

Dreaming of Animals: The Waswanipi Cree Shaking Tent Ceremony in Relation to Environment, Hunting, and Missionization

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Most accounts of changes in religious rituals and beliefs among arctic and sub-arctic peoples emphasize the impacts of acculturation through Christian missionization, or state education, on the transformation or abandonment of "traditional" practices. A second viewpoint emphasizes the historical continuities between pre- and post-Christian forms of indigenous religious beliefs and practices. Some studies in this genre argue for syncretism, while others show that conversion and change did not occur at all, at least at the deeper levels of meaning and belief. The latter view contends that traditions simply went "underground" where they were not exposed to outsiders, and where they were replicated without transformation.

There are problems inherent in each of these perspectives. By focusing solely on the impacts of missionization and political encapsulation, researchers have not examined the possibility that beliefs and social relations are being reproduced which remain distinct from those of the dominant society. Some traditions might also have been retained as forms of resistance to that domination. Alternatively, any simple analysis of the reproduction of beliefs runs the risk of omitting the changing context of the constraints and resources which affect action, and of failing to consider the constant processual changes inherent in all cultures.

This paper attempts to explore a middle ground between these two views. I will show that the "traditional" religious beliefs and practices of a sub-arctic Indian people have not disappeared with the adoption of Christianity, nor have they remained unchanged. I analyze the transformations and continuities in religious beliefs and rituals among two generations of Waswanipi Cree from the James Bay region of northern Quebec. The focus is on the widely discussed shaking tent ceremony, and the reasons for the decrease in its performance compared to the early decades of this century.

Infrequent performance of the shaking tent is often taken as a sign of the demise of Cree religious belief and practice. I believe, however, that the change is a variation on the form of Cree religious practices, rather than a radical break with tradition. I concentrate on the period from 1925 to 1950 in order to demonstrate that these changes in ceremonial practice were closely related to both transformations and continuities in Waswanipi religious thought. They were not solely the result of acculturation by outsiders, nor were they the result of any clinging to unchanging tradition on the part of the Cree.

Information on Waswanipi religious beliefs was collected primarily from statements by Cree elders during the 1970s and 1980s, during which time I was engaged in fieldwork in the area. Most of these men and women had been Christians since their youth, and had reached adulthood in the period from the late 1920s to the late 1940s. I emphasize the connections between these contemporary statements and a distinctive and integrated system of Waswanipi thought and worldview. This system incorporates ideas about self, environment, and the spiritual world.

My analysis focuses primarily on the way in which the shaking tent ceremony is viewed by a significant number of elders, and how it is valued by them even though all but a few have chosen not to perform it themselves. Opinions about the ceremony differ among elders today. In the last three decades some have come to reject it as a means of evil-doing that causes fighting, illness, and sometimes death. To them, this is not consistent with the fundamentalist Christianity which has gathered adherents in the region since the 1960s. The majority, however, acknowledge these possible consequences, but also emphasize the potential of the ceremony to help those in need, to heal, and to unite people and do good. This latter view was typical of the period prior to the 1960s at Waswanipi, the period with which this paper is concerned. The first section, therefore, emphasizes the views of the latter group of elders, who see the ceremony as a qualified good.

The meanings of the ceremony are analyzed in the context of Cree worldview, hunting practices, social relations, personal power, spiritual beliefs, and the Cree adoption of Anglican and Roman Catholic beliefs. The question is then asked why so few of these elders perform the shaking tent ceremony, given that it was reasonably common among their parents' generation, and was still practiced by some in the 1970s and 1980s. Here, I explore a processual explanation of the changes by indicating how spiritual belief and ceremony responded to changing environmental conditions. To do this, I examine the changing experiences of daily life which those ecological changes engendered in hunting practices, social relations, and assessments of personal power.

The shaking tent has long been regarded, both by Cree and by out-

side observers, as the most distinctive of James Bay Cree religious rituals. In spite of this, its declining performance has been attributed to missionization, acculturation, and external education. I will argue that indigenous responses to ecological and social changes play a more important role than do the intentions of outsiders. In addition, the impacts of environmental and social changes were themselves mediated by the Cree. I will also show how the process of Christian missionization at Waswanipi during the early decades of the century fit with and contributed to the ongoing changes within the Cree system.

The Shaking Tent and the Spiritual Encounter

In his writings on eastern Algonquian culture in the 1920s and 1930s, the ethnologist Frank G. Speck claimed that, for the James Bay Cree, hunting is a "sacred occupation" (Speck 1935), a metaphor that captures the essential link between religion and ecology.¹ Most hunters do not simply pursue game in a technical and economic sense, although they certainly possess considerable physical skill and rational knowledge with which to do so effectively. They also value and seek the experience of communion with "beings," "powers," or "understandings" that are "beyond the human." Indeed, the hunt is, at its most subtle level, an exploration of the understandings, experiences, and expectations which emerge in the everyday encounter with what we in the "West" might call elements of the supernatural in the natural world.

Nevertheless, these beliefs and practices do not give all adults equal standing. They are not only responsive to the environmental ecology that shapes experiences "in the bush," but also to a social dimension, whereby some men and women understand more and are more "powerful" than their contemporaries. Religious thought and practice constitute a dialogue regarding both the place of humans in the world, and the standing of humans *vis-à-vis* each other. The meanings in this dialogue (such as those in the shaking tent ceremony) are often ambiguous, however.

A shaking tent ceremony is typically performed on a fall or spring night by a Cree shaman/performer who has previously experienced a dream in which spirit beings have revealed to him/her the power to perform the ceremony. S/he enters alone into a specially-built, cylindrical, barrel-shaped tent where s/he is visited by various spirit beings and other persons who are not physically present at the site. During the ceremony (which may last all night) singing and verbal exchanges are heard from the tent. These exchanges may be given in contemporary Cree or in various archaic or personal languages and Cree styles, as well as in several "voices" and voice intonations. The audience, which may consist of a few family members or dozens of community

members, sits around the outside listening, and may be invited to question the spirit visitors. The voices inform the audience of events in the future, or of events which have taken place in a distant location and which are not yet known.

In order to understand the significance of the shaking tent ceremony to the audience, it must be analyzed in the context of the Cree worldview. The basic James Bay Cree term for "life" can apply to a wide range of beings. These include animals and plants, natural objects and phenomena (such as certain rocks and water), implements (such as guns, traps, snowshoes, and canoes), spirit beings (such as lightning, wind persons, and animal bosses), legendary figures (such as *Chikapesh*, the trickster), Jesus, and God. Those living beings which are not normally seen in waking life are referred to in everyday conversation through the use of a number of circumlocutions, such as "the ones we do not see," "he whom we do not see," or "unseen powers." Descriptions of the characteristics of such beings refer explicitly to the reasons that they normally cannot be seen. They are said to live "far away," "at the end of the earth," or "above us" (i.e., where we cannot travel). They may also be described as beings with "no bodies." Furthermore, when they appear in a dream as a "beautiful woman," or a "white-haired woman," the image is understood to be a metaphor. Thus, it is said that the image "means" the being it represents; it is not the appearance of the living being itself.

