INTRODUCTION

Church historians and anthropologists alike have failed to explain why the western James Bay Cree, those at Moose Factory and Fort Albany, rapidly adopted Christianity in the mid-nineteenth century. One early missionary account celebrates "the fiery zeal" of early missionaries, who acted as "a shining light amidst the sordid surroundings of heathen darkness," rescuing Indians who were "slaves of superstition, and such things as stealing, cannibalism, murder, polygamy, immorality, and hardness of heart."² A later, more scholarly church history is colored by denominational affiliation, chronicling "events and achievements for which we should be humbly thankful and sincerely proud."³ John Honigmann's anthropological study of the Roman Catholic Attawapiskat Indians, north of Fort Albany, concluded: "In no sphere of life was substitution more extensive than in the realm of religious belief."⁴ He found that twentieth-century church residential schools "succeeded in implanting an entire new belief system and eradicating practically all adherence to the old one" among the western James Bay Cree, in contrast to their East Cree neighbors where "a considerable part of the old belief system persisted beyond the middle of the twentieth century."⁵

In stressing the missionaries' efforts, as James Ronda and James Axtell have noted, congratulatory church histories have denied the Indians' humanity.
Indians have been portrayed as beneficiaries (or victims) of benevolent interventionists. It is true that Native congregations and individual Native Christians were shaped by missionary labors. But the Indians were neither "unthinking opponents" nor "passive children."  

Kenneth Morrison alerts us to the problems of discussing Native "conversion," showing that the Montagnais revitalized their existing religious beliefs through contact with Christianity. In the case of the western James Bay Cree, it will be shown that such incorporation (or Sergei Kan’s "indigenization") can also explain their response to nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries. The latter insisted that polygyny, conjuring, the shaking tent, drumming and signing be abandoned. But it is apparent, from the missionaries’ writings and from Cree oral tradition, that the Cree reinterpreted Christianity to fit their existing beliefs. From such a perspective, the Indians emerge as active participants (or participant-observers) in their own history instead of victims of an imposed and alien one. Honigmann’s notion of "substitution" needs to be tested.

SUBSTITUTION VERSUS EXCHANGE OF MESSAGES

In May of 1852, almost nine months after arriving in Moose Factory, teacher-catechist John Horden lamented, "On examining many of the Indians I found the ignorance of some to be lamentable indeed, and they will certainly require a great outpouring of the Spirit of God before they can be confirmed by the Bishop." But when Bishop David Anderson visited the mission in August of that year, he proceeded to interview the Indians to determine their readiness for confirmation. Chief Oolikichish was asked to repeat the Lord’s Prayer and the
Creed, and was then asked questions from the Church of England catechism "out of their direct order, to make sure that it was not learned by rote." Questions about "the soul and body, and effect of death, the ground of his own hope in death, whether he felt afraid of death, whether he felt anxious to receive the Lord's Supper" were satisfactorily answered. Other Indians were asked "what they prayed for, what they blessed God for, whether they prayed each night and morning." One hunter, when asked what he did on the Sabbath, said that "he rested and sang some hymns, and prayed by himself."11

Anderson, convinced that the Indians "use intercessory prayer and that their conscience is very sensitive and tender," confirmed one hundred and five of them. When he asked "where they buried the heathen Indians," the Bishop was told, "We have not any." He rejoiced that the "rites of superstition, the drum of the conjuror, have now left this spot, and are no longer heard."12

Bishop Anderson's accounts suggest that conversion was a simple process, involving the adoption of basic Christian truths and the abandonment of "heathen" practices. His successor, Bishop Robert Machray, was closer to the mark when he claimed that the Moose Factory Cree "possessed more knowledge of Christian truth than is to be found among the rural population of England." The comparison was appropriate, for English churchmen recognized that "parasitic" beliefs persisted among the masses, even in their own country, as Keith Thomas has shown in his study of Religion and the Decline of Magic. As late as 1904, when a Cree woman at Mistassini, east of James Bay, drank the entire cup of communion wine (instead of just taking a sip), it was noted that she probably believed "as some of the old country people in England used to think" that there was some power in the wine itself.13
In The Moon of Wintertime John Webster Grant observes that missionization involves the exchange of messages across a cultural barrier, and lists the conditions which are necessary for its success. First, the message bearers must be confident and strongly motivated. This we had, in the form of European and also Native missionaries, but they are not our concern here. Their message must contain some "significant criticisms of the existing order" in order to appeal to the disaffected, but it must have some "fit" with existing beliefs, and the receivers "must have a strong desire to receive" it.14

MANITU AND EXISTING BELIEFS

Like their eastern neighbors, the Cree of western James Bay (omaskekokowak: Swamp People; Swampy Cree; Muskegog Cree) lived in the contingent world which they shared with other-than-human persons. The latter included, but were not limited to, the food-persons on which they subsisted and the threatening human-distorted persons (like the wiihtikow) and helpers (like the powakans or dream helpers; mikinak or the helper in the shaking tent, literally a turtle; and manitu) who provided "a nonphysical kind of strength that we shall call power."15

