

made some 2000 years ago on St Lawrence Island and persisted through succeeding cultures of Okvik, Old Bering Sea, and Punuk. Except for a brief period around AD 1000, it was not found on the mainland of western Alaska. Some 500 years later this style of decoration became much reduced or absent, but eventually realistic engravings emerged that became widely distributed in Alaska by the early nineteenth century. Decorated bow drill handles (drill bows) were the most common.

After Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867, American trading posts were established and walrus ivory was introduced to new areas. Drill-bow art declined, but there was a big expansion in walrus-ivory art with cribbage boards, pipes, and carved or engraved whole tusks. Several examples of the innovative work of Angokwazhuk (Happy Jack) are illustrated and the source of some of his pictures is identified. As walrus-ivory supplies declined, the type of carving changed; several such examples are illustrated.

The differences between the development of contemporary Alaskan and Canadian art are discussed and several early Canadian soapstone carvings illustrated. The final chapter explores at length the nature of authenticity and the ambivalence of native forms and motifs used by non-natives, and the less controversial work of native artists who are no longer resident in Alaska.

Fakes are exposed in the form of elephant and other non-indigenous materials mass-produced into curios for sale in Alaska. There are reproductions and deceptions, too. Ancient Alaskan ivories have been decorated in recent times by copies of early pictographs, and plastic scrimshaw of Arctic scenes is widespread.

The book contains new material and the benefit of the author's willingness to re-evaluate and occasionally correct earlier statements as new information was acquired. It is beautifully written and presented with an index, references, and illustrations conveniently near the relevant text. The thoughtful provision of a chapter heading on each double page greatly facilitates the use of the notes. (Janet West, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

**ANCIENT PEOPLE OF THE ARCTIC.** Robert McGhee. 1996. Vancouver: UBC Press. xii + 244 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7748-0553-6. \$Can35.95.

Robert McGhee has established an international reputation not only as a foremost Arctic archaeologist in a strictly academic sense, but also as an author of popular books and articles in this field. *Ancient people of the Arctic* is meant for a popular audience, and it is certainly one of his finest efforts to date. It is an extremely comprehensible text for the non-specialist, avoiding overly technical or jargonistic terms or phrases.

The book focuses specifically upon various Paleoeskimo cultures of the Canadian Arctic and Greenland. The first three chapters provide a historical summary of Paleoeskimo research, and stress the fact that, because there are no Paleoeskimo cultural descendants, recon-

structing their lifeways is, of necessity, 'imagining history' (page 10). Chapters 4 and 5 deal with High Arctic Independence I and low Arctic Pre-Dorset and Saqqaa cultures, respectively, while chapters 6 and 7 deal with climatic change and the transition to Dorset and Independence II cultures. The remaining four chapters deal with Dorset culture, including technology (primarily chapter 8), ritual and symbolism (chapter 9), contact with neighbouring groups (chapter 10), and eventual disappearance, beginning approximately 1000 years ago, following the arrival of Thule Inuit from Alaska (chapter 11).

While meant for a popular audience, the book will also be of interest to northern (and other) archaeologists. Specifically, it represents a current statement on McGhee's view of Paleoeskimo technology, social structure, and ideology; while some may disagree with certain interpretations (for example, Independence I groups spending the winter in a state of semi-hibernation), it nevertheless represents the most readable, and ambitious, non-technical summary of Paleoeskimo cultures to date.

The book is liberally illustrated, but whereas the colour photographs are excellent, almost all of the black-and-white photographs have been poorly reproduced. Otherwise, it is finely produced, with clear, sharp print, very few typographical errors, and a useful index. (James M. Savelle, Department of Anthropology, McGill University, 855 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2T7, Canada.)

**ECOLOGY OF ARCTIC ENVIRONMENTS.** Sarah J. Woodin and Mick Marquiss (Editors). 1997. Oxford: Blackwell Science. vi + 286 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-632-04218-4. £35.00.

Environmental change in Arctic ecosystems has been subject to much attention in recent years. Examples of important issues relating to environmental change include: the large amounts of dead organic carbon stored in tundra ecosystems and its potential loss to the atmosphere as CO<sub>2</sub>; the potential for sequestration of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> caused by an expanding vegetation in the high Arctic; and the significant emissions of the greenhouse gas methane from wet tundra. All are examples of issues associated with potential feedback effects from Arctic environments in a changing climate, which are frequently dealt with in recent literature. *Ecology of Arctic environments*, edited by Sarah Woodin and Mick Marquiss, is no exception. However, this book will also tell us there are many other important current issues within the area of Arctic ecology, and the fact that the book does not concentrate on a single issue but looks at a wide range of them is an important justification for it.

The book is based on contributions from a March 1995 workshop in Aberdeen marking the end of the first phase of the NERC Arctic terrestrial ecosystems research programme. One might argue that, although UK authors form the majority in the book, it is somewhat surprising that only two of the 12 contributions seem to have been associated with this particular NERC programme.