

LIFE HISTORY, MATERIAL ON APACHE BEN CHALETSIN, KIOWA-APACHE
FROM FIELD NOTES FURNISHED BY W. E. BITTLE,
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MATERIAL COLLECTED 1963 and 1964

GENERAL SUBJECT: LIFE HISTORY MATERIAL ON APACHE ("BIG BEN") CHALESTIN,
KIOWA-APACHE, BORN C. 1865, DIED 1956.

NOTE: Apache Ben was a well-known personage in the Anadarko area till the time of his death. Part Lipan and part Kiowa-Apache, he identified strongly with the Kiowa-Apache tribe and always took an active interest in tribal affairs. At one time he was married to the daughter of the last Kiowa-Apache chief, Apache John (Koonka-za-chey). Later he married Rose Chalepah. In all he was married four times, outliving his first three wives. He had no children of his own but he adopted Rose's children by her first husband and at his death his estate passed to Rose, and after her death, in 1965, to her five surviving children. Apache Ben became wealthy from income from oil wells on his lands and to the white residents of this area he was the very epitome of the old time unacculturated Indian enjoying his wealth by spending lavishly on things giving him personal pleasure and giving generously to his relatives and friends. Ben was a dedicated follower of the peyote religion and played a leading part in trying to establish a formal Native American Church organization at a national level. Throughout the oral history materials from western Oklahoma there are many references to Ben which give additional information on his intertribal connections and his personal eccentricities. Ben was a large man and in later years became very heavy. He travelled extensively and remained active and alert to the end of his life.

This manuscript consists of three sections:

1. Field Notes taken by John Mead, a graduate student in anthropology, during an interview with Ben's widow, Rose Chalestin in 1964.
2. Excerpts copies from probate files giving information on Ben's relatives and ancestors.
3. Notes taken during an interview with Lyle Griffis, Field Solicitor, Solicitor General's Office, Anadarko by Pat Draper, graduate student in anthropology in 1965. Mr. Griffis comments also contain material relevant to B.I.A. policy and procedures with respect to the Indians under their jurisdiction.