

# CADDOAN ARCHEOLOGY NEWSLETTER, VOLUME III, No. 2

Summer 1992

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Carte Nouvelle de La Partie de l'ouest de La Louisianne, Faite sur les  
Observations et decouvertes de M. Benard de la Harpe, l'un Commandans audit Pays.  
Undated [ca. 1725]

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## Early Historic Hasinai Leadership: Toward a Coalition Theory

by  
Daniel A. Hickerson

Historically, the Caddo communities that made up the Hasinai Confederacy were located in the Upper Neches and Angelina river valleys of East Texas. Archeological evidence suggests that the area was occupied continuously from pre-contact times, at least as early as ca. A.D. 1400 (Story 1990:170; Wyckoff 1974:182; Krieger 1946:208). The first Europeans to encounter the Hasinai were the surviving members of the de Soto expedition, who passed through East Texas in 1542 (Hudson 1990). There is no further record of direct contact with Europeans until after 1680. As of the second decade of the eighteenth century, the confederacy seems to have been made up of from ten to twelve communities, whose residents spoke similar though not identical dialects and whom by all accounts were culturally homogeneous.

Hasinai households and settlements were dispersed. Each community had a core area that was surrounded by hamlets; a hamlet consisted of seven to fifteen houses and was surrounded by fields of corn (Wyckoff and Baugh 1980:228). This dispersed pattern of settlement was of critical importance for the maintenance of an economy centered around subsistence farming- primarily of corn -but also of beans, squash, and a number of other crops. The organization of households into many small settlements among Caddoan groups was a strategy utilized in a vulnerable growing environment, characterized by limited and unpredictable productivity, to spread out and thus limit the risks associated with crop failure (Brown et al. 1978:193-194). The failure of the Spanish missionaries to persuade the Hasinai to move into more nucleated villages was a major factor in the nearly total failure and collapse of their initial missionizing efforts in the area after only a few years.

The Hasinai Confederacy was nominally led by the *Grand Xinesi*, a sort of high priest who held office by direct line of descent (Casañas 1927:215). In addition to being the religious leader of the Hasinai, he appears to have been the head of a priestly class, whose members were all known as *Xinesi*.

The *Grand Xinesi* performed general priestly ceremonial duties such as maintaining the fire temple (Espinosa 1927:156) located near his house in the Hainai village on the Angelina River, and acting as an intermediary, through the channel of the *cononisis*, between the Hasinai and their deity, *Ayo-Caddi-Aymay*. The *cononisis* were two small spirit-children believed to have been sent by the deity to the Hasinai "for the purpose of discussing their problems with them" (Espinosa 1927:160). They were said to live in a

house that was near the fire temple, where only the *Grand Xinesi* could see and communicate with them.

The *Grand Xinesi* was shown deference and respect (Griffith 1954:61). Spanish observers reported that a portion of all food grown, gathered, or hunted was given to the *Grand Xinesi* (Hidalgo 1927:52). However, there is no evidence of any central food storage at the community or confederacy level.

The next level in the leadership structure was that of the *Caddices*. One *Caddi* governed each community, and this office also was inherited through the line of descent (Casañas 1927:216; Espinosa 1927:175). The missionaries Casañas and Espinosa both describe the line of descent through which the offices of *Grand Xinesi* and *Caddi* passed as being patrilineal. Espinosa reported, "If the chief captain (*Caddi*) dies, leaving only a small son, the Indians recognize him as their head and, during his minority, they furnish him a counsel composed of *caziques* (elders) who supply the place of the chief..." (Espinosa 1927:175).

The *Caddices* were not directly supported by the population, but planted their own fields and participated in communal activities such as house building and the clearing of fields (Casañas 1927:217). The *Caddices* are described as authorizing house construction and marriages of virgins within their communities; acting as judges in disputes; officiating in some ceremonies; and exercising or at least sharing command in hunting and war parties (Griffith 1954:64). Nevertheless, the authority of the *Caddices* has been interpreted as limited by Griffith (1954:64).