The Reverend George Barnley, who first ministered to the Swampy Cree of James Bay, interviewed two Indians from York Factory on western Hudson Bay in 1842. They could not tell him who created the universe, or who looked after them from day to day, nor could they explain their fate after death. Barnley concluded that "though they speak of 'The Great Spirit', their 'Shamunutoo' [kitchiimanitu] is not in their estimation another appellation for the Christian 'Jehovah' and they are in truth without God and therefore without hope in the world." Early in this century, Alanson Skinner had claimed that "the idea of a

single great spirit" was "entirely a European importation" (Emphasis added). John M. Cooper, following fieldwork at Moose Factory in 1933, concluded that the Cree believed in a "supreme" being which was called manitu in pre-Christian times. John Honigmann, who studied the Attawapiskat Cree north of Forty Albany, rejected Cooper's thesis, claiming that the name kitchiimanitu (great manitu; great spirit; God) was a recent development.16

Regina Flannery, who also conducted fieldwork in James Bay in the 1930s, finds that none of these statements conflicts with Cooper's thesis. As Skinner realized, the Cree were not exclusively monotheistic, but believed in a number of other-than-human helpers. Honigmann confirms Cooper's informants in stating that the name kitchiimanitu was recently introduced. Barnley's remarks support Cooper's claim that the Cree did not believe in a creator of the physical world nor in a well-defined afterlife. Richard Preston observes that the concept of an all-powerful being was foreign to the Crees; helpers could extend human powers, but only to finite limits. The Crees' manitu was superior, but not supreme.17

According to Cooper's informants, the superior being was addressed as Master of Food (katibelitaman miitchim), Master of the Means to Life (katibelitaman pimatisiiwin), and Master of Death (katibelitaman nipiiwin). Preston cautions that the Master of Food may reflect Christian influence (Give us this day our daily bread). Flannery considers the possibility that Cooper's informants confused the Master of Life with Caribou Man, a human-animal person, and also suggests the Master of Death may have been a recent belief incorporated to conform with the Christian trinity. The Cree of Moose Factory and Fort Albany were influenced by Christian missionaries earlier and more continuously than some of their eastern neighbors, and we cannot rule out
Christian influence on their concept of three masters. But since the East Cree also believed in three masters, questions concerning the aboriginality of the Swampy Cree masters are not easily resolved. This study accepts as reasonable that, at least by the early nineteenth century, the western James Bay Cree believed in a superior being and perhaps a trinity. These concepts may have been shaped by earlier contacts with Europeans or other Indians, to be sure, but seem to have existed by 1840 when missionary contacts were renewed (See below).

The Cree were hunters and gatherers, skilled in the use of bow and arrows, snares, deadfalls, fish weirs, and other food gathering methods. But the hunter's world was a contingent one, so there were divination techniques which could predict hunting success, special observances of slain animals, such as the bear, to ensure future success, and ritual treatment of animal remains to show respect for food-persons.

Young adults of either sex actively sought out helpers in solitary dream quests. A dream helper (powagan) meant power or "luck"; some helpers were more powerful than others, and some individuals received power from more than one helper.

Some individuals, who received additional powers from mikinak, were called mitews (shamans; conjurers) and their activities were referred to as mitewin. With such power, one could engage in conjuring, sorcery, and curing. Many plant remedies were common knowledge, but since much illness was believed to be caused by sorcery, cures resulted from the intervention of another, more powerful sorcerer. The Cree recognized two ways of predicting the future. One, papewiwin (good luck), included scapulimancy and was available to anyone.
The other, manitukewin (using the power of manitu), was only practiced by a mitew with the aid of his dream helper(s). A mitew could use the shaking tent (kosapatchikan) for healing, sorcery, predicting future events, or "general good fortune." A shaman could also defeat and kill a wiihtikow, the distorted human person associated with anti-social behaviour in general, and (more recently) with cannibalism in particular.21

The Cree sang at feasts, at wiihtikow-killing celebrations, when seeking success in hunting, and in love songs and lullabies. Shamans sang to their helpers in a contest of power with other shamans, while kneeling in the shaking tent, or while curing. A shaman played the drum while people danced in special clearings, seeking food or health, celebrating the defeat of a wiihtikow, or preparing for hunting. Shamans had medicine bags, and used conjuring drums and rattles.22

Humans and other animals possessed a soul (atchahk), which never died but left the body at death. The Cree believed that the soul remained nearby; at the same time, they referred to the northern lights as the dancing souls of the dead.23

RESPONDING TO EUROPEANS: THE HANNAH BAY MURDERS

In 1668 a trading post was established at what is now Waskaganish, Rupert House, Quebec. Two years later the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was formed, and posts at Moose Factory and Fort Albany followed in 1673 and 1675 respectively. The HBC's chaplain was captured by a French force in 1686 and, during the interregnum, Jesuit priests made brief contacts with the Indians. Following the return of the region to British control in 1713, the HBC decided...
the territory was too dangerous for clergymen, and none was dispatched to James Bay until more than a century later.24

In 1821, following intense rivalry from the North West Company, the HBC absorbed its rival and achieved a virtual monopoly in James Bay. That this new state of affairs was distressful to the Cree, who now had little bargaining power, is apparent from an incident still vividly recalled. In January of 1832, a party of Rupert House Indians murdered William Corrigal, a man of mixed ancestry, his wife and seven other Indians at Hannah Bay post, between Moose Factory and Rupert House, intending to capture the other posts and even the Company's annual supply ship. Those responsible for the murders were executed. Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz observe, "If a general rebellion against the Company was contemplated, it did not materialize. According to the archival sources, the accused did not enjoy the support of other local Indians."25

