Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Nadasdy, Paul, *Sovereignty's Entailments: First Nation State Formation in the Yukon*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017, 396 pages.

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In *Sovereignty's Entailments*, Paul Nadasdy leverages an impressive array of scholarship from political theory, Indigenous studies and anthropology to caution against the widespread embrace of "Indigenous sovereignty" as the best vehicle for Indigenous empowerment, especially in Canada's Yukon territory. The book is ethnographically grounded in Nadasdy's two decades of engagement with First Nation state-formation in southwest Yukon, including his work as Kluane First Nation's (KFN) official representative on two intergovernmental committees charged with implementing and reviewing its self-government agreements. This experience has afforded Nadasdy an insider's view of the transformations wrought as KFN finalised its land claims and took over many state functions from the Canadian and territorial governments. The book argues that these transformations, particularly "in Yukon Indian peoples' ways of relating to one another, the land, and animals," (38) are related to the very exercise of sovereignty as entailed by KFN's adoption of the agreements. Although he claims to defer judgment on whether sovereignty's entailments will turn out to be positive or negative in the end, insofar as Yukon Indian people absolutely did not organise themselves into sovereign states before colonialism, Nasdasdy concludes unequivocally that "the Yukon agreements serve as extensions of the colonial project" (315).

The book's provocative introduction and first chapter on "Sovereignty" establish Nadasdy's two key theoretical assumptions: the first is that sovereignty is the essential mode of expression of the modern territorial state (11–12); the second is that its cultural entailments are so fundamentally opposed to those of indigeneity that Indigenous people cannot adopt the mantle of sovereignty without undergoing a "cultural revolution" (5). Most of the remainder of the book is dedicated to describing this revolution with respect to three key cultural dimensions of the sovereign state – territory, citizenship and nation – as these are brought into being through the Yukon agreements. These three "entailments" are addressed in Chapters 2 through 4, while a fifth core chapter, called "Time," combines a critique of the nationalism of historical time with an investigation into the temporality of bureaucratic wildlife management. Throughout the text, Nadasdy juxtaposes scholarly debates on the meaning of these core concepts in political theory and anthropology with evidence from the ethnographic record concerning pre-contact Yukon society. He then describes how the entailments of sovereignty as described in the first set of literatures are wreaking havoc on the ways of being documented in the second set of literatures. This last component relies on Nadasdy's own long-term fieldwork in the Yukon, and it is here that he is at his best: in relating the stories of KFN citizens' own struggles to come to terms with their new political reality, he amplifies their insights as to the meaning of sovereignty in practice into a devastating critique of the state as such.

One of the most poignant of these stories involves a former chief of KFN, Joe Johnson (to whose memory Nadasdy's book is dedicated), becoming so outraged that a neighbouring First Nation offered him only a week-long permit to hunt in its territory that he decided to apply for a hunting licence from the Yukon government instead (123–125). Nadasdy recalls being astonished when he first learned that Johnson, who had personally striven to achieve self-government for his own First Nation, apparently preferred to submit to the rule of the colonial state rather than the rule of another First Nation – one whose citizenry included many of Johnson's own close relatives. The paradox implicit in Johnson's decision may well have inspired the book as a whole, and Nadasdy returns to this story again and again as a prime example of how state bureaucracies – regardless of whether they technically belong to First Nations or not – do not merely overlay but radically disrupt precolonial forms of Indigenous political organisation. Indeed, in the years that followed Johnson's decision, KFN, which in Johnson's time had granted unlimited hunting permits to neighbouring First Nations' citizens, became concerned about over-hunting and stopped issuing permits to non-citizens altogether. Nadasdy interprets this as a decision to prioritise the territorial control necessary to maintain state sovereignty over the human and human–animal relationships whose distinctiveness from colonial accountings once constituted KFN's raison d'être (132).

At times, Nadasdy is careful to note that the differences between Yukon Indian and statist ways of being in the world are not absolute. For instance, the opposition between state and kinship-based modes of political organisation that is at issue in Joe Johnson's dilemma above comes up for both European and settler-states as they struggle to determine who does and does not belong to the nation (146–149). At other times, Nadasdy seems keen to discover the kernel of absolute difference hiding amidst the exigencies of decades of political struggle. In the

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chapter on "Time," he contrasts the "circular" time of reincarnation, which structures Yukon Indian peoples' relations with non-human persons, with the "cyclical" time of sustained yield, which supports bureaucratic wildlife management. While providing a richly ethnographic account of how these different ways of relating to animals uneasily coexist in negotiations over resource management budgets and catch-and-release fishing, Nadasdy nevertheless argues that KFN's very participation in the space-time of bureaucratic decision making inevitably diminishes its constituents' chances of relating to "land and animals – and to one another – as their grandparents did" (298).

