

caractérisée des Amérindiens envers les programmes de services sociaux du gouvernement du Canada, méfiance qui avait frappé Shewell et qui constitue l'interrogation authentique de son travail.

Une des faiblesses de la méthode de Shewell tient en ce que ce n'est que dans le chapitre 6 que la voix amérindienne se fait entendre. En effet, la parole archivistique amérindienne est inexistante avant la fin des années 1940, ce qui implique que l'histoire telle qu'interprétée par l'auteur est construite exclusivement à partir du point de vue gouvernemental pendant les années 1873–1943 (épisode Jules Sioui). Dans la mesure où l'auteur soutient que les Amérindiens sont objectivés dans leur relation avec les institutions gouvernementales, et dans la mesure où il s'agit d'analyser la « relation » entre les deux parties ainsi construites pour l'analyse, il me semble que l'absence de point de vue amérindien, tant au niveau des sources primaires que de l'approche, est problématique.

Par ailleurs, la définition que donne l'auteur du libéralisme est anecdotique et même problématique à certains égards. On gagnerait à voir distingués utilitarisme et pragmatisme, impérialisme, mercantilisme, libéralisme économique et libéralisme politique. Je pense que les cultures pré-colombiennes comportaient des éléments de mesure d'économie (ce qui peut exclure le principe d'accumulation qui appartient au capitalisme) et surtout des éléments de *self-reliance*.

Enfin, l'approche foucauldienne annoncée est peu développée. Il s'agit plutôt d'une position systématiquement défiante envers les actions du gouvernement, une vague analyse de l'impérialisme canadien. La matière est là pour une analyse foucauldienne, mais il n'est pas certain que l'auteur en fasse un usage pertinent (les cours au Collège de France sont d'une utilité particulière pour l'analyse de la transformation des peuples, sujets politiques, en populations, objets du pouvoir). Le mélange de Foucault avec la critique de l'impérialisme est par ailleurs mal indiqué.

Ces faiblesses mises en lumière, il reste à souligner la valeur du travail historique de Shewell, qui offre une analyse détaillée et inédite de l'activité gouvernementale dans la question amérindienne. Grâce à son systématisme et son exhaustivité, sa richesse en illustrations, anecdotes et analyses secondaires, cet ouvrage pourra servir de matériel d'analyse à de nouvelles études sur la question, notamment en histoire des idées politiques au Canada, et aussi en études postcoloniales.

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ST-ONGE, Nicole — *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850–1914*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre – University of Regina, 2004. Pp. 137.

In recent years there has been a trend towards moving the field of Métis studies away from its scholarly preoccupation with nineteenth-century Red River politics and society, towards more inclusive and varied portraits of Métis culture, history, and economics. Nicole St-Onge's portrait of the small Métis community of Saint-Laurent

du Lac is a unique addition to this revisionist trend. She suggests that the oft-studied Red River parishes themselves are in need of historical reinterpretation, that the residents of Red River communities demonstrated far more economic and cultural variation in their activities than previous studies would have one believe.

St-Onge successfully mines an interesting array of documents to reconstruct the life of this small parish from its earliest origins in the nineteenth century to the onset of World War I. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the initial formation of the settlement by *canadien* freemen and traders. In its earliest period, the economic and social activities of the parish bore a close cultural affinity to the largely *Saulteaux* parish of Baie St-Paul, and the founding families in both communities had strong ties of kinship. St-Onge notes that, unlike the case in other Red River parishes, buffalo hunting was not the economic mainstay for Saint-Laurent. Instead, its residents subsisted on a number of different pursuits — independent hunting and fur trading on the shores of Lake Manitoba; commercial fishing; the manufacture and sale of salt; and freighting. These activities served to strengthen and perpetuate commercial and kin ties with the local *Saulteaux* population, but also fragmented the community economically and socially because of the seasonal and geographic demands that these occupations necessitated.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the changes in lifestyle that took place in the latter part of the 1860s, which would introduce further cultural divisions. A famine that devastated their traditional sources of game and fish, combined with the influx of new settlers from other similarly impoverished Red River parishes, brought the comparatively unregulated social practices of Saint-Laurent's original inhabitants under the critical gaze of outsiders. The newly arrived settlers, whose farming and commercial fishing pursuits kept them anchored near the heart of the recently established parish of Saint-Laurent, did not develop or maintain close relations with the *Saulteaux* on the lakeshore, as did the freemen families that had preceded them. Their obedience to the teachings of the Oblates also served to separate them socially from Saint-Laurent's original families, despite the fact that most residents of the parish identified themselves culturally as Métis.

