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Chief John Ross of the Cherokees held the preeminent political position in his tribe for nearly forty years and served his people in a public capacity for more than fifty. From 1816 to 1866, Ross penned an enormous number of letters, speeches, reports, and other documents, almost 1,200 of which appear in this book. The collection includes letters to such prominent political leaders as Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant, Opothleyahola, Major and John Ridge, Elias Boudinot, John C. Calhoun, Winfield Scott, Jesse Bushyhead, and Andrew Johnson. The papers published here present Ross in his roles as chief executive, political negotiator, and diplomat for his tribe. His writings reveal not only his gifts as a consummate politician but other qualities as well—loyalty to friends and political allies, steadfastness, and practicality.

This expertly edited assemblage of the writings of a nineteenth-century American Indian is unique in the collections of American public figures of the times. It is invaluable for understanding the dispossession and removal era of Cherokee history and the uncompromising white expansion that impelled it.



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