A Reinterpretation of Plains Indian Adaptation: The Case of the Comanche

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A REINTERPRETATION OF
PLAIN INDIAN ADAPTATION:
THE CASE OF THE COMANCHE

by

Lynn R. Johnson

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Submitted to the
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Lynn R. Johnson
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INTRODUCTION

The Comanche have been cited as having a significantly lower level of socio-political organization than was prevalent among American plains cultures. This situation has been attributed to the Comanche's pre-equestrian Basin Shoshonean origins. Hoebel states: "It is not an understatement to say that the Comanches represented plains culture in its rudest form and that where it was most rude it was most Shoshonean." (Hoebel 1940: 129) This statement argues that the level of Comanche socio-political organization was set by the persistence of older socio-political organization was set by the persistence of older social institutions. However, it represents a departure from the established views of cultural homogeneity among plains societies.

Also, it is generally accepted that the development and spread of native equestrian cultures in North America was accomplished without direct or prolonged contact with European cultures. (Walker 1972: 1-2; Webb 1931: 52). The Comanche were an exception to this otherwise accurate generalization. They developed into an equestrian culture under the direct influence of the Spanish. This early and continuous Comanche-Spanish contact heavily influenced the Comanche adaptation to the southern plains.

This study examines the socio-political organization of the Comanche from the perspective of the Comanche-Spanish culture contacts. The conclusion reached is that the Comanche retention of many basic Shoshonean socio-political characteristics can be directly linked to the Comanche-Spanish contact situation. More specifically, it will
be shown that the Comanche quickly developed a predatory raiding economy at the expense of the Spanish—by which some Comanche bands supplemented the more typical Southern Plains buffalo hunting economy; while for other bands raiding became the major form of subsistence. In both cases, raiding was a cultural strategy which allowed the Comanche a degree of adaptive flexibility not available to the central and northern plains tribes.

The argument presented here refers to only one contact situation. Nevertheless, it suggests that such conditions may have developed in other areas with similar results. There is ample evidence that other American Indian societies developed or intensified raiding activities against Europeans as well as native populations after European contact. The effect on the socio-political development of such raiding adaptations has not been clearly defined. This may be partially attributed to an over-emphasis placed in acculturation studies on the modification or disintegration of native cultures under direct or prolonged contact with technologically superior European cultures. This study does not negate the fact that this is the imminent result. Rather, the point is that in the initial stages of culture contact, the technologically inferior culture may seek out and exploit the weaknesses of the technologically superior culture in such a manner that the native socio-political system reflects an exploitive adaptation to the European culture. The degree to which other cultures have similarly adapted to European contact can only be determined by careful reevaluation of their circumstances.
OVERVIEW OF PLAINS CULTURE

To facilitate a clearer understanding of the Comanche culture, it is necessary to briefly outline the current interpretations of plains culture, as well as to define how the Comanche differed from the general plains cultural pattern.

To a great extent our understanding of plains Indian society has been influenced by the culture area concept developed by Clark Wissler (1938) and further refined by A.L. Kroeber (1947). With respect to the development of theoretical constructs, both scholars were cognizant of the influence the environment had in the evolution of plains cultures. However, both treated the plains geographic areas as a single environmental zone. Similarly, they focused on plains societies as a homogenized cultural whole. While this generalized approach fulfills the scientific principals of theory development, the details of social organization and cultural micro-evolution become lost in generalizations about whole culture areas.

The most recent attempt to categorize groups in the plains culture area on an ecological-socio-political basis is that of Oliver (1962). Oliver argues that the plains equestrian cultures, which were either preequestrian hunters and gatherers or horticulturists, developed similar socio-political patterns in their adaptation to the plains environment. The key factors in their adaptation, according to Oliver as well as Wissler and Kroeber, were the acquisition of the horse and the seasonal movement of the horse and the seasonal movement of the buffalo. Oliver also demonstrates that the differences between plains societies can be explained in their preequestrian origins; i.e., forming, hunting and gathering, or in
ecological idiosyncrasies. The case for the Comanche is explained as a combination of these two variables, their Shoshonean socio-political origin and the environmental conditions of the southern plains.

Just how the Comanche differed can best be illustrated by using the seven variables on which Oliver based his arguments. These variables are:

1.) summer tribal congregations and winter dispersal in bands; 2.) police organizations for the regulation of summer hunts; 3.) age-graded societies; 4.) status and prestige acquired through warfare and hunting; 5.) leadership; 6.) councils; and 7.) clans. Oliver found that with minor structural variations, all plains tribes either elaborated on or modified their preequestrain socio-political organization to conform to the above variables. In other words, some tribes developed police organizations where none had existed. Other tribes having clan systems modified them to facilitate winter dispersal in bands.

The Comanche stand out as significantly different in their plains adaptation in that for all practical purposes: 1.) they did not show the characteristic pattern of tribal congregations in summer and dispersal into fragmental bands during winter; 2.) they did not develop the otherwise universal plains institution of the communal hunt police; and 3.) they did not develop sodalities or associations (Oliver 1962: 71).

The explanations offered for the low level of Comanche socio-political organization are of two kinds. First, cultural persistence—the Comanches' cultural roots were of Shoshonean origin. For example, Wallace and Hoebel write that "The Comanche band was strikingly similar in organization to the aboriginal Shoshonean groups of the Great Basin in the days preceding White contact." (1952: 22). The explanation here is that to a great
extent the Comanche had retained their pre-equestrian socio-political organization after moving into the southern plains. While cultural continuity does illustrate the level of Comanche socio-political organization, it does not isolate or explain the variables which allowed the Comanche to dominate the southern plains without drastic alteration of their basic Shoshooan social structure.

The second explanation is ecological: the contention that the environment of the southern plains was less demanding than the northern plains insofar as the severity of the northern winters made (the summer communal hunt, the summer tribal congregation, as the hunt police and the winter dispersals) an adaptive necessity for the northern tribes. The southern plains, on the other hand, offered less severe winters and contained more buffalo year round, thus providing less stringent adaptive pressures on the Comanche (Colson 1954: 13-14).

This explanation has some validity, but an analysis of southern plains climatic conditions and buffalo habits and distribution points out that the adaptive pressures of the south were or should have been just as demanding as those characteristic of the northern plains. Existing data on buffalo population and habits indicate that they did not make annual migrations of a patterned nature. Rather, the distribution and population of the herds remained relatively constant in any given area throughout the year. The herds moved in irregular patterns in response to local conditions of grass and water. These patterns were so irregular that the plains tribes often had trouble finding the herds (McHugh 1972: 173-175). The only conclusive evidence for herd migration involves just the northern and southern extremes of the buffalo range. In both instances the herds would
largely abandon these areas, but only during the severest weather. In the north, the herds would shift southward to avoid the worst winter weather. The extreme southern herds would range northward during the summer to escape the heat and the lack of grass (Allen 1877: 465).

