

Culture

Denys DELÂGE, *Le pays renversé. Amérindiens et européens en Amérique du nord-est 160-1664*. Montréal, Boréal Express, 1985. 424 pages, maps

Bruce G. Trigger



Volume 6, numéro 1, 1986

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1078457ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1078457ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

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

ISSN

0229-009X (imprimé)

2563-710X (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Trigger, B. (1986). Compte rendu de [Denys DELÂGE, *Le pays renversé. Amérindiens et européens en Amérique du nord-est 160-1664*. Montréal, Boréal Express, 1985. 424 pages, maps]. *Culture*, 6(1), 82–84.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1078457ar>

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

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

but which also includes some recent Canadian work. It consists of ten articles written by scholars who have themselves been significant contributors to the field; each article is presented in the form of a bibliographic essay on a broadly defined topic which is inclusive in scope and, in some instances, trenchant in comment. Many of the studies reviewed in this volume appear to shift away from parochialism of place, period or discipline towards the more theoretical and comparative approaches which have been encouraged for several years by various centers of Indian Studies, such as the sponsor of this volume itself, which is the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian. Although designed for the specialist, any teacher will find here a veritable market bazaar of enticing and well labelled items from which to choose materials useful for a wide variety of classes.

Rik PINXTEN, Ingrid VON DOOREN, and Frank HARVEY, *The Anthropology of Space: Explorations into the Natural Philosophy and Semantics of the Navajo*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983. 240 pages, US \$32.50 (cloth).

By Ellavina Perkins
Navajo Community College
University of Arizona

The *Anthropology of Space* is a collection of every conceivable Navajo spatial terminology, and appears to be well documented research work. The Navajo script is commendable with only minor mistakes.

The book is full of valuable data for those who are inclined to research, particularly those researchers in the ethnographic arena. It is designed to serve them as a training manual and a guide to doing similar fieldwork among the Navajo. It is highly technical as shown by the Universal Frame of Reference (UFOR), an apparatus Pinxten devised to collect and research Navajo spatial terminology. UFOR is a maximal set of spatial discriminations that human beings are capable of making, and may be used for ethnographic research in any semantic field.

This book is purely academic and meant for scholars on the caliber of Pinxten, particularly those who are used to the Northwestern University context which seems to be limited to the students of Ossy Werner and the like. To the layman this book

is inaccessible and irrelevant; however, it can still be useful to some Navajo scholars as resource material. It may especially be useful in the holistic approach to teaching mathematics to Navajo students by the few Navajo teachers who are literate in Navajo, since Pinxten has certainly laid out, to a great extent, a plan for how this can be done.

As a whole, I find Pinxten's book an excellent and reliable piece of work on the Navajo language and a tribute to one institutional philosophy: "to promote, nurture and enrich the Navajo culture and language." Ethnographic works such as Pinxten's are needed and deserve such attention as that given by him to spatial semantics, toward the preservation of the Navajo language and to determining how the language is faring in such a defined domain.

The reliability of Pinxten's book is partially attributable to his collaboration with one of the foremost authorities on the Navajo culture and a person who has many years of experience working alongside individuals like Pinxten. I commend him for selecting Mr. Harvey as his consultant.

I especially appreciate Pinxten's reason for supporting the native approach to research and education: "there is today the phenomenon of the totally inappropriate education, leading to misunderstanding and sociocultural and psychological alienation of Navajo children and adults. With its almost complete lack of consideration for the authentic Navajo world view, the school curriculum is scarcely integrated into the native context. The result is that people at some point have to choose between their system of knowledge and the Western alternative. Most people never choose and come to live and think in a 'divided world', partly Navajo and partly Western. Nobody deserves this second rate treatment in a democratic society."

Denys DELÂGE, *Le pays renversé. Amérindiens et européens en Amérique du nord-est 160-1664*. Montréal, Boréal Express, 1985. 424 pages, maps.

