

MARITIME PROVINCES PREHISTORY. By JAMES A. TUCK. Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Canadian Prehistory Series, 1984. 102 p., 3 maps, 8 colour, 20 b&w illus., index, glossary, bib. Cdn \$8.00

Until recently, no readable reference was available on regional archaeology in Canada for the unspecialized reader. Despite continuous fieldwork programs operated by a number of university faculties, government agencies and museums, knowledge of much of Canada's prehistoric past was largely confined to a few hundred anthropologists, their students and a handful of keen lay enthusiasts.

With the publication of *Ontario Prehistory* by J.V. Wright in 1971, the National Museums of Canada launched a series of provincial and regional prehistories that, with the most recent addition of James A. Tuck's *Maritime Provinces Prehistory*, now number six. The books, which sell for less than \$10 each, are attractively printed, contain both black and white and colour illustrations, and are bound in an easily handled eight-square-inch format that lends itself to use as a desk reference.

Tuck, who also authored *Newfoundland and Labrador Prehistory*, begins by apologizing for the meagerness of the data he has been able to gather in his writing, giving as part of the explanation the poor preservation inherent in the Maritimes' environment. One does tend to wonder, however, at the limited amount of fieldwork evidently being practised in the Maritimes, a dearth that becomes increasingly obvious during the course of reading this book. Most of the publications mentioned by Tuck are in excess of five years old, and in fact only a handful of archaeologists are presently working there, despite the "real resurgence of interest in the prehistory of the Maritimes" (p. 1) claimed by Tuck. The blame falls largely on federal, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island government cultural agencies and universities, which have shown an appalling lack of interest in their own archaeological resources. This shameful situation is the more shocking when one considers that this part of the world loses up to a metre or more of its shoreline each year, a problem frequently lamented by Tuck. He points out the consequences in the chapters dealing with the period prior to 2500 B.P., when coastal sites are a rarity, despite evidence to the contrary in adjacent regions, such as Labrador, with less coastal erosion.

Maritime Provinces Prehistory is divided into three main sections that cover time periods labeled by Tuck as the Palaeo-Indian Period (11 000-9000 B.P.), the Late Pre-Ceramic Period (5000?-2500 B.P.) and the Ceramic Period (2500-500 B.P.). The divisions are approximate and artificial, reflecting the current state of knowledge of the area. A further two chapters describe respectively a hiatus in the archaeological record from 10 000-5000 B.P. and burial ceremonialism. The latter chapter, easily the book's most absorbing section, outlines the value of burial excavation in fleshing out the scanty evidence to be found through standard archaeological techniques.

The principal criticism I have about the book is that, although it meets its objective in gathering together the available evidence in an easily understandable format, it remains rather dry reading. The text covers a number of site excavations and their results without giving the reader a tangible sense of cultural life. Although he makes some tentative connections between historic ethnographical descriptions and evidence from the archaeological record, Tuck avoids speculation to a degree that would do credit to an academic report. I find the lack of imagination somewhat oppressive in an account meant to stir the interest of the public. In his preface Tuck states that he has attempted to stick to the "facts"; nevertheless this reviewer believes that some of the strictly factual data might well have been omitted in favour of more interpretive ideas. The illustrations are repetitive, consisting mainly of images of stone tools and weapons and examples of sites under excavation that show features of particular interest, yet they never attempt to show, for example, what the various house forms described in the text might have looked like. A single archival photograph of two men playing a dice game called *Waltes* (not *Waltus*, as Tuck writes) is used.

That Tuck is capable of evocative writing is beyond doubt, and his occasional indulgences in this text provide welcome relief from an otherwise factual progression:

. . . The air would have been decidedly smoky as the frequent backdraughts . . . made the fire smoulder. But the aroma of a stew of meat or fish simmering in a large clay pot would provide a welcome distraction. . . . (p. 51)

Few errors were discovered. A reference to "unique" specimens of prehistoric woven textiles (Plate 14) might have mentioned that a number of similar examples have been recovered from historic period sites. There also appears to be something amiss with the last sentence of the accompanying text for Plate 10, since no two uncemented examples of the sherds illustrated appear to be from the same vessel. Of more substance is the tendency to confuse the reader with information that may in any event be of interest only to archaeologists, such as in the seemingly conflicting section on the Laurentian Tradition on page 20. Tuck suggests that polished-stone tools frequently assessed as Laurentian by archaeologists actually belong to the Maritime Archaic Tradition; however, he does not explain the latter until much later. The coastal/interior distinction in the first paragraph on page 23 is therefore a source of confusion to the reader for several pages; few will have the patience to reread the section in light of the explanation on page 30.

