

Oregon Historical Society and Beals are continuing with their valuable work, hopefully in a format that is easier to follow.

Vancouver, B.C.

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White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914, by Patricia E. Roy. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989. Pp. xvii, 327. \$37.95.

As the subtitle suggests, this book pursues two themes: white attitudes towards Asians in early B.C. history and Asians as an issue in the provincial politics of that era. Given the nature of my skills, I will focus this review only on the first of these themes.

Basically, Professor Roy's argument is that until about 1900 white attitudes towards Asians in B.C. had mostly to do with labour-management relations. From about 1900, however, a change occurs: as the economy fluctuates, and as white immigration declines while Asian (especially Japanese) increases, anti-Asian sentiments are more broadly expressed in white society. The terms of expression often invoke the need to defend a "white man's province," but that expression is a broad cover for a variety of white anxieties.

I find this general argument an advance over the previous level of discussion of the subject. Instead of continuing a simple argument of either economic anxieties or racist reaction as the basis of white attitudes, Roy has combined them and dealt with the subject developmentally, showing how emphases and modes of expression changed with changing historical contexts. I particularly like her conclusion that "white man's province" is not an expression of simple racism. It seems to me that she has gone part of the way towards shifting the focus of explanation from where it has been to where it could more fruitfully lie. In what follows I will attempt to develop this point.

I think it can be usefully argued that the ultimate concerns of British settlers in B.C. — first and last — have clustered around questions of political and cultural dominance. On a multicultural frontier the founding of a colonial government and the justifications that accompany it are matters of critical importance to the subject we are discussing here. In such situations, a would-be dominant group must claim to rule all inhabitants of the territory, and thus it must include them within its legal jurisdiction. Thus, if the Asians in B.C. enjoyed some benefits of British justice it was less a

matter of the tolerance or generosity of the British than a necessary part of the legitimation of British government of this territory and all the people therein. A would-be colonial government must also decide who is to be part of the ruling group and how all those not part of it shall be classified. Thus, persons of British background were defined as “settlers,” persons who could be expected to establish homes, promote the rule of British law and adhere to British values. At their pleasure, some others, relatively close in values, could be granted membership on some basis. By contrast, aboriginal peoples would be defined as having no rights because they had not developed their patrimony or brought proper order. All other newcomers — ones distinctly non-British in culture — could be defined as “sojourners,” having no commitment to establishing order, finding homes, or developing the land. By being so defined, all such “sojourners” were not part of the ruling group, which defined and justified itself as “settlers,” but were rather “immigrants” or “sojourners,” the subject of laws to be made by the British group.

If we look at it this way, the disenfranchisement of the Chinese in B.C. in the 1870s is not merely, as Roy sees it, an action that frees white politicians to use Asians as a political football, but a fundamental part of the process of social definition accompanying the creation of this province. From almost the beginning, Chinese were defined as having no right to be here. They could only come and stay at the pleasure of the whites.

In a recent book, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, Ronald Takaki has argued that in the American case “immigrants” from the European shore have been believed to have some kind of right to be in America; those from the Asian shore had no such right, could be sent away or denied entry at the pleasure of the Europeans. They were permanent “strangers.” When the research has been done, I suspect we will find that the Canadian situation was much the same. The British “settlers” in B.C. formed a core group, but others of European derivation, whose values came close to those of the British group, might be acceptable.