The *Caddi* of each village was assisted by a council of old men, or *caziques*, who he could summon at any time to discuss matters relevant to the community; a special house was maintained near the house of the *Caddi* for these councils. Casañas (1927:218) reported that, "If the *caddi* wants to do anything, he calls the old men together, listens to each of their views, and then decides to do what he thinks best, explaining his views to some of the men and urging agreement".

### Questions of Hasinai Political Hierarchy

A number of questions will be raised concerning the Hasinai political hierarchy. First, what was the political nature of the Hasinai Confederacy? It is clear that at the beginning of the eighteenth century this group exhibited some degree of coordination and centralization of authority. But as to where this authority rested, and how far it extended, the evidence presented by documents of the period is unclear and at times contradictory.

A second area of inquiry concerns the basis of power in this confederacy. What were the mechanisms and relationships through which authority was maintained? We could

assume that the Hasinai Confederacy was a theocracy; that is, political authority had a religious base. But this brings us no closer to the motives and mechanisms that guided and constrained this authority. Any discussion of the hierarchy and relations of authority must take into account not only the means by which power was maintained, but also the motives or goals that drove these relationships.

The assumption has been made that the confederacy was governed by the *Grand Xinesi*, and that the local governors, the *Caddices*, were subordinate to this "High Priest", or, as described by Fray Francisco Casañas de Jesus Maria (1927:215), the "Petty King" ruled over his people. This interpretation has gone unquestioned in several reviews of the texts written by European observers around the turn of the eighteenth century (Bolton 1987; Griffith 1954; Swanton 1942).

I will argue that authority in the Hasinai Confederacy was held collectively by the *Caddices*, who constituted a coalition of leadership. The *Grand Xinesi* was a nominal leader supported by this coalition as an ideological figurehead, or a symbol, by which social solidarity was maintained through a mixture of reverent awe and the threat of religious sanction. I do not suggest that the position of *Grand Xinesi* was invented by the *Caddices*; *Xinesi* were observed among other Caddoan groups, particularly the Kadohadacho and other Red River tribes. Perhaps the *Grand Xinesi* held greater power at an earlier time.

The effective control that the *Caddices* exerted over the lives of the people was limited, but substantial in certain situations. The nature of their authority was generally, but not exclusively, coordinating or managerial rather than coercive. The principal motives of this coalition included the regulation and reduction of warfare; the maintenance and control of trade networks; and the distribution of valued items obtained through trade.

#### Evidence for a Coalition of Power

Researchers using accounts by European explorers and missionaries realize that the Hasinai Confederacy was an operating, coordinated unit, and at the same time have recognized that the *Grand Xinesi*--the most respected, revered, and feared member of the Hasinai community--does not seem to have been involved to any great extent with leading these communities. Descriptions of the *Grand Xinesi* portray him as aloof, not to be bothered by the day-to-day business of the communities. In 1690, Massanet (1916:381) described the Grand Xinesi as "extremely serious and reserved...advancing slowly, and bearing himself with much dignity".

It was the *Caddices* with whom the Spanish invariably dealt and negotiated. The *Caddices* presided over the ceremonies when communities received visitors; it was the

custom to house and feed those visitors, including the leaders of European parties, in the house of the *Caddi* (Joutel 1896:107; Massanet 1916:377). In 1687, the surviving members of the La Salle expedition were met in their approach to one of the Hasinai communities by a welcoming party of elders under the direction of the *Caddi*. The Hasinai party then conducted the Europeans to the *Caddi's* home (Joutel 1896:107).

Perhaps one of the clearest demonstrations of the lack of genuine political authority and experience held by the *Grand Xinesi* can be found in the chronicles of the de Leon expedition, which established the initial Spanish missionary presence among the Hasinai. Massanet (1916) reported that after meeting the Spanish, the *Grand Xinesi* immediately stepped aside and relinquished his position as high priest to the Spanish fathers. The willingness of the *Xinesi* to give in so quickly, and apparently turn over the people to the Spanish party, seems all the more anomalous given the extreme difficulty that the Spanish ultimately experienced in their missionary activities.

