

for the first-time reader with little or no previous knowledge of the Antarctic. Finally, the title of this book is regrettable, as it has been used before. It will detract from, and cause confusion with, the excellent account of the setting up of the Australian Mawson Base by Phillip Law, published by William Heinemann in 1983. (Herbert Dartnall, Copper Beeches, 76 Lewes Road, Ditchling, Sussex BN6 8TY.)

BRIEF REVIEWS

THE ESKIMO STORYTELLER. Edwin S. Hall Jr. 1998. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press. xv + 491 p; illustrated; soft cover. ISBN 1-889963-02-X. \$US24.95.

First published in 1975, this is a first-rate and enduring account of the narrative and oral history of the relationship between people and place in northwest Alaska. Edwin S. Hall gathered this collection of 190 stories from the Inupiaq village of Noatak mainly in the early 1960s, and from two master storytellers, Edna Hunnicutt and Paul Monroe. *The Eskimo storyteller* is essentially their book, and Hall contextualises and structures the narrative with reference to the socio-economic situation in northwest Alaska at the time he first began to visit Noatak. Hall also discusses the social and cultural importance of storytelling for the Inupiaq people, describing how stories were told and how they were passed on to the next generation of storytellers. The stories collected here have recognisable motifs that are common to other Inuit stories and oral histories elsewhere in Alaska and other parts of the Arctic; whether they are about family life, social relationships, animals as spiritual beings, the dual existence of both humans and animals, and the everyday, yet ambivalent, preoccupations of human beings.

Despite the obvious value of the stories it contains within its covers, *The Eskimo storyteller* has a contemporary significance in a methodological sense. More than 20 years after it first appeared, Hall's book is a fine example of the kind of collaborative research between anthropologist and local people that is increasingly promoted and encouraged in the Arctic today. Hall's account of how he actually went about gathering the stories (and the storytellers' reactions to why he was interested in gathering them), translating them, and reproducing them for publication in as accurate a way as possible so as to convey their original feelings is a valuable account of how to do research. In his analysis, Hall is wary that too much interpretation may deny the stories the meaning they have for those who tell them. These are the people's stories, and,

as Hall says, they are to be savoured and enjoyed, not questioned.

THE INUPIAQ ESKIMO NATIONS OF NORTHWEST ALASKA. Ernest S. Burch Jr. 1998. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press. xviii + 473 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-912006-95-1. \$US49.95.

In 1994 the distinguished anthropologist Ernest S. Burch produced a report summarising his research into extinct nations in northwest Alaska. This report was highly scholarly, and was circulated only to polar libraries and a few eminent researchers in the field. *The Inupiaq Eskimo nations of northwest Alaska* is a modified version of this extensive work. It is intended to be accessible to a wider audience, and to be a record of cultures that ceased to exist in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Burch has achieved his objective admirably. The book contains a brief introduction, including basic information on the geography and history of the region as well as documenting research methods. Then there are 11 chapters, each one dedicated to a specific Inupiaq nation, and a conclusion in which various theoretical issues relating to the information provided are addressed. At the end of the book are several useful appendices, including an essay on the missing village of Qikiqtagruk (a large village reputedly near present-day Kotzebue that features in oral accounts, but that archaeologists and historians have failed to locate), a detailed reference list, subject and geographical indices, and a list of oral sources that were used in compiling this volume. There are many detailed and clear maps, and the text is divided into small and very readable sub-sections. Thus, it is not only possible to read each chapter in its entirety, but also to use the book as a reference source by locating specific well-defined topics.

The essence of the book is based upon previous research conducted in the area and on oral accounts gathered from the elders of Inupiaq villages at a time when such narratives were still the primary form of historical record. Like Knud Rasmussen, whose accounts of the people of Greenland and Arctic America are unique and valuable sources of information not available elsewhere, Burch has compiled a history of all-but-forgotten nations that will prove to be a major reference work for many years to come.

BOOKS RECEIVED

SCOTT'S LAST JOURNEY. Peter King (Editor). 1999. London: Duckworth. 192 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7156-2938-7. £20.00.