

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FORT SILL APACHE TRIBE

By *Benedict Jozhe**

The Fort Sill Apache Tribe are the descendents of three Apache Tribes: the Warm Spring Apache Tribe, the Chiricahua Apache Tribe and the Nednai Apache Tribe.

They were a hunting and wild food gathering people. For their sustenance, they depended almost completely on wild plant, seeds and animal life. From earliest times, until deprived of their lands, they in their efforts to obtain sustenance, spread over and used and occupied all of the wide extent of their ancestral lands.

By the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of February 2, 1848 following the close of the war between the United States of America and the Mexican Republic, the Mexican Republic ceded to the United States sovereignty over a vast territory called the Mexican Cession Territory. Including lands owned, and occupied, from time immemorial, by the Warm Spring Apache and Chiricahua Apache tribes.

The ancestral lands of the Warm Spring Apache Tribe were located in the southwestern part of the present state of New Mexico, within the present United States. They lived in the following areas of their country: the Mimbres, Pinas Altos, Mogollon, and San Mateo mountains. Around the head waters of the Gila River, in the vicinity of the Copper Mines near Santa Rita, New Mexico and Hot Springs, New Mexico. The Mexican people called Hot Springs, "Ojo Cleinte." It is located near the present town of Dusty, New Mexico. The Warm Springs Apaches called the Hot Springs area, "Ti-go-tel." In the Apache language it means "Four broad plains." It was their favorite home.

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Including Warm Springs, they were also called by the following names: Ojo Cleinte, Copper Mine, Mogollon, Mimbres, Pinas Altos, and Gila Apaches. Their Indian name is "Chee-henda" and it means "Red Paint People." They had an agency at Ojo Cleinte, New Mexico Territory.

Their leaders since 1848 were Mangus Coloradas, Loco, Victorio, and Nana. Mangus Coloradas became chief after Juan Jose was killed in the vicinity of the Copper Mines by white men in the employ of the Mexicans there. The Warm Springs people regarded Mangus Coloradas as one of the greatest leaders of the Apaches all-together. On occasions, he represented the Apache Nation, and was responsible for the treaty in 1852 with the United States. As Captain Cremony in 1868 wrote, "He was truly the King Philip of the Apache Nation," and "Beyond all comparison the most famous Apache warrior and statesman of the century." He early realized the futility of warfare against the whites and while on a peaceful mission was treacherously murdered by soldiers who were escorting him to a fort to negotiate a treaty.

Chief Loco, who succeeded Mangus Coloradas, was peaceful and cooperated with the Government at all costs. His sub-chief Victorio tried to cooperate with the Government but became impatient with the government demands for his people to be removed to San Carlos Reservation, Arizona Territory, and refused to leave his country a second time. He considered it unfair and unjust for his people to leave their country against their wishes, especially since they did no wrong against the government to warrant such treatment. He was pursued on both sides of the border by the United States and Mexican troops. He fought for his rights and his country until he was killed about a year later by Mexican troops in Mexico.

Living today at Apache, Oklahoma is a grand-son of Mangus Coloradas, Mr. Talbot Gooday, who is about one hundred years old. Also of worthy mention is Mr. James Kawaykla, Sr.,¹ a grand nephew of Victorio, who was with him in Mexico when he was killed. Moses, Norman, Raymond and Richard Loco are the grand-sons of Chief Loco.

The second Apache tribe is the Chiricahua. Their ancestral lands were located in the southeastern part of the present state of Arizona, within the present United States. They lived in the following areas within their country: Dos Cabezas, Chiricahua, and Dragoon mountains. Their agency was located at Apache Pass, Arizona Territory and Thomas Jeffords was their agent

¹ The autobiography of James Kaywaykla, last survivor of Chief Victorio's band of Warm Spring Apaches, as told to Mrs. Eve Ball, is scheduled to be published as a book this spring (1962), in Arizona.

for a time. Their only name was Chiricahua. Their Indian name which means "Great Mountain" or "Mountain People" is "Chogun-an."

