were exchanged independently and intact through various processes of diffusion. I believe that both processes underlie his ultimate interpretation, which he illustrates in a series of complex figures that show the distribution of the harpoon head types within Greenland and map at least four paths of these traditions into and around Greenland.

This work is the author’s Ph.D. dissertation, and it exhibits some of the strengths and weaknesses characteristic of such documents. One of its real strengths is massive scope; it tries to integrate diverse lines of complex and often confusing evidence into a unified whole. However, this monograph occasionally displays an uneasy blend of theory and description, also characteristic of dissertations. The above quotation concerning harpoon heads, as well as a more lengthy discussion in chapter 6, seem to represent the philosophy behind his interpretation rather than an exposition of the method used to identify the “parallel traditions.” Certainly he does not explain how to determine independently which of the several possible “meanings” is responsible for the shape of any given harpoon head type.

On the basis of my own interests and research, I find Gulløv’s treatment of two topics unconvincing. Part of his thesis is that one of the “parallel traditions” derived from contact between people of the Thule and Dorset cultures. I have elsewhere argued that the preponderance of evidence, including harpoon head styles and radiocarbon dates, does not provide convincing proof for such culture contact (Park, 1993). There is no need to repeat those arguments here, but I am no longer alone in questioning at least some of the commonly cited evidence for Dorset-Thule contact (Kleivan, 1996).

I am also concerned with Gulløv’s reliance on problematic radiocarbon dates, especially since chronology is important to many of his conclusions. Many of the excavations were carried out years ago, and therefore some of the radiocarbon dates reported here were also obtained quite a while ago. However, I am unconvinced that dates run on turf (or “turf containing blubber from slag horizon,” p. 88) or on marine materials (including harp seal and guillemot bones, walrus ivory, and baleen) provide any useful chronological information. Rather than listing all the objections to the use of such materials, especially those from migratory sea mammals, I will simply cite Tuck and McGhee’s (1983) excellent discussion on the topic. In addition to drawing heavily on such suspect radiocarbon dates, Gulløv elsewhere rejects at least one date run on wood because it “seems too early” (p. 450). He also reinterprets the impressively tight cluster of dates obtained by McCullough (1989) on Ruin Island phase sites. He claims that, rather than reflecting a relatively brief phenomenon in the late 12th or early 13th century, these dates indicate that Ruin Island lasted from the 13th through the 15th century (p. 453).

Despite such criticisms, this volume deserves a place on the shelves of scholars interested in the prehistory and history of Greenland. The excellent illustrations include numerous line drawings of representative artifacts (often with multiple views or profiles). The occasional awkward sentence makes one aware that this work has been translated from Danish, but overall the writing is clear. One editorial deficiency, however, is the absence of an index in a work of this size and complexity. Several important topics are dealt with in multiple locations within the work, a fact not readily evident in the table of contents.

REFERENCES


KLEIVAN, I. 1996. Inuit oral tradition about Tunit in Greenland.


The question that arises most often is the meaning of the terms Independence I and II, Saqqaq, and Pre-Dorset. Do these represent distinct cultures, regional variants of one culture, or neither? What are more important, their obvious similarities or their evident differences? And what do these differences mean? Appelt addresses this issue most forcefully, making a case for Saqqaq as a culture distinct from other Paleo-Eskimo manifestations. Susan Rowley, working with a large amount of diverse material from Igloolik, takes the opposite position, following Helmer (1994) in identifying all of these as part of the Pre-Dorset Initial Horizon. What is lacking here is any consideration of what either of these positions means in cultural terms. One difficulty in resolving this issue, of course, is the lack of large, stratified, early sites with good preservation in the Canadian Arctic to compare with those in Greenland.

Grønnow, M. Meldgaard and Møbjerg all present material from such sites in Greenland, enriching our understanding of the early inhabitants of Greenland and arousing the envy of those of us working in less productive regions. By comparing their Saqqaq material with material from far-flung sites in other parts of the Arctic, Grønnow and Møbjerg seem to be supporting the idea that Saqqaq culture is a regional variation of a more general Pre-Dorset culture. Harp, in his description of early finds on Belcher Islands, also seems to support this idea, although he does not address the question directly. Andersen contributes to the debate by identifying Pre-Dorset and Dorset as useful general terms, reserving the others for more specific manifestations. Describing finds from the recent NEWland Project in Northeast Greenland, he makes a tentative case for two groups coexisting for a time in parts of Northeast Greenland, one a regional variant of Peary Land Independence II, the other possibly an Early Dorset group moving in.

Another major issue in Arctic prehistory is the question of transitions and contact: the Pre-Dorset to Dorset transition, the Dorset to Thule transition, and Norse-Thule contact. The late Moreau Maxwell addressed the first of these, citing a variety of evidence to support the idea of a transitional culture between the Pre-Dorset and Dorset, to be identified either as “Transition” or as “Groswater.” Susan Rowley applies data from Igloolik to this question, pointing out that new data show the transition to have been less abrupt than Meldgaard initially thought. There is great potential here for enterprising researchers to take up this question and begin to clarify this whole period.

The Dorset period is less well represented here. Sutherland makes a convincing case for deconstructing the long-held belief of uniformity in Dorset art in favor of a more nuanced view of considerable diversity, based not only on time and space, but also on context. Returning to Meldgaard’s idea that there is a “smell of the forest” about the Dorset, Petersen makes a less convincing case, linking Greenlandic myths (assumed to be relics of early Dorset myths) with themes in Northwest Coast and early Boreal forest mythology.

Typically, the Dorset to Thule transition receives more attention than the Dorset Culture itself. The three authors (Gulløv, McGhee, and Plumet) who address this issue all suggest that Dorset people did indeed encounter early Thule immigrants. In a direct critique of Park (1993), who argued that the Dorset Culture had disappeared before Thule peoples arrived in the Canadian Arctic, McGhee makes the strongest case, based on his work at Broom Point. Gulløv’s case, based on the symbolic meaning of harpoon heads in times of hunting stress, will not convince anyone looking for a “smoking gun,” but has the appeal of an argument based on Inuit cultural values. In describing archaeological research at Kangirsujuaq, Plumet reiterates his conviction that this is a rich area for an in-depth study of this issue.

The question of Norse-Thule contact is addressed in Arneborg’s summary of known instances of contact. Her discussion of social reasons why such contact should have had limited impact on the cultures involved might profitably be applied to the Dorset/Thule debate (as is done in

The Iñupiaq Eskimo Nations of Northwest Alaska is the first of at least three volumes by Ernest S. Burch, Jr. on Northwest Alaskan Iñupiaq culture, the result of more than three decades of research in that region. In this book, Burch presents data on the individual “Nations” that inhabited the region before the twentieth century. Later publications will describe the internal workings of Northwest Alaskan groups and their external relationships. Burch sets forth two goals in producing this valuable addition to Arctic anthropology. The first is to present a comprehensive view of the subsistence and settlement of 11 Iñupiaq Nations that inhabited Northwest Alaska before the end of the 19th century. The second is to use those data to support his cellular (read societal or tribal) model of Iñupiaq social...