

Culture



Archimandrite Anatolii KAMENSKII, *Tlingit Indians of Alaska*, Translated, with an Introduction and Supplementary Material by Sergei Kan, Fairbanks, The University of Alaska Press, (original 1906), English Translation 1985. pp. 166. \$15.00 US

Margaret Seguin

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argues that the experiences of his personal life during this decade contributed to his emergence as a mature thinker and “produced an amalgam of models and methods from a range of sources [which] turned Edward Sapir from a competent Boasian anthropologist into an interdisciplinary theoretician (583).”

This Sapir volume provides invaluable documentation of Sapir’s culture, his personality and his interaction with other thinkers of his time. It is rich in previously unpublished material by Sapir himself, as well as original information about him by people who knew him as a person. The book is about Sapir but it is also about the many people who contributed to the “genuine” cultural understanding to which he dedicated his life. It is essential (and fascinating) reading for anyone with an interest in the history of ideas in anthropology and linguistics.

Emily Ivanoff BROWN, *Tales of Ticasuk, Eskimo legends and stories*, Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 1987, xxvi & 134 pages, illustrations.

par Louis-Jacques Dorais
Université Laval

Ce livre est un recueil de contes et légendes inuit de la région d’Unalakleet, au fond du golfe de Norton (Norton Sound), sur la mer de Béring, à l’ouest de l’Alaska. L’auteure, Ticasuk de son nom inuit, est, nous apprend l’introduction, un personnage célèbre dans la région : infirmière, institutrice, elle décida, à cinquante ans, d’entreprendre des études universitaires. À sa mort, en 1982, à l’âge de 78 ans, elle détenait plusieurs diplômes (dont une maîtrise) en langue et culture inuit, et venait de recevoir un doctorat honorifique de l’Université d’Alaska. Elle laissait des centaines de pages de matériel folklorique et ethnographique, dont le présent ouvrage, publié à titre posthume, illustre une petite partie.

Il ne s’agit pas d’un travail anthropologique au sens strict. Le livre d’Emily Brown a donc peu d’intérêt pour les spécialistes. C’est, en fait, un recueil de contes et légendes destiné aux écoliers autochtones d’Alaska, ainsi qu’au grand public. Le fait qu’il soit rédigé en anglais en dit long sur l’état de la langue inuit (en voie de disparition) chez les jeunes de cette région d’Alaska.

Chacun des 24 courts récits que contient l’ouvrage est précédé d’une explication de l’auteure, qui précise un

certain nombre d’éléments plus difficilement compréhensibles aux enfants contemporains. Les récits sont suivis d’une courte morale, qui leur donne une signification pédagogique américano-chrétienne.

Tous ces contes et légendes ont un contenu purement local. Beaucoup sont étiologiques, relatant l’origine de tel village, telle coutume ou tel accident géographique de la région. Malgré tout cependant, on reconnaît certains thèmes communs à l’ensemble de l’aire inuit : la nature de l’aurore boréale (des esprits jouant au ballon avec une tête humaine) ; la vengeance de l’orphelin, qui détruit ceux qui étaient méchants envers lui ; la fille qui ne voulait pas se marier (et qui est avalée par la terre, plutôt que par la mer, comme dans les mythes de l’Arctique oriental).

Certaines expressions insérées dans les récits ont été laissées dans leur langue d’origine, le parler malimiut, un dialecte inuit qui a déplacé, au début du siècle, les parlers yupik jusqu’alors utilisés dans la région. Malheureusement, malgré certains efforts de la part de l’éditeur, l’orthographe n’est pas toujours standard.

Finalement, le livre offre peu de points intéressants, si ce n’est comme témoignage de la vitalité d’une culture qui, dans ce coin de l’Alaska, remonte à plusieurs millénaires. Le cap Denbigh en effet, haut lieu de la préhistoire esquimaude la plus ancienne, ne se trouve qu’à quelques kilomètres d’Unalakleet, le village natal d’Emily Brown.

