NETSILIK ESKIMO MATERIAL CULTURE: THE ROALD AMUNDSEN COLLECTION FROM KING WILLIAM ISLAND. BY J. GARTH TAYLOR. *Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1974. 15 x 22.5 centimetres, 173 pages, illustrated. $9.00.*

A new book on material culture is always a welcome addition to the library of any museum ethnologist. This one is doubly welcome with its focus on the relatively unknown collection of Netsilik Eskimo material culture obtained by the renowned Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen between October 1903 and August 1905. It is sad but true that often the finest and oldest collections of North American material culture are to be found not in Canada or the United States, but in European museums. The Amundsen collection of close to 1200 artefacts, mostly deposited in the University Ethnographical Museum in Oslo, Norway, is such an example. In quantity and quality it is rivalled only by that collected during the Danish Fifth Thule Expedition led by Kaj Birket-Smith from 1921-24.

The volume begins with a short introduction which includes a capsule history of outside contact with the Netsilik Eskimo as well as a summary reconstruction of the normal annual cycle of the Netsilik subgroups. Then follows the bulk of the text describing the Amundsen collection in straightforward chapters under the headings of Clothing, Hunting and Fishing Implements, Transportation, Housing, Utensils and Containers, Tools, Recreation, and Models and Amulets. In the description of each artefact are detailed: material used in manufacture; museum catalogue number; measurements; stylistic features; occasional explanatory notes from published literature or Amundsen's unpublished diaries; and a brief mention of the presence or absence of similar artefacts among the Iglulik and Copper Eskimos. A short example will suffice to show the style of presentation:

Children's Pants

There is one pair of pants (15798) of the size which would fit a very young child. These are made from the white fur of a young seal. They have seams down the front and both sides, and are open between the legs. The total length is 50 cm and the circumference of the waist is 56 cm.

A similar pair of children's pants have been reported from the Iglulik . . . Jenness . . . mentions that it was "quite common" for Copper Eskimo children to wear a separate coat and trousers over their one-piece inner suits, but he does not give further description or illustrations (p. 39).

The book is illustrated with a curious combination of beautiful nineteenth-century-style pen-and-ink drawings made in the nineteen twenties, together with photographs where the former were apparently not available. The small size of the illustrations does not do them justice, and often serves to hide important details. A few modern line drawings of sled and kayak details are a notable exception. Although the general quality of the book is fair, the glued binding will not withstand heavy use. Since the price of this volume is $9.00, it is just as well that it has been produced in paperback by photo-offset directly from double-spaced typed copy — one shudders to think of the price of a hardbound typeset edition. I would like to have seen Eskimo names for the artefacts included as well as a short description of their use and place within the culture, but such additions would perhaps have lengthened the book unnecessarily.

Although Dr. Taylor's primary purpose in writing this book was to make the collection known to the world outside Norway, the secondary purpose was to compare the Netsilik material with that obtained by the Fifth Thule Expedition of 1921-24 from the Iglulik and Copper Eskimo, and to test Birket-Smith's theory that "it is evident that within the Central Eskimos the Copper tribes are farther removed from the Netsilik Eskimos than the latter are from the Caribou and the Iglulik groups" (p. 15).

This theory is examined in the concluding chapter where the author compares the distribution of artefact classes among the Netsilik, Copper and Iglulik Eskimos. He concludes that "the Amundsen collection shows closer affinities to the material culture of the Copper Eskimo not only with respect to the number of shared artefact classes, but also with respect to the stylistic similarities of artefacts that are found among all three groups" (p. 168).

Since the comparisons did not include the Caribou Eskimo, the test of Birket-Smith's statement seems inconclusive. Taylor notes, however, that the Amundsen collection was obtained almost twenty years before that of the Fifth Thule Expedition. It should also be noted that the Netsilik material from the latter expedition came mostly from Netsilingmiut who had migrated to the Hudson Bay region around Repulse Bay, Depot Island and Chesterfield Inlet. Another possible source of bias was the Copper Eskimo material which came mostly from the Umingmakturmiut, an eastern group not far from the Netsilingmiut territory.

