

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Tribal Worlds: Critical Studies in American Indian Nation Building. Edited by Brian Hosmer and Larry Nesper.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0cq6r5d4>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 38(4)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Bauerkemper, Joseph

Publication Date

2014-09-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

confusing it with another 1896 case that is broadly inconsistent with *Talton, United States v. Kagama* (97–98). This requires more analysis. Also, the return of sacred Blue Lake to the Taos Pueblo is described as a return to the Laguna Pueblo, a distinct people almost 200 miles away (176–179). Given that the meaning of Native American sovereignty is entirely bound up with tradition and culture, it is important that this lake, sacred to Taos Pueblo, was returned to that people: it is not “Indian land” but rather Taos Pueblo land.

It is difficult to imagine how these mistakes, surely not incidental in a book of this type, escaped the editorial process. These comments aside, it is important to give full credit to the scope of this work. Certainly, it is an important contribution to our understanding of Native American sovereignty, offering a detailed historical analysis of its place in American politics, history, and law.

Sidney L. Harring
CUNY Law School (Emeritus)

Tribal Worlds: Critical Studies in American Indian Nation Building. Edited by Brian Hosmer and Larry Nesper. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013. 322 pages. \$90.00 cloth; \$26.95 paper.

For compelling reasons, some acknowledged, some tacit, in recent decades scholarly and applied considerations of American Indian nation building have exhibited two simultaneous tendencies: they have been oriented to the future and have also emphasized economic development, such as *Rebuilding Native Nations*, for example (2007). While Brian Hosmer and Larry Nesper’s edited collection *Tribal Worlds* does not depart from these tendencies altogether, it offers a great deal more. The book will be of particular interest to historians and anthropologists working in American Indian studies, yet it also speaks insightfully to ongoing conversations in political science, social theory, economics, and material culture. Moreover, with the collection’s consistently sophisticated and productively multivalent consideration of indigenous nationhood—a core and permeating concept for American Indian studies—it should draw the attention of students and scholars working across the interdisciplinary scope of American Indian studies.

Historian Hosmer and anthropologist Nesper bring together American Indian studies colleagues working in these disciplines to mount a collaborative exploration of “the meanings, dimensions, and manifestations, and general project of indigenous nationhood” (1). The book serves as the initial offering of the SUNY Press “Tribal Worlds” series, also helmed by Hosmer and Nesper, having grown out of scholarly networks associated with the Committee

on Institutional Cooperation American Indian Studies Consortium, the Newberry Library D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies, and the American Society for Ethnohistory. The collection's guiding questions, made explicit in the editors' introduction, include: "How are we to understand the reality of tribal nationhood in light of complex histories?"; "How is indigenous nationhood to be understood, defined, and observed?"; and "How have Indigenous nations interacted with colonizers (and with one another) and how have those interactions shaped, formed, or effectively created, the indigenous nations we observe today?" (3–4). Contributors address these questions through varying methods and in relation to diverse archives, and the editors invite and challenge readers "to read radically, going to the root of contemporary claims about both the present and the past in the papers collected here" (4). Indeed, one of this collection's overarching and unique strengths is the consistent attention paid to interpenetrating pasts, presents, and futures.

Following the editors' introduction, *Tribal Worlds* is presented in two parts: "Definitions" and "Manifestations." Although the collection takes neither full nor clear advantage of this two-part structure, these categories do serve as subtle organizing substrates for the contributions. Anthony F. C. Wallace opens the "Definitions" contingent with an anecdotal and descriptive affirmation of collective political life on the Tuscarora reservation. Wallace's chapter makes prominent use of a concept of "the rule of law" that shares little with that phrase's use in political science and law, and his explicitly utopian approach sheds simultaneous light on Tuscarora politics, the Haudenosaunee confederation, and Wallace's own scholarly dispositions regarding the practice and analysis of anthropology.

Gerald F. Reid follows with a detailed archival account of late-nineteenth-century Mohawk opposition to Canada's Indian Act system. These reserve-based resistance efforts, Reid reveals, reinvigorated confederate Rotinohsionni (Haudenosaunee) ties that settler policies had worked to minimize, ties that have persevered to continually shape current Haudenosaunee relations. Continuing in the vein of historical anthropology, Christina Gish Hill delivers an extensive and generative exploration of kinship as a central mechanism of Native nation sovereignty. Asserting a fundamental distinction between Native nations and nation-states, Hill emphasizes the obligations and entitlements of kinship and contrasts these against the abstractions of state citizenship. Hill continues by suggesting that only through a consideration of enabling kinship relations can we adequately understand and explain actual iterations of the phenomenon of language, land, history, and ceremony theorized by Tom Holm as "peoplehood."

