

# The Caddo

## Where Do We Get Our Information?

### Caddo Voices

East Texas is part of the historic homeland of a society of farmers, warriors, potters, priests and traders known today as the Caddo. The more than 5,000 modern Caddo strengthen their ties to the past through stories, songs and dances that commemorate and celebrate events in Caddo history. Living Caddo are a valuable resource for anyone researching Caddo history.



Courtesy of the Caddoan Visual Archive and Collection of the Caddo Heritage Museum

Members of the Caddo Nation gather for dances today just as they did in 1892, and for hundreds of years before that.

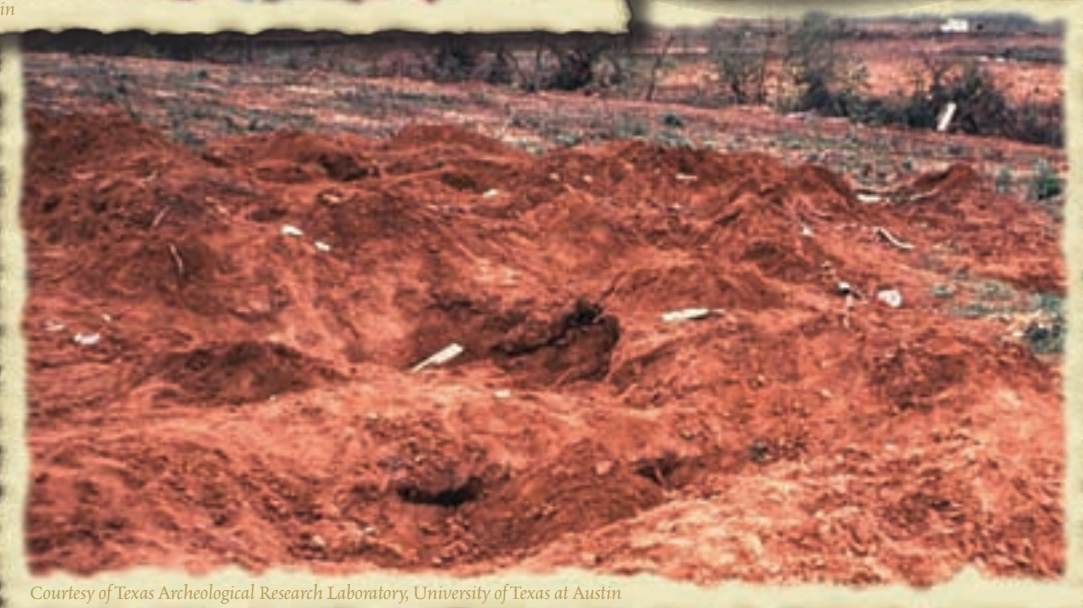


Courtesy of the Research Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society



Courtesy of Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, University of Texas at Austin

Archaeologists carefully excavate at Caddoan Mounds, scraping away the dirt with small tools. Compare their technique to this Caddo cemetery destroyed by grave robbers using a backhoe.



Courtesy of Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, University of Texas at Austin



### The Past Speaks

A lot of what we know about the ancient Caddo comes from archaeology. Archaeologists are scientists who work slowly and carefully to keep dating and objects intact. After excavating a site, they share the artifacts and information they uncover with the world.

### Early Explorers

"The Caddo are a populous nation of people, and so extensive that those who give detailed reports of them do not know where it ends...They have houses made of wood, cultivate the soil, plant maize and other crops, wear clothes, and punish misdemeanors, especially theft."

—Father Damien Massanet, 1690



Texas map 1691, original in Archivo General de Sevilla

European explorers in the 1600s and 1700s recorded a lot of information about what Caddo life was like at the time. A Spanish expedition produced this map which provides a detailed look at a Caddo village in 1691.



Bar-Zin-Debar  
(Tall Man)

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Courtesy of National Anthropological Archives



# The Caddo

## Collaboration and Community

### Independent but United

While the Caddo are often referred to as if they were a single, unified group, they actually considered themselves a collection of many named extended family groups who shared a common culture of strict social rank. The scattered Caddo came together at mound centers like Caddoan Mounds during sacred and festive times.

