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BY
ROBERT H. LOWIE

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[837]

SOCIETIES OF THE KIOWA.

BY **ROBERT H. LOWIE.**

[838]

PREFACE.

Before summarizing the results of the investigation of Plains Indian societies undertaken by the Department of Anthropology for a number of years, it appeared desirable to secure data from the Kiowa respecting certain theoretical points that had developed from a study of other tribes. Though Mr. Mooney's printed Kiowa material seemed to decide these questions implicitly, it seemed best to take a view of the subject in the field from the particular vantage ground afforded by the systematic survey of the region presented in this volume. For this purpose I made a side trip to Anadarko, Oklahoma, in June, 1915. There I had the good fortune of enlisting the services of Mr. Andres Martinez, a Mexican who had been captured by the Apache while a boy, sold to the Kiowa two years later, and who had lived a large portion of his life as a Kiowa among Kiowa, marrying native women, entering some of the men's societies, and so forth. Mr. Martinez became my main informant and acted as my interpreter in questioning two full-blood Indians on doubtful points. He also corrected several errors in his published biography,^[1] which he explained were due to his inadequate knowledge of English at the time of its composition.

It is obvious that several days' work, however intensive, cannot exhaust such a topic as the military and related organizations of a Plains tribe: all I attempted was to shed some light on the

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INTRODUCTION.

From Battey we learn that in the seventies of the last century the Kiowa had a police organization designed to prevent the young men from going on raids that might bring trouble upon the tribe.

... a strong guard of their soldiers were continually watching, day and night, while in camp, to prevent any such enterprise from being undertaken. In moving from place to place, these soldiers marched on each side of the main body, while a front guard went before, and a rear guard behind, thus preventing any from straggling away.

A corresponding body regulated the buffalo hunt.

The soldiers, going out first, surrounded a tract of country in which were a large herd of buffalo; and no one might chase a buffalo past this ring guard on pain of having his horse shot by the soldiers.^[2]

Clark merely lists the names of five men's societies.^[3]

In Rev. Methvin's biography of my chief informant there is a brief chapter on military societies,^[4] but as these data were revised and amplified in connection with my own inquiries, they need not be summarized as there presented.

Our principal sources on this subject, however, are Mr. Mooney's statements.^[5] These largely corroborate my own notes and will be presented with them so far as they do not coincide.

The older literature cited above does not in any way contradict the general results I obtained independently, which may be summarized as follows.

In recent times the Kiowa had six men's societies and two women's societies. There once existed in the time of one informant's greatgrandfather an additional men's society, the qo`+itēm, "Kiowa's Bone"(?). The members of this organization represented each a buffalo bull, except for the leader, who (though also a man) represented a buffalo cow. In a fight, if this leader stopped to stand his ground, all the others were obliged to do the same, even at the risk of death. Thus all of them were killed, and the people were afraid so that they no longer kept up the organization.

The six men's societies of recent times were: the Rabbits (fulā`nyu); Shepherds (altō`yuhe); Rulers (?) of Horses (tsĚ`tā`nmā); Berries^[6] (tá'ipĕko); Black Feet (tuñk`uñqōt'); ? Horses (q'ō`ĭ'tsĚ`ñko). Of these the first-mentioned comprised all the little boys^[7] in the tribe, while the last society in the list is superior to the others in social prestige, being composed exclusively of eminent warriors. The rest are of the same rank. Mr. Mooney at one time believed that the Rabbits "were afterward promoted, according to merit or the necessities of war, in regular progression to higher ranks."^[8] In a more recent statement, however, he corroborates my own information that "the next four societies ... were all of about equal rank, varying only according to the merit or reputation of the officers at any particular time."^[9] The societies thus did not form a graded series in any sense. As a boy grew up any one of the four coördinate societies might make him join. Some men never advanced from the status of a Rabbit, for if a boy was not considered the right sort he was not asked to join the adult men's organizations. There were only a few individuals who were barred in this way, however; every Indian man of any social standing became a member of some society. Later some other society might induce him to change his

membership. If he was especially brave, he might be taken into the q'ō 'i'tsē`ñko. Except for the Rabbits, age had nothing to do with membership, nor was membership purchased; further the societies did not offer gifts to the individual sought as a member, thus differing from the Crow societies.