These arid conditions are further substantiated by Levy's study of the southern plains environment. He states:

Water appears to have been a less stable element and it is here that some of the differences between the north and south plains are made clear. High winds throughout the plains made for a generally high evaporation rate, but higher temperatures in the south made the area below the Arkansas (River extremely drought-prone. (Levy 1962: 20).

There is clear evidence that the Texas plains were abandoned by the buffalo during the summer months (Allen 1877: 465). The evidence on tribal response to this shows that by 1854 the Comanche, as well as the Kiowa, had to move as far north as the Arkansas River to find buffalo (Allen 1877: 525-527). The Arkansas River represents the northern limits of the Comanche territory (Richardson 1933: 47; Jablow 1950: 80).

From this evidence it may be inferred that while the winters may have been less severe, making more buffalo available on the southern plains during the cold months, the drought-prone environment and its influence on buffalo movement should have made a summer communal hunt and a hunt police of prime importance to the Comanche. The question is clearly raised by Oliver:

If all of the true plains tribes developed these institutions in response to a shared ecological situation, then there is the clear implication that the Comanche did not share precisely the same situation, or else that they developed different techniques for coping with the situation. (Oliver 1962: 73).
The Comanche occupied a wide expanse of territory, including parts of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas and Oklahoma (Richardson 1933: 18-21). This territory, according to Oliver, does not represent a single environmental zone, but rather a collection of micro-environmental areas to which individual Comanche bands adapted. He contends that not all Comanche were true plains people because not all were living on the plains or were seriously involved with the buffalo. He further indicates that some Comanche bands were more involved with horses than the plains people, and that large horse herds and the use of horses for food compensated the adaptive pressures for some of the Comanche bands. Consequently, the development of a more structured socio-political organization was unnecessary (Oliver 1962: 73-74). His assumptions are correct insofar as they point out the environmental variations within the territory occupied by the Comanche, but his conclusion falls back on the retention of preequestrian heritage as the primary cause of the Comanches' lack of socio-political organization. He states:

We may say that the evidence strongly suggests that the differences between the Comanche and the other true plains tribes were primarily due to cultural background of the Comanche, although ecological considerations were also factors in the sense that they permitted these variations to survive. (Oliver 1962: 75)

Oliver's interpretations of the micro-environmental conditions of the southern plains and the use of horses as food were important factors in understanding Comanche adaptation, but neither of these explanations accounts for how the Comanche were able to dominate the southern plains without drastic alteration of their Shoshonean socio-political organization. The adaptation of any society to an environment necessitates an adaptation to other cultures which occupy the same environment or adjacent areas,
and which through political, economic or military activities influence the conditions of that environment. The one "ecological" condition not taken into account by Oliver and other students of plains culture is the influence of the Spanish on Comanche adaptation. The argument presented here is that there were two important variables which heavily influenced the Comanche economic and socio-political adaptation. These are, first, the Spanish foreign policy, its structural weaknesses and the resulting conditions it perpetuated. And second, the development, modifications and expansion of native and Spanish trade networks.
SPANISH FOREIGN POLICY

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Spain, along with the major European powers, embarked on a world-wide exploration and expansion program. Spanish foreign policy at this time was fourfold: conquer, convert, exploit, and incorporate the native population.

Spain's policy in the New World was guided by a theory of government, similar to Roman imperialism, coupled with a religious ideal. In essence, this meant that all power and decisions were controlled and regulated by the central government. Spain's immediate goals were to conquer territory, incorporate it into the Spanish state, and render the natives useful to the government (Webb 1931: 88).

The major implement of conquest was the conquistador, the general and his army, who made initial contact with the indigenous population and conquered them if necessary. After subduing the native population, a provincial government, not unlike a European feudal system, was initiated to maintain control and exact tribute for the government.

Equally important to Spanish economic policy was the missionary zeal of the Universal Church. Missions were established in all new territories as soon as provincial governments were established. The natives were expected or forced to finance and maintain these institutions through tribute and labor. Total conversion to Christianity was the ultimate goal, and the church made regular use of the military in attempting to accomplish it (Webb 1931: 87-88).

There were two major factors which influenced this situation, factors which had important ramifications in the development of the
early Apache and later Comanche people. First, Indians of the Southern plains did not have the readily exploitable wealth the Spanish had extracted from South and Central American civilizations. The economy of the Southwest Pueblos offered little in the way of valuable tribute, and the Southern plains offered even less. In essence, there were insufficient local resources and wealth to support the imperialistic system of Spain. Consequently, Spain had only a minor economic interest in the Southern plains. Secondly, the small number of pedestrian Apache bands scattered throughout the vastness of the Southern plains would have made conquest extremely difficult under the existing Spanish economic and military system. (Webb 1931: 88).

Spanish military power during the early stages of occupation was confined to the conquistador. But, as provincial governments developed and small numbers of Spanish settlers moved into the area, other methods of defending the missions and settlements were devised. Prior to the Pueblo revolt of 1680, these military forces were comprised of citizen-soldiers who served without salary. They performed escort duty, acted as guards for their own towns and during emergencies assumed command of the mobilized citizens. (Simmons 1968: 112). The revolt of 1680 underscored the necessity of a stronger military structure and permanent garrisons were authorized. Each local garrison was required, by regulations, to man a total complement of fifty-seven soldiers, including officers and Indian scouts. In actual practice, however, most garrisons never had a full command. Training of individual recruits was regulated, but the actual amount each soldier received varied from garrison to
garrison. Arms and equipment were supplied by the government with the individual soldier paying a percentage from his own pay. Officers were either regular army men transferred from Mexico City, or private soldiers who had risen through the ranks. Adequate training and leadership qualities were often lacking in commissioned colonials, while officers from the regular army often looked down on their men and bemoaned their own misfortune at being assigned to frontier duty. Maintaining arms and equipment was a problem on the frontier since firearms and ammunition had to be requisitioned from Mexico City. Because of this the colonial soldier depended more upon the shield, armor, lance and sword, than firearms. In terms of technological efficiency, these weapons were not much better than those used by the plains tribes. Another problem was the lack of coordination and communication between provinces and garrisons. Each province was responsible for defending its own border and was rarely capable of mounting a coordinated campaign with others. (Faulk and Brinckerhoff 1966: 30-34).

