

Culture



Satya SHARMA, Alexander M. ERVIN, and Deirdre MEINTEL (eds), *Immigrants and Refugees in Canada: A National Perspective on Ethnicity, Multiculturalism and Cross-Cultural Adjustment*, Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, and Montréal: University of Montréal, 1991; 316 pages. \$20.00 (paper)

Norman Buchignani

Volume 13, Number 1, 1993

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081414ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081414ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie

ISSN

0229-009X (print)

2563-710X (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Buchignani, N. (1993). Review of [Satya SHARMA, Alexander M. ERVIN, and Deirdre MEINTEL (eds), *Immigrants and Refugees in Canada: A National Perspective on Ethnicity, Multiculturalism and Cross-Cultural Adjustment*, Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, and Montréal: University of Montréal, 1991; 316 pages. \$20.00 (paper)]. *Culture*, 13(1), 105–106. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081414ar>

Tous droits réservés © Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie, 1993

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

These three chapters, combined with Steven Romanoff's chapter, "The Cultural Ecology of Hunting and Potlatches among the Lillooet Indians", (9) and Tyhurst's chapter on land use (7) provide the best insights into the pursuit of subsistence as a dynamic system of interrelated human activities. I am not entirely sure what to make of the fact that the interrelationship of activities, while never particularly apparent, is far more conspicuous in the use of land than it is in the use of fish resources.

Salmon fishing is the single activity that receives the most attention. Michael Kew's chapter (4) begins with a valuable and necessary overview of salmon both as individual species of differential utility to humans and with the dynamics of the variation — historic and prehistoric — in their populations and migration patterns. Unfortunately, the chapter degenerates into a quixotic consideration of the logical 'evolution' of fishing technology that is out of character with the rest of the book and its stated intent. Steven Romanoff's chapter (5) and Kennedy and Bouchard's chapter (6) provide detailed information about the mechanics of fishing and inventory the locations utilized for fishing. Their material is invaluable but does not pay sufficient attention to the context of the activities that surround fishing and to the allocation of labour to activities — other than preserving the fish — that occur during fishing episodes. The consideration of fishing ends with Aubrey Cannon's provocative but not entirely convincing analysis of raiding for salmon as a deliberate and logical economic strategy.

The accomplishments of the book, the pulling together of so much information about the environment and practices of the peoples of such a small region, is a substantial accomplishment and I have little doubt that it will become a standard reference work that will be utilized for years to come. It is a frustrating lesson of ethnographic research that people are generally much better at doing things than they are at providing reasons for why they do them. This book has much the same problem. Hayden's Introduction does a yeoman's job of attempting to summarize the theoretical context within which a book like this makes sense but is an impossible task. At places, as with the discussion of generalized hunter-gatherers (p. 12), the lack of space leads simply to inadequacy. At other places, as with the discussion of competition (pp. 14-15) or that of the analogy of natural selection in an ecological perspective (pp. 7-9), it is harder to tell. The discussion of competition

is terribly compressed and strange. The use of natural selection as an analogy in the analysis of culture is a complex issue fraught with difficulty. It simply is not clear whether it is the lack of space that creates the impression of an overly rigid view of the environment as a thing apart from the actions/choices exercised by particular species or if it is an accurate presentation of Hayden's theoretical perspective. I suspect that these problems are not Hayden's alone but reflect the state of development of that theory ambitious enough to attempt the integration of material and cultural explanation. The interim product of that attempt, this book, is a useful work whose doing is superior to the explanation of why it should have been done.

Satya SHARMA, Alexander M. ERVIN, and Deirdre MEINTEL (eds), *Immigrants and Refugees in Canada: A National Perspective on Ethnicity, Multiculturalism and Cross-Cultural Adjustment*, Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, and Montréal: University of Montréal, 1991; 316 pages. \$20.00 (paper).

