

Culture



Anthony P. COHEN, ed. *Belonging: Identity and Social Organization in British Rural Cultures*, Newfoundland, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982. 352 pages, \$15 (cloth)

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Marc-Adélarde TREMBLAY, *L'identité québécoise en péril*, Ottawa, Les Éditions Saint-Yves Inc., 1983, 287 pages.

Par Asen Balikci
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«C'est pas grand chose ce livre, il y a des descriptions du Québec mais personne n'est cité, ni Althusser, ni Todorov, ni Godelier, t'en rends-tu compte, penser le Québec sans Balibar?» C'est ainsi que des copains québécois commentaient récemment le dernier livre de Marc-Adélarde Tremblay qui traite de l'identité québécoise en péril. «Mais y a-t-il au moins du Rioux-Dofny?» je demandais à mon tour. «Du Rioux oui, mais le vieux Rioux ethnographe; quant à Dofny, il n'y est pas!» Ma curiosité piquée, je feuilletais rapidement le livre et heureusement, je tombais vite sur une citation de Lévi-Strauss. Calmé et convaincu que le livre en valait la peine, j'en commençais la lecture en me disant qu'un étranger au Québec comme moi pourrait probablement y apprendre quelque chose.

J'ai beaucoup appris dans ce livre. L'ouvrage se présente essentiellement comme une reproduction avec modifications d'une série d'articles parus dans les années 70 dans différentes revues et traitant d'une multiplicité de sujets variés et pourtant reliés. Le thème central, défini dans l'introduction, est repris sous des éclairages différents dans les sections qui font le corps de l'ouvrage: qu'est-ce que le fait québécois, quelle signification donner à la québecitude, quels sont les paramètres géographiques, historiques, culturels et politiques sur lesquels le sentiment d'identité des Québécois est fondé et qui l'expriment le mieux? Il s'agit d'un thème d'une grande complexité et qui atteste d'une forte ambition intellectuelle. Le thème central inspire une succession d'analyses qui portent sur les stratégies locales d'adaptation écologique, la dialectique culture globale—cultures régionales, la structure traditionnelle et l'évolution récente de la famille, les vertus agricoles inspirant la vocation nationale, l'encerclement anglo-saxon, la destructuration culturelle et l'apparition du sentiment d'aliénation. L'ouvrage se termine par une discussion critique des ambitions historiques et avatars conjoncturels du pouvoir péquiste.

Le niveau d'analyse est élevé et ceci de manière continue. Le lecteur a de la peine à souffler. On perçoit mal le vécu quotidien des petites gens. Les références à l'ethnographie des petites communautés sont rares, ce qui peut étonner de la part d'un anthropologue qui a beaucoup écrit sur la vie rurale

au Québec. Fait très important, l'approche de l'auteur est rigoureusement et systématiquement culturaliste, Marc-Adélarde Tremblay se distingue très nettement de la horde marxo-structuraliste. La perspective culturaliste suggère l'existence d'une «configuration globale: la culture des Québécois francophones» (p. 61). Elle est forcément relativiste, c'est-à-dire qu'elle assume le caractère original et distinct de cette configuration globale. Vu toutefois la longue urbanisation, la diversité régionale et l'histoire tourmentée du pays, les modes de vie des Québécois présentent une extrême diversité. Où donc chercher cette «configuration globale» sinon dans les niveaux secrets de la culture, dans le domaine caché des valeurs? L'auteur cite très à propos les recherches de Ruth Benedict et Margaret Mead sur le «caractère national». L'ouvrage de Tremblay se situe dans cette lignée anthropologique, il essaie de dégager le fond culturel commun des Québécois et de suivre ensuite, pas à pas, sa décomposition relative dans le temps et dans l'espace.

L'ouvrage exprime un effort sérieux de dégager l'essentiel. Pour moi, étranger au Québec, la lecture de ce livre a constitué une entrée directe au sujet central: qu'y a-t-il de québécois chez les Québécois? Je cherchais depuis longtemps réponse à cette question. L'examen des monographies de terrain ne m'avait apporté que des connaissances parcellaires, l'ouvrage de Marc-Adélarde Tremblay m'a permis d'en faire l'intégration.

