



Traditions of the Caddo (Sources of American Indian Oral Literature)

George A. Dorsey

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Hernando de Soto encountered the Caddos in the sixteenth century, and survivors of Sieur de La Salle's last voyage in the late seventeenth century gave the first full description of them. By 1903, when George A. Dorsey was investigating their customs and beliefs, the Caddos, numbering 530, were living on a reservation in Oklahoma.

The Caddoan tribes, found along the Red River and its tributaries in present-day Louisiana and Arkansas, practiced agriculture long before they hunted buffalo. The tales collected for this book, first published in 1905, reflect the women's horticultural practices (supplemented by the men's hunting), village life distinguished by conical grass lodges, family and social relationships, connection to nature, and ceremonies. The tales vibrate with earthly and unearthly forces: Snake-Woman, who distributes seeds; Coyote, who regulates life after death; the Effeminate Man, who brings strife to the tribe; Coward, son of the Moon; the Man and the Dog who become Stars; the Old Woman who kept all the pecans; Splinter-Foot Boy and Medicine-Screech-Owl; water monsters; animal-people; and cannibals.

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