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Christine Schultz White, Benton R. White. *Now The Wolf Has Come: The Creek Nation in the Civil War.* College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996. 216 pp. $29.95, ISBN 978-0-89096-689-1.

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The history of the Civil War in the Indian Territory presents a serious challenge for historians. Aside from a paucity of records left by the Native American participants, researchers must grapple with the slippery issues of cultural bias and misinterpretation in the few accounts that have survived. The origins of wartime divisions between tribes living in the region were complicated, which requires that anyone attempting to explain them use the tools of the anthropologist as much as those of the historian. A good case in point is the study of the Muskogee or Creek nation and its tragic introduction to our national agony during the closing months of 1861.

Like others of the so-called civilized tribes who were relocated to the Indian Territory during the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Creek Nation experienced a bitter division partially based on those who had embraced the removal treaty and those who had not. The McIntosh faction had a longstanding reputation of ready acceptance of and assimilation with Euro-American pioneers, and when the Civil War broke out the McIntosh quickly allied with the Confederate government. Creek opposition to the McIntosh course found its leader in Opothleyahola, an aging orator who based his refusal to join with the Rebel cause not so much on any loyalty to the Union, but on a sincere desire to avoid the conflict altogether. In his desire to sit out the fight, Opothleyahola found encouragement in the alleged neutral stance taken by John Ross, the leader of the Cherokee Nation, as well as thousands of disgruntled members of the Seminole and other tribes who wanted nothing more than to be left alone.

Circumstances worked against Opothleyahola's hope for peaceful neutrality, and as his home became a rallying point for refugees fleeing the coming holocaust he received word that John Ross had finally bowed to the pressure of a Confederate alliance. As the rebel government moved to consolidate their claim on the Indian Territory, Opothleyahola decided to act on an invitation he had received from Union authorities in Kansas to seek refuge there. In the late autumn of 1861 9,000 men, women, and children, hauling much of their worldly possessions in heavy oxcarts and wagons, set out from Opothleyahola's home in a desperate attempt to escape the war. The pursuit, led by Colonel Douglas H. Cooper, included regiments from all the allied tribes, including the McIntosh Creeks who had their own agenda in settling the score with Opothleyahola's people.

Three pitched battles occurred during the Creek odyssey north to the Kansas border. The first at Round Mountain on November 19 was an unexpected victory for the refugees, sending Cooper's army back to Fort Gibson for a second wind. The next fight occurred on December 9 at Bird Creek, where Opothleyahola was again able temporarily to check the pursuing Rebels. But as a result of terrible weather and diminishing supplies, the fleeing warriors and their families were trounced at Chustenahlah on December 26, and the relentless tracking of the survivors ceased only when a blizzard mercifully intervened. Of the 9,000 people who had begun the trek with Opothleyahola, only 7,000 ever made it to Kansas, where the anticipated aid of the Union government became just another example of a long history of broken promises.

The story of Opothleyahola's flight has been retold in the volume by Christine White and Benton White. They employ oral history interviews, anthropological studies, and traditional primary sources to paint a colorful word picture from what the authors describe as the "Indian perspective." Admitting a certain bias at the onset of a historical work is certainly nothing new, but the Whites take their warning one step further than most narratives by informing readers, "If yours is a world of linear logic, scientific empiricism, and sensory perception only…if you cannot concede that there are at least other

possibilities, you need read no farther." What follows this introductory red flag is a story that reads very much like a novel, devoid of precise dates and locations, and presenting its events and characters against an extremely sympathetic background.

In a way, the subtitle of this book is misleading. The work does not describe the Creek experience over the course of the entire Civil War, but instead concentrates on Opothleyahola's flight and the Creek pursuit led by Daniel McIntosh. A large portion of the book is devoted to a vehement critique of Euro-American society and its treatment of Native Americans woven into the tale of a delegation sent to Washington, D.C., to plea for the relief of Opothleyahola's people. While this critique is certainly an expression of the "Indian perspective," one naturally wonders if its severity is entirely justified.

Now the Wolf Has Come contains no maps or precise dates of activities as the Whites describe Opothleyahola's ordeal. An explanation for the former omission, hinted at in the footnotes, is that the location of the battles described remains a matter of debate for researchers. Only the Confederate battle reports are available (Opothleyahola's people naturally did not write down their version for inclusion in the *Official Records*.) The omission of precise dates is intentional, since the White's literary style precludes the use of conventional measurements of time. Yet the absence of both maps and dates makes it difficult to compare the Muskogee ordeal with the well-documented flight of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce, as the Whites insist it should be.

Although the authors attempt to tell the story from the perspective of both the Tuckabachee and McIntosh factions without advancing the cause of either side, the reader is naturally left with a measure of sympathy for Opothleyahola's people. After all, they are the ones that "lost" the campaign and suffered unbelievable hardship in their quest for Union protection in Kansas. The wartime experiences of the McIntosh soldiers in the Confederacy and of the Creeks who enlisted in the Union Home Guard regiments are only briefly mentioned.

As a literary experiment, *Now the Wolf Has Come* is a compelling narrative that presents readers with a story of pathos and hardship. As a historical work documenting the scope of the Creek nation's participation in the Civil War, the book falls short of its promise.

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