

**THE CIRCUMPOLAR INUIT: HEALTH OF A POPULATION IN TRANSITION.** By PETER BJERREGAARD and T. KUE YOUNG. Copenhagen, Denmark: Munksgaard International Publishers Ltd., 1998. ISBN 87-16-11905-3. 287 p., maps, b&w illus., bib., appendix, index. Hardbound. DKK 300.00 + VAT.

The authors preface their work with a clear statement of purpose: "To describe the current changing health patterns in the Inuit communities of Greenland, northern Canada, Alaska, and Chukotka (Russia) from a public health point of view." In this endeavor they have succeeded admirably, putting together a readable and well-researched compendium of information about the health of Inuit across the Arctic.

Peter Bjerregaard and T. Kue Young are both physicians with immense experience in the special health problems of northern indigenous peoples. Bjerregaard has worked extensively in Greenland under the auspices of the Danish Institute for Clinical Epidemiology (Copenhagen), while Young is affiliated with the Northern Health Unit at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg and works especially in the Keewatin District. Both have published widely in the medical literature and are senior editors of the *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*. Each, moreover, has played a key leadership role in the work of the International Union for Circumpolar Health. I can think of no individuals better qualified to undertake such a task.

The book is divided broadly into three parts, followed by the authors' conclusions. Part I provides a basic introduction to the history and culture of the Inuit, with special emphasis on the health consequences of contact and the beginnings of health services in the North. Next are a brief demographic summary of the population and a discussion of the broad health picture and modern epidemiological trends. Central to the authors' argument are the general similarities in health patterns of the Inuit across the Arctic, but also the marked changes in health status that have emerged and are emerging over time as a result of rapid change in nearly every aspect of their lives.

Part II of the book reviews in greater detail the literature on disease patterns among the Inuit, with emphasis on pregnancy and the life cycle, infectious diseases, chronic diseases, injuries, and mental health. For each major topic, the authors discuss and assess the available medical and scientific information, bringing to bear studies from each of the major geographical regions of the Arctic where Inuit live. Since the studies cited vary in quality and methodology and were conducted under differing political and social conditions, direct comparisons among regions are rarely appropriate. The authors are careful to avoid such pitfalls, but they still are able to detect clear trends, particularly the rapid transition from infectious diseases (especially tuberculosis) to the chronic diseases resulting from adopting the diet, behavior, and lifestyles of the lower latitudes as causes of morbidity and mortality.

Part III, entitled "Determinants of Health," is in many ways the most original and useful part of the book. Here the authors describe at some length how the distinctive cultural, behavioral, geographical, social, environmental, and economic conditions of the people in their arctic homeland determine their health status. Of special interest is the chapter on the environment, which discusses not only the usual housing, water, and sanitation issues of the Arctic, but also some of the problems relating to chemical contaminants and pollution that have resulted from some ill-advised industrial enterprises in the North. This section of the book also summarizes well some of the lifestyle and behavioral issues of a people in rapid cultural transition, including excessive tobacco use, a "westernized" diet high in carbohydrates and saturated fats, declining levels of physical activity, and patterns of sexual behavior. The concluding chapter of Part III discusses the distinctive genetic and biological factors that relate to a number of unusual health conditions found among the Inuit.

The summary and conclusions chapter, which comprises Part IV, effectively brings together the major themes of the book. The authors end by outlining some of the special problems that face the biomedical researcher of today in conducting studies in northern communities. The environment for research has changed radically in the past few decades. No longer can a team of faceless scientists fly in, draw blood from everyone in sight, and then fly out, never to be heard from again. The Inuit themselves are now rightly requiring a full statement of research purpose, clear relevance to their needs, the freedom of individuals to participate or not, and the prompt sharing of results. Such an approach, of course, is long overdue.

Despite the clear similarities in health status across the Arctic, most of which (as the book sets forth) may be attributed to common climatic, geographical, environmental, social, economic, cultural, and even genetic factors, important regional differences remain. The available health services, for instance, vary considerably in scope, accessibility, and intensity, as does the use of indigenous practitioners. Distances between settlements as a rule are considerably greater in Canada, than, say, in Western Alaska or Chukotka. Indigenous political organization in the various groups also shows major differences in degree and extent. In Alaska, for example, all health services for the Inuit, even the central referral hospital in Anchorage, are now entirely under the management and policy control of the Native people themselves (a point unfortunately omitted from the book). The extent of "separateness" of the Inuit from regional or national government also varies considerably across the Arctic. Perhaps most significant, from the point of view of this book, are the differing priorities and methods of the research agencies in the four countries discussed. The resulting gaps in regional information prevent direct comparison of findings from different regions.

