

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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