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The Relations between the Kiowa and the Crow Indians.

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The Kiowa, a Plains tribe intimately associated with the Comanche in historic times, have demonstrably occupied "contiguous parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas". Long considered a distinct stock, they have been plausibly connected with the Tanoan family by J.P. Harrington and grouped by Sapir with not only the Tanoans, but the Uto-Aztecs as well, forming with the Tanoans a branch of his "Aztec-Tanoan" stock. By these tokens, then, the Kiowa appear as a distinctly Southern Plains tribe (1).

However, a pioneer in Plains Indian ethnography, the late James Mooney, on the basis of Kiowa traditions recorded by him about sixty years ago, has advanced the view that the Kiowa originally dwelt in western Montana, near the Flathead Indians; that subsequently they moved east, encountering the Crow "probably about or before 1700"; that a very close intimacy was established by these two tribes and continued even "after the Kiowa had entirely removed from the north and established themselves on the Arkansas" (2). These views have been widely accepted by responsible ethnographers. Swanton and Hoxby (3), e.g., write as though the northern derivation of the Kiowa and their specifically close association with the Crow were firmly established.

To this crystallization of Mooney's conceptions into a dogma I take exception. If the traditions he reports have historic validity, I incline to Wissler's and Kroeber's interpretation that they refer to a temporary northward migration, preceded by southern residence and followed by a return to the south (4). Conversations with Professor Leslie Spier suggest that he essentially concurs in this interpretation. I should like to present some evidence derived mainly from my studies of the Crow.

If the intertribal bond was at one time as close as Mooney

believes, evidence should be forthcoming from the Crow with approximately equal decisiveness as from the Kiowa. The reverse holds true. In the Index to a general book of mine on the Crow, I find 9 references to the Piegan, 28 to the Dakota, 11 to the Cheyenne, 32 to the Hidatsa, 8 to the Mandan, but not a single one to the Kiowa. As a matter of fact, I remain doubtful whether two native terms I collected as possibly designating this people actually bear this meaning; on one of them two interpreters were at variance, one Crow stating that it denoted not the Kiowa, but the Osage (5).

Undoubtedly a comparison of Crow and Kiowa cultural traits yields a respectable number of resemblances, but the question is how far the resemblances go beyond those to be expected between any two nomadic Plains peoples. This is precisely the problem attacked by E.W.Voegelin twenty years ago with reference to folktales. Profiting from a recently published collection of Kiowa tales by Elsie Clews Parsons, Dr.Voegelin inquired into the relative degree of similarity between the stories of the Kiowa and those of the Arapaho, Gros Ventre, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, and Crow respectively. She demonstrated that the tales did "not show a markedly specific affiliation with Crow mythology"; the parallels were rather due "merely to a general Plains influence as regards Kiowa mythology"(6).

Corresponding conclusions result from examination of the two tribal systems of military organizations. To take the best-known society, the Kiowa "Chief Dogs" (to use Mooney's rendering) have specific traits in common with the "Big Dogs" of the Crow; members in both instances wear sashes, shake dewclaw rattles of the same type, blow whistles during a dance, and in battle are pledged not to retreat. But these features were so widespread in the area as criteria of a society named after dogs that no argument emerges for a distinctively Crow-Kiowa relationship (7).

The war customs of the two tribes also show in part resemblances in detail - e.g. the blackening of faces by victorious warriors -, but again the features are so common in the Plains that no special historical connection is established thereby. In some cases a Kiowa practice may be evidence of one-time contact with other northern tribes than the Crow. For instance, before starting on a raid Kiowa braves used to parade holding a buffalo hide, which they beat with sticks. As Mooney himself states, this usage was characteristic of Indians as far north as the Columbia River; and in the same context or otherwise such drumming on a rawhide has been reported from the Nez Percé, Pawnee, Arikara, Lemhi and Wind River Shoshone, and Comanche. Actually, it was not unknown to the Crow, who had borrowed it from the Shoshone, but with them it remained merely a subordinate form of amusement (8).

Striking, indeed, are the contrasts with respect to social structure and concomitant phenomena. The Crow are subdivided into thirteen matrilineal clans, while the Kiowa have no clan system at all, but merely split into a number of bands set at 7 by Mooney, at from 10 to 20 by Richardson. The core of a band consisted of its leader, his brothers, and their spouses, but there is no suggestion of unilateral descent (9).