Anthony P. COHEN, ed. *Belonging: Identity and Social Organization in British Rural Cultures*, Newfoundland, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982. 352 pages, \$15 (cloth).

By Max J. Hedley
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Belonging seeks to legitimize a social anthropology of locality within the British Isles. This inward movement reflects more than practical and financial disenchantment with the discipline's traditional milieu. Rather, it is seen to be of practical significance, in demystifying the misleading imagery of a quaint and homogenous rural Britain, and of possible theoretical value. In his introductory essay, *Belonging: the experience of culture*, Cohen argues that a worthwhile ethnography of locality is facilitated by Geertz's interpretive anthropology. With

respect to this the title of the book can be understood, for "belonging" refers to the "experience of culture". Consequently, belonging to a locality is to be sought in the realm of meaning which saturates the consciousness of everyday life. The collection is thematically organized into two sections, *Belonging to the part* and *Belonging to the whole*. To further continuity, contributors were expected to provide two chapters, one for each section of the book.

The contributions of Anthony Cohen and Peter Mewett approximate most closely the collection's objectives. Both are concerned with maritime crofting communities in which occupational pluralism and multiple resource use are yielding ground to occupational specialization and heightened dependence on commodity production. In Cohen's article, *A sense of time, a sense of place: the meaning of close social association in Whalsay, Shetland*, "belonging" is understood to be rooted in the social organization of kinship, neighbourhood, and crew. However, it is not the changing associations that are stressed, but the meanings for those involved. Consequently, forms of association are seen as idioms of legitimation which continue to provide the basis for expressions of social identity. Mewett, in *Associational categories and the social location of relationships in a Lewis crofting community*, examines the same associational categories, but emphasizes social organization, with extensive descriptions of their significance for group formation and interpersonal relations. In his companion article, *Blockade, a case study of local consciousness in an extra-local event*, Cohen describes communications between members of the Whalsay fleet during the Scottish fishermen's strike. From this, he identifies a temporary shift from a customary equalitarian idiom to one embodying ideas of collective solidarity and assertive leadership. While this reveals the encroachment of the outside world, it is also interpreted as reaffirming local consciousness. A somewhat different scenario is postulated by Mewett who suggests that the class system characteristic of Britain is emerging in Lewis. This is accompanied by the decline of esoteric culture, and the prevalence of a negative self assessment with respect to mainstream culture. In his second article, the persistence of local consciousness is identified in the meaning associated with the category of exile (migrant), and in the pervasive practice of bestowing nicknames, and thereby social identity, on community members. Nevertheless, the persistence of such practices and the survival of "Lewisness" are questioned because of their grounding in the social relationships of the crofting community.

It would be a mistake to lean on Cohen's

introduction as a guide to interpreting contributions. A case in point is the interesting and lucidly written essay by Robin Fox, *Principles and pragmatics on Tory Island*, the only contribution without a companion chapter. While concerns relevant to local consciousness are embedded in the article, its thrust is to be found in a particular theoretical issue. It deals with a perceived overreaction to the normative emphasis of an earlier legalistic anthropology. An argument is made to support the significance of normative principles in structuring social life, but it is a structuring which is qualified by the operation of firmly established sub-principles (modifiers) and subject to the strategic manoeuvring of those involved. The argument is clothed in rich ethnographic examples (inheritance, crew formation, natalocal residence) drawn from extensive field work.

Sidsel Larsen's articles, *The two sides of the house* and *The Glorious Twelfth*, pronounce a shift from a maritime milieu to a working class neighbourhood in Kilbroney, Northern Ireland. Drawing on a dramaturgical perspective and the concepts of ethnic group and boundaries, Larsen explores the effects of sectarian strife on everyday life in a Protestant dominated village. She emphasizes the central significance of "avoidance" as a means of maintaining differences and facilitating interaction between Protestants and Catholics. The theme of "avoidance" is continued in her second article with its focus on the Orangemen's celebration of the Battle of the Boyne. Also, this event is treated as a ritual and analyzed in terms of the messages it conveys to participants, Catholics, and the British public. The conditions of field work precluded involvement with Catholics. Nevertheless, the importance of the imbalance of power and a fear of reprisal are mentioned, though they do not form part of the analysis.

