

David Howe Turner, 2018, *Eyes of the Shaman: The Visions of Piona Keyuakjuk*. Oakville: Rock's Mills Press, 176 pages.

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David Howe Turner, 2018, *Eyes of the Shaman: The Visions of Piona Keyuakjuk* Oakville: Rock's Mills Press, 176 pages.

Book Review by Roxanne Blanchard-Gagnéⁱ

From the point of view of a non-Inuit author, Professor Emeritus David Howe Turner (Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto), in *Eyes of the Shaman: The Visions of Piona Keyuakjuk* (2018), pays tribute to Uqurmiut¹ (“People of the leaside” in Inuktitut) culture and details some elements of *angakkuuniq*². Through (re)reading this book, anthropologists, academic peers, and the next bibliophile will notice a unique opportunity to tackle the complex issues of addressing sacred representations and Inuit spiritual practices (*angakkuuniq* and Christian tradition). Readers will also gain further insights into present intra- and inter-cultural social dynamics within the scope of intertwined relationships between human and non-human beings (e.g., animals, *tuurngait* (helping spirits³), *nuna* (land)). This book also provides a glimpse of Inuit art and handicrafts to help broaden awareness and understanding regarding Inuit artists and northern realities. In this regard, Turner’s *Eyes of the Shaman: The Visions of Piona Keyuakjuk* thus represents an admirable attempt to express the lifestyle and art-based practices of Inuit carvers without succumbing to the clichés—the very delineation of this social-cultural context of lifestyle practices would require a close analysis of its own.

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1. They now live, with few exceptions, in Pangnirtung (Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2014).
2. Inuit religious phenomena, requiring a holistic approach, center on individuals (s.g., *angakkuq*; pl., *angakkuut* in Inuktitut) who act *inter alia* as spiritual guides and healers who mediate with the spirits (as the winds and animals) and others, such as Sedna (or Senna in Inuktitut), the Sea Goddess, who rules the underworld and marine animals. “According to [Naomi Musmaker Giffen] both men and women could perform as shamans [(to be understood as *angakkuut*)], but men patients were predominantly treated by men, while women were treated by men and women, or, in the Hudson Bay area, predominantly by women” (Giffen 1930, paraphrased in Oosten 1986, 117).
3. Referred to as *auxiliary spirits* by Saladin d’Anglure (2006, 2018) or as *helping spirits* by Knud Rasmussen (1999 [1929]), these entities are the spirits of deceased Inuit loved ones (such as a relative with whom an Inuk shares a namesake) and animals (familiar).

Within the distinct perspective of religious studies and cultural anthropology, the author offers a fresh look at a living tradition by introducing Piona Keyuakjuk (also spelled Piona Qijuarjuk or Peona Keyouakjuk) and his neighbours' experiences with and knowledge on *angakkuuniq* through their carvings and drawings. Thus Turner, who fielded the awakening of Western (scientific) knowledge about contemporary *angakkuuniq* and *tuurngait* (i.e., alongside Oosten 1986; Aupilaarjuk, Aupilaarjuk, and Saladin d'Anglure 2001; Saladin d'Anglure 2018; Laugrand and Oosten 2010 [2012]), challenges our understanding of Inuit converted to Christianity.

It all started in 2005 with an invitation to join Professors Christopher Trott and Peter Kulchyski (Department of Native Studies) as well as a few students from the University of Manitoba at their summer school in Pangnirtung (or Pangnirtuq; also, Panniqtuq)⁴, Nunavut. Prior to his arrival, Turner began his research, for example by “[...] browsing through the Inuit art shops of Toronto looking for works by Pangnirtung artists” (Turner 2018, xxv). Under the initiative, he was introduced to Piona Keyuakjuk’s artwork— “[...] that immediately attracted [his] attention” (ibid., xxv). It happened again on his first day in Pangnirtung when he dropped by the Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts. This prompted Turner to ask where he could find the artist, and in a matter of hours, he introduced himself to Keyuakjuk. The outcome of this meeting was stupendous because of Piona Keyuakjuk’s willingness to generously share his time and cultural knowledge on a wide range of Inuit subjects, such as mythology, traditions, and behaviours. Interest thus quickly arose in both parties to pursue their dialogue within a framework of Arts⁵ and Inuit History.