The societies met only during the period between a sun dance announcement and the sun dance itself, but this interval differed greatly in length, the announcement being sometimes made very soon after the consummation of the preceding ceremony while at other times it was only made immediately before the performance announced. During the period defined the societies met very frequently, one member inviting the others one day for a feast, and the rest following suit on other days. The q'ō 'i'tsē`ñko met less frequently than the rest. A man could only belong to one society at a time (except in the case of the adult leaders of the Rabbits). Since the Rabbits included all the young boys in the tribe, they were very numerous. On the other hand, the q'ō 'i'tsē`ñko, owing to the special qualifications for membership, were very few,—only ten according to Mr. Mooney and from fifteen to twenty according to Martinez, while two Indians set the number at thirty. The last-mentioned informants set the average membership of the other organizations at forty or fifty, while Martinez's estimate is from thirty to forty.

There was no such rivalry between any two societies in times of war as has been described for the Crow Indians (this volume, p. 174). Sometimes at the time of the sun dance any two societies might engage in a kicking-fight, the object of which was to teach the young Indians not to run away from the enemy but to stand their ground and fight. This is doubtless the performance referred to by Battey as coming after the erection of the sun dance lodge:— [843]

The soldiers of the tribe then had a frolic in and about it, running and jumping, striking and kicking, throwing one another down, stripping and tearing the clothes off each other.^[10]

Martinez knew of no instance of a man voluntarily leaving his society. A father might give presents to poor Indians in honor of a boy who becomes a Rabbit, but he would not take the initiative to get his son into his own organization.

The mutual-benefit feature that characterizes the Crow clubs does not seem to have been prominent among the Kiowa. For example, when a man bought the medicine privileges described by Methvin under the caption "quo-dle-quoit,"^[11] he was assisted by his relatives, but his society had nothing to do with the procedure.

At the time of the sun dance the medicineman appointed one of the societies to get the sacred tree. Similarly, he would choose one of them to act as police during the buffalo hunt. Their function in this connection is called q'ī'at'ā'tu, which seems to mean "they can stop any one." The offender who hunted individually instead of taking his place with the rest lost the meat so secured, and if he resented this punishment the police might shoot his horse or whip him.

If a member absented himself from an evening session of his society during the sun dance period, his associates would sing a song the next day, hallooing and making a big noise at the end of the song. Then one man would call aloud the delinquent's name, coupling it with that of his mother-in-law and crying, "That is your wife!" Since the mother-in-law taboo held sway among the Kiowa, ^[12] the object of the performance was evidently to make the offender ashamed.

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MEN'S SOCIETIES.

RABBITS.^[13]

According to Mr. Mooney the Rabbit society embraced boys of the age of about ten or twelve. Martinez was about ten years old when he joined, but said that any boy belonged to the Rabbits when old enough to walk freely. In his case the event occurred later because he only came to live among the Kiowa at nine. There were two leaders, who were grown-up men and stayed with the Rabbits as long as they lived. These also belonged to some other organization, but their first duty was to the Rabbits if a meeting of both organizations should be called at the same time. Kō'tar and Ayáte were the leaders in Martinez's time.

The Rabbits, generally, but not always, wore at the back of the head a strip of elk hide with the hair and a feather standing erect. They wore buckskin clothes and painted the face with different colors. All sang while dancing. The leaders beat drums but also took part in the dance sometimes. During one song three or four boys, or sometimes as many as ten, got up to dance. After the dance the leaders told the Rabbits all about their war deeds. If one leader died, the other nominated a successor, and if the boys agreed all went to this man's place, seized him and led him to their tipi.

The day before a feast one of the leaders would ride about, announcing that such-and-such a boy had invited the Rabbits for a dance and feast the next day.