By Bruce G. Trigger
McGill University

This is an innovative and important interdisciplinary study. It offers the first comprehensive analysis of the French, Dutch, and English colonization of northeastern North America during the early and middle decades of the seventeenth

century that pays comparable attention to European factors promoting colonization, its impact upon the native peoples of the area, and the nature of the colonial societies that were established there and also makes a systematic effort to understand the interrelations among these different aspects of colonization. Delâge's work is inspired by the socioeconomic perspectives of Karl Marx and the world-system approach of Immanuel Wallerstein. Although his spatial and temporal framework is more restricted than Wallerstein's, in many respects his study of northwestern Europe in the seventeenth century is more comprehensive and better balanced.

Delâge's main thesis is that the outcome of colonial rivalries in North America depended on the characteristics of the European national economies that were competing with each other for a share of the world market. Unlike Wallerstein, Delâge believes that the Netherlands alone constituted the core of the European world-system prior to the 1660s, while England and France were both parts of the semi-periphery. Delâge also emphasizes more than Wallerstein that the differential power of capital accumulation among the nations of Western Europe was rooted in the uneven development of their agricultural systems. The Netherlands forged ahead in terms of agricultural production, trade, and manufacturing, followed by England; while France, which remained in a semi-feudal state, lagged far behind. As a result, the Dutch won control of the most lucrative external sources of capital accumulation, the Baltic region and the Far East; while England had to be content for the time being with the second prize, the Atlantic region, and France was left clinging to a few marginal spheres of influence. Northeastern North America was a valuable source of fish, furs, and timber. Furs could be obtained from native hunters and traders in exchange for European manufactured goods at rates that were highly advantageous to Europeans. Becoming part of the periphery of the European world-system reduced these native peoples to a state of permanent dependence on Europeans, undermined their egalitarian social structures, compelled native men and women to work harder than ever before, depleted the natural environment, and gave rise to unprecedented intertribal conflicts. While the Dutch undercut the French by selling their goods at lower prices, the French sought native trade through military alliances and missionary activity.

Only the developing economy of England and its accompanying economic crises encouraged massive European settlement in North America, which eventually doomed the less populous Dutch

and French colonies. The free colonists of New England also created a market for English manufactured goods which, along with the cheap raw materials they supplied, allowed the English to displace the Dutch as the leading commercial power after 1660. Delâge portrays New France as an underpopulated colony, confined by the commercial and naval weakness of its motherland to a hostile environment, limited by the monoproduction of the fur trade and its feebly developed economic institutions, and its development hampered by feudal institutions, such as a powerful church and the seigneurial system, which was established to restrict access to the fur trade. European settlement was everywhere accompanied by the spiritual subordination of native peoples, genocide, and the confinement of survivors on reserves. Delâge believes that in addition to the economic motivations for such behaviour, native egalitarianism was regarded as subversive to the hierarchical societies that European colonists were seeking to establish in the New World.

Delâge's arguments are diverse, elegantly constructed, and based on a wide range of respectable interpretative concepts and I personally welcome his reinforcement of a materialist approach. Yet not all of his formulations are convincing. In his effort to draw the greatest possible dichotomy between European and Amerindian societies, he has exaggerated the egalitarian, redistributive aspects of the latter. There is convincing evidence that private exchanges occurred (within the structure of intertribal alliances) and that profits were made on intertribal exchanges prior to the arrival of the Europeans. "Tolls" also appear to have been paid when native traders crossed the territories of friendly tribes. Status rivalries may not have been as muted as Delâge assumes and there is archaeological documentation of genocidal warfare (as opposed to simple blood revenge) already in prehistoric times. All of this suggests that the Europeans were not the first serpents who disrupted the primitive communism of this Garden of Eden.

It is also doubtful that contacts between Europeans and native peoples were necessarily unequal from the beginning or that native life was not initially enriched by the fur trade, as Delâge suggests. For a long time European goods were sought because of the symbolic value they had for native peoples, rather than for technological reasons. In view of the great risks and frequent losses involved in transatlantic shipping, it is also unlikely that the long-term profits derived from the fur trade, even under monopoly conditions, were as great as Delâge indicates. Nor does the capitalist

exploitation of native people alone account for the exhaustion of game animals and the spiralling intertribal warfare that accompanied growing native reliance on European goods that they were unable to copy. European colonists did not scruple to play one native group against another, but native groups were prepared to do the same to European traders and officials. Nor does it appear that the egalitarianism of native cultures directly threatened the hierarchical organization of European societies in those early days. Employees of French trading companies temporarily adapted to living among native peoples but their aim was invariably to make enough money to break these ties and gain higher status in their own society. Their "half-breed" descendants remained members of the native groups into which they were born. It is clear, however, that for their own reasons, clergy and administrators sought to subordinate native peoples and alter their traditional ways of life. European historians can no doubt identify analogous problems with Delâge's treatment of their material.

