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Review of *The Political Economy of North American Indians*
Edited by John H. Moore

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The Political Economy of North American Indians. Edited by John H. Moore. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. Preface, figures, tables, notes, references, contributors' biographies, index. xiv + 349 p. \$32.95.

This book consists primarily of essays that were first delivered before the Twelfth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences held in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, in 1988. Billed as Marxist in perspective, it seeks to show that Indian history should be seen more as economic conflict than cultural clash.

In the introductory piece the editor provides an excellent overview of the history of political economy in general and its use in anthropology in particular. The articles that

follow vary widely in length, scope, and quality. All somehow explain the motivation behind governmental policy, as well as developments within Indian communities, as matters of production, trade, and consequent politics, rather than accept any officially or openly stated causation. Some offer convincing and detailed analyses in demonstrating economic roots, while others seem only to make the claim or strain credibility by avoiding consideration of openly stated motivations that cannot always be ignored.

In a study of the modern Lakota powwow, Thomas Biolsi looks beyond the obvious functions and finds symbolic opposition to assimilation and a reaffirmation of treaty rights and federal funding that allow the Lakota to live in a meager rural setting. Patricia Albers helps make sense of intertribal relationships, something difficult to understand for Euroamericans accustomed to nation-state political and economic structures, in a fascinating interpretation of bonds between groups of Plains Indians. She finds interdependence based on appropriations of labor and resources and organized through common social formations such as kinship ties and sodalities. Alan Klein examines the nineteenth-century buffalo hide trade and challenges the familiar and simplistic Euroamerican versus Indians scenario. While acknowledging the tension and differences between working class whites and Indians, especially in the final phases of the trade as white hunters and skinners replaced Indian suppliers, he describes similar roles for both within a buffalo culture controlled by distant capitalists.

Several other of the articles similarly resemble the "world system" approach pioneered by Immanuel Wallerstein, in which tribal political-economic systems are seen within a larger world economy. Sandra Faiman-Silva assesses the impact of the Weyerhaeuser multinational corporation on the Choctaws of southeastern Oklahoma and concludes that local resources and communities on the periphery of a complicated political and economic arrangement receive far less reward than

the company at the center. Likewise Max Hedley in his study of the Walpole Island Reserve of southern Ontario finds that until the 1940s informal exchange of game, fish, and crafts enabled Indians to maintain household economies and distinct communities in spite of government efforts to convert to commercial agriculture and incorporate the reserve into national networks. Thereafter, however, wage labor prevailed and independence faded.

While not always dramatically different from more traditional interpretations, these articles expand our understanding of how Native peoples, informed by evolving traditions, adapt, adjust, and survive as individuals and communities. The important and interesting perspectives will serve as useful starting points for scholars as they seek better to understand Indian policy and relationships between all groups that played a part in Indian history.

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