In accordance with Mr. Mooney's statement that the boys of the society "were drilled in their future duties as warriors by certain old men," Martinez compares the Rabbit organization to a

school. The leaders would rise and say: "When I was young like you, I was a little Rabbit, when I got older I went and stole horses, took scalps, etc."

Martinez says that every once in a while nowadays he hears the father of some sick child say, "If he recovers, I'll call the Rabbits together." Then, if the child gets well, the father will entertain the boys with a feast, and the Indians believe that the promise was the cause of the recovery. In the old days the Indians used to do the same thing in corresponding cases.

The Rabbits jumped up and down without change of position, held up their hands to the level of their ears, moving the hands, and at the same time imitated the sound of rabbits: ts'ā, t's'ā! [845]

Martinez remained a Rabbit until he was about fifteen years old.

SHEPHERDS. [14]

When about fifteen years old, Martinez was sleeping in his tipi one night when three young men entered. He gave them something to smoke, they smoked and then told him they were there on business. "What is your business?" My informant had already guessed what it was, for all his visitors were members of the Shepherd society. Each of the Rabbits had a special friend with whom he would dance. Martinez's comrade had already been taken in by the Shepherds and wanted him to join likewise. There was no reason for refusing, but even had he done so it would have been of no avail since they were accustomed to take the boys by force. They took Martinez at once to the Shepherds' meeting-place where the members began to halloo and beat drums. He was at once joined by his comrade, and the two danced together.

The Shepherds danced differently from the Rabbits, moving slightly or jumping up, and also moving both arms out at the level of the waist. No sound was made while dancing. Big-bow and Ayáte (the Rabbit leader), both famous warriors, were the leaders of the Shepherds for life. The Shepherds had no badge, but wore feathers on the head. The two leaders had as badges two flat sticks about the length of a man's arms, carved with figures, with a pendant tsë'íta uⁿta (=?) skin, and a wrist-loop. These emblems were shared by the leaders of all the coördinate societies. If one of the leaders rose and put the loop of his stick round his wrist, all the members had to get up likewise and dance. At the end of a song all the Shepherds sat down except one of the leaders, who would tell of his exploits. For each deed recited the drummers beat the drum once. Sometimes only one leader recited the deeds, sometimes one after the other. Sometimes some other member would follow with a recital of his own deeds. In the Shepherds, as in the other coördinate societies, all ages from twelve up were represented. If Martinez had so desired, he might have stayed with the Shepherds all his life, but usually some other organization would take a desirable member. After being adopted, my informant no longer joined the Rabbit feasts but went to those of the Shepherds. All he had to do there was to learn the songs and dances and obey his leaders. [846]

The following story is told. The Kiowa were once being pursued by the enemy toward a mountain called Altō'yuhe. There one Kiowa, a Shepherd, said: "I will not run any farther, I'll make a stand and defend my people, even if I get killed." He acted accordingly, sang his song, and was killed. The mountain was then called after the Shepherds, and the society adopted his death song as a special song of theirs. The words were about the following: "Now I am gone. I am going to leave you." (i. e. "I will not run any more.")

TSË`TĀ'NMĀ. [15]

Martinez was about twenty when this society took him in. His comrade was still a Shepherd, so Martinez sent for him and made him join also. There were two leaders, one of whom marched in front, the other behind. This seems to apply to all the societies. It did not matter which leader took either of the two positions defined. Here, as in all the coördinate societies, the leaders had two sticks of the type described for the Shepherds, and called either after the skin pendant or qo'kū'qa'. There were rattles and drums. Two or three members would dance to the music, but if the leaders rose with their badges, all were obliged to rise and dance. The leaders told about their deeds, then other members followed suit. Martinez was satisfied with the Shepherds, but the tsë`tā'nmā were eager to get him, and had he refused to join they would have come for him again and again. When getting an individual they went to his own, not to his society's, tipi. The society that lost a member in the manner described would not resent this in any way and might do likewise with members of other societies. If the tsë`tā'nmā got together now, Martinez would have the right to join in their meeting.

