9. Samuel E. Kenoi’s Portraits of White Men

Narrated by Samuel E. Kenoi
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Introduced by Anthony K. Webster

Let me begin with an understatement. Native Americans have had a long and complicated history with “white people.” While mainstream American society has created any number of stereotypes about Native Americans through popular media and the like (see Deloria 1998; Meek 2006), Native Americans have not been passive here, merely the object of the Western “gaze.” Native Americans have also long been evaluating the behaviors of white people and providing commentary on such behaviors. Keith Basso’s impressive ethnography *Portraits of “The Whiteman”* is an account of how Western Apaches talk about and joke about white people (Basso 1979). In this chapter I present two narratives by Samuel E. Kenoi, a Chiricahua Apache, told to Harry Hoijer, an Anglo anthropological linguist, in 1930 on the Mescalero Reservation (south-central New Mexico), which provide images of white people (specifically, white men), or *'Indaa* (see Hoijer 1938). The images, I should add, are humorous but not terribly complimentary. I consider Kenoi’s narratives to be examples of indigenous social commentary and critique.

We know a bit about the narrator Sam Kenoi (as he was known). He was one of anthropologist Morris Opler’s primary consultants for his monumental memory ethnography of the Chirica-
huan Apache, *An Apache Life-Way* (Opler 1941). He also provided an autobiographical account to Opler (Opler 1938). Kenoi, according to his own recollection, was born in the mid-1870s. This was a time prior to the forced removal of the Chiricahua Apaches from the southwest in 1886. In 1886, after the surrender of Geronimo, the Chiricahuas, including those who had helped the U.S. government, were forcibly relocated to Fort Marion, Florida. Kenoi tells of soldiers terrorizing the Chiricahua Apaches on the train cars they rode as they were relocated to Florida. The U.S. government treated all Chiricahuas, including the young Kenoi, as prisoners of war for the next twenty-seven years. Kenoi attended the infamous Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. In 1893 the Chiricahua Apaches were relocated to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and in 1913 the U.S. government offered to resettle them on the Mescalero Apache Reservation. Otherwise, they would remain in Oklahoma and receive allotments. Kenoi was among the two-thirds of the Chiricahuas who chose to resettle on the Mescalero Reservation.

Kenoi was politically active on the Mescalero Reservation, writing letters complaining about reservation conditions and, more importantly, writing letters concerning the compensation of Chiricahua Apaches for being falsely imprisoned by the U.S. government (see Lieder and Page 1997:69–75). His views on white people were based on a long and complicated set of life experiences. That he chose to sit down with both Opler and Hoijer, to share with them something of his language and his culture, speaks a great deal about Kenoi. Kenoi was not naive about white people and their attitudes and behaviors. Perhaps he felt that working with these two *Indaa* would aid his efforts at getting monetary compensation for the Chiricahua Apaches' time as prisoners of war?

**THE NARRATIVES**

Both narratives are from recognizable genres among the Chiricahua Apaches. Coyote stories are well-known among the Chiricha

...
greedy and react angrily. Their behavior is neither restrained nor controlled. Again, restrained and controlled behavior is valued among Chiricahua Apaches. The White Men, then, are a model of what not to do.

There is something in Kenoi’s verbal artistry that suggests his attitude toward the White Men. In Chiricahua Apache there are four person markers. The fourth person in Chiricahua is used for people who are socially remote. For example, when Coyote speaks to the White Men, Kenoi uses the fourth-person dual gu-

Nágú Ma’yeñí ągüułdiná’a: “Au, dítsí hišhá.”

Then that Coyote spoke thus to them, they say: “Yes, I’ll shake the tree.”

Kenoi uses the fourth-person pronoun repeatedly in this narrative for the White Men. There is another way to disambiguate third persons in Chiricahua Apache. In Chiricahua Apache narratives there is a tendency for overt nouns to be relatively infrequent. Actors are disambiguated through paralinguistic features and through the alternation of pronominal prefixes (in Chiricahua Apache, pronouns are attached to the verb). In Chiricahua Apache there are two third-person pronominal prefixes, yi- and bi-; both can be glossed as ‘he, she, it’ (Chiricahua Apache does not code gender on its pronouns like English does). The alternation between yi- and bi- has to do with the importance of a character within the narrative. If the narrative is about Coyote or the Foolish People, then they are more important or topical and take the bi-prefix. The less important characters—like the White Men—take the yi-prefix (see Webster 2006).