Casañas (1927:216) compared the *Caddi* of each community to "a governor ruling and commanding his people." He described the *canahas*, or assistants to the *Caddi*, as subordinate officials whose duty was "to relieve the *Caddi* and to publish his orders by reporting that the *Caddi* commands this or that. They frighten the people by declaring that, if they do not obey orders, they will be whipped and otherwise punished". Other officials, called *tanmas*, "promptly execute orders. They whip all the idlers with rods, beating them on the legs and over the stomach" (Casañas 1927:216). Important decisions were made by the *Caddi* with the consultation of the *caziques*, or elders. However, Casañas (1927:218) made clear that the final decision rested with the *Caddi*.

The authority of the *Caddices* is obvious from even a cursory reading of the descriptions made from the period. But this implies a dispersal of authority to the local village level that is incompatible with a higher level of organization and coordination thought to characterize the Hasinai Confederacy. If the Hasinai recognized a unit of organization beyond that of the individual communities, then there must have been both some means of coordinating the actions of this unit and a reason for maintaining this level of organization. Yet there must have been some stronger central authority than is initially apparent.

European observers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were virtually unanimous in noting the "inviolable peace" that was maintained not only among the Hasinai settlements, but between the Hasinai and surrounding groups (Espinosa 1927:178). Grievances between members of one community and those of another were dealt with swiftly, as Espinosa (1927:178) noted:

They observe strict justice in their dealings with each other. When one takes anything from another, the aggrieved person...presents the case to the

principal captain (*Caddi*). After consultation with the other captains and the old men (elders), he makes the delinquent give satisfaction (emphasis added).

Espinosa (1927:178) also described the manner in which the Hasinai groups and allied tribes organized in preparation for war against enemy tribes:

The way in which they most clearly show their civilization is in the embassies which they send to various settlements, especially when they wish to call them together for war. The [*Caddices*] receive the person who goes as an ambassador with great honor [emphasis added].

The importance of these preceding two passages is that they clearly show the *Caddices* of the Hasinai communities coming together as a group to solve problems and coordinate activities of importance to the entire Hasinai alliance. When the confederacy was threatened by a real or potential internal conflict or grievance, or when warfare was called for, the operative unit was a coalition of the *Caddices* and their advisors. This coalition has been little recognized in research on the Hasinai.

The demonstration of this point--that the *Caddices* acted collectively as a ruling, or at least a managerial or coordinating, coalition--is significant, but still leaves some relevant questions unanswered. If such a coalition was the center of power for the Hasinai Confederacy, then why did they allow the *Grand Xinesi* to continue as the primary object of reverence by the general population?

First, we can eliminate the idea of the *Xinesi* as a functional mechanism for central storage and redistribution of resources. No evidence has been found of any kind of central storage of food, on the hamlet, village, or confederacy level. Frank Schambach associates the presence of food storage platforms among the Red River Caddo with typical farmsteads, but not with the compounds of chiefs or priests (Schambach and Rackerby 1982:121). While it is always risky to make inferences about one group based on observations of another, this gives some support for the position that storage and redistribution of food resources was not a function of the *Xinesi*. Historical observations confirm that food was stored within households. In years of shortage, Espinosa (1927:157) stated that "they hurry out to hunt for corn, trading for it on other ranches where the crop was more abundant." The corn supply was also supplemented with a seed of reed grass that was ground and cooked.

Vincas Steponaitis (1991:213) has mentioned the inadequacy of purely functional explanations to account for the development of stratification and centralization. One must focus as well on political strategies and material conditions that are related to the realization of those strategies (Steponaitis 1991:213). The bases for the strategies enacted by the coalition of *Caddices* might be found in the dual control of trade and warfare.