The murderers, apparently threatened with starvation, had received directions from an other-than-human helper by use of the conjuring tent. Francis and Morantz conclude that "a mixture of religious and economic motives sparked the Hannah Bay murders." There is some suggestion in the oral tradition that the Company's books played a role. When captured, according to oral tradition from Moose Factory, one murderer was found to possess the post's account books or journals, claiming that he "got them from heaven." As early as 1724, the HBC had forbidden its employees to teach the Indians to read and write. The wealthy HBC used secular books and letters extensively, and the Cree may have associated them with power. Taking debt, whereby the Indians were advanced supplies for the winter, was closely associated in Cree with writing in a "book" (the Company's ledger).26
The Hannah Bay murderers were Rupert House Indians and two of them, named Shaintoquaish and Bolland, were captured there. Moose Factory was certainly influenced by the incident; Bolland escaped, but Shaintoquaish was brought there for judgement. An execution squad dispatched from Moose Factory included John and Edward Richards, two men of mixed ancestry, and "an Indian . . . [who] had relatives massacred by their friends." Shaintoquaish accompanied the group but was shot by the Indian, named Dick, after feigning lameness. At Hannah Bay, the other murderers were killed, two of them inside a shaking tent.

An oral account from Rupert House (which claims that the murderers were Moose Factory Indians) states, "After that the Moose Indians never used to play with that [shaking tent] anymore. Those people there who used to play with it, they knew that it was not a very good thing. Even though a person can play at a conjuring tent, still, the way they thought, it's not all true. They had always been thinking that the conjuring tent was a pretty true thing. The Moose Indians never played with it after that." This probably oversimplifies how the shaking tent was abandoned but does indicate how, even in pre-missionary times, faith in its benefits may have begun to wane. The shaking tent had resulted in murder, and had proven to be no protection from an execution squad.

POWER, BOOKS AND WIIHTIKOW

Power was very important to the Cree, and their existing religion, i.e. pre-1840 was evidently found to be deficient. David Wynne told Cooper that powagans used to tell the shamans that there was one who was greater than the three masters: "Often the conjurers tried to get this real manitu to come to...

them so he could be better known, but they could not succeed. The conjurers
told the people there was a great manitu. The three manitus i.e. the Masters,
used to say they were not the greatest, but that there was a greater one above
them. The people called this greatest one just manitu." European or Native
missionaries, and the short-lived Cree prophets of 1842-43, were more powerful
than Cree shamans because they claimed to be able to communicate with the
superior being.

Christian power was so readily accepted by the western James Bay Cree
that by the 1930s one of Cooper's informants told him that the once-important
powagans were simply "bad spirits." Power in the abstract was of no importance;
it was needed to obtain food and confront the contingencies of everyday life.
The Cree were pragmatic; they would only modify their "traditional" (existing)
beliefs if they became convinced that other-than-human Christian helpers could
provide tangible aid. Cooper was told the story of how a starving Indian winter
group became convinced, perhaps in pre-missionary times, of the existence (and
power) of a superior manitu. They killed a whiskeyjack (Canada Jay) and put its
gizzard on a fishhook: "If they caught a fish, this would mean that there was a
greater one; if no fish were caught, this would mean there was no greater one
than the three Masters." Like the Biblical account of Jesus' disciples, "soon they
began pulling up fish as fast as they could take them in."31

Reverend Barnley performed his first Indian baptisms at Fort Albany in July
of 1842, admitting forty to the church. Tekokumaw (Caribou Boss?) became
Adam Goodwin. Metoot (Raft) was renamed Joseph Goodwin. Yellow Legs was
baptised George Sutherland. Whitefish became Elizabeth Wynne. Wapunewoetum
(Morning Cry) became John Wesley, while his wife Shkwashesh (Little Woman)

received the name Susannah. Frog was baptised John Scott, and his sister Atchahk (Star, or Soul) was thereafter known as Lydia. Tahkoonahkun (Cradle Board) and his wife became Jabez and Dorcas Bunting. Another forty-seven were baptised in August of 1844. The HBC recognized the Indians’ newly acquired names, and their traditional “aliases,” in its debt ledgers. Despite the adoption of European names, however, a traditional Cree system of nicknames is still evident today.

Barnley introduced baptism to seventy-one Moose Factory Indians in February of 1843, but there the Cree names were generally retained as surnames. Misekitch became Adam, and his wife was renamed Eve. Their son Tusenach was baptised Joseph, his wife Mary. Ageneshkum received the name Joshua; his four unmarried sons assumed his Cree name as their surname, but were differentiated as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, while married sons Sailor, Piskwatch and Alesapa retained separate Cree surnames. In September of 1844, twenty-five were baptised. Forty-six were admitted to the church in July of 1845. From 1843 until his departure in 1847, Barnley baptised, in all, about 210 Moose Factory Indians.

Free tea and sugar issued to participants provided an immediate incentive, and later missionaries distributed bales of clothing to needy parishioners. Bruce Trigger and Cornelius Jaenan found that the Huron adopted Christianity in order to obtain guns and other goods. In the case of the James Bay Cree, after more than a century and a half of contact with traders, the missionary’s goods were likely a bonus rather than a prime motivator.

