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Review of "Choctaw Nation: A Story of American Indian Resurgence." By Valerie Lambert

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Choctaw Nation: A Story of American Indian Resurgence. By Valerie Lambert. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xi + 302 pp. Notes, works cited, index. $45.00 cloth, $24.95 paper.

Choctaw Nation fits nicely into two recent trends in the development of Native American history. First, Valerie Lambert draws interpretive threads into the twenty-first century explored for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Circe Sturm's *Blood Politics* (2002), Donna L. Akers's *Living in the Land of Death* (2004), and Fay A. Yarbrough's *Race and the Cherokee Nation* (2008). For Lambert the past thirty years or so have comprised a renewal of the Choctaw Nation that is at the same time part of a larger "cycle of rupture and rebirth" that reaches back at least to the 1500s. Second, Lambert is a Choctaw, and the book makes an interesting contribution to recent books about Native North America by scholars of Native ancestry. But unlike Akers who draws a fairly

sharp line between "Western historians" and indigenous scholars, Lambert gently and gracefully invites all readers to accompany her on a trip into the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and to listen with her as her friends and sources tell their stories.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Choctaws began to articulate two distinct stories about how the past informed the present. One group who sought to oppose federal termination legislation claimed links to an ancient Choctaw past that saw themselves doing what their forebears had done for centuries—defend to the last the nation's pride and sovereignty. In contrast, Hollis Roberts, who became the nation's chief in 1978, claimed to have almost single-handedly led the Choctaws to nation status and depicted his accomplishments as wholly unconnected to the nation's past. Roberts led the nation for more than two decades and contributed mightily to improvements in tribal services, powers, and possibilities, but his downfall in the midst of sexual assault accusations opened the way for the next generation of Choctaws to continue the rebuilding.

Lambert tracks the Choctaw renaissance through a number of developments. Arguments about Choctaw history caused citizens to divide along factional lines that sometimes held and sometimes dissolved over issues involving commercial developments, water rights, and relationships with outsiders. As Lambert tracks between her outsider perspective as an anthropologist and her insider's view as a Choctaw, readers are privileged to a clear-sighted and at times touching analysis of a history and of a people. Just what that history was and who those people are, however, remain the kinds of questions that continue to define and inform the rebirth of the Choctaw Nation.

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