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RESEARCH

Reimagining the Iglu: Modernity and the Challenge of the Eighteenth Century Labrador Inuit Winter House

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ABSTRACT

The Inuit sod winter house or iglu has undergone a host of alterations over the past millennium, as housing styles were accommodated to changing local milieus during the colonization of the Eastern Arctic. Many of these changes relate to subtle shifts in gendered work and household social relations, and in Labrador from the eighteenth century some appear to reflect engagements with a more or less hostile European discourse on architectural modernity. Far from a static form subjected to convulsive contact-era transformations, however, dwellings were gradually remade in the context of a long-running Inuit effort to house work and sociality within a meaningful space.

Résumé: La maison inuite hivernale en tourbe, aussi connue sous le nom d'iglou, a connu toute une série de modifications durant le dernier millénaire, alors que le style du logement s'adaptait aux changements du milieu local durant la colonisation de l'Arctique de l'Est. Plusieurs de ces changements sont liés à de subtiles modifications dans la division du travail et l'organisation des relations sociales de la maisonnée et au Labrador, à partir du 18^{ième} siècle, certaines semblent refléter des engagements avec un discourt européen, plus ou moins hostile, sur la modernité architecturale. Les habitations, loin d'être de forme statique, sont sujettes aux transformations convulsives de l'ère du contact, cependant dans le contexte d'un long effort des Inuit, elles ont graduellement été refaites comme espace significatif de travail et d'interactions sociales.

Resúmen: En los últimos mil años, la casa de hielo de los Inuit, conocida con el nombre de ''iglú'', ha sufrido una serie de alteraciones para adaptar su estilo a los medios locales cambiantes durante la colonización del Ártico oriental. Muchas de estas alteraciones están relacionadas con cambios

sutiles en el trabajo propio de cada sexo y con las relaciones sociales domésticas; desde el siglo dieciocho en el Labrador algunos cambios parecen reflejar un discurso más o menos hostil sobre la arquitectura moderna. Lejos de ser una forma estática sometida a las transformaciones de una era de contactos convulsivos, estos hogares se reformaron poco a poco por el afán de los Inuit de alojar el trabajo y las relaciones sociales dentro de un espacio significativo.

KEY WORDS

Iglu, Labrador Inuit, Social Relations, The Body, Work

Introduction

The early twentieth century mission doctor Samuel Hutton regarded the Inuit of northern Labrador as disease-prone and childlike, biological and moral weaknesses he attributed to the Labrador climate and Inuit "habits of life" (Hutton 1909:9). According to Hutton these habits were deeply embedded in an intransigent nature, and cultured in the sod house or iglu, the "dark and noisome den" (ibid:10) he felt they inhabited. He wrote:

> Try to picture a hut of turf and stones, propped, maybe, on rough stumps and branches which have been toilsomely gathered from the sea: the only ventilation is the occasional breath of air that wafts sluggishly along the dark tunnel-like porch; the only window is a square of membrane, brown and greasy-looking, stretched over a hole in the roof; the floor is a sodden patch of trampled mud! That is a heathen Eskimo iglo; and I cannot imagine anything more dismally unhealthy." (Hutton 1912:38)

Hutton championed a program of social and biological engineering based on a strategic series of architectural reforms that would align Inuit housing with the practices advocated by contemporary hygienic science (see Latour 1988). The adoption of modern housing to replace "the huts or dug-outs, which are merely holes in the ground, covered with sods (Edwards 1905:69)" would not only reduce airborne and sanitary contagion, but more private sleeping arrangements would curb the sexual excess that Hutton believed was "the besetting weakness of the Eskimo race (Hutton 1909:48)."

The Inuit house was a space constituted in reformist discourse as the site of a strategic intervention aimed at remaking Inuit bodies, characters and souls. Hutton's revulsion at Inuit architecture is homologous with his role as colonizer of the Inuit body; the equivalence of the body and house in both European and Inuit symbolic orders makes them equally important

sites of the colonial project of modernization. Hutton and others were clearly blind to the fact that Inuit iglus were already modern, syncretic assemblies of Inuit and European architectural elements that had undergone major reconfigurations during the preceding four centuries of intercultural exchange. And beyond the horizon of the European documentary record, the iglu had been at the centre of a long-running discourse on gender, family, community, the body, and work that can be traced back in the archaeological record for millennia.

