**KIOWA INDIANS**. The Kiowas, according to their traditions, were hunters living at the sources of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers in present Montana. It was a cold region of deep snows. They hunted with bow and arrow with the dog-their only domesticated animal drawing the travois with poles attached to harness. A great river flowed west of mountains called Gai K'op (Kiowa Mountains). The Flatheads were neighbors and north and west were several Athabascan tribes such as their friends, the Sarsis. According to legend a quarrel divided the tribe over hunting spoils-the udders of a doe. The winners of that delicacy moved southeastward with the Kiowa Apaches to live with friends, the Crows. Those left behind were never heard of again. The Crows taught them to ride horses and hunt buffalo-animals they had never seen before. There was some intermarriage with the Crows as there was with the Sarsis, as they still visited the Sarsis. [Dohäsan](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fdo47), one of the greatest of Kiowa chiefs, had a Crow ancestor. [Satank](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fsa32) of the Koitsenko warriors had a Sarsi mother. The earliest written mention of the Kiowas and their long affiliated tribe, the Kiowa Apaches, was in 1682 by [René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fla04), who heard of them from a captive Pani slave boy at Fort St. Louis who called them Manrhouts and Gattacha. The Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804 heard of them in the Yellowstone region but did not meet them.

The Kiowas had taken the first step basic to the acquisition of the Plains Culture by learning to ride the horse and by hunting, on horseback, the buffalo for food, the main commissary of that culture. Horses drew them southward. Gaining horses, slaves, and guns from the Spanish, the Kiowas evolved into completely nomadic lifeways of predation, pillage, and warfare, until they became one of the most feared and hated of the Plains tribes. Constantly they kept the greatest numbers of horses of all the Plains Indians. About 1790 the Kiowas made a lasting peace with the Comanches and with them traded horses and captives east by way of the Wichitas and Taovayas to the French and English for guns, ammunition, and metal for points and vermilion for face paint. In 1840, under the sponsorship of William Bent, the Kiowas, Kiowa Apaches, and Comanches joined with the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos at Bent's Fort on the Arkansas in a peace never broken. Bent's wife was a Cheyenne, and he wanted the Cheyennes and Kiowas to trade there in peace. The five tribes in union made a formidable barrier athwart the Arkansas to passage across the southern plains. The government sent the First Dragoons to protect wagontrains on the Santa Fe Trail. Later the Second Dragoons and the Mounted Rifles tried to protect the southwest and Texas from Indian incursions. In the 1850s the Second United State Cavalryqv sought to stem the attacks on the frontiers of the southwest and Texas by the five tribes but with little success.

The Plains Indian culture area was the last to develop in North America; it was historic, beginning around 1620 with the introduction of the horse into New Mexico by the Spanish. It was characterized by the horse, the buffalo, the tipi, soldier societies, and the Sun Dance. There were some thirty or more tribes but only eleven were typical of the Plains Indian culture: Kiowas, Kiowa Apaches, Comanches, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Assiniboines, Blackfeet, Crows, Gros Ventres, Teton-Dakotas and Sarsis. Buffalo furnished almost everything they needed in material culture: food, clothing, tipis, tanned hides, fur robes, bedding, rawhide, leather for parfleches, saddles, bridles, canteens, horn for spoons, and hooves for glue. The bow was shortened for use on horseback, and vessels had to be unbreakable. Thongs and ropes held things together and could be lashed to the saddle or to the travois, which became larger to use with the horse called the Sun Dog. Everything was adapted for hasty packing and quick movement, often a matter of life or death. A camp habitation could be moved in thirty minutes. Men and women wore skin garments, moccasins, leggings, and fur robes for coats in winter. Jewelry was used by both men and women, much of it fashioned from Mexican silver coins. Men wore their hair in long braids wrapped in fur strips. Both men and women parted the hair in the middle. Women wore the hair braided or hanging loosely. Over the right ear, men wore a portion of the hair cut short, a tribal symbol. Also the men wore moccasins, of tribal cut with a flap that dragged the ground, usually heavily beaded. In warfare men wore a breastplate of pipestone that protected the chest. Men wore breech clouts, and women wore a pull-on shift dress to below the knees.

