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## Review of *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War*. By Clarissa W. Confer.

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*The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War.* By Clarissa W. Confer. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. xii + 199 pp. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95.

Because military action in Indian Territory had negligible impact on the Civil War, most accounts of America's deadliest conflict are focused elsewhere. Few Civil War buffs realize the magnitude of death and destruction suffered by the Cherokees and neighboring tribes. Clarissa W. Confer's study of the impact of the conflict on the Cherokee Nation documents and personalizes the tragedy that decimated its people, destroyed the work of a generation following the Trail of Tears, and left a legacy of strife and animosity.

Confer focuses on a single tribe among the so-called Five Civilized Nations which she suggests "encapsulated much of the war experience in Indian Territory." After reviewing the schism over removal which precipitated prolonged bloodshed in the 1840s, she surveys events that drew the Cherokees and their neighbors into the Civil War. Clashing outlooks on slavery, religion, culture, and politics persisted even after federal officials arranged a truce between tribal factions in 1846. Northern and Southern attempts to secure tribal support as the federal union disintegrated in 1861 rekindled smoldering rancor, making neutrality impossible.

Cherokee Chief John Ross reluctantly allied his tribe with the Confederacy in the vain hope of maintaining unity. That hope was shattered as the tribe split into antagonistic factions, with Stand Watie, Ross's arch foe from the removal era, leading Cherokees loyal to the South and the Ross Faction allying itself with the Union.

The course of military action in the Cherokee Nation between 1861 and 1865 receives cursory attention. To balance earlier histories, which focused on military action during the Civil War, Confer probes the conflict's effect on ordinary citizens, particularly women and slaves. As much as possible, she uses documents reflecting the Native American perspective. While the Cherokees shared problems experienced by citizens of the southern states, they faced hardships most other Americans escaped. Internal differences forced many members of the tribe to seek refuge in Kansas or southern Indian Territory and Texas. Those who remained suffered reprisals from hostile members of their own tribe. The author paints a bleak picture of dislocation, hardship, and widespread death that affected every segment of tribal society. Tragically, the end of the fighting provided little relief. With their nation in shambles, and despite a staggering loss of life, the intratribal vendetta continued. The Reconstruction policies of a vengeful federal government exacerbated the tragedy, depriving the dispirited Indians of land and threatening their sovereignty.

The author's concentration on the Cherokees reflects the importance of their role in the Civil War in Indian Territory. Her narrative provides a useful overview of events that shaped the future of the tribe, but it does not relate those events with the insight and verve that characterize the best of the literature of the Civil War east of the Mississippi. The book provides no new information or fresh perspective, nor does it breathe life into events that were not only important but colorful.

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