



**Apaches-Kiowas continued—**

learned the ancient art of communal “buffalo jumps” as well as material culture from other tribes, such as the Blackfeet, as they moved south. (Blackfeet may have been using buffalo jumps and living about where they are now for 6,000 years).

We know that Apaches were prominent in the Plains in the 1500’s and 1600’s because the Spanish Conquistadors Coronado, Onate and others, encountered and wrote about them there during that period. Anthropologists agree that there were still some Apachean people south of the Black Hills (in the Dismal River and Ash Hollow area of the Nebraska panhandle) until about 1790.

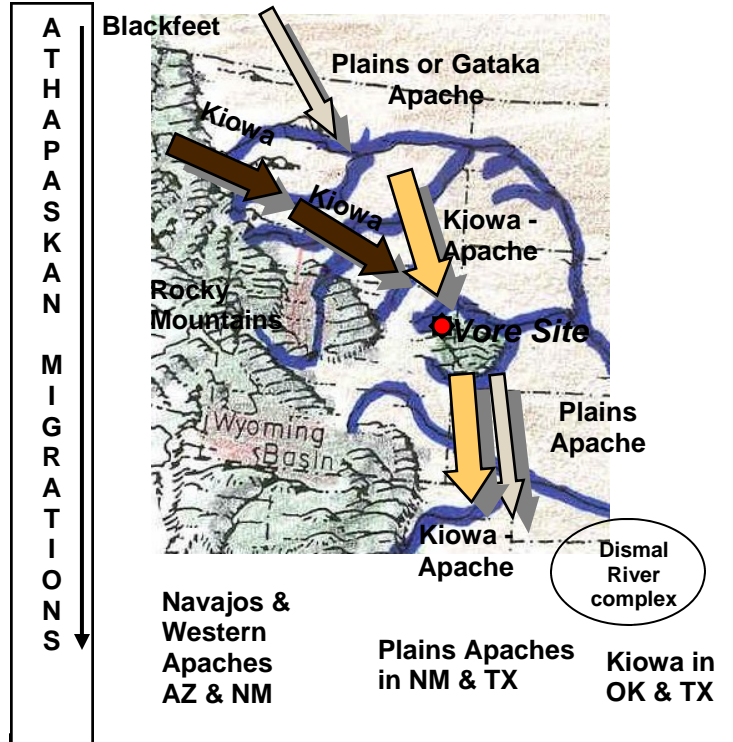
The Apaches that formed the so-called Dismal River Complex made some of the cultural adaptations characteristic of other Plains nomads. However, they lived in semi-permanent villages (“rancherías”) of small buildings with wood-and earth roofs more similar to the “forked-stick” hogans used by the early Athapaskan-speaking Navajos than to the larger, more circular “earthlodges” that the Pawnees and Missouri River Indians favored. These Apaches also grew corn in addition to hunting buffalo and they produced characteristic pottery, roasting pits and arrow points.

Another group of Apaches encountered and formed an alliance with a small tribe in western Montana that spoke a completely different language. These were the Kiowas.

**Whence the Kiowa?**

Nobody yet knows for sure where the Kiowas came from. Their language has some similarity to that of the (Tanoan) Rio Grande pueblos and the so-called “Uto-Aztecan” language family. Accordingly, one theory is that the Kiowa originated in the southwest or Intermountain area, but made a large circular migration... north through the Great Basin, and over the mountains to western Montana. Another theory has both the Tanoan pueblo people and the Kiowas originating in the north, separating, and ending up in the southwest at different times.

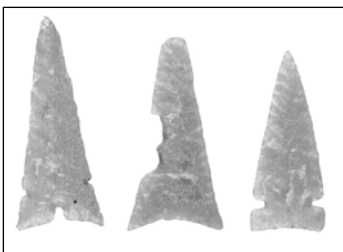
Wherever their origin, there is consensus among anthropologists and historians that at least part of the Kiowas allied themselves with a band of Apaches in Montana. From there they drifted toward the Black Hills-Vore site-Little Missouri River areas. En route, in south-central Montana, they encountered the Crow tribe. Apparently, Kiowa-Crow relationships were also generally friendly. The Kiowa-Apache stayed together for generations and eventually shared the Vore site region with the Gataka Apaches. Ultimately, Kiowas moved to the southern Plains where they allied with the Comanches and were defeated there by the U.S. Army.



