

The Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855–1970. By Clara Sue Kidwell with foreword by Lindsay G. Robertson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. 320 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

In 1820 the Choctaw Nation, one of the Five Civilized Tribes, acquired by treaty approximately 13 million acres south and west of the Arkansas River in what is now Oklahoma. Under the 1830 Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, most Choctaws moved from Mississippi to the eastern part of their western nation in the early 1830s. At the time of Removal, mixed-blood leaders had provided the Choctaws with two successive constitutions, and the tribe continued its constitution making when it arrived west. In the course of this effort, it provided first for the incorporation of the Chickasaws into a fourth district of their new nation, then permitted the Chickasaws to govern themselves independently. Their last nineteenth-century constitution (in 1860) provided for the election of a bicameral legislative council and a principal chief and established a court system that culminated in a Supreme Court and a Bill of Rights to guide the court in its review of national laws. The 1860 constitution remained in place until 1983, although in the early twentieth century, the federal government forced allotment on the Choctaws, placed them under the jurisdiction first of federal courts and then of the new state of Oklahoma, and then made the principal chief a presidential appointee.

Meanwhile the Choctaws, whose elite held slaves, sided with the Confederacy during the civil war. The Choctaws proved more wholehearted in their participation in battle under Confederate leadership than any other slaveholding tribes, and in part for this reason they lost hundreds of thousands of cattle to thieves from Texas but suffered little property damage within their nation. At the end of the war, the Choctaw delegation and their sometime agent, under whom they had fought in the Confederate army, put together a treaty delegation that ultimately went to Washington and crafted a treaty less damaging to the Choctaws than the treaties imposed on delegates of other, less enthusiastic tribal allies of the Confederacy. The Choctaws allowed for a railroad right-of-way through their nation but did not give in to pressures to deprive them of their territory or to establish a territorial government defined and dominated by the United States. They were able ultimately to establish monetary claims for annuities and treaty cessions owed them by the United States, though confirming and receiving payment for such claims required many years of lobbying. As Kidwell demonstrates, the Choctaw governing elite, though seldom unified, provided nonetheless effective lawyers, delegates, and lobbyists. In that sense, they established their “agency” in determining their own fate.

In part, the Choctaw elite proved effective because they chose to become “civilized.” Not only did they establish a centralized constitutional system, they ran a comprehensive and very effective school system with the aid of Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries who also established churches throughout the nation. By the 1850s, most Choctaws wore “citizen dress,” many Choctaw women over generations had married white men, and the Choctaws conducted their debates in council and published their laws in

both English and Choctaw. Choctaws grew corn and cotton, pastured cattle, and engaged in trade before and after Removal. Ironically, the missionaries conducted many of their schools and churches and translated the Bible, hymns, and other good works into Choctaw, thus preserving the language. Long after Oklahoma became a state full-blood communities remained isolated in small rural settlements that surrounded their churches; church elders provided much of their elected leadership.

The downside of intermarriage and acculturation was the division of the community between those persons—mostly full-bloods who retained communitarian values and preferred reciprocity to profit as they preferred Choctaw to English—and the national leadership, mostly mixed-blood, who in the long run proved to be willing to trade land for cash and preferred entrepreneurship and acquisitiveness to communitarianism and reciprocity. Under mixed-blood leadership, the Choctaws caved in to the pressure to accept allotment slightly earlier than the other Civilized Tribes and failed when they tried to combine federal jurisdiction with separate statehood as Oklahoma entered the union. Because the tribe retained title to timber, coal, and asphalt lands after their agricultural land had been awarded to individuals, a shadow government, headed by a federally appointed chief, remained in existence to deal with the United States regarding the retained assets and various unadjudicated or unpaid claims.

When their appointed governor tried in the 1950s to organize a “national” democratic government for the tribe and to persuade the federal government to sell their remaining resources and distribute the proceeds per capita, Congress pretended they had asked for termination and terminated all federal services. At this point the Choctaw elite combined with the senator from Oklahoma to see to it that their trust status was reinstated, and in the early 1970s the tribe not only succeeded but also received permission to elect their own government and write yet another constitution. Self-determination has enabled this government to combine entrepreneurship with service to the community, and in 2006 their manufacturing, resorts, and casinos earned them enough to support a hospital, a museum, and a variety of other tribal services, providing much-needed jobs to local Choctaws who had long ago lost most of their land and suffered severe unemployment.

Kidwell’s work overlaps that of several scholars, notably Angie Debo, David Baird, and Sandra Faiman-Silva. Chronologically, Faiman-Silva’s *Choctaws at the Crossroads* (1997) covers the most similar time period. Kidwell is hardly uncritical of the Choctaw elite, some of whom were her ancestors, but she looks on entrepreneurship, whether white or Choctaw, with a less jaundiced eye than does Faiman-Silva. Despite her preoccupation with the jargon of dependency theory, Faiman-Silva provides more information about the economic development of the tribe and the immiseration of most full-bloods who remained in Oklahoma than does Kidwell. Kidwell is far more informative about the actions of the often conflicted elites in pursuing claims and trying to defend their self-governing status than is Faiman-Silva. To a considerable extent, the two books complement one another and provide an interesting spectrum of critical perspectives. Neither pauses to reflect on the rather significant fact

that by the time the Choctaw government achieved its restored sovereignty and became an active agent in providing services for the neighborhood, less than a fifth of the enrolled Choctaws remained in the Oklahoma counties that were once the Choctaw Nation.

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The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Leadership and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Native America. Edited by Joanna Brooks with a foreword by Robert Warrior. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 445 pages. \$65.00 cloth.

Roman historian Titus Livy proposed that history is the best medicine for sick minds. For Livy, early national figures, whose lives served as positive and negative models for later Romans, were part of this cure. Early Native Americans' life stories have similarly served as models of leadership and personal and spiritual growth, in their own day and in ours. Part of the difficulty of the literature written by these authors, however, is that we do not always agree with their view of what sickness Americans—and Native Americans—faced. Even more crucially, we may not like their cure. As Robert Warrior notes, a writer like Samson Occom can come across as a “cold-souled Calvinist” (v). Yet Occom saw his relationship to Christ as central to his ability to serve as a positive example for others. How can we be honest about early Native writers and pay heed to our own twenty-first-century needs?

Joanna Brooks's stunning edition of the collected writings of Samson Occom faces this problem head-on by providing us with evidence of the true complexity of what Occom calls “this Indian world.” For the first time, Brooks's collection brings together the surviving manuscripts and the known published works of this crucial early Native American author. Since 1982 when Bernd Peyer republished Occom's autobiography and LaVonne Brown Ruoff called attention to Occom's *Sermon, Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul* (1772), Samson Occom has come to serve as the archetypal colonial Native American. Yet, as Brooks usefully notes, much of the scholarship on Occom has at least a “quiet implication that Occom adopted his English-language literacy and Christianity at the expense of his own wholeness or at some cost to Mohegan oral tradition and culture” (31). The full range of Occom's writings, however, reveals that “it is more productive to read his writings . . . as part of an ongoing indigenous intellectual history of engagement and survival against the epic crimes of colonialism” (32). For Brooks, to read the great expanse of Occom's writings is “to grapple with its historical particularity, its generic variety, its familiarity, [and] its foreignness” (33). Perhaps more crucially, to read all of Occom's works is to realize that Occom did not write in solitude but was part of a network of Native American writers and thinkers who “lived and moved within a space he [Occom] called ‘this Indian world’” (34). Brooks's collection goes a long way toward broadening