COPPER ESKIMO PREHISTORY. By Robert McGhee. *National Museums of Canada, National Museum of Man, Publications in Archaeology, No. 2, 1972. 6¼ by 9¾ inches, 141 pages, 11 tables, 13 maps, 19 plates. $3.50.*

By the second decade of this century it was clear that the snowhouse-dwelling Central Eskimos of the Canadian Arctic (the groups known as Iglulik, Netsilik and Caribou and Copper Eskimos) were in their lifeway less similar to their neighbours of the east and west than those permanent-house-dwelling neighbours of Labrador and Greenland and northern Alaska were similar to one another. Two major groups of hypotheses were developed in explanation.

One of these suggested that Proto-Eskimos had originated in interior Canada; that some of their descendants had moved northward to the arctic coast, where an ocean-edge adaptation was evolved that included the construction of semi-subterranean dwellings and winter sealing through breathing holes; that their descendants in turn, now carriers of what was known as Thule culture, had spread east and west; and that finally the central coast became the object of a second movement from the interior by later descendants of the original Proto-Eskimo population, whose presence masked traces of their earlier Thule cousins. The second proposed much more simply that Thule Eskimo culture had originated in Alaska; that a movement from Alaska to Greenland had transported it across the northern rim of Canada; and that the culture of the Central Eskimos derived from that of their direct Thule ancestors under the stress of local conditions.

The present book attempts a test of these two sets of hypotheses as they relate specifically to Copper Eskimos: first, by means of analysis of previously published information on physique, language, and material culture; and second, by means of archaeological research.

Relatively simple quantitative measures applied to blood group data, to cranial measurements, to word lists, and to certain traits of material culture lead to the tentative conclusion that all Eskimos of northern Alaska, of the central Canadian coast, and of the eastern arctic had a single ancestor; that during the past few centuries there have been no major displacements of people; and that the Central Eskimos have diverged from the others in ways that suggest neither separate ancestry nor outside contact.

The section on archaeology presents information on six sites which, together with some additional comparative material, serves to define three periods applicable to the Copper Eskimo territory: The Thule period (A.D. 1200-1600) is characterized by semi-subterranean winter dwellings with heavy interior framework; by relatively heavy stone houses with slab floors, piled boulder walls, and (probably) skin roofs; and by artifacts similar to those known archaeologically in other Canadian Thule collections and in contemporary assemblages from northern Alaska. The Intermediate interval (A.D. 1600-1771), unfortunately, is defined on the basis of a truly inadequate artifact sample, but is thought to be that of house structures of *qarmat* type (a dwelling excavated into the contemporary surface, with light structure, covered by a small amount of sod and probably by skin) and of well-defined stone tent rings with a clearly marked sleeping area. The Historic period (after A.D. 1771) is recognized by the presence of trade goods, and involved the use of summer tents, of snow houses on the winter sea ice (which obviously leave no trace for the archaeologist), and of transitional shoreline camps.

In a comparative section on continuity, archaeologically known traits are ordered and counted. Of 160 traits, 85 are found to be present from Thule to Historic periods; 41 disappear after Thule; 16 appear with the Historic; 18 persist throughout, although in substantially changed form. Interpretations suggest that Thule sea-mammal hunters in the Central Eskimo region wintered in small central settlements, taking seals from the ice edge and in tidal cracks; Intermediate people are presumed to have spent the early winter in ice-edge *qarmat* settlements, the later winter on the ice; Historic people are known to have adopted the pattern of moving onto the ice at winter's onset to hunt seals at breathing holes.

Analysis of the cause of change makes major use of climatic fluctuations. The author concludes that the period of relative warmth at about A.D. 1000 contributed to the Thule expansion from Alaska by temporarily expanding their eco-system; that a subsequent chilling led to the shift to modern Central Eskimo practices; that the evolution of Central Eskimo culture occurred without substantial population movements; and, of course, that Central Eskimo culture was based squarely upon that of their Thule ancestors.

