



THE KIOWA – *Images of the Past*

Photographs Courtesy of the Western History
Collections, University of Oklahoma Library

By John R. Lovett

The Kiowa represent one of the principal tribes of the Southwest plains. According to their traditions, the Kiowa originally lived as hunters at the sources of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers in what is present-day Montana. Tribal legend recorded a split in the tribe, with one group moving northwest and the other to the southeast. The Kiowa that moved to the southeast and out onto the plains acquired horses in the early 1700s. With the introduction of the horse, the Kiowa embraced the plains culture of using the horse to hunt buffalo for food.

The Kiowa continued to move south to the headwaters of the Cimarron River in western Kansas and eastern Colorado. The tribe eventually gained control of an area south of the Wichita Mountains westward toward the headwaters of the Red River. This area of Kiowa hegemony included most of present-day western Oklahoma. The tribe was noted for their raids into Mexico and Texas and became one of the most feared of the southern plains tribes.

Military conquest and the destruction of the great buffalo herds were required to force the Kiowa from their traditional life style and onto the reservations. In June of 1875, the last of the Kiowa were brought into Fort Sill, Indian Territory. Although the Kiowas kept pictographic calendars of events in their history, it was frontier photographers that left a visual record of the tribe.

William S. Soule was one of the first photographers of the Kiowa. In 1869, Soule accepted the position of post photographer at Fort Sill, Indian Territory. He held the position from 1869 to 1874. Soule's images of the Kiowa are significant because they capture images of the tribe during a period of warfare and transition as they endeavored to main-

tain their traditional way of life against the encroachment of the frontier.

Soule's subjects included famous Kiowa leaders such as Kicking Bird, Satank and Satanta. In addition, his photograph of a Kiowa camp near the South Canadian River in 1869 is historically significant because his camera has frozen this image in time. Later generations of Kiowa are today able to view a Kiowa camp before the tribe was forced to modify their traditional way of life.

In the years following Soule's departure from the Indian Territory, other professional photographers continued the visual record of the Kiowa. William and Marvin Irwin arrived in the Indian Territory in the 1890s and opened studios in both Chickasha and Duncan. While most of the Irwin brothers customers were settlers, the Kiowa were also attracted to the photography studio.

The Irwin brother's Kiowa photographs are noted for their almost uniform clarity. However, the images represent the formal style of the period, with families standing stiffly in their best clothes against a studio backdrop. Fortunately, the Irwin Brothers provided quality prints to their customers. Most of the Irwin Brothers photographs that have survived to the present show only a minimum amount of deterioration and aging.

Another photographer of the Kiowa was Mrs. Annette Hume, wife of the Kiowa and Comanche agency physician. The Humes came to the agency in December, 1890. Mrs. Hume usually took her camera during her frequent visits to the agency. It was during these visits that she would photograph her Kiowa and

Photo Opposite Page

Two Kiowa men, Ed Two Hatchett, standing, and Frank Two Hatchett. Photographed by the Irwin Brothers, c.1890.

Photo 30 in the Irwin Brothers Studio Collection.

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Above –

A Kiowa camp, 1869, near the South Canadian River photographed by William Soule. This photo is historically significant because it captures for all time a Kiowa camp before the tribe was forced to modify their traditional way of life. Photo 124 in the Walter S. Campbell Collection.

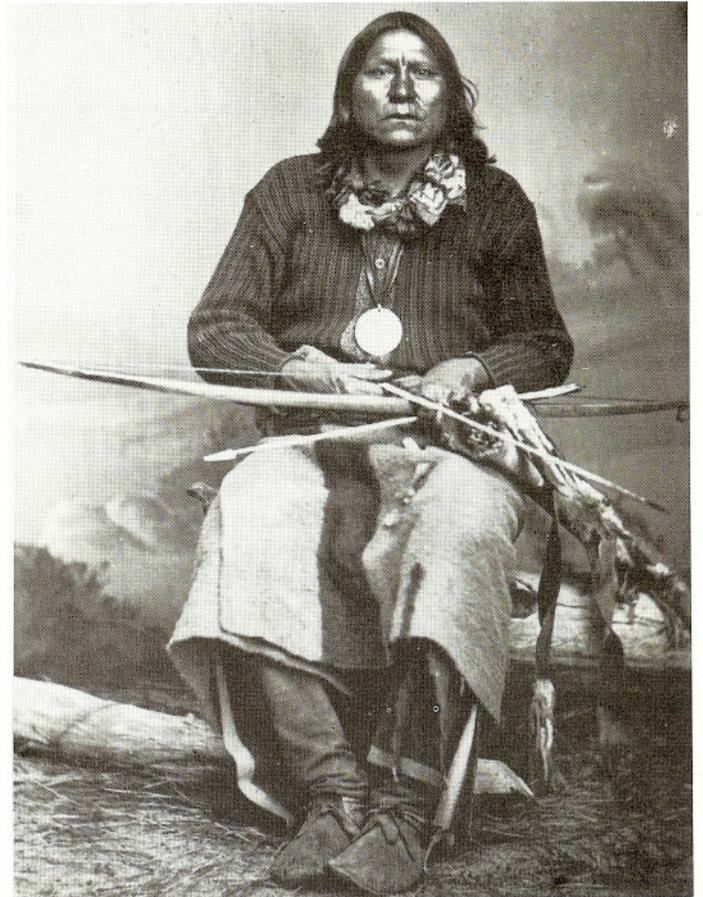
Photos Opposite Page –

(Top Left) Big Tree photographed by William S. Soule sometime between 1869 and 1874. Photo 42 in the William S. Soule Collection.

