

acterised the period of the market economy replaced the previous folk account of fishing as a somewhat ordered collaborative network of exchange between the human and natural worlds, with explanatory models that considered risk, chance, luck, rationality, reasonable behaviour, and decision-making as inherent in fishing activities. With the development of the modern state and consolidated capitalism in the fishing industry, social relations and cultural accounts of fishing changed further. Fishing production is now increasingly subject to scientific discourse, which is itself ultimately a social construction of the environment, and ideas of human responsibility that mute the local discourse of indigenous producers in fishing communities, mainly because scientific discourse is regarded as legitimate and a more accurate representation of reality. Pálsson shows precisely how this is linked to problems in the resource management of fishing as an appropriate regime, and how scientific discourse is, like indigenous discourse, a product of history and as such is no more or less valid as accurate representation than local folk accounts of human–environmental relations.

In the final chapter, Pálsson returns to the theoretical concerns of the first part of the book. Overall he draws upon an impressive range of theoretical and ethnographic material from coastal fishing societies to make his central point and to argue that, in the appropriation of the natural world, the actions of human beings are purposive, are laden with cultural meanings, and are inextricably bound up in a complexity of social relations. While Pálsson's exercise is intellectually stimulating, his argument has far-reaching significance beyond mere academic concerns. The conflicts between local interests and national and international policies of resource management legitimized by political agendas and scientific paradigms are such that worldwide, effective management is rare and mismanagement is, in itself, a threat to the environment and to human cultures. Beyond a narrow parochial approach, the perspective of ecological anthropology that Pálsson asks us to take is one that we need to adopt as we reassess our interactions and relations with the environment and our future place in the world as socially constituted persons, rather than as autonomous individuals involved in impersonal, impulsive productive activities. (Mark Nuttall, Department of Human Sciences, Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH.)

CAPTAIN SIMON METCALFE: PIONEER FUR TRADER IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, HAWAII AND CHINA. Rhys Richards. 1991. Fairbanks and Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press (Alaska History Series 37). 234 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-919642-37-3.

Among the numerous ship captains who ranged the northwest coast of North America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, not many left records and journals. If they kept accounts, they have generally been lost. Accordingly, the piecing together of the several successive voyages of 'Nor'west men' such as Simon

Metcalfe calls for excellent detective work and skilful recreation or filling in. Such is the case with *Captain Simon Metcalfe*, which is a triumph for author and publisher alike. Many a less-skilled researcher than the painstaking Rhys Richards would have abandoned the task early on. However, to his enormous credit and to the benefit of scholarship generally—and of maritime history and indigenous societies specifically—Richards has pressed on to give us as complete a story of the hazardous and violent passages of this remarkable trading master as can be completed—assuming, of course, that no new journals and accounts come to light in the future.

Simon Metcalfe is significant in the history of the maritime fur trade and other sea-going endeavours for a number of reasons. He was the first American captain to take sea otters on the shores between California and Alaska, and the first to trade them in Canton. He was either the first or second American mariner at Hawaii, and the first to trade sandalwood in China. The initiator of American sealing in the Iles Kerguelen in Antarctic waters, he was also one of the first Americans to trade with the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands. His death there at the hands of the local natives ended a career that was heavy-handed, tough-minded, resolute, and profit-oriented. He was not an attractive personality, according to the author, who goes even further in describing his subject as 'a captain who violated his owners' trust by appropriating their property for his own use; he was hard on his crews; and he traded natives with considerable savagery. Clearly, he was one of the toughest captains in a tough era' (page vii). He engaged in clandestine trading and was both evasive and secretive about his voyages and his own affairs. There must have been many like Simon Metcalfe, and one would like to find more of them in the historical record. Much attention, perhaps too much, has been given to the early voyages of the Boston-based ships *Columbia* and *Lady Washington*, and so it is particularly gratifying to find in Simon Metcalfe the true pioneer of American designs for a Pacific network of trade, one that was to have political and imperial consequences in Oregon, California, and Hawaii in subsequent years.

There has been a tendency of late to downplay the degree of violence in the northwest trade. But Metcalfe's life was an expression of violence, and he died as he had lived. At Maui, as the author recounts by analysis of numerous contemporary accounts, the resolute men and guns of the brig *Eleanora* killed some 300 natives in a savage, wanton massacre. Sailing for the Queen Charlottes in the little *Ino*, Metcalfe entered troubled waters, for here, just previously, was where Captain Kendrick had abused the Haida, who had a village on Houston Stewart Channel. The chief, Koya, took powerful revenge against the Americans, and he and his people stealthily took possession of the vessel and killed all aboard, including Metcalfe and his son Robert. The historical records of the bloody end of this trader are less rich than the Maui massacre. We could wish for more evidence, but on the face of it this reviewer subscribes to the author's summary

that such violence was a hallmark of the trade, and that both sides were at fault, and frequently.

