

## Recensions - Book Reviews

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*Point Hope: An Eskimo Village in Transition.* J.W. VANSTONE. The American Ethnological Society. University of Washington Press, 1962. x, 177 pp. \$5.25.

The book consists of a compact community study of Tigara village at Point Hope, Alaska, based on a year's residence beginning in September, 1955. A factual summary of the geography and history of the area includes mention of the adjacent archaeological site which produced the well-known remains of Ipiutak culture. Then the usual categories of culture are covered, from food through religion, with the expected emphasis on subsistence activities. A final ten pages is devoted to conclusions and "the village of tomorrow". There is a nominal index, and twelve pages of plates besides three maps and three figures.

Previous to the publication of this monograph, two remarkable studies of communities in northwest Alaska had already appeared, and a comparison of certain points shows how different such works can be. In 1933, Robert Marshall published his volume on Wiseman. (*Arctic Village*. New York, 1933). He offers no rationalization for his intellectual curiosity about the people of the upper Koyukuk River area, unless it is to verify his impression that they are exceptionally happy. His method was that of a participant-observer who did a great deal of verbatim reporting of what was publicly said. He also spent several hundred hours in private with his informants, a group into which he obviously tried to draw everyone (p. 6). He presents an intimate and personal account which never loses touch with the human beings about whom he writes with unsurpassed sympathy and frankness. His volume also contains the best photographic illustrations.

Charles Hughes in a volume on Gambell village devotes many pages to a resumé of the "psychobiological" approach which he says lies in the foreground of his attack on the problem of sociocultural change (HUGHES, C.C. with J.M. HUGHES. *An Eskimo Village in the Modern World*. Ithaca, N.Y. 1960. p. 34). The Hughes used sixteen principal key informants and ten secondary ones, carrying their typewriters into the people's homes and amassing what may be a record in the volume of notes for a single year of such research (pp. 24-26). They are sociologically and exactly normative in utilizing their great amount of data, and they bring into sharp contrast the Eskimo ways of life on St. Lawrence Island in 1940 and in 1956.

James VanStone states that his study is "functional and acculturational rather than historical" (p. 4). He seems to have been relatively informal in his research, relying mainly on "participant observation" and using a

small notebook for information which at convenient times he transferred to punch cards (p. 6). The over-all impression of his work is one of an ethnography, and a reconstruction at that. He does not achieve his intention of producing a functional and acculturational study or, at least he does not achieve it very well. Indeed, on occasions, it is difficult to know exactly what period VanStone is referring to. His account for the most part comprises impersonal, objective generalizations about the culture, although individuals are mentioned. The information is interesting, and we can only regret that there is not a great deal more of it.

To conclude our comparison, we would say that VanStone has given us the broadest range of cultural data, while the Hughes have demonstrated a new and intellectually sophisticated technique. As for Marshall's *Arctic Village*, although unlisted in the bibliographies of either the Hughes or VanStone, anyone might be proud to have written it. Together, the three volumes are invaluable to the anthropologist concerned with the methodology of the community study, and certainly no less so to the non-professional reader who wishes to learn about present day Eskimo culture in Alaska. To the latter, we would recommend enjoying first the simple and broadly instructive work of VanStone.

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*Artists of the Tundra and the Sea.* Dorothy Jean RAY. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961. XII, 170 pp., 113 ill. \$5.75.

One of the most persistent characteristics of Eskimo material culture has been the technological skill with which objects were fashioned. The Eskimos justifiably are ranked as outstanding craftsmen among primitive men. An inventory of Eskimo artifacts inevitably leads to mention of ivory working abilities, and nowhere in the Arctic has it greater antiquity and sophistication than among the inhabitants of the Bering Strait region. Here the tradition of working ivory is as old as clearly identifiable Eskimo culture, and here it continues most persistently today. A book on Eskimo ivory work is a welcome addition to the fields of art, technology, and Eskimo culture. Dorothy Ray's study deals with the Bering Strait Eskimos' ivory carving tradition and its current manifestations. The book focuses on two separate topics: the prehistory and history of carving, and the products of the modern craftsmen.

The textual discussions and appendix on ivory carving among prehistoric Eskimos of the Bering Strait region deals primarily with the best local sequence: Okvik, Old Bering Sea, Punuk, Western Thule, and the post-Thule developments. This background material provides the reader with a general