

episode within a larger process of colonialism, then this book has an crucial story to tell.

Carole Blackburn. *Harvest of Souls. The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650*. Montreal/ Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Reviewed by Cornelius J. Jaenen, University of Ottawa

The first reaction to *Harvest of Souls* is "not another study of Jesuit missions!" This more especially so when the subtitle includes *Colonialism in North America, 1630-1650*, a period when, in spite of Bruce Trigger's *Natives and Newcomers* before the newcomers had arrived, as Blackburn admits "New France was characterized by minimal settlement and the absence of either French rule or French dominance." (p.11). The author, consequently, is forced into construing pre-colonization texts into discursive evidence of the politics of colonialism and conversion. It is worth noting how the ethnographical literature has multiplied since the publication of *Friend and Foe* in 1974 and yet how few truly new theoretical frameworks have been exploited since then. This reworked master's thesis does attempt to provide an innovative construct for understanding the evolving Jesuit assault on Native societies and belief systems. The methodological key employed is colonial discourse studies as exemplified by Bernard Cohn, John and Jean Comaroff, Lata Mani and Robert Young - all dealing with other cultures, other social conditions, and other geopolitical situations than those of either early 17th century Montagnais or Huron societies in Canada. Nevertheless, a somewhat new perspective is brought to bear on this Jesuit intrusion.

The question of distortion is admirably approached in the introductory chapter. Nonetheless, an historical distortion continues to trouble the reader's mind: is not the setting atypical and unique in contact terms? The Huron may be a non-representative North American aboriginal community at a time when European settlement, the military presence, and hinterland penetration with resulting contact with new "nations" had not yet taken place. Religious *dévoisme* still triumphed, missionaries still served as diplomatic emissaries, and the civil administration was in the

hands of commercial interests, not the Crown. The author is fully cognizant of these facts yet builds a thesis of aboriginal peoples being dominated and colonized - at least in evangelical discourse. What we are dealing with, therefore, is not colonialism *per se*, but attempted subordination of an autochthonous population to an imported religious ethos and world view and attempted social control. Is the colonial discourse paradigm essential to the development of the thesis?

If not, it is intellectually challenging at least. There are no startling revelations for those familiar with the history of missions at this time, yet the presentation is refreshing as well known facts (at least to this reader, and I suspect to many others) are marshalled into the author's schema. We are told, for example, that Montagnais social relations were incompatible with Christian norms, and that the fluidity of their social groupings were an impediment difficult to surmount. The missionaries faced logistical problems as well, although Catholic evangelists were better prepared in that regard than were later Protestant missionaries burdened with families. The observation that Jesuits would not have been prepared for the physical demands of many mission challenges (p. 36) disregards the physical and psychological prerequisites of these soldiers of Christ. At least the author does not subscribe to a martyr complex as characteristic of these workers.

Different concepts of child-rearing, of dealing with crime, of gendered division of labour, of warfare, and of governance led to French Jesuit assumptions about the superiority of their own education, social system, government and law. More importantly it marked the chasm between the cultures in terms of concepts of spirituality, justice and human relations. Conversion is portrayed as a form of conquest in the absence of colonial conquest. Blackburn concludes that this form of conquest, subordination and submission "were powerful rhetorical forms, implicated in a vision of asymmetrical social and political relationships." The Catholicism the Jesuits presented was as socially and culturally embedded in French civilization as were the religious beliefs of the aboriginal peoples in North American societies. The Jesuits recognized this and therefore they were drawn into a consideration of what was universal and unchangeable in their Catholicism and what was relative and situational. Their own pre-suppositions, biases, stereotypes and categories were not discarded when faced with these different aboriginal societies, nevertheless the boundaries and distinctions became somewhat permeable as the work of conver-

sion progressed.

The core of this study is the demonstration from the Jesuit *Relations* themselves that the Huron succeeded in using the language of the missionaries to subvert its intended meaning and significance. Although the Jesuits employed a domineering idiom and attitude, they were challenged on many concepts and practices. The very meaning of Christianity became debatable.

Finally, the author affirms that another objective of colonial discourse studies is "to link to the present the categories and themes that served dominance in the past." This is not pursued, of course, although the dichotomies of savage/civilized and Christian/ pagan are mentioned. My own conclusion from reading this thoughtful book is that the Jesuits failed to achieve their objective of colonizing-converting, contrary to Axtell's view, and furthermore that when effective colonization did occur after 1663 the aboriginal peoples were not subdued and dominated by a superior culture and religion but they became the victims of the apocalyptic horsemen: famine, epidemics, exhausting wars.

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J.M. Bumstead. *Fur Trade Wars, The Founding of Western Canada*. Great Plains Publications, Winnipeg, 1999.

Reviewed by Bob Lindsay, University of Saskatchewan

I picked up this book thinking that it might be a significant addition to fur trade history, and given its subtitle, especially Western Canadian history. It might even have something to say about the history of Aboriginal peoples or Canadian history. What a disappointment it turned out to be. If it has little to say about the actual fur trade "wars", it has even less to say about the founding of western Canada, and virtually nothing to add to our knowledge of Indigenous history. It is a partial look at HBC-NWC conflict in the fur trade, a narrow legal history written largely from Lord Selkirk's point of view.

Bumstead regrettably assumes an enormous amount of historical knowledge from the general reader, providing an inadequate context and few examples to substantiate his claims. The arbitrary nature of this historical exercise is shown in the pains taken by Bumstead to show that the