In discussing the introduction of European names among a northern Ojibwa group, anthropologists Edward S. and Mary Black Rogers have suggested that the
missionaries' appellations were adopted by the Indians because they provided an additional source of "guidance, protection or power." The same explanation seems reasonable in interpreting the response of the western James Bay Cree. When Barnley's successor, John Horden, arrived at Moose Factory in 1851 he was told "it would be a grief to the Indians" if he did not baptise their children at the end of the summer "as during the winter many children die." If they believed in the protective powers of the rite, they were no different from many other Indians. It is by no means clear how the Cree distinguished between Barnley and the Oblate priest Nicholas Laverlochere; the latter baptised or rebaptised half of the Fort Albany Indians between 1847 and 1851, causing a division which remains today.35

The first Christian marriages were performed among the western James Bay Cree at Fort Albany in the summer of 1842, when ten couples were united. Although he performed one more marriage near Fort Albany, and forty-three marriages at Rupert House in 1843, none of the Moose Factory Indians participated in this rite until after Horden's arrival in 1851. John Fletcher's narrative, collected by Cooper in 1934, contains a statement on this era: "some even got married. At that time there were no weddings. Some were also involved in taking another person's woman. The man whose woman was taken would take another woman for himself." A powerful shaman would be the most likely candidate to steal a man's wife; the church considered marriage a permanent contract, and provided a form of power to prevent this. It is less clear how the Cree responded to the missionaries' objections to preferential cross-cousin marriage, arranged marriages, and polygyny.36
Christianity promised to unite the living and the dead in a community of saints, but it is by no means clear that the Cree accepted Christian notions of heaven and hell. They continued to believe that the atchak (soul) could linger nearby and communicate with the living (making the Christian notion of a holy ghost easily incorporated). Separation of the dead would have threatened the Crees' sense of community. Perhaps they, like Hallowell's Ojibwa, were skeptical about the Christian hell.\textsuperscript{37}

Non-Natives might expect that the Christian communion service, with its symbolic consumption of human body and blood, confused the wiihitkow-conscious Cree. There are no data to confirm this. The Cree evidently did not consider Jesus an ordinary human, but an other-than-human helper. In fact, Preston observes a striking parallel between the sacrificial death of Christ, because of God's love and to save mankind, and East Cree belief that animals give themselves to be killed so that humans can survive.\textsuperscript{38} The Cree certainly valued a feast, and communion was a symbolic feast and a social occasion. Perhaps it is we who are overly wiihitkow-conscious!

Horden's religion promised hope, but he was often dismayed by the Indians' fatalistic outlook. An inlander, heading upriver from Moose Factory in September of 1852, told Horden that he would return the following summer "if he lived." The clergyman complained: "This is an expression, which lately nearly the whole of the Indians have been in the habit of using . . . feeling the uncertainty of life." Indians were frequently "almost starving" -- but Native clergyman Thomas Vincent knew that this meant they had just enough food, with none to spare.\textsuperscript{39}
If most of the Moose Factory Cree seemed unaffected by Horden's teachings, others, like John Uskidge, said that they prayed when game was scarce. Gideon Pennewick's family members were often without food in the winter of 1851-1852, but trusted in God; God seemed to answer their calls, for they found eight or nine fish at a time when they checked their lines. When Samuel Oolekitchesk and Sheshekwun were ill and without food that same winter, they prayed to God. The Cree were easily able to reconcile their belief in a Master of Food and a Master of Life with the missionary's notions of God, supplementing their traditional beliefs with Christian ones. 40

Although the Cree used many herbal remedies, much illness was believed to be caused by sorcery. In the fall of 1851, Horden wrote that Oolekitchish and an unnamed man believed that God made their children ill. When the minister visited Dick's sick wife, she told him that God had already brought her close to death three times. Four other sick Indians claimed that their illness was sent by God for their own good, and as punishment for their sins. A pregnant woman, suffering in pain for four days before her death, said that Jesus would take care of her. A man who was ill prayed, rather than visit the HBC surgeon, and recovered. Thomas Vincent reported the case of Joseph Wynne (Tatahkeshekoneme), a dying Fort Albany man who gave all his possessions to a Martin Falls Indian, expecting to be conjured back to health. Vincent insisted that the goods be returned and, when he later visited the sick man, found two Christian books open before him. Wynne expressed hope that God would pardon his sins but died a few days later. 41

Missionaries also dispensed medicine, eventually pioneering modern health care for Indians. In Horden's time, invalids were left at the mission. Speaking

of Jabez Utap, Mark Apitakishikow (Half Day) and Uskidji, Horden stated: "The whole of my sick Indians are now in one tent which is large and well made of slabs of wood, erected through the kindness of Chief Factor Miles."42

By the same token, Oolekitchish prayed to God morning and evening and observed the Sabbath while hunting geese on the stormy coast of James Bay, and was protected during a November storm.43