To borrow Bakhtin's (1981) idiom, the iglu was not a timeless, monolithic cultural genre like the epic (as Hutton would have it), but a restless, hybrid, dialogic one like the novel, in a perpetual state of reinvention. Numerous facets of Inuit culture (clothing, harpoon heads, soapstone pots and lamps, etc.) at virtually any given time and place can be similarly regarded as the heteroglossic products of millennia of creative contacts and exchanges (Whitridge 2004a). Indeed, it is as easy to consider the European as the Inuit discourse to have been timeless, the former's twentieth century articulations surprisingly similar to its sixteenth century ones. But despite our best efforts to render non-Western (and Western) cultural forms stable and iconic they constantly reassert their historicity. The Inuit house demands a repositioning with respect to Western histories and discursive tropes that recognizes its developmental trajectory to be as long and its cultural pedigree as diverse as Western cultural forms.

Following a brief examination of historic European commentaries on Labrador Inuit bodies and dwelling styles, the archaeology of Inuit-European interaction in Labrador is reviewed and some alternate research directions proposed. Dwellings are one of the most visible and accessible parts of the Labrador archaeological record, but it is necessary to begin to imagine a long-running and prolific Inuit architectural history to draw useful inferences from them. A 1,200-year segment of this history is summarized, within which historic architectural changes appear substantially less temporally abrupt and organizationally radical than they do in the conventional accounts that set European influences against an abridged prehistory composed of little more than the state of Inuit culture at the moment of contact. Within a longer historical frame the changes wrought on sixteenth through nineteenth century Inuit culture by interaction with Europeans appear hardly more substantial than the transformation of European culture in its prolonged encounter with Inuit society.

Decentering Contact

Although complex, and often reciprocal, interactions between Europeans and Native Americans are well attested in the archaeological and historic

records, there is an almost compulsive tendency in the literature to regard the moment of contact as an essential hinge of indigenous cultural change. Without minimizing the importance of this moment (really, a prolonged episode of mutual discovery and accommodation), it is critical to recognize that native history began long before it and proceeds long after. A widespread indigenous discomfort with the notion of *pre*history (see, e.g., contributions to Smith and Wobst 2005) reflects precisely this demand that indigenous people not be defined by a mythical instant of encounter, that their history not be made to begin only when Europeans enter the frame. Native groups everywhere participated in cosmopolitan cultural networks that were already set within millennia-long social and economic histories. In the Inuit case there is a well-documented archaeological record stretching back to at least the sixth century in the Western Arctic (Dumond 1998; Mason 1998), and at least two centuries of interaction with Europeans themselves (the Greenlandic Norse) before Cortereal's cruise north from Newfoundland in 1500 marked the inception of a second phase of better-documented (though still heavily obscured) Inuit-European interaction (Allen 1997).

Besides the centring of native history on the European arrival, a second problem with traditional accounts is the tendency to set contact within the conventional narrative frame of domination and resistance. The inexorable and often violent extension of Western economic, political, and moral authority over indigenous societies is indeed an important feature of the contact process, but interactions were actually quite diverse. In the Labrador Inuit case contacts were spatially diffuse, temporally sporadic and situationally defined, as a wide assortment of European agents (fishers, whalers, fur traders, explorers, government agents, missionaries, etc.) from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Basque, Portugese, Spanish, French, English, Dutch, etc.) pursued a heterogeneous array of personal, group, class, and national projects along the coast (Table 1). Although it is possible to delineate redundant categories of interaction, it is not helpful to subsume the entire matrix of relations under any simple heading, and it is incorrect to assume that the relationship between Inuk and European was invariably an asymmetric one.

While European agents frequently possessed powerful and/or desirable instruments and commodities (ships, guns, alcohol, tea, ceramics, etc.), so too did Inuit (baleen, furs, ivory, sea mammal oil, skin technology, etc.). Inuit also had intimate geographic and ecological knowledge of the waters, shores and wildlife of Labrador that Europeans lacked. Unsurprisingly, the first centuries of interaction were characterized by frequent losses of life and possessions on both sides, as well as more or less mutually satisfying exchanges of commodities, services, and people. As Haven (1773:104–105) noted:

Table 1. Euro-American activities on the Labrador coast 1500–1800

	Exploration	Military/ Raiding	Whaling-shore	Whaling-floater	Fishing-shore	Fishing-floater	Sealing-shore	Trapping	Trade	Colonization	Missionization
Portugese	×	×		×							
British	×	×		×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Spanish	×					×					
Basque			×								
French	×	×		×	×	×			×		
Dutch				×					×		
American		×		×		×			×		
Newfoundlander					×	×			×		
French-Canadian					×		×	×	×	×	×
German									×		×

> The Eskimaux look'd upon the Europeans as stupid people without understanding, whom they could cheat and rob as they pleas'd, looking upon them at the same time as poor, interested and greedy of gain, to whom they must take not to shew what they had lest they might take them away by force. When I came there in the year 1763, the Eskimaux did not believe it was wrong to steal any thing from the Europeans, as the Europeans used to steal from them whatever and whenever they could. The Europeans on their side believed it was not at all wrong to kill and rob the Eskimaux whenever they could, for said they the Eskimaux are not Men.

