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Lai, David Chuenyan. *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. Pp. xvi, 382. 41 tables, 55 figures, and 40 black and white photographs. $29.95 (cloth)

Gunter Baureiss

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Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Cincinnati, are deliberately excluded, contributes in a small way to the study of immigrant labour history from a Marxist perspective. Of the twenty-four selections in "Suggestions for Further Reading," two are by Jentz and five by Keil. *German Workers*, published by a prestigious scholarly press, serves as still another example of committed radical history with a political point of view moving into the mainstream of American historiography.

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Bottles, Scott. *Los Angeles and the Automobile. The Making of the Modern City*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987. Pp. xii, 302. Illustrations, tables, maps, index.

North Americans have a love-hate relationship with the automobile. Planners hate it. Almost everyone else loves it; at least they buy and use cars whenever they can. Scott Bottles, a historian now working in the real estate division of Wells Fargo Bank, challenges a variety of automobile critics by documenting the popularity of the automobile from at least the time of the Model T.

Appropriately enough he focuses upon Los Angeles, tracing the pattern of use (and local politics) of transportation from the turn of the century through to World War II. He examines successive debates over the regulation of the local streetcar companies, traffic and parking in the downtown area, and transportation planning. Throwing in evidence pertaining to automobile use and the results of local referenda on transportation issues, he builds a convincing case that Angelenos consciously opted for the automobile en masse in the 1920s, when per capita ridership on the Los Angeles [street] Railway Company dropped precipitously while per capita automobile ownership increased almost threefold. He argues that this shift

was not encouraged by municipal government or planners. Rather, "the individual citizen began using his car because the reform movement could not assert its control over the traction companies." The companies would not - indeed Bottles suggests that their finances often would not allow them to - improve their service. No powerful popular movement attempted to ensure that good mass transit would be provided, if necessary through public ownership. Downtown business interests wanted better transit, but the car appealed to a broader geographical constituency. Most people chose cars because they offered greater freedom and ease of movement, even in the early 1920s when the streets could not accommodate them. Subsequently, the municipal government improved streets and eventually built freeways. In so doing, Bottles argues, it followed rather than led public opinion.

The challenge of this argument is twofold. First, it is a direct rebuttal of the widespread "conspiracy theory" that the automobile manufacturers bought up transit companies in the 1940s with the intention of closing them down to create greater demand for their product. By the 1940s, Bottles argues, the battle was over. Especially in Los Angeles, but in American cities as a whole, the transit companies were on their last legs and the city was already being remade around the car. The people had voted with their pocketbooks. Secondly, and more important, Bottles challenges the whole notion - eloquently expressed by Lewis Mumford and repeated many times since - that in so doing the people were being shortsighted. He points out that in building better roads Los Angeles has compounded rather than solved the problem of congestion - a favourite argument of the proponents of public transit. But, on balance, he reckons that the automobile has been better than the alternatives, allowing greater freedom of movement while providing lower residential densities and a higher quality of life. The people, he implies, are not fools.

The argument is, up to a point, persuasive. Certainly, his challenge to the conspiracy theory carries weight. Moreover, his praise for the automobile is a useful corrective to recent criticisms. In taking the automobile for granted, we should not forget that it has been, and to some extent still is, a liberating machine. But liberating only for those who own one. Modern suburban environments, of which Los Angeles is an exemplar, have been built around the car. On foot or by transit they can be very difficult and unfriendly places to negotiate. People who cannot afford a car and those who are unable to drive - including many disabled or elderly people, as well as most persons on low incomes - are left on the hard shoulder. Bottles tells us very little about the experience, views, and politics of these people, leaving nagging doubts that the majority has gained at the expense of a (perhaps sizeable) minority. To the extent that such doubts are well founded, Bottles's claim that the automobile is "democratic" rings hollow.

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Lai, David Chuenyan. *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. Pp. xvi, 382. 41 tables, 55 figures, and 40 black and white photographs. $29.95 (cloth).

David Lai's book on Canadian Chinatowns describes their physical and cultural landscape from 1858 to 1988. The book also deals with Chinese immigration to, and migration within, Canada and gives some examples of Chinese experience of racial discrimination. *Chinatowns* is an urban ecology study of meticulous detail, supplemented by tables, excellent maps, and photographs. Even though Lai's clear style makes it easy reading, the detailed discussion of various Chinatowns may be overwhelming to some readers. However,

because the book is so well organized, readers may select sections for careful reading while skimming others. Whatever the reader's interest, the book provides excellent reference material. It is impossible to check all the details for accuracy, but my intimate knowledge of two Chinatowns persuades me that Lai has produced an excellent document.

