

Tribes of the Plains Culture

The pressure of advancing settlers eventually pushed new American Indian groups into Texas. The biggest change for these Indians in Texas and across the Great Plains came when the Spanish brought horses to North America. Until that time, Indians walked and used dogs to carry their possessions. After Plains Indians learned to ride horses, they moved freely across the Great Plains, and the Plains **culture**, which relied on the bison, developed.

This map shows the rough location of the Plains Indians in Texas. The Mescalero Apache quickly moved on to New Mexico. The Kiowa Apache lived with the Kiowa.

Texas Plains Tribes



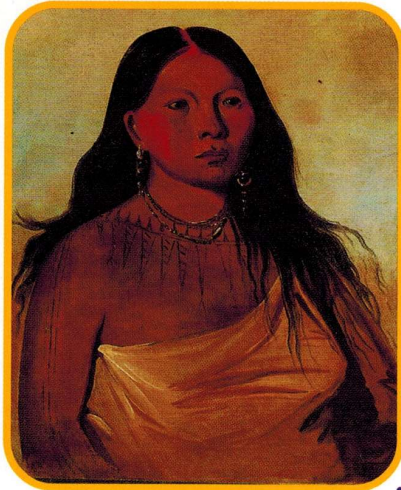
Millions of bison roamed the Great Plains. Bison supplied everything the Plains Indians needed. Bison meat was eaten raw, cooked, or dried. Hooves provided glue to make arrows. **Sinew** was used for thread and bowstrings. Bison hair was braided into ropes and belts. Horns were made into cups and spoons. Bones were shaped into tools. Hides provided covering for moveable houses, such as **tepees**. Clothing, robes, shields, and bags all came from bison. Even bison brains were smeared on hides to soften them.

When the bison were almost completely killed off by United States hunters, so was the livelihood of the tribes of the Great Plains. The United States created **reservations** for the tribes in Indian Territory, in present-day Oklahoma. Many Texas tribes were forced out of the state in 1839, by order of Texas President Mirabeau Lamar. Their final removal occurred in 1859.

WICHITA

One of the first Europeans to meet the Wichita was the Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. He explored the area around southern Kansas in 1542. The Wichita were actually made up of four loosely associated groups, which were the Wichita, Waco, Tawakoni (Tah-WAH-kohn-ee), and Taovaya (tah-oh-VAH-yah). The Osage, a group hostile to the Wichita, pushed the Wichita south. The Wichita then settled on the Red River at Spanish Fort. The Waco group advanced down to central Texas, near what is today the city of Waco. In the early 1800s, Wichita were trading goods from the Great Plains to Louisiana.

The Wichita had darker skin than most tribes. The men painted circles around their eyes and called themselves "raccoon eyes." Both men and women tattooed lines and geometric shapes on their faces. Wichita warriors



Wichita women tattooed their faces and wore dresses made of tanned hides that went down to their ankles. They sometimes used elk teeth to decorate clothing and make jewelry.

Painted their brave deeds on their robes or **tepees**.

Wichita villages were located along rivers and had 100 or more neatly arranged houses. Open shelters next to the houses provided a place to work, rest, and store extra food. The Wichita were excellent farmers. They grew corn, melons, beans, and pumpkins. After the Wichita began using horses, the men hunted bison during the winter. They lived in tepees while on the hunt.

Wichita marriages involved the groom giving horses to the bride's father or brother. The groom's parents provided a feast for the bride's family. The new couple lived with the bride's family.

When a person died, the body was dressed in the finest clothes. The face was painted with the person's special markings. A warrior's shield was given to a friend who understood its magic power, or it was hung on a tree. At the graveside the friend spoke to Earth Mother and asked her to receive the dead person.

The cone-shaped houses of the Wichita were 15 to 30 feet across and made of poles covered with grass. Beds stood off the floor on poles.



Jerky and Pemmican

Jerky and pemmican were popular foods among American Indians. Jerky was meat roasted over a low fire and cut into strips. Pemmican was pounded meat, nuts, and berries stuffed into animal intestines. Both were nutritious and easy to store for later use.

After a four-day period of mourning, friends prepared a feast for the family.