I will use the English term "spirit beings" for this category of entities which are not normally seen. It should be noted, however, that this does not imply any division in the unity of experience, nor a separation of the experienced world into natural and spiritual or supernatural phenomena. There is no radical separation between seen and unseen. All living things are both natural and spiritual.

"Seeing" and "visions" are the most general metaphors for the special experiences by which spirit beings are experienced by humans. Many of the specialized techniques for experiencing spirit beings involve actions whose symbolism directly refers to seeing. Looking into water reflections, playing with the eyes of animals such as the otter, looking into mirrors, or just "having visions" are examples of these. Even singing a powerful song, or drumming, is said to bring "visions." Similarly, animals which have exceptional powers of sight, such as owls, are often said to be messengers from spirit beings.

The shaking tent ceremony makes use of this metaphor (cf. Hallowell 1942:9-10). The term for shaking tent, *koaspskikan*, contains a root which the linguist Christopher Wolfart identifies as having the meaning of "see, vision" combined with "try" (Preston 1975).² The shaking tent is performed at night, and it is said to be inappropriate for it to occur in daylight. In the shaking tent, the performer sits at

the bottom of the tent where it is said s/he can see the various spirit beings which visit in the form of "little lights" near the top. In other words, during the ritual, those beings which cannot normally be seen are made visible to the performer. This visual symbolism is emphasized by the separation of the performer and his audience, for the latter can hear the spirits but can see neither them nor the performer. Indeed, it is said that the spirits would depart and the ceremony would stop immediately if a member of the audience were to try to lift the canvas and see inside the shaking tent without an invitation to do so.

The Performer and the Spirit Beings

A second concept central to the shaking tent performance is the notion of reciprocity. A root of the term *koaspskikan* means "trying to see." For Cree, this implies not only an individual effort but also a petition to the spirit beings requesting aid on the part of the person performing the ritual. This request is symbolized in several features of the performance.

When announcing that a shaking tent ceremony is to take place, a performer typically gives a public reason for the ritual. This is usually identified as a request from a member of the community for help, information, or understanding from the spirit beings (cf. Hultkrantz 1981a: 89). Normally, the request to perform the shaking tent ceremony comes from an intermediary for the person in need.³ This request will be echoed by the performer and directed to the spirit beings during the ceremony. Texts of shaking tent ceremonies show that the performers often make explicit statements or requests for help for people other than themselves. During the ceremony, the performer often repeats offers to see whether the spirit beings are willing to provide this assistance. If successful, this may lead to an extensive dialogue between the audience and the spirit beings in a question-and-answer format.

Reciprocity is also an important element in the life of the performers. Those who identified themselves as shaking tent performers indicated that they were responding to requests to perform the ceremony from spirit beings, as well as from community members. In addition, several people who do not perform the ceremony explained that although they were asked to do so, they decided against it. One young man indicated that he was being asked to perform shaking tents by several people, and that he might do so in the future.

It is said that a person who performs the ritual has a *mistapeo*, literally "big man." When the Waswanipi speak of these *mistapeo* in English, they use the term "helper." This does not mean they have an assistant, but rather that performers have a special spirit guardian. It is believed that without this helper, and other lesser helpers, a person

could not perform the ceremony. Thus, a complex network of reciprocities is created.

The symbolism in the shaking tent ritual demonstrates the ambiguous nature of the relationship between the spirit beings and the one who performs the ritual. On the one hand, the performance is dependent on the spirit beings coming to the shaking tent. If they do not come, the tent will not shake and the ritual will not occur. This willingness to participate is symbolized by the spirit beings placing themselves in unusual circumstances. During the ritual, they respond to the performer's request by coming *into* the tent, while the humans remain outside. This reverses the usual order, in which humans reside inside the tents and spirit beings outside. On the other hand, the performers must also show their willingness to participate, for throughout their lives they may be obligated by their spirit helpers to show special forms of respect for the help they have received. Thus, performers will usually avoid casual conversation or reference to the spirit beings, and may be required to avoid the killing or eating of certain animals. For some, this demanding life discipline has been the reason for their deciding not to perform the shaking tent when invited to do so by spirit beings.

Despite the demands placed on the performers by the spirit beings, the relationship between them is one of familiarity. Performers joke with *mistapeo* and other spirit beings in the shaking tent throughout the ritual. The visiting spirit beings are treated in a friendly manner by the performer, who makes use of highly informal conversation, jokes, and references to the long duration of their relationship. The performers may use terms of affection or endearment when referring to spirits or powerful animals, calling the bear "my pet" or "my dog," for example. In addition, performers often refer to the ceremony as something "like playing," and they may say that they are "playing" with the shaking tent when they perform the ritual. These friendly, informal, and even affectionate expressions of the relationship between the performer and the spirit beings are in sharp contrast to the dependency and obligation that also characterize the relationship.

The ambiguity of the ritual is symbolized in the vision of *mistapeo* himself, for the "big man" is said to appear near the top of the tent looking like a "little light." This ambiguity is also present in the relationship of the performer and the spirit beings. Thus, the former is dependent on the latter, and especially on *mistapeo*, for the ability or gift of performing the ceremony. At the same time, the intimacy of the relationship indicates that the performer is worthy of receiving the gift, and that s/he has willfully sought the relationship and met the respectful obligations and now can call on and influence the spirit beings. The obligation inherent in this reciprocity expresses and creates intimacy. This ambiguity facilitates an awareness of the unity of a world in

which the spiritual ties are not separated from the everyday social environment.

The Shaking Tent and Hunting

The theme of reciprocity found in the shaking tent is also important in the hunting and social life of the Cree. Hunting involves looking and seeing, not only in the sense that the hunter must find the game, but also in the sense that the hunter has premonitions or foreknowledge of the game he may "find" during the hunt. Thus, hunting is a seeking, or a "trying" to find animals which have already given the hunter signs that they are willing to be killed. In hunting, as in the shaking tent ceremony, we find the concept of reciprocity in the asking for and receiving or "fetching" of gifts (cf. Tanner 1979). It is believed that what is caught in the hunt is a "gift;" animals are *chemekonau*, "it is being given to us."