The only chapter available elsewhere is Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark's contribution on Anishinaabe treaty-making, reprinted from *American Indian Quarterly*. This essay's archivally rich consideration of multi-scalar assertions of Anishinaabe nationhood serves this collection well, illustrating various and varying ways in which Native communities have in the past, and might in the present, strategically deploy their alliances, specificities, kinship relations, and nested collectivities in order to counter colonial efforts at consolidating Native polities and containing their prerogatives. Sebastian F. Braun concludes the "Definitions" portion of the collection with a theoretical rumination that quickly moves from Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" to the ideological commitments that adhere to philosophies of language. Braun's rather brief chapter conveys a partially compelling, yet partially perplexing, critique of cultural sovereignty as a sociopolitical force inextricably bound up in false (mis)perceptions of actual "reality."

With this critique, it becomes apparent that the collection might have aspired to more deliberate internal dialogue. While Braun emphasizes that investments in cultural sovereignty can readily become essentializing and delegitimizing liabilities, multiple other chapters in the collection invoke cultural sovereignty as fundamental premise. Yet these chapters do not refer to one another, nor does Braun situate his assertions in sufficiently clear relation to widely read, highly regarded, and generally affirmative theorizations of cultural sovereignty put forth by the likes of Vine Deloria Jr., David Wilkins, Wallace Coffey, and Rebecca Tsosie.

Joshua L. Reid opens the "Manifestations" section of *Tribal Worlds* with a concise and compelling look at enduring Makah maritime traditions that have in the past, and continue in the present, to be inflected with cultural, political, subsistence, and commercial contours. Rather than a romantic gaze upon some idealized history, Reid underscores the continuance of dynamic traditions through the present. Chantal Norrgard similarly eschews a sepia-toned, folklorist reading of the Works Progress Administration's "Chippewa Indian Historical Project," revealing instead the consistent assertions of Ojibwe participants regarding treaty rights and tribal sovereignty. Produced amid brash assaults emanating from the state of Wisconsin against on- and off-reservation treaty rights and also amid federal failures to facilitate codified tribal powers, the Chippewa Indian Historical Project served as a site for the development of what Norrgard describes as an ongoing and "distinct rhetoric on Ojibwe treaty rights and the practice of treaty-reserved activities that stressed the contemporary validity of these rights, as well as their importance to tribal economies and culture" (212).

Continuing within the contexts of Anishinaabe treaty rights and the WPA, Adriana Greci Green's contribution looks at nineteenth- and twentieth-century

gathering of natural resources for the purposes of handicraft production. Emphasizing cultural sovereignty, Green underscores the ability of Anishinaabe families and communities to maintain their seasonal migrations and to access treaty-reserved resources by selectively participating in settler-oriented markets and economic activities. While Green readily notes that WPA Indian Handicraft Project in no way fully addressed the lack of access to treaty rights, she does illuminate how the limited forays and perspectives facilitated by the project continued to inform assertions of treaty rights that, most recently, have resulted in a 2007 consent decree recognizing tribal hunting, fishing, and gathering rights in inland Michigan.

Jenny Tone-Pah-Hote concludes *Tribal Worlds* with an essay demonstrating how “Kiowas used material culture to create, sustain, and illustrate the importance of family and community ties.” For Tone-Pah-Hote, “Material culture symbolized and bound the Kiowa together as a people among others in early twentieth century Oklahoma” (254). With a primary emphasis on dress, Tone-Pah-Hote reveals the linkages between design elements and political discourses while also providing the collection’s most sustained consideration of gender. She reveals that Kiowa women’s dress most prominently conveys tribal specificity amid the transnational terrain of western Oklahoma and that through self-determined participation in expositions and fairs, “Kiowas negotiated the boundaries and bonds of the nation in conversation with other Native people” (260–261).

As its wide yet coherent range of voices and themes indicates, *Tribal Worlds* succeeds—notwithstanding its very minor blemishes—in coordinating an intertwined set of conversations regarding “the revitalization and reimagination of Indigenous political, cultural, and economic life” (3). Whether through its disciplinary relevance for historians and anthropologists, or its general conceptual resonance, this is a collection that *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* readers would do well to engage.

Joseph Bauerkemper

University of Minnesota Duluth

Who Is an Indian? Race, Place, and the Politics of Indigeneity in the Americas. By Maximilian C. Forte. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013. 272 pages. \$27.95 paper.

“Who is Indian?” is a question that interrogates claims to race and geography while it simultaneously seeks to settle entitlement to any cost or benefit associated with an authentic indigenous identity. “Who is Indian?” persists widely: