

num) are the normal type of plant community. On the other hand, the regions of the Antarctic polar desert is considered to agree in all essential characteristics with the vegetation type of Arctic polar deserts. The final concluding chapter is all too brief and the book ends with a list of latin plant names and a useful index.

The most serious defect of the whole work is the total absence of photographs, and the poor quality of the small number of accompanying maps which are too small to give good detail. Also, there is much to argue about in the classification itself. For example, the translator queries the exclusion of Iceland from the tundra zone. Why has the southern tip of Greenland also been excluded? Why is no comment made about the classificatory position of the vegetation of the Falkland Islands and other islands of the Southern Ocean which are usually included in the southern cool temperate zone? Yet, in spite of these defects, in time this book is likely to be looked upon as something of a milestone in polar botanical literature. Due to the translator's efforts, many will have been introduced to information and ideas which up to now have been lost sight of in Soviet literature because of the language barrier. And thinking on the classification of polar vegetation can only be enriched as a result of the stimulating overview presented here. This book is a 'must' for all students of plant geography, especially of the cooler parts of the world; all those involved in its production and publication are to be congratulated.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN ALASKA

[Review by Marvin Falk* of Barbara S. Smith's *Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska: a history and analysis of the church archives in Alaska with an annotated bibliography*. Anchorage, Alaska Historical Commission, 1980, x, 171 p. Softcover. US\$ 12.00.

The Russian Orthodox Church has had enormous cultural, linguistic, social and even economic influence in Alaska. The arrival of the first Orthodox missionaries in 1794 predated the establishment of the Russian American Company. The Church became the primary agent of formal education, developed written forms for a number of native languages, and became an integral part of everyday life throughout most of the Russian-administered territory. Over time much of the Church's work was carried out by natives and creoles as well as by the Russian born. Its influence has never completely disappeared and is present today, sometimes working in subtle ways. Very little is generally known in detail because a complete history of the Church has yet to be written. This is not surprising since much of the primary documentation has not been available, and only a few scholars up to now have devoted their time to the study of the Orthodox Church in Alaska. The primary documents are very rich indeed, and they can serve those interested in demography and social history in much the same way as parish records have served in the study of medieval or early modern societies in Europe. This material is especially useful when it is combined with other independent observations, good oral histories when possible, and the best archaeological, ethnographical and anthropological studies.

An exciting discovery has been the recent collation of documents and records of the Kvikhpak (Yukon) River Mission by the Alaska Diocese of the Orthodox Church. This material has been filmed through a joint effort which included the state, the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education and the University of Alaska. Barbara Smith, who arranged and described the material, has expanded upon her original 1974 report to produce *Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska*. She includes a brief history; a description and inventory of the archival collection, now housed at St Herman's Theological Seminary in Kodiak; a chronology; and a selected bibliography with annotations. With the exception of the Kvikhpak inventory, her subject is the Orthodox Church in Alaska as a whole. She provides the best available guide to the names and assignments of Orthodox clergy. She briefly describes other archival collections and passes judgement on what has been published about the history of the Church. The text is handsomely printed with a number of useful maps, illustrations and photographs of church structures. It is not an exhaustive reference guide to the whole of the published or manuscript literature, nor is it meant to be. It is, however, an excellent place to begin for those interested in serious research as well as those who want a general orientation.

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