

Book Reviews

Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the New World, by Anthony B. Chan. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983. Pp. 224, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$14.95; paper, \$7.95.

From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada, by Harry Con, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg and William E. Willmott. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., in association with the Multiculturalism Directorate, Department of the Secretary of State and the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1982. Pp. 271, glossary, appendix, bibliography, index. Paper, \$9.95.

A few years ago the late Maurice Freedman essayed what he called a Chinese phase in social anthropology, a reference to the growing number of social scientific works on overseas Chinese that had appeared after 1949, when the mainland of China became unavailable for on-the-spot investigations. The spate of such studies has continued into the present era, when China is once more open to ethnographic observers (in part, anyway — *vide* the unfortunate fate of Stephen W. Mosher, whose work, protested by Peking authorities and just published as *Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese* by Random House in the U.S.A., cost him his PhD from a China-sensitive anthropology department at Stanford University). Overseas Chinese are found nearly everywhere, on each of the continents and most of the islands of the terrestrial globe. Since the late 1950s their presence in North America has been the occasion for the diffusion of the Chinese phase to Canada and the United States. The present two books are quite different instances of the form and style that that phase has assumed on the eastern side of the Pacific.

The study of Chinese in North America has been informed by both the national ideologies and social scientific perspectives that prevail in Canada and the United States. Thus, in the earlier works on Chinese in the U.S.A. — most notably those of Rose Hum Lee, S. W. Kung and Betty

Lee Sung — the central thrust was toward an uncritical acceptance of the benefits of complete and unreserved assimilation, perceived as the prerequisite to social acceptance, civil rights and economic advancement. In Canada, where ideological requirements favoured a mosaic rather than a melting pot, the Chinese were usually perceived as too different for their own or the country's good. Later studies in the U.S.A. — most notably those taking their point of departure from the application of the ethno-cultural pluralist thesis to the Chinese in the works of Stanford M. Lyman — subjected the much vaunted assimilationist thesis to severe criticism, pointed to the functions of the ethnic institutions and the circumscribed Chinese community, and treated the social processes attendant upon immigration settlement, occupational placement, language, education and mobility as well as the effects of prejudice and discrimination as features of a comprehensive situation worthy of dispassionate attention. In the same period — i.e., in the two decades since 1960, the year Rose Hum Lee's *The Chinese in the United States of America* was published and one year before Lyman's *The Structure of Chinese Society in the United States* was accepted as a doctoral dissertation at Berkeley — a rising ethnic consciousness spread over the U.S.A. and Canada, finding expression on college and university campuses in student protests about the colour-culture blindness of the curriculum and activation in assertively nativistic ethnic studies programs. Among the latter, those developing Asian-American and Asian-Canadian studies flourished in the academic landscape of the Pacific Coast.

Ironically, the rise of Asian-American and Asian-Canadian studies has diluted the Chinese phase that Freedman had so appreciated. In seeking alliances with U.S.- and Canadian-born Japanese, Koreans, Thais, Vietnamese, Cambodians and various Pacific Islands peoples, the rising ethnic consciousness in fact fostered an ethnogenesis. The overseas Asians bid fair to replace or supererogate the overseas representatives or descendants of the distinctive nations and peoples of the western Pacific Rim and Oceania. It is a remarkable but much overlooked fact that the ethno-cultural claims of overseas Asians are confined to the American continent, to Canada and the United States, and that the idea of confraternity among Asians has no noticeable locus in the Far East. A Cantonese husband absent from his village used to discover that he was "Chinese" by going overseas, as Clarence Glick's study of the sojourners in Hawaii tells us; a Chinese-Canadian (or American) discovers that he or she is an "Asian-Canadian (or American)" today by going to college.

