

## Culture



# T.F. MCILWRAITH, *The Bella Coola Indians*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948, (reissued 1992 with a new introduction by John Barker), 2 Volumes, 1,435 pages (cloth and paper)

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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and contemporary, aided by the author's presence in the Huasteca shortly after the apex of the peasant revolt, permits identification of fine-drawn intra-regional variations in class and ethnic identity based on specific histories of land tenure and administrative structure. At the same time, the very density of the analysis tends to reduce accessibility. Readers who are not Mexicanists are likely to get lost in a terminological maze (a list of acronyms and a glossary would have been a great help). All readers would have benefitted from more clearly presented regional maps cued closely to the text, and perhaps a *dramatis personae* to remind us of the many key players in this complex history. Nevertheless, Schryer's study comes across as a rich, thoroughly researched and grounded chronicle which brings to life the birth, coming of age and perhaps temporary senescence of a peasant revolt, and provides a major contribution by showing the critical role of ethnic identity in determining the trajectory of agrarian struggle.

T.F. MCILWRAITH, *The Bella Coola Indians*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948, (reissued 1992 with a new introduction by John Barker), 2 Volumes, 1,435 pages (cloth and paper).

By Leland Donald  
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From 1922 to 1924 Thomas Forsyth McIlwraith, a young Canadian recently graduated in anthropology from Cambridge University where he studied with Haddon and Rivers, carried out two six month stints of ethnographic fieldwork in the small community of Bella Coola, British Columbia. His work was sponsored by the relatively new Anthropology Division of the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa, Edward Sapir, Chief of Division. In 1925 McIlwraith began teaching anthropology at the University of Toronto where he remained until his death in 1964. In 1926 McIlwraith submitted the results of his fieldwork to the Museum for publication — the 1,800 page typescript of a comprehensive ethnographic monograph on the Nuxalk culture. This manuscript (or rather a closely related version of it reconstructed from later, heavily edited and censored versions of

the original) was eventually published by the University of Toronto Press in 1948 as *The Bella Coola Indians*. As finally published, the monograph was in two volumes which contained a total of 1,435 pages and was to be McIlwraith's only major publication. It was, in fact, almost his only publication on the Nuxalk. The entire work, long out of print, has been reprinted, with original pagination and an introduction by John Barker. The University of Toronto Press and John Barker deserve both our congratulations and gratitude.

In his introduction, John Barker briefly recounts McIlwraith's fieldwork experiences, the vicissitudes of the manuscript as McIlwraith struggled to get it published (at first there were censorship problems, then the Depression, then World War II), sets the work in its context in the history of anthropology in Canada and sketches in its role in the revival of Nuxalk culture. The introduction, although brief, will certainly help new readers of the work and, especially, students to appreciate McIlwraith's book in context. The quotations from McIlwraith's correspondence while in the field whet our appetite for more and certainly suggest that a fuller publication of his letters is warranted.

Diamond Jenness is quoted in Barker's introduction as having said in 1929 that the manuscript was the "finest report ever presented on an Indian tribe in either the United States or Canada" (p.xxvi). Without succumbing to a "league table" approach to rating ethnographies, I would agree with Jenness that *The Bella Coola Indians* is one of a handful of outstanding ethnographies of a Northwest Coast people and certainly also holds its own among ethnographies of Native North Americans. But if the work is comprehensive, it is not complete. There is very little in the book about material culture, technology, subsistence, or economics. Most other domains are well or at least reasonably covered, although students of domestic life and kinship will not find a lot of detail on this topic. The intellectual influences on McIlwraith's ethnographic work were British, but it is the British anthropology of Rivers and Haddon and not British social anthropology that influenced him. Nor is much said about Nuxalk visual art, for on this topic, McIlwraith is largely content to refer the reader to the earlier work of Boas.

Most of these deficiencies are explained by a combination of McIlwraith's interests, his Nuxalk collaborators' interests, and the time period of the fieldwork. McIlwraith used memory ethnography

and aimed at a reconstruction of Nuxalk culture as it was in early contact times. His collaborators probably had less to say about older forms of material culture and economic behaviour than many other domains of culture. In addition, in his earlier work in the Bella Coola region, Harlan I. Smith had focused on material culture, at least partially absolving McIlwraith of the responsibility for including it in his researches. (Much of Smith's Nuxalk data remains unpublished. Someone should bring out an edition of this material to complement McIlwraith.)

What is present in *The Bella Coola Indians*, makes talk of deficiencies seem like carping. The book is especially strong on religious and ceremonial life. The *Kusiut* society, for example, is well and richly described in the course of a chapter of 266 pages. McIlwraith took full advantage of the fact that he not only observed but participated in the 1923-24 winter dance performances of the *Kusiut* society, which, by the time of his fieldwork, had become the principal Nuxalk secret society.

The whole project of memory ethnography has often been questioned, but, although this book shows some of the weaknesses of that approach (aside from the missing topics, it is sometimes difficult to know to what extent observed practices overly colour the reconstruction of "traditional" practices [i.e., in describing *Kusiut* performances]), McIlwraith's work shows the quality of ethnography that can be achieved when a talented investigator works with able and interested local collaborators.

The book is not tightly organized or argued, but expansive and generous. A truly outstanding and detailed index (40 pages!) makes it easy to find things. This last point is not trivial, for, as Baker points out in his introduction, this is not so much a work to read through as a reference source on Nuxalk culture. I have been using it as such over many years of comparative research on the Northwest Coast. Whenever I turn to it I learn something new, usually well expressed. I am glad that this reprint will create the possibility of many more readers and seekers into this magnificent work. Once again, my congratulations to editor and publisher.

Peter H. STEPHENSON, *The Hutterian People: Ritual and Rebirth in the Evolution of Communal Life*, Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1991, 272 pages, \$43.75 (hardcover).

By Joan C. Stevenson

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The literature on Hutterites is extensive, and Stephenson's unique contribution is his focus on belief and ritual, particularly all the rituals and daily reminders associated with the concept of new life, *metanoia*. The Hutterites' ascetic, communal lifestyle is a stark contrast to the societies of which they have been a part. Stephenson believes that Hutterian ritual is largely responsible for the persistence of their adaptation and provides critical support for their retention of members and in the maintenance of their system. Most of the book is an "analysis of Hutterian ideology via its primary symbols" (p. 5), but he also attempts to understand their rituals in terms of a larger theoretical framework, specifically systems theory and cybernetics. He draws from the work of Rappaport, e.g. *Pigs for the Ancestors: Ritual in the Ecology of a New Guinea People* (Yale University Press, 1968).

The first three chapters are a succinct review of their early history. Chapter 1 reviews the birth of the *Taufers* (baptizer) movement and shows how the adult baptism ritual was central to Hutterian beliefs and that the extreme persecution which it elicited often led to a final "baptism of blood" and martyrdom. Chapter 2 describes their migrations in Europe and the origins of their communal lifestyle. Chapter 3 summarizes the most significant symbols: the tripartite baptism concept, its isomorphism with the holy trinity and the biology of birth, and finally, the practice of a communal lifestyle as a rebirth of Christ's body."

The next two chapters describe contemporary life in North America. Social organization and kinship are discussed briefly followed by a relatively long but weak chapter on growth and colony fission. He lists some of the social supports for their unusually high fertility but neglects to mention an important one, their short breastfeeding times and early supplementation. He argues that the evidence for the size of the fertility decline in the Hutterites is exaggerated if not wrong, because demographers