Although there have been many publications on the Chinese in Canada over the last two decades, this book is a valuable addition. The Chinatowns covered include the Nanaimo region, Victoria, the Vancouver region, the Fraser Valley, the Cariboo region, Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor, and Montreal. As well, references are made to Chinatowns in Moose Jaw and Saskatoon and to proposed Chinatowns in Regina and Hamilton. Those of Victoria, Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Winnipeg have already been discussed in the literature by other scholars. Lai comments on these previous studies from the human geographer's point of view, and brings the research up to date.

The main body of the book is organized in three parts: Canadian Chinatowns, Victoria's Chinatown, and Conclusion. An introductory chapter, plates (photographs), a short appendix, an elaborate bibliography, and a subject index complete the book.

The short introduction presents Lai's definition of "Chinatown" as an urban ethnic enclave within a town or city. He introduces a stage-development model, discusses Chinese immigration patterns to Canada, and provides an overview of selected Chinatowns within this framework. The stage-development model, employed throughout the book, defines four stages with their own characteristics. (1) During the "budding stage," Chinatowns form a cross-shaped pattern around two intersecting streets. At this stage, Chinatowns are identical to the Chinese community, which consists predominantly of males. (2) The "blooming

stage" refers to an area of several city blocks occupied by Chinese businesses, organizations, and residences. The Chinese community, during this stage, extends beyond the boundary of Chinatown itself. (3) The "withering stage" is characterized by a decline in Chinese population and businesses in Chinatown and weakened community organizations. Free spaces converted into parking lots are common. (4) In the "extinction or rehabilitation stage," Chinatown is either destroyed (by fire, urban renewal, or relocation) or is revitalized (by new construction projects or renovation of old buildings). Lai argues that all Old Chinatowns went through these stages for various lengths of time, depending on the migration pattern and the socio-economic situation of the Chinese.

Lai's major contribution is the linkage of immigration periods and the stage-development model. Chinese immigration patterns can be analysed according to four distinct periods: (1) free immigration (1858-84), (2) restricted entry (1885-1923), (3) exclusion (1924-1947), and (4) selective entry (1948 to the present). The Canadian immigration policies and the political, social, and economic conditions in China affected the demographic structure of the Chinese population in Canada. Chinatowns were a result of racism (discriminatory immigration laws and discrimination in Canada), the unique cultural traditions of the Chinese, and economic factors. In short, Chinatowns were a result of both involuntary and voluntary segregation.

During the free immigration period, Chinatowns emerged in British Columbia wherever Chinese were concentrated: in mining towns and centres of dispersion. This section includes discussions of early immigration and the initial reaction of the host community to the Chinese. When the CPR was completed in 1885, the Chinese moved from west to east, settling in major centres along the railway as far as Montreal. Lai also notes that some Chinese had come to the

east from the United States. He then continues with a discussion of British Columbia's Chinatowns, but he also deals with those major Chinatowns in the rest of Canada. In the prairies and the east, Chinatowns did not emerge until the 20th century, when Chinatowns outside of British Columbia went through a short budding and blooming stage. When the Chinese were prohibited entry into Canada, all Chinatowns entered the withering stage.

Lai deals next with postwar arrivals. Chinatowns either did not survive after World War II or did not reach the revival stage until the 1970s and 1980s. Describing postwar Chinatowns, he introduces his four types: Old Chinatowns; New Chinatowns (Saskatoon, Ottawa, Windsor, Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal), which emerged after World War II, do not have a residential area, and rarely have Chinese institutions; Replaced Chinatowns, which were built to replace the demolished Old Chinatowns (Edmonton); and Reconstructed Historic Chinatowns, which were rebuilt from extinct Chinatowns as live museums (Barkerville, B.C.).

Lai is undoubtedly the expert on Victoria's Chinatown, to which Part II of the book is devoted. The author applies his stage-development model to guide the reader through the entire history of Victoria's Chinatown. Demographic characteristics, land-ownership patterns and utilization, businesses, cultural organizations, and social activities are discussed. This section provides the unfamiliar reader with a good example of how a Chinatown works and how urban renewal can be effective.

Lai has undertaken a formidable task to chronicle Chinatowns in Canada since their emergence. He not only brings together available knowledge scattered in various documents and publications, he also adds new information. As such, the book is indeed a valuable contribution to the literature of the Chinese in Canada.