The two books under discussion here belong to the two aspects of the

middle period of the Chinese phase, i.e., that period before overseas Asian identity threatened to swamp particular ethno-national background. Anthony Chan's *Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the New World* is a spirited polemic assaulting the assimilationist ethic, critically probing the implications of a sojourner orientation for Canadian Chinese studies, exposing the mercantile despotism of the Chinatown economy, and emphasizing the present-day struggles for women's, workers' and community rights and recognition among Chinese Canadians. Much of the book is taken up with an encapsulated history of Chinese immigration to Canada, of the legal restrictions on Chinese entrance, of the rise and spread of merchant power in Chinatowns across Canada, and — in the most interesting and original part of the research — of the protests lodged by various Chinese Canadian student, worker, women's and other groups against imposed community development and in favour of communicative honesty about Chinatown conditions. The exciting narrative of the struggle to obtain a nationally televised version of their story concludes his book and speaks loudly to the recognized significance of hi-tech media at this moment in the Chinese phase.

Edward Wickberg's edition of *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada* is altogether different from that by Chan. Wickberg has convened a team of five scholars, each expert in a particular aspect of Canada's Chinese immigration situation. Working both jointly and separately, this group has assembled what must be regarded as the most comprehensive published work on the subject to date. Its 271 pages include maps and tables, and a glossary, appendix with more tables, and index are supplied after the text. The emphasis is on Chinese social and community organization and how the various clans, *Landsmannschaften*, secret societies, commercial associations and the umbrella Chinatown-wide organization originated, developed, adapted to the Canadian situation, and responded to the laws, customs, limitations, deprivations and discrimination that constituted the vicissitude of Chinese life in Canada. Wickberg and his colleagues detail an organizational and communal history that speaks to the marginal status of the erstwhile sojourners from Canton and their descendants. However, like Chan, they too recognize that a new Chinese is emerging in Canada. Partly facilitated by the relaxation in immigration restrictions in 1962, partly inspired by the new spirit of group (and of Asian) consciousness, these Chinese will add new dimensions, organizations and strategies to the old Chinatown forms. Indeed, they might break away from the latter altogether and create a new kind of community in Canada.

The two books are welcome additions to the continuing and changing Chinese phase in social science and history. They both add to our knowledge. But more important, they add to our consciousness. No reader can come away from these works uninformed or uninspired. The North American continent was not a true gold mountain to the Chinese who named it such. But the golden people who settled along the eastern Pacific and moved inland have given it their own ethno-cultural richness despite its lack of a generous spirit or warm welcome.

New School for Social Research

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Waterfowl on a Pacific Estuary. A Natural History of Man and Waterfowl on the Lower Fraser River, by Barry Leach. British Columbia Provincial Museum Special Publication No. 5. Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1982. Pp. 211, \$7.00.

Barry Leach is well known to scholars in the field of German history for his *German Strategy Against Russia 1939-1941* (Oxford, 1973) and his more popular *German General Staff* (New York, 1973), but in B.C. we have also known him for years for his talks on television and the radio, his letters to and articles in the newspapers about ecological questions and his leadership of the Institute of Environmental Studies at Douglas College. He has published a number of articles on ecology and ornithology, one of them in this journal in 1979. The fruition of these concerns is in the volume under review, which reveals that Leach's talents extend to delightful line drawings and two pages of sensitive verse.

In a first part Leach establishes the abundance of waterfowl in this area from early records, accounts for the creation of the marshes, explains the patterns of migration of the Fraser Waterfowl, describes the sequences of glaciation and their effects, tells of the native peoples and their modes of hunting, introduces the white man and recounts his early experiences of the wilderness, and summarizes the environmental changes that resulted in "The Decline of the Waterfowl."

Part Two is composed of eight chapters about "The Waterfowl": one on swans, four on geese (Snow Geese; Canada Geese; Brant; three other rarer kinds), a second on the dabbling ducks (Shoveller, Widgeon, Mallard, Pintail), another on the Wood Duck, and a final chapter on the diving ducks (Scoters, Scaups, Goldeneyes, Bufflehead, Oldsquaw, Harle-