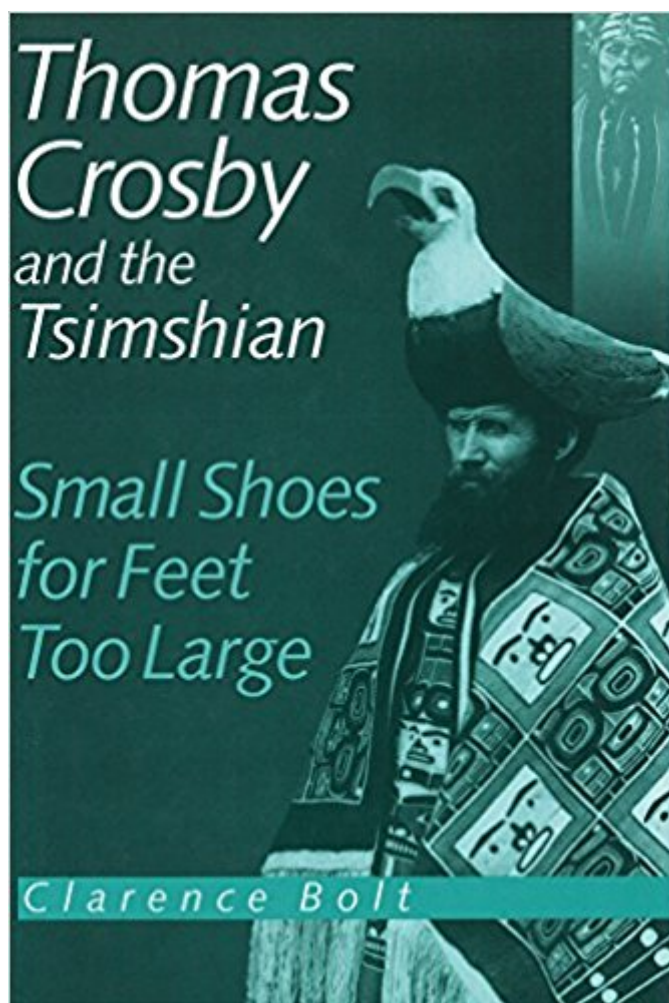


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Thomas Crosby And The Tsimshian: Small Shoes For Feet Too Large



Synopsis

When the Methodist missionary Thomas Crosby arrived in Port Simpson in northwestern British Columbia in 1874, he did so at the invitation of the Tsimshian people. Earlier contact with the Anglican missionary William Duncan had convinced them that, although many aspects of his mission program were appealing, his brand of religion was too austere. Instead they preferred the more expressive version represented by the Methodist Church. In *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian*, Clarence Bolt demonstrates that Natives were conscious participants in the acculturation and conversion process--as long as this met their goals--and not merely passive recipients. In order to understand the complexities of Native-European contacts, he argues, one must look at the reasons for Native, as well as for European, behaviour. He points out that Natives actively influenced the manner in which their relationships with the White population developed, often resulting in a complex interaction in which the values of both groups affected each other. As long as the conversion process unfolded as they wished, the Tsimshian supported their missionary. Over time, especially with regard to the land question, they realized that both missionaries and government officials were attempting to impose their restrictive visions rather than respecting Tsimshian concerns and goals. As one Tsimshian observed about the implications of accepting federal policy: "It would be like trying to put a small pair of shoes on feet too large for them. It would cramp our feet and prevent us from walking as fast as we did without such regulations." Missionary policy was no different. This book is unique in that it examines the functioning of two missions to the same people in a single locale, demonstrating how a particular Native group tried to protect its traditional land resource while at the same time seeking participating in the emerging White society of nineteenth-century British Columbia.

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Customer Reviews

Explains how the Tsimshian people of northwest British Columbia took an active part in their contact with European society in the later 19th century, rejecting one missionary and requesting another, shaping their acculturation to further their own interest, and resisting it when it did not. (University Press Book News)

When the Methodist missionary Thomas Crosby arrived in Port Simpson in northwestern British Columbia in 1874, he did so at the invitation of the Tsimshian people. Earlier contact with the Anglican missionary William Duncan had convinced them that, although many aspects of his mission program were appealing, his brand of religion was too austere. Instead they preferred the more expressive version represented by the Methodist church. Realizing that it was in their interest to fit into the broader context of Canadian life, as they perceived it, the Tsimshian made the decision to ask the Methodist church for a missionary. In *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large*, Clarence Bolt demonstrates that the Indians were conscious participants in the acculturation and conversion process -- as long as this met their goals -- and not merely passive receivers of the blessings as typically reported by the missionaries. In order to understand the complexities of Indian-European contact, Bolt argues, one must look at the reasons for the Indians' behaviour as well as those of the Europeans. He points out that the Indians actively influenced the manner in which their relationships with the white population developed, often resulting in a complex interaction in which the values of both groups rubbed off on each other. As long as the conversion process unfolded as they wished, the Tsimshian supported their missionary. Once they realized, however, that the church could not solve such issues as the land questions and their increasing difficulty with paternalistic governments, they moved away from Crosby. *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large* is unique as it examines the functioning of two missions to the same people in a single locale, demonstrating how a particular Indian group tried to protect its traditional land resource while at the same time seeking participation in the emerging white society of nineteenth-century British Columbia. Based on insights into the interaction between the Native population and the missionaries, Bolt, in the final part of the book, suggests a model for a better understanding of the interaction between European and Native cultures.

Bolt concentrates on the sociology of Indian-White relations, arguing Crosby's paternalism was not mainly to blame for the decline of his world-famous Port Simpson mission. The Tsimshian simply realized they weren't getting what they bargained for. (BC Bookworld, Spring 1993 1993-01-01)

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