

Culture



Daniel RAUNET, *Without Surrender Without Consent, A History of the Nisgas Land Claims, Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984. 244 pages, \$18.95 (cloth)*

James McDonald

Volume 6, Number 1, 1986

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1078443ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1078443ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie

ISSN

0229-009X (print)

2563-710X (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

McDonald, J. (1986). Review of [Daniel RAUNET, *Without Surrender Without Consent, A History of the Nisgas Land Claims, Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984. 244 pages, \$18.95 (cloth)*]. *Culture*, 6(1), 65–66.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1078443ar>

Tous droits réservés © Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie, 1986

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

Érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Daniel RAUNET, *Without Surrender Without Consent, A History of the Nisgas Land Claims*, Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984. 244 pages, \$18.95 (cloth).

By James McDonald
Royal Ontario Museum

"The Native fight is the fight of all those trying to regain a sense of owning their own lives, those who are... opponents of the madness of the present age." (p. 236)

In this book, Daniel Raunet outlines the political economy of the encounter between the Nisgas of northwestern British Columbia and capitalist society, and of the resulting struggle to maintain Nisgas identity. It is a valuable and timely contribution that explains both the current marginality of the Nisgas and their exceptional role championing aboriginal rights. Written from a Nisgas perspective, the text presents a substantial amount of useful ethnohistorical information with a refreshing tone and style.

Three major subjects are developed: the attacks on Nisgas culture by missionaries and other agents of the new order, the theft of land and resources, and the struggle of the Nisgas people against the imposition of the "rule of profit" (p. 14).

Raunet interprets the mission of the Churches to have been one of destruction, and their ultimate mandate, in the context of the times, to have been the removal of every cultural practice that was "inimical to modern capitalism" (p. 73). The chapters on the arrival and methods of the missionaries provide a convenient and interesting accounting of early evangelists who taught not only the Bible but also the customs of "working six days out of seven, and eating with one's feet under the table" (p. 72). For them, religion and culture were intertwined, whether it was paganism and savagery or Christianity and civilization.

The utopian morality that compelled the missionaries to undermine Nisgas culture also forced them to understand native society, if for no other reason than to change it more effectively. In time, their maturing sensitivity obliged the missionaries to defend the people and to support a resistance against the theft of Nisgas land, resources, and way of life.

Unfortunately, Raunet's description of how,

within a few years, the Nisgas resources were brought under the control of "white supremacy" (p. 102) is less informative. Instead of carefully discussing the government's machinations, for example the Royal Commissions, he simply gives extraordinarily long quotations of generally available government papers or recites the history of other parts of the province.

Nonetheless, his better examples of how the mining and agricultural pre-emptions turned the Nisgas into squatters on their own land, and of how the fish were regulated for the commercial fishery in ways that assigned the Nisgas to a second class position within the fisheries, illustrate well the role played by repressive government regulations in creating the contemporary marginality of the Nisgas economy.

One reads the chapters that follow, on the modern multinationals, with a feeling of *deja vu*. The Nisgas still live near valued resources and still find themselves in the front line of the rush for wealth. Raunet demonstrates the impact of this type of development well. His histories of the Tree Farm License and the AMAX mining project show how easily corporations can move in, take what they want, and then leave with little regard for the disruption they cause. Both case studies provide important information on recent Nisgas history.

These encroachments into Nisgas sovereignty and independence were not accepted without a struggle. Raunet reviews more than a century of the political battles over the land issue and for the recognition of Nisgas laws. It is good reading, containing important ethnographic data on Nisgas society, especially the complex system of tenure.

The material makes the reader realize that the repressive governmental attitudes that once banned potlatching and land claims are still very much with us. When the Nisgas hired British lawyers to present their 1913 petition to the King, they were frustrated by a requirement that Ottawa must sponsor them, which Ottawa would not do, just as the government counselled the Queen not to receive the aboriginal constitutional delegation in 1980. Similarly, the 1911 position of the BC government that Indian claims were settled before Confederation demonstrates the intransigence of a provincial government that still refuses to accept the entrenchment of aboriginal rights into the Constitution.

