

ter ni un conflit idéologique irréductible entre chamanisme inuit et religion chrétienne, ni une franche opposition à l'égard de l'action missionnaire. Il serait alors d'autant plus vain de dresser l'un contre l'autre le chamanisme et le christianisme que les témoignages montrent que des chamanes ont participé au changement en modifiant leurs pratiques. S'il est juste de considérer que la rencontre entre chamanisme et christianisme a suscité un bouillonnement de la pensée et qu'elle s'est traduite par une grande inventivité, la voix de ceux et celles pour lesquels le sentiment de perte et d'humiliation l'a emporté mériterait d'être rendue plus audible afin d'apprécier la complexité du phénomène, sans pour autant céder à la victimisation, une attitude jugée incapacitante par beaucoup d'Inuit.

L'ouvrage s'attache à définir, à redéfinir et à préciser les concepts et les notions qui le traversent et le structurent. Cette entreprise d'élucidation n'est pas une mince affaire, comme le montre la discussion consacrée aux non humains qui, tout en étant à la marge des humains et hors du social, participent à la communauté inuit de par leur intégration, à des degrés divers, au système de parenté. La difficulté est accentuée par le fait que les catégories distinguées sont constamment retravaillées en fonction de l'expérience personnelle, des circonstances, de l'état des connaissances ou de l'appartenance régionale. C'est ainsi qu'il existe divers cas de figure : appellations différentes désignant une même entité; esprits individualisés offrant des traits similaires aux esprits représentant un peuple; versatilité de certains non-humains affichant tantôt leur hostilité, tantôt leur bienveillance et les rendant ainsi inclassables. L'absence d'attributs univoques, le glissement d'une catégorie à l'autre ou le surgissement de catégories inédites (les anges et les démons) ne gênent en rien l'intelligence de la relation aux non humains, laquelle est soumise, comme d'autres phénomènes, au changement. Soucieux de traduire au mieux la posture intellectuelle inuit, les auteurs mettent l'accent sur un trait partagé : l'identité du mode d'existence des humains et des non-humains (habitat, économie de chasse, alliances matrimoniales). Face à une question qui conserve encore ses zones d'ombre, puisque les non-humains échappent aux injonctions rituelles et aux contraintes spatiotemporelles, les auteurs réalisent une ethnographie la plus exhaustive possible, tout en laissant un espace raisonnable aux certitudes et aux incertitudes, en se gardant des excès interprétatifs et en évitant les surgénéralisations. Ils sont en cela en phase avec le discours inuit qui se méfie des conclusions définitives. La question du sens à donner aux recherches tentant de faire coïncider les perspectives exprimées par les interlocuteurs sur le terrain avec les objectifs scientifiques se trouve une fois de plus posée. Les auteurs font le pari de reconnaître la validité des savoirs inuit et d'en faire la matrice d'organisation de l'ouvrage. Ce dernier, par son format même, nourrit la question des modalités de l'énonciation de l'altérité, celle des formes d'interaction les plus appropriées sur le terrain et celle de la restitution des résultats.

La dernière partie traite d'un phénomène observable à l'échelle pan-arctique : la résurgence du religieux sous l'in-

fluence des églises pentecôtistes et évangéliques. Implantées depuis 1970 dans l'Arctique canadien, ces églises attirent peu les aînés, inquiets des excès de ferveur et convaincus que le chamanisme demeure actif même en l'absence de rituels publics. En revanche, le renouveau religieux attire les autres générations ainsi que la classe politique qui y voit un accès à la promotion sociale. Une fois de plus, les Inuit vivent une période d'effervescence et de tiraillements. Cette présence concomitante des croyances ne semble toutefois pas freiner les efforts d'intelligence mutuelle et d'expression commune. Bien que le chamanisme soit associé au mal et à Satan, les rituels pentecôtistes et évangéliques partagent des affinités avec le chamanisme : la purification de la terre contaminée par les actions humaines, par exemple. Pour sa part, le gouvernement du Nunavut favorise la diffusion (orale et écrite) des savoirs du passé pour renforcer le sentiment d'appartenance à une culture distincte.