Here are two lines from Kenoi’s “The Foolish People and the White Men.” In the first line we can tell the object of the verb is the Foolish People because Kenoi uses bi-. In the second line we can tell the object of the verb is the White Men because Kenoi uses yi-

In Chiricahua Apache third-person subjects do not take a prefix but are understood. (dist = Distributive; 30 = third-person object; pp = postposition).

\[
\begin{align*}
daaðiłłdiná’a & \\
daa- & bi- & 30 & -ndi & -ná’a & \\
dist & to say & they say & \\

daayíłłdiná’a & \\
dayi- & 30 & -ndi & -ná’a & \\
dist & to say & they say & \\
\end{align*}
\]

They (Foolish People) said to them (Foolish People), they say.

What we should take away from this is that Kenoi had options about how he was going to reference White Men. In “Coyote and the White Men” Kenoi uses the fourth-person prefix to indicate that these White Men are socially distant.

Kenoi’s “The Foolish People and the White Men” begins with the White Men approaching a camp of Foolish People. The Foolish People shoot at the White Men, perhaps to scare them away. Of course, they quickly realize that bothering them will only make the matter worse. It does. The White Men move among them and begin stabbing the Foolish People with swords. We know this because Kenoi uses a form of the verb stem -zhish ‘to stab with a pointed object’. The Foolish People respond by shouting, “Shíghásyél! ‘My maternal siblings!’ The Foolish People attempt to calm the White Men by addressing them as relatives. The Chiricahua Apaches were, traditionally, matrilocal (that is, married couples tended to live with the wife’s family), and children could expect a fair amount of help and aid from their mother’s siblings. The Foolish People’s gambit does not work, of course, and the White Men continue to kill the Foolish People. Finally, the Foolish People realize the situation is hopeless and flee.

In Chiricahua Apache there are a set of enclitics (semi-bound
morphemes) that can attach to the noun. These enclitics specify that a noun has been mentioned before. There are two relative enclitics that Kenoi uses with some frequency, -n and -i. They have the general meaning of ‘aforementioned’, and I often gloss it as ‘that Coyote’ or ‘those White Men’. There is a subtle semantic distinction here. -n is used for persons and -i is used for actions, things, or collectivities. In “Coyote and the White Men,” Kenoi uses -n for both Coyote and the White Men. In “The Foolish People and the White Men,” he uses -i for the White Men. One explanation for this is that since it is a group of White Men the enclitic for collectivities is used instead of the one for persons. Another possibility is that the White Men, who appear as unstoppable killing machines, are not considered by Kenoi to be people but rather things.

In both Kenoi’s portraits of the White Men, the White Men appear socially aberrant. In “Coyote and the White Men” they are greedy and easily angered and thus become easy dupes for Coyote. They appear indifferent to distinctions among Coyotes, treating them all alike. Indeed, they exhibit characteristics normally associated with Coyote. Coyote, on the other hand, behaves in a socially responsible manner. It should also be noted that while Coyote is often called a trickster, his tricks very rarely work out well for him. This is the only Coyote story that Kenoi tells in which Coyote comes out ahead. It is at the expense of the White Men. In Kenoi’s “The Foolish People and the White Men,” the White Men are presented as inarticulate (they utter no words in the narrative), disrespectful of kinship obligations (they ignore the overt plea from the Foolish People), easily angered, and unstoppable killing machines.

Perhaps Kenoi is reminding the listener that the Chiricahua Apaches had fought a long, bloody, and ultimately failed campaign to hold their homeland against white men who were easily angered, unstoppable killing machines, unable to distinguish among Chiricahua Apaches, and greedy. In any case, Kenoi presents the White Men as easy dupes of Coyote because of their greed (no small task) and as unstoppable killers.

**Chiricahua Apache Ethnopoetics**

Chiricahua Apache narrators typically organized narratives into a series of lines by the interweaving of initial particles and the use of a narrative enclitic. Rather than present these narratives as block prose, I have separated them into lines and larger groupings. The presentation of these narratives is meant to highlight something of the poetic structuring of the stories by Sam Kenoi. This ethnopoetic methodology was first developed by Dell Hymes (1981, 2003). An ethnopoetic analysis pays tribute to Kenoi’s unique voice and style.

