

according to Taylor, controlled or had interests in B.C. Sugar Refineries, B.C. Electric, B.C. Telephone, B.C. Tramways, Vancouver Machine Works and also one of the largest blocks of Vancouver real estate. Many of these companies were Rattenbury clients. These are merely a few issues open for exploration as a result of Barrett and Liscombe's research.

With the firm demolition of such popular rumours that, for instance, Rattenbury stole the parliament buildings design from the English firm of his uncle (i.e., it was originally intended for a Maharajah's palace!), the way is open for further serious re-examination of Rattenbury's creative role in the formation of British Columbia's distinctive Edwardian west coast style. The 1901 Lyman Duff house, for instance, certainly demonstrates innovative brilliance. In other instances Rattenbury could be naively derivative. I am convinced, for instance, that Rattenbury's 1903/6 Revelstoke courthouse is an abbreviated version of H. T. Hare's Shoreditch Public Library published in the *Architectural Review* of 1893. Similarly, the Rattenbury shingle-style signature of steep gables either blind with a lancet vent or open with an indented gothic arch most likely derived from designs by Toronto architects Dennison and King published in the *Canadian Architect and Builder* in 1890.

In short, Barrett and Liscombe have contributed a founding architectural biography for cultural history research in British Columbia and thereby have established a standard which will challenge future scholars in this field.

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Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-90, by Barry M. Gough. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984. Pp. 287. \$27.95.

Gunboat Frontier is an account of how the Royal Navy was used to pacify the Indians of the northwest coast during the mid to late nineteenth century. The author argues that the ships and men of the navy were an important instrument of British colonial and Canadian policy, and that gunboats were frequently used on the coast, as on other imperial frontiers, to quell and control fractious natives. Naval force was initially employed to inflict retribution on the Indians for attacks on Europeans, but increasingly through the period of colonization naval officers were called upon to intervene in Indian matters. There were actions to suppress

Indian warfare, slavery and liquor trading and, associated with these, the navy also lent support to the missionaries who worked to bring about cultural change among the coast Indians. Clearly the Royal Navy was an important weapon in the arsenal of the invading Europeans, and Gough describes a number of incidents up and down the coast over a period of fifty years when naval vessels were used in the effort to establish British authority on this maritime frontier.

As far as it goes, this book is a useful contribution to the literature on the northwest coast. It is an example of a rather old-fashioned kind of imperial history, and the basic argument about the role of the Royal Navy has already been presented in the author's two earlier books, *Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1579-1809* and *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of America, 1810-1914*. The last of the trilogy, *Gunboat Frontier*, fills in the details of the navy's relations with Indians. There are, however, three major problems with this book: two that have to do with what the author does say and a third to do with what he does not.

First, there is altogether too much vague writing on these pages. The book is littered with qualifiers. This lack of precision with words is particularly apparent in the descriptions of Indian social structure. We are told that "along the entire coast the village constituted the autonomous political entity," but at the same time there were "unions of such local groupings into larger political units . . ." (p. 7). Later the various inlets of the west coast of Vancouver Island are called "the seats of empire" for Indian peoples (p. 108). "Empire" is an especially inappropriate word for groups that did not seek territorial aggrandizement, as an imperial historian should know. Or again, the Kimsquit, a Bella Cooola group, apparently "were a tightly-knit people whose interwoven ancestries were tied together by sentiment and pride of lineage" (p. 201). What does that really tell us about that particular group's social organization that could not be said about any number of indigenous peoples? Admittedly, describing the various cultures of the northwest coast with clarity would be a difficult task, but the author also shows a tendency to be vague about the central concern of his work. Having described how H.M.S. *Boxer* gave assistance to Father A. J. Brabant, Gough continues: "The *Boxer's* timely assistance may have been typical of the Royal Navy's support for missionaries of whatever Christian denomination" (p. 174). That it may have been typical is obvious; surely in a monograph on the navy we are entitled to know whether in fact it was. In the concluding

paragraph of the last substantial chapter the navy's gunboat actions in support of Empire are summarized as "countless in number, puzzlingly insignificant in the amalgam but vitally illuminating in their individual particularities of character, circumstance and place" (p. 209). Does that mean, in plain English, that the many individual incidents are interesting, but together they do not amount to much? If so, it is an odd way to sum up the subject matter of this volume.

