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The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929. By David A. Chang.

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being ignored for the sake of racial discussions and American Indian cultures studied extensively, yet racial uplift—key in current discussions of self-determination—being ignored for the sake of establishing “real” Indians. Scholars of American Indian studies should find this book tremendously useful in courses and comparative research—with non-Native populations—that examine the strengths and weakness of historical anthropological approaches to American Indian cultures and the roles that race has played in anthropological understandings of culture.

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**The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832–1929.** By David A. Chang. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. 312 pages. \$59.95 cloth; \$22.95 paper.

*The Color of the Land* examines the central role of land—its ownership and use—in the history of Indian Territory and, subsequently, during the early decades of Oklahoma statehood. Although David Chang has crafted a deft “regionally focused study of land tenure,” his aims are far broader (4). By studying the ways that Creek Indians, African Americans (both Creek and non-Creek), and whites organized and conceived of themselves with respect to land, Chang seeks to provide a fresh understanding of larger historical themes, including the conquering of the American West, the rise and fall of radical social movements, and “the making of black and white and Indian peoples” (4).

The strengths of Chang’s approach are many. By focusing on land, for example, he demonstrates how Creek communities in Indian Territory were shaped by the traditions and history of Creek towns in the American Southeast, where tribal members lived prior to the dispossession of their homes and forced removal westward during the early nineteenth century. *The Color of the Land* teases out the fault lines existing within Creek society before Removal and makes clear that these divisions persisted in the reconstituted Creek towns of Indian Territory. Whereas some Creeks had favored usufruct, or common ownership that rewarded those who worked or improved the land, others used slave labor on more extensive holdings in order to produce commodities for the market. Transplanted to Indian Territory, many Creeks continued to practice usufruct while others knitted together vast stretches of acreage in order to take advantage of a rising cattle industry that required routes through the region as well as booming markets for money-crop cultivation. In this, developments among the Creeks mirrored those in other parts

of the country—in other parts of the world—where newer technologies and capital formation placed stress on traditional small-plot farming.

*The Color of the Land* also offers a compelling portrait of the Creeks in the West, where they were unable to avoid the forces unleashed by nineteenth-century America: encroachment by non-Creek settlers, the Civil War, economic upheaval brought about by the railroads and oil exploration, and the government policy of allotment that targeted Indian lands. Oklahoma statehood in 1907 only escalated Creek dispossession as even purportedly protected allotments were taken from Indian control. Although others have told much of this story, particularly in the works of the historian Angie Debo, Chang's study provides fresh insights. For instance, he documents an unlikely story of Creek economic resistance in the wake of allotment. Caught between avaricious speculators seeking title to Indian lands, on one hand, and a federal government that prohibited or restricted sales of allotments to Indian wards, on the other, a number of Creeks rebuffed both and sought a middle strategy. Instead of selling to westering settlers or eking out a meager sustenance by tilling their allotments, these Creeks leased their allotments, thereby leveraging their remaining assets in order to profit from emerging, capital-intensive trends in farming and ranching or in the scramble that was western oil exploration. As Chang notes, not only did Creeks stymie the base efforts of land robbers and the progressive impulses of a government hoping to remake Indians along the lines of white farmers, but the way that Creeks held and used their land also mattered to the state of Oklahoma.

But *The Color of the Land* recounts more than merely the loss of Creek lands and the sorrows that attended dispossession and poverty. Chang charts how the wide-scale economic remapping of the West led Creeks to reformulate notions of race and nation. Historically a heterogeneous people, Creeks had accepted members without regard to ancestry, typically through marriage. But as their lands were plundered, older views of Creek identity—and of Creek racial politics—came under acute assault. White Oklahomans, driven by a boundless appetite for land, treated Creeks and other Oklahoma Indians in an appalling, even criminal, fashion. As a result, Creeks endured distinctly second-class citizenship. In turn, many Creeks developed increasingly exclusionary views of others, African Americans in particular.

The most far-reaching aim of *The Color of the Land* is to widen the lens on the tumultuous forty-year period between allotment and the Great Depression and to intertwine the Creeks' story with that of their African American and white neighbors. Although the close proximity in which Oklahoma's triracial population lived has provided a fertile laboratory for social scientists, Chang's effort to weave the stories of Oklahoma's peoples together is ambitious. To this end, he tells how competing visions of the African American nation—between

and among followers of Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and back-to-Africa promoters—played out in Oklahoma's African American communities while individual African Americans came to grips with their unfulfilled quest for individual land ownership. That this debate occurred in an atmosphere of increasing hostility among Oklahoma's whites toward African Americans, combined with evolving Creek attitudes toward their African American members and neighbors, offers the reader novel insights.