Inuit Shamanism and Christianity s'accompagne d'une bibliographie étoffée et d'un appareil de notes fourni. Il mérite d'être mentionné que les auteurs révèlent l'identité de chacun et chacune des interlocuteurs et interlocutrices inuit et leur assurent une véritable présence. L'ouvrage présente une singularité méthodologique inspirée de la nature et des résultats du travail ethnographique. Contrairement à la majorité des analyses consacrées au fait religieux inuit contemporain, les notions de syncrétisme, de revitalisation, de réinvention de la tradition ne sont pas mobilisées. Les auteurs contournent un piège qui risquerait d'enfermer les dynamiques religieuses inuit dans un cadre inadapté aux faits observés. L'ouvrage est donc utile à plus d'un titre.

Référence

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2007 Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic. Ressource électronique, <http://www.arcticlivingconditions.org/>, consultée le 12 novembre 2010.

Frédéric B. Laugrand and Jarich G. Oosten (eds.), *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity: Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010, 467 pages.

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The word *shaman* comes from the language of the Inuit groups Evenk and Eveny, Tungus-speaking reindeer herders and hunters in Siberia. Eveny pronounce it as *haman*, and this translates to "a person who knows." Laugrand and Oosten are seasoned anthropologists and have published recent books on Inuit shamanism, conversion, and Christianity including *Representing Tuurgait*, *Mourir et Renaître* and *Keeping the*

Faith. In this new book they have produced a remarkable study of shamanism and the move to Christianity among Inuit in Nunavut. Their data are based on interviews with a great many elders recalling their childhoods going back to the 1930s and 1940s, and from a number of elders' workshops in several communities from 2000-2008. Elders were selected because they are the respected keepers of knowledge and wisdom and have had direct experience with shamanism and early Christianity. The information also comes from accounts of early ethnographers and explorers from Parry and Lyon in 1822 to Hall and Boas of the later 19th century, Rasmussen in the 1920s, and missionaries including Peck from the late 1800s and early 1900s. All had observed and written about Inuit shamanism or the transition to Christianity. This book is the most thorough account of shamanism and early Christianity among Inuit to date.

The Inuit shaman's roles were primarily to help procure game, heal the sick, correct the weather and protect the community from evil spirits. The shaman or *angakkuq* worked with helping spirits or *tuurngait*, who were often animals but could be anything non-human. He or she would visit the great beings like Sedna, the sea mother who controlled sea animals (and according to some Inuit groups also land animals), Sila the spirit of the air who controlled the weather, or the siblings moon man and sun woman who could help with hunting. These great spirits would punish people for violating taboos causing poor hunting and bad weather. This is where the shaman intervened. When the shaman returned from these visits, or was healing someone, confession of transgressions concerning taboos was necessary. The taboos were many and covered numerous aspects of life from hunting to eating to sewing to sex, when under certain conditions it was forbidden to do many things.

The missionaries in Nunavut, starting with Peck in 1894, were against shamanism and then popular spouse exchanges. The shaman was seen to do the work of the devil. Missionaries stopped many practices related to Inuit spirituality including singing. There were Anglican and Catholic missionaries who competed with each other and had slightly different ways of working with Inuit people. Anglican missionaries encouraged Inuit to become Christian preachers, including shamans who were already leaders, and linked Christianity with civilization to help Inuit become Westernized. Catholic missionaries did not delegate religious authority but were more likely to adopt Inuit lifestyles. Most of the Inuit practices the missionaries were against went underground, but shamans never disappeared.

Laugrand and Oosten provide 12 chapters covering Inuit life in much depth during the period of early Christianity. Shamanism initially continued with Christianity but then declined. One chapter details relationships between shamans and missionaries. Inuit winter feasts, relationships with animals in hunting and the great spirits of the sea and sky are covered in other chapters. Non-human beings on the land and in the sea are described. Shamanic initiation is discussed using

individual accounts including the role of visions and dreaming. One chapter deals with healing as a sociocosmic process, and another covers the power of words and objects. Head-lifting as a healing practice and drum dancing are given a chapter. And, there is a chapter on contemporary Pentecostal and evangelical movements in Nunavut, which some elders see as being close to shamanism because of the shouting that takes place in churches.

