

Kiowa Narrative about Tso-aa (Tree Rock)

(also known as Devils Tower)

Before the Kiowa came south they were camped on a stream in the far north where there were a great many bears, many of them. One day seven little girls were playing at a distance from the village and were chased by some bears. The girls ran toward the village and the bears were just about to catch them when the girls jumped on a low rock, about three feet high. "Rock take pity on us, rock save us," they prayed. The rock heard them and began to grow upwards, pushing the girls higher and higher. When the bears jumped to reach the girls they scratched the rock, broke their claws and fell on the ground.

The rock rose higher and higher, the bears still jumped at the girls until they were pushed up into the sky, where they now are, seven little stars in a group. In the winter, in the middle of the night, the seven stars are right over this high rock. When the people came to look they found the bear's claws, turned to stone, all around the base.

No Kiowa living has ever seen this rock, but the old men have told about it, it is very far north where the Kiowa used to live. It is a single rock with scratched sides; the marks of the bears' claws are there yet, rising straight up, very high. There is no other like it in the whole country; there are no trees on it, only grass on top. The Kiowa call this rock "Tso-aa," or tree rock, possibly because it grew tall like a tree.

Told by I-See-Many-Camp-Fire-Places, a Kiowa soldier at Fort Sill, Oklahoma Territory, 1897

