

tions of the locality, by the failure of his colour plates, and by his inability to capture the elusive splendours of the aurora.

Ponting's early return to England was designed to raise much-needed funds by way of lectures and exhibitions and by the promotion of his stills and the movie film. In a chapter entitled 'Trials and tribulations,' the authors show how these plans were in part frustrated by Scott's conferring photographic rights to publishers without Ponting's knowledge. Fortunately, he retained control over the movie that many years later was to be reissued with a sound track as the classic *90 degrees south*. With the outbreak of World War I, interest in the Scott expedition waned, although Ponting, obsessed with the tragedy, continued to promote its story. Yet notwithstanding the success of his narrative account *The great white south* (1921), Ponting's fatal flaw, a total lack of financial acumen, led him from one business to another until in the end he died an embittered man.

The book concludes with an assessment of Ponting's place in the history of photography, followed by an account of the photographer's work and a brief sketch of Scott's career. This book is a welcome tribute to a great photographer of whom little has been written since H.J.P. Arnold's biography (1969), now long out of print. The authors have updated this work with new material culled from the recently published journals of Ponting's comrades and some unpublished sources. (H.G.R. King, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

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GENERAL GEOCRYOLOGY. E.D. Yershov. 1998. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 580 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-521-47334-9. £75; \$US120.

The Russian experience in geocryology or permafrost studies is both long and far-reaching, and as such it forms a vital part of this embryonic discipline. Yet for most permafrost researchers, the Russian contribution remains frustratingly elusive, hidden behind a language barrier that is breached only by infrequent, but frequently dated and often relatively weak, translations. The translation of E.D. Yershov's *General geocryology* is billed as the revelation of a classic work, providing a comprehensive and contemporary view of this portion of Russian science. For a generalist reviewer, only some of the most pressing questions stemming from such a billing may be answered, but for those questions that may be answered the responses are unequivocally positive.

Is the text comprehensive? It certainly is, containing five major sections, each comprised of three or four chapters. Following an irritatingly unnumbered first chap-

ter, the first major section leads the reader systematically through the fundamental thermal, physical, chemical, and mechanical processes of the freezing and thawing of ground and soil, plus the constituent water. This background in formative processes leads naturally enough into a second section focused upon the composition and frozen structures of sediments and rocks. The third section is a comprehensive evaluation of the important outcomes of seasonal freezing and thawing, the ensuing thermal regimes, and associated landforms. In the fourth section, Yershov changes perspective and provides a historical and geographical background of permafrost and associated phenomena. The fifth, and final, section is inevitably focused upon a review of applied and/or engineering issues. In short, the text represents a comprehensive course in geocryology — from cradle to grave, as it were.

Is the text, in fact, a fair reflection of Russian permafrost science and its history at the beginning of the 1990s? This question cannot be answered by this particular reviewer, nor presumably by anyone else who lacks familiarity with the original Russian-language literature. One frustration that does emerge is the grand total of only 21 references for a text spanning nearly 600 pages. Given that most of the citations actually provided are in Russian, it may be argued that this is not a critical shortcoming; nevertheless, it does mark Yershov's manuscript as more of a textbook than a research monograph. Despite an admittedly limited ability to assess firmly the text's position in its Russian context, the reader certainly develops the impression that the writing is all-embracing.

How does Russian permafrost science compare with English- or American-language geocryology (assuming Yershov's summary to be an adequate one)? There is no simple answer to this question because the breadth of the text means that there are innumerable answers depending upon the specific topic under consideration. A partial answer, derived from my own research interests in periglacial geomorphology, is that the shortcomings of a comprehensive, textbook review are apparent, but that there are many intriguing tidbits and snippets. Such a response should be read in a positive light, because surely it is true of any advanced textbook regardless of the language of origin. What did emerge strongly was a much more highly nuanced and sophisticated treatment of difficult issues than I have often read in other translations of Russian research. Undoubtedly, part of this improvement stems from the greater timeliness of this translation: it is all too easy to be critical of work that is decades old, but only recently translated. In short, some readers will be critical, others will be intrigued, many will probably be both — but in different portions of the book. All responses must surely be to an over-arching textbook, and not to a state-of-the-art research manuscript.

The line diagrams are generally small, but extremely clear and sharp, and as a result the reader is left with clear impressions, but no real opportunity to use them in a direct sense. The photographs are commonly mediocre, some even fuzzy and muddy to the point of being merely

gestures. Given the extremely handsome production of the book overall, this particular shortcoming is undoubtedly a reflection of the quality of the originals. Tables and equations are well presented. At US\$120 the book is undoubtedly good value for the money, but it is likely to remain a library item except for individuals with strongly vested interests.