Writing on Christian conversion of indigenous peoples often examines why some groups convert while others do not, or why some, like the Inuit, convert relatively quickly. Amazonian Indians and Australian Aboriginal people generally resisted Christianity, and some argue this was because of a fundamental mismatch. In Donald Pollock's analysis of Amazonian Indian non-conversion, he found that "they preferred their own company" (Wood 1993:308). Laugrand and Oosten show how many aspects of Christianity were compatible with the Inuit worldview. Some missionaries in Nunavut competed directly with shamans and many Inuit thought of missionaries as shamans. Inuit made decisions about conversion on their own terms and they did not convert because they wanted to join white or *Qallunaat* society. The idea of the world ending imminently was a belief that was easily adopted by Inuit as it fit with the possibility of Sila ending the world. Inuit preachers were adapting Christianity to their own traditions and shamans were converting, with some of them still practising shamanism out of sight of the missionaries. Christian spirituality emphasized helping as did the *tuurngait*. The giving up of taboos was seen as a relief and the transition practice of *siqqitiq* that included eating the heart of a seal emphasized this, as eating the heart had been taboo. Confession as healing had been a traditional Inuit practice with shamans. Hymns and prayers were similar to *irinaliutiit*, powerful words that could help with hunting or safe return from the land, or help in other ways, and they were like the old technique of *qinnгааq* or praying by shouting. The Pentecostal and evangelical movements link sins to previous generations, similar to the old belief that one's wrongdoings would affect future generations negatively.

Does this explain why Inuit converted so rapidly? Laugrand and Oosten show how conversion was not entirely a smooth process. Richling (1989) reported that Inuit dreams, recorded by missionaries, included fear of loss of family should they not convert to Christianity. Malaurie (2007) has written that discord was created in extended families when some converted and some did not, or when some became Anglican and others Catholic. Rasing (1994) found that converted Inuit would at times avoid their heathen kin. In Igloolik, hostility was present between Anglican and Catholic Inuit until relatively recently. In *The Other Side of Eden*, Hugh Brody (2000) writes that the missionaries were "the advance guard and companions of colonial processes." It was Catholic missionaries who began some of the residential schools, including Chesterfield Inlet where much sexual abuse took place. Others argue that some groups of Indigenous people were "vulnerable" to missionar-

ies. Epidemic diseases were manifest in the North among Inuit during the time of missionaries. Did this make them vulnerable? There are few negative memories among elders in this book about the conversion process. Perhaps they were too young to have been aware of how the missionaries affected Inuit families. The most noticeable effect of colonialism on indigenous peoples has been on family life. This is not surprising for a family-based collectivist culture. Perhaps the seeking of family harmony was an influence in the rapid spread of Christianity among Inuit.

Asad (1996) proposed that studies of Christian conversion should address questions such as "what kind of epistemic structures emerged from the evangelical encounter? What new possibilities emerged for people to constitute themselves? What were the new forms of consciousness?" In this book, Laugrand and Oosten address these questions. While most Inuit today are Christian, they have retained many of their traditional beliefs and practices. The belief in special beings on the land and in the sea is widespread, and these beings are still being seen. The naming of a baby after a deceased person, the *atik*, continues as a form of incarnation or reincarnation, extending kinship ties and providing people so named with protective spirits through these names to help them in life. Drum-dancing has been revived and is now a strong cultural icon among Inuit. Interest in shamanism is returning, and an Inuit leader with a shamanic family history in one Nunavut community told me they should create a "shaman church" to fit with Christianity. Indigenous peoples have generally not conformed to Christian missionaries' notions of the exclusivity of religious affiliation (Pollock 1993). The accounts by Inuit elders and early explorers and ethnographers in *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity* are richly detailed. This erudite book takes a deep look into Inuit spirituality and should be on the shelf of anyone interested in Inuit or indigenous shamanism, Christianity, conversion, and colonialism and imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries.

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