

## BOOK REVIEWS

THE MOUNT ALBION COMPLEX, A STUDY OF PREHISTORIC MAN AND THE ALTITHERMAL. BY JAMES B. BENEDICT AND BYRON L. OLSON. *Ward, Colorado: Center for Mountain Archaeology, Research Report No. 1, 1978. 213 pages, illus., maps. \$14.00 U.S.*

The Mount Albion complex is composed of a series of high altitude archaeological sites in Colorado, all of which share a distinctive style of projectile point. Two excavated sites are described in detail, one by each coauthor. The complex as a whole appears to be insular and unrelated to any nearby assemblages, and Benedict has cast a wide net over most of western and central North America in his search for comparable sites from 5000 to 7500 years old. He perceives close, but poorly understood, relationships with the Northern Archaic of Alaska and the Yukon, with the Shield Archaic of the Keewatin and with the Eastern Archaic.

As a spin-off of his search, Benedict was led to construct population curves for various regions in North America spanning the Altithermal, using five 500-year intervals. Two of these intervals are conceived as "short droughts," the first lasting from 7000 to 6500 B.P. and the second, in which Mount Albion belongs, from 6000 to 5500 B.P. Comparing his population curves with the climatic cycle, Benedict concludes that arid regions such as the Great Basin suffered depopulation during dry periods, at the same time that moist regions such as the Pacific Northwest and Southern Rockies served as refugia. Mount Albion is a specific case in point. Thought to have its original roots in unspecified "drought-susceptible areas to the west," its peoples moved to the high country of Colorado when amelioration of climatic conditions there rendered it suitable for habitation by hunters. Upon the return of cool conditions and increased effective moisture, man moved back into arid regions, away from environments where snow was a limiting factor.

The principal weakness, it seems to me, lies in the formulation of the populations curves, which are essential to the main thesis of the book. They are based on 225 acceptably dated archaeological components; but since these dates are spread unequally over eight broad regions and five time units, the sample seems pitifully small. Perhaps the future will nevertheless bear out the hypothesis.

In proposing two short droughts to replace the traditional concept of one "long drought" for the Altithermal, Benedict has added one more complexity to an already hotly debated issue. Some authorities question the characterization of Altithermal climate as excessively

hot and dry. Others doubt that the Altithermal was synchronous from one region to another. However that may be, Benedict's discussion is thoughtful and stimulating, even exciting. The volume is carefully written and edited throughout, and readers can implicitly feel confident that Benedict is conversant with his subject, and has taken his stance only after diligent research led him there.

One final note. Readers of *Arctic* will find the discussions of geomorphological processes in periglacial environments well worth careful examination. It is a rare report that so cogently integrates an archaeological site into its geological context — before, during and after the time of human occupation. The authors' insightful probing of the subject deserves emulation by good dirt archaeologists with corresponding opportunities.

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THE WHITE ARCTIC. ANTHROPOLOGICAL ESSAYS ON TUTELAGE AND ETHNICITY. EDITED BY ROBERT PAINE. *Toronto: University of Toronto Press (Newfoundland Social and Economic Papers no. 7) 1977. 15.5 x 23.5 cm, 418 pages. Hard cover, no price indicated.*

In *The White Arctic*, Robert Paine has assembled a collection of essays which provide an integrated sociological/anthropological study of the administrators and the administered in what is regarded as Canada's domestic colony: the arctic. Certain of the essays deal with the behavior of whites (Euro-Canadians, or *kadlunat*) in the north, while others focus more closely upon the effects which that behavior has had upon the society of the aboriginal peoples of the area. As stated in the Preface, the rationale for this topical approach is that "... the betterment of ethnic relations and the lot of the Inuit ... seems predicated on whites increasing their understanding of their own behavior in the north."

The views of ten authors are presented in this volume. Most of the research for the essays was undertaken for the five-year project 'Identity and Modernity in the East Arctic', which was sponsored by the Canada Council. The project was directed by the editor of the volume, who in addition wrote the preface and seven of the nineteen essays.

The essays are grouped into three sections: *The Colonial Shadow Over NWT; Case Studies from NWT; and Case Studies from the Labrador Coast.*