

**NUUSSUARMIUT — HUNTING FAMILIES ON THE BIG HEADLAND: DEMOGRAPHY, SUBSISTENCE AND MATERIAL CULTURE IN NUUSSUAQ, UPERNAVIK, NORTHWEST GREENLAND.** K. Hansen. 2008. Copenhagen: Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland. 239 p, hardcover. (*Meddelelser om Grønland, Man and Society* 35). ISBN 978-87-635-1084-4. £43. doi:10.1017/S0032247410000094

Inspired by the Danish passion for eskimology established by Knud Rasmussen, Kaj Birket-Smith, Helge Larsen and Jørgen Meldgaard, a young Keld Hansen studied the material culture and social structures of Inuit people between 1966 and 1968. Now, forty years later and working at the Viking Ship Museum Hansen has belatedly published this fieldwork with the support of the Greenland Research Centre at the National Museum in Copenhagen. In the introduction to this volume, Hansen looks back at the time when he was a student assistant in the Ethnology department of the National Museum of Denmark and reveals his everlasting passion for indigenous lifeways, particularly their skill in subsistence and hunting. In the field, Hansen became intrigued with the impact of changes to such traditions. Reflecting on his methods and fieldwork in which he served as the sole investigator in the small community of Nuusuaq (formerly known as Kraulshavn), Hansen explains how he turned himself into an apprentice of Inuit subsistence and followed ‘two of Nuusuaq’s most able hunters’ (page 13) and traveled across their terrain with sled dogs. After he had been accepted into the settlement he was able to interact with women and children.

The result is a descriptive and etic ethnography that provides a detailed examination of the terrain that Nuussuarmit (the people of Nuusuaq) call home. Hansen’s ethnography captures the era of a predominant cultural and ideological transition in the 1960s among the villagers when a group of semi-nomads were being ‘modernized’ via the establishment of trading station-centered settlements, a phenomenon which had its origin in the 1920s. The development of these settlements and their increasing populations resulted in the adoption of a new way of living that relied on cash and additional economic activities. The era also corresponded with a change in hunting equipment. Though they began incorporating industrial technology, many Inuit tried to maintain their traditional lifeways as much as possible. For example, unlike in other parts of the Arctic, Hansen describes how sled dogs have remained the crucial means of transportation to the present. Hansen also explores how new community concentrations and technologies impacted traditional values and material culture. Here he explains how and why traditional gear was used and, if necessary, why it was replaced with imported substitutes.

Hansen’s narrative is accompanied by numerous illustrations, photographs (in both black-and-white and colour), maps, charts, tables, statistics, and drawings, to facilitate our understanding. These pictures effectively help Hansen

compare the traditional harpoon, clothing and umiaq (skin boat) with industrial firearms, motorboats, and other items. The detailed descriptions of individual pieces of gear, prehistoric and contemporary architecture, and technological change are a valuable contribution to a literature on Arctic material culture, archaeology, and art history. Chapters on the Inuit ecosystem, annual cycle, transport, and hunting and fishing may also serve as a vital source of information for both Arctic natural and social scientists who investigate current cultural responses to climate change. Hansen’s records from the 1960s may well serve as a baseline for changes in sea ice quality and condition, as well as changes in animal migration patterns, species availability, and flora.

While the detailed narratives and their accompanying illustrations are important, there is little synthesis connecting the various topics, and as a result, the conclusion limits the relevance of the book beyond the Greenlandic Arctic. The Inuit villagers and hunters clearly spent careful time talking with the author, and so the work could have been enlivened by more ‘human voices.’ Interview texts (dialogues) with Inuit villagers could reveal their emic views and particularly their emotive bonds with their environment and cultural traditions in transition. But Hansen’s work is a product of its time, a period when anthropologists rarely provided the voices of their subjects. It would have been interesting if Hansen had, in his concluding chapter, made an effort to contextualise the cultural change he recorded with the multitude of interdisciplinary research done on this topic over the last forty years. Without making this effort, ironically, his work appears as a throwback to an anthropology no longer practiced, not unlike some abandoned traditional culture his work painstakingly documents. Still, this book will be useful to readers across disciplines who are interested in Arctic environmental change and cultural adaptation over time.

Although I found many visual aids helpful and intriguing, the maps could have been drawn more carefully with a scale, a directional arrow, and an inset small scale map for locational reference when the author uses large scale maps focusing on the Upernavik district (for example on pages 17 and 34). Colour coding (or pattern coding) of topography such as water, land, sea ice and settlements could also facilitate readers’ visual comprehension. Finally, it would be helpful to have a list of photographs and illustrations.

Overall, this publication is a valuable contribution to Greenland studies. Hansen’s narrative bridges the period between the prehistory and the mid-twentieth century of Nuusuaq, and has the potential to pass useful traditional knowledge along to future generations of the Arctic. Forty years after the completion of his fieldwork, it is time for the traditional stories, data, and information generously shared by Nuusuaq elders to go back to their Greenland home as an important record of indigenous history and heritage. It is my sincere hope that the long-awaited publication of this book reaffirms the adopted kinship between Hansen and Nuusuaq, his Greenlandic home. (Chie Sakakibara, The Earth Institute at Columbia University, Hogan Hall MC 3277, 2910 Broadway, New York, NY 10025 USA.)