

HENRY B. COLLINS AT WALES, ALASKA 1936: A PARTIAL DESCRIPTION OF COLLECTIONS. By DON E. DUMOND with sections by HENRY B. COLLINS. Eugene: Department of Anthropology and Museum of Natural History, 2000. University of Oregon Anthropological Papers No. 56. x + 203 p., maps, duotone illus., bib., plates. Softbound. US\$16.00.

One component of the Fifth Thule Expedition (1921–24) was Therkel Mathiassen's archaeological research, which established the presence of the Thule culture in the Canadian Arctic. Mathiassen's investigations led to intense debates about the geographical origins of Eskimo cultures—was Eskimo culture an outgrowth of Indian cultural developments in the interior of the Canadian Arctic, or the result of eastward migrations from the Bering Strait regions of the Western Arctic?

As William Fitzhugh points out in the foreword to this publication, at the time of Mathiassen's work, knowledge of Western Arctic prehistory was in its infancy. However, the extraordinary insight and archaeological research of Canadian archaeologist Diamond Jenness in the mid-1920s quickly challenged two theoretical views of Eskimo prehistory. First, by identifying the Dorset culture as ancestral to the Thule culture in the Canadian Arctic, Jenness challenged Mathiassen's contention that the Thule culture was the oldest expression of Arctic prehistory. Second, by investigating archaeological sites in the Bering Strait region, he provided evidence to support Mathiassen's belief in a western origin of the Thule culture. The material remains reported by Diamond Jenness and decorated artifacts purchased by Ales Hrdlicka on St. Lawrence Island aroused the interest of Henry Collins, who headed for St. Lawrence Island in 1928 to locate the archaeological sites that had yielded the decorated artifacts. Collins' excavations on St. Lawrence Island between 1928 and 1931 led to his definition of the Old Bering Sea culture.

Since the days of these early discoveries, a great amount of data has been added to the prehistoric inventory. As is usually the result of working with a more extensive database for a given region, interpretations reflect far greater cultural complexities. One of the questions that Henry Collins and other archaeologists working on the shores of Western Alaska were eager to investigate was the later cultural stages leading to the Thule culture episode.

During his 1926 field season, Diamond Jenness made test excavations at the village of Wales, located at the foot of Cape Mountain at Cape Prince of Wales, the westernmost point of the North American continent. Encouraged by Jenness, Henry Collins worked at the Cape in 1936, hoping to find evidence of the relationship between the later cultural stages in the Bering Strait region and the Canadian Thule culture. Following the 1936 investigations, Collins' research interests took him to new locations in the Arctic, and the Wales collection was put aside at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Over the years, Collins occasionally referred to the material from his principal Wales site, Kurigitavik, as evidence for a Birnirk-to-Thule transition; however, the material was never published in full. By the time Collins retired from

the Smithsonian, he had prepared a large part of the Wales collection for a proposed monograph. Even so, another 30 years would go by before this publication became a reality. In 1996 Don Dumond spent six weeks at the Smithsonian, editing Collins' manuscript on the sites at Cape Prince of Wales. In addition, Dumond provided an assessment of the Wales ceramics, as well as an analysis of artifacts from the Sand Mound and Pond sites, two smaller sites near Wales excavated by Collins in 1936.

In the introduction, using many of Collins' own observations, Dumond briefly recounts the historical background of the village of Wales, Collins' excavations, and his data-recording methods. Chapter 2 describes the excavation and features of the primary site, Kurigitavik, and gives Collins' own analysis of diagnostic finds from that site, with particular emphasis placed on harpoon-head and arrowhead typology. Collins' analysis is followed by Dumond's analysis of about one-third of the ceramic collection from Kurigitavik, as well as his examination of various implements not included in Collins' manuscript.

Chapter 3 presents the result of Collins' work on the Hillside site. Apparently the site was not mapped, nor were the sizes of the test units regularly recorded. As Dumond suggests, the results of the test excavations undoubtedly struck Collins as being less promising, showing evidence of component mixing, as well as an absence of Old Bering Sea objects. As in the Kurigitavik presentation, Collins' analysis of diagnostic Hillside Midden finds is followed by Dumond's analysis of potsherds and implements not included in Collins' original study. Chapters 4 and 5 present data from the two additional sites investigated by Henry Collins in 1936, the Sand Mound and Pond sites. Dumond's analysis of diagnostic Sand Mound finds, particularly the harpoon heads, leads him to conclude that Collins' suggestion of a Birnirk-related occupation at Sand Mound was correct. Dumond points out that the small Pond Site collection, representing the Norton Culture, was discovered more than a decade before that episode of Alaska's coastal prehistory was recognized. In Chapter 6, Dumond compares artifact styles and cultural succession at Wales, reflecting on Collins' own determination of cultural sequences on St. Lawrence Island. The discussion of style, diagnostic forms, and decorative design elements is not for the weak of heart and will challenge most neophyte students of Arctic prehistory. Of great interest to anyone interested in Arctic prehistory are the final pages of the last chapter, wherein Dumond presents a retrospective, 21st-century analysis of the prehistory of the Asian and American shores of the Bering and Chukchi Seas. The monograph is an essential addition to any Arctic library collection and to the bookshelves of Arctic prehistorians.

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