An international sensation
Kiowa Indians' art in new conquest

By Jeanne d'Ucel

At the International Art congress held in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in the summer of 1928, a group of thirty-five water colors proved to be the sensation of the exhibit. Heated discussions were caused by them among spectators and among critics, for many found it difficult to believe that these water colors could be the work of red Indians. Yet they were precisely that; the work of some Kiowa boys from Oklahoma.

It is not so long ago that the Kiowa Indians were accounted the fiercest among the plains tribes; even Kit Carson feared them. Several of their old people remember that in their childhood they roamed about hunting buffalo and making bold raids. However, for several decades, the Kiowas have been peacefully settled on their reservation near the Wichita mountains, where they are trying, with remarkable success, to transform themselves in one generation from nomads and hunters into farmers and husbandmen.

It is a fortunate thing that, although the mode of living may change, the spirit of the race is not entirely annihilated. The Kiowas have kept the love of their old rituals; the tribal dances are still held, the songs of old are still sung, the stories of days gone by bring still the same wonder.

And although the younger ones now bob their hair, rouge their lips and adopt the latest fads of white fashion, there is still in them the latent love and appreciation of the Indian arts and crafts, patiently developed during the days when Indian life was attuned to the rhythms of the seasons instead of the pursuit of hurried, material progress.

Three years ago, when Professor O. B. Jacobson became acquainted with the Indian boys Tsa-to-ke, Mopope, Asah and Hokeah he saw at once that they were gifted with that innate artistic instinct which is the birthright of all primitive people, an instinct which civilization invariably smothers.

With the sympathetic help of Miss Edith Mahier he took charge of these young artists, guiding them, giving them criticisms, especially giving them confidence in themselves and their art. Finding a white man who did not look upon all Indian things as necessarily inferior, these young men threw themselves into their work and began to produce the little masterpieces which have astonished and delighted two continents.

They all paint the dance, the ritual, the magic and ceremony of Indian life, and as Indian life is steeped in ritual and ceremony their fund of subject matter is a veritable treasure. Painting, as Indians always did, without models, and, true to their Asiatic origins, with only two dimensions, they produce figures full of movement and perfectly synchronized in rhythms and balance. Their dancers leap, sway, palpitate with life. With a remarkable memory and a startling sense of decoration the costumes are recomposed in their paintings, each detail of the symbolic design being faithfully reproduced since to them this is full of meaning.

Their sense of color is equally innate and pleasing. However complex it may be, the colors are always harmoniously combined and the manner in which they are applied gives their paintings a jewel like quality that is unique.

Besides Tsa-to-ke, Mopope, Asah and Hokeah, a Kiowa girl, Louise Smokey, was in Norman for a few months and did some water colors, her subjects being mostly women and children. Last year another young man, Auchiah, came. He has done some work showing, if anything, a more subtle
KIDWA INDIAN ART

A DISTINGUISHED OKLAHOMA ACHIEVEMENT—COVER OF THE PORTFOLIO
talent than that of his friends. It is quite possible that there are others equally gifted in the tribe.

A French editor has just published in a limited edition a folio of Kiowa Indian art with an introduction by Professor Jacobson and thirty-one colored plates showing the work of Tsa-to-ke, Mopope, Asah, Hokeah and Smokey. These plates made by a process recently perfected in France are without any doubt the most perfect colored reproductions ever made.

The volume now sells at thirty-two dollars. This publication is a monument to Indian art and to Oklahoma.

Venezuelan journey
A Sooner geologist goes where arrows sprinkle

NOTE.—The name "Motilon" is applied both to the range of mountains which forms the boundary between Venezuela and Colombia west of Lake Maracaibo, and to the various tribes of Indians which inhabit it. The separate tribes are further distinguished by the names of the rivers to the banks of which each one confines itself. These Indians were found to be tractable by the early explorers, and frequently traded baskets, hammocks and other handwork with the outlying Colombian villages. In an outburst of apostolic and patriotic zeal, however, the Colombian government, in 1865, decided to "convert" the heathen, sending for this purpose an expedition of soldiers and priests. Bullets and tracts failed to persuade the illogical aborigines, and they retaliated by a series of raids over a period of decades, the last one relatively recent. At present all the tribes north of the Rio de Oro on the Venezuelan side are peaceful, and do a thriving business in ferocious-looking arrows which they sell to lunatic pale-face millionaires employed by the oil companies. The tribes of the Rio de Oro (River of Gold) are warlike and are feared by their more peaceful brothers to the north, who do not speak their language. The language barrier was probably responsible for various unfortunate incidents in which Venezuelans, in a panic, shot prematurely and inspired the enmity of this tribe. The territory they occupy is so remote and so little needed at present that they would have been undisputed masters of their lush jungled hills had it not been for the oil companies.

By the middle of 1923 they were in the habit of sending out little scouting parties of four or five, to watch and occasionally to ambush and fire a few arrows at the mysterious engineers and their helpers cutting through the jungle; up to this time they had wounded a few Venezuelans but had killed no one. Then a small railroad was built and a wildcat well drilled, and their fortunes mounted; several gruesome deaths of Venezuelans and even outlanders, unrevealed (for who can challenge a cunning wraith peering, flitting, writhing through tangled vines and great screen-like low-hung palms?), fed their bravado. The wildcat was unsuccessful and deserted; and who was to tell the naked ones that their prowess alone had not dispossessed the "Spaniards"?

Only a hundred miles southwest of Maracaibo is this tribe of undefeated unapproachable. Their villages, seen from the air, each large round communal palm structures surrounded by smaller huts, festoon like brown beads the silvery serpentine of the streams in the green wilderness.

At 1 A. M. (July, 1923) we sidled out of the impromptu party which as usual involved most of the foreign population of Maracaibo. Our car, sleek and expensive and so long that it had to back around the narrower, chug-gier, muddier of the narrow corners, took us expertly to the docks, and shortly slid away to look for other owls. My companions picked the stern of our launch from the many sterns neatly lined up and gently undulating along the wharf and we stepped aboard. The mechanician cast off the shoreline and picked his way swiftly up to the bow, where he hauled in the tiny anchor chain hand over hand and pulled us lakeward. A jingle, and the anchor was aboard; a strangled whir, and then a series of barks, easily picked out, unblurred, which were to be our unnoted metronome for days. We chuffed through the black water, around the dark fishing schooners, past the brilliantly lighted steamers further out, past the bight of the harbor and into the restless choppy waters of the open lake, rapidly widening as we turned southward.