

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

1991

Review of The Kiowa

Maurice Boyd

Texas Christian University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Boyd, Maurice, "Review of The Kiowa" (1991). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 617.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/617>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

The Kiowa. By John R. Wunder. Indians of North America, edited by Frank W. Porter III. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989. Maps, illustrations, photographs, bibliography, glossary, index. 111 pp. \$15.95.

This brief and easily readable summary about the Kiowas from their early known beginnings to the present should be welcomed by Kiowa and non-Kiowa alike. Any general reader seeking an overview of the tribe will also find it helpful.

The editor of the Indians of North America series, Frank W. Porter III, provides an introduction outlining the political stress under which all Native American Indians have lived and still endure. The author, John R. Wunder, places the Kiowa tribe within this overall framework. The first three chapters concisely give the cultural development of the Kiowas prior to any significant contact with European culture, and the final three catalog the Kiowa turmoil, first through warfare, and then through political and legal struggles with the federal (and state) government. The author is at his best writing about

the legal and judicial relationships between the Kiowas and the federal government. Kiowa readers will find the final two chapters directly applicable to their present problems and concerns.

Kiowa elders will question a few statements by both the author and the editor(s). The author refers to the Kiowas as a nation more than once; but they were only a small tribe of six bands—seven when joined by the misnomered Kiowa-Apache, and six again when one band left and disappeared in Wyoming. The Kiowas will recognize the author's Azatanhop (angry travelers) band who left the tribe during the hunting dispute by their more popular term, the "Pulling Out" band. Kiowa descendants of the Buffalo Medicine Cult practitioners also wince at the white man's term "Buffalo Doctor Society."

From James Mooney's time with them in the 1890s until today, Kiowa elders have insisted that all existing physical and cultural evidence supports their contention that the tribe always lived in the north prior to their relatively late migration southeastward. No scientific evidence exists to support an early southern habitat theory.

Young male Kiowas may also disagree with the assertion that they could progress through five warrior societies in former times. The progression and approximate age levels were Polanyup (Rabbits), ages 6-12; Adaltoyup (Young Wild Sheep), ages 12-15-17; and then as young adults they moved into one of six warrior societies of equal status. In time the ten greatest warriors from the adult warrior societies were elevated into the Koitsenko group, which represented a fourth level.

The editorial staff did an excellent job of selecting Kiowa art to illustrate tribal cultural development through the Sun Dance, tipis, individual dances, skin paintings, and calendars. In their insertion on page 26, the editors state that only four known calendars exist. In addition to the four cited, several others have survived including the Keah-ko calendar in New Mexico held by the Ohoma drum keeper; the Big Tree calendar in Dallas; the Tonemah cal-

endar currently held by a family member in Flagstaff, Arizona; and three ledger calendars in the archives at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The editors also declare that the Kiowas acquired horses in the early nineteenth century, but the author more correctly states that LaSalle reported the Kiowas had huge remudas prior to 1682; this latter statement agrees with Kiowa tradition.

The Kiowa, nevertheless, is a good introduction to the tribal history, and possibly it will stimulate some gifted Kiowa to write a comprehensive history from the perspective of the Kiowas.

MAURICE BOYD
Department of History
Texas Christian University