In support of these views, the Waswanipi cite stories in which the killing of animals was not simply the result of the knowledge, will, and action of the humans. These include cases in which animals, for no apparent reason, cannot be killed even when their presence is known. Conversely, animals may be found unexpectedly and killed without significant effort on the part of the hunter. They also believe that the behavior of many animals indicates a willingness to be caught. For the Cree, behavior such as a beaver springing a trap several times before finally being caught is evidence of this willingness. Another example is the behavior of the moose. When this animal hears a hunter approach, it will often stand up and look at him in an attempt to get his scent or to visually ascertain the source of the disturbance before fleeing. This is interpreted by the Cree as an indication that it is willing to be killed.

By calling the animals "gifts," the emphasis is not on the action of humans, but on the action of those beings from which the animals, "gifts," come. When asked from whom these "gifts" are received, or who "gives" them, the answers are either that they are gifts of "God," or "Jesus," or of various other spirit beings, particularly the wind persons, who are said to be "God's helpers." Thus, hunting involves three types of participants, animals, human beings, and spirit beings. Animals participate not as passive resources but as active "persons." That is, they possess intelligence and wills, and are capable of independent action. Animals are considered to be "persons" or "like persons." In the Cree world, as has been reported for the Ojibwa, explanation is personal not mechanical (cf. Hallowell 1955).

Human beings and animals are, therefore, both social actors, and their social relationships are based on communication which informs them of each other's intentions and actions. This communicative as-

pect is clearly seen in hunting practices. Thus, indications of the presence of game are interpreted by the hunters as intentional signs given by the animals of their willingness, or unwillingness, to be hunted and eventually killed. This communication is also seen in the shaking tent where animal spirits may be participants. They appear and speak, responding to the songs that the performer may sing about and to them, and give information about where the hunters may find them and when they will be there.

The hunter not only receives signs that lead to success; he is also under obligation to respect the animals that sacrifice themselves so that he and other humans may live. There are numerous ways in which the hunter must show respect for the animal. These include transporting the carcass appropriately, butchering the animal carefully and in a proper manner, ensuring that none of the animal's body is wasted, sharing the food widely with others, and disposing of the remains of the animal, such as its bones, in a prescribed fashion. Hunters who do not show respect for the animals will not receive them as gifts, whereas those who establish and maintain a properly respectful relationship can expect success in future hunts. Animals give themselves to the hunter only if the hunter treats the animal well and shares the animal gifts with other families. Hunting, in the Waswanipi view, is not simply an application of human labor to passive resources, and human action does not alone transform animals into "food." Hunting is, rather, a social and sacred occupation involving communication with spirit beings. Thus, the hunter is required to fulfill his obligations to spirits as well as to fellow members of the society.

The Shaking Tent and the World

Just as the elements of the shaking tent performance precisely parallel those of hunting, so the multiplicity of symbolic references in the ceremony relate to the organization of everyday space and time (cf. Vincent 1973). The shaking tent can be viewed as a representation of the Waswanipi world. A central organizing symbol of that world is that of the wind spirit persons.⁴

The primary wind persons are located in each of the four cardinal directions, and are associated with specific seasons and typical weather patterns which they bring to the area. The association with both directions and the recurring seasons makes them central symbols in the organization of both spatial and temporal phenomena. It is the seasonal, weekly, and daily weather conditions brought by the winds that strongly influence which animals will be caught by the hunters. The wind and weather patterns are, therefore, important communications about the intentions of the spirit beings concerning the success of a hunt. Harvest records and independent scientific studies indicate that

weather conditions are a critical factor in animal behavior and thus in the outcome of the hunt.

The wind persons play important roles in the shaking tent ceremony, both as visitors who may be spoken to by *mistapeo* during the performance and as the pre-eminent spirit beings who determine the timing of the performance itself. Ceremonies are typically held at the changing of the seasons in fall and spring, when the predominance of particular wind spirits is changing. Typically, performances are held only on windy evenings, and will be delayed for appropriate conditions. They are said to please the wind persons, so that the wind is often calm outside when the performance is over. This close linkage of wind persons to both hunting and the shaking tent is also reflected in the fact that the best time to hunt is generally when there is a moderate wind, because the noise it makes covers the noise of a hunter's movement. The swaying of the shaking tent when occupied by spirit beings creates just such a sound. The fact that the shaking tent sways only when spirit beings are present emphasizes that the wind persons are powerful, intermediary beings, who are partly of the world "down here" where humans live and partly of the world "up there" where spirit beings reside. Thus, the wind persons link humans to spirit beings both in the shaking tent and in the daily experiences of hunting and living.

The wind persons not only symbolize connections, they also symbolize the configuration of experiential order; a circular or cyclical structure of experience, which also links hunting and the shaking tent. The concept of cycle is implicit in both the passing of the seasons and in the root of the name for the most powerful of the wind spirits. *Chue* or *chioue* from *chuentnshu* or "north wind person" is described by the Cree as meaning "return" or "bring back." This concept is central to hunting, where the image is that the hunter goes out to "look for" or to "fetch" the animals which have indicated their willingness to be killed, and "brings back" the animals or meat (Tanner 1979). This is then distributed or "given away" to others so that the hunter can "find" more meat. "When we have food, and we are living with others, we give them half our food, and it seems like we find more to replace it," as one Waswanipi woman said.

The same pattern is found in various ritual performances. For example, a small portion of meat or fat of an animal is burned in the stove before each meal. This meat is said to be "given back" to the spirits as an offering (cf. Tanner 1979). The offering does not complete, but rather continues the cycle. It is not only an offering in return for gifts already received, but one which seeks to assure gifts in the future. Elements of this ritual are repeated in the ceremony for the first beaver caught in the fall, which consists of burning the fur, cook-

ing the animal in an open fire, and then feasting on the meat. The burning of the animal for the spirits and sharing the gift with the community is an expression of the desire for a good hunting year. These ritual exchanges parallel and symbolize the exchange cycle of hunting itself.

The preparation and disposal of animal bones represents a similar offering. Animals that are properly killed and respectfully treated will lead to renewed success in hunting. The disposal of the remains varies with the type of animal, but whether the bones are placed on poles, on a platform, or in the water, they are typically oriented so that they can be readily seen by the souls of the departed animals. These are said to reside "up there" or to the "east," and can be reborn. Therefore, the animals are respected, and they are invited to return to ensure the regeneration of the animal populations.

