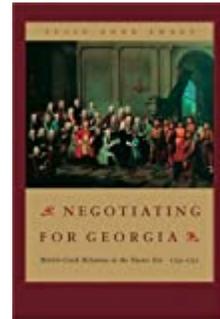




Julie Anne Sweet. *Negotiating for Georgia: British-Creek Relations in the Trustee Era, 1733-1752.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005. x + 191 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8203-2675-7.



Reviewed by Michael Morris (Department of Social Sciences, Dalton State College)

Published on H-South (April, 2006)

A Tale of Two Colonies

In *Negotiating for Georgia*, author Julie Sweet applies Richard White's concept of the Middle Ground to early Georgia's Indian relations with reasonable success. This concept illustrates quite well Sweet's thesis that both James Edward Oglethorpe and Yamacraw leader Tomochichi entertained a mutual respect for each other and, for a time, made a partial entry into the other's world for the benefit of both communities (p. 9).

One of this work's strengths is the depth to which it reconstructs the early day-to-day life in the colony and the breadth of the attempts by both leaders to make some inroads into the other's culture. Sweet introduces the reader to the Yamacraws and notes that they were a breakaway tribe from the Lower Creeks. Likewise she traces the philanthropic movements of the early seventeenth century in England that produced both James Oglethorpe and the Georgia colony. These two seemingly unrelated worlds collided when Tomochichi moved his people to Yamacraw Bluff in 1728 so as to have access to South Carolina's Indian trade (p. 21).

Within the bounds of the Anglo-Indian world which the book recreates, the reader must ask what each side

sought to gain in the burgeoning relationship. The author notes rightly that both the Yamacraws and the colonists needed friends and allies and Tomochichi's decision to reach out to the English only bolstered his own position as leader of a relatively small community (p. 25). Another strength of this work is its recreation of first encounters between the Yamacraws and English and mutual attempts at building a meaningful relationship. Sweet analyzes in detail both the use of sword and ceremony in each culture's welcoming rituals, occasionally speculating on Anglo or Indian reaction to the other side's behavior.

The book notes that because the Yamacraws created bonds with the English, Lower Creek ambassadors appeared soon after wishing to create the same ties. Since the Yamacraws had become the bridge to this new group of English, the Lower Creeks had to reconnect their frayed relationship with the breakaway group led by Tomochichi (p. 35). Sweet correctly notes the different concepts of treaty that both parties probably walked away with after successfully signing the treaty of 1733. Oglethorpe and his people viewed these arrangements

as permanent and unchanging while the Lower Creeks viewed changes in leadership and economics as creating variables to the agreement (p. 39).

Of particular interest is the work's treatment of a visit to England by the Tomochichi delegation. Here the author paints Tomochichi, despite his age, as a strong leader interested, for the most part, in what was best for his people. Upon meeting the trustees he requested Christian instruction for his people's youth and fair trade prices for the Yamacraw people in general. Of course, Europeans also used such visits to overawe their Indian visitors and sometimes cow them into a more malleable state of mind. This played a part in English motives for the visit as well.

Another area which will interest the reader is the work's treatment of early conversion efforts in Georgia. The details include John Wesley's time in Georgia and both his faltering interest in Indians as well as his problems with women. The work surmises that Christian conversion should have been achievable since native faiths were so similar. Yet, the mere fact that Wesley was appalled at some aspects of native culture prevented him from making the journey part way into the Yamacraw world. Thus native peoples did not make the journey part way into his (p. 94). This work samples both cultures for later leaders who did not measure up to either Oglethorpe or Tomochichi.

Other topics covered in the work include a somewhat testy trade war between the older colony of South Carolina and the newer colony of Georgia when the latter tried to require dual regulation of Carolina traders operating within Georgia territory. One particularly interesting event covered in the work is Oglethorpe's journey to the Lower Creek town of Coweta in 1739. Some of

the best analysis covers this journey which literally for Sweet comes to represent the general's journey into the Creek world. By taking the risk of a journey into the very heart of the other culture, Oglethorpe willingly became the minority among an alien majority (p. 115). Lest the reader come to believe that Oglethorpe had gone native, so to speak, the work reminds us that during the War of Jenkins' Ear, Oglethorpe forbade his Creek soldiers from celebrating their war victories in customary fashion and rejected with disgust the gift of a severed head of a Spanish-aligned Indian soldier (p. 147).

This book has many strengths to recommend it. Like similar emerging works, it tells the story from the native point of view first. If the work has faults they are both few and minor. Many ethnohistory texts analyze events and activities to a degree seldom done before, but they occasionally speculate too far. In discussing conversion efforts, Sweet notes that Tomochichi "probably equated the process with comparable celebration or kinship rituals from his own belief system" (p. 79). Unfortunately, we will truly never know some aspects of a preliterate culture. The facts we do know are always reflected through the lens of European bias and so we need to exercise caution in filling the gaps in our knowledge. Another comment comes in the author's treatment of Mary Musgrove. Sweet's conclusion is that Mary was a shameless fortune-seeker. Yet, her work reveals decades of service to the colony and deliberate attempts on the part of leaders to stonewall her efforts at receiving payment. At the same time, colony leaders paid some Yamacraw men on a monthly basis for military service (p. 33). Was Mary not paid because she was a woman or because she demanded payment? Despite these minor points, *Negotiating for Georgia* deserves its place on the ethnohistorian's book shelf.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-south>

Citation: Michael Morris. Review of Sweet, Julie Anne, *Negotiating for Georgia: British-Creek Relations in the Trustee Era, 1733-1752*. H-South, H-Net Reviews. April, 2006.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11604>

Copyright © 2006 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.org.