

Reviews

LOBSTICKS AND STONE CAIRNS: HUMAN LANDMARKS IN THE ARCTIC. Richard C. Davis (Editor). 1996. Calgary: University of Calgary Press. xiv + 326 p, illustrated. Hard cover: ISBN 1-895176-88-3; \$Can44.95. Soft cover: ISBN 1-895176-69-7. \$Can29.95.

This book presents 100 profiles of persons active in the context of the North American Arctic, which were originally published in *Arctic* between June 1982 and December 1987 and which will be familiar to many readers of *Polar Record*. Richard Davis' conception was to use the profiles as 'The best resource to help us grasp both the human and geographical aspects of the North....' The title refers to the twin means of indicating landmarks, the lobster being a tree with all but the topmost branches removed, while, beyond the treeline, cairns are employed for the same purpose. The persons profiled are such landmarks in a historical sense.

The editor has not merely represented the profiles without any attempt at organisation, but rather has divided them into 16 units, each of which comprises three to eight profiles with a map and a brief introductory comment. The general principle behind this organization is that of shifting from one geographical area to another. There is, of course, no such scheme that is not open to objection on the grounds of artificiality: one might, for example, consider that George Strong Nares sits more easily with Robert E. Peary and Frederick Cook than with William Penny and Otto Sverdrup. But in this context, it is a most effective means of dividing the profiles into manageable groups. The editor contributes an interesting and informative introduction to the profiles and suggests that this is a book 'made for browsing.'

In this he is perfectly correct, and it would be difficult to envisage a book more attractive for that purpose for the polar enthusiast. When the profiles were originally published, they appeared somewhat as petit fours after the solid menu included in each issue of *Arctic*. Seen as a whole, they represent a major assembly of biographical information that is imposing both in bulk and in quality. Each reader will have his own preference. For this reviewer (and it is necessary to include a modest disclaimer here since he was the author of two profiles), it is not those of such figures as Franklin, Back, and McClintock that have most appeal but those of such famous persons as Ernest C. Oberholtzer, John Hornby, and Albert Faillie. One would suggest that, however well informed a reader might be, there would be few who would not gain from a perusal of this work. Not only explorers are included, but there are also 'government geologists...romantic adventurers, whalers beside anthropologists, English ladies with Inuit guides,' not to mention, of course, members of the RCMP.

The quality of the profiles is uniformly high, as indeed one would expect when one looks at the names of the authors. Each consists of between two and three pages of biographical information plus illustrations, usually portraits, but in cases where none exist (for example, Richard King), there is an appropriate map or picture of a vessel.

Within such a short compass, it is difficult to include much more than the mere outlines of a person's life. But the authors have very frequently introduced astute comment, while some of the prose is of the highest quality. This reviewer will not soon forget, for example, the description of Warburton Pike's suicide when, at the age of 54, he was rejected for service in the British Army during the First World War.

Because of the unequal length of the profiles, it was necessary for the editor to devise some means of filling up the pages. This he has done most effectively by the use of illustrations from *Hudson Bay* by R.M. Ballantyne (himself profiled) or from W.F. Butler's *The great lone land*. These serve to lighten the text, and to assist in furthering the editor's intention: to produce a book for browsing.

In format, the book is landscape and very attractively produced. There is a full index. Davis is to be congratulated for having undertaken the work of assembling the profiles into a single volume, for raising the requisite funding — from such sources as the Frederick A. Cook Society — and for carrying the whole project to such a satisfactory conclusion. (Ian R. Stone, Laggan Juys, Larivane Close, Andreas, Isle of Man IM7 4HD.)

THE POLAR REGIONS: A POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY. Sanjay Chaturvedi. 1996. Chichester: John Wiley. xviii + 306 p, hard cover. ISBN 0-471-94898-5. £35.00.

At last, a major study on the international politics of the polar regions has been written by an academic with a SPRI affiliation, since Sanjay Chaturvedi, although based at the Panjab University at Chandigarh, researched and wrote this book during a lengthy period resident in Cambridge. Despite its unparalleled library resources and the sterling work of *Polar Record*, SPRI-based authors have not featured prominently in studies on the contemporary politics, economics, law, and conservation of the polar regions published since the late 1970s. However, we must hope that John Heap, SPRI's Director, will soon put pen to paper, given his central role in polar questions during recent decades.

Readers familiar with Chaturvedi's previous research will not be surprised to learn that, despite the book's nominal title, his prime concern is to apply what are described as the 'new geopolitics' to the polar regions, a theme linking up to his earlier work with Professor Puri at Panjab University and paralleling the publications of Klaus