Overall effectiveness of the Spanish frontier army was poor and offered little in the way of protection against raiding plains Indians. The Spanish were able to maintain military dominance before the Comanche arrival only because the Spanish policy forbid the sale of guns and ammunition to native populations; and, by tightly controlling the sale of horses they were able to maintain mobility over the pedestrian plains Apache.
In 1589 the first permanent Spanish settlement was established in New Mexico (Bolton 1916: 226). From this point on, Spain began systematically to carry out their imperialistic policy among the Pueblos of New Mexico. Their success was due to the completely sedentary economy of the Pueblos. The Pueblos had little of value except their crops, which the Spanish plundered so extensively that many Pueblo villages were reduced to starvation (Kenner 1969: 12). Frustrated by the lack of wealth in the Rio Grande area, the Spanish began to seek other avenues of profit. The long standing trade between the Plains and Pueblos had been temporarily stopped by Spanish conquest of the Pueblo area, but soon reopened with the Spanish as controlling agents. The major center for this trade was the Pueblo of Taos, although most Pueblos and newly established Spanish settlements conducted trade with plains Apache (Kenner 1969: 14). Spanish presence and the introduction of European goods stimulated trade between the plains Apache and Pueblos to a point it had never reached prior to contact. The Apache were now able to acquire a wide variety of Spanish goods: knives, axes, saber blades to be used as lance points, iron arrow heads, a wide variety of trinkets, jewelry, cloth, clothing and cooking pots as well as the traditional native commodities.

The initial relationship between the Spanish and the Apache was generally friendly. The Apaches needed the Pueblo trade as an outlet for their dressed skins and hides (Kenner 1969: 16). The Spanish held no interest in the plains region nor did its inhabitants possess
any wealth, other than buffalo hides and meat which were more easily obtained through trade than by force.
THE SLAVE TRADE

Slavery was an integral part of Spanish imperialism and had been practiced since contact. Many Pueblo people had been sold into slavery after Spanish conquest. Once provincial governments were formed and trade with the plains Apache reestablished, the Spanish accepted and encouraged the buying of captives taken by Apache raiding parties. The Spanish, concerned more with making a profit, tended to ignore the origin of Apache captives. While most captives offered for sale by the Apache were Caddoan prisoners taken in raids east of the southern plains, many Pueblo settlements under the direct rule and supposed protection of Spain found themselves attacked by Apache raiders. As Spanish holdings in Mexico and the Southwest grew, the demand for slave labor increased. Provincial governments began to subsidize the profitable traffic in slaves. Luis de Rosas, Governor of New Mexico in 1637, sent expeditions into the plains to capture hostile Apaches to be sold into slavery. By 1661 the slave trade had become so profitable that Spanish traders were seeking every opportunity to capture Apaches, even as they traded peacefully at the Pueblos. (Kenner 1969: 15-18).

While the increase in slave raiding caused a great deal of resentment among the Pueblos and Apaches, there was little outright hostility toward the Spanish. The Apaches did raid Spanish settlements periodically, but the lure of Spanish trade goods kept Apache hostility at a minimum. Another factor in the continued Spanish-Apache trade relationship was the latter's desire for Spanish horses. The first recorded account of the Spanish trading horses to the Apache was in the 1650's. (Kenner 1967: 16).
While the Apaches may have acquired horses in limited numbers before this period, it is doubtful that they possessed enough horses to have attained the mobility necessary to compete with the mounted Spanish soldiers.

Spanish imperialistic policy had been able to maintain a degree of superiority over the sedentary Pueblos by maintaining garrisons and demanding tribute in the form of agricultural products and in controlling the trade with the plains Apache which kept the Pueblo economy at a minimum. By keeping tight control of the horse trade, the Spanish were able to retain the advantage of military mobility over the pedestrian Apache. The Apache desire for horses is well illustrated by the unsuccessful 1650 plan which the Pueblos devised to rid themselves of Spanish oppression. The Apaches agreed to aid the Pueblos in their rebellion in return for the horse herds owned by the Spanish. (Kenner 1969: 15-16). The discontent of the Pueblos and Apaches culminated in 1680 with a carefully planned and successfully executed rebellion—the so-called Pueblo Revolt—which quickly drove the Spanish from New Mexico. The Apaches were also involved in the uprising and were also involved in the uprising and were present at the siege of Santa Fe. Their resentment against the Spanish slave policy is reflected by their demand for the release of all Apache slaves in Santa Fe before the Spanish were allowed to withdraw. (Kenner 1969: 19). The Spanish left behind most of their property, including extensive horse herds which subsequently fell into the hands of the Apache. Spain reconquered New Mexico in 1693, and reestablished their former governmental and trade policies.

From 1693 until the arrival of the Comanche in 1705, the Spanish had few troubles with either the Pueblos or the Apache. One factor responsible
for the lack of hostility on the part of the Apache was their recent development of a semi-sedentary horticultural economy. During the Apache's long association with the Pueblos they had learned the techniques of oasis farming and at some point in these years began to raise their own crops. The first recorded evidence of Apache farming was in 1694 (Kenner 1969: 21). This development resulted in a switch from their former nomadic hunting economy to a sedentary spring and summer farming phase. It is quite probable that this change in the Apache subsistence economy coincided with the Pueblo revolt of 1680 and the resulting increase of horses available to the Apache. Since the horse increased mobility and hunting efficiency, there was more time available to raise the food which they had previously had to steal or trade.

Two important pre-Comanche, post-Spanish factors have been emphasized—factors which were of major importance to the Comanche adaptation and exploitation of the southern plains. First, the agricultural economy of the New Mexico Pueblos and the inadequate wealth, by Spanish standards, of the southern plains made the Spanish form of feudal system unworkable: Therefore, the area was of only secondary importance to their expansion program. This had a direct effect on the financial support the southwest frontier provinces received from Mexico City, and negatively affected provincial governments and military efficiency. Secondly, the Spanish introduction of European trade goods, horses, and the development of a large scale market for slaves which would ultimately provide the motive for, and the perpetuation of, the Comanche raiding economy.
The Comanche made their first recorded visit to Taos in 1705. They were reported to have attended an annual trade fair in the company of their Ute relatives who were regular visitors at the Pueblos (Richardson 1933: 55). The Comanche were reported to have been forced from their northern homeland by northeastern tribes who had acquired guns through the French and English. Their movement onto the Southern plains, however, was facilitated by their desire for Spanish horses which they had acquired in limited number (Wallace and Hoebel 1964: 10; Richardson 1933: 19).

