

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

meaning and origin of the word “aesthetics,” which concerns itself with sense perception; that is, the perception of quality that derives from the nature of materials and their sensitive/sensuous handling by artists. They constitute innate aesthetics, i.e., “man’s desire to make all representations magically effective—‘par le désir d’obtenir l’efficacité’ as M. Schuwer expresses it” (Read, 1936). Camille Schuwer suggests “that we have no right to make a distinction between the utilitarian and the artistic activities in primitive man: that primitive man does everything he does for a purpose, in total disregard of what we are pleased to call aesthetic qualities” (Read, 1936:8-9). In this regard, *Eskimo Artists* offers me its most stimulating argument, which is relevant to those controversial aspects of contemporary art criticism that deal with the meaning of and in both art and culture.

Dr. Himmelheber does not have any such pretensions; he simply intended his book to be a description of his fieldwork in the two areas he visited: the Kuskokwim River region and Nunivak Island. In terms of art, these two areas are quite different from most other areas. Thus it would be wrong to assume that this work makes any generalizations about the Eskimos or their art. The title of the book is somewhat misleading since Himmelheber’s artists are highly specific, both as Southwest Alaska Eskimos and as artists. Many other atypical groups of artists from other regions and traditions also exist within the North American Arctic, including Greenland (cf. Swinton, 1977).

In reviewing the book I found I was stimulated both positively and negatively, and relived many of my own memories of frequent visits to the Arctic in the 1950s and 1960s. At that time I was also privileged to witness some incredible changes that were and still are taking place, although I see these changes with less pessimism than Himmelheber describes in his preface to the 1987 English edition.

Much work has been published about the Kuskokwim River region and Nunivak Island in the 1930s. The great merit of this book for all who study the various aspects of Eskimo art lies in the accounts of the narrative content of artwork and Himmelheber’s personal insights (his humanism) into individual artists’ concepts, stories and techniques, and his identification of the artists by name. Unlike the featured artists in most other ethnographic reports from the first half of the nineteenth century, Himmelheber’s subjects are no longer romantically anonymous.

While this book is terse and direct, and rather nostalgic and sentimental, in the context of the times in which it was written, its factual accounts are pertinent to anyone with a genuine interest, professional or amateur, in the art of Native people.

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*George Swinton*  
*Professor Emeritus of Art History*  
*Carleton University*  
*647 Strathcona Street*  
*Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada*  
*R3G 3E9*

SILAS: THE ANTARCTIC DIARIES AND MEMOIR OF CHARLES S. WRIGHT. Edited by COLIN BULL and PAT F. WRIGHT. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993. 418 p., illus. Hardbound. US\$59.50.

The publication of the personal papers of Charles Seymour Wright, who participated as a member of the scientific staff in Robert Falcon Scott’s last expedition, represents a most welcome addition to the corpus of records on that venture, surely the most written about in polar history. The title relates to the nickname conferred upon Wright by Henry Bowers who, of course, himself enjoyed the sobriquet “Birdie.” The editors, Colin Bull, a distinguished geophysicist, and Pat F. Wright, the subject’s daughter, have skillfully woven Wright’s diary, a subsequent memoir, field notes and family correspondence together with editorial comment, to present a coherent account of the expedition with particular reference to the part Wright played in it. Distinctions in the text between the different sources and comments depend upon a system of differing typefaces and margins that, while confusing at first sight, enables the essential continuity of the narrative to be preserved without the need for cumbersome footnotes.

The body of the text is preceded by a full introduction. This includes the well known story of how Griffith Taylor and Wright, at the time a Canadian research student at the University, walked from Cambridge to London to see Scott and Edward Wilson, the scientific director of the expedition, to seek places on it. Information is also presented relating to the scientific preparation for the expedition in which Wright took a full part. At the end is an equally full epilogue providing details of Wright’s career after the expedition and of the many distinctions that he earned.

The outlines of the story are well known, but it is a measure of the success of the editors that the book would be equally interesting to the expert and to a person whose knowledge of the subject is confined to the merest acquaintance. Wright’s formal duties related mainly to the study of penetrating radiation, but he involved himself in other scientific areas, notably glaciology, and took a significant part in the early stages of the polar journey itself. Wright was the discoverer of the tent in which Scott, Wilson and Bowers perished and the matter-of-factness of his account highlights its poignancy. Wright reflected in his memoir on the reasons for the failure of Scott’s party to return and disagreed with the view of George Simpson, the expedition’s