By Norman Buchignani
University of Lethbridge

This edited volume is an eclectic offering based primarily upon revisions of papers presented at the 1988 meeting of the Canadian Anthropology Society (then still the Canadian Ethnological Society). These were augmented by several others evidently solicited thereafter. The editors of *Immigrants and Refugees* (who also are key authors) identify two basic goals for this volume. The first is broadly topical, as suggested by the title: to present a "national perspective" on key Canadian immigrant and refugee issues. The second is to provide readers with a sense of "anthropological" approaches to the study of ethnicity, again with a focus on immigration and settlement. These are worthy objectives, the former particularly because there have been few conscientious attempts to link the quite divergent 'micro-level' ethnic studies discourses of anglophone and francophone Canada, the latter because, as the editors note (p.1), previous edited volumes on Canadian ethnic issues primarily have been sociological in

tone. These would be difficult aims to achieve under otherwise unencumbered conditions, as each requires the comprehensive command of a wide-ranging and for the most part, ill-integrated literature. Both objectives would also benefit from a deep understanding of at least two additional literatures for analytical and comparative purposes: that on Canadian ethnic studies generally, and that on the cross-cultural ethnographic analysis of ethnicity. These become goals when the editors began with a set of papers not initially selected or written to these purposes.

Indeed, if I disregard the suggested connections between chapters made in the editorial introduction and the useful and quite comprehensive introductions to the book's three parts (each by one of the editors), I see no consistent theme here, save for the Canadian focus. Neither is there much consistency in analytical approach, level of sophistication or disciplinary orientation. A bare majority are by anthropologists, but a couple are even by demographers (Samuel and Jansson) and a macro-economist (Akbari). A few (notably those by Crossley, Kaye, and Wellin and Ervin) are concrete, blow-by-blow descriptions of immigrant and refugee settlement practice while others are analytically quite sophisticated.

This is not to suggest either that there is no coherency at all in *Immigrants and Refugees*, or that there are not valuable contributions here. Both, for example, are to be found abundantly in Part III dealing with Quebec, which is edited by Deirdre Meintel and which contains primarily papers done by her co-participants in a project on ethnic youth in Montréal. Meintel's Introduction and most of these papers demonstrate qualities I would hope are increasingly characteristic of anthropological research on ethnicity: an unwillingness to take folk and government conceptual categories, 'facts' and assertions at face value; a tendency to deconstruct and analyze these as parts of socially generated discourses rather than 'reality'; an appreciation of ways in which ethnographer-informant relations and ethnographic writing form and inform our understandings of ethnic phenomena; a felt need to ground ethnographic observations in a theoretical literature. Here, chapters on the use of life history to illustrate Calabrian ethnicity (Peressini, Chapter 20), and on native anthropology (Claudio on Portuguese, Chapter 21; Pak on Koreans, Chapter 22) stand out. The other three

ethnographic chapters (Gremla on second generation Chilean identity, Chapter 23, Juteau on Salvadorian divorce, Chapter 24; and Xenocostas on second generation Greek familialism, Chapter 25) also make valuable contributions of a somewhat more ethnic group specific sort.

The rest of the book provides some useful studies as well. Satya Sharma (Chapter 2) and Alan Anderson (Chapter 3) present literature surveys appropriate for students, though both are more the conceptual captives of folk discourse than I would like, and Anderson ironically references only three anthropologists and almost no work at all done after 1983. Though short on development and references, Parin Dossa's (Chapter 4) account of elderly Ismailis augments a very meager store of anthropological studies of ethnicity and aging. There are several more quantitative analyses of value here, notably of South Asian youth in Canada and India by Kurian (Chapter 5), South Asian resident and visa university students in Saskatoon by Satya Sharma (Chapter 7), and especially, correlates of women's happiness among 'Southeast Asian refugees' by Fuchs (Chapter 12). Though essentially unreferenced, two others by John Van Esterik (Chapter 16) and Ervin (Chapter 17) provide thoughtful, first-hand commentary on the application of anthropology to immigrant resettlement practice. Also drawing on a wealth of personal experience, Hari Sharma (Chapter 9) presents a rich social history of left-oriented social movements against racism in British Columbia.

In overview, perhaps this volume *does* reflect the current state of Canadian ethnic studies. As in the larger literature, one finds here pearls alongside dross, deeply integrated and theoretically grounded papers alongside others that are decontextualized, unreferenced and entirely descriptive, intensely self-reflective efforts alongside those of others which, having appropriated their worldview intact and entire from social issues talk, never even know that they might escape it. I think that this volume has good potential for use in courses dealing with ethnicity and Canada, especially if selectively augmented. It has an excellent content to price ratio for a textbook, and, with no fewer than twenty-five chapters, it is sufficiently diverse to be a flexible pedagogical asset.