

**Anderson, Kay. *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875–1980*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. Pp. X, 323. Illustrations, maps. \$34.95 cloth**

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Chinatown, so long an integral part of downtown Vancouver, is a neighbourhood with a life and history, although perhaps not of its own making. Combining social theory and thorough research, Kay Anderson argues that Chinatowns generally, and Vancouver's in particular, are occidental constructions that both signify and reinforce cultural domination. Anderson has undertaken a study of ambitious scope, examining more than a century of discourse on the Chinese presence in Vancouver. Based on an extensive use of primary documents, she argues that a Euro-Canadian hegemony both defined and constructed Chinatown based on images of and assumptions about its inhabitants. Both the definition of Chinatown and its construction are explored in this well-written and cogently argued book.

During the nineteenth century, the Chinese settled in a swampy flat near the main business district of Vancouver. Between 1880 and 1920, Euro-Canadians first ignored the district, and then came to view it as immoral and unsanitary. Through the 1930s, Chinatown's image was changed with the first attempts to renew it and to present it as a tourist attraction. But the stigma endured, and by the 1950s Chinatown was still viewed as a slum, and plans were made for urban renewal. Chinatown survived, however, and as the 1960s and '70s dawned, tourism, city planning, and a new federal policy of multiculturalism prompted new and more positive images and discourse surrounding Chinatown. This was all part of the process through which a "Chinese" identity was constructed in Vancouver.

Despite such changes in Chinatown's image, Anderson argues that racialization remained the dominant force that separated the "Chinese" community from the dominant Euro-Canadian one. That is, the very existence (celebrated or otherwise) of Chinatown reinforced the "otherness" of the Chinese-Canadians within the larger community and consequently ensured their continued marginalization. Anderson maps this construction of the racial identity, or "racialization" process in Vancouver very effectively. In turn she sets out the spatial and social consequences of the very idea of Chinatown, as well as how the identity and its consequences shaped—and were shaped by—the legislative responses of all three levels of Canadian government.

Social theory aside, however, it seems clear that if Chinatown was a social construction for non-Chinese Vancouverites, it was nonetheless a social reality for its inhabitants. Unfortunately this dimension of Chinatown—the dimension experienced by those who lived and worked there—is largely missing. That is, while Anderson claims she does not wish to deny Chinatown's residents an active role in the process she describes, she has effectively done that. Attempts by Chinatown's business elite to exercise control over the planning and development of their community in the 1950s is dealt with in chapter six, but through the rest of the discussion, the role of community is absent. Anderson simply argues that Chinatown survived primarily because Chinese-Canadians themselves were not willing to be absorbed and dispersed into greater Vancouver.

The narrative of this work also suffers from inconsistent terminology. "Chinese" is used at times without quotation marks to refer to Canadians of Chinese heritage, as well as Chinese of Asian birth. This is confusing as well as inaccurate.

Similarly, the term "European" is indiscriminately applied to non-Chinese British Columbians from the mid-nineteenth century through to the present. Such imprecise and inaccurate terminology is both confusing and problematic in a study of ethnic relations and racial discourse.

These criticisms aside, this is a well-researched and soundly argued work that stands as an important contribution to the fields of race relations, and to urban history and geography.

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**Brumfield, William Craft. *A History of Russian Architecture*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. x, 644. 80 colour plates, 677 halftones, map, index, bibliography. US \$95.00 (cloth).**

A substantially revised edition of his earlier *Gold in Azure: One Thousand Years of Russian Architecture* (1983), Brumfield's comprehensive survey of architecture in European Russia from the medieval to the modern era will attract those urban historians interested in the signification of power in the built environment. The author divides his study into four periods: early medieval Rus to the Mongol invasion of the mid-twelfth century, the revival of architecture in Novgorod and Muscovy from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, the reigns of Peter the Great and his successors from the eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, and the modern era from then to the present. A thematic unity is provided to these broad periods by a concern for the appropriation of foreign influences and their relationship to indigenous stylistic traditions.