Archimandrite Anatolii KAMENSKII, *Tlingit Indians of Alaska*, Translated, with an Introduction and Supplementary Material by Sergei Kan, Fairbanks, The University of Alaska Press, (original 1906), English Translation 1985. pp. 166. \$15.00 US.

by Margaret Seguin
University of Western Ontario

Sergei Kan has collected materials for this volume from published and unpublished writings by the Russian Orthodox missionary Fr. Anatolii Kamenskii, who worked in Sitka, Alaska from 1895 to 1898. Kan has much done more than simply translate an existing work : he has selected several of Kamenskii’s important short newspaper articles and reports, organized them into a coherent order, and then translated and annotated them in the light of scholarship on the Tlingit, on Orthodox missions, and on the original

author's previous and subsequent career. The volume is introduced by an introductory chapter in which the translator discusses the significance of the work, and provides a brief biography of Kamenskii; the volume is completed by 16 appendices (mostly translations of directly relevant pieces of briefer correspondence), glossaries of Tlingit and Russian terms, and an index.

Kan has set a high scholarly standard for this work, and the meticulous attention to details of translation and annotation indicate that he has recognized that the principal audiences are specialists in the ethnology of the Tlingit, historians of missionization, and 19th century historians of the area. Ethnographic and historical information has been cross-checked against contemporary accounts from newspapers and the reports of other missions in the area, and was further verified by Kan's interviews with Tlingit consultants during 1979-80. Kan suggests (p. 17) that the volume will be of interest for understanding the relationship between theory and practice in the work of Russian missionaries, and will dispel the view that they were tolerant cultural relativists, while still highlighting some contrasts to Protestant American missionaries from the same time/area.

I do have some small dissatisfactions with the form of the book as it stands, and I will mention them before discussing the content in greater detail. First, the format used for notes is awkward—the reader must leaf back and forth between the text, the original notes and the translator's notes. The two sets of notes could easily have been merged, since they are distinguished by use of an asterisk with the translator's notes in the text. Some readers will find the typeface used in the text for note numbers is so fine that it is illegible; this is really quite an unnecessary distraction and the publisher should have been able to predict the problem. Finally, Kan has included references in his Bibliography that are not cited at all; for example, Drucker's 1958 study of native brotherhoods is in the bibliography, but isn't cited, and doesn't appear in the text.

Kan provides a considerable amount of commentary to contextualize Kamenskii's writings. He succeeds admirably with respect to the reflections of Russian culture and social history, but glosses over some of the more general issues in 19th century debate. I may be judging a bit unfairly in this regard, since my comment is grounded in a very recent reading of R. Bieder's *Science Encounters the Indian*, which does an extraordinarily fine job in this area.

There are other areas where the volume could have been profitably extended as well. For example Kan suggests that the volume will contribute to an understanding of the Orthodox versus Protestant mission activities in the area, but while he points out examples of tension between Kamenskii and Protestant administrators and missionaries, he doesn't explore the

direct influence that the missionary William Duncan had on the direction of Kamenskii's ideas. (Kamenskii discussed Duncan and the Metlakatla community in very positive terms (p. 121), but Kan discusses the derivation of his program for the future of natives in Alaska from "a particular blend of ideas, with a clear influence of the Russian idealization of the patriarchal lifestyle of peasants, hunters, and fishermen" (p. 10).

A final area in which the book falls short of my hopes for it was in the discussion of the Indian Society of Temperance and Mutual Aid, of which Kan says (p. 11) "Soon thereafter, Indian Brotherhoods spread to other Tlingit communities and continued to be quite active until 1940s-1950s." It is not clear from his comment whether the brotherhoods were the same "Native Brotherhoods" that Drucker's 1958 account discusses (for B.C. and Alaska), or whether they were their inspiration, or were quite unrelated to them. This may be an instance of insider knowledge being presumed by Kan.

In summary, though I have complaints small and large, this is overall a well-done, interesting book, with some special relevance to those interested in ethnology of Tlingit/NWC, and especially 19th century history in the area. It also offers a contribution to historians interested in the process of missionization. Kan has done an exceptional job of making the original material accessible to contemporary scholars. The nature of the material may ensure that it will have a small audience, but it is well worth recommending for library acquisition.

Karla POEWE, *The Namibian Herero: A History of their Psychosocial Disintegration and Survival*, Lewiston/Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985. 364 pages.

by Mathias Guenther
Wilfrid Laurier University

The psychological effects, three generations after the event, of the colonial German genocidal war on the Herero of Namibia, are examined in this compellingly written book, which the author presents as an "addition to the broader universe of survivor literature".

The author first provides a brief historical account of the war and the subsequent internment of the scattered and emaciated Herero survivors in "collection camps", whence they were sent off to work on white farms and railroads. After surveying the effects on the