

REVIEW

FIERCE CLIMATE, SACRED GROUND: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN SHISHMAREF, ALASKA

Elizabeth Marino. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks, 2015; 122 pages, photos, maps, index. ISBN 978-1-60223-266-2 (paperback; \$24.95); ISBN 978-1-60223-267-9 (ebook; \$24.95).

Reviewed by **Jim Simon**

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Marino's *Fierce Climate, Sacred Ground* is destined to become a classic in Arctic climate change discourse and research. Her use of first-person narrative and the book's organization makes it a very easy read. Marino effectively uses the case study approach of applied ethnography and, in so doing, identifies many significant aspects of the challenges small, marginalized communities face in responding to environmental change. As such, this case study makes an important contribution to our understanding of climate change policy research. The extensive references and citations serve as an excellent primer for students of climate change impacts and adaptation strategies.

This book is a must-read for academics, policymakers, and the general public interested in understanding climate change research, climate change policy development, and the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies among human societies and groups impacted by environmental change.

Marino provides a compelling discussion of the global attention received by the people of Shishmaref as a case study of a community on the forefront of anthropogenic climate warming and environmental change. This book represents an effective use of ethnography to contextualize climate change impacts, community vulnerability, and resilience factors with a strong grounding in anthropological, disaster, vulnerability and resiliency, and environmental migration theory.

Marino expertly develops the argument that evaluations of climate change impact vulnerabilities must include an understanding of socioecological history of colonialism and that climate change is an issue of human rights, especially aboriginal human rights.

This case study points out the ironic circumstances Shishmaref residents find themselves in as they respond to human-induced climate change, given the relative paucity of local greenhouse gas emissions from activities in Shishmaref and the relative lack of benefits received from large-scale industrial emissions. As Marino states (pp. 9–10): “In other words, people in Shishmaref, Alaska have nearly no culpability for climate change on a large scale and yet are some of the first to suffer the consequences. The least guilty, in this case, are suffering the greatest loss.”

Marino presents an adapted conceptual model of vulnerability (following Adger 2006), which helps us to understand the various drivers of vulnerability, ranging from natural disasters (where vulnerability is expressed as exposure to natural environmental forces) to a lack of entitlement resources (where social relations are the principal driver of vulnerability). In the middle of these two conceptual extremes, Marino describes the political ecology model where vulnerability is driven by a group's political position within society. She then describes a model that incorporates compounded pressures from both environmental forces and systems of social relations that define vulnerability. Marino describes the latter as the pressure and release model, which is closely tied to climate change research and is adopted from the field of ecology. The pressure and release model balances the natural hazard model of disaster with the political ecological model. The strength of the pressure and release model is that it incorporates root causes of vulnerability that are internal to a community; hazardous conditions are considered an additional pressure on that community. This model neither underscores nor dismisses the physical reality and impor-

tance of the hazard itself. Marino acknowledges, however, that the pressure and release vulnerability model is not without limitations, because it fails to describe the mechanisms of vulnerability over time.

Marino informs us that, despite their intuitive sense and continued public appeal, hazard-centric research and techno-engineered solutions to disaster began to fall out of favor with social scientists by the late 1970s and early 1980s as new research demonstrated that the consequences of disasters were highly dependent upon social systems and socioecological interactions.

Marino also provides an insightful discussion of the term “vulnerability” and its inherent stigmatization: a critical understanding that all climate change researchers and policymakers should appreciate when considering rural Alaska communities’ vulnerabilities to a changing environment due to anthropogenic climate change. In short, Marino cautions that labeling certain groups as vulnerable can be stigmatizing and can result in the re-creation of outdated and racist stereotypes of indigenous peoples needing the help of outsiders. Marino’s experiences in Shishmaref, however, demonstrate that residents are extremely competent, flexible, and resourceful individuals with remarkable resilience to the challenges they face. Marino (p. 30) also develops the argument that Shishmaref residents: “...are vulnerable to a limited set of negative circumstances and

events associated with flooding that are the result of complex social and ecological circumstances that implicate far-reaching global and national policies and ideologies.”

