

journals, but gathered his information, among other things, from books also written for the intelligent reader. Zavatti could have offered a more up-to-date outlook of the polar regions without sacrificing the general character of his statements. The reader of Italian who is a newcomer to polar literature will enjoy this book.

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**EARLY VOYAGES AND NORTHERN APPROACHES.** By TRYGGVI J. OLESON. A history of Canada, Vol. 1. Toronto: McLelland and Stewart. 1964. 9¼ x 6 inches, xii + 211 pages, illustrated with sketch maps, line drawings and 24 plates. \$8.50.

This is the first of McLelland and Stewart's seventeen-volume project, the Canadian Centenary Series, with W. L. Morton as executive editor and D. G. Creighton as advisory editor. "The result, it is hoped, will be scholarly and readable, at once useful to the student and of interest to the general reader." (p. ix). Volume I, by the late Dr. T. J. Oleson, professor of history at the University of Manitoba, is lively in style, wide ranging yet concise, nicely balanced in content, and invigorating by its bold interpretations. The book covers the period from about 1000 to 1632 A.D. and includes the Norsemen and their sagas, Iceland, Greenland, Vinland, the Skraelings, the archaeologists' Dorset and Thule cultures, mythical voyages to America, the hazy history of fifteenth century exploring in the area, then the Cabots, Frobisher, Davis, Hudson, Button, Bylot, Baffin, Munk, Foxe, James, and many others. About half the narrative pertains to Norsemen and Eskimos, and the rest to their salty successors up to 1632. I am unable to comment on the last-named but I question whether many historians will approve the author's harsh judgement of Sebastian Cabot. Happily, Oleson avoids an excess of Vinland entanglements.

The first part includes the problem that "occupies the central position in this volume" (p. xi), namely the intermixture of the aborigines and the Norsemen and the fate of both subsequent to their meeting. In this complex sphere Oleson leans heavily, but not completely, on the work of Jon Duason. Basing his interpretations on historical data, sagas, folk lore, and archaeology, Oleson concludes that the *Tunnit* of Eskimo folk tales were the Norsemen and that the *Skraelings* of the sagas were aborigines of Dorset culture. He argues that a blending of these two groups, culturally and racially, produced the Thule culture that subsequently extended throughout arctic Canada and west into Alaska. In coming to these conclusions the author treats arctic archaeology and its dull practitioners with the same rigour he accords Sebastian Cabot. Arctic archaeologists regard Thule culture as an outgrowth from the northern Alaskan Birnirk culture that was carried eastward to Greenland by population drift roughly about 1000 A.D. Further, most archaeologists consider Tunnit and Skraeling to be Eskimo and Norse terms respectively for Dorset culture Eskimos. Thus arctic prehistorians hold interpretations at odds with those given the central position in this book.

Although he notes that most scholars accept an Alaskan origin of Thule culture, Oleson neither presents their case nor a comprehensive rebuttal of it. His basic claim that the oldest Thule sites are to be found in Greenland and the youngest in Alaska is not documented and it is not supported by archaeologists. His observation that the attempt to link Thule with Birnirk "can hardly be regarded as successful" seems unfortunately to refer to a recent paper by the reviewer<sup>1</sup> rather than to J. A. Ford's monograph<sup>2</sup>, which provided much of the evidence and framework for that paper. His statement that there "is no evidence for" the eastward spread of Thule ignores a significant, if incomplete, body of data. One cannot concur with Oleson's conclusion (p. 174) that the Alaskan origin and eastward spread

of Thule "is one of the most astounding myths in the whole of history." It is not a myth; it is generally regarded as something more than a hypothesis. If future work can reduce it to a myth it will be rather minor in the world of historians. At that, the idea is one of archaeology, not history and here, I think, is the author's initial error that fathered others: the common and easily made mistake of thinking archaeology entire-ly an extension of history. It is some-times and in part. In the general sense and in the context used by Oleson, however, it is a different discipline with a different intellectual heritage of concepts and methods. From that error and by his intellectual courage Oleson was led to exercise naïve ideas of the pro-cesses of culture change, ignore and misconstrue part of the prehistoric data, and overstate his case. For all that it is a meaty bone that Oleson has thrown at, if not to, northern archaeologists; it may prove a good way to nourish our think-ing. Perhaps the editors should have consulted an archaeologist. Even if wrong, the author argues as the Norse devil's advocate in an interesting and refreshingly forthright manner. Oleson wrote a lively and enlightening book recommended to the reader with the above archaeological warning.

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, William E., Jr. 1963. Hypotheses on the origin of Canadian Thule culture. *Am. Antiquity* 28:456-64.

<sup>2</sup>Ford, James A. 1959. Eskimo prehistory in the vicinity of Point Barrow, Alaska. *Anthrop. Paps. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* Vol. 47, pt. 1.

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#### FAUNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF BIRDS IN THE ILIAMNA LAKE AREA, ALASKA.

By FRANCIS S. L. WILLIAMSON and LEONARD J. PEYTON. *Biological papers of the University of Alaska, No. 5.* 1962. Paper, 9 x 6 inches, ii + 73 pages, 16 figures, including maps, 10 tables. \$1.00.

As an adjunct to more extensive studies on the faunal relationships of birds in the Upper Cook Inlet area of southern Alaska, Francis Williamson and Leonard Peyton spent parts of two summers chiefly along the Newhalen River on the north side of Iliamna Lake — at the base of the Alaskan Peninsula. The lake itself, the largest body of fresh water in all Alaska, lies at the junction of three major ecological divisions or biomes. By subdividing these divisions into a dozen smaller ecological units, which are adequately described and superbly illustrated, the authors attempted to determine the faunal relationships through observation and the collecting of specimens in each of the units. In this venture they were not wholly successful. Nevertheless, they present what appears to be an accurate picture of the avifauna of the Lake Iliamna area with reference to the three major divisions.

Of the three biomes of the area, the Hudsonian (Coniferous Forest) yielded 38 bird species, the Eskimoan (Tundra) 20 species, and the Sitkan (Moist Coniferous Forest) only five species. Nineteen species were so general in habitat preference that they did not fit any particular biome. The authors conclude that the Iliamna Lake area with its mixed avifauna is not a distinct faunal district. It is similar in this respect to the upper Cook inlet area but different from other neighboring areas, namely extreme southeastern Alaska, Prince William Sound, and probably Kodiak Island.

The instability of the avifauna is further reflected in at least five intermediate races or subspecies found in the area. It would appear that these birds are influenced by both coastal and interior races. Although not presenting a strictly taxonomic paper, the authors delve rather deeply into the subject and support their ideas with a convincing series of specimens. Most interesting is the presence in the area of three races of fox sparrows, the relationships of which are discussed at some length.

The printed text consists largely of an annotated list of 103 bird species, in-