While it is clear that by 1760 some Comanche bands were being pushed south by better armed tribes it is probable that the initial Comanche movement south was primarily due to the desire for horses. Within one year of their arrival along with their Ute allies, they were raiding Apache farming settlements (Thomas 1935: 60). Undoubtedly there were two reasons for the Comanche's rapid development of a raiding pattern. The first and most important reason was the Comanche desire for horses. They had been Shoshonean pedestrian hunters and gatherers with a subsistence economy, and a level of social organization not far above a nuclear or extended family band. They had come to recognize the value of the horse as a means of transportation and power. Spanish control of the horse trade was tightly regulated, and the early Comanche did not have the wealth to purchase horses. The logical avenue open was to steal them. Spanish military efficiency, while far from being fully effective, was still a formidable barrier to a pedestrian group such as the early Comanche. The Apache, however, did possess large numbers of horses and were easier prey
due to their sedentary horticultural adaptation. Raiding small isolated farming settlements offered better chances for success than relatively large and garrisoned Spanish settlements. The accepted explanation for the rapid Comanche displacement of the Apache has been attributed to the sedentary adaptation of the Apache, which gave the nomadic Comanche a definite advantage. The Comanche could mass an overwhelming number of warriors against isolated farming settlements, while Apache retaliation was hindered by not knowing where the nomadic Comanche could be found (Secoy 1966: 30-31).

Undoubtedly these early raids were small scale raiding expeditions, similar to the generalized raiding pattern which became predominant during the late 18th and 19th centuries. A few men travelling by foot would enter an enemy camp at night and drive off as many animals as possible. This form of raiding rarely resulted in many casualties to either the raiders or their enemies. The Comanche quickly elaborated on this pattern and began systematically to attack Apache settlements. The motive for these attacks has been attributed to the Comanche desire to take and hold the southern plains (Richardson 1933: 19). Though this was the end result, the real objective was less grand than a conceptualized plan of conquest. Several factors prompt this conclusion. First, it is doubtful that the socio-political organization of the Comanche was capable of such a concentrated effort. They exhibited no such organizational tendencies during their dominance of the southern plains. Secondly, the initial Comanche attacks were in northeastern New Mexico on the extreme western edge of the buffalo range. As late as 1719, those Apache occupying the plains of eastern Colorado, north of the Arkansas river had no knowledge
of the Comanche (Hyde 1969: 64-65). The obvious implication being that the Comanches southward migration was west of the major buffalo range. Obviously, horses and Spanish trade goods provided the initial interest for the Comanche southward movement and subsequent attacks on the Apache. The Comanche had been aware of the Spanish slave trade since their arrival, and they were quick to recognize the value of captives. The outright attacks on the Apache were concentrated, though individualized attempts on the part of the Comanche to secure captives who were valuable and marketable trade items. The Spanish had never been overly concerned with who supplied captives for sale, so the Comanche quickly became involved in the growing slave trade, at the expense of the Apache population. With the horse and captives as major objectives, the defeat of the Apache was considerably hastened.
SPANISH RESPONSE TO COMANCHE INVASION

The Apache sought the aid of the Spanish, but the Spanish made no positive move against the Comanche even after they attacked Taos in 1716 and carried off several captives (Richardson 1933: 55). By 1719 Comanche raids were interfering with Spanish trade (Tomas 1935: 104-105). The Apache were the principal trading partners of the Spanish and the continuous Comanche attacks made the accumulation of items the Spanish accepted in trade difficult. The Spanish economy was heavily dependent upon Indian trade in buffalo hides and slaves which were exchanged in Mexico for manufactured goods not produced in the provinces (Kenner 1969: 40).

With their economy at stake the Spanish were prompted into action. In September of 1719, a force of 600 men under the command of Governor Valverdi took the field in search of the Comanche. They reported the destruction of Apache settlements as well as the capture of sixty-four women and children from one settlement, but they were unable to find the Comanche (Thomas 1935: 113-115). Not being able to locate the Comanche was a continuous problem faced by Spanish military expeditions. During the Spanish occupation, a major factor in their military inefficiency was the lack of experience and information on the plains. One reason for this lack of experience was a Spanish law which forbade traders from transporting goods to the plains tribes (Kenner 1969: 36). Undoubtedly, the purpose for this law was to maintain tight control of what was being traded to the Indians and to insure that the provincial government received its share of the profits.
THE FRENCH THREAT

More alarming to the Spanish were reports of French soldiers fighting side by side with the Pawnee. The Apache also indicated the existence of an extensive French gun trade, and further embellished the story by including tales of two large French towns in the vicinity of the Platte River (Thomas 1935: 143-144).

The Spanish had long been aware of rumors that the French were trading with tribes along the eastern periphery of the southern plains. As early as 1695 the Plains Apache had complained that the French were supplying their enemies with guns (Folmer 1953: 277). Undoubtedly the Apache were perpetuating these rumors in hopes the Spanish would reverse their ban on trading guns to the Indians. In fact, there had been French traders in that area—a small number of them had traveled from the French settlement in Illinois in 1719 to make contact with the Pawnee. They were bringing guns to trade but had lost most of them to the Osage while travelling through their country. The French reached the Pawnee and traded two guns for horses; the Pawnee already had six guns in their possession, which the French reported were highly valued. The French found the Pawnee unfriendly and quickly departed for Illinois (Hyde 1959: 73). The Apache stories of a gun trade were partially true, but hardly could be called extensive or constant.

The French soldiers and towns were pure imagination. The reaction to these rumors clearly illustrate the state of Spanish governmental and military inefficiency which the Comanche were soon to capitalize on. By the time Valverdi returned to Santa Fe and filed his reports, the
French activity had grown to a military force of 6,000 men located two-hundred leagues from New Mexico and drawing closer each day. The dispatch pleaded for weapons and supplies to combat the French army, and quite significantly pointed out that the entire New Mexican defense force numbered only three hundred thirty-eight men, with an inadequate inventory of serviceable arms (Thomas 1935: 147). The reaction in Mexico City was to suggest that a Spanish detachment of twenty to twenty-five men be stationed north of the Arkansas River, to guard New Mexico against the French. They also ordered Valverdi to send an expedition into the area to reconnoiter the French positions.

The New Mexican officials were opposed to the order of a small garrison so far from Santa Fe, but the expedition to reconnoiter the area was sent under the command of Governor Valverdi's second-in-command, Lieutenant Colonel Pedro de Villasur. His command consisted of forty-two Spanish soldiers, three Spanish settlers, and sixty Pueblo Indians (Hyde 1959: 74). Villasur's expedition was attacked by a Pawnee and Oto force near the Platte River. Thirty-five Spanish and twelve Pueblo Indians were killed. The survivors scattered and eventually reached New Mexico (Hyde 1959: 76-77).