Despite the promises of Christianity, however, many Cree continued to believe in the influence of powerful shamans. Thomas Sheesheep (Duck) felt helpless despite Horden’s assurances that the Christian God would provide his daily bread, and his mother was convinced that Thomas was "bewitched by the services of some powerful Indian of Hannah Bay."44 Nevertheless, oral and documentary accounts indicate that some Indians became convinced of Christianity’s power over wihtikows and powerful shamans. In traditional Cree belief, a wihtikow was defeated by shamanic power. Missionaries seized on the wihtikow concept to explain the Christian devil or matchi (bad) manitu, and today in western James Bay this is often what wihtikow means. Another term, ootchiskwatchiw, is now sometimes used to refer to what may be the more generalized Cree concept.45

Christianity promised power over this threat. The Anglican baptism service asks participants to "renounce [wihtikow] and all his works," and announces that those who are baptised should fight "against sin, the world and [wihtikow]." The New Testament’s Book of Mark offered readers an impressive array of powers, from casting out wihtikows to healing the sick.46 The missionaries’ religion was associated in the Indians’ minds with power -- over sickness, other-than-human danger, conjurers, danger while travelling, and starvation. This
power was obtainable through prayer (appeals to God or Jesus), and observance of the Sabbath.

The Cree did not recklessly abandon their traditional beliefs. In 1852 an Indian beached his canoe, having just arrived from a nearby fishing spot to attend the Cree service of worship at Moose Factory. He had scarcely landed, however, "when a goose approached him, flying very low. He took his gun, fired, and immediately the goose fell dead. . . . Immediately a large number of children collected around the fallen bird, which of course," Horden noted, "impaired the solemnity of the day." The Cree had many hunting observances, which showed respect for food-animals, and the missionaries' commandment could be added to their repertoire. A ban on active Sunday hunting could be observed when game was plentiful, and understanding missionaries excused seventh-day fishing and hunting when food was scarce. We would expect that pragmatism would dictate that when an animal came near, offering itself as food, it would not be ignored on any day of the week. Yet Horden reports the case of Sheshekwun who absented himself from the communion table after hunting on a Sunday.47

Power could also be derived from the possession of, and belief in, religious books, as we observed in the case of Joseph Wynne. This interest in books is not surprising, for we have seen that the HBC forbade its early employees to teach Indians to read or write and that one of the Hannah Bay murderers stole the Company's account books or journals. A Cree religious movement which swept western Hudson and James Bay in the early 1840s also emphasized books, charts and inscribed boards.48
During the 1840s, the Cree enthusiastically adopted James Evans' syllabic system, first introduced by two York Factory visitors (likely the prophets) and then promoted by Barnley. By the 1850s, when Horden arrived, Indians were frequently reported to be asking for books, paper and pencils. Church Missionary Society records include several examples of Cree letters. Jane confessed, "Tell the minister that I am unable to do what he told me." George Uskidji admitted, "I cannot do what [the Bishop] told me; my sins are too much before me." Emma Wawasan, after leaving Moose Factory for Hannah Bay, missed seeing Horden regularly and sent him her best wishes. During their first two years at Moose Factory, the Hordens were often busy handcopying syllabic books for the Indians. In 1853 a small printing press arrived and, during a six-year period, it produced over seven thousand copies.49

Upriver from Moose Factory, at New Brunswick House, Horden reported that an Indian woman named Misitonapao believed she had been given two books by a spirit, and commanded "to instruct the Indians in a new religion." The incident generated much excitement among the Indians, but the local HBC officer was not impressed; he discovered that the books had been stolen from his own house, "the very wonderful one being a coloured map of Canada west."50

James Axtell draws attention to the power of the printed word to send messages accurately over long distances in the eastern woodlands of North America. This may also have impressed the western James Bay Cree, for the wealthy HBC routinely used the printed word to send its secular messages between distant posts and to communicate with London. Preston observes that the East Cree other-than-human helper, mistapew, can extend human powers, but only to a limited degree; it is not supreme, all-powerful, all-seeing or all-

knowing. In discussing conjuring among the northern Ojibwa, Hallowell makes a similar observation about mikinak, the equivalent Ojibwa and western James Bay term. During a conjuring performance, Hallowell was invited to ask a question of the conjurer; he asked whether his father, who was in Philadelphia and had been ill, was well. Mikinak went off to investigate and returned to report eventually that "if he had the right place," Hallowell's father was "no worse" (Emphasis added). Traditional Cree spirit helpers could extend human powers of communication, but they had their limits. In some cases, as with the Hannah Bay murders, they might even give bad advice.

When he showed the Moose Factory Indians some magic lantern slides, Horden suggested that they must consider him to be a "great conjurer." The minister could be incorporated into the Cree world-view in this role, although he may have been feared as much as he was respected. An Indian told Horden's successor, Bishop Newnham, that he "liked and understood his sermons, but he did not 'preach hard enough,' and then explained this by saying the Bishop did not shout. They fancy you are not in earnest unless you do so." Shouting usually indicated a loss of self-control, but it may also have indicated power. One wihtikow story says, in part: "While they were fighting [wihtikow] started to yell and shout. When people did that, they said they didn't know what they were doing. Then the Indian started to shout also, and he was the louder of the two." The Indian, who evidently had a shaman's powers, overcomes his opponent. The missionaries' practice of shouting, which most Cree remember from just decades ago, may have contributed to their aura of power. It is less clear how the role of Cree catechist evolved.
If Christianity brought power to the missionary, it could also help the Indians to become powerful new, but benign, conjurers. Patrick Steven, one of Cooper’s informants, was a conjurer’s son and would have become a conjurer himself, but instead he followed the ways of “the Book” (Bible).\(^5^3\)