- ✘ **Xinesi** — This head of the larger alliance of family groups was born into his job, lived at the mound center and served as an intermediary with God (Caddi Ayo).
- ✘ **Caddi** — Each village had a head man called a caddi who was also born into his job.
- ✘ **Canahas** — These village elders advised the caddi.

- ✘ **Tammas** — Tammas were enforcers who made sure people obeyed the caddi and behaved properly.
- ✘ **Connas** — As village priests, connas cured the sick and performed daily rituals.
- ✘ **Common People** — Farmers and craftspeople, commoners also provided the labor to build the sacred mounds.



This depiction of a mound center and village shows a xinesi living on a mound made for important people.

The complex Caddo society of social rank was held together by kinship, expectation and custom. Roles were defined by age, sex and clan.

### Adaptability in the Face of Crisis

Caddo tribes maintained an adaptable political organization in order to meet the demands of a shifting local economy. For example, in the 1780s the Hasinai Caddo changed their social structure to eliminate the xinesi position as it was more advantageous for each village caddi to negotiate separately with the locally powerful Spanish and Comanches.



As diplomats and negotiators, the Caddo attempted to work within the framework of white society to ensure their survival and prosperity. Here, the Caddo Business Committee visits the Oklahoma State Capitol in 1929 to negotiate for a better future.



This photo shows a working council at Tribal Headquarters in Binger, Oklahoma. The Tribal Council is made up of elected officials who help make decisions for the entire tribe.

### Modern Tribal Government

In the late 1800s, the remnants of the many named Caddo tribes united to save their shared culture, consolidating into one group for the first time. In 1936, Caddo leaders wrote a tribal charter and elected a formal government.



Sho-We-Tit  
(Billy Thomas)

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# The Caddo

## Health and Disease

### Healthy Lifestyle

The Caddo farmed fields on the edges of woods, strung out for miles along streams and rivers. They ate very well off the land, hunting and gathering in the water as well as the woods and supplementing their diet with farmed crops. The abundance and variety of food, and the constant exercise required to obtain it, kept the Caddo healthy.



Here, the Caddo go about their daily business, including farming corn, cooking meat, gathering baskets of food and relaxing under shade arbors.



Waves of disease swept through Caddo villages periodically, until there were fewer than 1,000 Caddo left. In 1859, the remaining Caddo were forced onto a tiny reservation near Anadarko, Oklahoma.

### A Time of Crying

Visiting Caddo country briefly in 1542, Europeans brought Old World crops like peaches and watermelon, which the Caddo quickly adopted. They also brought smallpox, measles and cholera to which the Caddo had no resistance. Three generations later, these diseases had killed as many as 95% of the Caddo. What do you think it felt like to be Caddo during this time?

### A Living People

The Caddo survived their low point and rebounded to a current population of more than 5,000. Modern Caddo no longer live on a reservation; they live in houses and apartments all over America. Many still retain ties to their past by speaking the Caddo language, practicing customs and rites and attending dances and celebrations.

#### Learn Caddo words for foods

Beans=dabas

Bread=dush kut

Corn=kisi

Grapes=kee-swee

Meat dish=ha-bush-coo

Onion=dahaw

Pumpkin=ka-kee-kus-nee



Visitors to the Caddo Nation Web site can learn many Caddo words, including these for common foods.

Minnie and Charley Parton

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# The Caddo

## Gathering to Trade and Celebrate

### Strategic Position

The Caddo homeland lay between the Great Plains tribes, the Eastern Woodlands tribes and the tribes of the Southeast. Taking advantage of this gateway position in the flow of trade goods, they managed a huge trade network with themselves at the center. Caddo villages hosted yearly trade fairs with tribes from near and far. The Caddo traded many different things, but some of the most important were information, diplomacy, favors and political influence.



Caddo-made trade items such as pottery, reed baskets and bois d'arc bows have been found hundreds of miles away from their homeland. This map shows some of the trade items coming into Caddo trade fairs from as far away as the Great Lakes.



This drawing shows a circa-1750 trading session with a French trader. The Caddo preferred to trade with the French, as the Spanish would not trade them the guns they needed for hunting and protection.