On the whole, *Maritime Provinces Prehistory* is a brief, readable account of the current state of knowledge in this region. Like the others in the series, it is handsomely produced and will be a welcome addition to libraries of professionals and students as well as to the average interested reader. Information is factual and easily referenced, and the language is happily free of the jargon that so frequently shuts out the very audience we hope to reach.

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BLACK WOLF: THE LIFE OF ERNEST THOMPSON SETON. By BETTY KELLER. Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984. 240 p., photos, index. Cloth. Cdn\$19.95.

The name Ernest Evan Thompson will likely ring few bells, but many *Arctic* readers will immediately recognize the name of Ernest Thompson Seton, author of *Wild Animals I Have Known*. The latter sobriquet is but one of many tried on by the subject of Betty Keller's book, yet it is the one by which Seton is best known and the one he finally adopted permanently. Northern specialists and enthusiasts will also recognize Seton as the author of *The Arctic Prairies* (1911), his chronicle of a 2000-mile canoe journey into the treeless regions east of Great Slave Lake. He is most celebrated, however, for his stories and paintings of wild animals and for his developing conservationist principles, although Seton's brand of conservation will seem vulgar and self-serving in comparison to environmental attitudes of the 1980s. He was, nevertheless, a major precursor of today's conservationist movement, as well as a leader in the promotion of woodcraft and, ultimately, of the Boy Scouts of America.

Although Keller's biography deals with many of these facets of Seton's life — especially Seton's desire to be recognized as a naturalist — her attention is generally focussed on Seton's private life. She perceives Seton's private life largely in terms of his family life, both as one of eleven children in the family of Joseph Logan Thompson and as the husband of Grace Gallatin Seton and later of Julie Buttress Seton. As one often realizes in reading the biographies of men of genius, knowing them through their accomplishments and the products of their genius is

frequently preferable to an intimate contact with the men themselves. The portrait Keller creates of Seton suggests that an acquaintance with "Black Wolf" would be no exception. Perhaps because he is primarily viewed as a member of a large Victorian family, Seton surfaces as an egotistical child not unlike the character of Mr. Toad in *The Wind in the Willows* or a self-martyred victim amusingly like Eeyore in *Winnie-the-Pooh*. This comparison is apt, for today Seton's animal stories find their most appreciative audience in young readers, but while the comparison is apt, it is also ironic: Seton's "realistic" animal stories stand as the antithesis of the tales of Kenneth Grahame and A.A. Milne, where humanized animals pack picnic lunches for their boating excursions and undertake "Expositions to the North Pole." Nevertheless, the wayward personalities of nursery characters soon lose their charm when transplanted to the flesh-and-blood adult. Keller depicts a person who "knew nothing about cooperation," whose "enthusiasm for martyrdom was almost entirely destructive," and who, in his memoirs, "resorts to unwarranted ridicule" of those friends and instructors who helped along his career.

Yet *Black Wolf: The Life of Ernest Thompson Seton* is not at all a vituperative condemnation of Seton. Instead, Keller attempts a frank assessment of the artist-naturalist and what motivated him. He was an over-achiever, a characteristic Keller implies grew out of his family relationships. Being one of ten sons must have exacted its toll. But the enormous and unnatural hatred Seton nurtured for his father largely commands Keller's attention in her forays into Seton's childhood. Although Keller can never identify the reason for this paternal hatred, she leaves little doubt in the reader's mind of its intensity. The family name of Thompson became an anathema to Seton; at one point, he dropped the name entirely, picking it up later as a middle name only at the request of his mother, to whom he was very close. In a 25-year period, he variously identified himself as Ernest Evan Thompson, Ernest Evan Thompson Seton, Ernest Thompson-Seton, Ernest Seton-Thompson, Wolf Thompson, Wolf Seton, and Chief Black Wolf. The confusion this must have caused his publishers and readers is obvious; the confusion in Seton's own mind is perhaps equally apparent.