The vagueness of its expression tends to diffuse the main point of this book, but there is no doubt that the author places a great deal of emphasis on the use of force, or the threat of force, to suppress the Indians. Yet one wonders whether, by focusing on violence, he exaggerates the level of conflict. How important was the use of armed force in overall Indian policy and how frequent in the context of Indian-European relations over five decades were these naval forays among the Indians? Sometimes, even on the evidence presented here, naval actions were inconclusive. Moreover, on the second to last page, it is admitted that gunboat actions affected only "a small minority of natives" (p. 214). Presumably, therefore, satisfactory Indian policy was not a matter of power alone, as the example of the United States shows. While Indian policy in British Columbia often involved crisis management, what happened between the crises? As in his earlier books, Gough here refuses to consider other interpretations of the level and importance of violence in Indian-European relations on the coast, particularly during the early contact period. He reiterates the view that "the maritime frontier had a violent history of white-native contact" (p. 109) and on this occasion cites, in support of that contention, a section of my *Contact and Conflict* in which I am at some pains to play down the level of inter-racial violence as a factor in early contact.

The third criticism of this book is perhaps the most fundamental. It would have been a worthwhile exercise simply to use the naval sources to describe its role as an agent of imperial power on the northwest coast. But the author promises to do more than that and then fails to deliver. Since British Columbia is a Pacific place this book is a contribution to Pacific history. Over recent years historians of the Pacific have argued that we should do more than merely describe the imperial waves that successively crashed upon the reefs and beaches of the world's greatest ocean. It is necessary not just to follow the tides of empire but also, to use the title of a recent history of the Pacific, to stand "where the waves fall" and make some effort to see history from the viewpoint of those already

on the shore.¹ It is one thing to describe the power of European weapons and assume that the newcomers had the upper hand, but the Pacific peoples did not always play dead when the whites produced their big guns. All of the excessive firepower of *Resolution* and *Discovery*, which Gough details as representative of British naval superiority from the outset, was of no help whatever to James Cook as he was hacked to pieces on the rocky shoreline of Kealakekua Bay. There was another side to this story, and Gough begins by suggesting that he will tell it. The Admiralty papers are touted as possibly the last unused major documentary source on "Northwest Coast Indian life in the nineteenth century" (p. xv), and on the first page Gough states that his "objective has been to get as close to the historic interface of white and native societies as possible, and to describe and assess how each responded to the other" (p. xiii). In fact, throughout the book there is very little sense of how and why the Indians responded. Consistent with the old imperial history, the natives do not act but rather react to the actions of Europeans. The northwest coast Indians' own motivations and priorities are not examined in any detail. It is not sufficient to name Indian groups and individuals and to offer a general description of their culture. One would like to know about their notions of warfare, their views on crime and punishment, and the reasons why they sometimes resisted and sometimes did not. After describing the Cowichan affair, in which James Douglas led an armed force to capture and summarily execute an Indian who had attacked an English settler, Gough observes that "for reasons unknown, the natives did not regard the capture, trial and punishment with the same measure of acceptance as the authorities" (p. 66). Presumably those reasons had to do with the Indians' view of the invasion of their territory, and with a whole set of different cultural attitudes towards revenge and compensation. Although one must be careful about analyzing other cultures, some conclusions could be drawn in this case. Certainly to attempt what is difficult is better than raising the reader's expectations and then backing off. To the extent that they are used here, the Admiralty papers are a revealing source on the views of navy men but not on northwest coast Indian life. For in the end, *Gunboat Frontier* tells only one side of the story. While it details the attitudes and actions of the Royal Navy, it does not take the reader across to the other side of the frontier.

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¹ K. R. Howe, *Where the Waves Fall: A New South Sea Islands History from First Settlement to Colonial Rule* (Sydney and London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984).