This cyclical pattern is also seen in the shaking tent ceremony. It is performed at the change of the seasons, in the spring and fall. A performance often lasts from dusk to dawn, thus bridging the period between daily cycles. They also often contain verbal references which set each individual performance within a context of past and future performances. Thus, performers do not say they will do a shaking tent, but rather that they are "trying to do this again," or again trying "what I've been doing during my younger days." Often, the ritual will include references to future plans for shaking tents. The performer may make statements such as, "I'm going to let you know when I want to play again, to go in the shaking tent. The ones who came to see me in here, they are going to come again." The recurrent nature of the ritual is expressed in comments by performers about "being here again" or to "being around where I used to hunt." The comments convey not only a sense of repetition, but also of future return.

Various structures and paraphernalia of the ceremony also convey this image. The shaking tent is typically constructed of six or more poles which are tied to two or more hoops. The covering is placed over this, creating a roughly circular (cylindrical) shape. The other important piece of paraphernalia, the kerchief which is tied around the head of the shaman, is tied in four corners. This unites the four points of the wind persons in a circle. The poles which are used in the construction of the shaking tent are often put away and carefully stored after the ceremony, where they "will not be disturbed." This is similar to the treatment of animal bones, and the respectful treatment is a precursor to future performances. The poles are put away in dense bush, where strong direct sunlight cannot reach them.⁵

The shaking tent is thus a complex structure of symbols which replicates, reaffirms, and creates the central order of the world. This is also reflected in the parallel structures of life and death.

Life and Death

It is believed that after death, the soul of a person often continues to have contact with the living, through dreams and by assistance in hunting. According to the Cree, it is ultimately God who decides the life or death of all living things, and God's intentions with respect to the life and death of people can sometimes be known in advance. One shaking tent performer said he "was not long for this earth," and made arrangements for his departure, indicating that he would pass on his spiritual helpers/powers, and making it known where he was to be buried. When he died, his family said that they "found" a lot of food in their hunting. People also anticipate the death of others. One man reported a dream in which the sun set into a black mist instead of into the trees, and he said that after the dream he knew that something was going to happen. A short time later he heard that his mother had died.

Death is also foretold in unusual animal behavior such as animals approaching a human settlement without fear. Often signs brought by birds are interpreted as harbingers of death. These might be a visit or the call of an owl at an unusual time, or an unusual goose call. Birds and flying animals in particular are associated with the foretelling of both hunting success and death. There are several features which make bird symbols significant. Most birds are migratory, disappearing and reappearing with the seasons, thus reflecting the cyclical pattern of death and rebirth. Birds are also not entirely earthbound, and they come closest of all earthly beings to the beings which are "up there."

The cyclical link of death and birth is expressed in the mixing of images of the two, and in the analogies that are drawn between old age and youth. Children are often identified with a person who has recently passed away, and are nicknamed accordingly. It is also said that the child may have the same interests and skills as the deceased. Images of the young may refer to the elderly. Thus, a dream which foretold the impending death of an elder was described as a "vision of himself carrying a baby ... but he dropped the baby."

The shaking tent ceremony uses these same symbols, replicating their structure and meaning. The performer is usually a mature or "old man," and the spirits are also said to be elders. The frame of the tent itself is made up of young saplings which symbolically contrast with the older spirits and performers. It is said that if an older tree was used the "elders" or spirit beings would complain, and may not come into the tent.

Similarly, I believe that the shaking tent itself symbolizes the transition from life to death and the return. Traditionally, when a person died in a wooden frame lodge or in a tent, their body would not be removed through the normal or front doorway. Instead, a hole was

cut in the back or side of the structure, or created by lifting the tent canvas along the side. The usual entrance into the shaking tent is at the top, and there is, apparently, no other doorway. The opening at the top makes it clear that the shaking tent is designed for the use and movement of spirit beings, not human persons. The performer enters and leaves the shaking tent by pulling open the canvas, typically on the side facing the southeast. Through this temporary opening in the tent the performer enters the company of the spirit beings, as everyone does at death. Death is also symbolized by the posture of the performer, who remains completely immobile, sitting in a crouched position in the center of the tent circle.

One of the reasons the ceremony is said to be "powerful" is that it involves symbolically traversing, or approaching, the boundary between life and death. This symbolism supports the common community belief which associates the power of the shaking tent ceremony with the risk of conjuring duels, and with threats leading to injuries or possibly death. Therefore, those who perform the shaking tent ceremony are regarded as individuals of power, and are treated accordingly by the other members of the community.

Hierarchy, Knowledge, and Being

While God is the immediate cause of all that happens in the world and is ultimately responsible for all that is, the Cree universe is also populated by persons of lesser power who possess intelligence, intentions, wills, morality, and personal idiosyncrasies. Thus, the wind persons, the animals, and human beings each act out of their own will, and each can choose whether or not to follow "God's way."

A hierarchy of beings exists in the Cree world. They believe that God is the "boss" of all things, and other beings are variously called his "helpers," his "pets," or his "children." God is the "leader" of a descending series of lesser leaders and assistants. In hunting, for example, God is assisted by the wind persons, who are spoken of as siblings ranked by age. They, in turn, are aided by animal "masters," who are themselves "leaders" of each kind of animal. In each the old adult animals are the "leaders" of the young of that species, in a hierarchical chain of leadership and power. There are a number of legends which tell of squabbles among the different kinds of animals as to which of them should be regarded as the more powerful, and the relative ranking and respectfulness due to each.

Iniuatch, meaning human beings or Indians, have a somewhat uncertain place in the hierarchy. In general, they are more powerful than animals, but less powerful than spirit beings. The weakest of the spirit beings, some of the animal masters and "cannibal giants" *atosh* (or *wi-iko*), are said to have formerly been humans. Animals are said to have

been "like us" at the time of the legends, when they were able to talk with human beings. Humans thus fit somewhere in the middle of the hierarchy, not radically separated from those ranked above or below. Humans are also connected to spirits above by their personal guardian helpers, *mistapeo* and others, who explicitly act as intermediaries (see below).

There also exists a relative ranking among humans. A person's standing within this egalitarian society varies with age and social status. The age differences are specifically distinguished according to life stages. The passages through successive stages are considered to be expressions of the growing competence of the individual (Preston 1975). A young married man is said to be just "starting to think" about his activities. A man crossing the transition from middle age to *chenu*, "old man," "knows a lot" or "understands" things. Old people are expected to demonstrate this competence by being leaders and using their knowledge to help those younger than themselves.

These differences are spoken of in English by the Waswanipi in terms of degrees and exchanges of "power." In the hierarchy of spirit beings, the different ranks of leaders are distinguished by their degrees of "power." When people are asked to explain the power of God, they refer to the relationship between his thought and his action. What God thinks or knows happens. When people want to explain the power of a human, they may also refer to the relationship between their thoughts and what happens in the world; saying, for example, that what he or she thinks sometimes comes to pass. "Thought," "prayer," and "helpers" link human beings to God, and establish important bonds between powerful beings of different ranks.

