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Review of The Cherokees: A Population History

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The Cherokees: A Population History. By Russell Thornton. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. Illustrations, editors' foreword, introduction, appendix, notes, references, index. 237 pp. \$11.95.

Russell Thornton provides a scholarly and comprehensive review of the population variations of an American Indian tribe after contact first with European and then United States' cultural, institutional, and economic policies. He notes population fluctuations along with historical events that occurred after first contact. Governmental policies including accommodation, paternalism, assimilation, extermination, and relocation and isolation of the Cherokees clearly affected population totals. Thornton concludes by acknowledging the Cherokees' own never-ending search for self-determination and viability.

This text will be valuable for scholars interested in understanding how population variations impacted Cherokees' psychological and cultural integrity, and how, as a people, they

were able to survive change that emanated from without. Although Thornton does not stress this in the text, the effect of Cherokee population losses became a distinctive part of tribal history and experience, while severe population variations contributed to cultural disorganization and family disintegration. These population and cultural disruptions were the catalyst for the formation of three distinct tribal entities. The Eastern Band, the Western Nation, and the Keetoowah Band have each contributed to the modern conception of what it means to be Cherokee.

Unlike many other surviving tribes, the Cherokees' relatively early contact with white culture and the degree of intermarriage with whites and African-Americans produced a heterogeneous population. This heterogeneity not only affected tribal politics/perspectives, but, according to Thornton, aided the Cherokees to survive and share a cultural legacy, regardless of individual members' demographics or geographical location. Thornton's concentration on population changes ensures that the Cherokees and their experience are the focal consideration and may serve to initiate research on the interaction between tribal culture, population change, and successful adaptation.

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