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## F. Todd Smith, *The Caddo Indians: Tribes at the Convergence of Empires, 1542-1854*

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*The Caddo Indians: Tribes at the Convergence of Empires, 1542-1854.* By F. Todd Smith. Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995. 240 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.50 cloth.)

Although the Caddo Indians occupied a strategic position between competing colonial powers because of the location of their homeland in parts of Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, there has been a paucity of research on this important group, which today resides in Oklahoma. Early work was done by ethnographer John Swanton and by historian Herbert Bolton, who studied the Hasinai, the southern Caddos. The late Mildred Wedel often suggested the need to study this important group, but not much was done until recently, when Bolton's book was reprinted and *The Caddo Nation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992) by Timothy Perttula and *Caddo Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995) by tribal member Cecile Elkins Carter were published. Now, with his book *The Caddo Indians*, F. Todd Smith seeks to produce the first comprehensive history of the tribe from first contact with Europeans in 1542 to the creation of the Brazos reservation in Texas in 1854.

The Caddos were organized into three loose confederacies: the Kadohadachos, Natchitoches, and Hasinai, the last being the largest. Their first contact with Europeans was with the De Soto expedition in 1542, at which time the Caddo population must have been substantial, if Smith's figures are accurate. He estimates the population at 10,000 when Europeans returned to the area in the late-seventeenth century, a decline of 95 percent from 1542. In 1854 the population, which was scattered, was probably about seven hundred.

With the height of their power already a thing of the past, the Caddos met Europeans again when the Spanish occupied east Texas in 1690 and when the French arrived in the area soon thereafter. The Caddos attempted to exploit their position between European rivals, and access to French weapons was important until the departure of the French in 1763. Subsequently they would seek to benefit from the United States/Spanish/Mexican rivalry, but they would be pressured by American

settlers, illegal traders, alcohol, and refugee Indians such as the Delavares and Cherokees. Population decline would continue, causing the consolidation of the Caddo population, and conflict with other tribes increased. In 1854 the Texas legislature gave the United States jurisdiction over twelve leagues of vacant land for the use of tribes in Texas, and a reserve of some 37,000 acres was established on the Brazos near Fort Belknap for the Caddo; and other Indians. The first reservation census in 1855 showed less than five-hundred Caddos, with others living in Indian Territory. They were harassed by Comanches and then were attacked by Texans, who blamed them for Comanche raids, and were removed to Indian Territory in 1859.

Smith has provided a straightforward chronological account of Caddo history, but he fails in his goal of focusing on the Caddos and their perspective. Despite their strategic location, the Caddos were far removed from the seat of French and Spanish power and thus are the subject of less correspondence than more important tribes. Smith provides readers with many facts in a rather pedestrian manner and offers little context or interpretation. The reader learns relatively little about the inner workings of Caddo life, the process of political consolidation, or relations with other tribes in a time and place when changing tribal relations were important, and the brief conclusion provides nothing in the way of analysis. What is most baffling is the decision to end the book in 1854 with the creation of the Brazos reservation rather than with removal to Indian Territory in 1859, which seems to be the logical end of that period of Caddo history.

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