In this view, God's knowledge is total and all-powerful, while spirit beings participate in this knowledge to varying degrees. They know what will happen in much of the future, and they know part of what is happening in distant places. They may tell humans what is happening, or what will happen, through dreams, waking thought, spirit helpers, or ceremonies.

Power and the Shaking Tent

Waswanipi describe "power" as the link between thought and actual events in the world. In hunting, when human beings think of something that is subsequently given to them, they have *miopaiio*. *Miopaiio* is translated by the Cree as "good luck" in English, and literally means "it goes well." When they do not get what they want or need, when "it goes badly," they have *matsipaiio*, which in English is called "something bad," "bad luck," or "no luck." "Luck" and "no luck" are concepts which express the accord between human thought and events in the world. For the Cree, "luck" is not chance or random occurrence.

Rather, it is an expression of the ebb and flow of "power." "Luck" ebbs and flows by nature; an expectation that is reflected in proverbial statements and stories which convey the pervasive conviction that no human being can have "luck" all the time. It is said that husbands and wives do not have "luck" together, that only some of the families living together in a hunting camp will have "luck," while others will have "no luck," that a person who has "no luck" in one season or activity will have "luck" at another season or activity, and that anyone who has "luck" all the time will not live long. This is said to be "God's way." The conviction that human beings do not always have luck, and do not always get what they want or need, emphasizes the dependence of human beings, with their lesser powers, on spirit beings.

The ability of humans to "know the future" or to "know what is happening far away" indicates the relative degree of "power" a person has. Waswanipi have a term for this anticipatory knowledge, *nikanchischeitam* (literally "future knowledge"), which is explained as being able to "see ahead" or "know ahead." Humans receive future knowledge from spirit beings through dreams, daytime thoughts, helpers, and ceremonies. As humans mature, they know how to cultivate and interpret such communications. Those who possess such knowledge are said to be "powerful" or to have "powers." The implication here is that knowing the future is not simply a matter of expectation or speculation. Rather it represents knowledge with substantial, if varying, degrees of certainty. This certainty is due to the fact that this knowledge comes from spirit beings. Thus, an individual who possesses this knowledge can "know for sure" what is going to happen.

Knowledge of the future is the key and the unifying element in hunting and the shaking tent ceremony, as well as in conjuring in general. Knowledge of the future was explained by one Cree as "looking to find what one knows," much as hunting is looking to fetch the game one knows will be given, and the shaking tent is looking to get answers to questions. The "power" of the shaking tent ceremony is demonstrated in the knowledge of the future it conveys. Among the most typical features of the shaking tent ceremonies are "predictions" of what will happen in the future, by spirit beings who may also tell what is happening far away in other bush camps or in the settlements. These features demonstrate the power of the shaking tent ceremony and the power of those who perform it.

The shaking tent ceremony not only exemplifies power, it also illuminates the nature of "power" and instructs the audience in its use. Performers not only know the future, they also participate in the making of the predicted events in the world. A central issue is how knowledge of the future helps to actualize what will come to be.

While the "power" of the shaking tent ceremony is clearly linked to

and shared by performers (who must themselves be powerful to engage in the ceremony), the basic structure of the ceremony demonstrates a concept of power which is based on active participation as opposed to control. The most important and illuminating aspect of the shaking tent ceremony is that the performer does not perform; s/he sits immobile in the center of the tent while *mistapeo* and other spirit beings are active. The performer does not shake the tent; the tent shakes because of the presence of the spirit beings. The fact that the performer does not shake the tent shifts attention away from the power of the sole performer and towards that of the other beings who must cooperate if a performance is to occur. The symbolism thus emphasizes that even with all of his/her power, the performer is not in personal control of the ceremony. The performer does not construct the shaking tent; this is done by relatives under his/her direction. The performer does not make the tent shake, and depends on *mistapeo* to make the spirit beings come. In addition, the first thing a performer does when leaving the tent is to smoke tobacco as an "offering" to the spirit beings. The symbols of the shaking tent ceremony focus not on the power of isolated performers, but on the complex social interdependencies on which the exercise of knowledge and human will depend. Thus, a potentially egocentric event, which ostensibly focuses on, and which does acknowledge, the power and capability of the performer, demonstrates the interdependence of the individual on social relationships with kinsmen, other humans, and spirit beings.

The ambiguities and the constant play during the ceremony emphasize that, while human beings are active participants in the processes of power, what actually happens is the result of the willful action of many powerful beings. Humans can best participate by actively attuning themselves to the other beings in the world in which they live. Humans are personally powerful insofar as their thought and action are linked to the multifaceted courses and causes of events in the world. Neither self-aggrandizement nor egocentric will can make the future come to be, although individuals do nevertheless differ in their degrees of power.

Thus, power is not defined by the ability to control others, although it may be used to that end on occasion. Power, in the shaking tent ceremony and in life itself, is actualized by the intimate linking of human thought and action to the wider world produced by the concerted action of many beings. Human beings possess power when they integrate their thoughts and actions with those of other beings. In this way, they participate in the "power" of making the world. And they may participate for good, or bad, outcomes. The shaking tent ceremony, like hunting and daily life itself, is an occasion for realizing, as much as exercising, power.

The Shaking Tent in Historical Perspective

Despite this current interpretation of the power of the shaking tent ceremony, which is shared by contemporary elders, they emphasize that these powers have been misused, especially in the past, by some who seek control of others and self-aggrandizement.⁶ The great majority of the "younger" elders, those who reached adulthood between 1925 and 1950, state that they do not perform the shaking tent ceremony themselves, typically because they fear that the ceremony could be used in this way. They say that they themselves did not need the shaking tent. This is in contrast to the generation of elders who were born between 1880 and 1910, and who reached adulthood between 1900 and 1925. Among this generation, performance of the shaking tent ceremony was much more widespread according to the interviews I conducted and the few published reports of the period. What caused the shift in the relevance and frequency of shaking tent performances, and how did its meaning change?

Waswanipi elders tend to describe their way of life at the turn of the century as being "traditional," although their ancestors had been in contact with fur trading posts on their lands since at least 1799. In addition, they probably had been intermittently involved in the fur trade even earlier, from the latter part of the 1600s. Traditional life for the contemporary elders refers to the time at the turn of this century when people traded furs for steel axes, traps, muzzle-loading guns, woven clothing, and metal cooking utensils. At this time, people did not have many traps, access to matches on a regular basis, or significant quantities of imported foods. Without imported foodstuffs or sophisticated trade goods, the Cree possessed a high level of autonomy.

