

## WICHITA-KIOWA RELATIONS AND THE 1874 OUTBREAK

By Karl Schmitt\*

A feature of Indian life in and around Anadarko, Oklahoma which is soon obvious to the interested observer is the tribal ethnocentrism which still exists. One aspect of this is pride in one's own tribe and its ways; a second aspect is that of applying stereotypes, frequently uncomplimentary, to other tribes. Particularly striking are the prejudices which the Kiowas and the Wichitas, as groups, hold against each other.<sup>1</sup> A full understanding of the present status of Kiowa-Wichita relations would require an analysis of the complex situation from cultural, psychological, and historical viewpoints. This paper is limited to a consideration of an important historic factor: the series of events now referred to by older Indians as the "74 Outbreak" consisting of an uprising by some bands of the Kiowa and Comanche and their subsequent subjugation by the United States military forces. Wichita, Caddo, and Delaware scouts aided in rounding up the dissident bands. The outbreak has been described by Indian agents<sup>2</sup> and by Army personnel.<sup>3</sup>

Included in this paper is an account of the "74 Outbreak" as remembered by an elderly Wichita woman. Her story not only agrees well with the published materials but also furnishes further details and background information. In addition it has an advantage in that the viewpoint is that of an Indian and includes data pertinent for understanding the actions of the Indians involved.

## SETTING OF THE 1874 OUTBREAK

The Southern Plains area was the scene of many movements of tribes and populations in historic times. These movements were particularly complex during the period of the Civil War. The

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<sup>1</sup> As is frequently the case in the application of stereotypes, individual exceptions are made. Kiowa and Wichita individuals do fraternize and attend each others ceremonies. At a recent Wichita gathering at which the writer was present, Kiowas were among the guests of honor. There are also now a number of intertribal marriages.

<sup>2</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the secretary of the Interior for the year 1874*, pp. 72, 221, 238. Washington: GPO, 1874.

<sup>3</sup> *Record of Engagements with Hostile Indians within the Military Division of the Missouri from 1868 to 1882*. Washington: GPO, 1882, p. 41.

conclusion of the war found the Kiowa scattered in small groups extending westward from the vicinity of present-day Anadarko into the area of the Wichita Mountains. Following the war, the Wichita, including the Waco, Tawakoni, and Kichai, returned from the vicinity of what is now Wichita, Kansas and settled on their reservation, the southern boundary of which was the Washita River, in what is now Caddo County.<sup>4</sup>

The Wichita bands inhabited separate, though adjacent, villages. The Wichita proper under two chiefs named Tsodiako and Kawhaydis lived on the east side of Sugar Creek near the present homes of Mr. Clarence Standing and Mr. Hugh Miller; one band of the Tawakoni under the leadership of Tawakoni Dave lived on the hill just north of the Standing home; the Waco led by Buffalo Good inhabited a village on the west side of Sugar Creek across from the Wichita; a second band of the Tawakoni, "Tawakoni Jim's bunch", were also on the west side of Sugar Creek and a little north of the Waco; the Kichai lived several miles to the west in the flats of the Washita, just under the "Old Shirley Place," and were led by Chief "Just Another Day."

The period of the early 1870's was one of great stress for the Plains tribes, since they had been forced to alter radically their former type of life: the buffalo were practically extinct and this meant that the main subsistence of tribes like the Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne was gone; the older form of obtaining prestige and wealth by warfare and raiding was discouraged by the United States government; American expansion had greatly reduced Indian lands and forced many different tribes to live in close proximity; and tribal autonomy no longer existed since they were not free to move about as they pleased and were subject to the authority of Indian agents and Army personnel in many matters. Some tribes, such as the Wichita and Caddo, threw their lot with the government whereas others, including the Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne, tended to resist authority. This environment of unrest, insecurity, and conflicting attitudes toward the government was a natural setting for intertribal friction.