This zero-sum judgment is informed by the book's distinctive articulation of critical and Indigenous political theory with anthropology, which Nadasdy deploys to pinpoint Indigenous peoples' relationship to non-human animals as the ultimate, positive basis of their exclusion from the sovereign community: "More precisely, because such beliefs – and the practices based upon them – by definition stand 'outside' the relation of sovereignty, indigenous people . . . whose hunting practices, say, are rooted in a different temporal order, or who view animal people as powerful political actors, necessarily place themselves 'outside' the Hobbesian relation of sovereignty" (71). Nadasdy is correct to note, as the political theorists cited in support of this claim do, that the modern concept of sovereignty is based on the historical exclusion of both non-human animals and Indigenous peoples in theory and practice. There is also no reason to doubt the significance of animal-persons for many northern Indigenous political orders, as the ethnographic record affirms. "Such beliefs," however, can be seen to be the cause of Yukon Indian people's struggles with the state in the present only by bracketing the violent colonial histories that have brought Hobbes's dystopian vision to bear on Indigenous political orders in the first place.

In order to present his contemporary ethnographic data about the myriad difficulties associated with First Nation state-formation in the Yukon as if he were reporting on the original imposition of the state onto a non-state society, Nadasdy indeed brackets both colonialism and history itself. He focuses exclusively on those aspects of Yukon Indian culture that are documented to have existed prior to colonialism and that are defined in maximum contrast to state forms. Many of these are marked by the absence of some feature obviously necessary to the state, such as clearly defined territory, coercive authority or exclusive membership criteria (for example, 97–104). As a result, the historical imposition of colonial authority, while destructive, does not appear transformative, since the colonial state remains constitutively external to the Indigenous culture it overrules without consent. The new First Nations, however, which are born of both the colonial state and Indigenous struggles against it, have required Yukon Indian people to subject themselves to the requirements of the state (299; and see above) – that very thing against which their indigeneity has already been defined (49, n5). In this frame, it is no wonder that Nadasdy finds Indigenous sovereignty in the Yukon to be "something of a contradiction in terms" (303).

While Nadasdy boldly dismisses history itself as nothing more than the temporal basis of the modern nation-state (247–254), neither anthropology nor its object, culture, are subjected to similarly trenchant critique. This leads him to accept anthropology's signature discovery of Indigenous culture as an alternative to the state as an insight into the nature of reality rather than, as a generation of post-colonial criticism has emphasised, a symptom of anthropology's strategic confinement to what Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2003) aptly named "the savage slot." In Trouillot's reading, the savage is necessary to the West not as its actual opposite, but as the utopian projection of its unfulfilled universalism. The slot corrals the careful ethnography that characterises much anthropological research into a form suitable for the West to consolidate its singularity and justify its colonial expansion. That anarchist thinkers have found as much fodder in anthropological descriptions of "stateless societies" as liberal political theorists did in accounts of the "noble" or "ignoble savage" (304–305) redeems the discipline somewhat from its complicity in colonial projects but does nothing to counteract the structure of the slot or the primacy of the West. Thus, the intellectual interchange between anthropology and political anarchism discussed briefly in Nadasdy's concluding chapter, "Anti-Sovereignty," renders the painstaking argumentation of the rest of the book almost superfluous: one does not need to do empirical research to find that a quintessentially stateless society of animist hunters, as documented in the southern Yukon before colonisation, and affirmed by anthropological categories (and colonial hierarchies), is antithetical to the modern territorial state as such.

Despite Nadasdy's own conclusions, the original ethnographic research presented in *Sovereignty's Entailments* need not merely reinforce anthropology's disciplinary claim to the vanishing indigene. On the contrary, whether it is in Joe Johnson's defiance of another First Nation's permitting process, or hunters "cultivating a Yukon-wide network of 'hunting buddies'" to avoid the need to apply for permits (131), or KFN's refusal to draw a boundary separating itself from White River First Nation (which it completely overlaps as a result; 207–216), Nadasdy's ethnography shows the repeated failure of the colonial state to fully subdue the complex and ever-changing orders of people, animals and land in the Yukon. Whether this sign of colonialism's limitations should be attributed to a form of Indigenous sovereignty or Indigenous anti-sovereignty, or to the fundamental incoherence of Enlightenment humanism, is probably less important than the extraordinary fact that it is occurring at all under circumstances of such profound inequality as continue to exist between the settler-colonial Canadian state and the First Nations it has so recently deigned to recognise. Ironically, this more optimistic way of interpreting KFN's historic struggle against the colonial state demands a shift in emphasis from the entailments of the state to those of colonialism. Unlike the abstract concept of the state, however, colonialism's entailments are hard to track without recourse to the possibility – at the very least – of the diverse Indigenous sovereignties they have historically attempted to displace.