Those Cree who lived through this period remembered life being hard and dangerous. Those who survived the difficulties were seen as powerful individuals. People depended mainly on trapping and fishing, and many (if not most) stories indicate that people were repeatedly short of food and frequently faced danger or starvation. The instability of the supply of game and the uncertainty of subsistence activities were, in the view of the contemporary elders, caused by the activities of hostile spirit beings and by fights and competition among humans. One type of spirit which caused trouble was the *atosh*, or cannibal monsters, who consumed people and brought disasters to humans. Conjuring by elders was also widespread, and was related to personal competition among hunters. *Mistapeo* were actively recruited, because those with such helpers could protect themselves from threats, and threaten retaliation in return.

Many, if not most, failures to locate or kill game were attributed to the interference of another hunter or of threatening spirit beings. According to the stories told today, there was a deep concern with spirit

helpers, with dueling between powerful elders, and with conjuring and divination. This concern represented the attempt to protect oneself from the forces which interfered with obtaining the game which was needed to live.⁷

Intensified Missionization

The first effective missionization of the Waswanipi was begun by Roman Catholic missionaries during intermittent summer visits in the latter half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, Anglican managers and employees of the Hudson's Bay Company were responsible for missionary efforts of their own by acting as catechists or lay readers.⁸ Contact with resident Anglican missionaries was made during this same period by those Waswanipi who traveled for the Hudson's Bay Company each summer to the depot at Rupert's House, 150 miles down river at James Bay. These individuals delivered the company fur purchases for shipment overseas and picked up the year's supply of goods for the company post at Waswanipi. More regular contact developed between 1914 and 1927, when an Anglican missionary took up residence, first in summer and later for the entire year, at the site of the company post on Waswanipi Lake. He provided the first extended lessons in Christianity, as well as more general teachings for young people during their summer residence at the post.

The impact this missionary had on the people was shaped both by his own vision of his role and by the perceptions of the Waswanipi. The Reverend Harry Cartlidge was interviewed in 1976 when he was in his nineties. In this interview, he indicated that he believed his task was not to undermine Waswanipi religious beliefs, for he found the Waswanipi to be more Christian in their daily lives than most Canadians living to the south. He described their gentle insistence, for example, on daily services in summer, after he had initiated a schedule of weekly services.

His main task, in his own view, was to help them prepare for the massive influx of Euro-Canadians, which he knew would eventually come to the region. He believed that if a Cree were to be able to "adjust intelligently and not be pushed around as a second rate person . . . that meant school" (Cartlidge in Scanlon 1964:20). This required that the Cree keep their self-confidence and self-respect, characteristics which were grounded in their cultural beliefs.

I said, and I don't want you to think I'm making white people of [your children], I want you to be Indians and to demonstrate that the Indian is the equal of the white man anywhere in any situation. . . . You can stand up as our equal and still be an Indian. And I think that was the thing that had the people stand behind me and go to school (Interview transcript with Harry Cartlidge, February 20, 1976; see also Cartlidge, 1920).

Cartlidge sought not to directly challenge Cree beliefs, but rather to teach useful skills including English language, Cree syllabics, basic mathematics, and fundamental geography. In his sermons and religious teaching, Cartlidge said that he explicitly sought to identify the common ground between Christianity and Cree worldviews rather than seeking to directly challenge their beliefs.⁹

Waswanipi adults tend to see Cartlidge's missionizing work as being well-integrated with Cree beliefs. He is remembered less than the Cree catechists who followed him, a sign that his work was neither very disruptive nor very transforming. Nevertheless, the Waswanipi, with the intentional and unintentional assistance of Cartlidge and those who followed, appear to have forged a well-integrated structure of religious thought in which Jesus was the pinnacle of a system of natural and animal spirits, a system which integrated spirits, humans, and animals in a world of God's creations.

The success of this integration was demonstrated for me in the 1970s and 1980s when new Christian missionaries arrived. Some of these people challenged the validity and sacredness of Cree religious thought. One story of a man struggling to understand the validity of both "animal power" and "Christian power," so insistently separated in the new religious beliefs, suggests how some of the Cree found specific answers to the challenge. This story, which I heard second-hand, was of a hunter who indicated to others that in following the new Christianity, he had not lost his "powers from the animals," because he still had dreams which foretold the hunt. To test the relationship between the two types of powers, he went out hunting after a dream and found a moose with its calf, as he expected. As he approached, the calf startled first, but he did not fire. The calf ran to its sitting mother and circled her three times as she rose, and he shot both. He told others that this experience showed he could have power from both spirit dreams and Christianity. The finding of the moose validated the existence of "power from the animal" which came in dreams. However, as he had never seen a calf make three circles before, the holy number three showed the "power of Christianity" was also at work.

In summary, missionization at Waswanipi has not been entirely smooth, especially in recent years. However, the process in the 1920s and 1940s was, by all accounts, an integrative one which did not provoke fundamental challenges to Waswanipi religious thoughts or practices, and which resulted in an effective syncretization.

Environmental and Social Changes

According to the elders, the first major transformation of the "traditional" way of life occurred between 1910 and 1930, when the environ-

ment of the region was transformed. During this period, non-Native presence was confined largely to fur trading posts, although, for a time, there was competitive fur trapping by Euro-Canadians. Direct government administration of the region and intensive exploitation of the land and forests by Euro-Canadians had not yet begun.

During the first decades of this century, the region was covered by mature forests, and lightning caused a series of extensive forest fires which swept through the Waswanipi region, as well as the areas to the north and west. In the mature forests, subsistence activities had focused primarily on rabbits, partridge, fish, and some beaver and caribou. After the fire, a young forest developed. Trees such as pine and deciduous species, which flourished in open terrain, became dominant. As a result, the number of beavers increased, and moose migrated into the region from the south.

At the same time, in response to growing competition from new traders, the Hudson's Bay Company introduced repeating rifles and canvas canoes into their trade, and made steel traps more easily available. The introduction of repeat-firing rifles and the resupply of steel traps had the potential to significantly increase the effectiveness of hunting and trapping. The greater effectiveness of the repeating rifle and steel trap, combined with the increased abundance of moose and beaver resulting from the extensive forest fires, significantly improved the reliability and security of subsistence production.

A variety of evidence indicates that although the Waswanipi readily admit the utility of rifles and steel traps, they also attributed the increased success in subsistence activities to improved relationships with the spirit beings critical to the hunt, and not simply to the availability of new technology. The power of thought and the security of the hunter were enhanced, in the Waswanipi view, by an improved relationship between spirits and hunters. The changes were thought to be due to an increase in the power of thought, called *meteo*. (*Meteo* was previously a term for a person with the powers of a conjurer, but here it refers to new forms of personal/spiritual power.)