(Top Right) Kicking Bird photographed by William S. Soule between 1869 and 1874. Kicking Bird died in 1875. Photo 41 in the William S. Soule Collection.

(Bottom Left) Cry of the Wild, son of Satanta, photographed by Soule. Photo 51 in the William S. Soule Collection.

(Bottom Right) Satanta (White Bear) photographed by Soule. Satanta was one of nine signers of the Medicine Lodge Creek Treaty in 1867. Sent to prison in Huntsville, Texas for his part in a raid in which seven teamsters were killed, Satanta jumped to his death from a second floor window. Photo 45 in the William S. Soule Collection.





Above –

Two Kiowa women cutting up meat after the beef issue at the Kiowa-Comanche reservation, May 1902. Photographed by Mrs. Annette Hume. Photo 7 in the Phillips Collection.

Photos Opposite Page –

(Top) A Kiowa mother and child in front of their tipi, 1901. Photographed by Mrs. Annette Hume. Photo 1555 in the Phillips Collection.

(Bottom) Kiowa tipi surrounded by a windbreak, 1901. Photo by Mrs. Annette Hume. Photo 239 in the Phillips Collection.

Comanche friends. Mrs. Hume's photographs are significant in both quality and scope. Her photographs provide visual documentation of the Kiowa tribe at the turn of the century.

From 1869 until the early 1900s, photographic activities both inside and outside the formal studio

have provided a vast record of the Kiowa tribe. Those images which have survived to the present are important historic documentation not only for the Kiowa tribe, but for anyone studying Kiowa and southwestern plains history.

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The Kiowa photographs in this essay come from the Photographic Archives, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma. The Western History Collections dates from 1927 when University of Oklahoma historian Edward Everett Dale recognized the need for a specialized research collection for graduate students and scholars in the field of Western U.S. and Indian history. Dale began such a library with initial financial assistance from oil entrepreneur Frank Phillips. From that beginning the Collections has grown to comprise a library of nearly 50,000 volumes, a Manuscripts Division of more than 1,500 unique collections and a Photographic Archives holding over 250,000 prints and negatives.

The majority of the Kiowa photographs in the Western History Collections are found in the Frank Phillips Collection. During the first years of collecting material, Dale realized the importance of photographs as a means of historic documentation. He made numerous trips around the country in search of research materials. Southwest Oklahoma proved to be the best source for Kiowa photographs. Dale personally selected and purchased the majority of the Kiowa photographs that are stewarded by the Western History Collections today.

Although Dale recorded as much information about the individual Kiowa photographs as then possible, identification and detailed description continue to be a problem for many of the images. Many of the photographs have only such basic information as the knowledge that the photograph indeed documented the Kiowa. Other photographs have a more detailed identification with the name of the individual or individuals shown being listed. An even more complete description would include the name of the photographer, where the photograph was made and the date taken.

A common problem when dealing with historic photographs is incorrect identification of the photograph. New or corrected information is added to the Kiowa as well as other historic photographs at the Western History Collections as that information becomes available. Members of the Kiowa tribe who visit the Western History Collections or see Kiowa photographs in publications and then contact the Collections constitute a major source of new information.

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*Left – Studio portrait of Tak-Qual
photographed by the Irwin Brothers,
Chickasha, Indian Territory, c. 1890.*

Photo 883 in the Phillips Collection.

Photo Opposite Page –

*Aheatone with his wife.. Photographer
unknown. Photo 219; Irvin Munn Collection.*





Studio portrait of Kiowa Jim's Family. Photographer unknown. Photo 1000 in the Phillips Collection.



White Buffalo and his wife. Photographed in the Irwin Brothers Studio in 1894. Photo 4 in the Irwin Brothers Studio Collection.

Researchers whose interest leads them to Kiowa photographs are encouraged to use the Phillips Collection and other resources of the Western History Collections' Photographic Archives. Information can be obtained in person, by letter, or by telephone.

REFERENCES

1. Arrell Morgan Gibson. *The American Indian: Prehistory to the Present*. D.C. Heath; Lexington, 1980.
2. Mildred P. Mayhall. *The Kiowas*. The University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, 1962.
3. Muriel H. Wright. *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma*. The University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, 1951.

Photo Opposite Page –

Studio portrait of Jim Waldo by the Irwin Brothers, c. 1895. Photo 894 in the Phillips Collection.

Below –

Two Kiowa women dressed in fringed buckskin photographed by the Irwin Brothers, Chickasha, Indian Territory, c. 1890. Photo 16 in the Irwin Brothers Studio Collection.



