An Aleutian Ethnography. By Lucien M. Turner. Edited by Raymond L. Hudson. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2008. 256 pages. $45.00 cloth; $26.95 paper.

In 1874, Lucien M. Turner traveled to Alaska as a member of the US Signal Corps, a branch of the army, in order to collect meteorological data. The Smithsonian Institution, interested in having corps personnel make ethnographic and natural history observations in the recently acquired territory, had recommended Turner to the corps on the advice of an ornithologist who had been a childhood friend. He spent three years, until 1877, in St. Michael, near the mouth of the Yukon River on the Bering Sea coast of mainland southwest Alaska. After a year's hiatus, Turner returned to Alaska with the corps, this time to the far southwestern reaches of the territory. From May 1878 to July 1881, he spent all but about two months in the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, with his longest stays in the Aleut (Unangan) villages of Unalaska, Atka, and Attu, on islands of the same names.

Although in later years Turner published many of his observations on the Yukon region and on the Hudson Bay area of northern Canada (where he worked following his Aleutian years), his *Descriptive Catalogue of Ethnological Specimens Collected by Lucien M. Turner in Alaska*, detailing his Aleutian work, was never published (nor was it truly finished). It is that work, integrated with other published and archival materials by Turner, that editor Raymond Hudson brings to us in *An Aleutian Ethnography*.

In order to appreciate the importance of Turner's contribution to Aleut studies, it is helpful to place it in historical context. The ancestors of today's Aleuts arrived in the archipelago from the Alaska mainland some nine thousand years ago, eventually moving westward to occupy the entire region—from Attu Island in the west to the Alaska Peninsula in the east—about four thousand years ago. The abundance and diversity of the mostly coastal and marine food resources of this region supported a large population, estimated to have been from twelve to fifteen thousand at the time of Russian contact in 1741. The Russian era was marked by the exploitation of the region's commercially valuable fur resources, chiefly sea otters and northern fur seals, and of the Aleuts, who provided the necessary labor. Within a half-century of the arrival of Russians, the Aleut population had been reduced through violence, diseases, and accidents by 80 to 90 percent, and no facets of traditional culture remained unaltered.

Despite the fact that it was in the Aleut region that the first sustained foreign contact in Alaska took place, there have been only a small number of extensive, firsthand ethnographic accounts ever written concerning the people of this area. The earliest and most comprehensive was written by Russian Orthodox priest Ivan Veniaminov based on his residence in Unalaska

from 1824 to 1834, three-quarters of a century after the profound cultural changes of the contact era had begun. Turner's observations of Aleut culture began eleven years after the 1867 sale of Alaska to the United States. By that time, although some deeply rooted Aleut traditions continued (such as the procurement of certain foods, sharing of resources among family and community, and the use of the Aleut language), many others had been substantially altered (for example, the replacement of traditional shamans with Russian Orthodox priests and Western doctors; the change from semi-subterranean extended-family houses to smaller aboveground dwellings; and the use of new technologies for hunting and fishing).

In *An Aleutian Ethnography*, Hudson has reorganized Turner's draft presentation of the material, splicing in pieces from other works by Turner and arranging it all in nineteen topical chapters that focus on various facets of Aleut life. Two appendices—one presenting fascinating maps drawn by Aleuts of some of their islands, the other describing a collection of gut bags made by Turner—round out the text. These are followed by informative endnotes, a bibliography, and an index.

Hudson's lengthy introduction to the ethnography is an informative and indispensable commentary on Turner's life and work. In it, Hudson presents not only a biographical sketch of Turner, but also an insightful critical analysis of the works of William Healy Dall, Ivan Petroff, and Henry Wood Elliott. These three contemporaries of Turner also wrote about the history and culture of Aleuts, but, unlike Turner's efforts, their works were widely published and, at least initially, well received. Nevertheless, as Hudson details, substantial uncertainties regarding the accuracy and originality of some of Dall's, Petroff's, and Elliott's work exist. With this in mind, Hudson notes, Turner's observations assume special importance to Aleut studies because Turner, unlike his contemporaries, learned the Aleut language and was able to converse with people of the region; spent more continuous time in Unalaska, Atka, and Attu; and made extensive collections of material culture.

Turner's ethnography is often cumbersome; the prose is dated, as can be expected, but it is also simply not well done. Hudson, who describes Turner's notes as being "as fragmentary and unpolished as the least of the stone implements he catalogued," acknowledges this observation (46). Perhaps more important, however, is that Turner does not always make clear if he is describing the Aleut customs and material culture that he observed during his tenure in the Aleutians, or if he is attempting to describe the customs as they were at some presumably more traditional time in the past. In this regard, some of the specimens (such as gut bags and grass baskets) he collected are clearly contemporary, while others (such as stone and bone projectile points) appear to be of archaeological origin. Readers will need to exercise caution

when drawing conclusions about late-nineteenth-century Aleut life based on Turner's work alone.

Overall, this is a very nicely compiled and edited book, with only a small number of inconsequential errors escaping editorial notice. However, I believe a few things could have been done better. First, because most readers are unlikely to be familiar with many of the places mentioned in the text, the population of the Aleut region by village that is presented in table 3 (59) would have benefited by including the names of the islands or mainland areas where those villages are located. Second, the various maps and graphics in the book are valuable additions, yet several are reproduced so small that their full worth cannot be realized. Finally, and most significantly, the high-quality black-and-white and color artifact photographs and drawings lack either internal scales or size notations in their captions, an oversight that will leave many readers—especially those unfamiliar with Aleut material culture—confused.

In sum, *An Aleutian Ethnography* is a most welcome addition to the remarkably small body of firsthand descriptions of Aleut culture. Hudson has made Turner's contribution all the more useful by placing it within the intellectual context of Aleut studies of the late nineteenth century. A teacher, writer, and artist, Hudson lived and worked for many years in Unalaska, where he spearheaded local efforts to preserve Aleut cultural heritage. He has also written and edited a number of books on the region, and his expertise and familiarity with Aleut culture and history lend an unspoken but necessary authority to this work.

Douglas W. Veltre
University of Alaska–Anchorage

The Arapaho Language. By Andrew Cowell and Alonzo Moss Sr. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2008. 544 pages. $70.00 cloth.

This volume contains the first comprehensive description and analysis of the structure of the Arapaho language. It is thus a major leap forward in Arapaho language studies. Its appearance raises many questions for the fields of linguistics and linguistic anthropology about why it has taken more than a century of intermittent research on the Arapaho language to reach this point. As the authors point out, there are now only about 250 fluent Arapaho speakers left, or roughly less than 2 percent of the combined populations of the Northern and Southern Arapaho tribes.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, research into the Arapaho language, such as that of Alfred Kroeber or Truman Michelson, was