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## Review of The Cherokee

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of Cherokee history and culture from pre-white contact to the present while simultaneously dispelling any present misunderstanding derived from “unsympathetic, culturally biased and inaccurate reports.”

By building on Cherokee legends, Perdue makes what might seem a “strange” culture immediately logical. She describes such things as the matrilineal society, reasons for war, and the position of women as only one thoroughly familiar with Cherokee culture can do.

Perdue illustrates how European contact and trade brought disease and change. Using recent demographers’ estimates she indicates how the first two hundred years of European presence in America brought the demise of 95 percent of the native populations. Intermarriage upset the traditional Cherokee social organization. Instead of husbands residing with their wives, Cherokee women went to live with white husbands. Children took their father’s name and inherited their father’s house, stores, and goods. These mixed-blood children introduced the first real inequality of wealth into Cherokee society. European trade soon became a necessity rather than a luxury. To obtain guns—imperative items since their enemies had guns—Indians had to kill more deer, thus abandoning the balance Indians had always maintained with nature.

After the American Revolution, the Cherokees realized that if they were to survive they had to become acceptable to the white man by adopting white culture. This “civilization” program, although well intended by some, represented for many a new way to wrest the Indian’s land from him. If Indians abandoned hunting and took up farming they certainly would be willing to relinquish millions of acres of hunting grounds. In the end, even becoming “civilized” wasn’t sufficient for land-hungry whites. Georgia led the way in demanding removal, and the Trail of Tears became a tragic fact of American history.

Perdue carefully traces the problems and success following removal. Of particular interest is the 1851 establishment of the Cherokee Female Seminary which was revolutionary in its attempts to educate females. Perdue’s book is the

*The Cherokee.* By Theda Perdue. Indians of North America, edited by Frank W. Porter III. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989. Maps, illustrations, photographs, bibliography, glossary, index. 111 pp. \$15.95.

In *The Cherokee* Theda Perdue achieves superbly two goals—to give an accurate account

only one for young adults that accurately portrays the origin of the Eastern Band of Cherokee rather than continuing the myth of Indians escaping removal by fleeing to the mountains.

*The Cherokee* is enhanced by numerous maps and pictures; especially interesting are the color photographs of masks, baskets, pottery, and pipes. Added features include excerpts from primary documents and a glossary. Perdue has produced an admirable book that transcends its intended young adult audience and is recommended for all who want an accurate history of the Cherokee.

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