Archaeologies of contact need to address a wider assortment of agencies and relations. This demands that archaeologists work across conventional disciplinary boundaries, especially the almost incoherent divide between prehistory and historic archaeology. Key elements of the archaeological story (long term shifts in social and economic organization, emerging environmental knowledge, and a patchwork of technological change, for example) were *inflected* by contact (new sorts of family and community organization and work became sensible, the desirable and accessible suite of resources changed, technologies were variously retained, refashioned, abandoned and adopted) but neither initiated nor defined by it. We need to avoid models that centre indigenous history on contact, allowing hybrid phenomena to "fall out of view" (Larkin 1997:408). While European documents usefully detail interactions and illuminate Western actors' rationales, their narrative hold is partial. The events and processes of interest were fundamentally intercultural; *all* agents had analytically relevant roles and motivations. The archaeological challenge, of course, is to bring these to light. The strategy adopted here is to focus on one prominent element of Inuit material culture—the house—and tack between the historic and archaeological records. Hopefully this will provide a suitable context for exploring the multivalency of contact related processes, without effacing their real diversity.

The European Gaze

Hutton was neither the first nor the last to disparage the iglu and attempt to intervene in its interior life. A European discourse on Inuit bodies and habits stretches back to Norse Greenland. Norse-Inuit interactions appear to have been infrequent, based on the sporadic archaeological and documentary evidence (McGhee 1984; Schledermann 1980). McGovern (1994) distills the Norse ecumene, noting an underlying intransigence in the face of environmental change and an altered post-contact cultural landscape that likely contributed to the Norse colonies' failure (a robust Inuit oral historical tradition also exists; for example, in the mid nineteenth century Aaron

of Kangeq produced a large series of illustrations dramatizing some of the most fraught moments in this brief encounter; Kleivan 1984). Within a few decades of the abandonment of these first European colonies in North America, Portugese explorers were charting the Labrador and Greenland coasts; only a brief hiatus separates premodern and modern European colonization. The Basques established whaling stations in southern Labrador by 1540 (Tuck and Grenier 1981), and made frequent references to pilfering that appears to be due to Inuit visits in the off season. English, French, Dutch and other whalers, fishers and explorers increasingly traded and fought with Inuit from the sixteenth century on (Kupp and Hart 1976; Kaplan 1985).

Early travel narratives depict the Inuit as monstrous cannibals who lived in caves or subterranean dens (Collinson 1867; Curtis 1774), projecting generic fantasies of cultural otherness onto Inuit dwellings and bodies. The latter fascinated Renaissance scientists, perhaps in part due to such fantastical reports but likely also because an interest in bodily difference informed the entire European project of exploration. A strengthened self-perception of a Europeanness opposed to indigeneity was one of its key outcomes. Encounters with people construed as physiognomically distinct were a persistent theme of the earliest travel narratives and illustrations (Allen 1997), presaging the development of a physical anthropology that took the scientific description and stabilization of such differences as a foundational problem. Later illustrators tended to depict natives simply as unusually clad Europeans in exotic surroundings. In both cases the indigenous represented a field of projection of physical and cultural otherness, the excluded realms of a Western self-imagining.

The economic mirror of this literary and artistic discourse was an actual traffic in human bodies based on their rank within a Eurocentric universe. Although an early Portugese attempt to initiate an Inuit slave trade was abandoned, virtually every account of contact during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries includes references to Inuit being kidnapped to Europe for study and display (Egede 1818; Collinson 1867; Sturtevant 1980). These individuals typically died within months, in their brief captivity serving as spectacles in a popular discourse on savagery and civilization played out in royal courts and public fairs, as well as on the autopsy table (one of three Inuit captured on Martin Frobisher's second voyage to the Eastern Arctic in 1577 was autopsied after his death in Bristol, the report of which attempts to locate the difference between Europeans and "savages" in the tissues exposed by the surgeon's knife [Quinn 1979]). A proto-anthropological understanding of the Other, and by implication Western civilization, was produced through the inventorying of physiological and behavioural differences between Inuk and European.

The iglu, however, exerted a particular fascination-repulsion on the early modern imagination. To the inexperienced observer the outer layer of sod insulation makes these structures appear to be mere holes dug into the ground, rather than complex architectural assemblies of wood, whale bone, hide and sod raised atop a carefully constructed stone and earth foundation. Iglus were thus conflated with other aspects of Inuit culture perceived as animal-like, such as wearing hide clothing and eating uncooked meat. In the words of one of Frobisher's sailors: "They live in caves of the earth and hunte for their dinners or praye, even as the beare or other wilde beastes do (Collinson 1867:283)." Individual Inuit and Europeans often formed friendly relationships, but domestic "habits of life" that hinged on the iglu were a recurrent site of cultural divergence. As the missionary Hans Egede wrote, "Notwithstanding ... their nasty and most beastly way of living, they are very good natured and friendly in conversation (Egede 1818:128)."

