

GEO. BIRD GRINNELL

236 EAST 15TH STREET

NEW YORK, N. Y.

May 6, 1929

Copy

Mr. W. S. Campbell,  
University of Oklahoma,  
Norman, Okla.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Your letter of April 27th has just reached me. I suspect that the fear felt and expressed by white men who took part in the wars with the Western Plains Indians were no more than survivals of the old time belief that Indians always tortured captives.

The books tell us that the Indians of the East did this, but in my opinion those of the plains practically never did anything of the kind. I feel confident that they never made a practice of it. Of course, a group of Indians, if they were particularly angry at a man, or a small group of men, might in this way satisfy their feelings of revenge, but in my association with Western Indians I think I never heard of anything of this kind. If acts, such as you allude to, ever took place among the Western Indians they were, in my opinion, the result of some special occurrence, and in revenge for some particular injury thought to have been received by the group. There was practically no torture of captives by the Western Indians. I have been told of many cases where captives were kindly treated and even adopted into the tribe.

I have always been somewhat skeptical about many stories of torture reported as practiced by the Eastern Indians.

The Western Indians, of course, wished to destroy their enemies, men, women and children, but I think they never practiced torture, except, possibly, in some cases where they were still very angry over some injury they believed they had received.

Yours very truly,

Geo. Bird Grinnell