Sovereignty's Entailments demonstrates both the promise and peril of applying anthropological knowledge to the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state. On the one hand, in its careful ethnography and bold engagement with political theory, it shows that contemporary Indigenous struggles for autonomy indeed challenge the very basis of modern territorial states' claims to knowledge, power and authority. On the other hand, in tying the expression of Indigenous autonomy to the continuation of pre-contact forms of political organisation and cultural expression, it delegitimises many Indigenous claims to state-based political authority. In other words, insofar as Nadasdy deploys KFN's experience to leverage a critique

of the state, he suggests an opening for Indigenous political action beyond the state; insofar as he secures this critique to a definition of indigeneity as absolute difference, he participates in the "strangulation" (Simpson 2014) of multifarious Indigenous sovereignties. Nadasdy is well aware of the two edges of his critical sword, and the book is littered with protestations against this more restrictive interpretation of his argument. A graduate student or very advanced undergraduate in anthropology, Indigenous studies or political science who is capable of discriminating between Nadasdy's critique and its less desirable entailments, so to speak, would profit from a close reading of the text, especially the introduction and the erudite Chapter 3 on "Citizenship." Given the colonialist assumptions still structuring the wider discourse on Indigenous sovereignty in Canada today, however, due caution should be exercised if assigning *Sovereignty's Entailments* to undergraduates unprepared to undertake such a critical reading.

References

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Ives, Sarah, *Steeped in Heritage: The Racial Politics of South African Rooibos Tea*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017, 255 pages.

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As African nations confront population growth, inequality, job shortages and mounting climate change, struggles over land mark social, economic and historical dilemmas from Cairo to the Cape. *Steeped in Heritage*, an ethnographic journey through the arid northern farmlands of South Africa's Western Cape Province, traces the global commodification of rooibos tea back to the fraught landscape in which it grows. Indigenous to this region of South Africa – a unique biome found nowhere else on earth – rooibos was domesticated in the nineteenth century by Dutch settlers who conscripted Khoisan hunter-gatherers as their labour. Due to violence and disease, the Khoisan people are said to be extinct in the Western Cape, though their Coloured descendants still perform most labour on Afrikaner-owned commercial rooibos farms. In claiming that the Khoisan are extinct from the Cape, Afrikaners identify as first-comers to the ecosystem and utilise the emotive powers of the rooibos plant as a political symbol of their belonging. A tough, stocky plant yielding a tea touted for its nutritive properties, rooibos is perfectly adapted, it appears, to a landscape in which little else survives. Afrikaner farmers see their familial histories and cultural values embodied in the plant. Cultivating rooibos is, for them, "a holy act" (22), even if Coloured labourers perform the work. Drawing on a robust assemblage of theories from Helmreich, Foucault, Malkki and Marx, Ives explores how rooibos has not only been grown but also *acculturated* to invoke the belonging of white farmers to the region. By the mid-twentieth century, rooibos tea had gained the status of South Africa's national drink, becoming a staple in schools, medical institutions, the military and many white homes. Since the end of apartheid and the neoliberalisation of South Africa's economy, the rooibos industry has successfully marketed rooibos as a tea for global consumption, using images of Khoisan peoples to mark an exotic and organic origin.

The product of a doctoral dissertation study supervised at Stanford by James Ferguson, the book's most valuable contribution is its animation of Coloureds' voices within the rooibos landscape. Stigmatised for over a century as a product of miscegenation between white and non-white people, Coloured South Africans face unique forms of marginalisation at a time when opportunities for some South Africans expand. In addition to convincing that the rooibos industry makes exploitative use of Coloured labour, Ives explains that Coloured people who grow their own rooibos are disadvantaged within South Africa's affirmative action programs. Ives contends that the African National Congress has tried to drive a wedge between white farmers and Coloured workers and warns that Coloured people stand to gain little from the land distributions that some now demand in their name. In the process, Ives illuminates, for the less familiar reader, the discourse behind South Africa's so-called "coloured problem" (34) – of how to envision a place within a nation for a people with no history or "precolonial reality" (36). As land relations in the Western Cape shift due to the effects of climate change, some Coloured workers are able to purchase land and are successful as small-scale rooibos growers. In response, white farmers are employing genome science and satellite technology to confine the plant, and argue that rooibos grown outside its native land is illegitimate, much like Coloured people.

Offering vivid insight into this socially and ecologically unique region of South Africa, Ives makes effective use of her own whiteness in this timely ethnography of difference. Ives gives a voice to Afrikaner farmers coping with profound social change and conveys in detail how racism still runs deep in some corners of South Africa. The claim that little has changed since apartheid is heard often among rooibos farmers in this region; Ives's descriptions of Coloured workers being infantilised by white employers supports this claim. In 1985, Vincent Crapanzano explored the banality of racism under late apartheid – how racism was "often lost to the social actor through the baroque texture of his everyday life" (xii). In the rooibos-growing region, the texture of white lives is consubstantial with the dusty ground. As an anthropologist specialising in the politics of land and whiteness in East Africa, I see *Steeped in Heritage* as articulating closely with a dilemma seen in white-dominated sectors of the region: how do whites make themselves politically discrete while simultaneously asserting that their alienation from land would be economically and environmentally ruinous for others?

One challenge that Ives confronts throughout her critique of the rooibos industry is in amplifying the voices of Coloured workers for whom belonging presents its own predicaments. Though most South Africans take for granted that Coloured people are descendants of Khoisan, Coloured communities are hesitant to invoke indigenous rights the way creole or Métis peoples in other regions have done. Describing the relentless and poorly compensated labour Coloureds have expended in