Egede appears to have been the first European to settle for an extended period of time amongst the Inuit, in southern Greenland from 1721 to 1736. He and his family learned Inuktitut, and participated fully in the house life of Greenlanders (ibid; Gulløv 1979). Explorers, whalers, fishers and traders of the period tended to confine their interactions to brief trading episodes on ship or shore, and in written accounts often expressed revulsion at Inuit house life. Of northern Labrador, the British naval officer Curtis (1774:376) noted: "Here the wretched residents build their miserable habitations with the bones of whales." The missionaries that followed Egede, however, made a point of entering Inuit dwellings. Moravians engaged in scouting the Labrador coast for mission sites in 1765 (having established Greenland missions in 1733; Cranz 1820; Gad 1973) proudly reported their Inuit host's testimony that they were the first Europeans to have slept amongst them (Lysaght 1971:210). With the establishment of Moravian missions in Labrador in 1771, the house rapidly emerged as a key field of negotiation of Inuit and European identities. Residing in mission-built houses and receiving rations of European foods and manufactured goods was offered by some missionaries as an inducement to conversion (Richling 1989:156). The state of Inuit houses was a common subject of moralistic discourse in sermons and addresses, and such a point of governmental concern that the governor of Newfoundland inspected the interiors of houses on multiple occasions (Anonymous 1909). The house was also the site of a tactical promotion of European modes of consumption of imported construction materials and mass produced housewares. The cost of materials and such key furnishings as a wood stove, required to heat the enlarged interior space, was an ongoing obstacle to the wholesale adoption of European-style housing (Edwards 1905; Hutton 1912).

The contact-era house bore a heavy symbolic burden; house life and Christianity were closely intertwined. Jesus-like, early Moravian

missionaries were frequently carpenters by trade, and were expected to assemble and maintain the mission buildings that were shipped prefabricated from Germany. In the context of a call for donations to help build houses for the Inuit, a Moravian periodical relates that Missionary Jannasch convinced a woman to clean her home by asking her: "If Jesus were to come into your house, do you think you could ask Him to sit down anywhere?" (Edwards 1905:69). Such associations would have resonated complexly with indigenous semantic structures, through which the house was metaphorically linked to whales, boats, bodies and the land (Whitridge 2004a). The house was the social womb, as expressed in the derivation of the Inuktitut word for uterus, 'igliaq', from the word for house, 'iglu' (Schneider 1985), and depicted in Leah Idlauq's iconic drawing of the elder woman Iqallijuq's memory of being in a house-like womb before her name-soul was reincarnated (Saladin d'Anlgure 1977). Moravians' and others' architectural reforms had significant entailments for Inuit constructions of self and community. "The door" was a central metaphor in Inuit dreams of salvation recorded in the early years of missionization. One dreamer saw Jesus at a table laden with dishes of food in the company of Europeans, but could not open the door to enter; another glimpsed the Inuit damned through a doorway to Hell (Richling 1989:162–163). The doorway was a threshold between Christianity and heathendom, and a clean and modern house the earthly realization of God's plan.

With the collapse of Moravian economic and social control in the early twentieth century, the Hudson's Bay Company, and later the Newfoundland and Canadian governments, assumed the task of administering Inuit domestic habits. Towards this end, the HBC published a remarkable bilingual volume called *The Eskimo Book of Knowledge* that in excruciatingly patronizing quasi-biblical prose purports to explain the modern world, and guide the Inuit in appropriate economic, moral, and domestic behaviour. In a chapter on "The Building and Care of Houses" Inuit attempts at European-style cabins are dismissed as dirty, dark and stagnant, whereas "The Company's Traders and the Men of God not only keep their houses tidy and spotless both inside and outside, but they allow the fresh air of heaven to pass into their rooms through the open windows" (Binney 1931:154). A somewhat more technical post-war government publication distills a similar ethico-hygienic message into pithy injunctions such as "No one must spit in the Igloo" (Government of Canada 1947:4). Within a few years of the latter, the federal government, in close coordination with traders and missionaries, initiated a massive program of rationalization of health services, policing, transportation, and education throughout the north that resulted in numerous settlement closures and, frequently, relocation of Inuit into government-built housing (Tester and Kulchyski 1994).