Although one could wish for more artifactual evidence for the largely hypothetical Transitional interval, this is a very successful argument regarding the development of Copper Eskimo culture in particular and Central Eskimo culture in general. Data are

manipulated with sophistication in what is one of the most elegant treatments ever made of arctic material. The result is impressive and convincing.

*Don E. Dumond*

MODERN ALASKAN NATIVE MATERIAL CULTURE. Edited by Wendell Oswalt. *University of Alaska Museum, 1972. 8¼ x 11 inches, 130 pages, map and tables. $2.50.*

The research project on which this report is based was conceived in two phases. The first involved the collection and identification of artifacts and information illustrating the continuity of traditional elements in Alaskan native material culture, and the documentation of changes which have occurred since the beginning of historic contact. In the second, the University of Alaska Museum hoped to encourage interest and pride in the preservation of culture elements by returning material and information, obtained during phase 1, to the native villages in the form of interpretive packages. At the same time, the museum would circulate an exhibit dealing with acculturation to the various urban centres in Alaska.

The results of phase 1, supported by a grant from the National Foundation for the Humanities in 1970-71, are the subject of the five papers in this volume. Phase 2 was to be supported by the same federal agency in the following year and its effectiveness will presumably be evaluated in a future publication. The first phase was under the direction of Wendell Oswalt who also served as field investigator for the western Eskimo area. Four other field investigators were sent to nine northwestern Alaskan Eskimo villages, three Kutchin Athapaskan communities in the upper Yukon drainage, three Aleutian settlements, and two villages near the mouth of the Kuskokwim River. In addition to over 500 artifacts, information was collected on habitation patterns, household inventories, housing, the seasonal round, and crafts. A photo documentary series of people, objects and activities was also obtained.

In the introduction, L. J. Rowinski, Director of the University of Alaska Museum, explains that as the project was originally conceived, one investigator would have coordinated the collection of material and information in order to achieve comparability from one area to another. It is regrettable that this plan did not prove feasible since the quality of the papers produced by the field investigators varies considerably and virtually no coordination of the research effort is visible in the published results.

The most detailed and knowledgeable paper in the volume is by Wendell Oswalt, the senior investigator. His study, based on research in four western Eskimo communities, emphasizes historical background with special reference to the introduction of trade goods in the nineteenth century, and a description of contemporary material culture on the basis of a classification formulated prior to the field work. This classification involves the identification of four material culture clusters defined as follows: western Eskimo (Yuk) continuities are forms perpetuated from aboriginal times; Yuk-derived forms are those manufactured locally, often of exotic materials, and modeled after aboriginal types; western-derived forms are the locally made exotic counterparts of Yuk-derived forms; direct western imports constitute the fourth form.

This useful classification could have constituted an ideal research design to provide continuity and comparability for all the papers in this volume. And yet only one, Vera Lustig-Arecco's study of Kutchin material culture, follows it to even a limited extent. The others are either shallow and impressionistic or attempt to disguise paucity of relevant data with pseudo-theoretical rhetoric. The volume concludes with a collection inventory, but it is regretable that a study dealing with material culture and based in part on photo documentary evidence contains no illustrations.

Unfortunately, this volume does not do justice to a stimulating and virtually unique research concept, the study of material culture in transitional situations. Nevertheless, anthropologists, educators, administrators, and indeed, anyone with even a peripheral interest in Alaskan Eskimo and Indian ethnology will await with interest the published results of the innovative second phase of this project. If the University of Alaska Museum can develop successful travelling exhibits, brochures, films, and other museum-oriented information outlets that will increase understanding of the acculturation process and help Alaskan natives achieve a greater understanding of their own adaptation, a significant break-through in material culture research and museum-community relations will have been achieved.

*James W. VanStone*

NUSHAGAK: AN HISTORIC TRADING CENTER IN SOUTHWESTERN ALASKA. By James W. VanStone. *Fieldiana: Anthropology, Volume 62. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1972. 6⅛ x 9¼ inches, 93 pages, illustrated. $4.25.*