ESKIMO KINSMEN: CHANGING FAMILY RELATIONSHIP IN NORTHWEST ALASKA. BY ERNEST S. BURCH JR. *St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing, 1975. 9¼ x 6¼ inches. Hard cover, $12.95.*

This very useful work by an unusually competent anthropologist is an attempt to integrate the existing literature on Eskimo kinship and interpersonal relations with his own field work on Eskimo kinship and its meaning. In particular, Burch traces the sequences of change in kinship and in social relationships over a period of more than 100 years. His research was a combination of dependence upon the memories and goodwill of informants, detailed cross-checking of data provided for consistency, and reliance on published data itself. It appears to have been an acceptable approach.

Describing the past subsistence cycle, Burch notes that Eskimos used kin groups as hunting groups, so that kinship was a factor of social organisation. Moreover, Eskimo suspiciousness of strangers and of intergroup violence made kin ties absolutely necessary for the protection of the individual away from, or even at, home. Cruelty to those without kin support — orphans, for example — was universal.

One basic thrust of the book is that the disease and alcoholism which followed upon the Eskimo's contacts with white people resulted in great population destruction and massive migration between 1850 and 1885, and these so disrupted kin ties as to cause increasing use of non-kin-based forms of activity, such as employment with white people.

In more detail, Burch covers the sedentarization of Eskimos from 1890 to the commencement of the Second World War. Establishment of schools acted as a centralizing factor, while the need to hunt and trap tended to decentralize Eskimo life. The drop in fur prices during the great depression, however, caused the almost complete concentration of Eskimos into villages by 1940. This ended the kin-based settling of disputes (by feud or war). Instead, school, church and village activity took over kin-based educational religious and recreational functions. By this time Eskimos had come into contact with Eskimos and others in urban areas and in work relationships, a fact which further attenuated the value of the kin ties.

Burch notes not only the real but also the fictive elements of Eskimo kinship in which, for example, one was related to anyone one had ever had sexual relations with, as well as to their children. In fact, Eskimo kinship was strengthened by lineal, marital and fictive augmentation and permanence, limited only by demography and lack of knowledge of persons supposedly related, or individual desires to deactivate relationships.

Although Burch takes issue with the general anthropological assumption of "formlessness" in Eskimo kinship and social organization, he includes so many additional conjunctions in Eskimo "real life" behaviour (regional variations in classification and terminology, alternative classifications, synonyms, naming, substitution, inconsistencies, etc.) as to support the argument that Eskimo kinship was really a personally flexible tool with very few formally limiting elements.

Burch identifies 33 roles and 27 reciprocal relationships implicit in Eskimo kinship and examines them primarily from the point of view of their "solidarity aspect". For example, he notes emotional distance in the marital relationship, early avoidance patterns (men used to live in the mens' house), and brittleness. He describes marriage primarily as an economic relationship and also suggests aboriginal rigidity in roles (but notes considerable variations in individual cases). Marriages were expected to be unstable, though in recent times their bonds have been firmer. Infidelity, always the chief cause of strain, has become more narrowly defined recently; civil divorce is now less common and easy than the severance of ties under the aboriginal system.

Burch describes husband- and wife-sharing, but denies their common occurrence. He believes the prime motivation to be one of increasing kin ties, though by his own presented data, fear of jealousy (in a reciprocal arrangement) and sexual interest seem the more dominant, and his data could be interpreted to show that tolerance of such forms by mates was a defensive manoeuvre to overcome potential violence as a result of infidelity, or an excuse for sexual attraction to non-mates.

In discussing cross-generation relations he notes that, although infanticide is practised, children in the aboriginal system were well cared for. Adoption was, however, so common that children could be thought of as kinship currency. Education was putatively by example, but this method became less possible with the increase in population in the twentieth century due to better health care. Obedience was demanded from children and physical punishment was often harsh. Relationships were, however, normally loving, only becoming formal with increasing age. Favouritism and non-favouritism of children reflected the treatment parents received from grandparents (for whom the grandchild was named).