So far so good, but I have saved the best for last! I approached 600 pages of translated Russian geocryology with a fair degree of trepidation born of past experience. While I would not recommend *General geocryology* as a 'light read' to accompany the beverage of your choice, I would congratulate technical editor Peter Williams, and the many helpers he acknowledges, on a splendidly comprehensible text — and simultaneously tip my hat to Cambridge University Press for the institutional commitment behind it. The determined, thorough, and carefully explained effort to wrestle with the terminological and definitional problems inherent to the translation are matched only by clean prose in which it is presented. Some heavy linguistic overtones occasionally lurk in the background, but I emerged on page 573 feeling that I had been subjected to a well-founded, well-written, and comprehensible survey of modern geocryology. The obvious strength is that the view, as claimed, is uniquely Russian, doubtless containing shortcomings in some areas of research, but equally assuredly shedding new light in others. The less obvious strength, but an equally important one upon reflection, is that both strengths and weaknesses come through clearly — science has been well served by the producers of this translation. In short, the rather lofty goal of opening the door on the working core of modern Russian geocryology has been, in very large part, realized. It is a task long overdue, and one that merits attention in many other tongues and corners of earth science. (Colin E. Thorn, Department of Geography, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 220 Davenport Hall, MC-150, 607 South Mathews Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801, USA.)

SINEWS OF SURVIVAL: THE LIVING LEGACY OF INUIT CLOTHING. Betty Kobayashi Issenman. 1997. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, in association with Etudes/Inuit/Studies. xiv+274 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7748-0596-x. \$49.95.

Sinews of survival provides a survey of prehistoric, historic, and contemporary Canadian Inuit clothing, which includes examples drawn from Aboriginal peoples in Alaska, Russia, and Greenland. The first chapter focuses on tools, accessories, and garments found in archaeological sites in Canada, Alaska, and Greenland. The second chapter provides a good introduction to the main skins used in Inuit clothing, including seal, caribou, and bird skins. It also introduces each type of clothing and describes how the clothing is layered to provide insulation. Skin preparation procedures and excellent drawings of the stitches used for different garments, including intestine parkas, are presented in chapter three.

The main portion of the book presents a survey of

Canadian Inuit clothing, which is well organized with maps clearly identifying the region, photographs illustrating regional styles being used in a variety of activities, examples of garments from museum collections, and drawings of garment patterns by Dorothy K. Burnham. The end of this chapter includes information on the evolution of styles and the impact that trade goods had on Inuit clothing styles. Chapter five, 'Spiritual, artistic and social traditions,' provides a fascinating summary of the spiritual and socio-cultural meaning of symbols used by seamstresses in clothing, with examples drawn from throughout the circumpolar region and as far south as the Lower Amur River (Russia–China border). The final chapter explores the relationships between Inuit communities, elders, styles and symbols used in different regions, and museum collections.

An appendix includes an inventory of museums with clothing collections from specific areas of the circumpolar region. The inventory, footnotes, glossary of terms, acknowledgements, references, illustration credits, and sponsors provide valuable material for future reference. The index makes it easy to locate information on similar topics located in different chapters. The archival and contemporary photographs, museum artifacts, illustrations, and maps contribute to the growing body of published information in the field of Inuit clothing and culture; however, a pair of Khanty or Nenets boots from Siberia are mislabelled as Copper Inuit boots on page 53. The material on these boot soles that is identified as polar-bear skin is actually the small pieces of skin located between the reindeer toes.

Quotes from Inuit are included throughout *Sinews of survival*, providing enriched explanations, perspectives, and stories. This combination of Inuit voices, illustrations, records, and museum artifacts creates a holistic view of the meaning and importance of clothing used in the Arctic. (Jill Oakes, Department of Native Studies, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3T 5V5.)

ALBATROSS BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION. Graham Robertson and Rosemary Gales (editors). 1998. Chipping Norton, Australia: Surrey Beatty and Sons. xii + 300 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-949324-82-5. £40.00.

A world without albatrosses is as disheartening a prospect as Wallace without Grommit or the 1812 Overture without the cannon. But the first is a serious prospect if the declines of certain albatross species continue. These declines, particularly among wandering albatrosses, were first noticed in the late 1980s on the French and British sub-Antarctic islands. Only when Nigel Brothers (1991) published his estimate that the Japanese longline fishery in the Southern Ocean was responsible for 44,000 albatross deaths per year did the likely cause of the declines become more widely appreciated.

Since that time there has been no lessening in concern for the damage wrought by long lines on many albatross species, on other seabirds, and indeed on other large vertebrates of the high seas such as sharks and turtles. Now BirdLife International has appointed a seabird coordinator