The Wichita respected a **deity** called Man-Never-Known-On-Earth. In their creation story, this god made a land that floated on water. He gave a man and a woman an ear of corn and bows and arrows. This first man became Morning Star, and the woman was the moon goddess Bright Morning Star.

By the mid-1800s, the Wichita lived in the Wichita Mountains of Oklahoma. After the Civil War in 1865, they were placed on a **reservation** with the Waco and Tawakoni groups.

TONKAWA

Tonkawa (TAHNG-kuh-wah) is a Waco word meaning "they stay all together." The Tonkawa were loosely connected bands that united by the 1800s. They lived on the Edwards Plateau, near present-day Austin, and had a tribal chief.

The Tonkawa hunted and gathered fruits, herbs, berries, acorns, and pecans. They traded pecans to settlers. After the Comanche, another Indian group, cut them off from the lands where bison roamed, the Tonkawa ate deer, rabbits, skunks, rats, and tortoises. Rattlesnake was a **delicacy**. The Tonkawa avoided wolves, probably for religious reasons. The sacred Wolf Dance was performed in secret.

Tonkawa houses were low **tepees** made with bison hides. When they could no longer get hides, they made brush houses. Tribal members belonged to the **clans** of their mothers. Tonkawa men wore a very long **breechcloth** and leggings. In cooler weather they put on hide shirts and robes. Women wore deerskin skirts and tattooed their upper bodies.

Tonkawa **shamans** treated the sick. As death approached, friends circled the dying person and put their hands on him or her. A second circle stood behind and touched the shoulders of the people in the first circle. After death, the person's hair was cut, the face painted yellow, and the body wrapped in a skin robe. Friends brought gifts to be buried with the body. After three days of mourning, relatives and friends brought food, clothing, and household furnishings to replace those buried at the funeral. Tonkawa buried the dead with their heads to the west, so that the spirit of the dead could go in that direction. People slept with their feet to the west so that they would not be taken to the underworld too early.

.....
This is an 1898 photograph of Sentele, or Grant Richards, a Tonkawa chief. Tonkawa men had long hair they parted in the middle and wore loose or braided. They wore bone or shell beads and earrings and put feathers in their hair.



Tonkawa thought that mistletoe was poison. They rubbed mistletoe juice on their arrows and later on the ends of their guns. Warriors also used lances. They carried shields made out of bison hides and used padded jackets for protection. The Tonkawa were warlike but friendly with white settlers. Later, they acted as scouts for the United States army while fighting other Indian groups. This caused other tribes to attack the Tonkawa when they were sent to Indian Territory.

Tonkawa Names

To keep from angering the spirits of people who had died, Tonkawa names were never used more than once. Tonkawa borrowed Comanche and European names after they ran out of their own.

APACHE

Three groups of Apache lived in Texas. The Lipan (lee-PAHN) are the most well known Apache tribe that lived in Texas. They lived in the Texas Hill Country by the 1700s. Mescalero (mes-kuh-LAR-oh) Apache lived in New Mexico by 1855. Kiowa Apache lived along the Red River and had more in common with the Kiowa Indians there.

Apache men wore breechcloths, leggings, and moccasins. In the winter they added a **buckskin** shirt and blanket. Women wore knee-length deerskin skirts, snug-fitting leggings, and high moccasins. Their shirts were also made of deerskin. Young girls wore dresses of beaded buckskin. The bottom of the dress was fringed with brass or tin ornaments.

In early days, the Apache had gardens in which they grew corn, beans, squash, and pumpkins. But Comanche raids in the 1700s forced the Apache to abandon their farms. The Apache hunted bison, deer, antelope, javelinas, rats, and wild turkeys. They traded meat, hides, **tallow**, and salt with American Indian groups in New Mexico. In return they received cotton blankets, pottery, corn, and small green stones that were probably **turquoise**. The Apache kept cattle for food and used the stomachs of cattle or bison to hold water. Women carried large baskets of water with the help of a **rawhide** strap.

Apache groups were small, usually several extended families banded together. A respected person was chosen as the leader. Marriages were arranged by families. The groom was obligated to take care of his wife's family. If the wife died, her sister was offered to

the husband. A woman could not leave if her husband died. Often she married her husband's brother.