An example of one such spurious comparison is the single Copper Eskimo kayak collected by the Fifth Thule Expedition. Although it is said to be from Tree River or Bernard Harbour, it is clearly an aberrant type, probably obtained from the Netsilingmiut in trade. It is not at all similar to one in the National Museums of Canada collected in 1913-16 by Diamond Jenness, or to others in museum collections elsewhere. Furthermore, the narrow-bladed paddle described by Birket-Smith is quite unlike the very wide cupped paddles collected by Jenness.

The book's main value lies in Taylor's careful and detailed descriptions of the Netsilik artefacts and as such is a very useful addition to any Arctic library. It is heartening to see an addition to the long-neglected study of material culture, particularly so in this case where it involves a high quality collection of early Eskimo material never previously published *in toto*.

David W. Zimmerly

POLAR DESERTS AND MODERN MAN. EDITED BY TERAH L. SMILEY and JAMES H. ZUMBERGE. *Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1974. 9¼ x 12¼ inches, 173 pages, illustrated. $11.50.*

This is a collection of papers presented at the Polar Deserts Symposium sponsored by the Committee on Arid Lands of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, late in 1971. Many of the chapters, however, show evidence of further work, including references as late as 1973. The volume is cloth bound, of good quality paper, with clear photographs and diagrams of a good size.

The chapters are grouped under three sections: Natural Environment (102 pages, including the article on native peoples), Economic Basis for Development (14 pages), and Problems of Immigrants (39 pages). The theme, as developed in the Preface, is that of "the polar deserts with respect to their physical and biological characteristics in relation to intensified development in polar areas . . . exploring similarities and differences between the polar deserts and low-latitude deserts . . . (and) . . . how man might apply knowledge gained by a long history of occupation of the latter areas."

A working definition of "polar desert" is proposed (under 25 cm of precipitation, with a mean July temperature of below 10°C) and the matter, of course, receives attention in the main body of the volume. "Polar", as might be expected, given the concern with aridity, explicitly includes ice-free areas of Antarctica as well as the High Arctic.

The most interesting parts of the book occur where authors pay some attention to the stated objectives. Thus, for example, Giovinetto, and also Bovis and Barry, tackle the problems of defining a "polar desert" competently and interestingly, Péwé develops at least some general points of comparison between warm and cold deserts (low precipitation but fluvial activity much in evidence, role of winds, etc.) and Cameron tabulates characteristics of soils in both types of desert. With few exceptions, however, other authors pay little but lip service to deserts of any kind, particularly to low-latitude deserts.

It is especially sad that the last two sections do not come to grips, even in general terms, with some of the exciting possibilities raised by the "applied" part of the objectives. The relative brevity of these sections is a reflection of the continuing ascendancy of the physical and biological sciences in polar regions. One hopes that the balance is changing and that more work like, for example, that in the paper by Tussing, "Processes and costs imposed by environmental stress", will be forthcoming.

No doubt many possible polar applications of knowledge and experience gained in low-latitude deserts were discussed at the symposium in response to these papers which are, in general, competent in themselves. Because the majority of the authors appear to be scholars with predominantly polar, especially arctic, experience, such points almost inevitably do not receive attention in their papers.

The dramatic entry of the oil industry into cold desert areas helped to stimulate the organization of the symposium at which these papers were presented. Could not this volume, possibly with a little more antarctic content, provide the *polar* briefing for a second conference which might have a greater concern with low-latitudes?

W. P. Adams

CLIMATE CANADA. BY F. KENNETH HARE and MORLEY K. THOMAS. *Toronto: John Wiley, 1974. 7⅛ x 9½ inches, 256 pages, illustrated. $8.95.*

The appearance of *Climate Canada* marks the entry into the increasingly competitive field of introductory university-level climatology textbooks of a work of regional specialization. The book is intended to provide "a simple descriptive account of Canada's climates and their interaction with man" for college and university students and interdisciplinary environmental scientists.