

University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma.
Sept 6 23

Dear Mr. Weygold:

Today I visited the State Historical Museum in the State Capitol in Oklahoma City. There I found an old buffalo hide tipi covered with pictographic representations of war and hunting scenes..It is about this that I wish to ask you.

The tipi measured about 12 feet from top to base behind, and differed in no important respect from the tipis of Cheyenne make with which I am familiar. It had once belonged to a Major Clarge, an officer at Ft. Rice, Dakota, who hunted buffalo with the Sioux while on duty with troops in the 60s or 70s. On one occasion his horse (which he had trained to run buffalo) fell with him and broke its neck, and he was thrown..One Big Bear(I believe that was the name) included this incident in his tipi paintings and when the Major found that he was represented on the tipi, he bought it. His son was induced to give it to the Museum..

The tipi cover was black with age and use and very badly cracked and torn in places, having had no sort of care- it was once used as covering for a barn roof which had lost some of its shingles! The central design on the back was a long pipe not unlike that on your tipi in Germany(the one you wrote of in Globus). A calumet (with the four red wisps etc) was painted close to the door on either side, also with the stem upward. The rest of the tipi was entirely covered with heraldic photographs representing exploits on the warpath or in hunting..I suppose there must have been fully 100 separate incidents..or figures or groups of figures. As my time was limited, I was unable to check them closely..The horses were especially well drawn, and some of the human figures and other animals were good .. All the designs were still in pretty clear outline and color- the old dull earth colors, they appeared to be. I noted that all the designs were so put on that they would be upright when the tipi was pitched- and this appeared rather unusual to me, as I had noted that the Blackfoot tipis in McClintock's OLD NORTH TRAIL and the Kiowa tipi in MOONEY'S KIOWA CALENDAR were put on every which way- even upside down. They appeared to be evenly spaced, and covered the whole tent except the flaps / There was no perceptible border of color at the base, nor any designs except those I have mentioned.

The number of designs made it seem unlikely that one man could have performed all the exploits there, and it occurred to me that perhaps the tipi was a record of a group or a society, especially as the figures of horses and men were quite differently drawn in separate groups. Did you ever hear of such a thing being done? It is mere conjecture on my part, but an interesting one to me. One of the groups represented a dance in which the costumes of the warriors were different, and four distinct kinds of lance were represented..including the Stringheart feather banner, and the lance with the crook at the end and the otterskin wrappings..

Another strange thing was that the pockets for the poles on the smoke flaps were on the wrong side of the tentcover- so that, if pitched, it must have had the drawings inside..and the cover was certainly much darker on the painted side than on the bare side- which seemed as though the smoke had stained that side (though the hide was so old and worn that this might have been due to other causes..) At once I remembered your experience with