Beyond the line, these narratives have been further divided into scenes, stanzas, and verses. Scenes have been organized based on form and content covariance. When there is a shift in location, for example, a scene is often indicated by the use of the initial particle nágu ‘then’. Scenes are indicated by Roman numerals. Stanzas are also based on form and content alignment. When Coyote acts, his actions take a stanza. When there is a shift in character there is a shift in stanza. Kenoi also signals these by his use of nágu or by overtly mentioning the character being switched to. Stanzas are indicated by spaces between lines. Here is an example of the interplay between nágu and overt character mentioning:

- 'indaą́ ábiłndiná'a:
  - “Naanaahítndi,” biłndiná’a.

Nágu ‘ándiná’a:
- “Duuda, dą’ayáłdí lli,” yiłndiná’a.

Nágu ‘indaą́ ábiłndiná’a:
- “Afiidii ḥi da’l’eh daadalhündélgu
  ‘Ashí díi xéélí bínúuđuztí díł’eh nanndílgu...
And so he began to drive away from there, they say.
He drove it over there as he had said, they say.

With the con complete, Coyote is free to drive the pack animals away from the White Men. 'Ákuu thus compliments the first verse in the stanza.

The narrative enclitic -ná'a 'they say' occurs thirteen times in "The Foolish People and the White Men" and forty-one times in "Coyote and the White Men." The enclitic is attached to the final verb of each sentence and clause outside of quoted speech. Chiricahua Apache has a verb final word order, and thus the enclitic is the rightmost line boundary. The narrative enclitic serves three primary poetic and rhetorical purposes. First, due to its use at the end of sentences and clauses, it aids in structuring this narrative into a series of lines. Second, the narrative enclitic is used in genres such as Coyote stories and Foolish People stories and acts as a genre signature. Third, it also places these narratives within the voice of tradition. These narratives are not the firsthand experience of the narrator; rather, they are connected to the words of others.

Kenoi also uses the Apachen quotative couplet. Here is an example from each of the stories presented here:

'Indaañ 'ábí:lndiná'a:
"Iyáábą́ą dákudesjí síndá" bi:lndiná'a.

The White Men spoke thus, they say:
"Why are you sitting in this lonely place?" they said to him, they say.

Nágú li 'árdiná'a:
"Juundó, 'iłaadadáká!
Duugudú́tuuda!" da:bbi:lndiná'a.

Then some thus said, they say:
"Friends, flee!
Nothing will stop them!" they said to them, they say.
Kenoi uses a verb of speaking (-näi ‘to say’) before and after the quoted speech. The verb form before the quoted speech has the prefix 'ā- ‘thus’, while the verb of speaking after the quote lacks the prefix. Both verbs also take the narrative enclitic. This quotative couplet frames or surrounds the quote. It is a very common way that Kenoi introduced quoted speech in his narratives, and it can be found in the narratives of other Apache narrators as well.

Kenoi introduces “Coyote and the White Men” with the formulaic opening of Mai ‘ńähin hughilmá ‘a ‘Coyote was going along a road, they say’. Kenoi uses the progressive aspect for the verb to move -gulí (ing in English often marks the progressive aspect). The progressive aspect suggests incompletion and ongoing action. We can understand the opening of this narrative as suggesting that Coyote has always been and will always be going along a road. Such an opening frame sets the stage for the kind of narrative to follow (much the way “Once upon a time” sets the stage for the kind of narrative to follow in English, though Coyote stories are not fairy tales).

THE TRANSLATION

Translations are always approximations (see Becker 1995). One tries to find a term in one language that is close—but never exact—to a term in another language. There are always things in one language that cannot be transferred into another language and connections in one language that were not there in the other language. Translations always put too much in and leave too much out. As such, translations are always incomplete and subject to revision, rethinking, and reimagining. In this translation I have been guided by the linguistic work of Hoijer. It appears likely that Kenoi helped Hoijer with the translations.