The book is solidly bound and printed on paper of good quality. The scientific tables and figures are of excellent

design and easy to understand. The photographs are clearly reproduced, although sometimes the placement of the pictures is not well harmonized with the relevant text. The bibliography is by itself a useful compendium of the biomedical scientific literature on the health problems of the Inuit. I found very few typographical errors and only a handful of minor factual errors.

This book currently has no peers in its field. No other single work examines the health situation of the Inuit from such a sweeping historical, cultural, or geographical perspective. Since the book is published in Europe, it will not be easily available and thus widely read in North America. This is unfortunate, since it would be of significant value for the orientation of physicians and other health practitioners who are embarking on clinical assignments in the Arctic regions of Alaska and Canada.

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FROM MIDDLE AGES TO COLONIAL TIMES: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ETHNOHISTORICAL STUDIES OF THE THULE CULTURE IN SOUTH WEST GREENLAND 1300–1800 A.D. By HANS CHRISTIAN GULLØV. Copenhagen: The Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland, 1997. Meddelelser om Grønland, Man & Society 23. 501 p., maps, drawings, b&w illus., bib., appendix. Hardbound. DKK 500.00 + VAT.

In this ambitious volume, Hans Christian Gulløv presents archaeological and ethnographic data that span the entire culture history of Greenland from the arrival of the Thule people until the middle of the 18th century, by which time their descendants were known simply as Greenlanders. Most of the archaeological data described in detail derive from the 17th and 18th centuries in southwest Greenland, but in his analysis Gulløv also draws heavily on previously published data from throughout Greenland and Arctic Canada.

In the first chapter, Gulløv summarizes what he identifies as the prevailing model of Greenland Thule culture history. Beginning in northwest Greenland, Thule spread around the island in both directions. The expansion along the west coast entered southwest Greenland in the 15th century, following the depopulation of the Norse settlements there, and then advanced northward along the east coast. Another expansion took place eastward, around the north coast of Greenland. The two Thule populations ultimately met in northeast Greenland in the 16th century. Gulløv then cites linguistic and archaeological evidence suggesting that this simple model is inadequate, and that a more complex series of population movements and interactions must be invoked to explain the Thule history of Greenland.

Chapters 2 and 3 summarize the Godthåb District archaeological data that lie at the heart of this research, drawing upon ethnographic sources for comparisons and elucidation. Chapter 2 focuses on the architectural data, with the goal of determining the origin of the most characteristic type of Greenlandic winter structure, the communal house. Chapter 3 presents detailed descriptions of the artifacts from these excavations, including their distribution within houses. These chapters are liberally provided with excavation plans and excellent line drawings of artifacts. Chapter 4, devoted to ethnohistory, draws upon missionaries' accounts, oral histories, and genealogies to document the patterns of travel and trade undertaken by different groups of Greenlanders, as well as the nature of their trade relations with Europeans in the late 17th and 18th centuries.

In the final three chapters of the monograph, Gulløv attempts to reconstruct the culture history of Thule in Greenland on the basis of the information in the preceding chapters and a complex analysis of harpoon head styles in Greenland, Arctic Canada, and Alaska. The use of harpoon heads as cultural markers has a long history in Arctic archaeology, but Gulløv takes a more explicitly theoretical, cognitive approach:

The harpoon head is here seen as a cultural symbol which tells of time and space, a concept in Greenlandic called *piffik*, i.e., a time or place to do something....When I enquire about “the subjective meanings in the minds of people long dead” (Hodder 1986) I am at the same time enquiring about the meaning of the chosen code in the archaeological object. This enquiry is met by an analysis of the semiotic relationship between the primary symbol (e.g., the harpoon head), the object (e.g., the form of the harpoon head) and the interpreter (e.g., the hunter). It is in the last relationship, where the hunter interprets the meaning of the object and thereby uncovers the code, that the contents of the expression *piffik* emerges. It may contain a religious relationship (the connection with the Sea Woman), an aesthetic expression (decoration) or social circumstances (group identity/owner's mark). In my interpretation of the archaeological object I demonstrate either cultural contact or a cultural tradition, for which I find evidence in South West Greenland's ethnohistory. (p. 29)

On the basis of his analysis of harpoon head styles and a very few other kinds of evidence, Gulløv concludes that “parallel traditions” of discrete harpoon head types existed in Greenland prior to the 17th–18th centuries. Subsequently, these discrete types became “diffuse” and were “replaced by hybrids” as a result of “trade, cultural contacts and altered settlement patterns” (p. 474). It is not entirely clear to me whether and to what extent Gulløv sees these “parallel traditions” as distinct cultural entities, or whether they represent powerful, long-lived cultural symbols that co-existed within individual social groups and