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

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Arnold, Linda. *Bureaucracy and Bureaucrats in Mexico City, 1742-1835.* University of Arizona Press, 1988. Pp. xii, 202. Figures, tables, index. $25.00 (U.S.).

Linda Arnold's book examines the bureacracy of the viceregal government of New Spain and changes to this bureaucracy after independence. The first chapter argues that in order to understand the modern states that emerged in Latin America, one must carefully examine the professionalization of the imperial bureaucracy in New Spain under the Bourbon dynasty, and the career of that bureaucracy during the Napoleanic Wars and the struggle for independence. Arnold accepts Eric Van Young's concept of the "Age of Revolution" as an apt characterization of the period from 1750 to 1850. Accordingly, she evaluates changes that occurred in the imperial bureaucracy during the transition from colony to independence by examining the bureaucracy throughout this 100-year span of upheaval.

Arnold draws upon previous studies dealing with the biographies of individual viceroys, the Bourbon Reform, and policy changes in the fiscal sector. The most original part of her contribution lies in her analysis of the neglected topic of internal decision-making in the bureaucracy. She also discusses the influence of both imperial policy and revolution on the lives and careers of the men who acted as intermediaries between state and society. The story unfolds in eight chapters. Following the introductory chapter, she deals, in turn, with the overall changes in the size and composition of the bureaucracy between 1742 and 1835, with the reorganization of the viceregal secretariats in Mexico City, and with changes in both the judiciary and the fiscal apparatus. Arnold then examines the job security, income, and families of bureaucrats as well as their

career opportunities, personnel policies, and politics, before providing a three-page conclusion. In this conclusion she states that the modern Mexican nation, linked to its colonial past, "shows no signs of abandoning that colonial legacy." This colonial legacy, Arnold argues, is a product of the Enlightenment.

The strength of *Bureaucracy and Bureaucrats* lies in its wealth of detail. The book falters, however, in those sections dealing with broader historical implications and in the theoretical generalizations drawn from the study. This general level of analysis is inadequate, perhaps even trivial. Arnold grounds her study of government officials in the broader context of changing public policy and the political turmoil accompanying the transition to independence. She does not, however, refer to the vast literature dealing with the "age of revolution" from the social scientific perspective currently being used by most Mexican historians.

Historians rooted in the social sciences, including people such as John Tutino and Eric Van Young, generally explain both political conflict and continuity of cultural norms in terms of the complex dynamic of competing as well as coinciding interests among distinct socio-economic classes. In contrast, Arnold presents both the war of independence and the ensuing period of civil war as primarily the outcome of an administrative program - the *consolidacion de vales reales* of 1804, a program which, she argues, had a disastrous effect on the subjects of the colony. This program is also portrayed as an unsuccessful attempt to bridge the gap between the ideology and the programs of enlightened despotism. The transition from Spanish colony to independent nation is thus analyzed more as the result of an error in public policy (as well as the outcome of events in Europe) than as the outcome of competing social forces within Mexican society. This analysis, which springs up suddenly at the end of the book,

is neither systematically developed in, nor sustained by, the earlier chapters.

The central theme of the book, wound as it is around the role of ideology, does not sit easily with the evidence. According to Arnold, both the republicans who dismantled the bureaucracy of New Spain and the imperialists who professionalized it were inspired by the same belief in progress - a "faith in material ideology" derived from the Enlightenment. The last sentence of the book goes further and suggests that the Porfiriato (with its renewed emphasis on efficient administration) and even the technocracy of Mexico today are additional examples of this continuity in material ideology. The implication of this statement is that perhaps the social problems of contemporary Mexico, like the political turmoil of the 19th century, are the outcome of too strong a belief in the ideals of the Enlightenment. Certainly for the 19th century, Arnold emphasizes an on-going pattern of social unrest and poverty fuelled by a failure to fulfil this ideology. She argues that both imperialists and republicans failed to "bridge the gap between the ideological rhetoric and reality" *notwithstanding* their "remarkable achievements." But why? Nowhere does the author discuss the excessive centralization that, as so many writers have mentioned, bedeviled colonial Mexico, as it does modern Mexico. Nor does she mention the increasing influence of Mexico's northern neighbour. Will the Mexican bureaucracy eventually fall apart again? Arnold's central argument on the theme of ideological continuity simply does not derive from her detailed examination of the intricacies of the late colonial bureaucratic system and its radical transformation in the republican context. In short, the author runs into some logistical problems in applying the findings of her case study to all of Mexican history from the end of the Hapsburg dynasty until today.

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