By modern standards this engagement seems small, but the loss of thirty-five men and their equipment was a serious blow to a defense force of less than four hundred men.

The Comanche continued to raid the Apache, growing richer in horses and captives with every attack. The Apache continued to plead for help and the Spanish filled reports. In 1724 Governor Juan Domingo de Buslamante
visited several Apache villages and reported the destruction of villages, and capture of woman and children (Thomas 1935: 201). Buslamante recommended the establishment of a garrison to protect the Apache and guard the frontier, but authorization was denied. By 1726 Apaches had abandoned their villages and had scattered, some to Taos, others to the Navahos (Thomas 1935: 216).

The Spanish pattern of response during the initial phase of the Comanche invasion was largely confined to attempts at relocating the harassed Apache in permanent settlements near Taos and Santa Fe. Military aid, except for a few reconnaissance expeditions, was non-existent. The New Mexican authorities had continually requested more military supplies and personnel, but their requests had repeatedly been denied. Undoubtedly the central government in Mexico City was reluctant to spend funds to improve the military structure of a province which provided so little revenue to the crown. By relocating the Apache close to the settlements, tributes could be collected which would increase the governmental profits, and the heathen Apache would be under the direct influence of the Church which would hasten their conversion; both were central to the Spanish theory of government. All the Spanish succeeded in doing, however, was to allow the Comanche unrestricted access to the southern plains and the New Mexican settlements.
Since their arrival in 1705 the Comanche had regularly attended the New Mexican trade fairs. They brought buffalo hides, meat and Apache captives to trade for a variety of Pueblo and Spanish goods. The Pueblo offered largely agricultural products, while the Spanish offered a wide range of goods including knives, awls, axes, saber blades, needles cooking utensils and various other items such as cloth, ribbon and beads.

The Comanche conduct at these fairs was generally peaceful, but there are reports that occasionally they helped themselves to Spanish horses. A 1719 report from Santa Fe complained that the Comanche took advantage of this "peace" to steal horses and commit murder (Thomas 1935: 104). A later report published in 1736 stated that "a 'barbarious' warlike nation called the Comanches always on the move" appeared annually in New Mexico to barter and then disappeared, not to be seen again until the next trading season (Wallace quoted in Kenner 1969: 36) Though there were some minor incidents, the Comanche made few raids against the Spanish during the first three decades they were on the southern plains. Obviously, the Apache were easier prey and the Spanish were the only practical source of trade goods. Consequently, the Comanche were careful to keep hostilities toward the Spanish at a minimum.

By 1730 the Comanche had pushed the Apache south and west into the New Mexican mountains. They were virtually in control of most of the Southern plains. It appears however, that as late as 1730 their main camps were in the Colorado plains, adjacent the the Arkansas River. They occupied this area and sent raiding parties southward to attack the retreating Apache
(Hyde 1959: 97-98). This would indicate that the early Comanche found this area especially suited to their needs, and were not particularly interested in occupying the vast area to the south. The Colorado plains had abundant buffalo since this area could be considered the Southern borders of the central plains. Most important this region was centrally located making it ideal for trade with both New Mexico and north among their Shoshonean relatives.

The Comanche must have become involved in the Northern horse trade very quickly after their arrival, since the northern Shoshone acquired their first horses soon after the turn of the 18th century. During this early semi-equestrian phase the Shoshone confined the use of horses to hunting, since their limited supply was too valuable to use in war or to transport baggage. By the mid-1740's, the Shoshone had enough horses to be considered totally equestrian (Secoy 1953: 36-37).

This gradual equestrian evolution among the Shoshone corresponds to the basic pattern of Comanche displacement of the Apache. The Comanche's initial attacks on the Apache provided sufficient mounts for themselves with a small surplus which were filtered north. With the stimulation of a constant demand for horses by their northern relatives, the Comanche escalated their attacks to provide the excess needed to maintain the trade.

The Shoshone were faced with providing an adequate commodity of exchange. Buffalo hides were unsatisfactory since they were not particularly valuable and transporting a sufficient amount presented a problem. The willingness of the Comanche to accept war captives provided the solution: Captives were valuable and they transported themselves. The Shoshone quickly began raiding for captives on a wide and continuous scale (Secoy 1953: 38).
Consequently, the Comanche assured themselves an additional source of captives for the New Mexican slave market.

As the Comanche replaced the Apache on the Southern plains they also became the principal partners in the Spanish trade. This trade followed a seasonal pattern which had undoubtedly originated long before the Spanish arrival. The trade fairs were held twice a year. Once in the spring from April to June and then again in September (Hyde 1959: 102). Taos remained the center of trade (Kenner 1969: 26), undoubtedly owing to its proximity to the Colorado plains. The spirit of these fairs is evident in a brief but vivid description of a trade fair:

When the Indian trading embassy comes to these governors and their alcaldes, here prudence forsakes them...because the Fleet is in. The Fleet being, in this case, some two hundred, or at the very least, fifty tents of barbarous Indians. (Jackett quoted in Kenner 1969: 37).

The decade from 1730 to 1740 was a period in intensified slave trade in New Mexico. The Comanche--via their trade with the Shoshone, were increasing the supply at the trade fairs. The slave trade was viewed with mixed emotions by the Spanish. The government condoned the practice since the New Mexican economy was heavily dependent upon such trade. On a more moralistic note it was generally thought that being a Spanish slave was better than being a Comanche captive. The Church concluded that while slavery was evil this particular situation had "potential means to save souls." The slaves could be educated and brought into the fold of the Church (Kenner 1969: 38).

Not all priests were in favor of the traffic in captives. Fray Serrano wrote a vivid if not condemning description of Comanche trading practices:

It is the truth that when these barbarian bring a certain number of Indian women to sell, among them many young maidens and girls, before delivering them to the Christians who buy them, if they are ten years old or over, they deflower and corrupt them in the innumerable assemblies of barbarians
and Catholics...without considering anything but their unbridled lust and brutal shamelessness, and saying to those who buy them, with heathen impudence: "Now you can take her—now she is good" (Hackett quoted in Kenner 1969: 39).

In addition to the economic necessity of the Indian trade, the Spanish were concerned with the continuous reports of French attempts to reach the Southwest. With the New Mexican military structure largely ineffective, the government sought to maintain some form of alliance with the Comanche, since with a dependence on Spanish trade goods the Comanche could be an effective barrier against French encroachment. In fact, the Comanche had been partially responsible for keeping the French confined to the eastern periphery of the southern plains. During their first three decades of war with the Apache the Comanche had generally been opposed to French traders, since they might have supplied the Apache with firearms (Richardson 1933: 58-59). The Apache had received a few firearms from French sources during this period, but the supply was insufficient to alter the Apaches deteriorating situation (Secoy 1953: 81).

