

INUIT ADOPTION. By LEE GUEMPLE. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1979. (National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper no. 47). 131 pages. No price indicated.

This monograph fills a long existing gap in Eskimo studies. There have been many references to adoption in the literature on the Inuit but few detailed or systematic studies of that practice in the Arctic. Dr. Guemple addresses himself to the difficult dual task of reaching an audience of both professional anthropologists and interested and concerned general readers. Except in the final chapter, where he deals explicitly with problems of concern mainly to social anthropologists, he succeeds admirably in this aim.

The study combines a careful collation of published source material on Inuit adoption with a rich mixture of observational data based on field work on both sides of Hudson Bay. In the beginning the author wrestles with the problem of defining adoption, taking into account both western conceptions of the practice and Eskimo perceptions, and resolves the apparent dilemma with a pragmatic definition that serves well throughout the monograph.

The second chapter, which deals with traditional Inuit adoption, treats such aspects as time of adoption, associated gift-giving, jural status of adoptees, and motives for both donor and recipient families. This section is comprehensive except that I would have liked to have had more discussion of the probable elements of reciprocity in adoption transactions and the role of claims by kindred.

The chapter on adoption of older Inuit is especially interesting because this aspect of Eskimo adoption seldom has been emphasized or even mentioned in the existing literature. While adoption of post-infancy children and adolescents, especially of orphans, is observed fairly often over much of the Eskimo area, the practice of fostering adult Eskimos and recognizing their status by the same term (*tiguaq*) as adopted children appears to have a regional emphasis. Neither the sources from other regions nor Guemple's material from the west side of Hudson Bay produce examples of this practice which he reports for the east coast of the bay.

Problems of changing adoption customs in the Arctic concern the author in the fourth chapter. He considers the role of absenteeism at hospitals in the south, changing economic conditions, and the role of illegitimacy which

has acquired new significance under the pressure of white attitudes. The changing rate of adoption in various communities is recognized and critically evaluated. In this respect I would have liked to have read more regarding the probable effects of the decline in efficacy of kinship claims in adoption, a factor which the author mentions but does not explore, and more discussion on the effects of booming birth and survival rates on adoption rates. However, Guemple does consider questions of demography in more detail in the concluding chapter where he (after J. Rousseau) criticizes the ecological or economic aspects of Dunning's *demographic hypothesis*. While the arguments in rebuttal of Dunning have force, I would note also that the bare facts of changing demography must have impact on the rates of adoption. Thus with swelling family size, rarity of apparent sterility, and the disappearance of infanticide, pressures on donors will decrease except, perhaps, in the case of grandparental adoptions. These and other problems of changing adoption practices in the Arctic represent the more researchable areas of Eskimo adoption at the present time.

The final chapter also presents a refreshingly objective appraisal of a rather esoteric social anthropological dialogue between "genealogists" and "symbolists" regarding the nature of kinship. Guemple concludes the book with a statement about the nature of social rules that is deeply rooted in the highly empirical experience of an Arctic field worker and puts the preceding theoretical discussion into an appropriately realistic perspective.

Barring a very few formal errors, the book is well and interestingly written and will be a useful addition to the library of Arctic anthropologists, and will reach a larger audience as well. Among its uses, it may well serve as a reference work for legal disputes which concern interpretations of Inuit adoption practices.

REFERENCES

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- DUNNING, R.W. 1962. A note on adoption among the Southampton Island Eskimo. *Man* (n.s.) 62:163-167.

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