When a child was born, it was held up to the north, south, east, and west and shown to the Sun. The father named the child a few days after birth, usually for something in nature. Children were rarely punished, and grandparents taught them skills they needed to know.

Apache warriors earned respect by performing brave deeds. They were excellent horsemen and counted wealth by how many horses they owned. A warrior's favorite horse was staked outside his **tepee** at night. Even after they had guns, the Apache still preferred their four-foot-long mulberry bows. The Apache made bow

strings out of split deer or bison **sinews** twisted together. Warriors carried an oval bison-hide shield about three feet high and two feet wide that turned away arrows and bullets unless hit straight on.

.....
This is a rare 19th-century photograph of a Lipan Apache chief (center) who served as a scout for the U.S. army. It was taken sometime in the 1870s at Fort Clark, Texas.



Apaches were afraid of spirits. Mourners walked home from the grave by different routes to confuse the spirits. Names of the dead were not spoken for fear the ghost would return and take the living to the underworld. Relatives did not eat during the time of mourning. The Apache believed that **shamans** could control or predict events. Near the end of life, shamans often transferred their powers to younger shamans.



Apache tepees were large enough for a dozen people. Beds were made of grass or cedar twigs several inches deep, covered with hides, fur side up.

.....

The Lipan Apache were friendly toward white settlers in Texas. Gradually, however, the Apache were forced out by settlers and went to Mexico. For years they raided along the border between Texas and Mexico. Finally, in 1873, United States army Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie led soldiers into Mexico and attacked Lipan villages. Lipan Apache survivors went to the Mescalero Apache **reservation** in New Mexico.

KIOWA AND KIOWA APACHE

The Kiowa and Kiowa Apache were latecomers to Texas. The two groups were the same in almost every practice except language. It is believed that the Kiowa once lived in western Montana. They were driven out of that region by other American Indian groups in 1780. Soon afterward, they were in Oklahoma's Wichita Mountains. The Kiowa and Kiowa Apache made a lasting peace with the Comanche in 1840. The name *Kiowa* is actually a Comanche word meaning "mouse."

The Kiowa were organized into bands. Every Kiowa group had a headman who directed hunts and decided where to camp. The leader was generous, because the band was free to leave him if they chose.

Bison, deer, and antelope were the Kiowa's main food, but they did not eat bear, birds, or fish. When hunting, mounted Kiowa men formed a circle around small **game** and forced the animals toward women and children, who then caught the animals by hand. There was no shooting unless the animals broke out of the circle. In large bison hunts, men surrounded the bison. They then shot the animals or forced them over a cliff. The Kiowa did not farm. They traded for plant food or took it from others. The Kiowa were often on the move and could break down their camp in 30 minutes. They carried nothing breakable. They used bison or cow stomachs to hold water.

Kiowa men let their hair grow as long as possible on the left side. It was cut on the right side to show off earrings. A scalp lock was left hanging down behind. Women parted their hair in the middle and wore it in two braids, or loose with a headband.



The Kiowa were described as tall and graceful. Kiowa clothing was made of **buckskin**. The Kiowa wore jewelry made from Mexican silver coins and decorated clothing and horses with metal ornaments. Kiowa war bonnets had feathers, horns, and a headband made of colored beads.

Kiowa **tepees** were made of tanned hides decorated with artistic paintings. Beds were made of light willow rods lying across several poles. These were covered with bison skins and blankets and served as couches during the day.

Kiowa boys married at age sixteen, and girls at age fourteen. The groom offered horses to the bride's parents. Once married, the couple lived with the husband's parents. Important men had several wives. Women did a huge amount of work, and having several wives made the work easier.

Kiowa children were named by a grandparent. Names came from important events or deeds

The Kiowa Five



The Kiowa were very artistic and continued that **tradition** in the 20th century. In the 1920s, under the leadership of their art teacher at the University of Oklahoma, a group of five Kiowa artists gained international attention for their paintings.

This silk screen painting (left) was done by Stephen Mopope, one of the Kiowa Five. It shows two Indian dancers and a drummer, all wearing feathers.