By the 1870s, four distinctive socio-economic groups had evolved within Saint-Laurent. The elite of the parish — at least in the eyes of the church — consisted of those Métis families who supplemented full-time farming with commercial fishing, observed Roman Catholic doctrine, and provided their children with formal educational opportunities. The cohort below the farming group was comprised of the families of free traders, who attracted the wrath of the priests due to their propensity for maintaining simultaneously a Métis household in the settlement and a *Saulteaux* “country family” by the lakeshore. The social class ranking third in the colony consisted of hunting and gathering Métis who maintained sporadic contact with Saint-Laurent between bison hunts and wintering quarters elsewhere. The people with the lowest status in Saint-Laurent emerged after 1870. These were the Métis descendants of freemen who identified culturally as *Saulteaux* and chose to live with their Indian relatives on Duck Bay and its nearby reserve.

That outsiders had already begun to delineate these disparate populations and correlate their lifestyles with their ethnicity is clear from the notes of census-takers and the accounts of contemporary visitors to the parish. Saint-Laurent residents who were

primarily involved in seasonal hunting, fishing, and trading along the lakeshore as opposed to farming, who spoke *Saulteaux*, and who continued to practice marriage *à la façon du pays* were often described as “Indian”. Conversely, those who farmed, sought title to land, led a Christian life, and formally schooled their children were deemed to be “Métis” or “white”, regardless of their racial origins or personal ethnic ascription.

After 1881 the racial, cultural, and economic distinctions embodied in these rather crude diagnostic criteria would become even more firmly entrenched with the migration of Québécois, Breton, and British agriculturalists to the parish, a trend discussed in chapter 5. These settlers adapted to their new environment with such success that the hunting, fishing, and trading lifestyle of the original inhabitants could not fail to be seen as anything other than proof of the racial and cultural inferiority of Aboriginal people. The parish clergy made unflattering distinctions between the settlers and the Métis, citing the prosperity and “western” culture of the former as proof of their superiority over the “Indian” lifestyle followed by the latter, whose vulnerability to the vagaries of the subsistence economy often resulted in destitution.

The interplay between economic and cultural forces would have profound ethnic ramifications for the people of Saint-Laurent. In the conclusion to her study, the author notes:

By 1880, many of the old lakeshore families were trapped in lives of poverty and hunger, caused by lack of land, little or no access to capital and none of the knowledge necessary for a transition to a farming-and-fishing lifestyle. After 1880, families who had succeeded in achieving a relatively comfortable living began distancing themselves from their impoverished neighbours and relatives by emphasizing their French-Canadian background and rejecting the label “Métis”. (p. 90)

St-Onge’s effective utilization of Oblate correspondence, oral histories, contemporary accounts, and census data provides a solid documentary foundation for the book’s concluding arguments. Although this detail can at times be overwhelming, the variety of sources (particularly the under-utilized French-language documents in the Oblate collections) is welcome.

Perhaps the strongest element of this study, however, is the explication of the ethnic phenomena reflected in this book’s title, that of “evolving Métis identities”. The birth, suppression, or effacement of ethnicity and the subsequent adoption of new cultural identities are processes that are difficult to elucidate without resorting to facile or shallow explanations. Recent legal decisions affecting Métis rights and the reclamation of Aboriginal heritage by thousands of Canadians make knowledge and understanding of ethnic identity formation essential for those who control the lives of Native people. St-Onge’s detailed examination succeeds admirably in communicating the interplay of race, environment, culture, and economics in shaping personal and collective Aboriginal identities over time.

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