Thus, cultural conformity might gain one a certain acceptance — less of that for those most distant culturally, like the Asians. Pat Roy, it seems to me, is heading for an argument that it has not been race, but culture — with its political associations — that matters. If that is so, I wish she would go all the way and put it in those terms. Chinese in early B.C. accepted British order, but they saw no reason to regard British culture as superior to their own. They alternately did — and did not — enjoy benefits from British justice, but saw no benefits from British culture. Why did they accept this situation — neither leaving B.C. nor withdrawing into an

armed, self-ruling group? Was it a matter of sojourner carelessness? Or a Chinese habit (common in China itself) of accepting the powers that have already asserted themselves and staying away from them as much as possible? It is not surprising that alarms about a "white man's province" are heard as Japanese immigration expands. Unlike the Chinese, who seemed to fit the definition ascribed to them, the Japanese behaved like Europeans. What if they should beat the Europeans at their own game? And then — as it was discovered that Japanese really wanted European opportunity while retaining Japanese culture — the stereotype of the perfidious Japanese developed: he pretended to conform but secretly did not. Despite Patricia Roy's assertion at the end of this book that by the 1940s a more confident set of British Columbians had gone beyond the anxieties of "white man's province," I think it is possible to see a continuity between what she describes and some white reactions of the 1980s to Asian immigration in Vancouver. The almost automatic "they're going to take over" seems to me to reflect the same ultimate fear of loss of political and cultural control and dominance.

In another way, Professor Roy's book strikes me as incomplete. Anyone who knows Patricia Roy's work will not be surprised to learn that she has utilized just about every archival and newspaper source available in English. She has not utilized sources in Chinese and Japanese, or even English-language sources that would tell us how Asians in the B.C. of that time felt. I readily recognize the problems of source availability for this period and of linguistic limitations on the author's part. I believe, however, that we are now past the time when one can write about the attitudes of one group towards another by using only the former's documentation. White assumptions and interpretations about Asian behaviour informed white behaviour towards Asians. That, in turn, led to Asian assumptions, interpretations, and behaviour, which, in turn, influenced white perceptions. And so on. We need to know what each side thought it was doing and how it interpreted the other sides in this multilateral set of relationships. Roy seems to accept as fact the white stereotype of the Chinese as "sojourners," though there is now a small body of literature debating the accuracy of that stereotype (Tony Chan, Peter Li, Yuen-fong Woon). Or again, Roy is imprisoned by her white-only sources on the question of Chinese voluntarily making a lifetime of domestic service. Though many white families might cherish warm-hearted memories of loyal Chinese domestics, the Chinese oral histories suggest that an equal number of Chinese saw domestic service as they did any other first job in Canada: a jumping-off point towards something better.

My point in all this is that reading the documents of the dominant group is not enough. We have newspapers and other publications in Chinese and Japanese, at least for the period from 1914 onward, and it is high time that someone with the appropriate linguistic and cultural skills use them to research the multicultural history of this province. Even within the realm of English-language materials, as the work of Takaki and Sandy Lydon has shown, there is much that can be learned about Asian perspectives. The purpose of doing that, as I see it, is not to answer the dominant group's version of B.C. ethnic history with an "ethnics" version; it is to move towards a social history of B.C. in truly multicultural terms. We don't need "equal time" for a minority report. We do need an imaginative synthesis — one that does not assume as inevitable the historical dominance of the British group or write only from that perspective, or, on the contrary, sees only the perspectives of the dominated.

I have indulged myself in a kind of "state of the art" statement, paying less attention than in a conventional review to Pat Roy's book. Within its own terms that book stands as a solid piece of traditional historiography. My hope is that Roy and others can move beyond it to where I think the nub of the problem really is to be found. In this year of Meech, as we once again re-invent and re-justify Canada and the cultural variety within it, an approach that would stress political and cultural dominance seems to me particularly appropriate.

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The Development of the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry: A Grown Man's Game, edited by Dianne Newell. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989. Pp. xvii, 303. \$34.95 cloth.

The title of this book is somewhat misleading. It gives the impression, at least to this reader, that the work is a general overview of the development of the salmon-canning industry of British Columbia. And the subtitle, "A Grown Man's Game," could suggest that the study will examine gender-related issues.

What Newell has in fact done is to cull from the extensive body of material left behind by one of the pioneers of the industry, Henry Doyle. Most of the book consists of extracts from the Doyle collection housed at the University of British Columbia and the University of Washington libraries. Each chapter contains an introduction by Newell, who provides