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Review of Raymond I. Orr. *Reservation Politics: Historical Trauma, Economic Development, and Intratribal Conflict*

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Raymond I. Orr. *Reservation Politics: Historical Trauma, Economic Development, and Intratribal Conflict*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017. xiii + 239 pp. Cloth, \$34.95.

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Social research on American Indian internal politics has often been labeled sensitive and uncomfortable, and it tends to deter scholarly work. To Raymond I. Orr, from the University of Oklahoma, intratribal politics forms the core of decision-making processes inside and outside American Indian communities or Indian Country and should not be concealed from open debate. In *Reservation Politics*, he calls on social scientists and scholars to appraise the origins of intratribal politics and what informs their contemporary and future decisions. He explains that these decisions or motivational behaviors are not random; instead, they are informed by key variables, most notably, the tribes' "worldview" (7). Such worldview emerges from the tribes' historical experience (ethnohistory) and the meanings derived from it. At its center, Orr points out, are internal factions with three different worldviews or logics: (1) communal affect, which values community harmony and social cohesion above individual material preferences; (2) self-interest, which elevates individual material interests and profits higher than those of commu-

nity harmony; and (3) melancholia, which places past traumatic events at the core of contemporary and future politics of the tribe. Orr places these three logics into contact with each other and “identif[ies] the link between historical processes and intratribal politics” (57).

Using a wide range of interviews and major theories in social sciences, Orr provides an ethnographic analysis of intratribal politics in three federally recognized tribes: the Citizen Potawatomis in Oklahoma; the Isleta Pueblos in New Mexico; and the Rosebud Sioux in South Dakota. Orr selected these specific cases because of his access to their tribal politics and the way they fit into his comparative methods and theoretical preferences. In each of these cases, though he does not claim to establish a particular theory, Orr hopes to capture a key segment of and inference to American Indian community life (47). To this end, he deploys a broad chronological organization to explain the origins of each tribe’s worldview and its effects on contemporary reservation politics and future decision-making processes.

The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, the introduction, grounds contemporary conflict in American Indian tribal politics within a deep intellectual understanding of political theory, political economy, historical exploitation, and social change. This includes Nietzschean and Freudian frameworks, intergenerational trauma theory, and recent discoveries in neuroscience. The author explains from a political perspective why exploring intratribal politics is critically important: “Why [might] one community . . . accept an offer of redress or reconciliation, another reject an offer, and another be completely un-inclined to barter over an issue?” (9). Chapter 2 examines the politics around (un)writing on intraethnic or intratribal politics in the past and how it fell under the dynamics of “common secrets.” Building upon Freudian psychoanalytic theory of “recognized and unrecognized conscious knowledge” and Sartrean juxtaposition of “thetic” (known) and “nonthetic” (unknown) knowledge, Orr “suggests that conversations about tribal politics, which have existed in a near black market, be more freely discussed” (36–38).

Chapter 3 explains two salient “causal mechanisms” that inform intratribal politics and motivational behaviors. The first centers on the presence of wealth or economic growth inside tribal communities, which leads to what Orr calls the rise of self-interest or a self-interested worldview (49). The second mechanism delves into the tribes’ ethnohistory of trauma, loss, and violence, which leads to what he describes as

the rise of melancholia or a melancholic worldview. Chapter 4 offers a compelling example of two tribal factions inside the Citizen Potawatomi Nation in Oklahoma: the Barrett-led Potawatomis, who represent a “utilitarian” and “self-interested” worldview; and the Sacred Heart Citizen Potawatomis, who are more “communal” and “traditionalist.” Orr reports that each faction uses different tactics—websites and media, among others—to promote its worldview and vilify each other.

Chapter 5 explores the logic that brought behavioral unity and relative homogeneity to the Isleta Pueblos. Unlike other tribes, the absence of significant sources of wealth in their land spared the Isleta Pueblos traumatic events of removal and internal conflicts, explains the author. Even the creation of a luxury resort in 2008 provides minuscule chances for an intratribal discord. Orr argues that this is largely due to the presence of “rumor,” “fear,” and “game of espionage” inside the tribe’s competitive forces of integration and differentiation, which tend to repress any feelings of tribal “acrimony” (121). On the other hand, chapter 6 examines the logic of trauma and the ways of survival inside the Rosebud Sioux. Orr indicates that the tribal ethnohistory—spearheaded by the Wounded Knee Massacre and the loss of the Black Hills—is not treated as something in the past, where the mourning stopped at one point; instead, it has become engrained into their culture and lived experience and has been converted into a tool of healing. On their refusal to accept more than \$1.2 billion in reparations for the Black Hills (Paha Sapa in Lakota), a tribe representative explained to the author that accepting a settlement “would betray [their] ancestors” (173). Orr argues that the Lakotas’ decision is engrained in a melancholic culture “to the point of sacrificing oneself and hindering the lives of future generations” (194).

In showcasing the intricate dynamics and roles of melancholia, communal effect, or self-interest into the political actions of three federally recognized tribes, Orr wants to explain essential questions about different grounds of motivations in intratribal political actions. Some readers will find Orr’s take on intratribal politics compelling; others will find the portability of his methodologies, theoretical framework, and levels of analysis less compelling than it reads. More specifically, the author’s application of Freudian psychoanalytic and Nietzschean moral philosophies to explain the Lakotas’ historical trauma and loss is often pushed too far, is forced, and lacks historicity. The work also suffers from the tendency to portray intratribal politics in, what I am sure is uninten-

tional, a Manichaeic allegory, black or white prism, lapsing the author's strong analysis into essentialist views. Most importantly, the lack of placing the tribes' meanings of land in their own ontology and epistemology converts their unhealed wounds and loss of land into a form of property valued for material benefits. In spite of these shortcomings, *Reservations Politics* remains a provocative text in a relatively small scholarship and deserves careful attention.