

debates that Canada's Arctic Aboriginal peoples were intensely interested and engaged in. There was also little discussion of the National Energy Policy and the "Canada lands" controversy that upset northern Canadians. Another oversight appeared to be that the lack of comment on the establishment of the Northern (military) Region and Northern Region Headquarters in 1970, which was a significant effort by Canada to assert sovereignty through the Canadian Armed Forces.

Grant has written a very readable book that provides a useful background for understanding northern sovereignty issues. It would make a very good textbook for courses in northern and circumpolar history as it provides an excellent overview from which students, utilizing the extensive reference section, could delve into their specific research interests. The book is supplemented with excellent maps and photographs that engage the reader and assist with understanding the events referred to in the text.

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*Inuit Shamanism and Christianity: Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century.* By Frédéric B. Laugrand & Jarich G. Oosten. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010. xx + 468 pp.

Frédéric B. Laugrand is currently a professor of anthropology at Université Laval in Québec, Canada, and Jarich Oosten is a professor of anthropology at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Their book examines Inuit *angakkuuniq* (shamanism) and mission work throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in what is present-day Nunavut. Focused on the dominant Protestant and Catholic denominations operating in the area—the Anglican Church (and to a lesser extent the Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches) and the Roman Catholic Church—Laugrand and Oosten locate the place of shamanism in the missionary enterprise. Their work shows that shamanism is compatible with Christianity, thus challenging the master narrative of colonization, which presupposes that the advent of missionaries and their mission plans led to the demise of Indigenous cosmological beliefs and practices. Drawing from oral testimonies, ethnographic material, and archival records, Laugrand and Oosten reveal that shamanism is alive and well, as Inuit people have long incorporated elements of Christianity into this belief system in a bid to reinforce pre-existing cultural traits within their cosmology. The transition to Christianity then was not an act of weakness or compromise, but rather one of strength. Their work could not have come at a better time given that Inuit history and culture have taken on renewed

prominence in contemporary Canadian politics. This fact is made evident by the establishment of Nunavut in 1999, an event which in itself constitutes a challenge to the role of culture in the process of colonization and resistance to it.

In their approach, Laugrand and Oosten accord an important role to the ways that Inuit people—elders, youth, generations between, and across locations—interpret their society and its history. Such a perspective comes to life in the authors' discussion of Inuit *qaujimajatuqangit* (the traditions of the past that are considered still useful today), a concept supported by the Nunavut Social Development Council. While the authors identify with the sentiment behind the Nunavut government's view of elders as fragile repositories of memories of the past, they have cautioned that such an approach skews the fact that Inuit culture had always ensured its continuity by transformation and integration of new ideas (385). In addition, they employ the field of anthropological study approach developed by Marcel Maus and Leiden anthropologists. That is to say, Laugrand and Oosten take into account "the variations and patterns, the diversity and richness, of the cultural variations in the whole area under study" (30). Under study are, more generally, the Kivalliq, North Baffin, and South Baffin Island areas, with a focus on the profoundly complicated system of interaction between places and peoples, supported by a rich availability of sources. A central theme in this project is the notion of autonomy as a key element in the decision making and actions of the Inuit, with individual rather than collective agency being primary for them as well as for missionaries. Certainly, Christianity brings changes, but how that change is perceived is the question.

The book is divided into twelve chapters grouped in four parts. Part One, "*Angakkuuniq* and Christianity," shows that contrary to claims by missionary sources, the "conversion" of Inuit people could not have happened without the active involvement of Inuit leaders and shamans. The example of the adaptation of Christmas celebrations to Indigenous contexts elucidates this point. Elders' unease about the commercial element of this Christian celebration was attenuated by it being perceived on other levels (gift giving and games) as a continuation of pre-existing Inuit celebrations of winter feasting. Part Two, "Animals, Owners, and Non-human Beings," draws attention to the nature of Inuit cosmology, one that is intimately tied to the landscape, its seasons, and its features. In particular, Laugrand and Oosten point to a deep awareness of place and continuity, of space and time, where the land and the sea, a part of a larger communications web, belonged to a people, rather than to individuals. Whereas the adoption of Christianity marked a departure from attributing powers to animals and inanimate

objects, acts tantamount to “idolatry,” shamanic practices are modified to still retain a certain respect for these “idolatrous” objects while divesting them of any spiritual or religious value.

Part Three, “Encounters, Healing, and Power,” makes the point that, while the existential need for divine intervention in the lives of the Inuit remains a constant, the means of accessing it has certainly changed. Christian hymns and prayer, accessible to all and sundry, in some ways have replaced the *irinaliutiit* (powerful words), which were exclusively exercised by designated persons. Part Four, “Connecting to Ancestors and the Land,” discusses the Inuit practice of the divinatory ceremony of *qilaniq* (head lifting), which stresses continuity vis-à-vis the land and the ancestors, and is shown to be accessible to the community at large unlike the shamanic practice of *sakajuq* (calling a helping spirit). Evangelical and Pentecostal beliefs are relatable in as much as they, in certain respects, are reminiscent of shamanic beliefs and practices (Christian concept of confession, repentance, and rebirth versus Inuit concepts of the healing circles), yet on the other hand, they evoke resistance because of their overly religious nature. Even though it seems less visible to the public, shamanism continues to manifest itself through art and through the central role given to elders in Nunavut with a view to “preserving” the past. Discourses it inspires rage on.

Of particular value, Laugrand and Oosten’s discussion of the intersection of shamanism and Christianity underpins existing discourses such as Dale Turner’s “indigenous philosophy” (*This is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy*, 2006), which insists that every attempt at addressing Indigenous grievances must be undertaken primarily from within the Indigenous cultural context. In so doing, Indigenous issues become matters worthy of centrality in their own right, not just issues seen otherwise as “irritants,” so to speak, on the periphery of the dominant (western) culture. By incorporating often lengthy direct quotes of Inuit views interspersed with minimal interpretation, as noted by Chris Trott whose commentary accompanied the book, the authors take the project beyond a strictly ethnographical enquiry. Such an approach guards against the imposition of an interpretive key, thereby making the text more dynamic.

This book is very carefully researched and written in a style that evidently puts an emphasis on accessibility by a broad readership. Laugrand and Oosten conscientiously explore a variety of issues relating to Inuit people and further pave a path towards engaging with questions that are themselves spin-offs of topics the authors have explored. A case in point is the story of Umik who shuttles between worlds (shamanism and Christianity) and yet, curiously, is described by members of his own community as being neither

angakkuq (shaman) nor a Christian leader (52). The reader is therefore left to determine that space between these two worlds that Umik seemed to straddle, which could not be defined by his own community. If Umik has to fit in one of these two belief systems and yet does not, where does that put him? That middle space has yet to be explored further.

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