BLACK FEET. [16]

These had drums but no rattles. The name did not refer to the Indian tribe. There were two leaders.

Charlie Faⁿto^{'n}i was captured and taken away while young and not returned to his people till very much later, so he was still a Rabbit when he came back at about forty-three years of age. Then the Black Feet took him in. One member called on him and told him he was sent to take him to that society. He went in. He was made to get up and dance four times with some other members, after which one leader told of his deeds. After that Faⁿto^{'n}i got up to dance whenever [847]

he felt like it. A year ago this spring the Black Feet got together for a feast and dance. Women were allowed to be there, but not members of other societies. The Black Feet had a hooked stick called *pobū́n*, belonging to one officer. It was wrapped with beaverskin, painted with different colors, and tied with pairs of eagle feathers along the shaft and at the tip of the crooked part. When a man had had the stick for a very long time, he might feel like giving it to a young member of the organization. Then the young man gave the owner good clothes and horses in return. The people knew that a man accepting the *pobū́n* had to be a brave man. When in battle, he would plant his stick in the ground and thereafter would not flee unless it was taken out by someone else.

BERRIES.^[17]

Every member had a rattle, originally of rawhide and of either spherical or square shape, but later baking-powder cans were used. There were two leaders with sticks. People of other societies might attend while they recited their deeds. At the last part of their song the Berries, as well as the *tsētā́nmâ*, would raise their rattles aloft and shake them.

The Berries had one arrow (*zḗbo*) as long as a spear. In recent times *Hā́nguL* made one because his grandfather had had one. Since he had it, it came to belong to the Berry society. Only one man had it; if he died, some other member would get a similar badge, the original being buried with the owner. In battle the owner stuck it into the ground and then was pledged to stand there unless released by some one else. The arrow was decorated with reddened eagle feathers and the entire shaft was painted red.

Q'Ṓ I'TSĚ̀ŃKO.

The exact meaning of this native term could not be ascertained. In his lists Mr. Mooney renders it "Chief Dogs" and "Real or Principal Dogs"^[18](?). In his Kiowa glossary, however, he explains that:

the name seems to mean "Kiowa horses" from *Gâ-i* or *Kâ-i* and *tseñ*. Identical with the "horse" and "big horse," military orders of the Kiowa and Kiowa Apache, respectively, as given by Clark.^[19]

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Martinez, like Clark's informant, translated the word as "Horses" with some additional honorific epithet, possibly connected with the office of scout. A corresponding difficulty as to the meaning of society designations has been noted among the Mandan (this volume, pp. 302, 306, 317). Comparison of the Kiowa society with the (Big) Dog societies of other Plains tribes certainly seems to show that it is historically connected with them. In further justification of Mr. Mooney's rendering may be cited the origin myth obtained by him. According to this, the founder experienced a vision of warriors equipped in the manner since adopted by the society and accompanied by a dog, which told the visionary that he, also being a dog, should make a noise like one and sing a dog song.

As already stated, members of this organization were expected to be especially brave; accordingly, they enjoyed greater prestige than other societies. In age they ranged from about 25 upward. Mr. Mooney's positive statement that the membership was definitely limited to ten is entitled to take precedence of my data since he doubtless had an opportunity of securing a general consensus of opinion while I was only able to interview three informants. Novices were not allowed to enter in the unceremonious manner characteristic of the other societies: one of the two leaders would approach the individual chosen with a pipe and thus force him to join. If a member felt too old to go to war, he would similarly put his pipe into the hand of a younger man, who was thus obliged to become his successor in the organization. Mr. Mooney tells us that in such a case the new member presented his predecessor with blankets or other property.

