

Franz Boas Social Activist: The Dynamics of Ethnicity

Marshall Hyatt

Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990. xii + 174 pp. \$39.95 (cloth)

Reviewer: Norman Buchignani
University of Lethbridge

This short biography of Franz Boas accentuates those of his activities which might broadly be considered political. As such, the focus is wider than implied by its title. The first half begins with Boas the post-doctoral job-seeker (1882) and ends 25 years later with him well established at Columbia. Here Hyatt uses a global opposition of scientific professionalism versus amateurism to illuminate most of the substantive personal conflicts and objectives Boas had during this period. The tone is entirely laudatory, joining with a tradition of Boasian deification dating back to the 1920s. We thus see Boas, "the just," repetitively donning the righteous mantle of science in disinterested battle against nearly every (amateur, self-interested) significant figure in the ethnological/anthropological community of the day. To be partisan is not conducive to the best history of science, for it evidently prevents Hyatt from defining his criteria for professional/amateur status, from fully comparing Boas's specifically anthropological academic training (at most, a few months under Virchow and later Bastian) to that of others or from distinguishing quality of scientific practice from formality of training. Hyatt does not tell us how Boas's unceasing attempts to legitimate his own brand of anthropology constituted social activism, nor does he define the implication for social activism of Boas's particular sociocultural methods and his contrastingly large-scale generalizations on body form and race.

Hyatt thereafter outlines Boas's influential role as a champion of racial equality for Blacks (chap. 5) and immigrant minorities (chap. 6). Readers will find much of interest including Hyatt's use of Boas's less-well-known correspondence and speeches to chart the development of arguments that later appeared in *The Mind of Primitive Man*, his support of the NAACP and other Black institutions, his course work and lectures on race and culture and his physical anthropological studies of immigrants. And yet we are given few insights into Boas's motives for these activities save for the largely unsupported assertions that these sprung from being a scientist, a Jew and a liberal. Though these are all plausible avenues of inquiry, Hyatt presents nothing substantive about contemporary notions of science and social activism, anti-Semitism in academic circles in either Germany or America or Boas's voiced concerns with it, or with political liberalism in either context. Neither does the author suggest why it was only at age 45 that Boas's anti-racist sentiments powerfully surfaced. He barely mentions the social activist, anti-racist tradition that was then well established in New York or the contemporary non-racist academic influences on Boas. Likewise, while Hyatt presents informative material on the studies Boas did for *Changes in Bodily Form of Immigrants* (including criticisms of Boas's less than rigorous methods), he wrongly claims that Boas's demonstration of "the instability of the human form . . . contradicts all previous knowledge" and that before him "science had supported the racist alone" (p. 10). This may be why Hyatt does not seek to explain why Boas's claims about race and human variation, found soon after in *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1913), were so widely accepted among academics at that time save for asserting that they were "true."

The last two chapters present basic information on Boas's involvement with issues of academic freedom and research ethics, with fighting nativism during and after World War I (chap. 7) and with his subsequent efforts to counter Nazi Aryan propaganda (chap. 8).

Overall, I welcome this book because of its important topical focus. Perhaps because of this, I continually wished for more, specifically concerning Boas's formative years and its sociocultural context, more on Boas's expressed feelings about race, ethnicity and his own Jewishness, and especially more literature and archival support for the author's assertions. Unfortunately, also, there are no references to work produced after 1979. In general, I would suggest that the book would primarily be useful in undergraduate courses in applied anthropology or the history of anthropology.

Art and Ethnicity: The Ukrainian Tradition in Canada

Robert Klymasz, ed.

Hull, Québec: Musée Canadien des Civilisations/Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991. 80 pp. \$17.95 (paper)

Russian Copper Icons and Crosses from the Kunz Collection: Castings of Faith

Richard Eighme Ahlborn and Vera Beaver-Bricken Espinola, eds.

Studies in History and Technology, No. 51

Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1991. 85 pp. \$14.95 (paper)

Reviewer: David Scheffel

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Art and Ethnicity: The Ukrainian Tradition in Canada grew out of the exhibition organized by the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) to celebrate the centenary in 1991 of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. As the title indicates, the exhibition, as well as this companion volume, concentrates on documenting the expression of ethnicity in art. Drawing on many years of research conducted by Robert Klymasz, the curator of CMC's East European Programme, and the staff of the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, the slim book features approximately 60 black-and-white and colour photographs of some of the exhibited objects. The selection includes archival pictures of early settlers and the artifacts of peasant life, religious objects such as icons, grave markers and processional staffs, embroidery and the ubiquitous *pysanky*, as well as some most interesting examples of contemporary photographs, prints and paintings which amaze the unfamiliar spectator with the range of styles and techniques employed by the post-Kurelek generation of Ukrainian-Canadian artists. This entire visual feast is beautifully produced and well described.

Billed as a collage of "approaches to understanding the subject matter in the exhibition" (p. 7), the five scholarly essays included in the book offer a competent introduction to the history and culture of the stereotypical Ukrainian-Canadian. *Stereotypical* because the reader receives a sanitized account of the Ukrainian presence in this country, devoid of any but the most superficial reference (Frances Swyripa, p. 22) to ethnic, political and religious strife within the far from homogeneous Ukrainian-Canadian "community."

This reservation aside, the five essays are informative but hardly scholarly in scope and depth. We learn, for example, that, because the early settlers did not have access