

common noun (with a small i) to signify any ice sheet having the principal characteristics of the Greenland ice sheet, that is to say covering a large part or the whole of a continent, and as a result modifying the general atmospheric circulation. There are in geography many other well-known examples of this linguistic phenomenon; before becoming common nouns, *karst* originally signified a limestone region of Croatia, *somma* a crest of volcanic origin surrounding Vesuvius, *erg* two regions of dunes in the Sahara, *bray* a region of the Paris basin where there was a large anticline.

The terms *nappe de glace* (ice sheet), *champ de glace* (ice field) and *calotte glaciaire* (ice cap) are not satisfactory, since they can be applied to an ice mass of any size. However, the transition from glaciers and local ice fields to an *indlandsis* or vice versa as the climate changes, occurs in an irreversible fashion, as Brooks and Tronov have shown, and as I have described in my book (Lliboutry, 1964–65, Tom. 2, p. 798–805). It is this discontinuity which allows us to classify glaciers and ice caps on the one hand and the *indlandsis* and their tributary glaciers on the other.

I hope Danish glaciologists will be so good as to lend us the word, and not to write ® *Indlandsisen*.

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17 February 1967

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## REFERENCE

Lliboutry, L. 1964–65. *Traité de glaciologie*. Paris, Masson et Cie. 2 vols.

SIR, *About the use of the expression "Indlandsis": comments on Dr. Weidick's letter*

As a Dane I can only welcome Anker Weidick's initiative to elucidate the use of the term "inland ice", *indlandsis*, and cognate terms, as these are often used at random.

Based on knowledge of Rink's works published in Danish it is beyond doubt that Rink meant his term *Indlandsisen* as a geographical place name to distinguish the huge part of Greenland from the different, remaining part of the country. The term *Indlandsisen* is therefore used on Danish topographical maps as an ordinary place name, and according to general rules for geographical place names it should not be transcribed to "inland ice" or other anglicized terms, and further it should be spelled with capital I.

Besides as a geographical place name *Indlandsisen* has been used by numerous authors to indicate a glacier, an ice sheet of huge dimensions. It deserves notice, however, that Rink's original definition—as also stressed by Weidick—does not only emphasize that the ice is of immense extent, but also that it should be barred from the sea by a generally wide, coastal land strip. The latter is not even 100 per cent the case with the Greenland ice sheet though nearly. If it is maintained that the ice should be barred from the sea by coastal land, it is obvious that the term "the Antarctic Inland Ice" is incorrect and presumably also "a Pleistocene Inland Ice". The terms "ice sheet" or "ice cover" are more correct to indicate these phenomena. The word *Indlandsis* should therefore only refer to the Greenland ice sheet. Of general use in Danish is the word *Iskappe*, normally indicating a glacier type of smaller dimensions than *Indlandsisen*. The older literature in particular uses it to describe *Indlandsisen*, but here it does not signify a particular place name, and the corresponding English word "ice cap" may therefore also be used of the Greenland ice sheet.

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SIR, *About the use of the expression "Indlandsis": comments on Dr. Weidick's letter*

Very large masses of glacier ice, covering hundreds of thousands of square kilometres, are at present to be found only in Greenland and Antarctica. They lie mainly on a rock bed, but in Antarctica extensive