By the mid-1740's the Comanche had completely broken the Apache and were eager to open trade with the French. In 1740 the French negotiated a trade alliance between the Comanches and the allied Caddoans of eastern Oklahoma and Northeast Texas. The Caddoans had been trading with the French since 1720 and had a plentiful supply of firearms (Secoy 1953: 82). With this trade alliance the Comanche were assured a course of firearms which the Spanish had rigidly denied to all natives. The establishment of this trade route marked the beginning of increased Comanche attacks on New Mexico and population shift from the Colorado plains to the southern plains.
The Comanche made several attacks along the New Mexican frontier taking captives, horses, mules and plunder. In 1744 and again in 1746, they attacked Pecos and Galesteo, driving their attack to within twenty miles of Santa Fe (Kenner 1969: 41). The severity of these attacks prompted the Spanish settlers, who under law had no political power, to demand protection. The governor was forced to request authorization for a military expedition. Mexico City considered the request and eighteen months later gave approval. The governor of New Mexico was then ordered to confine military action to decisions of whether hostile Indians should or should not be allowed to trade at Taos (Hyde 1969: 104-105). The New Mexican officials decided that since New Mexico needed the trade and the Comanche would benefit from the Christian influence at the trade fairs they would be allowed to trade (Richardson 1933: 57). The Spanish had given the Comanche a free license to raid New Mexico and maintain open trade at the same time. A part of their decision undoubtedly rested on reports that thirty-three Frenchmen were within two days travel of Taos, trading firearms to the Comanche (Hyde 1959: 105-106).

After 1740 there was a definite movement of Comanche groups into the Southern plains. Prior to 1740, Comanche raiders and traders had come into the Taos area from the north. After 1740 raiders also came from the east as far south as the Santa Fe area (Hyde 1959: 103). Undoubtedly, the initial movement was begun by the Penane (Wasp) band who had moved south and east out of their Colorado territory in order to facilitate trade with the French supplied Caddoans. The Colorado plains were probably occupied by other "newer" Comanche. The Arkansas River running through the Colorado plains seems to have been a convenient boundary. To the north
of this river were the Shoshone, adjacent to and south of the Arkansas River there were Comanche. Since the Shoshone were virtually identical both linguistically and culturally to the Comanche, a Shoshone merely had to reach the river to become a Comanche. It is quite probable that those Shoshone living directly north of the Arkansas River would move south in order to acquire, first hand, the same horses and goods the Comanche brought to trade.

The only evidence which tends to support this theory is the reports of Comanche survivors from a raiding party who made an unsuccessful raid on Taos in 1751. The "Comanche" captives stated that they were from two bands who had come from north of the Arkansas River. This raiding party only had six guns among five hundred warriors (Hyde 1959: 110). At best this could be interpreted as a general shifting southward of the Shoshone after the opening of the southern gun trade. It also indicates that not all the Comanche were receiving an abundant supply of firearms.

There is also some possibility that the sudden Comanche attacks on the Ute in 1749 may have been the work of these new "Comanche" who were determined to gain access to the New Mexican settlements. The Ute occupied the region north of New Mexico and had, until 1749, launched raids into New Mexico from this direction. In 1750 the raids stopped, and the Ute began asking Spanish officials for protection from the Comanche. The Ute location was right for an invasion by Shoshone already mounted via the Comanche trade. The conditions were also right, but no Spanish records indicate the appearance of a new group of Comanche. But then again, the Spanish had failed to recognize the first Comanche invasion in 1705.
The Comanche raided the New Mexican frontier with seasonally patterned regularity. Raiding every summer, the Comanche accumulated horses, captives and plunder which were traded to the Caddoans for French guns. Returning to New Mexico the raiding would continue; then, in the fall they would travel to Taos for more trading. As the Comanche increased their horse herds, they began selling them at the trade fairs. As early as 1760, they were reported to have brought horses to trade, and in the 1770's they were bringing "a thousand or more animals" to Taos (Kenner 1969: 37). The Spanish were quite willing to buy these horses since Comanche raids had drastically reduced the Spanish herds. The Spanish maintained their ban on selling firearms to natives, but by 1760 the Comanche were offering guns to the Spanish. Though there are no accounts of how many guns were offered, the record indicates that it was a considerable number and that it was still going on in 1776 when Fray Domingue stated that the Comanche sold "good guns" (Thomas 1932: 317).

The Comanche were also busy ransoming Spanish captives at the trade fairs. The Comanche were quick to realize that the Spanish paid large ransoms for the safe return of their own people. The following account illustrates the Comanche's raiding priorities as well as the Spanish governments attitude toward aggressive behavior on the part of their appointed officials. In August of 1760, the Comanche attacked a Spanish ranch house near Taos where many settlers had gone for protection. The Comanche killed the men and captured fifty-six women and children. In 1761 these Comanche arrived in Taos ready to trade. The Governor, convinced that a hard stand would end the Comanche attacks, refused to allow the Comanche any trade until the captives had been returned. The Comanche did gain entrance to
the fair by permission of the alcalde upon the Comanche promise to "ransom" seven of the captives. The Governor, evidently not knowing of this deal, had the Comanche leaders arrested. The Comanche attacked and the Governor, anticipating such a reaction, had cannon loaded with grapeshot waiting. After the fight the Governor reported a victory claiming 400 Comanche killed and 300 taken prisoner. For his victory the Governor was replaced. The Comanche captives were released and open trade renewed (Kenner 1969: 43-44). The official policy stated that instead of attacking the Comanche, he should have seized the opportunity to make peace and recover the Spanish prisoners (Richardson 1933: 58).
THE TEXAS FRONTIER

The Comanche had concentrated their raiding activities on the New Mexican territory throughout the first half of the 18th century. In fact, the Spanish settlements in Texas had reported no Comanche in that area as late as 1756. The only Indian problems Texas reported prior to that date were with the Apache (Hyde 1959: 114). In 1757 the Spanish began constructing a mission on the San Saba River, near the present town of Menard, Texas. The mission and fort were completed by the priests complained that the Apache, for whom it was built, were more interested in receiving gifts than religion. Rumors of approaching Comanche were circulated and the Apache fled. In March, 1758, the Comanche attacked, killing the priests and burning the mission (Webb 1931: 127-128). It was reported that a combined force of Comanche and Caddoans totalling two thousand warriors attacked the mission (Hodge 1907: II 705).

