

PROCEEDINGS: NORTHERN ATHAPASKAN CONFERENCE, 1971. VOLUMES I AND II. EDITED BY A. MCFADYEN CLARK. *Ottawa: National Museums of Canada 1975* (Publications in Ethnology no. 27). 11 x 8½ inches, 803 pages, 14 maps, 13 figures, 23 tables. \$9.25.

In March 1971, a conference on northern Athapaskan research was held at the National Museum of Man in Ottawa. Seventeen scholars participated in the discussion of previously circulated papers, fifteen of which are published in these two volumes. Research in linguistics, archaeology, and ethnology in most of the areas occupied by northern Athapaskans is covered, although on the basis of these contributions it would appear that relatively little work is currently being carried out among the Athapaskans of western Alaska.

The proceedings have been edited and prepared for publication by A. McFadyen Clark. She provides a brief introductory essay outlining the rationale and accomplishments of the conference, but makes no attempt to relate the papers to each other by means of editorial comments. Admittedly, this would have been difficult because of the wide-ranging subject matter of the various contributions, but it would nevertheless have helped to make clear the diverse factors responsible for the current emphases in northern Athapaskan research.

The first volume begins with a brief historical review by Cornelius Osgood of varied spellings of the word "Athapaskan." A far more substantial contribution, and perhaps the most erudite selection in the two volumes, is a 125-page paper on matrilineal kin groups in northwestern North America by Frederica de Laguna. It is an exhaustive review of theories concerning the origin of matriliney in the interior of Alaska, the Yukon Territory, and in the adjacent coastal areas, bringing together as it does all published data, the author's extensive field work, and the insight afforded by many years of research in the area. Focusing much more narrowly, A. McFadyen Clark provides an overview of upper Koyukuk River Koyukon social culture, comparing their exogamous matrilineal sib system with the bilateral organization of the Yukon River Koyukon.

"Feuding and warfare among northwestern Athapaskans" is the title of a paper by Catherine McClellan. Causative factors for these culture traits among several cordilleran groups are considered in some detail. McClellan's contribution, like that of de Laguna, is an elegant combination of ethnohistorical

research and skilled field work. Of lesser general interest is a Peel River Kutchin folk tale recounted by Richard Slobodin, who provides a detailed analysis of its form, style, and content.

June Helm and six co-authors have provided an extremely useful overview of the contact history of the subarctic Athapaskans which attempts to identify the main features of the changing intercultural environment in both time and space. Particularly useful is an accompanying synoptic chart of contact events. This impressive paper represents by far the most ambitious attempt ever made to survey agents of contact throughout the entire area occupied by northern Athapaskans. Although the framework is familiar from previous publications by the senior author, this summary is certain to serve as an important guide for future students of culture change among northern Athapaskans.

The eleven papers in the second volume include a sophisticated linguistic study by Robert Howren in which he suggests that languages spoken by groups in the Mackenzie drainage area constitute a single sub-stock derived from a common precursor. In the other linguistic contribution, Clark Davis presents a critique of J. P. Harrington's analysis of Chilcotin and Nicola. The results appear to be primarily negative or inconclusive, and will mean little except to language specialists.

Two papers are concerned primarily with Chipewyan ethnohistory: Beryl C. Gillespie documents the territorial expansion of this group in the eighteenth century, while James G. E. Smith attempts to establish the fact of a close and enduring relationship between Chipewyan socio-territorial organization and the taiga-tundra environment. Both papers are the result of impressive, well-documented research and they complement each other nicely. The role of dogs among the contemporary Hare is examined in a paper by Joel Savishinsky, while Cornelius Osgood, in his second contribution, provides some unpublished data on place names from his 1928-29 survey of the Great Bear Lake region.

Utilizing historical accounts, ethnographic reports and his own field work, John Honigmann assesses the personality structure of several modern Athapaskan groups and compares it with that of neighbouring Canadian Eskimos. The results suggest, not surprisingly, that the two personality types exhibit a different response to rapid culture change. There are few references to Alaskan groups, even though the Indian-Eskimo interface is more extensive in this region.

In the first of three archaeology papers,

Donald W. Clark describes the excavation of two small village sites on the Koyukuk River near Huslia, Alaska, which yielded artefacts similar to those from the coastal Norton-Ipiutak complex. After examining the problem of ethnic identification, the author concludes that Eskimos may, at one time, have occupied the lower middle Koyukuk drainage area. This is an important contribution to our understanding of the Indian-Eskimo interface in interior Alaska.

Papers by Richard E. Morlan and William C. Noble are concerned with the direct historical approach in Athapaskan archaeology. Morlan describes a large, late prehistoric site in the middle Porcupine River drainage area which represents a regional pattern of Kutchin prehistory going back approximately 1000 years. Noble provides a synthesis of existing archaeological data for five groups in the arctic drainage lowlands and emphasizes the importance of ethnohistoric data to the archaeologist wishing to demonstrate the antiquity of named Athapaskan groups; his contribution contains many important suggestions for future archaeological research.

The final article in volume two is intended as a summary. Richard Slobodin indicates

that interest in research on the northern Athapaskans is of relatively recent origin and he points out the need for the development of theory and a synthesis of existing knowledge. He stresses the significance of work in cultural ecology and ethnohistory and points out possible directions for future research.

Publication of these papers more than four years after the conference for which they were prepared hardly seems consistent with the goal of a publication series "designed to permit the rapid dissemination of information . . ." Although the quality of the individual contributions varies considerably, the compilation as a whole illustrates the broad interests present day research workers have in the northern Athapaskan area. All subarctic specialists will therefore be grateful to the National Museum of Man for making possible the publication of these papers, no matter how delayed. It is encouraging to observe such a wide variety of research methods applied to the study of peoples who have for too long received only limited attention from anthropologists.

James W. VanStone