Archaeologies of Contact

Archaeology potentially provides a material corrective to the hegemonic European narrative of indigenous architectural depravity, if archaeological accounts can be sufficiently disentangled from Westernist understandings. Recent archaeological research suggests that Modified Thule groups ancestral to the Inuit arrived in northern Labrador in the mid to late fifteenth century, as the collapse of bowhead whaling economies further north lead to a radiating expansion of Low Arctic settlement (Whitridge 1999, 2004b). This contrasts with a scenario that posits a relatively early Thule arrival, and late persistence of Late Dorset Paleoeskimo groups, resulting in Dorset-Thule contact in northern Labrador in the early fourteenth century (Fitzhugh 1994), but agrees with other estimates of the timing of Inuit settlement (Schledermann 1971; Kaplan 1983). Inuit populations rapidly expanded south, likely reaching the Basque whaling stations along the Strait of Belle Isle by the mid sixteenth century. Direct contact with Europeans is firmly attested by accounts of the Inuit woman and child who were kidnapped by French and Portugese sailors and exhibited in Germany in 1567 (Sturtevant 1980).

Archaeological research on the early historic period has focused on contact-related changes in economy and material culture, and especially the shift from oval, one- or two-family iglus to much larger rectangular houses around the end of the seventeenth century (Figure 1). Explanations here and in Greenland, where a virtually identical and contemporaneous

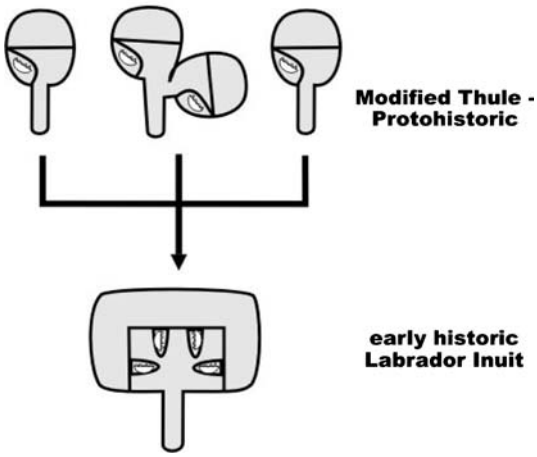

Figure 1. Early historic shift from one- and two-platform winter dwellings to communal houses in Labrador

architectural shift occurs (Gulløv 1997), tend towards either the ecological or the socioeconomic. The former suggestion, that climatic cooling prompted economic stress that in turn encouraged a shift to communal residence for mutual assistance (Schledermann 1976), has been undermined by paleoenvironmental reconstructions that fail to reveal a significant climatic downturn at this time (Kaplan and Woollett 2000; Woollett et al. 2000; Woollett 2003). The scenario that has gained greater acceptance in the literature is that the burgeoning trade of baleen and other local products for European commodities promoted the emergence of a class of wealthy, polygynous traders and whalers who gathered large household followings around themselves (Taylor 1976; Jordan 1978; Jordan and Kaplan 1980; Kaplan 1983, 1985). Large houses were in fact more corporate than communal.

While the latter scenario is compelling in many respects, some qualifications can be offered of this and other past approaches. First, these explanations are rooted in highly generic narrative structures—environmental deterioration and adaptation on the one hand, increasing socioeconomic inequality and complexity on the other—and make relatively little allowance for history and alterity. In their stark simplicity, and close correspondence to current anxieties, they recall the modernist fable of liberation from ignorance and drudgery through science and technology invoked by Hutton. There is no sustained explication of the internal social relations of households, beyond a cursory and somewhat androcentric emphasis on polygyny and the economic activities of male household heads. The microsocial gender and generational dynamics involved in the negotiation of space for work, storage, eating, sex, performance, ritual, play, etc. in the reconfigured houses need to be more fully considered.

These scenarios also have a relatively shallow time depth, essentially beginning in the moment before the shift to communal houses, and ending with their adoption. The corrective for this would be an archaeological recentering (Larkin 1997) of Inuit history on the long-term social, cultural, economic and ecological processes that intersected this particular nexus of material culture change. Indeed, there was no universal template for the design of the Inuit house at contact; some groups retained predominantly single family dwellings like those of their Classic Thule predecessors (e.g., in the Canadian Central Arctic and northern Greenland) while others progressively adopted variants of large multifamily structures (e.g., various Western Arctic groups). Some favoured snow as a primary construction element for briefly occupied winter dwellings, as part of a mobile winter settlement round based on the sea ice, while others retained land-based sod construction styles. The observable forms at any given time and place were the momentary culmination of diverse design histories. Archaeology reveals multiple arcs of architectural change that extend back over a

millennium of Inuit colonization of northern North America, and on into the historic era. The specific trajectory of architectural transformation that stands behind the adoption of communal houses in Labrador requires a specific historical and archaeological elucidation.