Horden reported the case of a woman who "shewed signs of madness and a disposition to become a Cannibal [sic]," but was calmed by her friends when Christian books (a syllabic prayer book, hymn book and catechism) were placed on her chest. Horden described the wihtikow as "a semi-spiritualized body assumed by a Cannibal [sic], which rambles through the country but is seldom seen; it is of an immense size and the prints of its feet, which are often seen, are of a size corresponding to the bulk of its body." When Eliza Wemistikos became "deranged, plucking up the grass which formed the floor of her tent, tearing her clothes and committing other acts of a like nature," Horden reports that they tried to calm her through prayer. In traditional belief, such illnesses were only overcome through the intervention of a very powerful shaman.\(^5^4\)

The narratives which follow, told at Moose Factory in the 1980s by devout Anglicans, indicate why the Cree became convinced that Christianity was more powerful than conjuring. In the first narrative, a Christian book is believed to be powerful enough to stop a shaking tent performance and to prevent harm from a Shaman’s threats. The event seems to be set in early missionary times:

**Another Who Should Be Respected Even More\(^5^5\)**

The old man, Frank Rickard, used to tell of his father. His father was born here [Moose Factory], so was his mother. They lived here when the conjurers were still around. His father’s mother was a conjurer. His mother told him they would set up the shaking tent. Around the outside they would smoke tobacco. One old lady asked another, "Are you coming over to smoke?"

“No,” the second woman answered. When she was reminded that
everyone was expected to be present at the respected ritual, she replied that there was yet another who should be respected even more. "There is no other, and if there is, then tell me," the first one said.

In answer, the Christian prayer book was brought out, but finally she agreed to go, and when she did she took the book along. The tent was supposed to shake, and the sounds of geese would be heard coming from within. Of course somebody would be inside while this was going on, as the communicant. When the shaking tent started moving, she opened the book and everything stopped. There was no noise. The person inside asked, "What happened?"

He was told of something more powerful and dangerous, not known to this land. "Later," he said, "in time they will know."

Nothing happened to the old woman. She had known manitu. He (the conjurer) attempted to do things to her that were considered dangerous, but nothing ever became of these attempts. Once she had a vision of a house, floating downstream, and then suddenly it was gone. That is what this old lady sensed, but nothing ever happened from this.

Abraham Rickard (trans. Norman Wesley)

The second narrative tells another story of a shaking tent performance that failed, and then uses a Biblical analogy to suggest why the ritual is no longer used today.

If The Faith Is Not There . . . 56

The shaking tent was a tipi type of structure. I saw one once. It was a regular tipi, large enough for one person. The poles were usually peeled. That's the kind I saw. It was about eight feet high; it depended on the user's preference, but it was always covered with canvas or any type of covering.

I saw an old lady make one once, but when she tried to use it nothing happened; there was no sound. I guess she didn't possess the manitu. The people said, "Mary is going to try the shaking tent." It was in the evening when she walked by and went into the shaking tent. She went in to seek answers, but no, it didn't happen.

Maybe she wasn't a real conjurer. It was only those who could manitukechik [use the powers from manitu] that were capable of these things. It's just like when an idol was made of bronze and everyone was made to bow down. I read about this in the book. [summarizes the Biblical story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who survive in the furnace]. They had a very strong faith in God. This is what the tent is like; there is a strong faith that goes along with what these people did. If the faith and belief is [sic] not there, then we cannot do it. Even if we make the tent as elaborate as possible, it can't be done.
[without faith]. Our grandfathers and fathers had the strong faith and belief; that's the only way it can be done.

Willie Wesley
(trans. Norman Wesley)

Willie, the narrator of the last account, was once visited by a strange presence while he was camping by himself. Seated by his fire on a windless night, he noticed the ashes begin to swirl and his hair stood on end. Remembering his father's words, he read his Pilgrim's Progress and came to no harm. Another elder, hearing me recount this story, informed me that he "didn't believe in mitewin." His old grandfather, a devout Anglican, had told him that as long as he carried his "book" (Bible) he would never have to be afraid. Even in denying the other man's story, however, he suggests a belief in Christianity's power over traditional other-than-human threats.

CONCLUSION

In western James Bay, Grant's conditions for successful missionization were met. Christianity could be reconciled with traditional notions of a superior being, power and soul, and perhaps a trinity. Manitu, once perhaps a vague notion or apprehension, became kitchiimantu, with whom people could now communicate; he now had a son and absolute power. Power -- over illness, wihtikows, the food quest, the perils of travel and threatening shamans--became democratized, available to all through prayer, Christian rites, Sabbath observance, and faith in books. The Christian devil was adopted as a bad manitu, or wihtikow. Traditional songs and drumming were replaced with hymns. Church services and prayer served the purpose of traditional dances, although secular European fiddle music and stepdancing, at weddings and feasts, were also adopted. European names were adopted, alongside traditional Cree nicknames.
They abandoned the shaking tent, but retained a healthy respect for its potential.58

The Cree of western James Bay reacted to the messages of early Christian missionaries as they did to many external influences.59 They incorporated them, selectively revitalizing their traditional beliefs through syncretism.60 To use Honigmann's term, they chose to adopt other "channels" to manitu and power. In so doing, they were active participants in their own history.

