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The Choctaws are among the largest and best-known Indian tribes originally of the Southeastern United States, but over the centuries they have become one of the most acculturated to white ways, known more for what they absorbed of white culture than for their own distinctive traditions. Since the removal of the greatest part of the tribe to Oklahoma in the 1830s, Euro-American acculturation has become especially dominant. Nevertheless, among the isolated group of Choctaws that remained in Mississippi after Removal and a few individuals in Oklahoma, the old tribal dances and songs have been preserved.

This book discusses all aspects of the Choctaw dances and songs performed today by dance troupes in Mississippi and Oklahoma. It describes the social organization of the troupes, the construction and use of their musical instruments, and their costumes. Extensive historical information surveys the early literature on Choctaw music and dance, the divergent experiences of the Mississippi and Oklahoma Groups, and the recent movement toward cultural revival among traditionalists in both states.

The choreography for each dance that survives in the Choctaw repertory is described in detail and illustrated by photographs. The book also contains an overview of Choctaw dance music, with a classification of the song and in-depth analyses of musical elements, form, and design. The structure of dance events is reconstructed here for the first time. Musical transcriptions of thirty songs are included.

The authors, using a comparative approach, have focused on the relationship between contemporary performances in Oklahoma and Mississippi. Despite regional variations in performance practice, the Choctaws have sustained considerable continuity in their dance and music in this century, successfully resisting fierce pressure to assimilate and thereby lose all remaining vestiges of their culture.

This is the first book-length study of Choctaw music and dance since 1943, with much new information on the dances. It will be welcomed by ethnomusicologists, dance ethnologists, students of Native American culture, anthropologists, folklorists, and anyone interested in American Indian dance.

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