

By the Kansas Historical Society

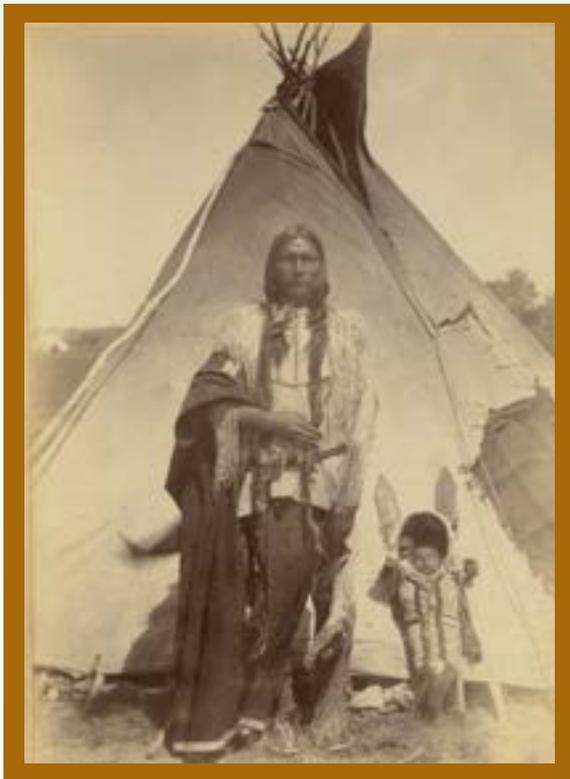
## Meet the Kiowa

The Kiowa are American Indians who once lived on the high plains of Kansas. Today they live all over the world. Their tribal headquarters is in Oklahoma. Some Kiowa still live in Kansas.

In the 1700s the Kiowa lived in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Before Kansas became a state they migrated to the high plains of Kansas. The Kiowa were a nomadic tribe. They followed the animals they hunted.

The Kiowa are part of a group of people known as "horse nomads." Horses allowed the Kiowa to travel greater distances and to move heavier loads and more things. The Kiowa also rode horses to hunt.

The Kiowa lived in tipis. A tipi is a moveable home. The frame is made of long wooden poles that are tied together at the top and spread apart in a circle at the bottom. The base of a tipi was as wide as the tipi poles were tall. The frame was covered with buffalo hides. Kiowa tipis were decorated with designs to show events and important things about the people who lived in them. Everyone would know which tipi belonged to whom by the designs on each tipi.



To move their villages, the Kiowa used a travois pulled by a horse. Tying two of the long tipi poles together at one end makes the travois. The other ends of the travois poles would drag along the ground. Plains Indians did not have wheels or carts.

The Kiowa depended on buffalo for meat. In addition to eating buffalo meat, the Kiowa hunted smaller animals and gathered wild plants, fruits, and nuts. Since they did not grow gardens, they traded buffalo hides and meat for corn, beans, and squash grown by people in eastern Kansas.

On the high plains there was little water and the soil was dry, so gardens would not grow. There were few trees to build house frames or burn as fuel. The Kiowa lived on the high plains. All of these environmental conditions meant that people could not stay in one place for very long. Instead they would move to find more resources.

When people move from place to place they are called nomadic.

# Satanta's Speech

Satanta was a Kiowa chief. He negotiated with the U.S. government at a time when the Kiowa were being forced to give up their lands for reservations. In 1867 he represented the Kiowa at the Medicine Lodge Treaty negotiations. In the following speech Satanta describes the Kiowa's traditional lifestyle. A newspaper reporter from St. Louis attended the negotiations and wrote down the speech.



All the land south of the Arkansas [River] belongs to the Kiowa and Comanche, and I don't want to give away any of it. I love the land and the buffalo and will not part with it. . . . I want the children raised as I was.

I have heard that you want to settle us on a reservation near the mountains. I don't want to settle. I love to roam over the prairies. There I feel free and happy, but when I settle down I grow pale and die.

A long time ago this land belonged to our fathers; but when I go up river I see camps of soldiers on its banks. These soldiers cut down my timber; they kill my buffalo; and when I see that it feels as if my heart would burst with sorrow.

This building of homes for us is all nonsense. We don't want you to build any for us; we would all die. Look at the Penatekas! Formerly they were powerful, now they are weak and poor. I want all my land, even from the Arkansas south to the Red River. My country is small enough already. If you build us houses the land will be smaller.

Why do you insist on this? What good will come of it? I don't understand your reason. Time enough to build us houses when the buffalo are all gone. But you tell the Great Father that there are plenty of buffalo yet, and when the buffalo are gone, I will tell him. This trusting agents for food I don't believe in.