NOTES

1 Narratives were collected through a personal service contract with the Canadian Ethnology Service (National Museums of Canada) and translated by Norman Wesley and from John M. Cooper's unpublished papers at Catholic University of America, courtesy of Regina Flannery.


5 Ibid.; see also his "Expressive Aspects of Subarctic Indian Culture," in Helm Subarctic, p. 731, and "Attawapiskat--Blend of Traditions" Anthropologica 6 (1958), 60.


12Ibid., pp. 135, 147, 138; CMS, Horden to Mee, 7 September 1868, A-89.


15Richard J. Preston, Cree Narrative: Expressing the Personal Meaning of Events (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), pp. 238-242; John M. Cooper "The Northern Algonquian Supreme Being" Primitive Man 6, Nos. 3, 4 (1933), 41-111; personal communication with Regina Flannery; John J. Honigmann, "The Attawapiskat Swampy Cree: An Ethnographic Reconstruction" Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska 5, No.11 (1956), 65, 72. Honigmann's translation of manitu as "a vaguely conceived pool" of power may reflect acculturative change, see the discussion on mistapew in Adrian Tanner, Bringing Home Animals: Religious Ideology and Mode of Production of the Mistassini Cree Hunters (St. John's: Memorial University, 1979), p. 115 and Regina Flannery and Mary Elizabeth Chambers, "Each Man Has His Own 'Friends': The Role of Dream-Visitors in Traditional East-Cree Belief and Practice," Arctic Anthropology 22, No. 1 (1985), 1-22. Alternatively, the pre-Christian superior being may not have been named manitu (Regina Flannery, personal communication).


17Personal communication with Regina Flannery; interviews with Richard J. Preston. Cooper's informants used three other terms ("Supreme Being," pp. 58, 63, 68-69) and, as noted above, Flannery cautions that Cooper may have erred in asserting that the superior being was actually called manitu (see discussion on manitukewin below). The East Cree superior being was not named manitu; Flannery and Chambers, "Friends."


19Honigmann, "Attawapiskat," pp. 33-38, 68-69. See also his "Expressive Aspects of Subarctic Indian Culture," in Helm Subarctic, pp. 718-738. Honigmann's informants make no mention of dream helpers known as powakans; but see Cooper, "Supreme Being," p. 48 ff, and see also Flannery and Chambers, "Each Man Has His Own Friends," on East Cree dream helpers (powatakans), mistapew and the shaking tent.


21Ibid., pp. 68, 72-78 and also his "West Main Cree," p. 223; Louis Marano, "Windigo Psychosis: The Anatomy of an Emic-Etic Confusion," Current Anthropology 23, No. 4 (August 1982), 385-412; Regina Flannery, Mary Elizabeth Chambers and Patricia A. Jehle, "Witiko Accounts From the James Bay Cree," Arctic Anthropology 18, No. 4 (Winter, 1981), 57-77. Edward S. Rogers suggests that wihtikow was not a human being until this idea was "imposed upon the Indians by Whites. If I recall correctly, no human who was reputed to have eaten human flesh was ever considered a windigo by any traders' reports in their journals. The [cannibal] concept seems to have emerged sometime during the latter half of the last century" and was "blown out of all proportion by anthropologists" (personal communication). See also note 54 below. I am grateful to Norman Wesley and Munroe Linklater Sr. for explaining their meaning of manitukewin; its translation by others as "idolatry" of "an (illicit) image of God" may be literally correct, but also reflects Christian influence. Honigmann uses this word in "Attawapiskat," p. 73, but not in "West Main Cree," p. 223. Flannery (personal communication) notes that the word has a long history of association with powerful objects, see "Manitowghigin" (a red coat such as those prized by eighteenth-century trading captains) in John Oldmixon, "The History of Hudson's Bay Containing an Account of its Discovery and Settlement, the Progress of It, and the Present State; of the Indians, Trade and Every Thing Else Relating to It," in J.B. Tyrrell ed., Documents Relating to the Early History of Hudson Bay (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1931), p. 396, and mantuwian


26 Francis and Morantz, Partners, pp. 91, 158-160. John Dick's narrative of the Hannah Bay murders can be found in John M. Cooper's 1934 fieldnotes, following p. 584, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.; it was translated by Andy Faries in 1985. The Hannah Bay murders, variations of the name Shaintoquaish, and the murderers' strange interest in books they could not read are still vividly recalled at Moose Factory by Ruby McLeod, Fred Moore and others. Richard Faries, A Dictionary of the Cree Language as Spoken by the Indians in the Provinces of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta (Toronto: General Synod of the Anglican Church of England in Canada, 1938), pp. 54, 347; thanks to Jennifer Brown for this reference.


28 John Blackned's narrative in Preston, Cree Narrative, pp. 142-146, slightly edited.


Archives of Ontario, Moose Factory Register, Ms. 161; Hudson Bay Company Archives (HBCA), B.3/d/144, Albany Indian Ledger, 1845-46. Those baptised included the "priestess" associated with the 1842-43 prophets and Laughing Willie’s sons, Peter Weckakases and Reuben Nkesases; Laughing Willie’s third son had starved to death awaiting the prophet’s promises. The priestess was either widow Fanny Sutherland, baptised with her thirteen year-old son Henry, or Ann Mesawakwun, "The Witch," also baptised on 4 August 1844.

