

of the harsh realities that the author faced in making this expedition successful. It is written for the layman and would also be enjoyed by young readers. What makes reading a challenge is the lack of accurate maps. The maps throughout the book, copies of the originals, are in French and very difficult to follow. A series of up-to-date maps, on which readers could locate the many place names used by the author, would make the story even more compelling.

Apart from the map problem, this book is an excellent read for the general reader, as well as for those interested in polar history.

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ACROSS ARCTIC AMERICA: NARRATIVE OF THE FIFTH THULE EXPEDITION. By KNUD RASMUSSEN, with an introduction by TERRENCE COLE. Classic Reprint Series No. 6. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press, 1999. (Originally published in 1927.) ISBN 0-912006-94-3. 415 p., maps, plates, index. Hardbound, US\$34.95; Softbound, US\$24.95.

Between 1921 and 1924, Knud Rasmussen led a small band of colleagues in a journey of investigation across arctic North America, from Hudson Bay to the Bering Strait. The full scientific report of the Fifth Thule Expedition, as it was called, fills ten volumes. This single volume, *Across Arctic America*, is Rasmussen's own reworking and condensation of the larger series and gives the essence of the Arctic and its people.

In his introduction, Terrence Cole says, "On his journeys Rasmussen explored both the visible world of ice and snow and the invisible world of mind and spirit, recording an incomparable wealth of data about Eskimo intellectual and spiritual life" (p. xi). Rasmussen's basic principle in his work was to "earn the trust of local people by showing understanding and patience: living with the people and not apart from them, sharing their work and their food, even when it was not the most palatable" (p. xvii). The expedition name "Thule" was derived from "the legendary name of Thule, after the mystical land that the ancients believed was the end of the earth" (p. xx).

The story of Rasmussen's journey from region to region and from tribe to tribe becomes rather philosophical as he compares and contrasts what he finds with his own experiences and those of his colleagues. Throughout the book, he tells of finding the local *angakoq*, an older person bequeathed with a sort of mystical and religious quality that made him the center of all meaning and practice in each community. It is the business of the *angakoq* to protect, to heal, to intercede, to oversee observance of traditional customs and taboos, and to administer justice. Rasmussen describes each *angakoq* charmingly in con-

crete terms, including his living quarters, charms, amulets, and bracelets, as well as his power and influence (his place in totemism) in his community.

What is death? What is life? What are the taboos that govern life? What are the roles of men and women in each community? What are the laws of survival? What are the fears that haunt the people? How do the forces of nature and weather influence life? With these fundamental questions, Rasmussen engages his *angakoqs* and records their wisdom for us. Through their stories, songs, games, laughter, and legends, Rasmussen explores the customs and ways of these people as he weaves from western Greenland to the eastern ports of Siberia. These accounts, often similar in story and meaning, make delightful reading.

Of particular interest was the chapter entitled "From Starvation to Savagery." Each group of people had different survival methods, based on the lay of the land, the climate, the types of animals, the size of the group, and its ability to wander. In this chapter, the Netsilingmiut people are described at the extremes, in times of plenty and times of starvation. Rasmussen says, "life is thus an almost uninterrupted struggle for bare existence, and periods of dearth and actual starvation are not infrequent" (p. 223). He then explores cannibalism in the light of the above questions posed to the *angakoqs*, and asks further: Who is sacrificed? Where does suicide enter the picture? Why not infanticide? What is the importance of amulets? His summation:

My own experiences in these particular regions have convinced me that the white man, though bringing certain perils in his train does nevertheless introduce a gentler code, and in many ways lightens the struggle for existence.... On the other hand, one must not judge these children of nature too harshly. They are, in fact, still in but an early stage of evolution as human beings. And we should bear in mind that life in these inhospitable regions, exposed to the cruellest conditions and ever on the verge of extermination is not conducive to excessive gentleness. (p. 236)

The short chapter entitled "Belated Honors" is an interesting supplement to the history of the John Franklin expedition. Although 75 years had passed since Franklin's death, Rasmussen heard several stories of encounters with the expedition that seemed still fresh in memory. Sitting on King William Island, where many of Franklin's men died, he listened to the stories, saw material remains of the British expedition, and paid tribute:

Here on this lonely spit of land, weary men had toiled along the last stage of their mortal journey. Their tracks are not effaced, as long as others live to follow and carry them farther; their work lives as long as any region of the globe remains for men to find and conquer. (p. 241)

The similarity in the stories from east to west is what strikes Rasmussen most. The characters may change, the

plot may vary, but the essence is the same in many of the regions he visits. The reader must envision Rasmussen recording stories as unobtrusively as possible as he sat perched on skins inside a steamy hut or clammy igloo, inhaling the aroma of smoke and sweat, and tasting all manner of strange foods. As Terrence Cole remarks, “the intellectual and spiritual life of the people themselves were his primary interests, not simple geographical discovery, and thus even when following the tracks of previous explorers, he found uncharted territory” (back cover). The whole three-year expedition is best summed up in Rasmussen’s own words: “It is good sometimes to feel the power of Nature over one. You bend in silence and accept the beauty without words” (p. xvi).