This book is well-researched, has a useful although somewhat dated bibliography, and is well-referenced. It also has many illustrations, the provenance of which is unfortunately not provided. This reviewer could not find, for instance, the source or origin of the illustration of Captain James Hanna's vessel *Sea Otter* firing on the natives of Nootka Sound in 1785. Such omission apart, this is an excellent account of Metcalfe's proceedings. As such, it adds significantly to the historical literature of the maritime fur trade. (Barry Gough, Department of History, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3C5, Canada.)

HERO IN DISGRACE: THE LIFE OF ARCTIC EXPLORER FREDERICK A. COOK. Howard S. Abramson. 1991. New York: Paragon House. xix + 250 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 1-55778-322-5. US\$21.95.

The story of the claims in 1909 by Frederick A. Cook and Robert E. Peary to have attained the North Pole, and of the subsequent controversy about which explorer — if either — reached 90° N, is well known. In the past 80 years, many books have been published about the two men's claims, supporting those of one (usually the backing of one man involves the condemnation of the other) or disputing both. In recent years, the consensus of academic historians of polar exploration has been that it is unlikely either Cook or Peary reached the North Pole or its immediate vicinity.

Enter Howard S. Abramson, the editor of *Traffic World* and the author of a previous book about the National Geographic Society, with an effort that claims to present 'new evidence which finally sets the record straight' and 'dispells [*sic*] those clouds and retrieves the true hero from disgrace.' *Hero in disgrace* certainly is entertaining reading, and one finishes it liking Cook as a man and wanting to believe that he did indeed accomplish all he said, including reaching the North Pole and making the first ascent of Mount McKinley. But there is precious little 'new evidence,' and the author does not present a great deal other than Cook's word to prove that Cook accomplished what he claimed. On the other hand, Abramson has selectively ignored facts that damage Cook's case. For example, he has blatantly neglected to mention the later expeditions to the Mount McKinley area, the discovery of Cook's 'fake peak,' and the exhaustive study of Bradford Washburn (1958) that completely supported the indications that Cook faked his ascent of the highest mountain in North America. In addition, he never adequately explains why Cook was willing to leave his all-important 'proofs' of his attainment of the Pole in Annoatok with a man he hardly knew rather than taking them with him.

Such a dearth of necessary information is compounded by Abramson's lack of any academic references throughout the book. In fact, nothing other than quotes are referenced, leaving the reader simply to guess whether statements that disagree with former assessments are made because of new data or because of opinion.

The seriousness of this lack of referencing is amplified by the factual errors throughout the book. Jo Peary was not 'the first white woman known to have visited the Arctic' (page 6); 'white women' have been living in Arctic settlements such as Tromsø and Hammerfest for hundreds of years. Nor was she even the first woman to accompany an exploring expedition to the Arctic; from 1735–1736, for example, Mariya Pronchishcheva accompanied the Lena-Taymyr branch of Bering's Great Northern Expedition that surveyed the Arctic coastline of Siberia. The voyage of *Miranda* in 1894 was not 'the world's first strictly pleasure cruise to the Arctic' (page 20); regular commercial tourist ships began going to Svalbard in 1881, and by the time of *Miranda*, half a dozen trips of this kind were being made to Svalbard each year and more to Alaska and other northern destinations. Robert E. Peary was not 'the only American who was launching expeditions to the North Pole at this time' (page 64); Walter Wellman attempted to reach the North Pole from Svalbard in 1894, and the Baldwin–Ziegler expedition (1901–1902) and its successor under Anthony Fiala (1903–1905) both attempted to reach the Pole from Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa. It is not at all universally accepted that Pytheas crossed the Arctic Circle (page 135); the locations that have been most convincingly argued for his destination — the Shetlands, southern Iceland, and southern Norway — are all below the Arctic Circle (Whitaker 1982). And Sir John Franklin was not a retired admiral (page 136), nor was his expedition of 1845 almost 100 years before the Cook–Peary controversy began in 1909 (page 137).

Abramson's basic thesis is that Peary's triumph in the North Pole controversy was due to the unrelenting pressure of his supporters, such as the National Geographic Society, the Peary Arctic Club, and *The New York Times*, who 'quickly devised the plan they believed was most likely to succeed: Destroy Cook's claim by destroying his reputation as an explorer and a man' (page 150). But in building a case for the ubiquity and under-handedness of the Peary clique, Abramson engages in similar slanted reporting. All too often, Abramson dismisses people who questioned Cook's story by implication and insinuation, rather than by any comment on whether their information was accurate or not. Thus, he besmirches Professor Herschel Parker with the comment that he 'had actually resigned from the [Mount McKinley] expedition in fear of his life after stating that the summit was unreachable, not because it was time for him to return to his classes' (page 59); Abramson ignores the fact that in 1912 Parker and Belmore Browne led the first expedition to reach the height of 20,000 feet on McKinley (Browne 1913).

Again, to discount the newspaper reports of Philip Gibbs, Abramson states, 'Soon after Freuchen and Gibbs met the returning explorer — if not before — they decided between themselves that Cook had not reached the North Pole, even though no one had yet heard his story of the expedition.... Either Gibbs had attended a different homecoming ceremony than did all the other journalists in Copenhagen or he had already decided on a plan to make