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Review of *Sovereign Nations or Reservations? An Economic History of American Indians* by Terry L. Anderson

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Sovereign Nations or Reservations? An Economic History of American Indians. Terry L. Anderson. San Francisco: Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, 1995. xvii+202 pp. Tables, references, and index. \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0-936488-81-6).

As editor of the 1992 *Property Rights and Indian Economics*, Terry L. Anderson wrote that Native Americans need to be in control of their own lives to experience success. Tribal sovereignty, he argued, is the key to leaving poverty behind. Anderson, an economics professor at Montana State University, addresses this issue more directly in *Sovereign Nations or Reservations?* In each chapter he examines age-old questions about Native American concepts of property rights, law, economics, and the ever changing relationships between Native Americans and Anglo-Europeans.

Anderson considers the general relationship among property rights, culture, and economic activity. Discussing Native American law prior to European contact, he concludes that while somewhat decentralized in character, its scarcity of formal institutions in no way implies that Native Americans lacked rules, citing several examples of Native American institutions enforcing order. Importantly, he emphasizes that Native American societies were "far from static," stating that tribes adapted to face changing conditions after Anglo-Europeans arrived.

The second half of his text illustrates the domineering bureaucracy created by the federal government to deal with Native Americans in the years following the Civil War. Anderson concludes that federal policy of forced individual ownership and laws placing native lands under trusteeship combined to harm economic productivity on reservations.

In attacking the question of whether land was unproductive as a consequence of cultural differences between Native Americans and whites or because of its unsuitability for farming, Anderson contends the latter is more accurate. By parceling land into largely ineffective 160 acre divisions, and keeping the rest of it under strict bureaucratization, the federal government thwarted most efforts by Native Americans to experience economic success.

In the last two chapters, Anderson argues that the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was a mistake and that the sovereignty of Native Americans often finds itself under attack from both the federal government and potential investors in the economic development of reservations. He concludes that sovereign governments will need to maintain control over themselves in order to guarantee successful external and internal investment opportunities.

Any critiques of this otherwise informative book lie in the use of certain terminology and myths in the text. Anderson's assertion that he is a "native American" in order to justify his use of the term American Indian, is at best a weak argument, at worst an attempt at correcting perceived political correctness. In addition, the title for chapter two, "The Red Man's Law," uses a label for Native Americans that one would hope had been discarded in the trash pile of disused terminology in academic literature long ago. Finally, in his concluding chapter, Anderson presents the tired mythology of the first Thanksgiving as an example of good relations between Native Americans and Europeans.

This book does address an area needing repeated investigation; its shortcomings do not undermine Anderson's purpose. Any one-volume description of Native Americans and their economic systems is by its very nature too slight. Anderson admits this from the start, and his book is an important beginning. The demand for more complete economic analyses of tribes exists and must be pursued. **Nicholas J. Aieta**, *Department of History, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.