Archives of Ontario, Ms. 161. Those baptised included William Apistapesh. Some of Barnley’s outrage at the syncretic movement must have arisen from the participation of Fort Albany Indians who were nominal Christians, and he may have baptised the Moose Factory Indians to dissuade and protect them from the influence of this cult.


Archives of Ontario, Ms. 161, 192. John Fletcher’s narrative is from John M. Cooper’s 1934 Moose Factory fieldnotes, p. 488ff, translated by Andy Faries; see also Honigmann, "Attawapiskat," p. 78. On polygyny see Wesleyan Missionary

37 Conversation with Bishop Caleb Lawrence, 3 January 1986, and with the Reverend Grant Churcher, 2 January 1986; Hallowell, "Spirits of the Dead," pp. 156-157. I am grateful to Norman Wesley for drawing my attention to the cultural discontinuity caused by the Christian heaven and hell.

38 Interview with Richard Preston, 1983.


40 CMS, Horden Journal, 2 February, 22 and 23 March, 26 April 1852, 10 March 1853, A-88; Cooper, "Supreme Being." On Sheshekwun see also Brown, "Cast of Characters," p. 2. Killing dogs and waiting in their tents for the prophets' promises had not proven effective; Brown, "Track to Heaven."


43 CMS, Horden Journal, 7 and 12 November 1855, A-88. Horden found that the Cree word for thunder was animate and plural ("large birds"); Ibid., 29 March and 30 July 1856, A-88.

44 Ibid., 31 October 1861, A-89; Archives of Ontario, Ms. 161. Indian James Sutherland of Fort Albany was also named Sheesheep.

45 Honigmann, "Attawapiskat," p. 68. The term among the East Cree is autsh; see Preston, Cree Narrative, p. 84.

46 Anglican Church of Canada, Book of Common Prayer; The Book of Mark, Chapter 16 verses 17-18.

Sparrow’s Fall, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967) is a fictional account of a Cree hunter’s struggle with missionary teachings.

48 The HBC allowed at least two Indians to attend its school at Fort Albany in 1809; see Jennifer S.H. Brown, "A Colony of Very Useful Hands," The Beaver 307, No. 4 (Spring 1977), 42, 44.


50 CMS, Horden to Mee, 7 June 1869, A-89.


53 Cooper, "Supreme Being," p. 50. I know of no case where Indians used Christianity for malevolent purposes after Abishabis’ time. See also Kerry Abel,

54 CMS, Horden Journal, 13 September and 3 November 1855, A-88; 9 December 1951, 16 June 1860, A-89. In the story of Chechewuchanish, a boy (who later steals the summer season) is abandoned by his parents. When Chechewuchanish offers to take care of him, the boy says, "No, no, I am afraid of you, for you are a Cannibal." Chechewuchanish replies, "I am no cannibal. Your parents better deserve that name, having left you to perish." CMS, following Horden's sermon of 14 May 1876, A-102. This example further illustrates that wihtikow was an anti-social quality, not a cannibal, and indicates the missionary's role in confusing the concept.

55 Interview with Abraham Rickard and Willie Wesley, Moose Factory, 1984, translated by Norman F. Wesley. One wonders if this woman with the book and the vision was "the priestess" of 1842.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid. See also Tom Harpur, "Blind Isaac," Outdoor Canada (December/January 1986), pp. 18-20, 23.

Dick Preston suggests that manitu may have been a vague apprehension of other-than-human power (see also Honigmann's view in note 15 above). See also Richard J. Preston, "Notes on East Cree Musical and Cultural Transformations," published in French in Recherches Amerindiennes au Quebec 15, No. 4 (1985). On missionary attitudes to traditional songs and drumming see CMS, Horden Journal, 14 June 1856, 30 April 1853, A-88; Horden to CMS, 1 September 1854 and 30 August 1855; A-79; Vincent to CMS, 17 January 1881, A-109; Horden to Fenn, 16 February 1891; A-116; Vincent Journal, 2 July 1857 and 4 November 1865, A-98. On European dances see Honigmann, "Attawapiskat," p. 57 and the National Film Board's "Fiddlers of James Bay." On being bothered by dreams see John Fletcher's narrative, and also Honigman, "Attawapiskat," p. 71. Sergei Kan shows how forgiveness was introduced to the Tlingit. Among the western James Bay Cree we have seen how the Hannah Bay murders were executed by a squad which included kinsmen of the original victims; missionaries hoped to promote peaceful interpersonal relations, including forgiveness (see CMS, Horden Journal, September 1855, A-88; Vincent to Society, 9 February 1866; A-98; Vincent Journal 10 December 1865 A-98; Horden Journal, 27 May 1858, 7 June 1862, A-89, Vincent to CMS, 19 January 1980, A-104; Diocese of Moosonee, Moose Factory Parish Records, Preacher's Book 1893-1906, 18 April 1898 and 29 August 1899).

59 This conclusion is in contrast to Tanner's finding, for the Nichicun East Cree, that "little in the way of syncretic developments have taken place. The two traditions are not in conflict, since each has its own social context, the settlement sector for Christianity, and the bush sector for Cree shamanistic religion," in Bringing Home Animals, pp. 210-211.