

obvious which missionaries helped these Indians with this protest. However, the full text of this petition appears in the B.C. *Sessional Papers, 1875*, pp. 674-675 where it bears the signatures of Peter Ayessik, chief of Hope, Alexis chief of Cheam, and 54 other chiefs of Douglas Portage, Lower Fraser and Coast; thus 56 chiefs of Roman Catholic Indian bands in the Roman Catholic mission district of Saint Charles supported the petition. These chiefs were no doubt assisted in framing their petition — particularly point seven regarding their being hard working agriculturalists hoping to “enter into the path of civilization” — by Roman Catholic Oblate missionary bishops d’Herbomez and Durieu. Perhaps LaViolette did not in 1961 consult the Roman Catholic Oblate missionaries’ records because they were in French. Yet he might have consulted Reverend A. G. Morice’s 1910 *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada* which summarized in English the Oblate missionaries’ work in British Columbia from those records. Morice’s discussion of how the Oblate missionaries came from France and tried to teach the Roman Catholic religion, a temperant or sober, non-pagan way of life, the agricultural and industrial skills of “civilization,” and the English language to the Indians of the Fraser Valley, Georgia Straits and the Interior of British Columbia would not have supported LaViolette’s discussion of Indian cultures and the “Protestant” ethic in British Columbia.

Besides wondering why the University of Toronto Press reprinted *The Struggle for Survival* in its present form, I also wonder how they came to print this period piece in the Canadian University Paperbooks series. Does it not qualify as a history, or an investigation, or a polemic, or a tract fit for the Social History of Canada series? With a suitable scholarly introduction could not *The Struggle for Survival*, like other books advertised in that series, “enrich our knowledge of the past and lay the groundwork for future advances in scholarship and historical consciousness”?

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Those Born at Koono, by John and Carolyn Smyly. Saanichton: Hancock House, 1973. 120 pp., illus. \$12.95.

It is becoming increasingly evident that three schools of thought are emerging from what, up to this date, has been a formless group working with the undigested Indian material of the Canadian west coast. If we look at this “formless group” from an historical perspective, we find

Boas, Barbeau, Swanton and others doing their work; they are followed by writers such as Katherine Judson and Hugh Weatherby. Then there are the Indian artisans, such as Clutesi and Reid.

Of the three groups, the second can be excepted from serious consideration. Although there is a certain validity to keeping our interest alive through retelling stories, this style does not further our knowledge. It is time that our knowledge matured beyond those minds that equate simplicity with childishness.

One cannot respect the Indian artisans enough: this third group is fighting an uphill battle against society, education and history. But in 1974 it is difficult to respect the art to the same extent one respects the artist. Today their art is fashionable just as Eskimo sculpture is; and just as sixty years ago African art was the rage in Berlin and Paris. Tomorrow the Indian artist will face the problem that his grandfather faced when the missionaries "liberated" him from tradition. There is little to be learned from the carver working in traditional patterns.

The only group that is developing within itself and increasing our knowledge is the one headed by Boas and Swanton, followed by Barbeau and Wingert, then Holm. Now we can add *Those Born at Koono* to the list of necessary books for any serious study of British Columbian Indians.

Today Koono (Q'ona) is better known as Skedans, a village which once thrived on the eastern shore of Louise Island, in the Queen Charlotte group. Almost nothing is left at that spot which Emily Carr found to be so without "sham" in 1907. Even then it was a ghost village rapidly returning to the soil and forest. Today a logging camp is based where the town once stood, a few poles lean into the wind and nothing more.

It is probably safe to say that no one knows Koono better than John Smyly. In 1956 Smyly was commissioned by the Provincial Museum at Victoria to produce in replica three Haida houses and a representative group of poles — which he did at a scale of five-sixteenths of an inch to the foot. In 1957 he took part in a salvage trip to Koono and Ninstints. In 1965 Smyly became a permanent member of the museum staff and one of his first jobs was to build a model Haida village. He tells us that he chose Koono because of "the variety of its poles and the beauty of its natural setting."

In *Those Born at Koono* Smyly has built Koono again — with words and pictures. Beginning at one end of the village he has worked through the 27 houses and 56 poles known to be at Koono in the closing years of the last century. Fortunately Dr. George Dawson took photographs of Koono in 1878 when the houses were in use and the poles erect. In 1897

Dr. C. F. Newcombe photographed the site and in 1907 Emily Carr took a few photos. "Skedans," a chapter from Carr's *Klee Wyck* should be read in conjunction with *Those Born at Kooná*. If it were not for these pictures, and the notes kept by Newcombe and others, Smyly would have faced an impossible task. Kooná was built of wood; and very little survives the damp of the British Columbia rain forest, not even resilient cedar, the primary wood of the people of Kooná.

