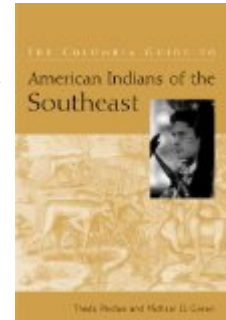


Theda Perdue, Michael D. Green. *The Columbia Guide to American Indians of the Southeast.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. xv + 305 pp. \$49.50 (cloth). ISBN 0-231-11570-9. \$24.50, paper, ISBN 978-0-231-11571-1.



Reviewed by Anne E. Richardson

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Sovereignty in the Southeast

With this first volume of a seven-volume reference series on American Indian history and culture, Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green have added another title to an impressive body of scholarship about native peoples of the region extending from the Mississippi River to the Tidewater. Perdue, professor of history at the University of North Carolina, is known for her contributions to native gender studies and oral history research, particularly with respect to the Cherokee Nation. Green, professor of American Studies at the University of North Carolina, has examined cultural conflict brought on by political conflict, with particular emphasis on the Creek Nation. These tribes and others who first inhabited the area now comprising the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and the Carolinas are described in a concise and highly useful format for anyone interested in the history of Native Americans of this region. The authors propose to educate their readers on the complex issues surrounding native sovereignty today by detailing tribal histories and cultural developments over

the span of their known existence in North America.

The volume is organized into four sections for ease of reference. Part 1 details the history of indigenous Southeasterners, focusing upon the best-known tribes, those who removed to what became Oklahoma Territory in the nineteenth century. Chapter 1 presents a chronological overview of the historical debate regarding native sovereignty, from early accounts of victimization through factionalism, dependence, and agency, to arrive at what the authors term a more appropriate methodological discipline, ethnohistory. By examining native cultures from a native perspective, incorporating both cultural study and traditional factual history, Perdue and Green propose that a more accurate and more relevant perspective of current conflicts over sovereignty issues is possible. Such an approach requires examination of archaeological and documentary evidence as well as oral history traditions preserved by native peoples.

Chapter 2 examines the evolution from Paleo-Indian, Archaic, and Woodland culture to the

thriving Mississippian mound culture encountered by early European explorers, particularly Spanish conquistadors. The consequences of European contact, especially depopulation and organizational degeneration, are outlined in chapter 3, concluding with a depiction of the resulting tribal clan structure. Those who survived the onslaught of disease adapted to new communal societies, without the powerful regional kings of Mississippian times. Chapter 4 details the complex interactions between European nations aspiring to establish colonial empires in the region inhabited by native Southeasterners. As these ambitions erupted into a series of wars pursuing domination of the continent and its inhabitants, tribes residing in this region continually suffered disruption and destruction from repeated efforts to obtain their support or prevent their influence in the outcomes.

In chapter 5, the authors follow the course of events between Southeastern native peoples and the infant American Republic. Early attempts to offer "civilization" programs as payment for land cessions exacted from these tribes acknowledged them as sovereign entities, not "conquered nations." The Creek War erupted in 1811 as a more localized episode of the larger Pan-Indian movement represented by Tecumseh's intertribal alliance in the North. Andrew Jackson's ruthless military campaign to crush the uprising reinforced attitudes of military as well as cultural superiority over native peoples. Chapter 6 explores the fate of those tribal members who relocated to Oklahoma Territory during the years of forced removal in the 1830s. Factionalism that had developed over resistance to removal had to be surmounted before prosperous, peaceful settlements could rebuild their respective nations. No sooner had civil strife within the tribes been resolved than the eruption of the Civil War rekindled those animosities. The flurry of economic development, especially railroad expansion, brought new problems for tribal authorities to confront, with diminishing authority compared to the expanding white

political bureaucracy. The individual allotment system imposed by the Dawes Severalty Act in 1887 effectively destroyed tribal autonomy, and admission of Oklahoma to the union of states in 1907 completed the evisceration of native sovereignty for the nations from the Southeastern region. The last section of this chapter discusses ongoing efforts to regain sovereignty into the twentieth century. Finally, chapter 7 discusses the continuing struggle for autonomy during the twentieth century, from the New Deal enactment of the Indian Reorganization Act to the adoption of a federal policy of self-determination in the 1970s, all the while confronting problems posed by racism and lack of economic opportunity.

Parts 2, 3, and 4 offer a wealth of reference information. Part 2 provides encyclopedic identifications of specific persons, places, and events critical to understanding the histories of the tribes examined in this comprehensive study. The authors admit that not every noteworthy person and event could be included in a volume of this scope, but close inspection reveals very few omissions. The chronology that comprises part 3 skillfully clarifies sequences of events occurring to various Southeastern tribes over the span of known history. Part 4 offers detailed research resource information, including names and contact addresses of recognized tribal groups, an extensive bibliography discussing primary and secondary published material, and a list of museums and historical sites open to the public. Only archival source locations have been omitted, and these intentionally so, as the authors found these too numerous to present in detail.

Any student or individual interested in pursuing the history of Native Americans of the Southeastern United States could benefit richly from this wonderful compilation of information into a concise reference work. The authors have presented a balanced discussion of many indigenous peoples in an engaging style and format, well supported by extensive research into their subjects.

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