She adeptly describes the roles of subsistence and traditional land tenure and occupancy as primary considerations in Shishmaref residents’ struggle to cope with a changing environment, while at the same time maintaining their sense of cultural identity and socioecological food security. Marino concludes *Fierce Climate, Sacred Ground* with applied ethnographic recommendations to cope with environmental change, including: (1) develop new disaster response protocols for climate change; (2) create a central agency for relocation planning; (3) work closely with local institutions; (4) develop mechanisms to encourage personal cross-agency relationships; (5) outline risks and outcomes in explicit terms while recognizing culturally divergent value systems; and (6) acknowledge an Alaska Native right to traditional subsistence territory and fund the protection of this right.

REFERENCE

- Adger, W. Neil.
2006 Vulnerability. *Global Environmental Change* 16 (3):268–281.

REVIEW

SO, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN NATIVE? LIFE AS AN ALASKA NATIVE TOUR GUIDE

Alexis C. Bunten. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2015; 272 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8032-3462-8 (hardcover; \$26.95).

Reviewed by Nadia Sethi

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During the summer months, Sitka residents are accustomed to seeing their community transformed from a quiet Alaska town to a place bustling with tourists, who take over the downtown during a short period when the cruise ships are in town. *So, How Long Have You Been Native?* chronicles the experiences of a summer seasonal tourist industry worker and provides insight into the industry from the inside. It is an engaging read filled with humor, history, and critical analysis of cultural tourism.

Bunten began her research for this book while completing her Ph.D. in anthropology at UCLA. She spent two summers working in Sitka with Tribal Tours, a local tour company owned by the Sitka Tribe, under the disclosure that her experience at work would inform her research on “cultural commodification and self-branding in Native American cultural tourism” (p. xi). Although Bunten’s heritage includes Yup’ik and Alutiiq rather than Tlingit roots, Tribal Tours welcomed her and her research project. Her co-workers, who are presented in the book as fictionalized versions of her real co-workers, willingly allowed their stories to be shared.

Written in an auto-ethnographic style, the book presents the day-to-day experiences of working in the industry, from getting hired to learning how to give and personalize tours, to building relationships with co-workers and learning how to handle tourists who are sometimes inappropri-

ate and often ill-informed about Alaska. She weaves into this narrative a history of tourism in the area, social commentary on the effects of colonization on Alaska Native people, her own family history, and self-questioning of her position as an indigenous anthropologist. This includes examining a series of provocative questions: What version of history do tourists want to learn? What does it mean to identify as an Alaska Native? What stereotypes and expectations do tourists bring with them when they arrive in Alaska (and can a tour guide correct these stereotypes over the course of a two-hour tour)? Are there some stories that are not appropriate to share outside of the culture? These questions are largely left open for the reader to consider, but Bunten makes it clear that those who participate in cultural tourism by putting themselves on display as Native tour guides bravely serve as culture brokers “whose occupations serve to bridge the gap between peoples of disparate backgrounds and worldviews” (p. 204).

Readers who are interested in the history of Southeast Alaska will find this book an appealing read, as will those who are interested in tourism studies, or self-reflexive studies of anthropology. As a former Sitka resident, reading the book made me wish that I had taken the time to join one of the community tours, so that I could have experienced Sitka through a different set of eyes.

REVIEW

ON TIME DELIVERY: THE DOG TEAM MAIL CARRIERS

William S. Schneider. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks, 2012; 160 pages, photos, maps, tables, index. ISBN: 978-1-60223-167-2 (paper; \$24.95).

Reviewed by **Kenneth L. Pratt**

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Short but rich, this book is essentially a series of local histories built around dog team mail carriers, the overland trails they used, and the ways in which human relationships to the land have changed since the advent of aviation. The geographic focus is Interior Alaska, and the temporal period of concern is circa 1900 to 1945. The goal of the study is summarized by author William Schneider as follows:

The Iditarod and Yukon Quest sled dog races are faint but important reminders of a period in Alaska history when overland trails provided transport and communication over much of the vast Interior. Dog team mail carriers, responsible for regular scheduled delivery of mail and freight regardless of weather and trail conditions, made up the backbone of this system. Today, planes provide point-to-point travel over vast stretches that once supported a different way of life, a life more dependent on the land. This book sets out to tell that story (p. ix).

Schneider definitely achieves his goal. Methodologically, the study is an ethnohistorical reconstruction—one that relies most heavily on oral history accounts (both Native and non-Native) but also effectively incorporates written historical and government records and is well illustrated with historical photographs. The book is solidly researched, clearly written, and its layout pleasing.

