

THE ALASKA TRAVEL JOURNALS OF ARCHIBALD MENZIES, 1793-1794. With an introduction and annotation by WALLACE M. OLSON, and a list of the botanical collections by JOHN F. THILENIUS. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1993. xvi + 247 p., maps, index. Softbound. US\$17.50.

Archibald Menzies was a Scottish surgeon and naturalist (primarily a botanist) with the Royal Navy who, among his many exploits, participated in George Vancouver's circumnavigation of the globe from 1791-95 in the ships *Discovery* and *Chatham*. Menzies's journals of the Alaskan portion of this expedition (1793-94) have been brought to us by Wallace M. Olson, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Alaska Southeast.

Menzies was one of many who accompanied Vancouver, but one of few to produce a journal. As Professor Olson explains in the introduction, a complete original journal does not exist, but he was able to obtain what Menzies had written after the expedition had been completed, presumably based not on memory but on his original notes. A significant motive for Vancouver's exploration in Alaska was the prospect of discovering the Northwest Passage. Failing that, a better knowledge of the coastline and its inhabitants would prove useful to British commercial interests. This account deals with their work in the inland waters in the vicinity of the present-day communities of Ketchikan, Juneau, Valdez, and Anchorage.

What we have in the Menzies journal are the daily activities while sailing along the coast in the larger vessels and exploring the shoreline in smaller vessels. It is an account of arms, coves, bays, sounds, inlets, capes, points, and islets and rocks, necessarily repetitive, since these surveys occupied most of their time. It is important to recall just how long ago these events took place and how poorly this part of the world was known. Maps were crude and detailed knowledge did not yet exist, so they had to navigate carefully in uncharted waters, probing cautiously with frequent soundings, always uncertain, sometimes guessing. By trial and error they entered sounds that became bays, encountered shoal water and rocks, and were frequently run aground and forced to refloat themselves or simply wait for higher tides. Erratic winds, calms, frequent rain and fog, and strong tides constantly challenged these sailors. Trials and tribulations are reduced in the journal to a few sentences. The loss of rigging during a terrible squall is dryly recorded, but otherwise unelaborated. The ship's craftsmen made repairs on the spot, felling trees on shore and working them for replacement spars.

Their careful examination of the shoreline was accomplished from launches and cutters or yawls mounted with sails, but for the most part they rowed. The crew comprised "men" and "gentlemen," so you know it was the men who did the rowing, mile after mile, hour after hour, often against the wind and in rough, even dangerous, water. The slow pace and the relatively short distances traveled most days are well reflected in the account. Maps supplement the text to show the areas and actual routes of the surveys, but I could better match the diary and the terrain and also appreciate their accomplishments by following progress on a large-scale topographic map for which Olson's numerous geographic notes are absolutely essential.

Descriptions of the land forms and the vegetation are general.

As a source of information on the vegetation and flora this account is not very important. Judging from the diary, plant collecting was peripheral to Menzies's other duties and conducted opportunistically. He obviously delighted in those few days he could spend on shore looking at plants and, by his own account, collections were made and notes written up. There are apparently few of Menzies's plant collections extant, and fewer that can be traced to a specific locality. We are left with the plant names mentioned in the journal, which John Thilenius has interpreted and brought up-to-date in an appendix. I would have preferred to see these annotations as notes, in sequence as the names occur in the text. Nevertheless, without these notes for reference, the botanical comments would be much less informative.

Throughout the journal for both the 1793 and 1794 seasons are descriptions of the local residents—Tsimshian, Tlingit, Haida, Eskimo, Tanaina Athabaskan—as well as representatives of the major Russian trading companies, and British and American ships trading in the region. These encounters tell us about many things—the social and material culture of the local people, and of the prevailing European attitudes toward other cultures. Groups of people, large and small, at temporary encampments and even fortified villages, were visited to gain information about the coastline, the location of villages, etc., and sometimes to obtain supplementary food, such as salmon and halibut. They met canoe travelers and often invited the people on board. One truly spectacular flotilla organized by Russian traders consisted of 900 people in 450 canoes.

Numerous comments reveal old and thankfully long-abandoned notions of racial and cultural dominance. The desire, even the expectation, that the local people would accept "docile subordination" seems incredible today. When they did not submit, their independence was taken as "treachery" for which acts of punishment and revenge were exacted. To submit a village "so turbulent and daring in their insults" to bombardment by cannons was acceptable. If canoes followed too closely or were suspected of unfriendly acts, shots were fired either across or into their bows. Here is eyewitness documentation of the problems that arise when different cultures meet. Obviously, the Europeans expected the worst and feared being overwhelmed by superior forces. This was not without some justification since the Natives were often well armed and, in some areas, were known to be warlike.

The clash of cultures was virtually inevitable due to language barriers and diverse customs. Even friendly actions were open to misinterpretation. Menzies was traversing a part of the world remarkably rich in cultures and barely known, hence the even greater difficulty in being suitably informed and prepared. We learn from the journal what the Europeans were thinking and why they acted as they did, but what must have been the overall impact on the people of the region from this voyage and other similar voyages? Fascinating would be the Native point of view on these intrusions, that were beneficial for the trading opportunities, but with obviously detrimental impacts on their lives.

Although my first impression was that the day-by-day accounts would not be very interesting, I found the book remarkably engrossing. The progress of the surveys grows on you. Spare in detail, Menzies is nevertheless informative. Professor Olson has

provided numerous notes, which add enormously to our understanding of the geographic references, the people Menzies visited, the significance of events, and sources for the many place names this expedition bestowed. Those interested in exploration, especially of northwestern North America, will want to read this book.

