

Satanta (properly Set-t'ain'-te, 'White Bear'). A noted Kiowa chief, born about 1830; died by suicide in prison, Oct. 11, 1878. For about 15 years before his death he was recognized as second chief in his tribe, the first rank being accorded to his senior, Setangya, or Satank, and later to Lone Wolf, although probably neither of these equaled him in force and ability. His eloquence in council gained for him the title of "Orator of the Plains," while his manly boldness and directness and his keen humor made him a favorite with army officers and commissioners in spite of his known hostility to the white man's laws and civilization. He was one of the signers of the Medicine Lodge treaty of 1867, by which his tribe agreed to go on a reservation, his being the second Kiowa name attached to the document. The tribe, however, delayed coming in until compelled by Custer, who seized Satanta and Lone Wolf as hostages for the fulfilment of the conditions. For beastfully avowing his part in a murderous raid into Texas in 1871, he, with Setangya and Big Tree, was arrested and held for trial in Texas. Setangya was killed while resisting the guard. The other two were tried and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Texas State penitentiary. Two years later they were released, conditional upon the good behavior of their people, but in the fall of 1874, the Kiowa having again gone on the warpath, Satanta was rearrested and taken back to the penitentiary where he finally committed suicide by throwing himself from an upper story of the hospital.

In appearance Satanta was a typical Plains warrior, of fine physique, erect bearing, and piercing glance. One who saw him in prison in 1873 describes him as "a tall, finely formed man, princely in carriage, on whom even the prison garb seemed elegant," and meeting his visitor "with as much dignity and grace as though he were a monarch receiving a foreign ambassador." His memory is cherished by the Kiowa as that of one of their greatest men. See Mooney, Claendar History of the Kiowa Inds., 17th Rep. B.A.E., 1898.