 121.

For "The People" —
Andrew Yellowbear, Jr.