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Inuit and Whalers on Baffin Island Through German Eyes: Wilhelm Weike's Arctic Journal and Letters (1883–1884)

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Book Reviews

INUIT AND WHALERS ON BAFFIN ISLAND THROUGH GERMAN EYES: WILHELM WEIKE'S ARCTIC JOURNAL AND LETTERS (1883–1884). Edited and written by Ludger Müller-Wille and Bernd Gieseking (in German). Translated by William Barr. Montreal: Baraka Books, 2011. 286 pp. $29.95 (softcover). ISBN: 978-1-926824-11-6

Wilhelm Weike's journals provide a unique perspective on early European anthropological research on Baffin Island. Employed by Franz Boaz, who would later become a noted anthropologist at Columbia University, Weike was asked by his employer to keep a journal of his travels for Boaz's future use. As such, Weike's work provides a unique historical source, useful both to those interested in understanding Boaz better and as a German ''everyman'' perspective on both whaling and Inuit culture on Baffin Island. For the casual reader, it may be slow. For historians and other scholars, maybe just right.

The book is split into two parts. First is the edited version of Weike's journal and letters, and second is a biography of Weike's life by Müller-Wille and Gieseking.

When Weike joined Boaz's expedition, he was 23, and Boaz only 24. They would travel across the Atlantic, along the coast of Greenland and on to Baffin Island aboard the ship *Germania.* On Baffin Island they ventured among whalers and Inuit, continued on to the Cumberland Sound sea ice, and then by dog sled across Baffin Island and along the coast of Davis Strait before boarding a whaling ship headed for Newfoundland, and eventually home to Germany. The second part offers greater context on the life of Weike and on his travels with Boaz. This section could easily be read before diving into the actual journal accounts to aid in the reading of the primary sources.

Perhaps the most compelling part of the book comes from the juxtaposition of Wieke's upbringing and training with that of Franz Boaz. Weike was a servant in Boaz's father's household; Boaz, a newly minted doctor of philosophy with training in physics, geography, and philosophy. Some of the book's most interesting sections are in fact where the editors insert excerpts from Boaz's journal alongside Weike's. In one such example, Boaz waxes on 'my' Kant (referring to a book of philosophy he was traveling with written by Immanuel Kant) and discusses how rough and deprived conditions are in the field. For Weike, it was just another day of work.

As a primary source document, it is apparent that the book's editors and translator have lovingly compiled a useful document for historians. For the more casual reader, the book for the most part lacks compelling storylines that draw one's interest in. However, within the journal and letters there are interesting accounts to read. For example, Weike's descriptions of Inuit burial and grieving practices for a deceased family member are touching, well written, and provide descriptions of traditions not often read about. But one must sift through much of Weike's writing to find accounts worth waiting for. As has been noted in the introduction by Müller-Wille and Gieseking, the ''social distance,'' between Boaz and Wieke persisted ''throughout their shared sojourn in the Arctic.'' Perhaps it is too much to ask of men of a different time, but one wishes for two young, energetic men in such a far-off land to have forged something more special than a master-servant relationship. For the modern reader, this distance means that what we get is essentially another work assignment for Weike, no different than the cooking and cleaning assignment Boaz asked of his servant. This reader wonders what might have been if the account had been written not as a work assignment, but instead as a personal journal.

Journal accounts can draw the reader in powerfully—for example, Dick Proenneke's journals as written up in ONE MAN'S WILDERNESS: AN ALASKAN ODYSSEY. This account does not have that draw. For historians, this work may be first rate; for others it may be more worthwhile to wait for another author to take the more interesting pieces of the account and produce a more readable telling of the story.

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GLOSSARY OF GLACIER MASS BALANCE AND RELATED TERMS. By Cogley, J. G., Hock, R., Rasmussen, L. A., Arendt, A. A., Bauder, A., Braithwaite, R. J., Jansson, P., Kaser, G., Möller, M., Nicholson, L., and Zemp, M. Paris: UNESCO-IHP, IHP-VII Technical Documents in Hydrology No. 86, IACS Contribution No. 2. 114 pp. Free (softcover). Order from ihp@unesco.org

Because of its direct connection to sea level, glacier mass balance is a subject of much interest now, not only to glaciologists, but also to a wide variety of earth scientists and even the general public. Consequently, this comprehensive glossary of terms is timely and welcome to a wide range of readers and users.

This is not a glossary of glaciology—the only term related to sea ice, for example, is ''*sea ice*''—but the authors have taken a pleasingly broad view of ''Related Terms,'' including terms such as *brightness temperature, permittivity,* and *ice-core stratigraphy* (but not *ice core*), and even organizations, like *World Data Centres* and the *World Glacier Monitoring Service*.

The authors, in their Introduction, give a lucid and apposite explanation of their scope and purpose: ''The aim of this Glossary of Glacier Mass Balance and Related Terms is to update and revise what has long been the effective standard of mass-balance terminology (Anonymous 1969).'' It '' . . . reflects changes in practice with conventional measurement tools, and also what is possible with the wide range of new tools . . . .'' The GLOSSARY includes commentary on usage, particularly problematic usage, with recommendations where appropriate.

''The scope of the Glossary extends beyond the measurement of mass balance. There are articles covering such subjects as gla-

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