I have translated initial particles consistently. Nágu is always ‘then’ and ‘áku a is always ‘and so’. I have translated the narrative enclitic as ‘they say’ every time it appears in the narrative. In doing this, I hope to highlight their recurrences throughout these narratives. They are the principal organizing devices. When forms in Chiricahua Apache are identical, I have endeavored to translate them into English identically. Here I hope to show something of the parallelism (repetition with variation) that Kenoi employs in his narrative. Kenoi repeats the phrase ‘ńähin shumá̃ bišálay ‘the tree which is standing there by the side of the road’ twice, and he repeats shumá̃ ‘tree that is standing there’ three other times as well in “Coyote and the White Men.” Such repetitions create coherence throughout the narrative. I have also capitalized character names for ease of reference in both the Chiricahua Apache and English versions. I will leave it to the reader to track the actors when they are not overtly mentioned.

Shühǘyé is translated here as ‘my maternal siblings’. This is a noun with a possessive pronominal prefix, shi- ‘my’. In Chiricahua Apache certain nouns (kinship terms and body part terms, for example) require a constant possessor (that is, they cannot appear without a possessive prefix). Hoijer translates the form as “my cousins.” In Chiricahua Apache, -yułé could be used for one’s mother’s sisters and brothers and for one’s mother’s sister’s daughter’s children and for one’s mother’s brother’s daughter’s children. My translation hints at the maternal aspect of the kinship term.

‘Indaa is consistently translated as “White Men” here. I follow the translation of Hoijer. Nothing in the Chiricahua Apache form suggests that these are men, but based on the contexts of these narratives, I believe a male gender can be inferred. Therefore, since Chiricahua Apache does not code for gender on its pronominal system, I have translated third-person pronouns as masculine. Here again I follow Hoijer’s conventions. There are other words for white people in Chiricahua Apache, including dáádaát’ijónde ‘blue-eyed people’.
A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY AND PRONUNCIATION

In preparing this narrative I have transcribed the Chiricahua Apache forms to more closely align with the current orthography used in the Mescalero Apache Dictionary (Breuninger et al. 1982). Vowels in Chiricahua have a similar quality to vowels in English, with these exceptions: vowels with a “nasal hook” (a, e, i) are produced in a similar manner as the vowel in English man, where the vowel is pronounced through the nose. Accented vowels (à, ë, ì, ù) are pronounced at a higher pitch. When a vowel is “doubled” (aa, ee, ii, uu) it is a long vowel. Long vowels are pronounced for a longer period of time than non-long vowels. An accent mark on the first vowel of a long vowel (áá) indicates a falling tone. An accent mark on the second vowel of a long vowel (áé) indicates a rising tone. Chiricahua Apache has a voiceless ñ that is presented as /ñ/. This sound is similar to the sound some English speakers make when they say please. /ň/ is a syllabic nasal, similar to the n in knin. That is, it takes stress. Chiricahua Apache has a set of glottalized stops as well: /t\'/, /k\'/, /ts\'/, /t\'\'/, and /ch\'/. Such forms are produced by holding the air in the mouth for a moment longer than English speakers normally do and then releasing the air in a burst. Finally, Chiricahua Apache has a glottal stop, /\'/. This is the catch in the throat when English speakers say uh-oh. In Chiricahua it is phonemic (that is, it changes the meaning of a word with its presence or absence). All words that appear to begin with a vowel actually begin with a glottal stop. By convention, and for the sake of dictionaries, the glottal stop is often deleted here and understood. Its presence is only realized in combination (e.g., when a prefix is added). I have retained the glottal stop vowel initial as a reminder of its presence.

NOTES

1. On Chiricahua Apache ethnopoetics, see Webster 1999. I discuss this narrative from a different perspective in Webster 1998.
2. For a useful overview of Chiricahua Apache linguistic structure, see Hoijer 1946.

REFERENCES CITED AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

Then some thus said, they say:
“Friends, flee!
Nothing will stop them!” they said to them, they say.
And so some of them fled, they say.

Biguitaná’a.
Lágú ʾI nda baajíizhuzhunáʼa.
Daabúúlt’únaʼa.
‘Ákuu ʾádaa’ildihndináʼa:
“Duudaaadaal’jiidá.
‘Ákuu dánúughu’uundiił,” daa’ildihndináʼa.
Nágú ʾI ndaa bitautéjúnáʼa.
Bighádaadá’ishiishnáʼa.
‘Indaá nódaayútunáʼa.
“Shighúuyé!
Danjiit’jiju gugháda’ishiish!” daayiit’indináʼa.
Ákuu bee’nitseénáʼa.