Many of the people who began hunting in the period after 1925 state that they did not perform the shaking tent ceremony, despite the occasional urgings of their elders. They did not need *mistapeo* helpers because when they thought of what they needed they usually received it; they had *meteo*.¹⁰ The personal stories of these hunters frequently focus on events in their early hunting years, when in times of food shortages they were able to kill one or more moose and distribute the food among a number of camps in need, thus providing others with security for the difficult mid- or late-winter period.

A significant feature of these stories is that these relatively young hunters were able to save elder hunters from hardship. This is in con-

trast to the stories they tell of their own relationships to their children. When their own children, as young hunters, could not find game they needed advice and information from their more experienced elders. This is the usual pattern, today as in most of the past. But for a few decades earlier in this century, the pattern appears to have been reversed. Younger hunters learned to use the new equipment and to hunt newly available animals as readily, and at the same time, as their elders. The latter's experience and knowledge of the land may have been a less decisive element in hunting success during this period.

The shift in the thinking of the younger hunters who grew up in that period is reflected not only in their stories about how many of them were able to aid their elders with their hunting success, but also in their discussions about relationships with spirit beings. One genre of story which is not frequent but nevertheless recurrent, is of young hunters surviving spiritual challenges from their elders.¹¹ When an elder would challenge them to a duel or send them omens of bad luck, the younger generation would "just brush them away" or "send them back." Some said they did not need *mistapeo*, or personalized spirit helpers, and that only their thought, *meteo*, was necessary.

A series of stories from this younger generation of contemporary elders relates to the acquisition of their spiritual powers. These stories emphasize that they do not attribute their spiritual power and knowledge to inheritance from their fathers, but rather to their own actions, often learning it through dreams. While the theme of inheritance is also present in these stories, it is often accompanied by qualifications, such as rejection of the powers associated with the shaking tent ceremony, drumming, or other specific practices. Such rejection is not universal, but the stories do emphasize the distinctiveness of the types of power exercised by the younger generation of elders, even while continuity is acknowledged. Several stories of these individuals explicitly contrast the life experiences of the speakers with that of their parents and grandparents. A key feature of these stories is that, almost without exception, they picture the life of the parents as being extremely difficult and insecure. They contrast this with their own lives which had greater security, with respect both to hunting success and to illness and "untimely" deaths.

Some of the younger group of elders also explicitly say that hostile spirit beings, such as the cannibalistic *atosh*, are no longer active in the Waswanipi world, and that spirit beings that intercept or block hunting success are now very rare. In one case, a legend about encounters with an *atosh* (which was originally recorded in the 1930s by the ethnology student, John MacPherson, from a Waswanipi informant) was recently retold by a member of the younger generation of elders. This man was a son-in-law of the earlier teller. In the 1930s version, the legend re-

ferred only to an encounter with an individual *atosh*, while the later version dealt with the demise of the *atosh* as a group at the hands of a man in the speaker's parents' generation. The first version also emphasized the importance of the spiritual helpers whose powers were needed to overcome a challenge from *atosh*, while the second version emphasized thought power. The transformation of legend into history here symbolizes the passing, at least temporarily, of the malevolent spirits from the Waswanipi world.¹²

A change may also have occurred in the concept of "luck," although the evidence is limited in this case. The ethnologist, John M. Cooper, reported in his notes from interviews with Waswanipi Cree who were visiting at the more southern Indian community at Obidjuan, Quebec, in 1926, that the term *matciheo* meant getting no animals and "go away." An interpretation of the term as meaning "bad" was explicitly rejected by his informants. In the 1970s, *matsipaiio* was interpreted by Waswanipi as "bad luck." It was explained that the animals are there, but that they do not want to be caught, usually because of moral transgressions on the part of the hunter. The changed meaning of *matsipaiio* may be correlated with the historical change from explaining poor hunting by blaming the interventions of malevolent spirits or human bad will, to explaining hunting success or failure more on the basis of personal powers. This change also could be related to the heightened focus on the moral responsibility of the hunter.

Thus, the changes occurring in the Waswanipi world from 1925 to 1950 were interpreted by younger elders as a strengthening of the bonds between humans and animal spirits. This was manifested in an increase in the power of personal thought. For this generation, dreaming (and thinking) of animals was enough to link humans and spirits. This development did not mean that humans had conquered or gained mastery over the environment; indeed, they continued to depend on it. Because of a more intense relationship with the spirits, however, humans had become more secure and better able to predict the immediate future. They were also better able to resist the interferences of fellow humans. The accompanying historical reduction in the performances of shaking tent ceremony, in interpersonal feuding, and in the number of active spirit beings, may all be interpreted as related to this increased power of personal thought. Thus, the shaking tent (and religious beliefs in general) are embedded not only in the daily life of hunters, but in the environmental and social histories of the Cree community.

Conclusion: On the Transformation of Religious Practices and Thought

The relationship between environmental and technological changes on the one hand, and religious practices on the other, cannot be under-

stood without considering how the participants interpret and evaluate events. The transformation of religious thought and practices which developed at Waswanipi between 1900 and 1950 was only one of a number of possible changes which might have followed the changes in the availability of game, the improved harvesting technology, and the extended interaction with missionaries.

For example, it was entirely possible that the Christian emphasis on individual conversion and salvation, the improved technology, and the equal success of hunters of all ages would lead to a shift in economic activities to highly individualized and efficient trapping. This would have involved the adoption of harvesting patterns like those of the non-Native trappers. These may have included privatization of land and resources by individual families, the maximization of cash incomes, the increased use of imported subsistence in place of subsistence production, and an abandonment of Cree spiritual thought for a modified Western belief system. In fact, these changes have been predicted by some anthropologists with regard to the acculturation in northern hunting societies.¹³

Another possible transformation would have involved the translation of increased subsistence security and improved technology into an elaboration of ritual through the development of a much more complicated system of ritual and belief. Such a system might include, for example, the appearance of ritual specialists and specialized ceremonial societies. This has apparently happened in other Algonquian societies, such as the Ojibwa.¹⁴

I would contend that the changes in subsistence activities and the acceptance of Christianity were explained by the Waswanipi in ways which were both culturally appropriate and specific to the historical situation of the time. Those cultural and religious changes which took place reflected social and environmental relationships during that period.

The alternative of ritual elaboration would have required the greater differentiation of prestige and the introduction of increased status differences among community members. This would have conflicted with the development of less differentiation between the younger and older generations resulting from both changes in subsistence and the message of missionization. The other alternative mentioned, individualized economic trapping, would have led to a breaking of the social bonds among families and hunters and would have introduced greater competition. Again, this would have been in conflict with the enhanced practices of social reciprocity, as well as with the welcome reduction in competitive dueling and the aggressive use of spirit powers. It would also have been associated with the abandonment of a world infused

with religious and moral responsibility to animals and spirits, in order to hunt and trap in a less restrained fashion.

