

BOOK REVIEW

STEVE HOUSER, LINDA PELON, & JIMMY W. ARTERBERRY. 2016. **Comanche Marker Trees of Texas**. (ISBN-13: 978-1-62349-448-3, flexbound). Texas A&M University Press, John H. Lindsey Building, Lewis Street, 4354 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-4354, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.tamupress.com, 1-800-826-8911). \$35.00 US, 224 pp., 123 color and 6 bw photographs, 11 bw drawings, 6 maps, 1 graph, glossary, bibliography, index, 6" × 9¼".

The authors of this book, a Comanche Nation Tribal Preservation Officer, an anthropologist, and an arborist—all displaying evident love for historically significant trees—teamed together to document how and why the Comanche created Marker Trees.

The authors define Marker Trees as those “meant to identify a location, regardless of event or resource. They are locating/calling/signaling trees that can give or deliver a message as well as direct a path.” They offer a classification of marker trees recognized by the Comanche. There are burial trees, ceremonial trees, medicinal trees, treaty/council trees, and storytelling trees, and any one tree can serve one or more of these functions. However, the book focuses chiefly on turning trees—shaped or bent to point to a resource, to give trail directions, or designate a specific location for cultural activity. They describe how trees were pulled over and lashed down in such a way that an elbow or arch was formed as the tree grew, often with the bend created to point in a desired direction.

The authors provide descriptions of the trees that have been formally authenticated and certified by the Comanche Nation thus far, and they give detailed instructions for anyone wishing to have a tree investigated and possibly accepted as a legitimate candidate. They explain that, logically, such trees are fast disappearing. Marker trees that were designated by paint or slashes on the trunk do not seem to have survived, though they were known to exist, and trees bent by the Comanche are now well over 100 years old, so recognizing remaining trees is critical.

While this book might not have wide appeal, it will prove invaluable to those who study Comanche history and their life on the plains. It goes a long way to shed light on methods the Comanche used to control great portions of Texas (not to mention neighboring states) for some two-hundred years. The book will also be a must-read for those who have a particular interest in culturally and historically significant trees in the state and their preservation. Those more generally interested in Texas history and folklore will find the book equally enlightening. Most importantly, the book stands as a point of pride for the Comanche Nation. They are the first Nation to officially recognize, document, authenticate, attempt to educate about, and preserve Marker Trees in the state of Texas. They, and we all, can hope others will follow, and that the general community will look out for and respect these living pieces of our shared history.—*Grace Lloyd Bascopé, PhD, Anthropologist & Resident Research Associate, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.*