

***Through Darkening Spectacles: Memoirs of Diamond Jenness.* Diamond Jenness and Stuart E. Jenness. Gatineau, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2008. 407 pp. [Distributed by University of Washington Press]\***

Reviewed by Hannah Voorhees

Diamond Jenness (1886-1969) succeeded Edward Sapir as Chief of the Division of Anthropology at the National Museum of Canada in 1926, serving until 1948. During much of Jenness' career, anthropology was still trying to carve a disciplinary niche for itself within Canadian universities. Reflecting the intellectual infrastructure of the time, all of Jenness' pioneering work on indigenous arctic cultures, including his identification of the Dorset Tradition, was carried out under the auspices of the Geological Survey of Canada. As a state scientist, Jenness had no students, and was plagued by administrative obstacles throughout his career. His ethnographic work, which includes *Dawn in Arctic Alaska* (1957) and *The People of the Twilight* (1959), has, until recently, received less attention than it deserves.

Any reader who has ever sought information on the life and times of Jenness will welcome the addition of this new collection, which includes eleven chapters by the anthropologist, edited and supplemented with nine additional chapters by his son Stuart E. Jenness, who uncovered his father's memoirs in 1972. The essays remained shelved until 2003, when Stuart began two years of devoted detective work, drawing on family memories and documentary sources to build on the memoirs and piece together a nearly seamless account of all aspects of his father's life.

Stuart Jenness deals with lesser-known periods of Diamond Jenness' life, such as his early study of Papua New-Guinea, his service during the two World Wars, and his contentious falling out with fellow Canadian anthropologist Marius Barbeau over succession to the position of Chief of Anthropology. The latter subject has received attention elsewhere in a biography of Barbeau by Laurence Nowry (1995), which portrays Diamond Jenness as the party at fault. Stuart Jenness is eager to restore his father's reputation, and indeed, presents a convincing case. Through detailed reference to administrative correspondence, he illuminates factors that over-determined the tension between New-Zealand born Jenness and French-Canadian Barbeau: the limited number of positions in anthropology at the time, Barbeau's unconventional intellect and concern with French folk-studies (neither of which proved amenable in the governmental setting of the time), and the ever-present hazards of miscommunication from the field.

Although the Barbeau controversy is a primary concern for Stuart Jenness, it never overshadows the rest of Diamond Jenness' story, and is the focus of only one out of 22 chapters. The book begins with the anthropologists' own account of his childhood in New Zealand, his first ventures outside his homeland, early days at Oxford, and his first field experience on Goodenough Island, during which he suffered from Malaria, truncating his tropical career (fortuitously, as it developed). Just a few months after recovering from his illness, Diamond Jenness drew on his Oxford connections to land employment working as a researcher for the Canadian government

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on his first expedition to Alaska and Canada, the personal details of which the anthropologist neglected to include in his original memoirs, but which have been masterfully recovered by his son.

Inserted throughout the text are several selections of Diamond Jenness' more readable anthropological essays, some of which were previously published for popular audiences, including "The Trials of a Polygamist," a fable-like story about a Copper Eskimo man's struggle to maintain power in his traditional role while society changes around him. In "An Indian Medicine Man," Jenness presents a Coast Salish medicine man's first-hand account of his training as a healer, a chapter that illustrates Jenness' great respect for his informants, as well as his prescient attention to voices beyond his own in the crafting of ethnographic text.

Whereas the first half of the book deals with the anthropologist's Arctic studies and the economic and administrative challenges of research and museum work in the 1920s and 1930s, the second half describes the anthropologist's travels in Europe, including scholarly trips and more leisurely travels with his family. In an effort to provide a comprehensive account of father's life, Stuart Jenness provides a minutely detailed timeline of his travels, not all of which will likely prove interesting to the reader. Particularly of note is the Jenness' family's time in Germany immediately before WWII (a chapter that Diamond Jenness evidently wanted to leave unpublished). Throughout his life, Jenness' optimism and curiosity seem to have placed him in situations others would have considered dangerous, and the family's time in Germany was no exception. In the same vein, another notable chapter describes a winter spent studying Cyprus in 1955-56, during which Jenness turned his well-honed anthropological eye to the history and social dynamics of the emerging violence between the British and Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

*Through Darkening Spectacles* leaves us with a much clearer picture of Diamond Jenness the man; the two voices in this book work together to reinforce our sense that Jenness' genuine interest in other human beings, humility, self-deprecating sense of humor, and patience as he built his relationships with his informants and collaborators all contributed to his success as an anthropologist, even as he struggled to keep anthropology afloat in Canada during the Great Depression and World War II. Through these trials, as well as the loss of his friendship with Barbeau, Jenness understandably became disenchanted with his own role, a fact reflected both in the title of the book and its original subtitle, "Some Memories of a *Taugenichts*," (a "good-for-nothing"). Fortunately, anyone who reads this account of a remarkable life in anthropology is unlikely to agree with Jenness' wry assessment of his own contributions.

## References Cited

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