

A HISTORY OF GREENLAND

[Review by Sylva Gethin* of Finn Gad's *Grønlands historie. 1. Indtil 1700*. København, Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 1967, 461 p, illus. 2. *1700–1782*, 1969, 2 vols, 760 p, illus. 3. *1782–1808*, 1976, 615 p, illus.]

The first two volumes of this work, which must surely be indispensable to any serious student of the history of Greenland, and indeed of Scandinavia, were published in English translation by C. Hurst and Company in 1970 (*The history of Greenland. 1. Earliest times to 1700*) and 1973 (*2. 1700–1782*) respectively. The author is a Danish teacher and historian, who has lived and worked in Greenland for many years. The work will constitute the first complete history of the country and is extremely detailed and thorough. Extensive use has been made of all available source material, a great deal of which has never been used before, or even seen since it was originally filed away in archives and libraries.

Volume 1 goes back to the first appearance of man in Greenland about 5 000 years ago and we are given a review of present theories regarding these prehistoric times, inevitably based on the evidence of archaeologists. The largest single section of the volume, however, is taken up with a fascinating account of the Norse settlement in the south-west, which subsisted for 500 years from the 10th century onwards. The various theories as to how this civilization came to an end are discussed, but we are not offered any definite solutions. The forefathers of the Eskimo encountered by the Norsemen appear to have come to Greenland from about 900 onwards across the ice from the American continent—the first link in an unbroken chain of immigrations that continued until the 1860's. The increasing Scandinavian activities in the region after the virtual silence of the 16th century are accounted for in great detail, as are those of other nations, including the British. These activities stemmed largely from intensified fishing and whaling and, in the case of Britain, the search for a North-west Passage and the striving towards supremacy on the seas. European influence in west Greenland gradually began to make itself felt during this time, but no serious interference took place until after 1700 and the west Greenland culture developed along its own lines, based on local whaling.

The second volume is essentially about the pioneering stage of the Danish-Norwegian colonization of west Greenland and thus centres on Hans Egede and his contributions to missionary work and trade; but it also takes up other important themes: the culmination and decline of the whaling, the Dutch withdrawal after the great shipwreck disaster in 1777, the clashes between the Danish missionaries and the Moravian Brethren, and the struggle for survival of the various trading companies, the state eventually taking over in 1774. At the end of the period dealt with here, colonies had been established all along the west coast from Julianehåb in the south to Upernavik in the north and foreign ships were barred from access. Greenland had become a Danish concern with the consequent necessity of devising and implementing definite and consistent policies—a subject of intense discussion and controversy over the years, the present being no exception.

Volume 3, in spite of its equal size, covers a period of only 26 years, which reflects the fact that the source material becomes more and more abundant as the work progresses towards our own time. Almost impossibly so it would seem as Gad, in order to accommodate it all, has felt obliged to publish an additional work in 1974 (*Fire detailkomplekser i Grønlands historie 1782–1808*), which deals in more detail with four different aspects of the themes treated in the main work. The latest volume covers a very important epoch in Greenland's history, taking us up to the time when the 1807–14 war in Europe caused communications between Denmark and Norway to be broken. A new era is usually considered to have started in 1782, when the administrative inspectors, appointed the year before, took up their duties, and official regulations for trade and whaling were issued. The author deals here with administration and trade, fisheries, sealing and whaling as well as with social conditions and demographic data. These were hard times in Greenland with devastating epidemics and frequent periods of famine. A large section on missionary work includes accounts of the curious revival movements, and we are given a review of cultural conditions and developments.

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The author's style is possibly a trifle heavy and it is perhaps inevitable that a work of this kind becomes somewhat monotonous and repetitive with all its quotations, details and figures. This in no way alters the fact that we have here a valuable and solid work which is likely to remain the authoritative one on the subject for a long time and to which one turns with the utmost confidence.

In the English translations those of the numerous notes and references have been omitted that were considered to be of interest only to readers with a good command of Danish who might consequently be referred to the Danish volumes. The separate indices of personal names, place-names and subjects of the original volumes have been brought together in one sequence and abbreviated, but as the Danish terms for organizations, official bodies, titles, etc. have wisely been kept, a glossary has been appended. The work is interestingly illustrated, though not profusely so. It obviously cannot have been easy to find a great deal of suitable contemporary material. The colour plates in the Danish volumes have been replaced by reproductions in black-and-white in the translations.

RUSSIAN ARCTIC EXPLORATION

[Review by Terence Armstrong* of *Charting the Russian northern sea route. The Arctic Ocean Hydrographic Expedition, 1910–1915*, by L. M. Starokadomskiy. Translated and edited by William Barr, Montreal and London, Arctic Institute of North America and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976, xxiv, 332 p, illus, maps. \$18.95.]

William Barr has put us all in his debt by producing this excellent edition of a major narrative. The work of this series of Russian expeditions has been familiar to English-speakers only through relatively short accounts in geographical journals or histories of exploration. The work carried out was, in Professor Barr's words, 'the first modern attempt at a systematic survey of the arctic waters to the north of Siberia', and it deserves to be better known, for it laid the foundation for operation of the world's major polar sea route.

The two small icebreakers that carried the expedition, *Taymyr* and *Vaygach*, were specially built for the occasion. The participants were enthusiastic rather than knowledgeable in polar techniques; but they acquired knowledge from season to season (there were five voyages, the first four annual and the last overwintering at sea), and ended by making a notable contribution. The great geographical discovery was Emperor Nicholas II Land, later renamed Severnaya Zemlya, the archipelago north of Taymyr, the most northerly projection of the Eurasian mainland. Starokadomskiy was *Taymyr's* doctor; his story is straightforward and factual, and full of enthusiasm for the expedition.

Professor Barr has done a first-class job in his dual function. As editor he is unobtrusive, supplying a good short introduction on the historical background and, in notes at the end, just as much supplementary information as one needs. He notes a curious feature of the book. The Russian original appeared in three editions, published in 1946, 1953, and 1959. The second and third are closely similar, but the first is remarkably different. The differences are of two kinds: the mention in 1946 of a number of members of the expedition of whom the Soviet regime disapproved—notably of Captain Kolchak, in 1918–20 a leader of the anti-Bolshevik forces—was excised; and a whole series of anti-American passages, absent in 1946, were inserted. These insertions stand out sharply, their shrill tone contrasting strongly with the gentle and reasonable tenor of the rest, so one may suppose the good doctor had nothing to do with them. Indeed, some of his friendly remarks about Americans were also modified or cut in the later editions. There are in fact more instances of insertion (*eg* on p 34 and 109) than Professor Barr draws our attention to; but he has made the point well enough. The curiousness of all this, of course, lies in the fact that the 1946 edition should have got through.

As translator, Professor Barr has succeeded well in producing an accurate and smooth-reading text. Spot checks reveal only one actual error (southwest for southeast on p 140) and one or two misleading nuances in verbal tenses. In view of this, it is odd that several proper names should

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