Keller's biographical work deserves special praise. Seton left numerous autobiographical accounts, but they are so prejudiced by his sometimes outrageously egocentric view of events that Keller has been forced to find external verification of almost every event in Seton's life. Seton's charges against his father, the reader will be interested to note, are not substantiated by any of the other sons. In many ways, this typifies the enormity of Keller's task.

Throughout the book, Keller remains both candid and humane. At no point does she exploit or sensationalize her material in order to improve her sales or to simplify her subject so that it fits a stereotypic mold. Without question, Keller has her own notions about the origins and causes of Seton's personality — without such shaping ideas, biography cannot exist and we are left with nothing more than a chronological arrangement of facts about a human life. But Keller's assessment grows out of a desire to understand the enigmatic Seton, and although she finds that he resists every effort to comprehend him, the intelligent and sensitive probings into his life ultimately create a meaningful image of the man.

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THE MICROBLADES OF UMINGMAK. By LINDA OWEN. Archäologische Forschungen auf Banks Island 1970-1975, Teil 1. Urgeschichtliche Materialhefte, Nr. 5, 1. Tübingen, West Germany,

Institut für Urgeschichte der Universität Tübingen, 1984. 138 p., photos, illus., maps, bib. Softbound. Dm. 43.

Umingmak, a Pre-Dorset site in the interior of Banks Island, was located and tested in 1965 by W.E. Taylor and R. McGhee. In 1970, 1973 and 1975, the Institut für Urgeschichte (Institute of Prehistory) carried out a series of excavations in order to establish the sedimentary sequence in the area and to test excavation and recording techniques developed in Paleolithic sites. In 1977 the institute published a preliminary report, edited by site director H. Müller-Beck, in the Urgeschichtliche Materialhefte series. *The Microblades of Umingmak* is only the second publication on the institute's excavations of this site and is the first of an intended series of final reports to be published in order of completion.

The format is inexpensive but effective, with good quality figures and photographs. Tables and figures would be easier to access if included in the text rather than at the end of the book. References to figures would be clearer if artifacts were individually numbered. More attention to editing will improve the readability of future volumes.

This volume comprises an analysis of 238 microblades and microblade fragments and one microblade core fragment located during the three excavations (1A1, 1A2, 1D). The author's objectives are to provide a qualitative and quantitative description of the microlithic artifacts; to reconstruct the method of production and the use of the blades; and to compare the blades within three excavation areas of the site and with blades from other sites in the Arctic.

Chapter 1 briefly introduces the research topic. The reader should refer to the preliminary report for full details on the location and environmental characteristics of the site.

Chapter 2 describes the initial discovery of the site and the three excavations conducted by the Institute of Prehistory. Little information is provided on actual excavation technique (i.e., use of screens, size of screen mesh, excavation tools), but methods of collection and recording, which differed from year to year, are described in detail. The major difference is that in successive excavations artifacts and bone of increasingly smaller dimensions were individually numbered and mapped. In 1975 all sediments were water sieved.

Chapter 3 describes the analytical methods used, including a list of attributes and an explanation of the relevant statistical tests. Although a definition of "microblade" is provided, Owen does not define "ridge blades," which are included in all statistical tests. In addition, the author admits to a problem in recognizing microblades but does not explain how this was resolved.

Chapter 4 deals with analysis of those attributes on the blades and the single core thought to reflect method of manufacture. Owen reconstructs manufacturing technique and suggests that, while similar throughout the site, some differences among excavation areas did exist — e.g., more ridge blades in 1A1 than in 1AD; more blades with cortex in 1D; the core fragment and blades with core remnants in 1A1. Although the author states that the blades were probably produced by pressure, she gives no documentation for this statement. Since the reconstruction lacks an experimental basis, it remains hypothetical.

Chapter 5 focuses on differences within the site. Although previous work by the author and others had demonstrated that it was not possible to distinguish intentional from accidental breaks or break method on microblades, Owen again attempts this task for the Umingmak microblades and is unsuccessful. Owen notes that median length, width, thickness and weight decrease from excavation area 1A1 to 1A2 to 1D. After conducting a median test, she concludes that this difference is statistically significant for width and thickness. One problem is that the actual differences are very small, ranging from 0.25 mm to 1.25 mm. In addition, the variation in length, which differs the most, is not significant according to the median test, while variation in thickness, which differs the least, is significant. These results are difficult to understand and appear to be misleading for this particular sample. Ridge blades, which are thicker and more numerous than "normal" microblades, are included in the analysis. Their presence may account