

CIRCUMPOLAR PEOPLES: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE. BY NELSON H. H. GRABURN and B. STEPHEN STRONG. *Pacific Palisades, California: Goodyear Publishing Co., 1973. 9¼ x 6¼ inches, 236 pages, illustrated.* (Goodyear Regional Anthropological Series) *No price indicated.*

This book meets a pressing need for a comprehensive statement of our existing knowledge of polar peoples. It identifies seventy one separate groups, and deals in detail with a number of the major groupings. In about 200 pages of text the authors have summarized and synthesized an enormous amount of scattered anthropological material. In doing so, they have shown how diverse these people were, and yet how they have managed to adapt to their environment and to change.

A short introductory chapter on the nature of the North — ecology, demography, physical anthropology, culture, linguistics and recent history — is followed by twelve chapters on the different peoples. The Sameks, Yakuts, Yukagirs, Tungus, Chukchi, Athabaskan, Northern Pacific groups, Kutchin, northern Naskapi, Aleuts and Eskimos are dealt with in detail. Ethnographic sketches are interspersed with discussions of specific anthropological problems like shamanism among the Tungus and the social structure and kinship terminology of the North Pacific groups. The stress is on the pre- and post-contact periods, but native land claims in Alaska are dealt with.

The writers neither lose the reader in dense and boring detail about particular aspects of cultures, nor do they wax hysterical about the injustices perpetrated on these people in the past. All in all, the book is a balanced, objective, yet sympathetic view of the past history and current status of the circumpolar peoples. These people were exploited in the past in a crass, commercial manner. Now the exploitation is of another sort. With their aura of glamour and their remote location, they are seen as romantic savages by urbanized westerners, and are expected to behave in a certain way. We feel disappointed if the reality of their lives does not match up to our expectations of them. In addition, at least in Northern Canada and Alaska, a vast bureaucracy has grown up to 'help' these people.

Graburn and Strong do a valuable service

in showing the complex reality, and the internal logic and integrity of the traditional way. Anthropologists are constantly wondering how they can 'help the native peoples'. Some have made rather a fine living out of acting as consultants to the Indians and the Eskimo. Graburn and Strong show how anthropologists can do more than dash in, do a quick study, and then dash out again. They have provided accurate information that hopefully will displace the nonsense that passes for wisdom about the traditional way of life. Eskimo life is described as being at 'the best of times' 'peaceful, co-operative and joyous'. But the best of times were interspersed with 'the worst of times', when infanticide, killing of the aged, suicide and cannibalism appeared. Anxiety over food, social instability, and rivalry among the men over women led to violence and murder. Hopefully this book will aid northern insiders and outsiders to discover the reality of the traditional cultures.

The authors have done an awesome amount of sifting through the literature on the circumpolar peoples. The book is worth whatever the price may be as a source book alone. Each chapter has an extensive bibliography. At the end there is a guide to journals, a list of ethnographic films, and a good index. Also included are maps, diagrams and sketches which are well integrated with the text. The book reads well, although it demands close attention; once in a while the writers get tangled up in the terminology of kinship.

Some anthropologists will doubtless quibble with some of the interpretations. But the book will be useful to anyone concerned with the past and future of northern peoples. Beginners and old northern hands will find a great deal of the material of interest and relevance. It will be especially useful to physical and biological scientists working in the North who want to get beyond clichés and their fleeting personal impressions of the indigenous peoples. However comforting and confusing these impressions are, they are no substitute for the detailed and accurate knowledge that the authors of this book have so skilfully synthesized and put into international perspective.

Jim Lotz

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