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Clara Sue Kidwell. *The Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970.* American Indian Law and Policy Series. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. xix + 320 pp. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8061-3826-8.

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From Tribe to Nation

Clara Sue Kidwell has written another classic in Choctaw history. As a sort of sequel to her well-known *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918* (1995), this latest work traces the tribe's experience in Oklahoma. This book is the second volume in the American Indian Law and Policy series published by the University of Oklahoma Press. Kidwell examines the history of the Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma from the early years following removal to the 1970s, when theyemergedas a modern nation with the right to choose their own leaders. Throughout this study, the author focuses on the theme of Choctaws as participants in their government, not just passive subjects. Contemporary Native American history acknowledges this point,but Kidwell does an excellent job of weaving it into a tight and nuanced discussion of the development of Choctaw history. It is primarily a political history, however, so those looking for a social picture of the Choctaw people will need to look elsewhere.

The book begins with the Choctawsafter removal to Oklahoma. Much was different from their former lives in Mississippi,but certain continuities, including the missionaries Cyrus Kingsbury and Cyrus Byington,helped them rebuild their lives. The treaty of 1855 marked a new chapter for the Choctaws. The delegates from the nation engaged in complicated maneuvering that entailed various associations and non-Indians to whichthe author only alludeshere. The treaty,in fact,created and reflected divisions within the Choctaw Nationthat were growing due to the influence of class. Peter Pitchlynn and friends managed to open the Choctaw Nation'sland for railroad leases, grant the Chickasaws autonomy,and lease their western lands for the settlement of displaced western tribes. The 1850s were a tumultuous period for the United Statesand the Choctawswere no exception. Slavery reared its divisive head everywhere. In the Choctaw Nation,it manifested itself as a power struggle between the missionaries, their New England-based governing body (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions [ABCFM]), and wealthy slaveholders. The tensions grew as slaveholders tried to assert control over mission schools. Theboard pressed for an antislavery stance and the missionaries remained caught in the middle. Ultimately,the ABCFM withdrew its support, but the missionaries to the Choctawsremained for afew years before the war broke out.

The Civil War gripped Indian Territory for four years,and the book includes a summary account of Choctaw involvement. The author keeps pointing out that a Choctaw alliance with the Confederacy was inevitable for the Five Tribes. It may have been an obvious choice for the Choctaws,but the issue caused serious divisions in other tribes. It is true that the Choctaw Nation suffered none of the wrenching divisions of other tribes and considerably less physical damage. Tribal officials estimated that only 212 people remained loyal to the United States. Although the Choctawsgained by remaining united throughout the war and came out perhaps less scathed than the Cherokeesand Creeks, the worst was yet to come. The real cost of war was in the treaty. Senator James Harlan,who had earlier proposed territorialization,became secretary of the interior, which gave him the means to execute his goals. Harlan planned peace treaties, which were blueprints for the end of Indian sovereignty. However, Kidwell argues that the treaties themselves did not do too much damage. Rather, she sees

the greatest cost of treaties as the opening of lands for railroads.

Senator Henry Dawes attackedcommunal land holding in Indian Territory because he believed that it prevented full assimilation into European American culture. Although many Choctawshad come to adopt the general American idea of equating private land with success, many stubbornly resisted being drawn into this alien concept of personal selfishness. The Choctaw Nation resisted allotment because it clashed with their long-held views of rights of occupancy rather than ownership. The Five Nations who owned their land in fee simple(private ownership of real estate in which the owner has the right to control, use, and transfer the property at will)escaped the actual Dawes Act of 1887, but quickly found themselves targets of the Commission to the Five Tribes (headed by Dawes),which came to achieve the same goal. Non-Indians, including freedmen,lined up to testify to the inequities in the Choctaw system that could be eliminated by the imposition of allotment. Chief Green McCurtain attempted to salvage some sovereignty in the face of the attack by the United States,and internal opposition appeared within the Choctaw Nation, but all to no avail. In 1987, the Choctaw Nationfor all intents and purposes agreed to dissolve.Kidwell covers all this in a few pages that do little to impart any sense of the trauma, confusion, and shock this must have caused the Choctaw people. She presents allotment as a dry, complex political wrangling with an inevitable end.

Although the Choctaw Nation dissolved, the issue of citizenship continued to plague its people. The Five Nations became caught up in the disastrous situation of having a white committee decide who was Indian. Characterized by blatant fraud as well as incredible mismanagement, the process of creating citizenship roles remainsterribly flawed. As Kidwell notes, it led to the remarkable situation where a person with no Choctaw blood could be born into tribal citizenship. It would appear to many observers that the Choctaw people nearly ceased to exist as a viable entity after an allotment and citizenship processdesigned by whites with that end in mind. Perhaps that is why the author adds an incongruous little chapter tracing the effects of change on ordinary people (her family). She works hard to stress that it was still important to "be a Choctaw" despite all the changes of recent decades. The final three chapters spin out the ongoing issues that embroiled the Choctaws and the United States. The leased land, Mississippi Choctaw citizenship, and control of resources were problems that never seemed to die. The added blow of a chief abetting the termination policy of the government in the 1950s further weakened the idea of a nation. The efforts of Ladonna Harris and her husband Senator Fred Harris to overturn termination helped to galvanize Choctaw political activism.

The main body of the book leaves the Choctaw Nation in the 1970s as a shadow of their former selves in terms of sovereignty and power, but the author insists that the core of tribal identity persisted. As if to hammer home the idea that the Choctaws are still relevant, Kidwell added an epilogue, bringing the reader up to date on the Choctaw Nation and the current issues with which it struggles, like citizenship.

Overall, this is a thorough look at the political evolution of the Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma. The Mississippi band makes only a brief appearance and is best covered by Kidwell's earlier work on that subject. As befits its place in a law and policy series,the volume sticksclosely to political history. However, even with that constraint, the reader might wish for a more complete, livelier picture of the Choctaw people who faced so many challenges to their very existence over the course of a century.

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