Indeed, the heterogeneity of ecological, social and economic factors in different regions has not been well accounted for. The radically different situations of northern and southern Labrador with respect to the timing and nature of Inuit participation in the European trade requires an explicit modelling of the mode of adoption of communal house forms in each area. Related to this, there needs to be a fuller theorization of the varied agencies of individuals and groups in the contact process, with respect to such things as agents' gender, age, wealth, status, knowledge, economic role, place of residence, and life history. This applies not only to Inuit, but to the diverse assortment of Europeans and North Americans with whom they interacted. The matrix of Euro-American occupational roles in Table 1 indexes crude categories of ethnic subject positions, implying *fields* of potential interaction with Inuit; within each, individuals varied in innumerable ways.

Finally, we need to better model the complex imbrication of Inuk and European agencies, and the *mutual* cultural transformations that ensued, rather than assume the one-sided loss of indigenous culture before an overwhelming European onslaught. However, predominantly European sites are still liable to be investigated by historic archaeologists and Inuit ones by prehistorians. This tends to reify the cultural divide promulgated in the European discourse on Inuit difference while neglecting the reality of heterogeneous interactions and effects, including processes of métissage that produced an increasing variety of hybrid ethnicities. For example the independent trader George Cartwright, a key figure in late eighteenth century Inuit-European relations in southern Labrador, conspicuously and self-consciously embraced Innu and Inuit dress and travel technology (Cartwright 1792), prefiguring the assimilation of numerous Inuit things and practices by late eighteenth and nineteenth century European settlers.

Long Term Architectural History

The thread of Inuit architectural history can be picked up more than a thousand years ago in the Bering Strait area, allowing the written history of the last few centuries of Inuit housing to be set within a much longer archaeological record. The earliest Inuit trace is the Old Bering Sea (OBS) culture that appeared along the Bering Strait and St. Lawrence Island coasts about AD 500 (Mason 1998). Architectural change and cultural exchanges with foreigners appear to have been occurring for at least this long, likely

beginning with the encounter of OBS and Ipiutak groups in northwest Alaska, and proceeding eastwards with expanding Birnirk and Thule populations along a frontier of contact with various Amerindian and Paleoeskimo groups (and westwards, though cultural interactions in northern Chukotka are not addressed here). Contact with Dorset Paleoeskimos in the Eastern Arctic is particularly deeply embedded in Inuit myth and oral history, and appears to have been accompanied by significant cultural exchanges, such as Inuit adoption of soapstone lamps and meteoritic iron (McCartney 1991; McGhee 1996; Maxwell 1985). These acquisitions were key technological predicates of an enhanced settlement mobility and harvesting efficiency that allowed a kind of Classic Thule modernity to bloom in the thirteenth century. Later Inuit adoptions of strongly homologous European cultural elements, such as wood stoves and manufactured iron goods, need to be contextualized within such an expanded temporal frame. So too with the house, which has been caught up with transformations of gender and community relations for at least a millennium. The Old Bering Sea-style iglu was altered in late Birnirk times through the displacement of the hearth to a detached kitchen wing, a phenomenon that appears to be linked to the reorganization of gendered labour with the emergence of whaling boat crews and the associated institution of the qargi or men's house (Figure 2; Whitridge 1999). The iglu with kitchen wing that Classic Thule migrants brought to the Canadian Arctic in turn was transformed through the reintegration of the kitchen as a lamp niche or shelf in late Classic Thule times, and then as a prominent interior lamp stand in

