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Book Reviews

Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866. By Theda Perdue. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979. 207 pp. \$12.50

This clearly written, authoritative account of slavery in Cherokee society is the first to give us a detailed discussion and historical analysis of an institution usually overlooked in Indian histories. Slavery, as the author, an assistant professor at West Carolina University, points out, existed among the Cherokee long before the coming of the white or the Black man to the New World. During periods of warfare the Cherokee and their neighbors captured men, women, and children, and some of these were adopted into clans of the Cherokees. Others were excluded from the clans and forced to live as deviants existing only on the fringes of Cherokee society. However, these slaves were not brought into a forced labor system because the Cherokees had no need to put captives into a labor force.

With the coming of the white contacts the Cherokees through the Indian trade became dependent upon the new technology involving guns, tools and hatchets. Eventually a part of the trade included Indian slaves, a traffic that reached its height about the time of the Yamasee War in 1715-17.

Cherokee contact with Blacks came very early in the colonial era when Blacks were captured by the Indians. White plantation owners, always apprehensive about the potential danger of a Black-Indian alliance on their frontier, did all they could to create hostility between the two non-white races. This policy does not appear to have been successful, but Cherokees did enslave Blacks. Step by step, as the Cherokee adopted the white man's type of agriculture, raising large stocks of horses, cattle, hogs, and sheep, they expanded their fields producing tobacco, cotton, and food crops. Gradually the more wealthy Cherokees acquired slaves for forced labor on their lands. The relations of the Cherokee masters to their Black slaves were, according to the author, not much different than relations between white masters and Black slaves. Cherokee masters, however, seem to have relied less upon disciplinary floggings and other harsh measures used by slave-owning whites in the south. And Cherokee newspapers from time to time editorialized about the Black people as a people who were capable of governing themselves and taking on responsibilities of a free people.

Yet the Cherokee leaders were among those who had considerable numbers of slaves. For instance, John Ross, David Vann, and John Ridge owned nineteen, thirteen, and twenty-one Black slaves respectively. They also, in the early 1830's, had comfortable estates similar to those possessed by prosperous white slaveholders.

Wealthy Cherokees valued their slaves, some of whom had aided their Indian masters during the chaos of removal and settling new lands. During the Civil War, as might be expected, the slavery issue divided the Cherokees as John Ross and other slaveowners attempted to establish a policy of neutrality. As this book shows, the institution of slavery divided the Cherokee people throughout their history after first contacts with whites and Blacks. Traditional Cherokee people have tended to oppose the slaveowners who adopted white values. What emerged was a virulent factionalism largely based upon the slavery controversy. Even today, the author argues, the factions are identified with rivalry over economic inequality and quarrels over traditional cultural values that are identified with Black slavery in Cherokee history. Such is the legacy of slavery among one of our great Indian tribes.

This fine book, heavily documented and backed up by a penetrating bibliographical essay, is one of the most important studies in Indian-Black-white history that this reviewer has examined. It is a model study in ethnohistory involving extensive investigation in several disciplines. At the same time, the clarity of style makes the book inviting to the general reader who has an interest in the history of the American Indians and Black people.

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Big Falling Snow: A Tewa-Hopi Indian's Life and Times and the History and Traditions of His People. By Albert Yava. Edited and Annotated by Harold Courlander. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1978. 178 pp. \$10.00

Albert Yava's *Big Falling Snow* is not, strictly speaking, a Native American autobiography. As editor Harold Courlander carefully notes, it is a per-