

linked to government that his reputation for detachment must be qualified at best? All these interpretations can be found among the contributions to this volume. This is probably because both views are valid. Innis was sympathetic to the costs of development but he was not, as Jeff Webb notes, “a social historian interested in the lives of rural people” (p. 183). Nor was he a social worker focused on the difficult problems of a region in transition. He was an economist interested in the forces driving the changes. He was also a man of his era. His views of Aboriginals, while often sympathetic, are phrased in terms that are disconcerting to readers with 21st century values. It is ahistorical for us to expect anything else.

Overall, this is a work with plenty of substance. For a collection of essays coming out of a conference, it is an impressively coherent volume, with only a couple of papers that seem tangential. The general level of the articles is very high, and for all the Innis I have read in my misspent years as an intellectual historian, I still feel that I understand him better with the help of this work.

That doesn't mean everything is perfect. Perhaps inevitably, there are points of repetition as people restate the same arguments or recount the same trips. Also, if I learned from the volume, I also felt frustrated by it occasionally. After reading 400 pages, even enthusiastic Innis scholars can become fatigued.

One reason the work is so long is that the editor has included a considerable number of his own writings: some 160 pages are authored or co-authored by Buxton. Although these articles are the product of excellent research, perhaps he might have omitted or consolidated some of this material in the interest of brevity. Overall, however, this is an exceptionally good work that tells us much about Innis. Anybody interested in Innis, evolving views of the North, or perceptions of Canadian development in his era would find this a work well worth reading.

Doug Owrām
University of British Columbia
3333 University Way
Kelowna, British Columbia V1V 1V7, Canada
Doug.Owram@ubc.ca

THE MEANING OF ICE: PEOPLE AND SEA ICE IN THREE ARCTIC COMMUNITIES. Edited by SHARI FOX GEARHEARD, LENE KIELSEN HOLM, HENRY HUNTINGTON, JOE MELLO LEAVITT, ANDREW R. MAHONEY, MARGARET OPIE, TOKU OSHIMA, and JOELIE SANGUYA. Hanover, New Hampshire: International Polar Institute Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-9821703-9-7. xliii + 366 p., maps, colour illus., further reading. US\$50.00.

It is very hard not to be enthusiastic about *The Meaning of Ice*. In many ways, it is an outstanding example of what can result when there is close cooperation between Inuit and scientists, not to mention careful and sensitive editors. This

volume about the effects of climate change on the northern environment was produced by people whose lives are intimately linked to sea ice, and for me no work has treated this topic better. (In the spirit of full disclosure, I have had the good fortune to live and travel with several of the contributors.)

The core of this book is the observations by Iñupiat (from Barrow, Alaska), Inuit (Kangiqtugaapik/Clyde River, Baffin Island), and Inughuit (Qaanaaq, Northwest Greenland) of how the sea ice environment in their respective regions has changed over the last several decades. Hereafter, for simplicity's sake, I will use “Inuit” as the cultural referent. The volume's contributors, of whom there are 43 (but see Acknowledgements), provide a wealth of information not only about the ice environment and the changes in it that they have experienced, but also how *siku* (sea ice) is a key component in the ecologies of their respective communities. Their various narratives inform the reader about the multidimensionality of the ice as a platform for travel and hunting and, when read closely, about how this environment influences the socio-cultural life of Inuit.

The Meaning of Ice, on first glance, gives the impression that it is more a coffee table book than serious scholarship. Its photographs, drawings, and maps are indeed striking, but all do more than simply please the eye. For instance, the maps that detail the changes that have occurred in the extent and nature of the sea ice around these communities (for instance, the disappearance of *sepput* (polynya) important for hunting) are excellent in both their technical quality and their informational detail. Similarly excellent are the drawings that illustrate traditional practices. These include the proper division of a narwhal at Qaanaaq (of particular interest to me) and patterns for the manufacture of sealskin *kamiit* (boots) and polar bear *silapaa* (wind pants). Then there is the descriptiveness of Inuktitut about this environment. Perhaps some of this nomenclature may replace some of the less precise English language descriptors, as has been the case with snow terminology in Russian.

But the photos and other illustrations, for all their richness, are supplemental to the Inuit narratives. These tell about not only the historical importance of sea ice to Inuit and the depth of their observational abilities, but also how Inuit are adapting to the changing environmental situations of each locale represented here. The term “expert” is too often loosely applied to persons simply because they have written about a phenomenon or a culture. Here, however, the term is fully appropriate because the writers have not only lived on the sea ice, but also derived their livelihood from it and have thought about it in ways rarely possible for outsiders.

In a field of study—climate change/sea ice/Inuit—that can appear to be, at the least, overcrowded, *The Meaning of Ice* stands out and is outstanding. The volume's qualities make it nothing less than a work of ethno-anthropology, an odd term to use here, but the right one. The Inuit who participated in *Siku-Inuit-Hila* (sea ice-Inuit-sky), in concert with the project's editors and scientific advisors, have

produced a work that removes its subject from the realm of abstraction and in so doing makes it absolutely clear that the sea ice is not someplace Inuit only venture onto; rather it is an essential aspect of Inuit culture and life. *The Meaning of Ice* is very much greater than the sum of its parts and kudos go to all involved in it. One last word: should one be led to ponder Inuit and Southern ways of thinking about sea ice, the word clouds on pages xlii and xliii are especially insightful.

George W. Wenzel
Department of Geography
McGill University
Montréal, Québec H3A 0B9, Canada
wenzel@geog.mcgill.ca