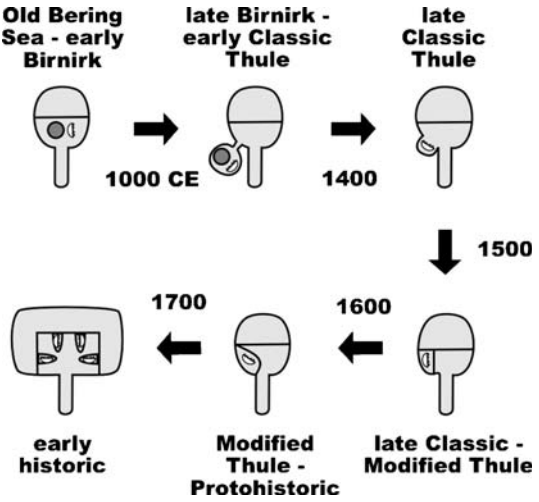

Figure 2. Long-term change in Inuit winter house design

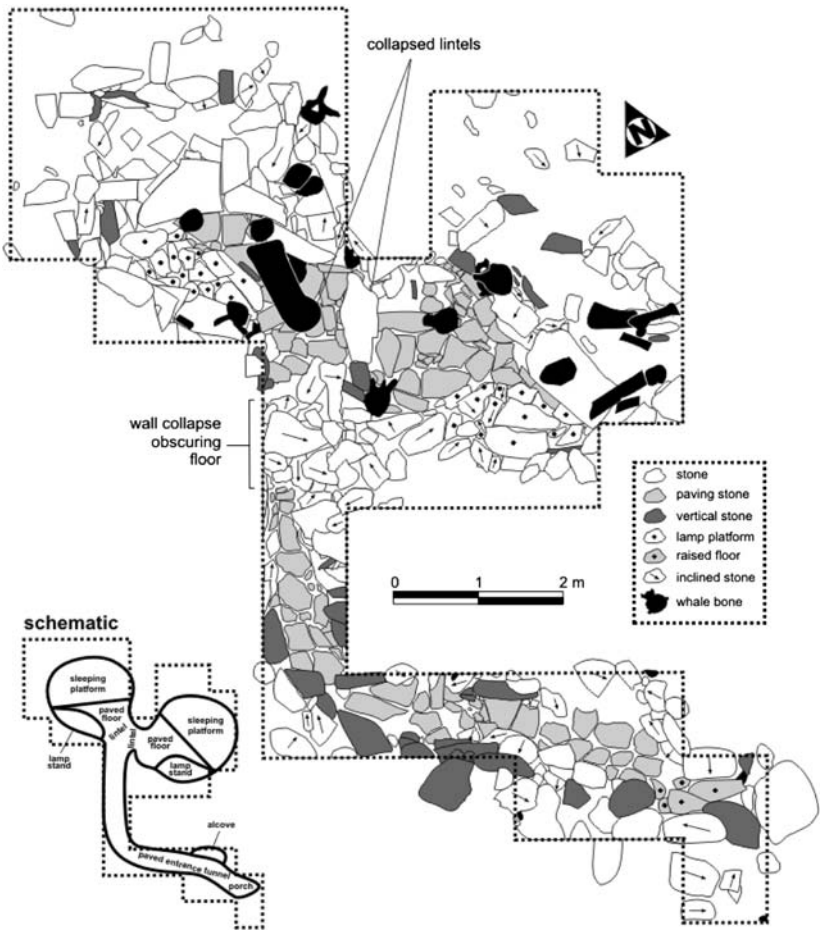

Figure 3. Map of house 2, IgCx-3 (Nachvak Village), northern Labrador

Modified Thule times, with the decline of whaling and its sociospatial correlates (Figure 3).

From this perspective, an important dimension of the shift to communal houses is a long-term trend towards re-establishing a central lamp or hearth, understood as a focal point of women's work. Although a gut skin window above the tunnel entrance was a standard iglu feature that provided limited winter light, the conversion of the house interior into a functional work space depended on the light and warmth provided by sea mammal oil lamps. The symbolic and practical promotion of women's spaces represented by a prominent lamp-lit work area (i.e., a projecting lamp stand) is sensible in terms of the skewed gender demographics of the

new composite households. Although entire families sometimes travelled south to obtain European goods through trading and raiding in the early contact era (a practice that the land grants to the Moravian church were intended to curtail; Lysaght 1971), men appear to have dominated these southern travel parties (Kleivan 1966; Taylor 1974). A steady loss of men to southern Labrador (mortality among these migrants due to disease, accident and violence was high, and some remained south for work) would have increased the opportunity for those remaining to form polygynous households with skewed gender ratios. Multifamily households with a preponderance of adult women embodied this new demographic reality, and are reasonably approached in terms of novel patterns of pooling of labour, resources and exotic trade goods in a volatile and highly competitive milieu. However, the particular character of communal house design—the adjoining sleeping platforms and prominent lamp stands—is only sensible in light of the long-term history of Inuit dwellings. The spatial organization of the communal house was dictated, as it had been for centuries, by the emergent logic of women's domestic work and sociality, inflected in this instance by the nature of contact-era socioeconomic changes.

In addition, several features of eighteenth and early nineteenth iglus can be understood as responses to the most frequent European criticisms of Inuit housing and habits of life, including muddiness, darkness, animal smells, stagnant air, and excessive warmth (e.g., Hutton 1909, 1912). Planed wooden planks replaced stone and earthen floors, and the confined entrance tunnel was progressively converted into an open porch by a reduction in length and increase in height. This would have allowed more air and light into the house interior, but also more cold. The interior ceiling was also raised, dogs were banished from the entrance, soap replaced the urine tub for washing, and eventually wood stoves and kerosene lamps replaced seal and whale oil lamps (Kleivan 1966). These changes do not represent minor adjustments in construction styles so much as a profound reconstruction of the iglu's sensorium, with significant entailments for extra-household activities. To achieve this, the occupation of nineteenth century Inuit houses would have demanded a thorough reworking of a host of bodily habits and styles: holding the body while entering and occupying the house, patterns of interaction with domestic animals, the location and physical accompaniments of washing, typical indoor dress. The hybrid house form demanded not merely an adoption of key *visual* tokens of European identity, but of the bodily practices that were absolutely integral to them. An important dimension of these architectural adjustments appears to have been the accommodation of European visitors' sensibilities, as well as those of interculturally mobile Inuit who had become accustomed to (or deliberately affected) the bodily practices embedded in European houseways. The adoption of hybrid Inuit-European and eventually

European house forms in Labrador unfolded over several centuries, shaped by the means, motivations and cultural understandings of householders; substantially non-European design elements and houseways persisted long enough to become the object of Hutton's and other's critical hygienic discourse.

