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Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation. By Kenny A. Franks.

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tion of the Cherokee movement "as an example of . . . sporadic ethnic militantism . . . in the 1960s" and treat "its significance to Cherokee themselves . . ." (p. 223).

Duane King and his contributors should receive thanks from students and scholars in the field for this outstanding collection. The tone of the writing was sympathetic to the plight of the Cherokees without descending into sentimentalization. With a couple of exceptions, the contributors concentrated on the Cherokee people themselves rather than relegating them to the role of passive objects. King performed his editorial labors well, effectually offering a truly interdisciplinary product. Hopefully others will emulate his example with similar compendiums on other Indian nations.

Terry P. Wilson  
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**Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation.** By Kenny A. Franks. Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1979. 257 pp. \$12.95.

Until recently, scholars have dealt with American Indian leaders in much the same manner as they have looked upon such historical personages as Robert E. Lee—gallant and admirable enemies who fought losing battles against overwhelming odds. Rarely did historians bother to analyze the cultural and ideological backgrounds of their subjects or seek to explain the internal tribal politics that led Indian leaders to make crucial decisions regarding the future of their people. Too often explanation and analysis were sacrificed for the drama of armed resistance.

Within the last ten years, however, historians have attempted to reverse this methodology in biographical literature, especially concerning tribal politics. The newest trend in American Indian biography has been toward cultural and political analysis. Scholars are concerned now with the motives of American Indian leaders and how those leaders attained status within their tribal political structures. The benefits of this recent scholarship are manifold: Indian leaders are not only better understood but they are also given a degree of humanity, a trait woefully lacking in most of the subjects of older "Great Man" biographies.

Regretably, Kenny A. Franks' *Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation* has set American Indian biography back a number of years. Primarily the book is a blow-by-blow account of Stand Watie's feud with John Ross as well as the Civil War in Indian Territory. Watie, the only American Indian to attain general officer rank on either side during the Civil War, is seen as a man who often took up crusades which either earned him the enmity of a great number of people or were lost causes to begin with. The author forgives Watie for these apparent mistakes, not on the basis of the subject's motives and ideological make-up, but merely on the basis of Watie's undeniable courage in battle. Although Franks points out some of Watie's physical weaknesses and describes the Cherokee leader's anguish over the deaths of his closest relatives, the book simply does not provide a total picture of Stand Watie.

Perhaps Franks should have examined Watie's social and cultural background in greater detail. Although given a missionary education and thoroughly acculturated to the white man's ways, Watie remained proud of his Cherokee heritage and no doubt knew and understood traditional Cherokee values and lifestyles. He could very well have been, in effect, torn between both cultures, leaving him with the option of becoming an intense individualist. Franks' insights concerning Watie's possible emotional crisis are not tenable. The author often lapses into writing off Watie's actions—particularly in regard to John Ross, his political rival and lifelong nemesis—as some sort of mystical and mythical Indian propensity toward violence and vengeance.

What Franks lacks in analysis and insight he makes up for in detail. The almost day-to-day description of Watie's Civil War experiences is as compelling a story as can be found in any number of historical novels. Franks' flair for dramatic writing is quite obvious also. One chapter, for instance, begins with the following lines: "Divided into two armed camps and poised at each other's throats, it was no surprise that the animosity of the members of the Watie and Ross factions soon burst into an orgy of bloodshed and confusion" (p. 95).

Overall, the book has a certain appeal. Watie was no doubt a man who possessed great courage and tenacity in battle. If read from that point alone, Franks' treatment of Watie would give the reader a great deal of satisfaction. If read as an analysis of Chero-



kee leadership and political history the book would, unfortunately, be very disappointing.

Tom Holm  
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**Jim Thorpe, World's Greatest Athlete.** By Robert W. Wheeler. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. 320 pp. \$12.50.

If a biography's success were determined solely by the quality of its creator's credentials and commitment, there could be nothing but praise for *Jim Thorpe, World's Greatest Athlete*. Robert W. Wheeler holds degrees in Education and History from both New York University and Syracuse University, where his advisor schooled him the techniques of "The controversial oral history approach" (p. xiii). Armed with that approach, and equipped with a tape recorder, Wheeler trekked more than ten thousand miles through twenty-three states to collect information and insights for his volume, seven years in the making. His was no hastily executed or easy research venture. Hitchhiking played a key role, as did the spare bedrooms of countless friends and admirers of "the world's greatest athlete." Not surprisingly, Wheeler's financial resources, as well as those of his relatives, received serious and frequent tests; and, unlike all Thorpe biographers before him (this writer included), he so ingratiated himself with Thorpe's family that he earned access to the athlete's personal scrapbook, the property of Thorpe's widow.

Yet neither unique access to that treasure nor unimpeachable credentials and commitment enable Wheeler to provide a convincing depiction of the internationally famous Native American. In his "Acknowledgements" section, he concedes that he has been "dismayed by the vagueness surrounding him [Thorpe] in life and death," and he promises "an honest treatment. . . [of] this supreme athlete" (p. xiii). Yet what emerges in subsequent pages is an unbalanced, unfocused, and occasionally inaccurate portrait. Wheeler, it seems, is so enamored with Thorpe's athletic accomplishments—the most fantastic, doubtless, in the annals of modern man—that he forgets, at times at least, that his subject is, first and foremost, not a hero but a human, a mortal as frequently