The distinctive badge of membership was a sash (*q'ŏ́ i'tsĚ̀ +ota*), about six inches wide and long enough to drag along the ground; it was made of rawhide, buckskin, or red cloth. When these emblems became old, there was a meeting for the purpose of making new ones, which took four or five days. For his sash and other regalia each member had a medicine bag from which they were only taken in war or when their dance was performed. In a war it was a member's duty to sing the song of his society, fasten his sash to the earth with a spear and thereafter to stand his ground regardless of consequences; anyone who fled lost his prestige and membership unless he had been released by some other man. Mr. Mooney distinguishes three types of sash,—the leader's^[20] emblem, which was of elkskin colored black; three emblems of red cloth; and six of elkskin dyed red.^[21] He states further that a member might lend his sash to another man, more particularly to a younger comrade, either in camp or even on less important war expeditions, but on the more important raids he was obliged to wear it himself lest he be regarded as a coward.

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The ceremonial paint of this organization was red, which was used all over the face and clothes, including the moccasins, and also on their feathers. The leaders, unlike those of other societies, did not carry flat sticks, but had reddened dewclaw rattles, the dewclaws being attached to the handle of the rawhide sphere. Martinez declares that the rawhide was obligatory, no modern equivalent being permitted.^[22] In addition to these instruments drums were used at a dance, and the performers also blew eagle bone whistles, painted red. The dance step was slow.

In battle and during a dance the members used backward speech. For example, they would say, "I am going to run away." "We do not want a feast yet," when they meant the contrary. During a buffalo hunt they might act as police like the other organizations.

WOMEN'S SOCIETIES.

There was an Old Women society (tʰaLietsuⁿ yū^p) and a Bear society (oⁿ nā^ʼ atema). The latter had very few members, only about ten or eleven. Some members were old, some were young. A few women, including Charlie Faⁿ toⁿ i's grandmother, belonged to both.

The Old Women were not all old, though none was young. There were about thirty-five or forty of them. They selected their daughters or other close kinswomen for successors; this also applies to the Bears. A woman made a feast four times before becoming a member. The Old Women danced round in a circle, and had a drum. In marching, one leader was in front, another in the rear. The Bears merely imitated the motions of bears with their hands. They did not allow any outsider to come in when they had a dance.

If a man started out for war he prayed to the Old Women, saying that if he came back successful he should give them a feast. In fulfilling his promise, he called the women, lit a pipe, presented it to them, and each member smoked in turn, then prayed for the warrior's honor and long life. Then the warriors brought water for the women, who drank it and prayed again. Then the feast was brought, the war leader recited his deeds, and then one of the leaders of the society cut a little piece of meat, buried it in the ground and prayed, treating in the same way a pinch or slice of every kind of food. Then they ate. [850]

This body is clearly described by Battey, who saw its members perform for an hour or two in the afternoon during the preparatory arrangements for a sun dance:—

The music consisted of singing and drumming, done by several old women, who were squatted on the ground in a circle. The dancers—old, gray-headed women, from sixty to eighty years of age—performed in a circle around them for some time, finally striking off upon a waddling run, one behind another; they formed a circle, came back, and, doubling so as to bring two together, threw their arms around each other's necks, and trudged around for some time longer; then sat down, while a youngish man circulated the pipe from which each in turn took two or three whiffs, and this ceremony ended. [23]

OTHER DANCES.

The sun dance, of which several accounts are available, [24] falls outside the scope of this volume.

The grass dance was said to have been obtained from the Dakota about fifteen years ago, but as Sitting-bull's name was mentioned in this connection my informant seems to have erred by a decade and to have had in mind the ghost dance, which the Kiowa first performed in 1890. [25] Mr. Mooney mentions a dance resembling the Omaha dance, in which only two men actually participate and adopt a child of another tribe during a tribal visit. [26]

In the buffalo dance (poⁿ qùEn) any of the societies might join. It was a sort of war dance and they performed it only before setting out on an expedition. War-bonnets were worn, and the participants carried shields, spears, and arrows. They would recite their martial exploits.

