

community in Honolulu and underscores contrasts between Hawaiian and mainland conditions. In chapter 13, David Chuenyan Lai traces waves of Chinese immigrants to Canada, outlining their origins, destinations, and homeland ties and community transformations from inner-city slums to suburban malls.

Part 6 deals with Australia and New Zealand. Manying Ip's chapter 14 documents Chinese settlement in New Zealand, highlighting immigration policy, transnational settlement history and patterns, and socioeconomic status. Based on a large-scale survey of Asian immigrants, Chung-Tong Wu's chapter 15 focuses on immigrants' attitudes and settlement experiences in Australia, particularly Sydney.

In her concluding chapter, Cartier states that the central focus of the book "is the Chinese diaspora as a set of dynamic geographical subjects" and "the geographical realities of diasporic process from different methodological and theoretical perspectives among geographical approaches" (p. 379). She summarizes the chapters by integrating several themes, including traditional, contemporary, and future diasporas and identity formation.

This book provides an excellent overview by comprehensively discussing the historical and contemporary Chinese diasporas across the globe. Grouping North America and Australia-New Zealand at separate ends of the book helps readers compare and contrast major immigrant recipient countries of the Pacific Rim in terms of historical and contemporary immigration policy and Chinese settlement. Collectively, chapters represent both theoretically oriented and empirically based research. Graphics and tables are very supportive of the material covered, although some photos might have been more effective in visualizing Chinese landscapes. Despite some minor shortcomings, the book makes an important and timely contribution to the study of Chinese diasporas from a geographical perspective. It is a valuable reference for social scientists, a potential course textbook, and a good resource for anyone who is interested in globalization, transnationalism, and the Chinese diaspora. Key Words: *Chinese diaspora, identity, place, space.*

**The Other Side of Russia: A Slice of Life in Siberia and the Russian Far East.** Sharon Hudgins. College Station, TX: Texas A&M

University Press, 2003. xvii and 319 pp., maps, photos., biblio. essay, notes, and index. \$ 34.95 cloth (ISBN 1-58544-237-2).

Reviewed by Bella Bychkova Jordan, Department of Geography, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

Sharon Hudgins's latest book deals with the post-Soviet realities in parts of Russian Asia. She had a rare opportunity to live and work for several years in Vladivostok and Irkutsk in the early 1990s, which were particularly difficult times in this peripheral region. Few areas of the former Soviet Union suffered from the aftermath of the disintegration of the command economy as much as the Asian side of Russia did, due to its marginal economic situation, lack of adequate infrastructure, severe shortage of social services and other amenities, and extreme climates. At the same time, the new, transforming Russia began to open its doors to foreigners, even into such "forbidden" cities as Vladivostok, which was off-limits even for Soviet citizens until 1992.

Hudgins is not a professional geographer. Instead, she is an award-winning food and travel writer. Geographers can often learn from people with such field experience. Even though I am a Siberianist and lived in that part of the world until recently, I, too, hoped to be informed by her work, and in certain chapters I was. But the book is very uneven in quality, in the sense that it has some memorable and evocative chapters and passages, but also parts that are deeply flawed.

This is a long book, consisting of an introduction, eleven chapters, and a postscript. The chapters are organized topically, covering diverse subjects ranging from the description of a crime scene in Vladivostok (labeled by the author as Russia's "Wild East") to a ride on the Trans-Siberian Railroad to visits to ethnic minority communities and night-long parties with Russian friends.

Hudgins is at her best when she describes encounters with common people, especially in the chapter "Among the Buryats," in which she beautifully captures the unique hospitality of these flamboyant people. In summer 2000, I happened to visit the same Buryat town of Ust'-Orda, and I can testify to the accuracy of her impressions. Hudgins is also fascinating when she writes about partying with Russian acquaint-

tances and friends. Her description of dishes, recipes for them, and beverages both entice the reader and make one feel a participant in the festivities. The book will be especially valuable to those interested in the geography of cuisine and rituals associated with food consumption.

Despite the fact that the author lived in two large Asian cities, her main focus on everyday life is Vladivostok. During her second stay in this city, the author had an opportunity to live in a high-rise building among the local people. It was also quite a challenge, as Vladivostok is infamous for its electricity shortages, badly paved roads, and high crime rate. In my several trips to Vladivostok, I learned how trying daily life in that Maritime region could be. Yet living just like ordinary Russians allowed the author to experience what few Westerners have before her: she learned not only how to survive without basic amenities, but to forge friendships and enjoy life under precarious conditions. These two chapters are the best and provide a valuable insight into life in the Asian part of Russia.

Hudgins is not even an amateur geographer, and her descriptions of landscapes and climate are often as dry and uninspired as those in a travel guide. She is at her weakest in the chapter on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Few readers will profit from her constant carping about smelly cars and dirty toilets and her fears for the superabundant pieces of luggage she carries. Lost in the self-pity and disgust is the experience of riding on one of the most exotic railroads in the world.

I have often camped and hiked along the shores of Lake Baikal, and I also found her chapter on the “Sacred Sea of Siberia” inadequate. Though the author ranks her trips to Baikal as “the highlight of my sojourn in Siberia” (p. 122), her portrayal of this wonder of nature is less exciting. Almost half of the chapter is filled with bookish statistics about the lake and its environments, and she allows its mysticism to slip through her fingers.

But what makes the book quite disturbing is that the author does not even try to hide

her prejudices toward things non-Western. The reader receives an early warning in the form of a harsh and unscholarly epithet when Hudgins refers to Russia as “Absurdistan” after a few incidents at an airport. She is actually surprised that no one uses plastic cages for their pets on airplanes in a country where millions live below the poverty line.

Between 1993 and 1995, Hudgins taught at two different universities in Russian Asia. That provides the basis for her analysis of higher education. Here again, the author’s prejudices prevail. The chapter “School Days” comes at the very end of the book, and her evident irritation with constant cheating by students flares into an indictment of the society at large: “The longer we lived in Russia, the more we came to realize that it was a society that placed little value on truth” (p. 265). “Russian attempts to control or distort information . . . extended from the highest to lowest levels of society” (p. 267). Repeatedly she laments “unexpected cultural differences” between an American and her Russian colleagues and students.

Hudgins acknowledges that “[T]here will always be people who see Russia’s glass of vodka half empty and others who see it half full” (p. 295). She leaves little doubt that she herself belongs among the former. Had she focused on what really appeals to her—interactions with people and learning about their ways, especially food and festivities—it could have been a truly enjoyable book, a much appreciated and inspiring guide to peoples’ lives beyond the Urals. Instead, it is disappointing. It seems odd that the author, who traveled extensively and experienced encounters with diverse cultures, is so inexplicably baffled by the “absurdities” of Russian life. And though at the very beginning of her book Hudgins promises to “dispel many misconceptions that Westerners have about Siberia and the Russian Far East” (p. xvii), I am afraid that her own attitudes and biases—bordering on xenophobia—have only enlarged an unfortunate list of such misconceptions. Key Words: *Irkutsk, Russia, Siberia, Vladivostok.*

Copyright of Professional Geographer is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.