One of the more intriguing facts to emerge from this book is the house names. It has long been known that the totems are ideographic; the poles cannot be read, as was long believed, but each figure, no matter how small, meant something to the carver and to the owner of the pole. Because the Haida had no written language, the owner's exact knowledge of the pole died with him. In contrast, the mythology of the Haida, like the mythology of the other coastal tribes, was not ideographic, nor was it very cohesive. In fact it was as opposite to the formal visual art as can be imagined. In the light of this distinction between oral and visual art, it is interesting to find houses with names such as "Peaceful House," "Eagle-Leg House," "House Raven Found," "People Think of This House Even When They Sleep Because the Master Feeds Everyone Who Calls," and, best of all, "Clouds Sound Against It (As They Pass Over)." These names were given to John Swanton by Chief Skedans when he was already an old man with a fading memory. But we do know that each house had more than one name: "House People Always Think Of" was also known as "Raven House." Skedans itself was also known as Grizzly Bear Town due to the numerous bear appearing on the totems. These names are poetic and ideographic, just as the interplay of form and space in the totem is poetry. The awareness of this poetry, and the knowledge that more than we know or suspect may lie beneath the surface of the carvings, stories and paintings, give us a better appreciation of places like Kooná.

Volumes such as *Those Born at Kooná* will be important because they are our doorway into the aesthetics of the Haida. Today they are bought, as the art is, because "primitive" is fashionable and it all makes good conversation. But this curiosity will die, all fads do. And when that happens we will be left with a few solid pieces of art and less than a dozen books on what *Haida* meant.

From these books, from these pieces of art, we will be able to recreate the intellectual, social and artistic milieu which flourished when the totem and the myths began to grow from idle carvings and fire-side tales, into the art we have today. As Herschel B. Chipp and Carol F. Jopling are

proving in their work with primitive art and culture, the psychological depth lying beneath the surface of myth and art is staggering. Except for Barbeau, no one has really approached the north Pacific Indian cultures with anything near the imagination and insight of a Levi-Strauss or Robert Graves. Until this happens our appreciation and knowledge of the art and myth will not mature.

But all of this is still in the future. *Those Born at Koon*a is important for what it is today and not for what it may hypothetically lead to tomorrow. This is a strong book, and an extremely accurate one, but it too is brief. Between 1836 and 1841, John Work counted 738 people at Skedans and thirty-seven years later, in 1878, Newcombe found the village almost entirely deserted. Why? Smyly is correct to a certain degree in attributing it to smallpox, but the missionaries and canneries and salteries with their money had much to do with it as well. This is something which deserves more than the one sentence answer we find in *Those Born at Koon*a.

While it is recognized that no photos of Koon

a in its heyday exist, it would have been helpful if photographs of Skidegate, or another large village, had been included in this book. This would give the reader a sense of the village's true size. The feeling one receives from *Those Born at Koon*a, is one of space, tidiness and planned architecture. Nothing could be further from the truth. And, worse yet, the impression stays with us long after we close the book. It shouldn't. A village was a busy community, it was life. This is what we should remember.

The Smylys tell us that Koon

a was fortunate in that it was a peaceful village. From Swanton we learn that Koona had a firm relationship with the Tsimshian at Kitkatla, and that they imported stories and customs from them. It would be interesting to know why this village was so peaceful. It was rare for the different clans or phratries to get along well, not to mention their relationships with other tribes. But we are not told and we read on wondering.

The nature of the "whys" that continually come to mind suggest that the Smylys are hesitant to stick their necks out and become authorities. There is no apparent reason why they shouldn't become the experts on Koon

a. It is obvious that they know Koona as no one else does; and, even though much of the information is sketchy, they move with ease through Koona and the information surrounding the village. This refusal to come to terms with their knowledge, along with a certain self-deprecating note — which flows like a current through the book — is sounded quite early:

We hope that the errors and omissions we may have made will cause some Haida person to say, "I can do better than that," and set about the task as it should be done, written and illustrated by the descendants of those who once lived at Koonaa.

This attitude echoes a statement made to me a few years ago at Kitsigas, "You're a white man, how can you understand what we're doing?" This type of thinking would rewrite history, and what it would do to our cultural heritage simply defies the imagination. But it is not an accurate attitude. Art is art, and it's open to anyone with the intelligence and knowledge to study it. The same can be said about myth — is it possible that we should forget Frazer's work since he's not a Greek, or Levi-Strauss' because he's not a South American Indian?

Those Born at Koonaa would be an enduring classic had the authors taken a few drastic steps toward being the final word. As it is, the book is the best of its type — and it belongs beside the books of Boas, Barbeau, Swanton and Wingert.

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