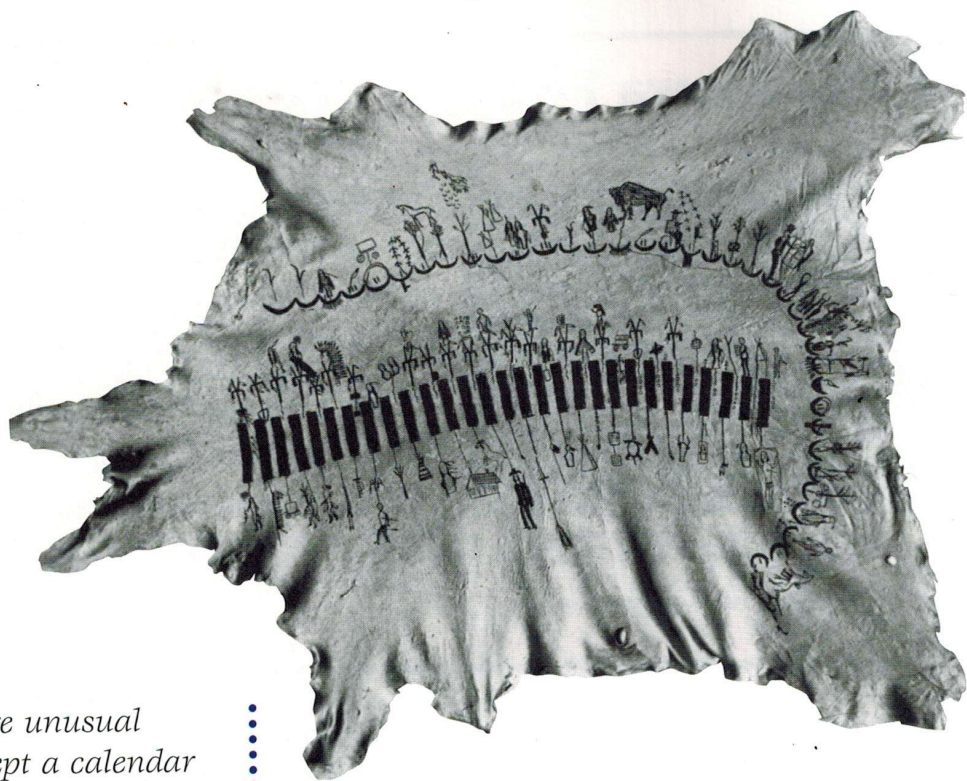
of **ancestors**. Old men near death often gave their names to younger men and then went nameless the rest of their lives. Names of the dead were not used or even spoken. When people died, they were buried in high places that were not easy to get to. Their goods were buried with them. Mourning lasted several days.

The Kiowa worshiped the Sun as their main god, but they believed that all things had certain powers. Owls, for instance, contained the souls of the dead. The Kiowa believed heaven was across the western ocean. It was a joyous place where game was plentiful, and horses were large and swift.

The Kiowa usually held the Sun Dance in the middle of June. All the tribes came together for the ten-day event. Everything followed strict **rituals**. The head of a freshly killed bison was placed on the twenty-foot-tall medicine lodge pole. Tepees circled the lodge in a set order. The sacred Sun Dance image, the *Taimé*, was set up on the west side. The dance itself lasted four days. Before everyone

Indian Sign Language

The Kiowa are said to have developed the sign language that all Plains Indians used and understood.



The Kiowa were unusual because they kept a calendar history on an animal hide. A series of pictures spiraled from the outside to the center of the hide. Markings showed winter and summer seasons with their important events. This Kiowa hide calendar is from around 1895.

left, old clothes, and sometimes a horse, were tied to the lodge pole as sacrifices.

The Kiowa were finally forced onto an Oklahoma **reservation** in 1875. Less than twenty years later, their land was divided and sold. In order to survive, the Kiowa quickly learned to live in the white **culture**.

COMANCHE

The Comanche were some of the finest horsemen in the world. Comanche children often learned to ride a horse before they could even walk. The horse was the center of the Comanche life and economy. Both men and women owned horses. The Comanche were the only tribe to breed horses. They also captured or stole them. They swept down out of the Colorado mountains and into Texas and became "lords of the Southern Plains."