An important feature of Indian life at this period was the weekly distribution of rations by the agencies. Rations included beef cattle, flour, coffee, sugar, lard, bacon,<sup>5</sup> and other items to which they were entitled as a result of treaties with the United States. The Wichita Agency had been established just north of

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<sup>4</sup> For a summary of movements of the Wichita during and shortly after the Civil War consult Gladys Esther Gates, *The Wichita Indians from 1859 to 1868*, Unpublished Master's thesis, History Department, University of Oklahoma, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> The Wichita and Kiowa threw away five gallon tins of lard and sides of bacon because to them it smelled bad and was considered inedible. Older individuals even refused to eat beef because of its bad smell and taste.

the present town of Anadarko to handle the administration of the Wichita, Caddo, and Delaware. Another agency was at the site of the present Fort Sill to administer the Kiowas and Comanches. However, one band of Comanches and a number of Kiowas found it more to their convenience to procure their rations at the Wichita Agency. Rations were issued on Saturdays and for those occasions large numbers of Indians camped about the agencies and spent their time visiting and gambling. It was at the Wichita Agency on one of these issue Saturdays that the main fracas of the 1874 outbreak occurred. There follows below an elderly Wichita woman's version of the event.

#### A WICHITA ACCOUNT OF THE 1874 OUTBREAK<sup>6</sup>

The Kiowa were fussing about the government cutting down their rations. They also didn't want to send their children to school. In addition Kiowa warriors had been raiding in Texas and the agent had been getting letters from Washington telling him to control those Indians. The government and the agent were expecting some trouble so they had two companies of soldiers camped at the agency and they threw up a little fort in the hills just north of the agency.<sup>7</sup> The agent had cautioned the Wichita chiefs to keep their people away from crowds and out of possible trouble. However, when the fighting broke out some young Wichita men joined in. There were lots of Wichitas in the '74 outbreak; they weren't supposed to be, but they were. It happened right after school started, it must have been September.<sup>8</sup>

The trouble started on Saturday, on an issue day. The agent called in the Kiowa chiefs and they got to fussing. Trouble started in the office when Kiowas started abusing government employees and the soldiers arrested one or two chiefs.<sup>9</sup> Talk got around to other Indians and they just started shooting everybody that was

<sup>6</sup> Informant A is a woman who is acknowledged to be the oldest member of the Wichita tribe. She was officially born in 1868 but other data indicate her birth date to have been 1863 or 1864. The account has been edited by the author. Changes were largely confined to grammatical construction; most words and idioms are those of the informant.

<sup>7</sup> According to the Kiowa agent's report, there were four companies. The Wichita agent states that the companies were there to arrest two Comanche chiefs who were not enrolled at any agency and who were at the Wichita Agency against orders. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the year 1874*, Washington; GPO, 1874, pp. 221 and 238.

<sup>8</sup> Both the Kiowa and Wichita agents state that the incident occurred in August and, according to the Kiowa agent, specifically on the twenty-second of the month. *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> According to the agents' reports, the trouble started near the commissary and involved the two Comanche chiefs as well as the Kiowas. The Wichita agent relates that, when the general in command of the forces tried to arrest the Comanche chiefs, the Kiowas fired upon him. The Kiowa agent's version is a little different: Red Food, one of the Comanche chiefs, started to run away and was fired upon by a guard, whereupon the Kiowas, led by Lone Wolf, commenced shooting at the troops.

white. The soldiers took refuge in their fortification on the hill and withstood all attacks. The rebels fanned out over the country. They burned John Osborne's father's store. He was married to Black Beaver's daughter. Osborne had five wagon loads of goods coming in. He said, "I'd better get out and warn those people." He went out to meet the wagons. The Indians killed him, the five drivers, and a Negro cook, just east of what is now Anadarko. They killed the teams, too. I was way down on Sugar Creek when the fighting started. Only the old people and children were left at home. We could hear the shooting. The women came home and most of the men, too. The women, children, and old people deserted the villages and went over to Cottonwood Grove.<sup>10</sup> Most of the men stayed behind at the villages.