**Lithic Evidence**

Matching arrow point styles with particular Indian tribes is definitely not an exact science. Tribes learned new techniques and technologies and exchanged them—sometimes intentionally through social interaction, trade, etc. — and, probably, by copying the successes of their rivals. Bow technology also changed over time, so arrow point styles and sizes had to change to keep the projectiles balanced. Even within a tribe, there was probably “artistic license” and individuality among the people that fashioned arrow points.

While conceding the problems with matching arrow points to cultural groups, it remains tantalizing to do some correlations, and to integrate different lines of inferential evidence. At the Vore site, for example, many of the points found among the



buffalo bones in the lower (older) cultural levels, are rather long, narrow acute triangles with concave bases. Some have side-notches while others lack side notches. Some

even have basal notches.

Dr. Charles Reher, the lead archaeologist for the University of Wyoming at the Vore site, believes that points with these style characteristics were probably created by the Plains Apaches, Kiowa

and Kiowa-Apache. Various methods of dating (Carbon-14, sediment varves, etc.) suggest that the layers where these points are found correspond with the period when the Apaches and Kiowas were controlling the Black Hills area. Further research at the Vore Buffalo Jump and other archaeological sites is needed to confirm this idea.

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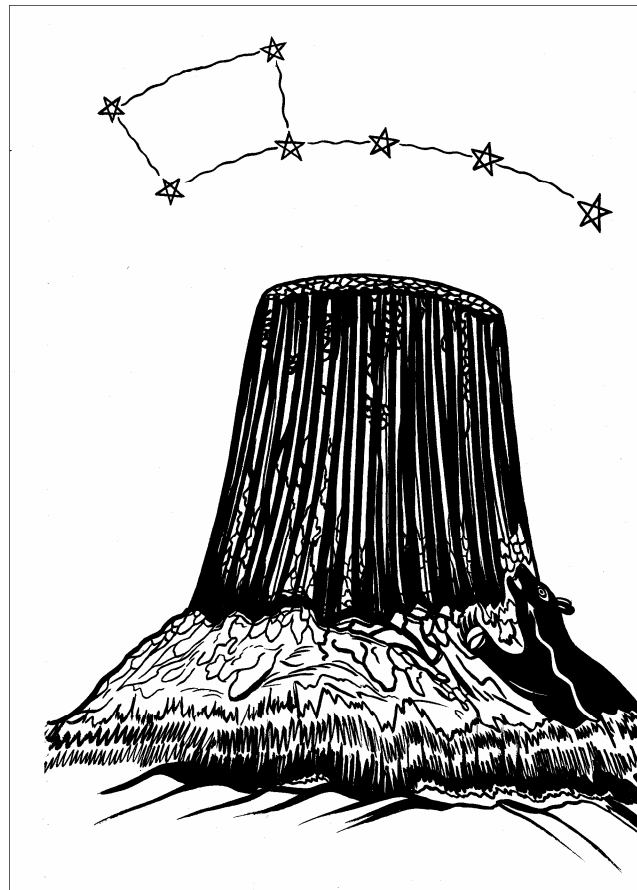


Illustration of a Kiowa Devils Tower legend  
By Al Momaday  
From *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

## KIOWA LEGEND OF DEVILS TOWER CONFIRMS THE TRIBE'S PRESENCE IN THE BLACK HILLS-VBJ AREA

Excerpt from *The Way to Rainy Mountain*  
By N. Scott Momaday (Pulitzer Prize winner of Kiowa descent)

"...A dark mist lay over the Black Hills, and the land was like iron. At the top of the ridge I caught sight of Devil's Tower upthrust against the gray sky as if in the birth of time the core of the earth had broken through its crust and the motion of the world was begun. There are many things in nature that engender an awful quiet in the heart of man; Devils Tower is one of them. Two centuries ago, because they could not do otherwise, the Kiowas made a legend at the base of the rock. My grandmother said:

*Eight children were at play, seven sisters and their brother. Suddenly the boy was struck dumb; he trembled and began to run upon his hands and feet. His fingers became claws, and his body was covered with fur. Directly there was a bear where the boy had been. The sisters were terrified; they ran, and the bear after them. They came to the stump of a great tree, and the tree spoke to them. It bade them climb upon it, and as they did so it began to rise into the air. The bear came to kill them, but they were just beyond its reach. I reared against the tree and scored the bark all around with its claws. The seven sisters were borne into the sky, and they became the stars of the Big Dipper...."* (Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1969)