The Comanche were never a unified group. Different bands were named for food, and each had a general territory. The Penateka Comanche (Honey Eaters) lived

Cynthia Ann and Quanah Parker

Cynthia Ann Parker was twelve years old when a group of Comanche and other Indians attacked and killed most of her family in Limestone County, Texas, in 1836. Cynthia Ann was taken to live with the Comanche. At age seventeen or eighteen she married Chief Peta Nocona and had two sons and a little girl. A group including some Texas Rangers attacked their camp in 1860. Cynthia Ann was taken to the Parker family, but she tried to return to the Comanche. She was never able to return, and she died sometime around 1870.



Cynthia Ann's teenage son Quanah (left) escaped the raid of 1860. He joined the Quahadi Comanche and rose to be their chief. After the Comanche went to the reservation, he learned the ways of white culture and became a strong voice for his people. He was a friend of Texas rancher Charles Goodnight and hunted with President Theodore Roosevelt on land that had once been his home.

west of the Cross Timbers between the place where the Colorado and Brazos Rivers start. The Kotsoteka (Buffalo Eaters) were the most warlike Comanche. The last Plains Indians to surrender to United States forces were the Quahadi (Antelope) Comanche, who lived in the Llano Estacado, in northwest Texas.

Comanche camps were set up along streams in no particular order. **Tepees** made out of hide were twelve to fourteen feet high, but a chief's was larger.. The door faced away from the wind. Beds were made of animal skins.

Comanche men wore braids and painted the part in their hair. They wore a yellow or black feather in a scalp



This photograph of a Comanche woman and her baby was taken between 1905 and 1910. Comanche women often strapped their babies in cradleboards to their backs while they worked.

lock. They plucked their eyebrows and beards and might have as many as ten ear piercings for shell or silver earrings. Their clothing included a **breechcloth**, leggings, and moccasins. Only important war chiefs had feather headdresses. Some chiefs wore bison horns.

Comanche women wore decorated **buckskin** shirts and skirts with uneven hemlines. Moccasins were decorated with beads, fringe, and little bits of iron called tinklers. Comanche women wore their hair short. They painted their faces with red and yellow lines above and below the eyes. They painted their ears red inside.

Newborn babies were wrapped in soft skins and strapped to a **cradleboard**. There was no set time to name a child. Children were called by pet names until they were officially named. At the naming **ceremony**, the **shaman** blew smoke in all four directions. Then he held the baby up to each of the four directions. Names were considered magical. A sickly baby would be given another name to get rid of the sickness.

The Comanche never planted crops. They traded for food or took it. They hunted with bows made of hickory, a very hard wood. They used a three-foot-long bow that was easy to handle on horseback. The bow was strung with split bison or deer **sinew**. Comanches hunted elk, black bears, and antelope but did not eat fish, birds, dog, or coyote. They captured or stole longhorn cattle. Large bison hunts had a leader, and each hunter knew his assignment. Hunters approached the bison and closed in, trying to get the animals to run in a circle. When they got within a few feet of the right side of the animal, the hunters sent an arrow down behind the last rib into the heart. Women did the rest of the work, including skinning the animals

and removing the meat. Meat could be roasted or boiled, but the Comanche considered it bad luck to eat meat cooked both ways at the same meal.

Comanche men might wait to marry until after age 30. A man first had to have enough horses to support a wife. The groom took a gift, usually a horse, to the girl's parents or brother. If his proposal was accepted, the father or brother placed the horse among his own herd.

The Comanche had few **rituals**. Within a band, a wise, older person was the peace chief. A distinguished warrior served as the war chief. A council of **elders** helped decide when to move, whether to make war or peace, and the time of hunts. Gifted speakers spoke at treaty councils, but they might not be chiefs. Because each band was separate, a treaty with one band did not apply to the others.

In 1874, Quanah Parker led a large party to the Panhandle of Texas. The following year, the United States army surprised them in Tule Canyon and killed 1,000 horses. Without horses or food, Quanah Parker was forced to lead the Comanche to their **reservation**.



Comanche warriors used hard bison-hide shields. The rounded surface turned aside bullets and arrows. Warriors tied feathers to the rim to throw off the enemy's aim. Men decorated their shields with bear teeth while hunting, scalps while making war, and a horsetail while conducting raids.