

work: "A book may be amusing with numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity." No one could say Professor Martin Robin has written a dull book.

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Peoples of the Living Land: Geography of Cultural Diversity in British Columbia. Julian Minghi, ed. Vancouver: Tantalus Research Ltd., 1972, 242 pp. \$4.50.

This book was intended primarily as a sketch of the British Columbian "landscape of conflict" for participants in a symposium on "Cultural Discord in the Modern World," held at Simon Fraser University in the summer of 1972. However, the scope of the volume is broader, including a series of contributions on other aspects of British Columbian people and places. There are frequent attempts to spell out the relationship between culture or society and landscape, which may perhaps be regarded as the fundamental theme.

The province has, indeed, seen its cultural conflicts — not so that a Pakistani or an Irishman would be very impressed, but serious enough nevertheless to darken the lives of many of its inhabitants and mark its landscapes. The Indian has had to endure the encroachment of the whites; the oriental people have aroused prejudices in the rest of the population. The Japanese, of course, were forcibly removed from the coast. Americans and Canadians remain somewhat uncomfortable with each other in the Point Roberts enclave. All these issues, with some of their geographical concomitants, are treated quite forcefully in the four essays of this book dealing more or less specifically with conflict.

Other conflicts might well have been dealt with too. The more notorious of the Doukhobors have fought in their own inimitable ways with other Doukhobors and with "the government." Landholding, settlement and agriculture in parts of the Kootenays have thus taken on a particular cast, and the infrastructure has often been disturbed, to put it mildly. The "counter-culture" has been at odds with the establishment, confronting developers at the entrance to Stanley Park, or looking for backcountry places in which to lead organic lives. The "east-enders" of Vancouver have long felt disproportionately represented in civic government vis-a-vis the more affluent people from the west. One expects these feelings to be translated every so often into voting patterns. The farmer who wants to continue making a reasonable living on his farm feels himself put upon

throughout the province by urbanites and hobbyists, as often as not from the United States. With land prices, taxes and production costs rising, how is he to remain competitive? All these conflicts stem from differences in background and way of life; they are essentially cultural. Their impact on the cultural landscapes of the province is substantial.

The eight essays of this volume not directly involved with conflict address themselves to cultural diversity in B.C. — mainly in the Vancouver metropolitan area. However, they treat the subject in a conceptually rather unstructured way and this invites more disparity in subject, approach and insight, than collections of essays are already normally prone to. In the introduction the editor makes a virtue of the variety of approaches, and indeed identifies the sampling function as central to the book. This is one way of dealing with the problem but unfortunately it doesn't help the reader very much. He is presented with a series of statements that not only illustrate different approaches but also treat various rather separate conditions and processes.

Differences in the degree of assimilation, a process common to all of the ethnic groups in the province, might have been one appropriate link for at least the ethnic papers if the additional material could have been obtained and some of the existing essays altered somewhat. An emphasis on the related persistence of some diversity in spite of a rip-tide toward cultural convergence might have helped to unify the material further.

Changes in residential patterns among the Chinese and the French, Italian retailing and business facades between Renfrew and Clark, some observations on the rural-urban fringe, all these each hold a certain interest for the student of the city, but they are only vignettes. In addition, there are unfortunate flaws in analysis and expression. The paper on Greek food habits and shopping patterns is intriguing. Concentration on the first of these might have realized more of the potential of the subject. The shopping patterns seem fairly straight-forward. The study of Vancouver's changing west end stands out as probably the most substantive contribution among the urban papers.

It is difficult to see how the paper on the factors responsible for the growth of Whitehorse, Y.T., found its way into this volume, even granting B.C. certain expansionistic tendencies. It is quite informative on this one particular town but really contributes neither to the theme of conflict nor that of cultural diversity.

In terms of both themes, this book is a sampling of actual geographic interests, but whether or not it is "a representative sample of the problems in the cultural diversity of British Columbia," as the editor maintains in

the Introduction, is open to question. The structure against which to assess this assertion isn't apparent, and another approach to this diversity, such as an exploration of persistent problems of class or economic disadvantage would probably have yielded a different set of issues.

The very lack of structure and the disparity of the studies in this collection may be taken as an indirect prospectus of what remains to be done in the cultural geography — one could perhaps use another term if this is not palatable — of British Columbia. This volume is a commendable collection of what new material was available.

There are problems too, in the use of some key words. In the Introduction, for example, "perceptions and habits," are subsumed under "cultural values" — in itself already redundant. This sort of confusion is important since "cultural" is a part of the book's subtitle and one should expect caution in the designation of the elements involved. Furthermore, the authors of essays on Maillardville, the West End and Point Roberts make rather frequent use of a code that includes such expressions as "spatial strategies," "work destination," "converted suite function," and "system stress." Criticism of jargon is a cliché, but in the context of a book that seems aimed at a readership of varied background, this represents a devaluation of the common currency.

More serious are the many opaque passages, some just convoluted, others questionable in grammar and syntax. A thorough shakedown of the prose throughout would have been most beneficial.

Although these flaws distract the reader, and he is likely to emerge at the end without anything like a systematic overview of cultural diversity in the province or any very clear ideas on the nature of the British Columbian, he will probably be left with several strong impressions nevertheless. There is repeated confirmation that the marks of cultural differences are subtle and elusive in the urban landscape. Certain intergroup problems stand out. The Indians of B.C., in contrast to most Indians in North America, retained at least the cores of their pre-contact homelands, but with changes in technology and aspirations these are of little use, except where they can be leased for urban residence, industry or other use by outsiders. Competition at a disadvantage often awaits the Indians themselves on their reserves and off. People of oriental background are no longer the focus of virulent prejudice, as they once were. However, occasional echoes still reverberate as recently over Pakistani-white relations in various interior towns. The memory of the displacement of the Japanese is still strong. Accounts of life in their isolated temporary settlement of Tashme evoke something of the price they paid. And off the very south-

western tip of the British Columbia mainland there is still that detached bit of America, from which occasionally rises the grumble of our good neighbours, who not only have to deal with their most inconvenient separation from mainland Washington, but numerous Canadian week-enders as well.

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