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**Book Review: *Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Oklahoma, 1865- 1907*. By Murray R. Wickett**

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*Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Oklahoma, 1865-1907.* By Murray R. Wickett. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000. Illustrations, bibliography, index. xvii + 240 pp. \$59.95 cloth, \$26.95 paper.

Many historians have recognized the tripartite nature of race relations in the Great Plains region and the aggressive negotiation for power this created in the post Civil War period, but each has selected a manageable portion of the story to interpret. Murray Wickett deserves recognition for intertwining the central issues affecting all three races into a meaningful analysis. The choice of Oklahoma as the site of interaction is rich with possibilities but fraught with complexity. Acculturated and non-acculturated Indians, mixed-bloods and full-bloods, Indian freedmen and southern migrant freedmen, Twin Territories, Democrats and Republicans, white entrepreneurs and white tenant farmers—each had a vision of sovereignty, freedom, and promise to be fought for and secured. Wickett argues that government policy along with white racism and numerical superiority combined to create a *modus vivendi* in which Native Americans became accepted as partners in the creation of the state while African Americans were positioned as inferior outsiders. The consummation of this paradigm, however, came about only after bitter contests among all parties.

Wickett draws from exhaustive research in government documents and records, oral histories, newspapers, diaries, and secondary articles and books, making this work a valuable resource for scholars and a likely textbook for university courses on history and race relations. Occasionally, the lengthy quotations become labored, though they do provide the language, emotion, and texture of the times.

Beginning with an overview of nineteenth-century racial attitudes and stereotypes about Indians and blacks which influenced an ideology of assimilation for one and segregation for the other, Wickett proceeds to evaluate the

impact of Anglo-American education, an enforced ethic of agricultural labor and individual land ownership, white standards of criminal justice, and the evolution of racial politics during the territorial period. A chapter on the imposition of the American judicial system over Indian affairs is especially revealing in its consideration of property and personal rights, military and civilian law enforcement, legal jurisdiction, graft, and vigilante action. Wickett imposes an orderly framework useful for interpreting the complicated transformations in the race relations of this region.

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