In addition to such questions of interpretation, there are various factual errors. Oumasasikweie, for example, was an Algonkin, not a Huron—which is of some importance to the historical episode discussed on p. 228. These problems do not detract substantially, however, from Delâge's major achievement in presenting a world-system analysis of European colonization in northeastern North America. The originality of his work lies in the diversity of material that he synthesizes and the structure that he gives to his subject matter. Reality was almost certainly not structured as neatly as are his explanations, but this is an indication of their usefulness. We are here dealing not so much with history as with a code to understand history.

Jean-Pierre CHAUMEIL, *Voir, Savoir, Pouvoir. Le chamanisme chez les Yagua du Nord-Est péruvien*, Paris, Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1983. 352 pages, 140 ff.

Par Jean-Jacques Chalifoux
Université Laval

Le titre et le plan de ce livre annoncent un ouvrage anthropologique standard sur le sujet du chamanisme : « Voir, Savoir, Pouvoir » forment la trilogie des universaux de l'essence même du

chamanisme ; ses relations à la pratique (Chap. 1), à la vision du monde (Chap. 2), à la vie du groupe (Chap. 3), et à la maladie (Chap. 4) en sont les dimensions d'une problématique anthropologique usuelle.

Paradoxalement, c'est cette même conformité aux attentes anthropologiques qui fait l'originalité du livre car l'auteur situe le chamanisme au centre et non en marge de la société et l'aborde de façon globale et non sous l'angle égocentré et parcellaire des perspectives psychologisantes. Il ne s'agit pas ici d'un ouvrage d'initié révélant ses expériences personnelles mais mieux encore de celui d'un anthropologue discernant la place centrale aux discours de ses interlocuteurs.

Dès l'introduction, après une brève mise en situation des Yagua et de l'état des connaissances sur les définitions du chamanisme, l'auteur présente une transcription de l'expérience initiatique d'un chamane dont le récit impressionne le lecteur tout en lui fournissant le premier canevas ethnographique des analyses subséquentes. Parmi le matériel offert, il faut signaler plus spécifiquement les nombreux dessins des informateurs décrivant les habitants et les objets d'un univers dont l'extraordinaire représentation avait déjà fait la page couverture de la revue *L'Ethnographie*.

Sur le plan théorique, l'auteur semble se situer dans la ligne de pensée de Roberte Hamayon qui propose une définition endogène et maximale du chamanisme, c'est-à-dire pour lui-même et non en tant que partie d'un système de transformation impliquant la possession comme le voit L. De Heusch, et couvrant l'étendue du champ idéologique. La position personnelle de l'auteur n'est toutefois pas tout à fait précise sur la définition du chamanisme et il laisse le lecteur en construire les frontières.

Pendant une centaine de pages, J.-P. Chaumeil décrit la pratique chamannique : la terminologie, l'origine, les accessoires, les principes spirituels, l'initiation et les guérisons. Le chamane yagua est, comme ailleurs, un être ambivalent, bon ou mauvais. Il peut cumuler les fonctions de chef et accéder aux quelques privilèges (polygamie) qui lui sont rattachés. Un des apports de cette partie du livre est de remettre en question le présumé fréquent selon lequel les chamanes sont recrutés parmi les individus qui ont reçu l'« appel céleste » de la « maladie-épreuve ». Ici, il ne s'agit pas d'une condition requise pour accéder à la fonction mais on retrouve une « maladie initiatique » dans le cheminement même de l'initiation. Celle-ci consiste en une série d'épreuves physiques dont le pivot fonctionnel est très terre-à-terre : la capacité de l'estomac de résister aux drogues et aux jeûnes