The first and fundamental reason to limit war was to maintain a dispersed settlement pattern. Population dispersal was necessary in a subsistence system based on settled agriculture in an environment only marginally suited for such a system. As Steponaitis (1991:207) points out, "dispersed settlements could exist only in times of relative peace, or in a situation where hostilities could be reliably anticipated." In the Southeast, nucleated settlements were a response to intense, unpredictable warfare; but nucleated settlements were not an option for the Hasinai. It was in their interests to build a regional network of alliances in order to control the occurrence of warfare. Warfare did continue on a regular basis, but it was limited and focused in certain directions, most notably towards the Plains, where it was associated with hunting for buffalo. Hidalgo (1927:55) noted that the Hasinai fought wars every year on the plains to the west and northwest, usually against the Apaches.

The control and maintenance of trade relations, most notably to the west and south, both reinforced, and was reinforced by, the building of alliances. The Hasinai encouraged contact and exchange with peoples in other areas by maintaining conditions of relative peace and stability in the region. And through the frequent distribution of valued goods obtained in trade, the *Caddices* may have strengthened inter-group alliances. Maintaining the position of the *Xinesi* as a revered religious leader may have further strengthened and consolidated these alliances by ideologically uniting the people under this popular figure.

#### Evidence for the Control and Maintenance of Trade

The Hasinai had trade connections with the Puebloan Indians of New Mexico before the first European contact. In 1542 the survivors of the de Soto expedition found among the Hasinai "turkises and shawls of cotton" that the Indians said were brought from the west (Smith 1968:164). Krieger (1946:207) noted finds in East Texas sites that bear strong evidence of Puebloan ceramic affiliations. These include sherds associated with fifteenth century Upper Gila ceramics, and others that may have originated in southern New Mexico and date to or before the fifteenth century (Krieger 1946:245).

Wyckoff (1974:211) more recently has noted that "items present in the Frankston occupations infer contact with people to the west", and that, in addition "Frankston pottery is noted to occur in the areas around San Antonio and Abilene". The Frankston phase is an archeological classification that has been applied to the late pre-contact culture of the Hasinai region (Story 1990:170).

In early historic times, the Jumano Indians were noted as middlemen, or traders, who before 1680 were bringing Spanish objects, including horses, to the Hasinai (Swanton 1942; Kelley 1955). Castaneda noted that every year, in conjunction with the visit from the



Jumano, the Hasinai "held a fair in which the plunder obtained from the Spanish outposts along the whole northern frontier of New Spain was bartered and traded" (Swanton 1942:37). In return, the Hasinai supplied salt and bow wood from the Osage orange, or Bois d'arc, a superior source for this use.

European clothing and textiles may have been particularly valued by the Hasinai. This would be consistent with previous trade in Puebloan blankets mentioned in the de Soto account. Joutel noted during an early encounter by the La Salle party with Hasinai Indians in 1687 that "we discovered three men on horseback, coming towards us from the village, and being come near them, saw one dress'd after the Spanish fashion" (Joutel 1896:104-105). Joutel (1896:104-105) also reported "seven or eight" Hasinai who carried Spanish sword blades, and others who had pieces of "blue stuff which they had gotten from the Spaniards". This encounter took place before the Spanish had made direct contact with the Hasinai or other native peoples of that region.

Father Anastasius, with the La Salle expedition of 1686, reported: "We found among the (Hasinai) many things which undoubtedly came from the Spaniards, such as dollars and other pieces of money, silver spoons, lace of every kind, clothes and horses" (Swanton 1942:193). And Casañas (1927:285) noted in 1691 that the Hasinai "are fond of bells, knives, and of everything made of iron--such as axes and mattocks", and also "woolen garments and especially blue".

Gifts were exchanged freely on the occasion of visiting among the Hasinai groups and by members of other allied tribes. Espinosa described a visit to a Hasinai village by Kadohadachos from the Red River area: "After they arrive at the houses they give dances and festivals and exchange gifts of whatever the country yields in abundance." Of the Gulf tribes that lived to the south, Espinosa said:

To keep them well disposed in times of war, the (Hasinai) Indians entertain them every year after the crops are gathered...This is also the time at which they trade with each other for all the things they lack in their own settlements (Espinosa 1927:179).