In view of these differences we should hardly expect considerable similarity in kinship terminology, but the terminologies

differ even more than might be conjectured. As one might anticipate, the Kiowa completely lack the features correlated with Crow emphasis on the matrilineage; but they also lack the extremely common Indian - and primitive - distinction between elder and younger brother. In this regard they resemble another southern Plains people, the Pawnee. Unlike the Crow and most of the northern tribes of the area, they also fail to distinguish between cross-cousins and parallel cousins, therein resembling the Comanche and Shoshone, Cheyenne, Arapaho, as well as many northern groups of other areas. A noteworthy feature, reminiscent of Shoshoneans, is the use of a single stem for maternal uncle and sister's child. Still more remarkable is the absence of specific terms for many relationships otherwise recognized in North America and the correlative, rare custom of addressing the kinsfolk in question by their proper names. In his classification of North American kinship nomenclatures, Spier puts the Kiowa with nine Southwestern tribes and a single northern one (Kutenai)(10).

Kiowa religion is imperfectly known, hence eludes systematic comparative treatment. But the major festival has been fairly adequately described, and concerning it there can be no doubt. The central sacred object, a small image or "doll" through which the benefits of the Sun Dance performance are attained, is peculiar to the Kiowa and the Crow. This unique feature thus corroborates Kiowa tradition that it was derived from the Crow. Its overshadowing importance outweighs the fact that an unweighted enumeration of single Sun Dance items does not establish an exceptional parallelism between our two tribes. They share 11 traits, whereas the Kiowa share 14 with the Gros Ventre, 19 with the Cheyenne, 23 with the Arapaho. In other words, the Kiowa variant is very far from duplicating the Crow festival. As a matter of fact, it diverges from it in conspicuous features. Thus, the auxiliary participants of the Kiowa Sun Dance never tortured themselves; and the Kiowa theoretically made it an annual ceremony, whereas the Crow pledged it only in order to avenge a beloved kinsman's death, so that performance was at irregular intervals. Notwithstanding these differences, the uniqueness of the doll demonstrates beyond doubt a historical connection between Crow and Kiowa. How to assess it, will engage our attention presently (11).

So far as I know, there has been no intensive study of Kiowa decorative art. Spier's findings for the designs painted on parfleches (rawhide cases) suggest more northern than southern influences, but no specifically Crow affinity; the number of specimens available for examination was small and the Kiowa figures do not demonstrate marked differences within the northern group. His table for "the number of times the tribes shared the design elements" presents the following figures: Kiowa-Yakima 3; Kiowa-Nez Percé 3; Kiowa-Kutenai 4; Kiowa-Sarsi 4; Kiowa-Blackfoot 5; Kiowa-Gros Ventre 4; Kiowa-Assiniboine 3; Kiowa-Crow 4; Kiowa-Dakota 3; Kiowa-Wind River Shoshone 4; Kiowa-Arapaho 5; Kiowa-Cheyenne 4; Kiowa-Northern Ute 3. The evidence from bead embroidery, so far as it goes, is contrary; i.e. the Kiowa fall in rather with their southern neighbors - Comanche, Wichita, Ute -, especially in using mainly stripe and border patterns rather than solid beadwork (12).

To sum up: I do not deny that at one time the Kiowa had northern contacts, but in view of the dearth of Crow references to the Kiowa and of Crow cultural parallels not shared with other Plains peoples, I challenge the dogma of an especially intimate

bond between the two tribes! Even the Sun Dance doll, according to Kiowa tradition, came via an Arapaho. As to an earlier northern habitat, "the presence of the Kiowa in the north may have been due to their periodical wanderings" (Wissler); I agree with Wissler and Kroeber that no permanent residence there is indicated in, say, the last five hundred years. This conclusion certainly accords with linguistic findings.

Notes:

- 1) John R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 145, Washington, 1952) pp.294-296. - J.P. Harrington, "On Phonetic and Lexic Resemblances between Kiowan and Tanoan", *American Anthropologist*, vol.12: pp.119-123. - Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings* (Berkeley, Cal. 1949), p.173.
- 2) James Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians* (Bureau of American Ethnology, 17th Annual Report, pp.141-445, Washington 1898), pp.152-161.
- 3) E. Adamson Hoebel and Ernest Wallace, *The Comanches; Lords of the Southern Plains* (Norman, Okla., 1952), 285.
- 4) Clark Wissler, "The Influence of the Horse in the Development of Plains Culture", (*American Anthropologist*, vol.16: pp.1-25, 1914), p.14. - A.L. Kroeber, *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America* (University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, vol.38: pp.1-242, Berkeley, 1939), p.80.
- 5) Robert H. Lowie, *The Crow Indians* (New York, 1935), 345-350. id., *The Material Culture of the Crow Indians* (*American Museum of Natural History, Anthropological Papers*, vol.21: pp.201-270, New York, 1922), p.267.
- 6) Erminie W. Voegelin, *Kiowa-Crow Mythological Affiliations*, (*American Anthropologist*, Vol.35: pp.470-474, 1933).
- 7) Mooney, op.cit., pp.229f., 284f., - R.H. Lowie, *Societies of the Kiowa* (*Anthrop. Papers, American Museum of Natural History*, vol.11: pp.839-851, New York, 1916); id., *Plains Indian Age-Societies* (same vol., pp.881-984), p.920.
- 8) Mooney, op.cit., p.312. - James Murie and R.H. Lowie in Clark Wissler, editor, *Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., Anthrop. Papers*, Vol.11: pp.581, 666, 811. - R.H. Lowie, *Social Life of the Crow Indians* (same series, vol.9: pp.179-248, 1912), p.244.
- 9) Mooney, op.cit., 228f. - Jane Richardson, *Law and Status among the Kiowa Indians* (New York, 1940), pp.6-8.
- 10) R.H. Lowie, *A Note on Kiowa Kinship Terms and Usages* (*Amer. Anthropologist*, vol.25: pp.279-281, 1923). - E.A. Hoebel, *Comanche and Hekandika Shoshone Relationship Systems* (*Amer. Anthrop.* vol.41: pp.440-457, 1939). - Leslie Spier, *The Distribution of Kinship Systems in North America* (*Univ. of Washington Publications in Anthropology*, vol.1: pp.69-88, Seattle, 1925), p.74f.

- 11) Mooney, op.cit., 155f. - Hugh Lenox Scott, Notes on the Kado, or Sun Dance of the Kiowa (American Anthropologist, vol.13: 345-379, 1911). - Leslie Spier, Notes on the Kiowa Sun Dance (Amer.Mus.Nat.Hist., Anthropol.Papers, vol.XVI, pp.433-450, 1921); id., The Sun Dance of the Plains Indians, 1st Development and Diffusion (same volume: pp.451-522, 1921).
- 12) Leslie Spier, An Analysis of Plains Indian Parfleche Decoration (Univ.of Washington Publications in Anthropology, vol.1, pp.89-112, Seattle, 1925), p.108. - A.L.Kroeber, Ethnology of the Gros Ventre (Amer.Mus.Nat.Hist., Anthropol.Papers, vol.1: pp.141-281, 1908), pp.154ff., 160f.

Résumé

Habitant le centre-sud des plaines américaines, les Kiowa doivent être considérés comme des Indiens typiques des plaines méridionales. Cependant, plusieurs auteurs, se basant sur l'autorité de J.Mooney, les font venir du Nord à une époque assez récente et estiment que leur contact avec les Crow aurait eu lieu vers 1700. Un lien étroit serait né alors entre ces deux tribus. Le professeur R.H.Lowie estime, quant à lui, que ce contact avec les Crow n'est dû qu'à une migration temporaire des Kiowa vers le Nord, entre deux séjours au Sud. En se basant sur des récits populaires des Kiowa, on a pu démontrer que leur mythologie était d'inspiration semblable à celle des Indiens des plaines du Sud. Les ressemblances trouvées entre l'organisation militaire des Crow et celle des Kiowa ne sont pas fortuites, car elles répondent au type généralement accepté dans l'habitat de ces deux tribus.

La descendance matrilineaire est la règle chez les Crow, alors que les Kiowa ignorent même la notion de clan et vivent en bandes ou groupements, sans idée de descendance unilatérale. La terminologie des Kiowa et des Crow au sujet de la parenté diffère donc passablement et dans ce domaine les Kiowa sont plus près des tribus méridionales que des Crow.

On ne connaît qu'imparfaitement la religion Kiowa, mais la Danse du Soleil présente une ressemblance très nette avec celle des Crow. Le bénéfice de cette danse s'obtient par le truchement d'une poupée chez les deux peuples. Mais c'est la seule ressemblance. De nombreux traits de cette danse apparaissent aussi bien chez les Kiowa que chez d'autres tribus méridionales. Cependant l'utilisation de la poupée confirme une certaine connection historique entre Crow et Kiowa. Il faut cependant insister sur les différences, car les danseurs Kiowa, au contraire des Crow, ne se torturent pas. Et les différences constatées permettent de douter de la connection culturelle entre les deux tribus.

Si les dessins des tentes de cuir paraissent plus nordiques que méridionaux, les broderies de perles et les motifs utilisés se ressentent d'influences méridionales plutôt que septentrionales. La linguistique prouvera encore que la présence au Nord des Kiowa n'est due qu'à une migration périodique et non à un établissement de longue durée.

(G.L.)