Of greater comparative interest is the gwudaⁿ ke, War Singing. The night before starting on a war expedition the whole company of warriors assembled and any woman might join, but men only if they intended to go along. They got a big buffalo rawhide, then all participants took hold of it, and beat it with sticks, at the same time singing a war song and marching through the entire camp. After they had passed through camp, they halted to smoke, then continued the parade, possibly until daylight. My informant stated that this performance was shared by the Comanche. As a matter of fact I recorded it among this people, [27] as well as in other tribes. Battey observed an apparently related performance in connection with the sun dance, after the lodge had been erected:— [851]

In the afternoon, a party of a dozen or more warriors and braves proceeded to the medicine house, followed by a large proportion of the people of the encampment. They were highly painted, and wore shirts only, with head-dresses of feathers which extended down the backs to the ground, and were kept in their proper places by means of an ornamented strap clasping the waist. Some of them had long horns attached to their head-dresses. They were armed with lances and revolvers, and carrying a couple of long poles mounted from end to end with feathers, the one white and the other black. They also bore shields highly ornamented with paint, feathers, and hair.

They took their station upon the side opposite the entrance, the musicians standing behind them.

Many old women occupied a position to the right and near the entrance, who set up a tremulous shrieking; the drums began to beat, and the dance began, the party above described only participating in it.

They at first slowly advanced towards the central post, followed by the musicians several of whom carried a side of raw hide (dried), which was beaten upon with sticks, making about as much music as to beat upon the sole of an old shoe, while the drums, the voices of the women, and the rattling of pebbles in instruments of raw hide filled out the choir.

After slowly advancing nearly to the central post, they retired backward, again advanced, a little farther than before; this was repeated several times, each time advancing a little farther, until they crowded upon the spectators, drew their revolvers, and discharged them into the air.

Soon after, the women rushed forward with a shrieking yell, threw their blankets violently upon the ground, at the feet of the retiring dancers, snatched them up with the same tremulous shriek that had been before produced, and retired; which closed this part of the entertainment. The ornamented shields used on this occasion were afterwards hung up with the medicine.^[28]

When a war party returned with a scalp, there was rejoicing and the women came to take part in the scalp dance. Both sexes might either go round in a circle for this performance or face each other in rows. A scalp was divided into four parts, each of which was put on a stick and carried by one of the women. The dance was danced every day for about a month, then the scalps were stowed away in medicine bags.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] See Methvin.

[2] Battey, 185-186.

[3] Indian Sign Language, 355.

[4] Methvin, 165-168.

[5] Especially Mooney, (b), and in *Handbook*, article "Military Societies."

[6] Of red color when ripe and salty taste.

[7] Methvin includes the girls also (p. 165), but according to Martinez this is a mistake.

[8] Mooney, (b), 229-230.

[9] id., *Handbook*, I, p. 862.

[10] Battey, 169.

[11] Methvin, 70 et seq.

[12] Methvin, 163.

[13] Mr. Mooney, (b), pp. 230, 418, gives two synonymous native terms for Rabbits, "polā 'ñyup" and "tsāñyui," of which the former obviously corresponds to my "fulā 'nyu."

[14] For his two synonymous native designations "ādaltóyui" (corresponding to my "altō 'yuhe") and "téñbeyu'i," Mr. Mooney gives the translation, "Young Mountain Sheep."

[15] Mr. Mooney translates "Horse Caps" (Headdresses); Martinez was unable to give an accurate rendering, but gave me the idea of "Rulers of Horses."

[16] Mr. Mooney translates "Black Legs."

[17] Mr. Mooney translates "Skunkberries," and gives another native name rendered "Crazy Horses."

[18] *Handbook*, I, 862; Mooney, (b), 230.

[19] *ibid.*, 409.

[20] According to Mr. Mooney there was only one leader.

[21] Mooney, (b), 285.

[22] I was told that similar rattles were also used by the medicinemen at a sun dance.

[23] Battey, 168.

[24] Battey, op. cit., 166-184; Mooney, (b), 240-244; Scott, 345-379.

[25] Mooney, (b), 360.

[26] *ibid.*, 358.

[27] This volume, 811, 820, 834.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SOCIETIES OF THE KIWAS ***

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