
Mark van de Logt. *Monsters of Contact: Historical Trauma in Caddoan Oral Traditions.* Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press: 2017. xvii + 252 pp. ISBN: 9780806160146

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This book by Mark van de Logt considers the origins of monsters that occur in the oral traditions of the Caddoan language-speaking Arikara, Pawnee, Wichita, and Caddo nations of the northern, central, and southern Plains and the Pineywoods and Oak-Hickory Savannah of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. Rather than viewing the monsters as signs of fantasy and myth in stories told by these people, the author convincingly makes the case that they are related to specific historical events and traumas whose origins occur after European contact in the mid-sixteenth century, during a period marked by invasion, war, colonialism, disease, enslavement, starvation, and death. In van de Logt's view, these stories started out as actual events from the observed past and became legends and myths as they were passed down over generations. Thus, he argues, "oral traditions... [are] historical sources comparable in status to Euro-American sources" (25).

Following a careful consideration of storytelling and historicizing oral traditions in Part I, the monsters van de Logt discusses in Parts II and III of this book are specific to each Caddoan Indian oral tradition while the traditions themselves are related to each tribe's unique history and historical experiences. For example, van de Logt begins with the whirlwinds in the Arikara oral tradition, arguing that the whirlwinds which came to destroy the Arikara people represent a series of European-introduced epidemic diseases in the eighteenth century, particularly the smallpox epidemic of 1780-1781. These epidemics reduced the population of the Arikara by about 80-90 percent. The destructive power of the whirlwinds and epidemic diseases greatly weakened Arikara society, and the epidemics were, van de Logt writes, a "disaster of cosmic proportions" (74).

In the case of the Pawnee stories in Parts II and III, van de Logt first addresses the Flint Monster who was terrorizing the people until a young hero killed the monster with a magical willow stick. Van de Logt hypothesizes that the Flint Monster is actually an armor-wearing Spaniard or Apache (or Navaho) Indian from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries who engaged in obtaining slaves for Spanish markets in New Mexico; the young hero may have been a French *coureur de bois* who killed the armor-wearing monster with a gun. From these story lines, it seems clear that European metal weapons played an important role in the history of Caddoan peoples, as sources of material and spiritual power; subsequently, the Pawnees in the early 1700s began to fight back against armor-wearing foes with firearms provided by French traders. The second Pawnee story in the book concerns the story of scalped men who survived their mutilation and were transformed from people feared by the people into figures with sacred and spiritual powers. Van der Logt links the increased scalping of Pawnee individuals to nineteenth-century genocidal attacks by the Lakota and Cheyenne—due in part to Anglo-American colonialism, settlement expansion, and ready access to guns and horses—on Pawnee settlements, their intent being "to wipe the Pawnee from the face of the earth" (164). With the increased intensity of war between the Pawnee and the Lakota and Cheyenne between the 1830s and 1870s, scalped men became likely sources of spiritual power. Pahukatawa was perhaps the

most significant scalped man because he became a great Pawnee prophet who gave the people hope.

The Wichita story in Part II deals with an evil witch-woman who captured children, hairless and headless men who may have been monks, and the story of Coyote and Spider-Man who rescued a child who was being tortured on an exploding pole (i.e., a cannon) by the evil woman. Van de Logt relates these stories to the 1758 attack by the Wichita, Comanche, and other “Norteno” tribes on the Spanish mission of Santa Cruz de San Saba in modern-day Central Texas, as well as to the Spanish and Indian (such as the Apache and Osage tribes) slave trading common at that time. Van de Logt uses a painting, “*The Destruction of Mission San Sabá in the Province of Texas and the Martyrdom of the Fathers Alonso de Terreros, Joseph Santiesteban*” (c.1765) to link the massacre to details in the Wichita story, concluding that Spider-Man was a Frenchman who had provided guns to the “Nortenos.”

In 1541-42, the De Soto entrada came among the Caddo peoples living in what is now southwestern Arkansas and East Texas. Two Caddo stories concern a masked, old cannibal man who killed Caddos with a mask that had a spiked iron nose, but who was eventually killed by the Caddo with a corn pounder. Van der Logt suggests that the cannibal man may fit the description of a conquistador in the De Soto entrada in Caddo country and that the spiked iron nose may be part of a helmet or iron-tipped lance used by a conquistador during battles and warfare with the Caddo at places such as the village of Tula in southwestern Arkansas. The spiked iron nose is, van de Logt observes, “distinct in American Indian monster iconography, appearing only in the Caddo traditions” (136). The author relies on the accounts written by Garcilaso de la Vega many years after the De Soto entrada to connect the iron-nosed cannibal story to entrada events, eventually concluding that in the Caddo stories, the cannibals were Spanish conquistadors and their brutal weapons were iron-nosed masks.

Monsters of Contact provides unique insights about Caddoan-speaking Indian peoples following European contact as well as their perspectives, as expressed in oral traditions on historical events in the past. These events were traumatic, but at their core, van de Logt argues that the stories about monsters pertain to different historic events unique to the Arikara, Pawnee, Wichita, and Caddo peoples brought on by European contact: “The differences in monster iconography show that each tribe had a different history to tell” (184).

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