Nágú li’ándináʼa:
“Juundéí, ʾiladaadahkál!
Duugudúu’uuda!” daabiiit’indináʼa.
‘Ákuu li’iladaadadeskanáʼa.

Coyote and the White Men

Coyote was going along a road, they say.
He sat down under a tree that was standing on the side of the road, they say.
There he sat for awhile, they say.
Then he put several pieces of money up in that tree that was standing there, they say.

Samuel E. Kenoí’s Portraits of White Men

The Foolish People and the White Men

Their camp, they say.
Many White Men moved in a group toward them, they say.
They shot at them, they say.
And so thus they said to each other, they say:
“Don’t bother them.
And so it will be worse,” they said to each other, they say.
Then White Men moved among them, they say.
They slashed them with swords, they say.
They went between those White Men.
“My maternal siblings!
What have they done to you that you would stab them!”
they said to them, they say.
And so they were being killed, they say.
Then two White Men came along the road driving a burden, they say.

There he sat, under that tree that was standing there on the side of the road, they say.

They drove the burden to him, they say.
The White Men spoke thus, they say:

"Why are you sitting in this lonely place?" they said to him, they say.

"No," he said, they say.

"I sit protecting this tree that stands here," he said, they say.

"Money grows on this tree.
For that reason it is valuable to me," he said, so they say.

The White Men spoke thus, they say:

"We will buy it from you," they said to him, they say.

Then he spoke thus, they say:

"No, it is very valuable," he said to them, they say.

Then the White Men spoke thus, they say:

"We will give you both these horses with their burdens and all of these pack animals that we are driving if you will give us that tree," they said to him, they say.

"But shake the tree;
let's see if money falls," they said to him, they say.

Then that Coyote spoke thus to them, they say:

"Yes, I'll shake the tree."
Right then he shook the tree, they say.

Some of the money that he had put in the tree fell down, they say.

Then they gave him all of the things they had been traveling with, they say.

Then the White Men got up, they say.

They shook the tree for a long time, they say.

Nothing fell from it, they say.

In a sorry state, they stood about under the tree that was standing there, they say.

They became angry, they say.

They started to go after him, they say.

And so he had long ago driven far away, they say.

He had driven to a camp of many Coyotes, they say.

He had distributed all of it among them, they say.

And so those White Men were coming to that place, they say.

The Coyote who had done those things to them met them first, they say.

They asked him, they say:

"You haven't seen someone over here who was driving a pack?" they said to him, they say.

That Coyote spoke thus to them, they say:

"I was walking over there recently but saw no one.
Which people went?" he said to them, they say.
Nágu beeqa’ashní díík’eh baajiñndilná’á.
Nágu Ma’yeñ ‘águulndiná’á:
“Ághai ghashí džíñntsaal st’í,íyéi bitis i’núuyuugu, ‘áñee da
ditsíí haxá.
Ákuu béésu naaneesdaagu náhalá,” guuñndiná’á.
‘Ákuu áñee da guchí’s’iindeeyuuná’á.
‘Águuljindiní bitis i’jinúuyuuná’á.

Nágu ‘Indaaní nádiit”áázhná’á.
Ditsíí yighágu yaanaa’aashná’á.
Dunyáamut’i’jdaná’á.
Juujibááyégu, ditsí’ú’ú’í bitláhee naajiyee’aashná’á.
Gułgüútúná’á.
Bike’shdíyeest’áázhná’á.
Ákuu ik’dá ríza’á i’núuyuuná’á.
Ma’yeí lakágu biguuta ná’tee inéfuyuuná’á.
Díík’eh gutaadaisndiná’á.
Ákuu án indaaní ghashí ga’aashná’á.
‘Añí Ma’ye águl’iñí iitsé gudáñghuná’á.
Hishdíkiná’á:
“’Íshí ta’í xéej hil’inayultí duuxaaúuí’jda?”
Ma’yeñ ‘águulndiná’á:
“Aashí ándeecegu husháá’í ndah duuyáahush’jda.
Xaadeñ naadaaguka?” guuñndiná’á.