

lies behind almost every successful (and unsuccessful) mining venture.

Not only is this book an excellent source of information about mining in Alaska, it is also a veritable compendium of people and places that Alaskans will recognize, some only as street names, and others who are still in the news today.

The book ends with an extensive glossary of mining terms and notes about the sources of information used throughout the book, many of which make interesting reading in their own right. I enjoyed the opportunity to read this account of Dunkle and his world, and I hope you will too.

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ESKIMO ARCHITECTURE: DWELLING AND STRUCTURE IN THE EARLY HISTORIC PERIOD. By MOLLY LEE and GREGORY A. REINHARDT. Foreword by ANDREW TOOYAK, Jr. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press and University of Alaska Museum, 2003. 216 p., 7 maps, 167 illustrations, index, bib. Hardbound. US\$45.00.

Eskimo Architecture is a systematic overview of contact era Inuit and Yup'ik dwellings based on the painstaking interpolation of architectural details extracted from explorers' and ethnographers' photographs, illustrations, and written accounts. Lee and Reinhardt's survey relies heavily on the ethnohistoric and ethnographic literatures of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and indeed the encyclopaedic spirit of their study harkens back to the catalogues of non-Western material culture typical of that period, before ethnography's turn away from "things." The volume that has resulted is profusely illustrated and loaded with descriptive detail. It represents a valuable reference for students of Inuit vernacular architecture, and especially for the archaeologists who routinely investigate the remains of such dwellings, and who have become increasingly interested in their sociological interpretation. Surprisingly, only piecemeal use has been made of a rich body of accumulated archaeological data that would have bridged many of the gaps encountered in the documentary record, and perhaps led the authors towards more substantial conclusions about variability in house forms.

The book is organized geographically into four chapters, with roughly equal space devoted to Greenland, the Canadian Arctic, northwest Alaska and the Mackenzie Delta, and the Yup'ik area of southwest Alaska and easternmost Siberia. Architectural forms in each area are discussed under the same functional headings: winter houses, transitional dwellings, summer dwellings, special-use

structures, and associated ritual beliefs. As the last region to be colonized by Inuit, and the first by Europeans, Greenland possessed less architectural diversity at contact than other regions. The best-documented form is the multi-family "communal" house, the emergence of which, in the early 18th century, has posed a persistent problem for ethnohistorians and archaeologists. Establishing a pattern followed in the rest of the book, Lee and Reinhardt sidestep such anthropological questions, concentrating instead on the triangulation of verbal descriptions and the visual clues in sketches, engravings, and photographs to work out the construction details of each major ethnic variant of seasonal dwelling form. Their architectural detective work provides an education in how to look at visual source material with an eye to uncovering underlying technological principles.

The chapter on the Canadian Arctic focuses on the most iconic Inuit dwelling form—the snow house, or *igluviak* (*iglu* is actually a generic term for 'house'). While simpler variants of the snow house were widely used as travel shelters, it was only around the driftwood-poor and economically tenuous shores of the Central Arctic that entire communities regularly wintered in this marvel of logistical expediency, engineering rigour, and elegant design. The Central Arctic snow house was based on a spiral of individually bevelled snow blocks forming a strong and well-insulated dome that could be varied in size, combined in modular agglomerations, and furnished with sleeping and lamp platforms, tunnel, ice block windows, benches, and storage vestibules to create everything from a doghouse to a multi-family dwelling or high-ceilinged community dance house. The warm-season complement of this flexible shelter was the skin tent or *tupiq*, which came in numerous variants of a ridge-pole, conical, or double-arch design.

Lee and Reinhardt also discuss the sod winter houses that predominated in Labrador and Southampton Island and their skin-roofed cousin, the *qarmaq*, used by many Canadian Inuit groups as a spring or autumn dwelling transitional between the *tupiq* and the *igluviak*. However, they do not explore the architectural tradition that underlies both *qarmaq* and sod *iglu* and provides a bridge between the sod house forms of North Alaska and Greenland, namely the sod, stone, and whale bone winter house that was ubiquitous in the Canadian Arctic between the 13th and 16th centuries. Archaeologists have recorded the visible foundations of over 2000 such houses, design elements of which can be discerned in many later house forms.

The sod house persisted into historic times in the Western Arctic as a multi-season dwelling associated with above-ground storage racks and ice cellars dug into the permafrost. Alaskan sod houses tended to be large and heavily built, often consisting of multiple family compartments opening onto a central space or connected by short tunnels to form labyrinthine compounds. The elaborate living arrangements reflected not merely the abundance of driftwood for building, but also the size of corporate kin

groups, the scale of economic accumulation, and the durability of these complex social formations in time and space. An array of ritual burial structures and festival houses were associated with the correspondingly elaborate ceremonial life of large Western Arctic villages. Warm-season dwellings included regional variants of the conical tent and the graceful, willow-framed dome of interior North Alaska. The most unusual, however, was the stilt house used by some Bering Strait islanders, consisting of an elevated driftwood frame covered with walrus skin and surrounded by a narrow deck. The striking effect of entire hillsides terraced for the platforms that supported these modernist skin boxes is unique in the Inuit and Yup'ik world.

The greatest diversity of dwelling forms was found in the Yup'ik area, where the cultural influences of neighbouring groups (Aleut, Tlingit, Chukchi) generated interesting architectural hybrids. Variations on the basic semi-subterranean sod winter house occur in most areas, but there is a tendency towards above-ground log or plank construction in all seasons. Some groups used skin tents or upturned boats as summer travel shelters, but the construction of gable-roofed, plank-walled summer houses, often accompanied by miniature versions on stilts that functioned as storehouses, represents a marked departure from Inuit housing styles. Lee and Reinhardt conclude the book with a brief recap of the major house types and their geographic distribution, and indicate directions for future research. An appendix provides somewhat flawed analyses of floor areas and potential household size for selected groups—and seems unnecessary.

The specific details of historic building techniques that Lee and Reinhardt piece together are convincing, and they constitute a valuable baseline for future architectural research. The beautiful illustrations and straightforward descriptions of exotic dwellings ensure the book will be accessible and appealing to a wide audience. However, accessibility is won by sacrificing a certain critical perspective on the historical sources; uncomfortably ethnocentric accounts of Inuit dwellings are presented without comment, while Inuit and Yup'ik perspectives on traditional houselife (as reflected in oral histories, autobiographies, songs, myths, art, etc.) are conspicuously scarce. Viewed in this light, the choice of “Eskimo” for the title is especially unfortunate. Although it avoids awkward or imprecise phrases such as “Inuit and Yup'ik” or “North American Arctic peoples,” it needlessly reinforces a colonialist conflation of northern cultural diversity. Lee and Reinhardt suggest at the outset that they will use local ethnonyms where possible, but “Eskimo” and “Inuit” are used interchangeably, and inconsistently, for some groups throughout the text. Arctic scholars may also be disappointed that a lively anthropological, archaeological, geographical, and historical literature on the social, semiotic, phenomenological, and functional properties of Inuit and Yup'ik dwellings is not more fully engaged, while the comments of early 20th century observers are given undue

prominence. Greater attention to archaeology would have revealed significant intra-group variability in dwelling design and moved the analysis beyond the identification of ideal ethnic house forms. In accommodating themselves to a momentary constellation of social, economic, ecological, and functional constraints, house-builders in the past riffed creatively on an assortment of cultural themes. Greater engagement with the contemporary literature would also have revealed that the future research directions Lee and Reinhardt identify are already topics of active debate. Regardless, Arctic anthropologists, archaeologists, architectural historians, and serious non-academic readers will want this handsome survey of historic Arctic house forms on their bookshelves.

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