*David F. Murray*  
*University of Alaska Museum*  
*Fairbanks, Alaska, U.S.A.*  
*99775-6960*

ESKIMO ARTISTS: FIELDWORK IN ALASKA, JUNE 1936 UNTIL APRIL 1937. By HANS HIMMELHEBER. Introduction by ANNIENUP-RIORDAN. Zürich: Museum Rietberg Zürich, 1987 (cloth) and Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1993 (paper). Originally published in 1938 in German by Erich Roth-Verlag, Eisenach/Kassel. vii + 84 p., 104 figs., map, bib., index. Hardbound, US\$24.95; Softbound, US\$15.00.

The softbound reprint of the 1987 first English translation (published in Switzerland) of Hans Himmelheber's *Eskimokünstler* was reprinted by the University of Alaska Press in 1993 with his permission. Not only does this new edition have an excellent introduction by Professor Fienup-Riordan, it also has Dr. Himmelheber's prefaces to the original 1937 edition and the 1987 English translation, plus other valuable introductory notes including a selection of publications by Dr. Himmelheber.

Professor Fienup-Riordan's introduction informs us of Dr. Himmelheber's life and work as a renowned Africanist and summarizes the extent of his work and publications on the Southwest Alaskan Eskimos. It would be difficult to provide a better characterization of Dr. Himmelheber's book than that provided by Fienup-Riordan, when she states that Himmelheber was able "to describe the Yup'ik Eskimos as not merely surviving in a harsh land, but creatively responding to it" (p. 9).

The text of the book is terse and to the point: Dr. Himmelheber, in less than 80 pages, is able to give a lively, unadorned picture of the relationships among life, ritual and art. He states emphatically that "the plastic and graphic arts of the Kuskokwim Eskimo are practiced for the sake of representation, not for aesthetic effect" (p. 11), and then expands on this statement in the "Fundamental Principles of the Plastic and Graphic Arts" by explaining that Yup'ik art is narrative and, therefore, one needs to know the artists' stories in order to understand the content of their imagery. Himmelheber does admit that some "aesthetic values are sought in the work of art" (p. 11).

He also describes "The Function of the Fine Arts," most of which are produced in conjunction with two of nine winter festivals. Himmelheber was able to participate in most of these festivals and describes them as the ingenuous—frank and believing—observer that he is. He lovingly and specifically illustrates the painting activities "with brushes of squirrel hair and paints of their own fabrication of minerals mixed with their own nose-blood and urine," their imagery being "fed from the same source, the ancestor-stories out of which they depict

important scenes" (p. 16). Throughout the book he names individual artists and documents their personal interpretations of stories and the significance of their imagery. Although Himmelheber concentrates on personal and family stories and ownership marks, it is here that he most resembles Euro-American art historians with their emphasis on image interpretations (iconography). He illustrates both mythological and other animals, with the latter being grouped under "Imaginary Models" in another section of the book.

Himmelheber emphasizes painting, which is the major artistic activity of the Eskimo south of Norton Sound. In contrast, ivory carving and engraving ("etching") continue to predominate north of the Sound (Ray, 1982). Nevertheless, sculpture does play a significant role in the south, especially on Nunivak Island, where Himmelheber spent three of the ten months (November 1936 to January 1937) of his fieldwork. Before examining three-dimensional work, he briefly discusses drawings, in which "Eskimo women and girls, down to the very smallest, are passionate story-tellers" (p. 28). He illustrates their drawing in sand, mud or snow by means of oblong, curved story-knives, with the story-tellers singing and drawing their stories concurrently. The story-knives, which are made out of bone, antler or ivory, are the only objects engraved by the Kuskokwim Eskimos.

The section on "Sculpture" is much more elaborate and is subdivided in unusual fashion. The subsections are ostensibly the result of assorted fieldnotes that are individually significant, but not necessarily presented in a predictable sequence; festivals, technique, personalities, masks and imagery are richly interspersed. Individually and collectively, they are valuable source material for any ethnographic studies of Southwest Alaskan Eskimo art save that of the Yukon region. The detailed discussion deals less with form than with content, more with meaning than with quality, and more with the Eskimos than with artistry. In contrast, his detailed accounts of what a few of the "real artists" said are interesting and informative. It is unfortunate that some of the illustrations, particularly the masks, (e.g., pp. 34, 37, 39) are not of objects from the geographical areas covered in his discussion (cf. Nelson, 1899; Fitzhugh and Kaplan, 1982; Ray, 1982). His discussion and illustrations of Kuskokwim grave figures are both fascinating and authentic.

Part II of the book focuses on "Talent"—Who has talent? The Manifestation of Talent, The Practice of Artistic Activity, The Estimation of Talent, and The Personality of the Artist. This section is of particular importance not only to the study of art making in Southwest Alaska, but because it challenges some universal questions about talent and art. Himmelheber is forced to acknowledge that "it is difficult to say how many real artists there are, in general, in a normal village" (p. 51). This same question could be asked of anywhere else in the world, not only about contemporary art making in the Canadian Arctic.

Part III, titled "Formation," contains ten subsections—The Model, Materials, Technique, Manners of Painting, Construction, Tradition, The Customers, Peculiarities, Change of Dark and Light Ground, and Simplification of Form. Here Himmelheber comes to grips with largely aesthetic considerations that also have specific ethnographic relevance. Part III deals with the true