Raunet's account of the period since the

organization of the Native Brotherhood in 1934 includes interesting inside views of Nisgas political strategy, such as a description of the historic meeting at which a young Frank Calder was designated to be trained as the Nisgas emissary to the government, the establishment of the Nisgas Tribal Council, and the famous Calder case itself. A major victory that resulted was the 1973 reversal of the Federal government stand on aboriginal claims. Raunet interprets this change in the context of the White Paper, James Bay, and provincial politics. His argument is that even though the policy seemed politically liberal, it was used only to negotiate the price of aboriginal surrender. This was not what the Nisgas wanted.

The Nisgas want the right to survive as a people. They declared this to be their demand in 1976, and repeated it at the First Ministers Conferences on the Constitution. As before, it was ignored.

Raunet's history of the segregation of the Nisgas supports his argument of a Canadian apartheid. But is it appropriate to apply an apartheid model to Canada? Unfortunately, Raunet's argument for doing so is weakened by factual errors and a misunderstanding of apartheid.

Factually he is wrong to say that the Indian Act and reserve system has a "purely genetic basis", or that the Indian Registry is only a racial record. More generally, he demonstrates a difficulty in maintaining the distinction between status and non-status Indians. In part, this stems from his uncritical use of the racist dichotomy of "whiteman/Indian". Consequently, in several key areas, his analysis of the penetration of capitalism slips into an unfortunate discussion of what "the whiteman" did, rather than a more consistent and precise discussion of class relationships. In other areas, the dichotomy emerges as a romantic presentation of Indians and of their environment.

The other weakness is that apartheid is not just a system of segregation, as Raunet suggests. He defines apartheid as "a system of oppression by which society is compartmentalized on racial lines... (with each race) set apart geographically, legally, economically" (p. 167), and where the original inhabitants are put aside as barriers to the free development of the resources of the country. There is more to apartheid than a misunderstanding or an inability for the government to tolerate any social system that is not based on private property in resources and land.

Apartheid is a total social system dependent on special policies for the exploitation of labour. These structure every aspect of national and personal life along racist lines. In Canada, Indian labour is not

important to capitalism, with the result that it can be marginalized. Thus, Indians can be segregated easily, and the Canadian social fabric is not defined by the policies of segregation. This feature makes Canada significantly unlike South Africa.

Fortunately, Raunet's methodology works better than his terminology. His global perspective on the multinationals and his examination of the experiences of the aboriginal inhabitants of other countries must be applauded. The international comparisons Raunet makes are important and informative; however they would be stronger if he more clearly contextualized the marginality of Indians not in terms of apartheid but as an aspect of the general phenomenon of capitalist development.

Lisbeth SACHS, *Evil Eye or Bacteria: Turkish Migrant Women and Swedish Health Care*, Stockholm, University of Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 1983.

By Sam Migliore
McMaster University

With *Evil Eye or Bacteria*, Lisbeth Sachs makes a notable contribution to the ever-growing body of literature dealing with topics of interest to medical anthropologists. Sachs provides a sensitive discussion of health-related problems Turkish women encounter, and attempt to cope with, as they migrate from their native rural communities to suburban Stockholm. She bases this discussion on material collected primarily in Sweden, but also in Turkey, during the 1976 to 1981 period.

Throughout the text, Sachs makes effective use of the distinction between *illness* and *disease*. She defines these concepts in the following way: (1) *illness* refers to "the subjective perceptions (symptoms) which are not necessarily visible (pain) but are communicated... in a culturally prescribed manner"; and, (2) *disease* refers to "ill-health arising from an 'objectively' observable phenomenon that can be classified, explained and treated in biomedical terms" (pp. 18-19). Based on this distinction, Sachs proceeds to examine how the Turkish women perceive the ailments they and their children experience. She also examines how the women's perception and explanation of these experiences determine the type(s) of action they take. Extensive use of case histories helps to illustrate this process. In my view, one of the major strengths of Sachs' presentation is her sensitive and sincere use of case material.