A further shift in milieu takes us to an agricultural village close to London. Marilyn Strathern's articles, *The place of kinship: kin, class and village status in Elmdon, Essex* and *The village as an idea*, are close to Cohen's in their concern with the insiders' perception of kinship and villageness. In contrast to Cohen's emphasis on uniqueness, Strathern provides an intricate analysis of the idiom of kinship and villageness and convincingly argues that Elmdoners' models embody a code for talking about the class system of English culture. In this context it is noted that social closure is as much a feature of bilateral English kinship as is its more conventionally recognized openness and flexibility. Moreover, villageness is not seen as referring to a natural entity with a culture, but, in conjunction

with kinship, to invoke openness and closure and thereby locate villagers in the English status system. The argument is well framed in a discussion of kinship, and the idiom of belonging.

The focus of Isabel Emmett's contribution is the continuity of Welsh identity, which is seen to saturate everyday life in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Breaking with the emphasis on locality, Emmett invokes the imagery of colonialism to describe Welsh nationalism and employs the concept of class (relations to the means of production) to describe social structure. After Welshness, she finds that the most noticeable characteristic of the community is its lack of social differentiation, for control over capital and political decisions rest primarily with the English ruling class. It is only after establishing this that she moves in her second essay, *Place, Community and Bilingualism*, to a discussion of the "finer mesh of interaction", the density of local encounters, and the sense of identity.

While individual articles are well worth reading in their own right, it should now be clear that their empirical and theoretical variations limit the coherence of *Belonging* to a celebration of diversity. A celebration, it might be added, that is dampened by the formidable task of contextualization which such divergent contributions leave the reader. Coherence is further undermined by the dualistic organization which, in reproducing the fading part-whole dilemma, recreates the difficulties of an earlier anthropology practiced in more exotic quarters. A minor result is an inconvenient separation of companion chapters which are more usefully read together. However, the dualism is of more fundamental importance, because it downplays the historic and contemporary significance of transcending structures to an understanding of locality. Of course, these comments refer to the collection as a whole. The merit of *Belonging* lies in the uniformly high quality of the particular articles, and the insights they provide into both the specific issues raised and the concerns of British social anthropology.

Ian A.L. GETTY and Antoine S. LUSSIER (eds.), *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows, A Reader in Canadian Native Studies*, Nakoda Institute Occasional Paper No. 1, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1983. 363 pages, \$12.50 (paper), \$29.95 (cloth).

By Carmen Lambert
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Though this volume is intended to present an overview of Canadian Indian policy and its effects on Native peoples, it borders on being another collection of conference papers without any clear unified thread. Among the twenty contributions, thirteen are original papers given at a Native Studies Conference held in 1981 at Brandon University. Seven articles, reproduced from various sources, have been added by the editors in an attempt to give some unity to the volume and provide the reader with a more coherent picture of Native history in Canada.

The collection is interdisciplinary and includes contributions from anthropology, sociology, political science, and economics; however, the largest number of essays is by specialists in social history. The essays vary considerably in content, style of analysis and format. They range from broad overviews of Indian-White relations to short descriptions or detailed analyses of particular historical events. Most of the articles focus on the period between 1815 and 1915. The book also reveals a definite geographical bias, since most of the contributions are concerned with the history of the Prairies.

The volume opens with an historical review of Indian-White relations by the historian, George F. G. Stanley. The following essays are divided into two thematic sections. The first section traces in part the evolution of Canadian Indian policy and administration. The main themes developed in the first article, J. L. Tobias' succinct analysis of the principles guiding Indian policy before and after Confederation, as well as in Stanley's Introductory essay, are elaborated upon in several succeeding papers: the assimilation goals pursued by the British and Canadian governments and the failure of the system to reach these objectives. R. J. Surtees examines the factors that led to the implementation, in the 1830s, of a policy geared to the creation of self-governing Indian communities. J. S. Milloy describes subsequent policy changes that establish-