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Cherokee Tragedy: The Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People.  
By Thurman Wilkins.

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Despite these dilemmas, the tribes' share of the catch and their income from fishing have risen sharply since 1974, resulting in a greater sense of community and self respect.

*Treaties on Trial* is definitely sympathetic to the Indians, but Cohen followed scholarly standards in preparing his study. In short, this is not a polemic. The author's research includes the formal sources—government records and reports, court proceedings, newspaper accounts, and secondary literature—but he also conducted over one hundred interviews of Indians and non-Indians and attended numerous meetings which dealt with Boldt's decision. The author also displays an admirable ability to discuss the endless legal and technical complexities of his subject in a readable and clear manner. Maps and charts scattered throughout the volume also enrich his narrative.

If any question should be raised about Cohen's treatment, it may be his tendency in the background chapters to attribute the national government's willingness or unwillingness to protect Indian fishing rights to existing federal Indian policy. While Indian policy doubtlessly acted as a factor, the personal diligence of agents, superintendents, government attorneys, and other federal officials, as well as the overall economical development of the Northwest, probably played more important roles.

Except for this caveat, however, *Treaties on Trial* is an excellent book. It offers intelligent and clear insights into a subject that is seldom treated except in legal journals and technical writings.

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**Cherokee Tragedy: The Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People.** By Thurman Wilkins. Second edition, revised. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986. 416 pp. \$24.95 Cloth.

More than fifteen years ago Thurman Wilkins published the first edition of his *Cherokee Tragedy: The Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People*. The story which he told was of the Cherokee leader known as The Ridge, and his son, John Ridge. Major Ridge, the father, was regarded by the author "as a hero, a far-sighted torchbearer, the apostle of tribal salvation through enlightenment."<sup>6</sup> A Cherokee who grew to manhood in the last decades of the eighteenth century, the noble father sent his son

to a missionary school in Connecticut, and ultimately joined his son (who had married a young woman from the East) in deciding that the Jeffersonian philanthropists were correct in their belief that removal was the only way to Cherokee salvation and survival. Although Wilkins defended the decision made by the Ridges as a rational and virtuous one, they paid with their lives because they signed an agreement with the United States authorities under which they gave up tribal lands. As a consequence, Major Ridge, John Ridge, and another signer of the treaty were killed for breaking the Cherokee law which forbade selling tribal land without the permission of the tribal authorities.

When Wilkins' publication was first reviewed in major scholarly journals, the majority of the treatments complimented the work warmly. The strongest negative comments were included in the *American Journal of Sociology*. In that piece, while not denying Wilkins ability as a storyteller, the reviewer pointed out that the book did not really tell us much about the Cherokee as people (individually or collectively), only about the Ridges as superhuman beings. Indeed, those with strong feelings about ethnocentrism will find this revised edition as objectionable as the first.

A decade and a half later, under the imprint of a different press, the author has published what is described as the second edition, revised. His avowed purpose in bringing out the second edition is stated in the preface: "The time has come for a revised edition, which eliminates certain points of development and takes advantages of the findings of recent scholarship" (xiv).

Whatever the author's prefatory statement of intent, there is little essential difference between the two editions. Certainly there is no change in the overall story, or in the interpretation which the author presents. For reviewers, as well as general readers, the same basic question confronts anyone who consults either edition: what is to be concluded about this story of the Ridges and their tragic end? Wilkins does not probe beneath the surface or read between the lines. We are not told who wanted the Ridges dead and why. Cherokee peoples have long memories, which might be tapped through oral tradition. Additional light might be shed by drawing from John P. Reid's works as well as Rennard Strickland's *Cherokee Law from Clan to Court* in explaining the framework of consanguinity in which the deaths took place, whether they were called murder, execution, or assassination.

This reviewer, moreover, is troubled by questions arising from some of the sources used and the story drawn from them. The early life of Major Ridge, for example, is depicted in romantic and unrealistic tones. According to the author, the young Ridge developed as a child of nature, who, "while yet an infant . . . learned to swim like an otter" (14). Wilkins quotes McKenney and Hall as his source for the assertion that The Ridge's father "taught him to steal with noiseless tread upon the grazing animal. [The young hunter] watched the haunts, and studied the habits of wild animals and became an expert in the arts which enable the Indian hunter at all seasons to procure food from the stream or forest'" (14).

As Wilkins indicates in his citations, the portrayal of Major Ridge's early life draws heavily from Thomas McKenney and James Hall's well-known publication. Yet if one follows the story of that account in Herman Viola's volume about Thomas McKenney, there is some hesitation in assuming that the scholar is dealing with what the anthropologist might term accurate field information. Passage after passage describing The Ridge's life re-sounds as a mythic epic narrating the experiences of the noble savage. As a result, Major Ridge's life seems drawn from a source written by a contemporary of Mason L. Weems.

The impact of this somewhat romanticized account could have been rendered more credible if the author had included some corroborative citations confirming certain salient events in The Ridge's life. For example, in the life of the Cherokee leader called the Dragging Canoe, there is the well-known story of his referring to Kentucky as a "dark and bloody ground." While one might be content with citing available secondary sources, the anecdote becomes more credible by including a reference to a deposition published in *The Calendar of Virginia State Papers* (I:291). On the other hand, if this kind of evidence was not readily available in the case of Major Ridge, then the author could have modified his account to suggest that The Ridge's upbringing was like that of any other Cherokee male who came to maturity in the period of the American Revolution. As it is, the critical reader may be offended by the romantic tone.

As frustrating as this romantic style may be to some readers, the omission of sources published since 1970 is more troubling. To be sure, if one reads the new preface and scans the bibliographical entries of this second edition, revised, and notes the explanatory footnotes scattered through the text, one will find

mention of sources published since 1970. Yet upon closer examination of the chapter citations, the reader finds only one of the articles published since 1970 (a John Ridge document) has been incorporated into the notes for this edition. Although Moulton's study of John Ross is mentioned in an explanatory note on p. 205, his work (not to mention those of John P. Reid and Rennard Strickland) is not incorporated into the notes. Furthermore, certain standard works have been ignored, especially studies about the American Revolution which include the Cherokee as well as Charles Hudson's magisterial *Southeastern Indians* and his informative *The Black Drink*. Ignoring the last named work has led Wilkins to continue describing the black drink (a tea brewed from the leaves of an indigenous holly) as an emetic, which it was long thought to be, but which Hudson and his associates have demonstrated has no purgative qualities whatsoever. The ritual purging associated with certain ceremonial uses of the black drink seemed to have been an acquired ability.

*Cherokee Tragedy* stands, in its second edition as in its first, a story that needs to be told. It is written in readable fashion, although one must overlook the author's biographical and bibliographical omissions. For now, and possibly for a scholarly generation to come, this will remain the best account of the story. Perhaps in twenty years an ethnohistorian will examine the sources and give us a slightly different interpretation. Until that time, Wilkins' book will remain the standard account.

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**Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth.** By Doreen Jensen and Polly Sargent. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1986. 86 pp. \$18.95 Paper.

This is a badly needed contribution to the study and understanding of Northwest Coast art and art history. While Bill Holm's *Northwest Coast Indian Art* and Hilary Stewart's *Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast* are landmark scholarly contributions to this phenomenal culture, *Robes of Power* enhances and builds upon the total three dimensional perspicuous backdrop against which all three books are endeavouring to triumph. As George