The transformation of the shaking tent ceremony reflects these changes. Although the shaking tent was performed less often by the younger generation of hunters, it was re-interpreted to emphasize its cooperative and reciprocal aspects. These, in turn, featured the participatory aspects of power and advanced the view that individual accomplishment depended upon the reciprocal participation in the emergence of events. The Waswanipi interpretation of the events described here tended to enhance the interdependence, autonomy, and capability of the hunters, while, at the same time, establishing stronger identification with animal and spirit beings.

Thus, we find that environmental, technological, and missionizing changes led to ceremonial reorganization and changes in religious thought. These changes took place through historically specific cultural interpretations of events. In this process, ritual and religious thought were responsive to changes in material conditions, of both an environmental and social nature.

It should be noted, however, that changes in ritual and religious thought themselves shaped the way in which the new technology was used in hunting activities. Thus, the transformed religious thought shaped the final form of the environmental adaptation. The Waswanipi remained primarily subsistence hunters rather than being transformed into Euro-Canadian style economic trappers, or ritual specialists.¹⁵ At this point, the impact of religious thought and practices on the environmental adaptation of the Waswanipi, and thus on the environment itself, is clear. In this network of causality, dynamic religious practices both impact on the environment, and are influenced by it.

In summary, religious thought and practices have been shown to be responsive to changing environments, technologies, and social relationships. It has also been shown that these religious transformations have implications for many forms of daily action, including the way technology, resources, and spiritual thought are used. These processes are ongoing and more or less continuous, although I have chosen to focus on a recent historical period.

That these processes continue is indicated by events today at Waswanipi; forests are being rapidly cut by international companies, and the spiritual and ritual world of the Cree is still being transformed. Models involving conflict and competition are being espoused more strongly by a new generation, but the search by the elders for just, reciprocal, and peaceful responses continues to be motivated by a profound sense of spirituality, grounded in their daily practices of hunting on the land.

Acknowledgments

The ideas in this paper have been developed over a number of years, and I have benefited from discussions and the work of many Cree and numerous colleagues. I am unable to list all of the former who have contributed, many of whom have now left this earth. I wish to mention Eva and the late Joseph Ottereyes, Jr., and three colleagues who have contributed greatly to my understanding: Richard J. Preston, Colin H. Scott, and Brian Craik. This paper draws on research funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (especially Grants 410-87-0715, 410-88-0535, and 410-93-0505); the National Museums of Canada, Canadian Ethnology Service, Research Contracts (1983-84, 1984-85, and 1985-86); and McMaster University, Arts Research Board (1982-83, 1984-85, and 1989-91). I wish to thank each contributor.

Notes

1. In 1968-1970, when I first engaged in fieldwork on Cree hunting at Waswanipi, I was profoundly interested in whether Cree hunters were managing the natural environment which they lived in and used. I was also vaguely interested in Cree rituals and religious beliefs. I think one of the most important things the Waswanipi Cree taught me during fieldwork was that, contrary to the assumptions I had brought with me, the links between living in the natural world, spiritual experience, and sensitively sustaining the environment were not abstract, but rather were a central part of the practical everyday experience of living and hunting "in the bush."

2. Brian Craik, however, in a personal communication, suggests an alternative interpretation of the term. He connects the term for shaking tent to the root of the verb for "he fears him" (*kostew*) or "he is afraid" (*kochlaw*). See below for a discussion of competitive dueling.

3. Prior to a 1969 shaking tent performance at Waswanipi, which was said to have been done on my behalf, my unspoken desire to see a shaking tent was correctly inferred from my ethnographic questions about the ritual, and a request was forwarded to the performer without my explicitly making it. This use of indirect and inferred request is typical of other situations. Nevertheless, various commentators have noted that the initiating motive can be a perceived threat or challenge to the performer from another person, including spirit beings. This threat may be apparent, at least initially, only to the performer (cf. Hallowell 1942; Brown and Brightman 1988).

4. I can only briefly outline these linkages in this paper (see Feit 1986).

5. This suggests that they are objects of the night, and/or that the regeneration of trees takes place underground in the earth "down below," rather than in the sky.

6. This is the aspect of the shaking tent ceremony which has received the most attention in the literature.

7. Confirmation of this view is provided by John T. MacPherson in his 1930 unpublished fieldwork report, "An Ethnological Study of the Abitibi Indians," which included a ten-day ethnological side trip to the neighboring Waswanipi. MacPherson explains his visit to Waswanipi as having been undertaken because "he wished to get in contact with members of the (Abitibi) band, who

still carried on the shamanistic or conjuring practices of their forefathers, who had married into the Cree band at Waswanoby Post" (MacPherson 1930:95).

8. An earlier contact with Roman Catholic missionaries probably occurred in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but there are no records of this contact or of its impacts in this region.

9. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable assumption that the missionizing emphasis on individual conversion and redemption may have contributed to a greater sense of individualized responsibility and power, when they became adults, among the students whom Cartlidge taught. Cartlidge himself tells a story about an occasion when he was forced to speak against conjuring at the adjacent Cree community of Mistassini. He did so by drawing an analogy between European belief in witches and Cree conjuring, thereby not overly elevating Europeans, but nevertheless indicating his opposition to both types of practices as something that should be relegated to the past (interview, February 20, 1976).

10. There are fewer feuds reported among men of this generation.

11. It is not surprising that such stories are rare. They are not supposed to be told under normal conditions, for fear of appearing to brag, or being disrespectful to the spirits, and thereby ruining one's relations with the spirit beings.

12. A symptom of the continuing transformations of this story is that when I first recorded it fifteen years earlier it was told to me as a personal story about historical events, whereas in a telling I recorded more recently it was again told as a myth/legend. This may be related to increasing conflicts between Cree and Euro-Canadian resource developers (see below).

13. This is in fact the future incorrectly predicted by Eleanor Leacock for the Montagnais Indians, and for the Mistassini Cree who are neighbors of the Waswanipi (Leacock 1954; cf. Feit 1991).

14. Such features characterize the Ojibwa, although authors have disagreed on whether this was a pre-contact development related to their more secure subsistence base, or a post-contact development related to the security deriving from goods provided by the fur trade (Hickerson 1970; and cf. Veczey 1983).

15. Religious thought and practices are constantly reproduced and transformed, and they cannot be seen as either epiphenomena of material conditions or as static structures or conservative traditions.

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Edited by
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UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO PRESS

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Printed in Japan

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ISBN 0-86008-515-5
ISBN 4-13-057100-1