The Texas officials were quicker to react than their New Mexican counterparts. In 1759 Colonel Diego Ortiz Parilla led a force of six hundred men complete with two bronze cannons against the Comanche and their Caddoan allies. Parilla's force destroyed a small Caddoan Village near the Red River, in the present Ringgold neighborhood. The town was fortified: The Indians were flying a French flag, carrying French weapons, and reportedly using French military tactics. The Spanish attacked the town, but even with their cannons they could not force their way in. Eventually the Spanish force broke and ran, leaving their cannons and most of their baggage behind (Webb 1931: 128-129). The estimated number of Caddoans and Comanche defending the fortified village was placed at 6,000 (Hyde 1959: 115). The defeat of
this Texas force left the Comanche clear access to the Texas settlement and beyond into Old Mexico.

The Comanche continued to alternate between raiding and trading until about 1765 when raiding on New Mexican settlements decreased. The decrease in raids coincides with the fall of New France in 1763 and the subsequent end of the Caddoan based gun trade. The Comanche were again faced with a single source of European goods. The horse and slave exchange continued with their Shoshonean relatives and with New Mexico. This peace lasted until 1768 when the Comanche found a new source of firearms, supplied by independent French traders through Taovayas middlemen (Kenner 1969: 45).

The period between 1768 and 1780 was a confusing series of Comanche raids and trade fairs, resulting in the virtual destruction of the New Mexican frontier. It is beyond the scope of this study to recount literature pertaining to this period except to illustrate the severity of the Comanche attacks, the Spanish response, and to discuss the factors responsible for the Comanche attacks.

In 1768, the Comanche concentrated their attacks on the Ojo Caliente area, forty miles north of Santa Fe. These attacks were so severe that settlers began abandoning their land even under penalty of fines and forfeitures of property (Kenner 1969: 46). In 1770 the citizens of Taos were forced to abandon their plaza and take refuge in the Taos Pueblo during a Comanche attack. In 1772, five hundred Comanche attacked Taos, and others attacked Pecuris and Galesteo. The Governor of New Mexico then reported the sequel to such raids:

The Comanche did not find it inconvenient to present themselves peacefully at Taos to trade their buffalo skins, horses, mules, some guns and captives in exchange for bridles, awls, knives,
colored cloth and maize from which the settlers of the province benefited. (Thomas quoted Kenner 1969: 47)

The Comanche traded peacefully for a year, then resumed raiding. The Spanish resisted the initial attacks, but the Comanche swarmed into the province "by all routes" and quickly stamped out effective resistance. The problem the Spanish had was the lack of weapons and horses. A survey indicated that there were only six hundred guns and one hundred-fifty pairs of pistols in all of New Mexico at the time (Thomas quoted in Kenner 1969: 47-48). As late as 1782 an edict was issued by the Governor directing all citizens to provide themselves with bows and arrows within two months (Simmons 1968: 149). The lack of horses was the result of the Comanche raids. In 1775, the New Mexican Governor requested from Mexico City at least fifteen hundred head of horses, warning that if they were not delivered, the province would be desolated. The request was approved but the horses were never sent (Kenner 1969: 48).

Besides the loss of lives and property, the New Mexicans soon faced starvation. Farmers were afraid to tend their fields; siege conditions prevailed throughout New Mexico. In one account it is reported that some people who remained in the Pueblos were reduced to eating horse and cow hides and roasting old shoes. By 1776 the population of Galesteo had been reduced by half. At Pecos the population had dropped from four hundred forty-six in 1750 to two hundred sixty-nine in 1776 (Thomas quoted in Kenner 1969: 49).

The question of why the Comanche carried on almost continuous war from 1768 to 1780 when they had prior to the former date reached a stable and lucrative trading/raiding arrangement with New Mexico, constitutes a problem. Part of the answer was the renewed French gun trade
along the Red River. But the unprecedented pressure of their attacks indicates other factors. It is highly probable that this period marked the invasion of a third wave of Comanche from the north. From the mid-1730's the northern Shoshone had enjoyed a position of military supremacy, via their trade with the Comanche. They raided indiscriminantly for captives to perpetuate this trade, and thereby succeeded in alienating themselves from surrounding tribes. This was not a disadvantage for the Shoshone as long as they maintained a monopoly on the horse trade. Gradually, by theft and trade, the surrounding tribes, i.e., Blackfoot, Atsina, Sursi, Assenaloine and Plains Cree, acquired sufficient horses. After 1763, independent traders began reaching the plains with supplies of firearms. The Shoshone, having isolated themselves, were cut off from this gun supply by their enemies who had quickly armed themselves and taken the offensive (Secoy 1953: 51-52). The result was a gradual shift in military supremacy. The Shoshone were forced to take the defensive and were gradually pushed off the northern plains.

Undoubtedly some of the retreating Shoshone moved south to avoid the increased pressure or to participate in the Red River gun trade. With the Comanche bands who had moved southeast to Taos attacking the central region, and the new arrivals raiding into northern New Mexico from across the Arkansas River, there is little doubt of why the raids were intensified. Spanish records indicate that as late as 1785, a Comanche group known as the Yupes were living far in the north (Hyde 1959: 153). This group of Comanche was the Yapaine or Yap-eaters, who during the 19th century, ranged across the Colorado plains south of the Arkansas River (Wallace and Hoebel 1952: 27-28).
The raiding continued until 1780 when a smallpox epidemic broke out in Texas and quickly spread through the southern plains. This epidemic killed over five thousand Pueblo Indians in New Mexico alone. It is not known how badly the Comanche were affected, but it must have hit them hard since raiding began to decrease, and they began asking for peace (Hyde 1959: 164-165). Another factor in the Comanche desire for peace may have been a desire for a permanent trade center. The peace was negotiated, and the Spanish added an incentive by giving gifts to the Comanche whenever they came to the settlements. These presents ranged in value from one to two pesos for a common warrior to fifteen or twenty pesos for a chief. These gifts cost the Spanish over five thousand pesos in 1789 (Kenner 1969: 54-55). The New Mexicans achieved peace, and the Comanche shifted their raiding activities to Texas and northern provinces of Mexico.

