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Review of *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*. By Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green

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The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears. By Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green. New York: Viking, 2007. xvi + 189 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 cloth, \$14.00 paper.

Past chief of the Cherokee Nation (1985-1995) and social activist Wilma Mankiller remarked, "We are still here." Facing rampant racism, a fraudulent treaty, and then dislocation from their homelands in the southeast, Cherokees not only survived but prevailed. Reflectively, Theda Perdue and Michael Green have summarized the complexity and cunning complicity surrounding the 1838-39 infamous Cherokee displacement known as the Trail of Tears, adding to the scholarship of Tim Garrison, Gary Moulton, Walter Conser, Mary Young, and the late William G. McLoughlin.

They juxtapose the remarkable lives of two adversarial Cherokee figures, Major Ridge (along with his son John Ridge, and nephew Elias Boudinot), who led the Treaty Party (about 600) to sign the illegal 1835 Treaty of New Echota, selling the Cherokee Nation for five million dollars, and the other, John Ross, who became the first constitutionally elected chief of the Cherokee Nation in 1828. The Ross Party had about 16,000 members before removal began. The two factions took Herculean measures to halt the other from attaining legal prominence in Washington. Ross first broached the subject of selling Cherokee lands in Georgia, where half of the Cherokees lived before removal; he then advised against continuing the Cherokee Nation as a Nation; and finally he offered to let Cherokees become Georgia citizens. Horrified at the suggestion of "amalgamation" with expansive-minded, racist Americans, the Ridge family campaigned to save the Cherokee Nation by advocating removal and signing the unlawful Treaty. The Ridge family felt that separation from aggressive Anglo-Americans, their government, and endemic racism and poverty was the best solution for Cherokee people.

Throughout the first three decades of the 1800s, Cherokee fate had become sealed through a series of events: the 1802 Georgia

Pact extinguishing Indian title to lands within its borders; the 1803 Louisiana Purchase extending westward settlement and opening lands to resettle dislodged Indians; the 1829 gold rush at Dahlonega, Georgia, leading to further settler encroachment; the 1831 Georgia lottery allowing Georgia citizens to seize Cherokee lands; and Andrew Jackson's 1828 election which guided the passage of the 1830 Indian Removal bill. Though Cherokees deftly used the court system and lobbied Congress vigorously to thwart removal, their efforts were to no avail.

Round ups and concentration camps preceded the treacherous and deadly removal process. Reaching Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in 1839, Cherokees faced perpetual chaos, internecine warfare, and stalemate until the Nation in 1846, under Ross, reluctantly accepted the terms of the 1835 Treaty. The promised Treaty monies allowed for rebuilding to begin; Cherokees even pioneered a bilingual public school system.

Perdue and Green argue that forcing removal under an illegal Treaty was the *real* tragedy for Cherokees. Others, however, may contend that Cherokee removal and similarly government-sanctioned Indian removal policies promulgated additional *real* tragedies such as government authorized Indian wars throughout the Great Plains until 1890, when Indian population reached its nadir.

Highly informative and finely organized, this book is written for both scholarly and general audiences. I strongly recommend it.

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