There were three of us on our horse. The people used to kid me afterwards and tell me how I kicked the side of my horse and said, "Lets go!" They used to tell me that I "sure must like to ride." One old man kept stirring up the women. Everytime they would quiet down, he would get excited and say he heard those rebels coming, and off everybody would run again. Finally, a Wichita man came over and told us not to go so far because the rebels weren't after us. It was way after dark when we got back to our village. *The Kiowa had even made a raid on our village!* The sacks of corn were cut and the grains were lying about. They claim the Kiowas did it!

After the excitement passed, it was found that the Kiowas had left to get away. They had gone down to Texas. At this time a group of Wichita, Caddo, and Delaware were recruited as Indian scouts under the leadership of Captain Pratt. The United States Army with the aid of the Indian Scouts rounded up the rebel Kiowas and brought them back. *This was the only time the Wichitas went against the Kiowas. Kiowa sure did hate the Wichita after that!* The leading Kiowa chiefs were imprisoned and later sent to Florida for a period of years. There they learned Christian hymns. I remember when the Kiowa chiefs were brought home. They were brought in wagons to the old Wichita School which was located just north of present day Anadarko. The Wichita, Caddo, and Delaware school children were taken out to meet the returning chiefs. The authorities *made* the Kiowa chiefs sing old gospel songs for the children. Then the Kiowa families came in and claimed their men.

Another detail concerning the outbreak was furnished by Informant B.<sup>11</sup> One of the Wichita scouts was Ichitowax who was a "war chief." This man *whipped a Kiowa Chief named Big Tree and*

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<sup>10</sup> This was the site of a former Wichita village of that name and now the site of Verden, Oklahoma.

<sup>11</sup> A Wichita man who was officially born in 1876, though other data indicate that 1868 is more probably correct.

*tied his hands and brought him in.* It should be remembered that striking a live enemy was one of the highest coups or war honors that a Plains Indian could perform.

#### DISCUSSION AND FURTHER STATEMENTS

There undoubtedly was some mutual suspicion between Kiowas and Wichitas before 1874. It would be foolish to say that the 1874 outbreak was the main cause of Kiowa-Wichita ill-feeling. There must have been previous historic facts which could be used to explain why most Wichitas sided with the United States Government against the rebellious Kiowas instead of joining them. However, in the minds of present-day individuals that date marks the break in what was previously an overtly friendly relationship between tribes. After the rebels had been rounded up there was great antagonism between the two tribes. The general feeling of the Kiowas is understandable; in their opinion former friends and allies had deserted them and sided with the enemy whites. In addition Wichitas had actually participated in the campaign against them and one of their chiefs had been humiliated by a Wichita chief. An added insult came with the enforced concert for the children of the Wichita, Caddo, and Delaware when the Kiowa chiefs returned from Florida.

The general feeling of the Wichitas included a reaction against the ill-feeling of the Kiowas plus certain resentments of their own. The Wichitas had lost a considerable amount of property<sup>12</sup> in the Wichita agency incident and no doubt held this against the Kiowas. Also present seems to have been indignation over what they considered to be general preferential treatment of the Kiowas and unfair treatment of the Wichitas by the United States Government. The Wichitas had long made efforts to co-operate with the whites and had received a relatively small reservation which was in effect reduced in size by the settlement of other tribes. The Kiowas, who were relatively new-comers to the area and who had been notoriously antagonistic to whites, were given a large reservation and one which included much of the Wichita's traditional territory.

By the time the Kiowas had been brought back to the reservation following the uprising and order had been established, the mutual antagonism between the Kiowas and the Wichitas had become crystalized around the events of the outbreak. This antagonism continued as an important factor in Kiowa-Wichita relations for the next three quarters of a century. There follow some statements from Wichita informants which illustrate the continuance of this antagonism over a period of years.

