



**Circle of Goods: Women, Work, and Welfare in a
Reservation Community (Suny Series in
Anthropological Studies of Contemporary Issues)
(Suny Series in the Anthropology of Work)**

Tressa Berman

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Studies how women in a reservation economy have creatively responded to federal policy.

Circle of Goods compiles the stories of Native American women and examines their kinship, wage work, and informal economies. Responding to the upheavals of reservation life brought about by federal policies—from commodity rations to welfare reform—Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara women, each with distinct histories and cultural practices, stand at the center of the Fort Berthold reservation economy. Berman introduces the concept of ceremonial relations of production to explain the contradictory effects of economic incentives and cultural commitments, and argues that the historical movement of people and goods through a series of structured dependencies often gives rise to creative strategies for survival and new social identities.

"...[*Circle of Goods*] makes an important contribution to our understanding of contemporary reservation economies in the Northern Plains, a subject that has received insufficient attention from anthropologists."—*Great Plains Research*

"This book makes a major contribution in showing how the ceremonial is political in American Indian communities. Professor Berman develops the concept of ceremonial relations of production to explore how people produce and distribute essential goods and services on the Fort Berthold Reservation, and she goes beyond that system of ceremonial relations to explore the political consequences of these arrangements: the effects upon gender relations and claims by Native people within the larger context of the United States. In pursuing this, the book is an important milestone in the study both of gender relations among North American Indians, and in the study of race, class and gender in America in general." — Thomas Biolsi, author of *Deadliest Enemies: Law and the Making of Race Relations on and off Rosebud Reservation*

"Anyone interested in contemporary Native American life, cultural identity, and gender studies will want to read this book. Berman shows how the structure of reservation economies shapes, and is shaped, by women in ceremonial, subsistence, and market economies. Her ability to show, through excellent case interviews, how identity is multiple and dynamic is well presented." — Jeffery Hanson, Tribal Anthropologist, Mescalero Apache Tribe

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