This encounter, the first of many, set the scene for a social bonding through shared experiences (such as family matters) and grounded their blossoming relationship into a lasting friendship. The experiences of their

4. “Pangnirtung [with a population of more than 1,400 people], is the third largest community in the Qikiqtani Region [also known as the Qikiqtani Region or Baffin Region] [...] [and the hamlet] has only seen permanent habitation since 1921. It grew around the Hudson’s Bay Company trading post that attracted the RCMP in 1923, an Anglican Mission in 1926, and a government hospital in 1930” (Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2021).

5. Even building customer-artist interactions. Moreover, as the commissioned carvings were often the main thread of their discussions, Turner seized these opportunities to delve deeper into the topic of *angakkuit*.

get-togethers are the core of the book's structure⁶, and each section of it reflects the various discussions they enjoyed over the years (2005 to 2009).

Turner's desire to understand Piona Keyuakjuk's character, particularly his propensity of "[...] having shamanic-like abilities" (Turner 2018, 45), led to a few informal meetings with Uqurmiut in Pangnirtung. Inuit speak from experience (of every kind, whether corporeal or incorporeal, tangible or intangible) as well as on current circumstances. Many have often observed and engaged in a type of ritualistic behaviour, though they tend to avoid *angakkuuniq*-related questions. As Darren McCarthy, one of Keyuakjuk's neighbours, said, "People believe that if you talk about *angakkuq* or mention the word, you bring their power to life" (Turner 2018, 20). This connection between intent and expression reflects the ability to bring an ethereal influence to bear as well as the unseen powers dealt with by *angakkuut*. Western influence and demonization of *angakkuuniq* appears to have inspired a code of silence among Inuit. Indeed, this contempt may be the reason for their resistance against full disclosure. Perplexed on that score, Turner wrote: "I wasn't sure if this was a reference to Piona or me asking questions about the subject" (ibid., 20).

Not concerned with a structural or comparative analysis of the various forms of Inuit religious beliefs, Turner presents Keyuakjuk's views and thoughts on what he carves and draws, which mirror what he sees and learns from his "journey" (either wide awake or asleep). Inspiration is found both on the land and at home. In each of his creations, Keyuakjuk combines the animals and spirits he has encountered and intriguing shapes as well as productions from other experiences. These intricacies are conveyed in the preface, as genuinely explained by Frédéric B. Laugrand, "[...] the many drawings [and carvings] depicting *tuurngait*, or Piona's helping spirits, constitute more than a memory; they translate an act of resistance and an assertion of cultural continuity. By releasing these vivid images, Piona not only shows that shamanism is still alive and situated within a wider cosmological framework, but he also makes a political statement within the contemporary Nunavut territory" (Turner, 2018, xvi). Browsing the 104 colour illustrations of the sketchbook, the reader will also notice, through the "[...] sacred representations [...] intermingled with the secular ones" (op. cit., 50), a strong desire of "[...] carrying on the Inuit way" (op. cit., 50),

6. Acknowledgments; Preface by Frédéric B. Laugrand; Introduction; I: First Encounter; II: Second Encounter; III: Third Encounter; IV: Fourth Encounter; V: The Sketchbook; VI: List of Sketches; VII: Illustrations; VIII: Selected References; Piona's Sketchbook.

coined by the precepts of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit⁷ (IQ)—for which Keyuakjuk holds himself accountable.

Because of his wisdom and sagacity, Keyuakjuk has incorporated the IQ's fundamental learnings and values into his artwork; for example, “[...] the importance of dealing kindly with everything, especially animals” (Karetak, Tester, and Tagalik 2017, 55). He therefore works toward this goal and concludes Turner's book by requesting that the Inuit way be portrayed as a long-term ideal.