The Chiricahua leaders since 1848 were Cochise, Taza, Naiche, and Chatto. Much has been written about Cochise and his story has had wide coverage on television and in the movies that his story is well known. His Chiricahua people regarded him as one of their greatest leaders. When he died in 1874 of natural causes, he chose his son, Taza, to succeed him as chief. Taza died while in Washington on tribal business in September 1876 and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Congressional Cemetery there. According to the Apaches Taza had no children. Another son of Cochise, Naiche, was an influential leader among his people and died at Mescalero, New Mexico about 1921. Chatto also died at Mescalero, New Mexico in 1934.

Among the Fort Sill Apache Tribe there are three grandsons of Naiche. They are Mason Kawaykla, Harold Kawaykla and James Kawaykla, Jr. He has a son, Christian Naiche, living at Mescalero, New Mexico.

The ancestral lands of the third tribe, the Nednai Apache Tribe, were located in the northern part of the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua in Mexico. The remnants of the Nednai people came among the Chiricahua Apaches and lived with them prior to their imprisonment in 1886.

Juh (Ho) was chief of the Nednai Apaches. Some of the Apaches say that Geronimo was a Nednai Apache. After the dominant leaders of the Chiricahua and Nednai Apaches died or were killed, Geronimo influenced the leaders of these tribes. Geronimo was never considered a chief by the Apaches. He died at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and is buried in the Apache Cemetery there in 1909.

Robert Geronimo, a son of Geronimo, now lives at Mescalero, New Mexico and a second cousin, Jason Betzinez,² lived at Apache, Oklahoma. Among Apaches of the present generation who have attained national recognition is Allan C. Houser (Haozous), painter, sculptor, and teacher at Intermountain Indian School, Brigham City, Utah.

In 1886, when Geronimo and some of the Apaches were brought in by General Miles, all the Warm Spring Apache Tribe,

² Jason Betzinez born early in the Civil War period was noted for his book *I Fought With Geronimo* (The Stackpole Company, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1959), written when he was over ninety at his home near Apache, Oklahoma. He died from injuries received in an automobile accident in 1961. A review of his book appears in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Winter, 1959-60), pp. 52-21.—Ed.

the Chiricahua Apache Tribe, and the Nednai Apache Tribe were imprisoned at Fort Pickens and Fort Marion, Florida. Peaceful and hostile alike were taken to Florida, including the scouts who took the oath to serve the United States under the flag at Fort Apache, Arizona Territory. They were lined up under the same flag and were disarmed and sent to the Florida prisons. While at Florida 112 children were sent to the Indian school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Nearly one-third of them died at Carlisle. Due to the unhealthy condition of the prisons in Florida, many died and they were transferred to Mount Vernon Barracks, Alabama in 1888.

In October 1894 they were brought to the Fort Sill Reservation in Oklahoma Territory. This land was given for the permanent settlement of the Apache Prisoners of War by the Kiowa, Comanche and Kiowa-Apache tribes. While at Fort Sill they engaged in farming and cattle raising and in these enterprises they were highly successful. Many of the men were Indian scouts and some of them enlisted in the regular army.

In 1913, the Fort Sill Apaches as they were called by the people here in the area were released from prisoner of war status at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. At this time approximately 240 elected to go to the Mescalero Reservation in New Mexico. Today, they share this reservation with the Mescalero Apache Tribe and are engaged in cattle raising and other enterprises there.

Eighty-two elected to remain in Oklahoma in the Kiowa, Comanche, and Kiowa-Apache Reservation. They received from the government \$3,000 to the head of the family and \$2,000 each to the dependents. With this money they were able to purchase 80 acre allotments, more or less, from the dead allotments of the Kiowas, Comanches and Kiowa-Apaches. The Fort Sill Apaches have no tribal property. The membership today is approximately 115.

Those in New Mexico call themselves the "Chiricahua Apache Tribe" and those in Oklahoma the "Fort Sill Apache Tribe."