While the Moravians appear to have been wedded to European architectural forms, many of the Euro-American colonists whose arrival they resisted were not. Settler sod houses in southern Labrador, in particular, are notoriously difficult to distinguish from Inuit houses on purely architectural grounds (Auger 1991). Even the house assemblages are often mixtures of European and Inuit material culture, reflecting Settler adoptions of Inuit forms, and vice versa, in households that were often ethnically mixed (see Firestone 1992 on local adoptions of Inuit material culture). Moravian resistance to the arrival of Settlers and their intermarriage with Inuit seems to reflect Settlers' tacit challenge to a Moravian program of conversion that depended on the rejection of a host of traditional Inuit practices. Settlers effectively embraced key elements of Inuit material culture and associated lifeways (sod houses, seal harvesting) that the Moravians were engaged in transforming or eliminating. These events point to the reciprocal character of Inuit-European interaction, especially away from the highly institutionalized context of the missions, challenging versions of the contact process that stress only political-economic asymmetry and the progressive imposition of European cultural forms.

The Symmetry of Cultural Exchange

Flows of knowledge and cultural meaning were multidirectional, and from the Inuit perspective framed within a long-term, heteroglossic discourse on cultural difference and identity that embraced many non-Inuit groups. Europeans and Inuit both kidnapped and killed, and pilfered each other's camps and caches. Inuit adopted numerous elements of European material culture, and Euro-American Settlers adopted Inuit sleds, boots, hunting techniques, and foodways. Geographic knowledge was shared in both directions. Inuit piloted explorers' ships (e.g., Kohlmeister and Kmoch 1814) and drew maps of coastline from memory (e.g., Spink and Moodie 1972; Savelle 1990), while Europeans produced increasingly accurate plans that became valuable travel aids for Inuit. New varieties of European and Inuit identity took shape in this exchange.

At each cultural extreme, a sense of distinctiveness and racial superiority was constructed in contradistinction to the perceived qualities of the Other. These, nevertheless, were belied by the reality of constant cultural exchange and hybridization. Inuit understandings of what it meant to be

an inumariik, a real inuk, emerged in opposition to the qallunat or White "habits of life." The persistent tension between these modes of being is a frequent subject of contemporary northern discourse, such as the artist Annie Pootoogook's stark depictions of modern Inuit domesticity. Euro-American self-conceptions of civilization and modernity were likewise achieved through a prolonged moral and scientific engagement with the Inuit, who from the sixteenth century (if not Norse times), had served as an archetype of the skin-clad savage. Inuit "habits of life" were formally displayed for public edification in living exhibits such as the ethnographic zoos of the German impresario Hagenback during the 1880s (Lutz 2005), and Inuit bodies collected and dissected by physicians, natural historians and anthropologists in an ongoing attempt to stabilize this cultural difference at the level of biology (Harper 1986).

The encounter between Inuit and Europeans is emblematic of a mutually constituted cultural self-awareness that has been rife ever since. The notion that, for Europeans, contact marks the transition between the medieval and modern worlds, or that it is a fulcrum between prehistory and history for indigenous groups, represent significant historical elisions. Inuit contact with Europeans did not wipe the slate clean; it merely set Inuit society and economy off in new directions, fostering distinctive cultural hybrids just as previous encounters with Dorset, Innu, Norse and others had done. Neither historic Inuit nor European culture in northern North America is sensible except in light of the other. Indeed, the reflexive turn in early twentieth century high modernity that increasingly exposed progressivist discourse to critique and irony, and ultimately a rejection of the premise of Western uniqueness and superiority that underlies modernism (Latour 1993), was sparked in part by a dawning recognition of the aesthetic coherence, authenticity, and self-sufficiency of non-European culture. Inuit art and design were championed by the representatives of early modern art movements such as Primitivism, Cubism, and Surrealism. But the arbitrariness of Western cultural forms announced by Meret Oppenheim's fur tea cup and saucer (Burckhardt and Curiger 1996) seems only to reiterate the message of a Labrador Inuit hide tea service collected decades before (see www.lindenmuseum.de). Modernity has its roots, in part, in the Western encounter with the everyday alterity—and uncanny familiarity—of an emergently hybrid Inuit culture.

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