I highly recommend this book to any person with a love for the Arctic. It engages the most casual reader in the stark realities of the polar regions, the harshness amidst the romance.

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ANCIENT HARPOON HEADS OF NUNAVUT: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE. By ROBERT W. PARK and DOUGLAS R. STENTON. Pangnirtung, Nunavut: Parks Canada, 1998. Text in English and Inuktitut syllabics. 108 p., map, b&w illus. Softbound. Cdn\$20.00

ANCIENT STONE TOOLS OF NUNAVUT: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE. By DOUGLAS R. STENTON and ROBERT W. PARK. Pangnirtung, Nunavut: Parks Canada, 1998. 118 p., maps, b&w illus. Softbound. Cdn\$20.00.

The foundation of modern archaeology rests on the scientific approach to data retrieval and analysis. Having completed an excavation, following precisely formulated procedures and methodologies, the archaeologist is faced with the equally important task of analyzing the data. Most often, two questions must be answered before further cultural insights can be gained from the material on hand: approximately when was the archaeological site occupied, and by whom? During the past 80 years of field research, Arctic archaeologists have gathered enough evidence to put together a picture of the many cultural developments that have occurred in the Arctic during the past 4500 years. Although this picture is far from (and may never be) complete, the major pieces of the cultural puzzle are in place, and the most important or diagnostic artifacts have been identified. Diagnostic artifacts are those whose shape and method of manufacture gradually change through time in such a way that a particular version or type reflects not only a specific cultural episode, but also the temporal stages within such a period. In other words, diagnostic artifacts are prehistoric time markers.

The first of the two books, *Ancient Harpoon Heads of Nunavut*, appropriately presents an illustrated sequence of one of the most important diagnostic artifacts for archaeological analysis. The first part of the book describes and illustrates harpoon technology, which incorporates a number of elements such as a throwing shaft, foreshaft, finger rest, line and often an ice pick. English and Inuktitut terms for the different elements of the harpoon are presented, along with a very brief description of different sea mammal-hunting methods. An equally brief summation of Nunavut Palaeo- and Neoeskimo prehistory follows, accompanied by a chart showing temporal changes in harpoon head styles during the past 4200 years.

These brief introductory remarks and illustrations are followed by a more in-depth description of harpoon heads under the heading “Harpoon Heads and Arctic Archaeology.” Perhaps a more appropriate heading would have been “Harpoon Head Attributes,” since the section describes material, metric, functional, stylistic, and symbolic attributes of harpoon heads. The “attribute” section is an illustrated description of some of the common types of harpoon heads from archaeological sites in Nunavut. The authors correctly point out that the harpoon head types shown are by no means an exhaustive listing, but rather a sampling of known types within Nunavut. The English section ends with a brief paragraph about harpoon heads today, a statement about the importance of protecting the Nunavut archaeological heritage, and a guide to further reading and cultural organizations. The second half of the guidebook is a translation of the first half into Inuktitut, written in the eastern Arctic syllabic script.

As a companion volume to the harpoon head book, *Ancient Stone Tools of Nunavut: An Illustrated Guide* deals with prehistoric stone tools found on archaeological sites in Nunavut. After a brief introduction, the authors present a short synopsis of Nunavut prehistory illustrated by a chart depicting the temporal sequence of prehistoric periods, including Independence I, Pre-Dorset, and various stages of Dorset and Thule cultures. The presentation of different types of tools is preceded by a discussion of the importance of stone tools in the interpretation of human activities on a given site in a given region, and by a description of raw lithic materials used by ancient toolmakers. In many instances, stone tool fragments and debitage are the only cultural elements that the inhabitants left behind on a site, or that have survived the ravages of time. The description of raw materials leads the reader to a discussion of the manufacturing techniques of stone tools and includes terms used both in English and in Inuktitut for the different attributes, such as ventral and dorsal sides of flakes, or percussion and pressure flaking techniques. These lithic attributes are the elements used to classify stone tools into useful categories for site analysis. Attributes, typologies, and debitage analysis are presented in a discussion about how archaeologists use such data to reconstruct the lives of prehistoric peoples. Drawings illustrating the distribution of lithics within excavated