### Trading Partners

Around 1686, the Caddo started trading with Europeans to get guns and ammunition, horses, cooking and farming utensils, beads, blue cloth and lace. The Caddo dealt strategically with Europeans throughout the 1700s, carefully cultivating alliances with them to maintain access to their goods and military protection. The diplomatic Caddo negotiated with different tribal and European groups at different times, depending upon their current agenda and needs.

### Modern Gatherings

Just as their ancestors gathered for yearly trade fairs, modern Caddo gather for dances. Caddo culture is kept strong by youth organizations such as the Hasinai Society and the Caddo Culture Club. Both of these organizations attend dances in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana, the traditional Caddo homeland, gathering to celebrate Caddo culture.



Here, members of the Hasinai youth camp practice Caddo songs like Turkey Dance, Fish Dance and Duck Dance.

Stanley Edge

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# The Caddo

## War and Diplomacy

### Warriors and Peacemakers

Protected by their reputation as fierce and skillful warriors, Caddo communities rarely had to band together to go to war, relying instead upon diplomacy to solve conflicts. Though they would go to war if they needed to, the Caddo also experienced centuries of relative peace.



This detail from an early Spanish map shows an extended family compound surrounded by a hedge of trees. The Caddo did not have walls and fortifications like some other mound building societies at the time.



### Diplomats and Politicians

During the 1600s and 1700s, Europeans walked a tightrope trying to keep claim on lands in the face of strong tribes. Due to their physical position between the Spanish and French, the Caddo became diplomats, brokering peace accords between tribes, between tribes and Europeans and even between Europeans. This diplomatic tradition continued until the nineteenth century.

Stanley Edge spoke before the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1899. These two photos, taken the same day, show that the Caddo were true diplomats who could smoothly transition between worlds to help broker the most advantageous deal.

### Patriots and Americans

The men and women of the Caddo Nation have fought in most American wars, starting with the War of 1812.



Twenty-three year old Caddo Thomas Leehmuis served in the U.S. Army in Iraq before dying in a roadside bombing on June 21, 2007.

Sho-ee-tat (George Washington) led the Caddo Frontier Brigade for the Confederacy during the Civil War.



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Courtesy of the Caddoan Visual Archive and Collection of the Caddo Heritage Museum



# The Caddo

## at Texas State Parks

You are currently standing in part of the traditional Caddo homeland. Many things have changed since the Caddo farmed this area, but many things have stayed the same. Walk in the footsteps of the Caddo by visiting the Texas State Parks and Historic Sites located in their homeland.



### Atlanta State Park

Used by the Caddo and other native groups for at least 10,000 years, the land of and around Atlanta State Park was an ideal location for farming and fishing. The Caddo used the area now called Knights Bluff as a lookout to see who and what was coming up and down their trade route on the Sulphur River. The Sulphur River was later flooded to make the lake we see at the park today.



### Cooper Lake State Park

### Atlanta State Park

### Lake Tawakoni State Park

### Lake Bob Sandlin State Park

### Caddo Lake State Park

Caddo (Tso'to) Lake holds a special place in Caddo traditional history. The Caddo are said to have first emerged into this world near Caddo Lake through a cave in a hill. The first Caddo brought along some things they would need to live above ground. Fire, pipe and drum were carried by a man, while corn and pumpkin seeds were brought by his wife.

### Caddo Lake State Park



### Purtis Creek State Park

### Tyler State Park

### Caddoan Mounds State Historic Site

A major regional trade center, Caddo groups lived here until about the year 1300. Visitors can see a burial mound and high and low temple mounds, and visit the museum which houses around 200 artifacts archaeologists have uncovered onsite. In this drawing, the Caddo are capping a temple mound with a final layer of clay just before leaving Caddoan Mounds for the last time.

### Mission Tejas State Park

Called Mission San Francisco de los Tejas, the Spanish established a mission near here in 1690 to convert the area's 5,000 Hasinai Caddo. A part of one Caddo village can still be seen on guided tours. The Spanish considered this site ideal to spread the Catholic word, as Caddo villages were trade meccas for other tribes.

### Caddoan Mounds State Historic Site

### Mission Tejas State Park



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