Following an introduction, the book is divided into seven chapters, each supplemented with endnotes that expand the context of or provide extra details germane to particular discussions therein. Chapter 1 (“Origin of the Mail Trails”) discusses linkages between early non-

Native trading operations in Interior Alaska, subsequent mining activities, and the entrepreneurs who became the first mail carriers “before a well-developed trail system and without government backing” (p. 4). Chapter 2 (“Evolution of the Mail Trail System”) describes how mail trails developed in conjunction with transportation (roads, railroads) and communication initiatives (i.e., the Washington and Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System [WAMCATS]). Good maps are essential to this chapter but, unfortunately, the two postal route maps (pp. 16–19) provided are virtually useless due to their scale. The volume lacks detail maps highlighting the relevant geographical areas.

Subsequent chapters benefit significantly from Schneider’s extensive experiences as both an oral historian and a recreational dog musher. His discussions of dogs known as “loose leaders” (pp. 35, 78, 81) is just one example.

Chapter 3 (“Life on the Trail”) provides a broader context for the daily life of dog team mail carriers. It also describes important supporting roles filled by mail carriers’ families and other Interior residents in the dog team mail delivery system of the early twentieth century, and explains the excitement that typically accompanied the mail carriers’ arrivals in rural Alaska communities. The following quote underscores the complexity of the overall process of mail delivery to the North at that time:

In 1925, a letter sent from New York to Rampart would travel by railroad or airplane across the country, by steamer from Seattle to Seward, and by train to Nenana on the recently completed railroad. Then the dog team would take over, carrying the mail

west along the trail to Manley Hot Springs and north to the Yukon at Rampart (pp. 37–38).

Schneider is also concerned that readers understand the extent to which modern mail delivery systems are separated from past cultural practices tied to the physical landscape, Native ways of knowing, and a larger sense of community. For instance, he points out that while today's rural youth may travel farther and more often than their ancestors did, and accordingly possess a "broader knowledge," they "aren't traveling through the country like their elders" and "their knowledge... is less rooted in a livelihood derived from the country" (p. 42). Thus, the history of dog team mail carriers in Interior Alaska also constitutes a lesson in culture change.

The next two chapters arguably form the central component of the book. Chapter 4 ("Nenana Was the Hub") provides summary histories of five specific mail trails

in the area between Nenana and McGrath, along with statements about current uses of those same trails, if any. Chapter 5 ("Circle and Beyond") does the same for seven former mail trails between Fairbanks and Dawson. Oral history is the foundation for both of these chapters.

Chapter 6 ("The Aviators") briefly describes the transition from dog team mail carriers to mail delivery by airplanes; chapter 7 ("Homeland of the Old-Timers") strives to emphasize the point that modern Interior residents can still learn a lot about travel and life on the land from present elders of the region.

Although the era of dog team mail delivery did not end until January 1963 (p. xi), it is a poorly known period in the history of Alaska. *On Time Delivery* goes far toward filling that void, certainly for a large part of Interior Alaska. This book will be of particular interest to historians and the Alaska dog mushing community, but it should also be engaging to the general public and would be a worthy addition to the collection of any Alaskan bibliophile.

REVIEW

EARLY INUIT STUDIES: THEMES AND TRANSITIONS, 1850S–1980S

Edited by Igor Krupnik, 2016. Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, Washington, DC; xviii + 452 pages, b&w photos, tables, index. ISBN 978-1-035623-70-0, \$49.95 (hardback); ISBN 979-1-935623-71-7 \$49.95 (ebook).

Reviewed by Richard O. Stern

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On October 24–28, 2012, the 18th Biennial Inuit Studies Conference took place in Washington, D.C., hosted by the Smithsonian Institution. Igor Krupnik organized a full-day session titled “From Boas to Burch: 100 Years of Eskimology.” The session, and this resulting book, are a synopsis of the history of Eskimology—the scholarly research on Inuit communities, traditions, and cultures. Krupnik was inspired to organize the session by two earlier events, the Fourth International Polar Year, 2007–2008, and the untimely passing of his Smithsonian colleague, Ernest S. “Tiger” Burch, Jr., in 2010. The chapters include essays by American, Canadian, Danish, French, and Russian scholars on “the history, origins, lifeways, social organization, and languages of the Inuit” (p. xvii).