The Kiowas camped in a circle at the Sun Dance ceremonies. There were six bands or subtribes, each having its part in Sun Dance ritual. There were social levels in the tribe. Of first rank were the Onde (aristocrats) who were great warriors, important subchiefs, ten priests owning the medicine bundles (Grandmother Bundles), and the wealthy associated with war or religion (wealth alone did not determine rank). Second rank, the Odegupa, consisted of small subchiefs, medicine men (who treated the ill and practiced magic), and people of limited property. Third rank or Kaan were the poor people, about half of the tribe. The Dapom were the misfits, crazy people, or those considered crazy. Rank was changeable-up or down. One could get honors to reach high rank but misdeeds or meanness could lower rank. The main weapons and implements used were the bow and arrow, spear (lance), tomahawk (a metal type with a pipe at one end became a trade item), chipped flint and obsidian knives, various flint saws, scrapers punch or needle of flint or bone, hafted axes and a hafted wide scraper for cleaning hides, coup-de-poing (fist axe), and eyed bone needles, often steel trade needles when available.

The men were warriors who protected the camp, always on guard against sudden attack. They sat around and smoked, but they also watched and patrolled, and they were good "baby sitters" for the little children. The women did the menial work-tanning hides, drying strips of meat, cooking, preparing pemmican (pointed dried meat with oil stored in bags), sewing clothing, foraging for roots and fruits and nuts, taking care of the dogs (women owned the dogs and the dog travois), setting up the tipi or dismantling it and packing bedding, directing slaves and young children in moving the horses to pasture, and caring for infants in the cradleboards. When it was necessary to move, the women could be ready to move in as few as thirty minutes. Children, puppies, and the ill were put on the travois with the gentle horses that the women used.

Social organization was simple. They had no clan system. Kiowas and Kiowa Apaches belonged to the same type of kinship system as the Cheyennes, known as the generation or classification type, where collateral and lineal relations are classed together. A mother was close to her son but a father trained and pushed his son to prominence. Sons respected the father and the older men. Corporal punishment was not used. Boys could be shamed or ridiculed by their elders. The family depended upon a son to become a provider, and his success was more important than a girl's, but girls could bring wealth to the parents in horses or gifts when a man wished to make a bride price. Grandparent and grandchildren were on intimate terms. The grandparents were the teachers, companions, and storytellers of history, legend, and religion. A child who had no grandparents missed a lot. The basic economic and social group was made up of brothers and sisters and their families. A blood related group joined voluntarily with a leader to form a camp or village. The military societies were called "Dog Soldiers" because of visions associated with dogs. The first of six was the Rabbit group for all young boys; others could be joined as they grew up. The Koitsenko was an honorary group of ten greatest warriors who were elected. The soldier societies policed the campsite and went on hunts and into war.

Marriage was usually arranged by gifts of horses to the parents of the girl by the man or his family. A contract was made by acceptance of the gifts. The husband usually went to live with the girl's parents. Eloping was occasionally done. Divorce was simple but not common. A wife sought her father's consent to divorce her husband. Usually the bride price was returned. A man could divorce his wife for adultery or cut off her nose. If mistreated, a woman could also initiate a divorce. In tribal government there was a head or civil chief who was an important topadok'í or camp leader chosen by all the topadok'ís and the war chiefs from their councils. The last great head chief was Dohäsan (Little Bluff), who died in 1866. The Kiowas were divided in their policy toward the whites. [Lone Wolf](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/flo09) led the hostiles while [Kicking Bird](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fki03) led the peace party until 1875, when he was poisoned. Later Lone Wolf gave his name to his nephew who became head chief in 1896. Women had no voice in tribal government.