Eyes of the Shaman: The Visions of Piona Keyuakjuk (2018) proposes ingenious ideas for further investigation and brings a full reassessment of social, cultural, and religious resilience through the process of conversion to Christianity in Pangnirtung. This work borders perhaps on a form of resistance; thus, a richer analysis on the topics covered (or implied) is warranted. It appears clear to me that additional in-depth research could help explain the comments made by Keyuakjuk and his father Josephee and shed light on some of the presented artwork for today's generation and those to come.

The remembrance of stories through the physical component of drawings, such as the philosophical aspects of the relationship between Inuit and the Arctic environment or “ethical views”, includes the relationship between humans and animals (Fienup-Riordan 2007), metamorphosis, personhood, and domestic nature. It is within this documenting and preserving of oral history that Keyuakjuk's artwork offers a firsthand account on conceptualizing and considering relationship dynamics and networks of ontological dimension more systematically (Maire 2015) and “of engagement” (Bird-David 1991).

For example, if we are acquainted with the symbolic data gathered for the book thus far, we will find tradition amidst all of the potential knowledge transfers conveyed when flipping through the pages. This appears to be particularly — as we have seen (or read) — hidden or exposed information on the clothing, ornaments, and tattoos of *angakkuuit* (pages 34 and 119), their tools (pages 9 to 11, also 19 and 27), and the carved [wooden?] masks (pages 107 and 124). Such information may be used, among others, to address the legacy of past and present *angakkuuniq*.

I want to stress this important aspect of the *angakkuuit's* accountability in harmonizing the (inter)connections with the elements of Inuit worldviews, including (but not limited to) weather influencing human life and to cure

7. In all aspects of Inuit daily life, the IQ (referred to as Inuit societal values and encompassing their traditional knowledge and epistemology) is practised through essential learnings, thoughts, and actions in order to “[...] become able human beings” (Karetak, Tester, and Tagalik 2017, 146) as well as to “[...] have a good life or live in harmony with people” (ibid., 146).

illness and disease, as I believe it may not have been emphasized enough by the author. Mention should be made here of the relevance of the dog sled equipment (e.g., dog sled whip (*ipparautaq*) (Laugrand, Oosten, and Trudel 2000), the connector for a dog team harness (Turner 2018) and the Inuit-qimitt (dogs) relationship in performing *silagiksaqtuq* (to alter the weather⁸) (Rasmussen 1929; Laugrand, Oosten, and Trudel, 2000), and healing practices (Turner 2018). Using “the connector for a dog team harness [(a tugline)] [...] as a healing tool”⁹ (ibid., 27), referred throughout this ritual as *oslik*, the *angakkuut* would have “[...] shake[n] it at the sick person to heal them and it takes the sickness away” (ibid., 27). It is no paradox that the connection between dog, health, and Inuit are emphasized and honoured by [animal] ceremonialism. These techniques reflect some of the many intricacies of the sacred human-canine bond in Inuit Nunangat.

In view of the foregoing conclusion, David Howe Turner’s *Eyes of the Shaman: The Visions of Piona Keyuakjuk* (2018) gives promising access to several general observations on the ethereal through half-hidden *angakkuuniq*-related knowledge in Pangnirtung, and of course that Inuit Art is not only a commercial industry but also, summing up and paraphrasing Aurélie Maire (2015, 460-461), we must put it on: “a continuum of teachings among Inuit that is exposed to another layer of understanding, another level of interpretation of the same symbols, stories, and practices.”

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8. “When the spirit of the wind keeps blowing and there is no peace to go out hunting by land or sea, then a [*angakkuut*] has to go up into the sky and beat him, trash him with a whip, until he calms down and the storms subside” (Rasmussen 1929, 72, as cited in Laugrand, Oosten, and Trudel 2000, 36)
9. “The harness rope goes down through the large hole and under and up through the small one” (Turner 2018, 27).

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