
This book uses ethnoarchaeology to examine the basic biological and ecological processes underpinning cross-cultural interaction between the Metis/Cree, Chipewyan, and Euro-Canadians involved in the late-19th- and early-20th-century fur trade along the upper Churchill River. As has become the habit of many northern researchers, the authors have used a very broad definition of ethnoarchaeology, which allowed their methodology to include historic graphic data that included both memory culture and ongoing theoretical and empirical domains.

The editing of this book is quite good, but by no means inevitable. The work is well researched and scrupulously presented. Although the work and discomfort must have been immense, the foursome appears to have weathered the labours with course, climbing Denali may not have been much more difficult than pioneering in the frigid Alaskan winters, anyways.

After 27 years of reading climbing adventure books, I must admit that I am a bit jaded and hard to please. Yet I found myself, after sitting down for a brief glance at Archdeacon Stuck's book, three hours later nearly finished with it. It was thoroughly absorbing and entertaining.

The book gives the account of the first complete ascent of Denali (otherwise known as Mount McKinley). The participants are Hudson Stuck (Archdeacon of the Yukon), Harry Karstens (an Alaskan adventurer), Robert Tatum (a postulant for holy orders) and Walter Harper (an Alaskan of mixed race). The year is 1913.

Between March and June of that year, these four adventurers made the arduous approach to Denali, climbed the main (south) summit (20,320 feet) via the Muldrew Glacier route, then descended and made their way on foot through the tundra and forests back to civilization. Although the work and discomfort must have been immense, the foursome appears to have weathered the labours with little trouble. Perhaps they made men tougher in those days, and, of course, climbing Denali may not have been much more difficult than pioneering in the frigid Alaskan winters, anyways.

Throughout the narrative I was struck by the simple and innocent attitude to mountaineering shown by the foursome. They were indeed climbing the mountain for the simple joy of adventure, with no ulterior motives. Stuck's comments on reaching the summit were that "There was no pride of conquest, no trace of that exultation of victory some enjoy upon the first ascent of a lofty peak, no gloating over good fortune that had hoisted us a few hundred feet higher than others who had struggled and been discomfited. Rather was the feeling that a privileged communion with the higher places of the earth had been granted" (p. 108).

Stuck also stands out in his support for the native people of Alaska. He begins the book with a plea for the return to the original Indian name, Denali (The Great One). Throughout the book he makes impassioned pleas for the respect and proper treatment of our indigenous North Americans. His concern for the two Indian boys, Esias and Johny Fred, who assisted them in their adventure is genuine and touching.