It is clear that the Hasinai were trading with groups to their west and southwest, both before and after initial European contact. After contact, the objects sought by the Hasinai shifted from Puebloan goods and other Indian-produced objects to goods of European origin. What remains to be described then is the manner in which these trade goods were distributed among the Hasinai and other groups.

This is a considerably more elusive point, and only a few pieces of evidence may be found. First, it can be suggested that however the trade objects were distributed, they did not remain exclusively with the elites. Sharp status-related differentiation in burials has not

been noted in Frankston phase sites, or in late pre-contact or Historic southern Caddo sites in general (Wyckoff 1974:201-211). Moreover, material symbols of status observed by Europeans in the early contact period appear to have been limited to larger house size and occasionally to particularly fine European items such as swords, as noted by Joutel (1896).

Most trade items seem to have been distributed quite widely through much of the populace. Casañas (1927:213) noted that "Neither the men nor the women lack articles of adornment for their festivities... Many of their ornaments they have secured from other nations, such as glass beads, bells, and other things...".

This does not mean that trade items were freely available, however. In fact, there is evidence that the *Caddices* had an active role in the distribution of these goods. Brothers Pierre and Jean-Baptiste Talon, survivors of the La Salle colony on Matagorda Bay who lived with the Hasinai as children for some years during the 1680s, reported that:

from time to time, all the aged of the village assemble at their chief's (Caddi's) house...this chief treats each of them to a large jug of gruel made with corn, very clear, which they drink, and sometimes he gives them presents of bows and arrows, which come from a nation that lives above the (Hasinai) (Weddle 1987:255).

It is reasonable to suppose that the Talon's presence at these meetings was limited to a few occasions, and that many other items in addition to bows and arrows were given away.

Feasting was an important part of Hasinai ceremonial life, and also took place in conjunction with the communal house-building and field-clearing that were organized by the *Caddices* (Espinosa 1927:154-156). Gift distribution might easily have been a part of any or all of these occasions. However, descriptions of these events are unclear on this matter, and it is impossible to do more than speculate that distribution of valued goods might have taken place on such occasions, perhaps as an incentive for participation in communal efforts.

In addition to their aesthetic or functional value, trade goods may have provided insurance against crop failure. In times of need, a household could exchange these objects for food with households that had raised a surplus. Recall that trade among households, not central storage, was the means of redistribution of food in the Hasinai Confederacy.

An additional clue as to the nature of use of trade goods involves Hasinai marriage practices. According to Casañas (1927:284), a man proposed marriage by offering a woman material gifts, which were accepted if she consented to the union. But such marriages were typically short-lived. On leaving one man for another, Casañas says, a woman would usually explain to the first husband that what he gave her was little in comparison to that offered by the new man, and urge the first to "bear the proposed change

patiently and hunt him another wife, or he should go out and hunt something else to give her so that she will stay with him".

#### Toward a Model of Trade Object Distribution

The suggested path through which valued trade objects were distributed begins with the *Caddices* acquiring objects through organized trade with outsiders, including the Jumano in early historic times. The *Caddices* then would distribute the items as gifts at certain occasions, including the meetings of the council of elders, possibly at feasts and ceremonies associated with communal field-clearing and house-building, and to leaders of other tribes in connection with organizing war parties. This would put the valued objects into general circulation, and encourage full participation in communal efforts such as those mentioned above. Once in circulation, the objects might have served as gifts in marriage contracts, trade objects for food for households in times of shortage, and any number of other purposes.

The control of trade by the *Caddices*, and the distribution of valued objects obtained through this trade, provided incentive for cooperation in communal efforts within communities, and helped build and maintain an alliance among communities through mutual gift-giving. The *Grand Xinesi*, acting as a religious and ideological leader, cemented this alliance through common reverence and awe.

A coalition of authority was advantageous because of the necessity of maintaining a widely dispersed pattern of settlements. Coordination of activities in such a pattern would only have been manageable at the local community level. The very existence of the *Grand Xinesi* among the Hasinai suggests that a higher level of authority existed at one time, but had not been maintained.