In religion the Kiowas were polytheistic and animistic. There was a general belief in supernatural agencies. Their great tribal ceremonial was the Sun Dance or K'ado in early summer. In the Sun Dance the tribe came together for ten days or more. The sun was believed to be one of many spirit forces. There were several objects of religious veneration. Sun Boy was the great supernatural and mythic hero and legends related his adventures. He gave them the medicine in ten portions kept by the priests in priestly tipis. The medicine was called the Grandmother Bundles. The Taime was a sacred image of a human figure-the central figure in the Sun Dance. Other small figures or sacred images were known-one was the Old Woman Under The Ground. Seni or [peyote](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/tsp01) was the worship of a cactus (*Lophophora williamsii*); it involved a system of myth and ritual in which buds from the cactus were eaten. Its use was long practiced by tribes along the Rio Grande and coastal Texas. The Sun Dance served both for religious and for social cohesion of the tribe. It was believed to recreate the buffalo and rededicated the beliefs and traditions. It lasted for ten days, six to prepare the lodge, set up the center post, and have a mock battle before its dedication, and four days for the dancers to seek a vision while dancing about the pole and the Taime. Self-inflicted torture, such as cutting of flesh and breaking of fingers, were employed on occasion but not to the extent as other tribes. In the six days sex license was allowed. Both men and women were allowed to dance about the selected dancers. After the festival was over the camp was broken and the people moved, and the warriors who had vowed to do so set off on raids. The Kiowas kept pictographic calendars of events in their history. The Sett'an or annual calendar and the Anko annual and monthly calendar were famous ones. In language classification, Edward Sapir placed Kiowa and the related Tanoan of New Mexico in the Uto-Aztecan linguistic family.

The Kiowas were noted for their depredations in Old Mexico and Texas. One Kiowa depredation in 1871 became known across the nation (*see* [WARREN WAGONTRAIN RAID](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/btw03)). Two Kiowas, Satanta and Big Treeqqv were tried for murder, the first time that Indians were held accountable for murder in their raids and tried in a white man's court. Satanta and Big Tree were tried and condemned to death, later commuted to life imprisonment. Two years later they were paroled by Governor [Edmund J. Davis](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fda37). When Satanta joined in the [second battle of Adobe Walls](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bta01) in 1874 against the buffalo hunters, he was sent back to prison for violating parole. In 1878 he jumped from a second story window to his death. There were greater depredations but the Wagontrain massacre was brought to the attention of President Ulysses S. Grant, the army, and the country because Gen. [William T. Sherman](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fsh28), the general of the army, was inspecting the area at the time. It took military conquest to place the Kiowas and their confederates on the reservations. At Fort Sill the last hostiles were brought in by June of 1875-the result of battles that destroyed their horses, while the buffalo hide hunters were destroying the buffalos, their main food supply, the wastage left to rot on the plains. The 1887 Dawes Severalty Act upset the cohesiveness of the tribe. It called for the dissolution of Indian tribes as legal entities and divided tribal lands among the individual members, granting 160 acres to each family head and 80 acres to each single adult. In 1888 Indian agency reports listed 1,151 Kiowas. In 1890 some Kiowas participated in Ghost Dance ceremonies, but the practice was abandoned after a Kiowan emissary visited Wovaka, the self-reclaimed prophet, and judged him to be a fake. The Kiowas turned to assimilation and successfully made the transition to white culture, many in one generation. Independent but highly intelligent, the Kiowas wanted their children educated and taught the new language and new ways. Many of them live now in and around Anadarko, Fort Cobb, Mountain View, and Carnegie, Oklahoma. They are United States citizens, highly respected, and are making their way in ranching, farming, industry, teaching, military and government service, arts and crafts-especially painting and sculpture, fashion design and jewelry, and in literature. Old Americans they were; now they are an important part of modern America. N. Scott Momaday, a Kiowa, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for his 1968 book *House Made of Dawn*. The 1989 United States census reported 4,800 Kiowas.

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