Informant C, a Wichita man who attended school during the 1880's and 1890's, said that when he was a boy there were two

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<sup>12</sup> See account of Informant A and also Wichita agent's report, *op. cit.*

schools. One was on the north side of the Washita and was for Wichita, Caddo, and Delaware children, while the other was on the south side of the river and was for Kiowas. Whenever they caught a Kiowa on the north side of the river, "they tried every way to kill him, they would kick him in the stomach, in the head, they would kick him anywhere." On the south side of the river there were four stores or trading posts. When the Wichita children would go over to the stores, and the Kiowa boys saw them, they would be given similar treatment by the Kiowas. My informant says "you had to run as fast as you could to get across the river and get away." The wife of this man said that the above "sounded awful but that the kids learned to dislike the Kiowas from their parents."

Informant B, who was a school boy during the 1870's and 1880's, tells of a more formalized type of mayhem which was practiced. The Wichitas had a game in which two sides of boys just kicked each other until one side ran the other off. When Wichitas played this among themselves they did it "just for fun—they kick each other around and when they want to quit they quit—nobody hurt." However, this same game was played with Wichitas and Caddoes on one side and Kiowas on the other, and "when play with Kiowas—not for fun!" In these intertribal kicking games, which were planned ahead of time, the contestants tried to inflict actual bodily harm on each other.

Informant D, a Wichita man who was born about 1901 and later went to school at Chilocco, related how he got the Kiowas "stirred up" when a student at that school. There was a pageant in which a Kiowa boy played the part of a chief and a Wichita boy kneeled in front of him. He said, "I think there is something wrong with that, it ought to be a Kiowa kneeling before a Wichita chief." This was a direct reference to events in the 1874 outbreak.

Present-day hostilities seem to be largely verbal and are reflected in derogatory statements made by members of both sides about purported general characteristics of the other groups. Wichitas tend to stereotype the Kiowa in terms of what they consider undesirable personality traits, while the Kiowa seem to stereotype the Wichita largely on the basis of unattractive physical traits.<sup>13</sup>

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The account of the 1874 outbreak illustrates that descriptions by living informants of events long past are not to be regarded lightly. In this particular case the related account checks rather well with accounts published soon after the occurrence,<sup>14</sup> and in

<sup>13</sup> Specific details of present stereotypes would add little to the present paper and could conceivably perturb individuals.

<sup>14</sup> Published accounts themselves do not agree on details.

addition adds pertinent details omitted, or not known, by the early reporters. Obviously much of the informant's story was not the result of actual observation of events but was gained by listening to elders discuss the affair. In a situation of this sort it would not be surprising if distortion or ethnocentric slanting of information occurred. This is not obviously the case.

Even if distortion does occur, such information should not be ignored. What individuals consider to be true is equally important in explaining present attitudes and behavior as the actual truth. In this case information gained by Wichitas from parents and grandparents concerning what the Kiowas have done or are like, and vice versa, constitutes the facts and basis of actions for many individuals of both tribes.

It should be pointed out, lest it be thought that the Wichitas and Kiowas are at each other's throats, that the situation is not nearly that extreme. There are factors operating against the continuance of antagonistic feelings. A number of these factors are the same as those more general factors which tend to tear down all tribal barriers. Attendance of Kiowas and Wichitas at the same schools teaches individuals that persons of the other tribe can be worthwhile human beings. There are now several inter-tribal marriages among members of the younger generation, a very rare occurrence in the past. Membership in organizations which cut across tribal boundaries, as the United States Army, the Native American Church, and the Baptist Church, also tends to create a common set of interests and erase old tribal animosities. Time has a soothing effect, and the loss of tribal customs by members of the younger generations leads older members of rival tribes to meet and talk amicably of by-gone days, and often to sing and participate in each others "pow-wows."

In conclusion, one can say that individuals of the Kiowa and Wichita tribes still hold adverse stereotypes of each other and in the minds of the people, at least, much of their mutual prejudice can be traced back to the "74 outbreak." However, animosities are not as intense as those which existed fifty years ago and a continuing diminution of ill-feeling is to be expected.