Burch finds this behaviour inexplicable, although it can be explained in psychoanalytical terms.

Burch also attempts to explain that geronticide was rare and only practised "when necessary"; again, however, an alternative explanation based upon inconsistences in child care is possible, and more likely. Burch also discusses nepotic relationships (varied); in-law relationships (strained); siblings (normal rivalry and love), co-siblings (potential mates) and affinal (varied) relationships.

More important to Burch are the strategy and patterns of affiliation. He feels that by tradition Eskimos needed kin to survive, to gain wealth and power and, more recently, simply for affiliative needs, for "happiness".

Since kin affiliation was crucial, some aboriginal villages were almost entirely multigenerational "single" families. He described the household composition of several turn-of-the-century villages in detail. These cases support Burch's argument for the continuing importance of family ties in northwestern Alaska. He notes that to focus on the nuclear family alone would obscure the range and flexibility of kin ties used by Eskimos.

Burch's work, overall, is careful, detailed and useful. Information is presented in normative and behavioural terms. Care and objectivity are the most valuable aspects of this useful book. They impart, unfortunately, a somewhat lifeless flavour to excellent material. This may be because Burch's assumptions about motivation include no element of dynamic psychological thinking, and relate to commonsense terms such as "survival", "power", "wealth" and "affiliation". Why this is an essential part of Eskimo life, and how it evolved, is not explained, and a comparison with other cultures is not made. Because of this, details regarding motivation and affect, which are only sporadically distributed throughout this work, have a potentially different meaning to the psychologically sophisticated reader. All this would be irrelevant except that the title "relationships" implies some psychological aspects to this reviewer.

In fairness, this was not Burch's aim. Nonetheless, the reader might keep in mind that it is the structure and pattern of family relationships, rather than any significant affective information, which is meant by Burch's title. That structure and pattern are well defined.

Arthur E. Hippler

PERMAFROST TERMINOLOGY. PREPARED BY R. J. E. BROWN AND W. O. KUPSCH. *Ottawa: National Research Council of Canada, 1974.* (Technical Memorandum no. 111). *5¾ x 8¼ inches, 62 pages, illustrated. Soft cover, $3.00.*

This glossary of terms is designed to aid the increasing number of people in Canada who are interested in areas affected by permafrost. It is a very useful compilation of the terms in current use, and as such fulfils a real need. The major part constitutes a listing of 146 terms and their definitions, with additional clarifying comments and references where appropriate. Nearly 100 alternative terms and cross references are also given.

The glossary was compiled under the sponsorship of the Permafrost Subcommittee of the Associate Committee on Geotechnical Research of the National Research Council of Canada. At two stages in its compilation, opinions were sought from many people involved in permafrost research in Canada, and as far as possible a consensus was obtained. In some cases, however, the authors report "conflicting opinions", and in an attempt to resolve them have expanded the existing definitions in some cases, even to the point of introducing new qualifications that are probably not universally applicable. For example, solifluction is defined as "the process of slow, gravitational, downslope movement of saturated, nonfrozen earth material behaving apparently as a viscous mass over a surface of frozen material." While there is a strong trend towards the use of "solifluction" only with regard to cold climates (with the implication of freezing or thawing processes normally involved), a restriction to saturated flow "over a surface of frozen material" is probably further than some researchers will wish to go.

The authors also discuss the problem of the dual use of the word "frozen". On the one hand, "freezing" is thought of as a process which occurs when water changes from liquid to solid, and thus it might be thought essential that "frozen ground" contain ice. On the other hand, the term "frozen" can be taken as applying to all materials at a temperature of below 0°C, whether the water present is in liquid or solid state (for it is necessary to note that underwater sediments will not freeze at precisely 0°C). The authors have conformed to normal modern practice in using "frozen" in the last-mentioned sense in relation to permafrost. Following this policy, specimen sections in the glossary read:

"*permafrost:* the thermal condition in soil or rock having temperatures below 0°C