#### Note

A shorter version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Anthropological Society, 23-26 April 1992.

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## Report on Test Excavations by the Adais Caddo at a Caddoan Mound in Caddo Parish, Louisiana

by  
Claude McCrocklin

This is a brief narrative report on a two day test excavation of a Caddoan mound on the north shore of Wallace Lake in southern Caddo Parish, Louisiana. The mound (16CD214) was discovered and recorded by Adais Caddo Indians, who invited Mr. Randlett Edmonds and members of his family visiting in Shreveport to look at the mound and give them his opinion. With the encouraging report of Mr. Edmonds stimulating an already keen interest by the Adais Indians to conduct test excavations in the mound, I was contacted to supervise these excavations. Dr. Frank Schambach of the Arkansas Archeological Survey was the professional advisor for the project.

### Test Excavations

The test excavations consisted of two 2 meter squares put down in the center of the mound and three 1 meter squares on the mound slope. The test excavations reached the 20-30 cm level where most of the artifacts in the mound fill were found. Only the test squares in the mound center had artifacts, and this is probably due to the mound slopes being eroded as well as to past surface collecting activities. A 1.5 meter deep shovel test was also made to check the stratigraphy in the mound, and the shovel test revealed that the mound was made of a fine light-colored sand not common in the area.

### Present Condition

The mound's dimensions are 39 meters east-west and 34 meters north-south. It is 1.5 meters high, although it is badly eroded from seasonal flooding since the Wallace Lake dam was built some 40 years ago. I estimate that the mound's original height was between 2.1 and 2.5 meters.

### Artifacts

Prehistoric Caddo pottery sherds of types dating from A.D. 1200 to 1400, lithic material, and animal bone were recovered in the test excavations. Metal detector scans on another area of the site also turned up one large caliber musket ball shot and flattened on one side, and a Civil War-era Enfield rifle minie ball.

### The Crew

The crew was composed of six Adais Caddo who conducted the test excavations, volunteers from the Northwest Chapter of the Louisiana Archeological Society, and the landowner (who had given us permission to do the test excavations).

### Summary

The Caddoan pottery sherds and other artifacts recovered from the test excavations confirm that the site was occupied during the prehistoric Caddo II period. Whether or not the Caddo II people built the mound, and what its function was, will require more test excavations to confirm. Our testing was sufficient to verify the presence of Caddoan artifacts in the mound, and a detailed report on the site has been completed by crew chief Evy La Borde which was mailed to the State Division of Archeology in Baton Rouge.

What historic significance there is to modern Caddo Indians finding, testing, and reporting a prehistoric Caddo site has yet to be decided. To my knowledge, this is the first time such work has been accomplished by any Caddo Indians. The Adais are proud of their contribution to Caddo archeology, and they appreciated the assistance received while doing it.

### *CADDO ADAIS HOLD INDIAN DANCES*

The Caddo Adais Indians held dances on June 27, 1992 to celebrate their Indian heritage at the Los Adais State Park in Robeline, Louisiana. In addition to the Indian dances, Frank Schambach (Arkansas Archeological Survey) spoke on the "History of the Caddo Nation", George Shannon (Executive Director of the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum) presented a talk on the "History of the Caddo Adais", and Claude McCrocklin (Northwest Chapter of the Louisiana Archaeological Society) spoke on "Caddo Adais Indians and Archeology".

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

A nation-wide symposium "After the Encounter: A Continuing Process" is being sponsored November 12-14, 1992 by the National Park Service at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park and Los Compadres de San Antonio Missions National Historical Park on the colonial community in the Spanish Americas. Archaeologists, architects, and historians will discuss social, political, and economic impacts resulting from the encounter of two worlds during the Spanish Colonial period. Papers will be presented on themes such as: Exploration and Discovery, Maya Frontiers and Mission Architecture, Cattle in the Colonial Americas, and Voices of the Borderland Frontier. For registration information, please contact the Quincentenary Committee, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, 2202 Roosevelt Avenue, San Antonio, TX 78210, 512-229-5701.

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