In addition to organizing the session and editing the volume, Krupnik contributed an editor’s preface and three chapters—an historical overview tracing the intellectual history of Eskimology, a review of Franz Boas’ contributions to early Eskimology, and a detailed description of Burch’s scholarly research to produce the “Peoples of the Arctic” map for the National Geographic Society, 1979–1983. Nelson H. H. Graburn offers a short foreword with his personal observations on fifty-five years of change in Inuit research.

The book is organized into three parts: early science about the Inuit, concepts and methods in early Eskimology, and the maturing and transition of Eskimology into the field more commonly called Inuit Studies today. The chapters in the first part include Ole Marquardt’s description of the work of Danish administrator in Greenland Hinrich Johannes Rink (1819–1893), Jerrold Sadock’s

evaluation of Samuel Petrus Kleinschmidt’s (1814–1886) contributions as the originator of scientific studies of Inuit grammar, and Kirsten Hastrup’s evaluation of Knud Rasmussen’s contribution as an explorer, ethnographer, and narrator of Eskimo societies. Krupnik, Ludger Müller-Wille, and Kenn Harper each contributed a section on Franz Boas’ long-lasting contributions to Inuit studies, despite his spending only a single year amongst the Baffin Island Inuit.

The second part of the book examines the maturing of Eskimology studies as cultural and geographical knowledge expanded across the Arctic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One chapter each by Hans Christian Gulløv and Nikolai Vakhtin examine the concepts of Paleo-Eskimo and Neo-Eskimo cultures by H. P. Steensby and his students and the study of Yupik Eskimo linguistics in Russian, respectively. William W. Fitzhugh contributed two chapters: one that examines the work of Henry B. Collins addressing the “Eskimo problem,” as the origins of Thule culture were then known, and a second that reviews the contributions of Frederica de Laguna (1906–2004) to Arctic, Subarctic, and Northwest Coast archaeology and anthropology.

The volume’s third and final part consists of six chapters covering a range of topics and scholars. As befitting a field of research that matured and spread its intellectual inquiries into ever-widening fields, the chapters cover disparate topics and scholars. Søren Thuesen writes about Danish researchers who have largely focused on Greenlandic studies of language, culture, history, and society. Peter P. Schweitzer describes the contributions

of Albert C. Heinrich to the field of Alaska Eskimo kinship studies. One of those widening fields, ethnohistory, particularly Alaska Eskimo ethnohistory, is reviewed by Kenneth L. Pratt. The legacy of Charles Hughes' research of St. Lawrence Island Yupik is chronicled by Carol Zane Jolles, who has made her own extensive contributions to northern studies. Claudio Aporta writes about the Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project (ILUOP) in the Canadian Arctic, chronicling both the power of maps to convey issues of land claims and territory and the contributions of Milton M.R. Freeman, Peter Usher, William Kemp, and others to the field of northern studies in the Canadian Arctic and Subarctic. Krupnik's discussion of Burch's *National Geographic* map was mentioned above. Last, in a coda, Béatrice Collignon reflects on her two-plus decades of research in the Canadian Arctic and the changing balance between academic-driven projects presented and approved by the communities of study, and community-driven projects that involve the participation of academics.

For anyone interested in arctic peoples, whether historian, social anthropologist, archaeologist, linguist, or

indigenous person, this book holds a wealth of historical information and intellectual perspective. The writing is uniformly clear, thanks no doubt to Krupnik's diligent editing. The references cited at the end of each chapter are a treasury of book titles, journal articles, theses and dissertations, and archival sources. Any student contemplating the preparation of a reading list for comprehensive examinations or study for classes on a range of arctic topics would do well to cull these sources. The index is thorough and comprehensive.

It took four years from the time of the Inuit Studies Conference in 2012 to this volume's publication in 2016. Considering the careful attention to editing and rewriting that no doubt occurred between the conference date and ultimate publication, that delay is understandable and certainly acceptable. In today's world of rapid e-publication and distribution of "preliminary results" and grey literature, *Early Inuit Studies* will stand as a lasting tribute to the history of scholarship and the scholars who produced it. This book should be in the library of every serious student of the Inuit peoples of the Old and New Worlds.

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