*The Color of Land* provides further historical texture in its discussion of the hardships endured by many white Oklahomans, themselves hardly a monolithic population. As Chang documents, the prevailing image of white Sooners plunging into green valleys in order to stake their claims was belied by a reality in which dreams of private landownership remained beyond the grasp of most. Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, many settlers became tenant farmers or industrial workers in the oil fields. In these circumstances, whites found themselves torn between competing allegiances to race and class. Although white Oklahomans were exhorted to find unity in their whiteness, economic hardship drove many to embrace emerging socialist doctrines. Oklahoma was home to one of the largest Ku Klux Klan chapters in the nation and to an equally vibrant socialist party. As Chang notes, a newfound class consciousness among white workers threatened not only capitalist ideologies but also racial hierarchies as industrial and agrarian laborers found solidarity with men of other races and thereby challenged white supremacy.

The results of Chang's ambitious efforts are somewhat uneven. For example, the willingness and ability of the Creeks to accept African Americans and others as members has been held previously to reveal a good deal about the nature of Creek social structures and political organization. But less has been said about what that same acceptance revealed about African Americans, and *The Color of the Land* does not shed further light on that issue. In addition, despite Chang's goal of integrating the narratives of Creeks, African Americans, and whites in Oklahoma, his descriptions more often tend to proceed along parallel tracks. But the fact that Chang falls short is hardly a criticism given the overall contributions of this well-documented and fluidly written book.

I am compelled to make one negative observation of *The Color of the Land*. As noted previously, Chang is not the first scholar to explore Indians' conceptions of race or examine Indians' efforts to use race for political purposes. But the number of studies on the subject, especially those focusing on Indian Territory and Oklahoma, is not overly large. Accordingly, the reader of *The Color of the Land* should expect to find a complete bibliography. Chang's work, however, contains no reference to at least one earlier book that also focused on how Oklahoma's Indians, including Creeks, conceived of race and used race in political ways for political ends. (Full disclosure: that work is my own—Erik

M. Zissu, *Blood Matters: The Five Civilized Tribes and the Search for Unity in the Twentieth Century*, 2001.) The omission is pronounced given that Chang's study addresses the same time period and many of the same events and themes as that work, including an extended analysis of Indians' evolving views of race in Oklahoma.

Erik M. Zissu

Stillman, Friedman & Shechtman, P. C.

**Contributions to Ojibwe Studies, Essays 1934–1972.** By A. Irving Hallowell. Edited by Jennifer S. H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 2010. 664 pages. \$50.00 paper.

For the last forty years or so, many Canadians have been distancing themselves from the artifice of Europe and seeking a more natural coexistence in their North American environment. Globalization critic John Ralston Saul recently captured the spirit of this impulse when he declared, "We are not a civilization of British or French or European inspiration," but rather "we are a people of aboriginal inspiration organized around a concept of peace, fairness and good government" (*Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada*, 2008, xi–xii). Although capturing the neoromantic spirit of the moment perfectly, Saul's statement is surprising nonetheless due to the fact that, until recently, at least some Canadian elements have studiously if quietly avoided configuring themselves on any single basis and particularly avoided configuring themselves in the terms of American ideology. Let me try to elaborate.

Although the original charter for the Hudson's Bay Company provided for rights to colonize and trade, in 1679 company leadership passed to a group that was "willing to forego colonization ventures and concentrate their efforts on building up a profitable trade." As Brown explains in her justly renowned comparative analysis of the corporate cultures of the Hudson's Bay and Northwest companies, "They and their successors in fact laid the basis of a long persisting company resistance to the planting in its territories of settlements that would, it was argued, be heavy financial burdens and strain the meager subsistence resources of the north" (Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in the Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, 1980, 9). The company was so intent on engineering the conservation of the Aboriginal residents as trappers and traders (to ensure the profitability of the enterprise) that they "demanded both celibacy and chastity from its employees," forbidding sexual relations with European women and women "who were members of the Indian groups on whose goodwill and cooperation the trade depended" (Brown,