After the defeat of the Parilla expedition in 1758 the Comanche began attacking the Spanish settlements of San Antonio, Bexar and La Bahia. They ran off horse herds, took captives and were rapidly desolating the province. As usual the Spanish were unable to stop them. The Comanche soon extended their raiding southward along the lower Rio Grande River. The Spanish attempted to make peace and succeeded in reaching an agreement with the Yapine (Yap-eaters) in 1775 (Richardson 1933: 68-69). It seems ironic that these Comanche who were supposed to be above the Arkansas River were in Texas making treaties with the Spanish. The treaty was worthless to the Spanish since the permanent Comanche residents, the Penane (Wasp) and Kotrokeskas continued to raid without let-up (Richardson 1933: 69).

In 1785, the Spanish did succeed in making a treaty with the southern Comanche. The Comanche agreed to stop raiding the Texas settlements and
to bring in all their Spanish captives "in order that they may be redeemed." The Spanish would establish trade fairs, and each year the chiefs and headmen would be given presents for keeping the peace. By 1809 these presents were costing the Texas province five thousand pesos annually (Richardson 1933: 70-71).

The Comanche raids into northern Mexico became more intense and destructive after 1785 (Roe 1955: 81-82). The Comanche had shifted their raiding to less devastated provinces while assuring themselves an outlet for captives in large numbers. These "goods" were then traded and ransomed at the annual trade fairs. The Chiefs continued to collect their presents for keeping the peace. The situation was clearly described by Richardson: "The Comanche rather than the Spanish had come to be the aggressors" (1933: 75). In less than one hundred years, the Comanche had come to dominate the entire southern plains. Their influence was felt for hundreds of miles beyond. They would remain dominant until the last decades of the 19th century but the cultural patterns and behavior which developed and perpetuated this dominance was shaped by their contact with the Spanish during the 18th century.
ANALYSIS OF SPANISH COMANCHE RELATIONSHIP

Comanche dominance of the southern plains was largely facilitated by three factors. First, by rapidly acquiring horses and developing a fully nomadic life style, the Comanche were relatively safe from punitive expeditions. Second, by defeating the semi-sedentary Apache, they eliminated the only competition for the southern plains. Third, the Comanche involvement in, and perpetuation of, native and European trade networks which were casual factors in the Comanches rapid equestrian development and defeat of the Apache.

The Comanches early desire for horses may have been directly related to the increased mobility and greater hunting efficiency that horses provided. This motivation was subsequently overshadowed by the development of trade with the northern Shoshone and the Spanish settlements of New Mexico. The Comanche began trading horses to the northern Shoshone. To meet the northern trade demand they increased their raids on Apache horse herds.

The Spanish slave trade offered an opportunity to obtain trade goods in greater quantities than could be purchased with meat and hides only. The Comanche quickly recognized the value of captives and began raiding Apache settlements for prisoners as well as horses. With the trade value of horses and captives providing the incentive to intensify raiding and the Apaches semi-sedentary agricultural phase offering optimum opportunity for success, the Comanches ultimate victory was greatly accelerated.

The development of the French-supplied Caddoan gun trade in the mid 1740's resulted in a shift in Comanche raiding. Moving south, the Comanche began raiding the Spanish settlements along the New Mexican frontier. The
Caddoan trade network required horses and captives as payment for French firearms, and the Comanche found the Spanish settlements and herds easier targets than the impoverished and scattered Apache bands.

The Spanish were unable to stop the Comanche advance for one basic reason. The political and religious policies were controlled by a rigidly bureaucratic government which, due to its very nature and geographic distance (Mexico City), proved incapable of grasping the severity of the situation and consequently proved incapable of making realistic changes or decisions concerning the Comanche invasion.

There were three specific factors which were partially created, and further perpetuated by the Spanish bureaucratic structure. First, the Spanish military proved inadequate once the Comanche became mounted. Second, the New Mexican economy was heavily dependent upon the Indian trade in captives, meat, and hides. With the Apache defeat, the Comanche became the principle suppliers and the switch from trading to raiding endangered the New Mexican economy. Third, the Spanish were aware of the French activity on the southern plains and the increased raids and numerous French firearms among the Comanche reinforced the fear of French invasion. The Spanish realized that the Comanche were a formidable barrier to any invading force and sought to win over the supposed French allies. Since the Spanish military was inadequate, the Spanish sought peaceful means of establishing a Comanche alliance. They allowed unrestricted trade and liberally distributed presents to the Comanche. The Spanish were able to achieve a degree of relief under this system, but as a result, the New Mexican and Texas settlements became trading centers for horses and Spanish captives taken in raids into Mexico.
CONCLUSION

In order to clearly define the nature of Comanche adaptation it is necessary to briefly return to the three variables Oliver found absent in Comanche culture. The Comanche did not develop tribal congregations, communal hunts, or hunt police. If it may be assumed that the universality of these institutions among the plains tribes was the result of a shared ecological factor, specifically the seasonal habits of the buffalo, then the Comanche either did not share the same environmental conditions or found alternative methods of exploiting the southern plains environment.

The southern plains have been shown to be extremely drought-prone during the summer months. This often resulted in the buffalo herds migrating north during these periods. If the Comanche had been solely dependent on the buffalo the development of communal hunts and hunt police should have been of prime importance. The Comanche were not totally dependent on the buffalo because they had developed an alternative subsistence pattern around the economic and political policies of the Spanish.

The Comanche quickly developed a predatory raiding pattern which to a great extent was enhanced by the Spanish open trade in captives.

They also became dependent on European goods and acclimated to the Spanish system of annual trade fairs held during the summer. European goods and trade fairs became an intricate part of the Comanche social system. Raiding became the central focus of Comanche culture, so much so that horses, captives and plunder were the socially accepted measure of wealth and power. Raiding became the summer activity in preparation for the annual trade fair. Comanche raiders brought in thousands of
horses and the Comanche were well known for the sheer size of their herds. They had so many horses that the horse became the alternative source of food during the summer raiding season. By the early 1840's the Comanche were reported to be eating 20,000 horses annually (Cash and Wolff 1974:23). This does not imply that the buffalo were not important to the economy of the Comanche, rather, the use of horses as a alternative food supply allowed them a degree of adaptive flexability which lessened the need for communal buffalo hunts and hunt police. To some degree the use of horses as food reinforced the raiding pattern, since the attrition rate of their herds was subsidized by raiding. By utilizing horses as a food source, the Comanche were able to maintain the summer raiding pattern necessary for acquiring the horses, captivies, and plunder with which to facilitate their trade network.

In essence the Comanche culture was partially orientated toward an individualized raiding complex which simultaneously raided and traded with its European progenator. The Comanche socio-political system remained at a minimal level because the Spanish influenced provided, on one hand, the environmental variable necessary to perpetuate that autonomy; and, on the other hand, the Spanish were militarily, politically and economically incapable of checking the Comanche because of their autonomy.


