

Review by The Pacific Circle Bulletin No. 11

Summing Up: A monumental and now indispensable work. Astonishingly comprehensive and impressively authoritative.

Raymond John Howgego. **Encyclopedia of exploration to 1800: a comprehensive reference guide to the history and literature of exploration, travel and colonization from the earliest times to the year 1800.** Potts Point [Sydney], New South Wales: Hordern House, 2003. Pp. xv + 1168. Bibliography and index. Cloth: AU\$295 and US\$195. ISBN 1-875567-36-3.

At a time when university courses on vanished empires enjoy renewed popularity, reflections on neo-imperial expansion preoccupy the news media, and publishers pour forth a stream of popular books on exploration and discovery, how odd that we lacked a thoroughly encyclopedic treatment of a subject so central to the creation of our modern world. However, thanks to the labors of Raymond John Howgego, we lack one no longer. The fruit of a lifetime of study and travel, as well as fifteen years' work, his *Encyclopedia of Exploration to 1800* is both astonishingly comprehensive and impressively authoritative.

Dwarfing other recent compilations, such as those by Delpar (1980), Bohlander (1992), Waldman and Sexler (1992), and Baker (1993), which contain a mere 250-350 entries, in this, his first volume, Howgego provides 2,327 alphabetically arranged articles, both biographical and topical, which also include multilingual bibliographies of primary and secondary sources, amounting to some 20,000 citations, and 4,000 very useful cross references.

The latter enable readers to trace connections among people, places, and themes. Major explorers who undertook "distinct and discontinuous" expeditions are accorded separate, consecutive entries - five each for Champlain, Columbus, Dampier, and Davis, four for Cook, and three for Cartier and Frobisher - an organizational device which lends greater clarity to their exploits.

While by its very nature such a work may appear Eurocentric, with a preponderance of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French explorers, the author's scope is cosmopolitan, and includes numerous entries for Arab and Chinese voyagers and travel writers. The chronological coverage spans the Ancient and Medieval worlds - despite a frequent lack of detail - through the Renaissance and Early Modern eras. Explorers who set out prior to 1800/01, but continued into the nineteenth century (eg. Humboldt and Bonpland) are fully described. Some apocryphal travel accounts are also included, along with a separate article devoted to "Fictitious Voyages". One totally fictitious biographical entry has been constructed to test the wits of readers; the first to identify it may claim the publisher's prize of a case of champagne.

Howgego's entries often go beyond the presentation of bare facts, and include sound and most welcome interpretation. The indexes of people and of ships - approximately 7,500 entries - are comprehensive. Yet the book lacks a geographical index, despite geographical subject headings attached to each article, which would have made one easy to compile, and thus link all explorers of a given region. Nor is there an index for place-of-birth/nationality. The author's treatment of such issues as old style versus new style dating, as well as the forms of foreign names and titles is generally sound. Nonetheless, his orthographic purity is inconsistent in the transliteration of names from non-Roman scripts (Arabic and Cyrillic). Some compensation is provided by the frequent indication of variant forms, such as offering Wade-Giles and Pin Yin versions of Chinese names, and indexing Nordic names under both forenames and patronyms, though not without inconsistencies. Leif and Thorvald, sons of "Eriki Raudi" (a.k.a. "Eric the Red") appear in the introduction as "Eirikson", and in the indexes as both "Eiriksson" and "Eirikkson". Similarly, William Baffin's death is misdated, and Luke Foxe did not, as claimed, sail on John Knight's 1606 voyage. But it is churlish to cavil over mere blemishes; whenever otherwise put to the test, the work exhibited an all-but-unshakeable accuracy of detail, as well as a refreshing dearth of typos.

A handsome, even sumptuously printed and bound, quarto-size volume, the layout and typography are clean and reader-friendly. Despite its steep price, it represents excellent value for the money. All of us who have dreamed of finding, or even of creating, the ultimate reference book in the field of exploration, should find Howgego's monumental and now indispensable work as close to ideal as we are ever likely to encounter, let alone produce. Now we eagerly await the publication of his promised second volume, covering 1800-1850.

Merrill Distad, University of Alberta