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Clarissa W. Confer. *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. xii + 199 pp. $24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8061-3803-9.

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The Civil War in Indian Country

Arguing that "it is critical to include and interpret the experiences of all participants," Clarissa Confer extends the historiography of the Civil War to the Cherokee Nation in Indian Territory (p. 7). The Cherokee, much like the rest of United States in the 1860s, was factionalized during the war with competing sides supporting the Union and Confederacy. But unlike the situation in the east, deep seated anger resulting from Cherokee Removal in the 1830s and the subsequent power struggle in the 1840s and 1850s amplified the divisions in the Nation. In order to broaden our understanding of the Civil War and its impact in Indian country, Confer places the war in the context of Cherokee efforts to maintain their autonomy.

Moving from military history, to political history, to social history in her concise work, Confer argues that the Cherokee divided into two sides that revealed a lingering animosity leftover from Removal. John Ross, the preeminent leader of the Cherokee during the nineteenth century, wanted to stay neutral at the war's outbreak in order to maintain the Cherokee's nationhood. But as his fierce rival Stand Watie and other members of the Treaty Party quickly allied with the Confederacy, Ross's problems increased. Confer presents Ross as having little choice in his decision to support Albert Pike's treaty with the Confederacy. A sizable opposition group had already pledged its support to the South and raised a mounted battalion, while the proximity of the Cherokee Nation to Kansas and the retreat of Union soldiers from forts inside Indian Territory at the start of the war left the Cherokee Nation exposed. As federal authorities stopped annuity payments and Confederate officials promised representation in its government, the Cherokee decision to join with the South was a decision made to protect their own rights.

In *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War*, Confer's organization is straight-forward. Her first three chapters move sequentially through Cherokee history leading up to the war as well as events of the war itself. Confer focuses on military and political leaders (both white and Cherokee), various battles and conflicts, and the events that showed the war's ebb and flow in Indian Territory. Her final two chapters change more toward a social history as she describes the war's effect on those who remained in the Cherokee Nation as well as the thousands of refugees forced to flee into Kansas or Texas.

Confer describes a conflict among the Cherokee that held both similarities and differences from the war in other Southern states. Comparing the Cherokee Nation to other border states like Missouri, Confer presents a situation where the only thing worse than choosing a side was *not* choosing a side. At first, Southern sensibilities dominated the region. But after the Federal invasion in 1862 and Ross's capture, overt support for the North increased. Bands of both Union and Confederate Cherokee supporters roamed the countryside looting and destroying homes and farms. Women were forced to take care of families while the men were away, and slaves deserted their masters when the opportunity presented itself. At the same time, the motivations for war in Indian Territory went far beyond slavery. The Cherokee, much like other Indians in the region, were deeply divided between "progressive" and "traditional" camps who differed in their views of Indian autonomy. Progressives, often the mixed-blood elites tied more directly to the Southern economy, saw the Confederacy as a way to maintain their own power. Traditionalists, on the other hand, represented the larger group among the Cherokee and supported the Union in the hope of maintaining their status as a nation.

In her introduction, Confer states that "the unique background of tribal members must be examined to understand the decisions made by them and their nation." "Influences as varied as matrilineal descent, clan affiliations, economic distribution, and decentralized government," she continues, "combined to make the Native re-

action to the Civil War distinct from that of other groups" (p. 5). This is certainly an important point and one that Confer could have explored more. She sticks to the basic political division between the Ross Party and the Treaty Party and limits her discussion of the larger progressive/traditional or mixed-blood/full-blood divide. How differences reflecting larger issues of Cherokee culture and not just rooted in politics influenced individuals during the war is an avenue for further scholarship.

This focus on elites like Ross, Watie, or John Drew is perhaps reflective of Confer's source material. Since many traditional Cherokee eschewed English, research sources that reveal their motivations are difficult to find. Instead, Confer mainly uses sources like the Cherokee Nation Papers as well as federal sources such as military and Indian Office records. In other cases, her sources are open to much debate. To show the difficulties of living in the Cherokee Nation during the war, Confer relies heavily upon the diary of the civilian Hannah Hicks, a missionary and daughter of Samuel Worcester. This leads to an obvious question: how indicative are the events involving a single white missionary of the larger Cherokee experience? How does Hicks's story compare to wandering bands of Pin Indians or refugee Cherokee forced into the Choctaw Nation? There is no doubt that the trauma of war bled over to all of those living within Indian Territory, whether native or non-native, but it does not answer the question of how "distinct" the Cherokee experience may have been. Confer's discussion of Hicks also relates to another point of criticism, albeit minor in her overall analysis. Confer asserts that "[m]issionaries in the Indian nations found themselves caught between the growing antislavery sentiments of their white officials and the political reality of powerful slaveholding Indians" (p. 28). This statement implies that most missionaries were of northern origins (and perhaps with abolitionist-tendencies) who were stuck in a slaveholding society. What it ignores, however, are those missionaries who took advantage of slave society to promote their church and the Southern cause. As historian William McLoughlin noted, the Southern Methodist church was rivaled only by Evan Jones's Northern Baptists as the largest Christian presence in the Cherokee Nation prior to the war.[1] With their church supporting the Confederacy from the top down, it stands at odds with Confer's general assessment of missionary work and its influence in the Cherokee Nation.

Overall, Confer expands on the general understanding of the Civil War by including the experiences of the Cherokee Nation at this time. Confer's scope and analysis are concise and precise, targeting a single Indian nation and its involvement in a larger American conflict. Her analysis and understanding of the events in Cherokee history further complicate our understanding of an already complex war. There is room for expansion, though. Showing the "civil war" in the Cherokee Nation, rather than just the "Cherokee Nation in the Civil War," would be equally as important to American Indian historiography.

Notes

[1]. William McLoughlin, *Champions of the Cherokees: Evan and John B. Jones* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 278.

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