

framework. This could have been omitted in favour of a comparative discussion of the Kaska and other adjacent and distant Athapaskan groups, or perhaps such could have been added. While there is something to be said for maintaining the integrity of graduate theses, the concluding chapter on archaeological correlates of seasonal subsistence strategies does not extend much beyond common sense and does little to integrate the preceding research findings. For example, the data cited on person-hours of labour for various activities are probably amenable to modelling of different conditions, at the level of individuals and families.

I have no serious criticisms. The text may be uneven in quality and difficult to read, but the illustrations and photographs are quite clear, even though the large-scale maps lack elevation reference points, an important consideration in this region.

Anthropologists and archaeologists alike should find this a useful volume. There is no doubt that many archaeological sites exist in the Stikine River watershed that can now be realistically interpreted in social, subsistence and settlement terms. Furthermore, anthropologists can obtain a good idea of the kinds of data that are of interest to archaeologists. Albright states explicitly that the lives of the Tahltan may be subject to considerable change. In fact, more work of this kind is urgently required in many areas of British Columbia.

Alberta Culture

MARTIN MAGNE

The Magic Leaves: A History of Haida Argillite Carving, by Peter L. Macnair and Alan L. Hoover. Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1984.

The Magic Leaves is the most recent contribution to a growing scholarly interest in Haida argillite. Beginning with the 1950s publication of Marius Barbeau (1953, 1957), this interest has been accelerated, and major studies on the genre have been published by art historians (Kaufmann 1969, 1976; Wright 1979, 1980, 1982), museum ethnologists (Sheehan 1981), and those whom the authors would term argillite "enthusiasts" (Drew and Wilson 1980).

The opportunity for this re-examination of Haida argillite chronology was the fulfilment of an obligation by the British Columbia Provincial

Museum. When Francis C. and Kathleen Reif of Vancouver donated their exceptional collection of 111 pieces of Haida argillite to the museum in 1978, they suggested the production of "a well illustrated book as a definitive scholarly work." The resulting study is indeed well illustrated with an abundance of clear illustrations, and it will serve scholars of Northwest Coast art well. Whether or not the book is *the* definitive study of the history of Haida argillite carving, however, remains to be seen.

The book aims not only to describe and illustrate the Reif Collection but also to trace the development of Haida argillite carving from its beginnings as a tourist-trade art form about 150 years ago in the early nineteenth century. Like the Inuit carvings of the mid-twentieth century, Haida argillite was not produced for use by the people themselves but as souvenirs for sale to outsiders. The history of the evolution of argillite artifact-types, subject matter and style is traced in a large number of rather short chapters, consisting of a brief introductory essay and a series of annotated photographs. The illustrations are excellent, crystal-clear and perfectly focused, the *sine qua non* of any worthwhile study in native visual art. Each section is illustrated with examples from the Reif collection as well as other pieces in the British Columbia Provincial Museum. Unfortunately, the book contains no separate list of the Reif collection, a serious omission given the stated role of the volume.

Five introductory chapters examine briefly: (1) "The Reif Collection"; (2) "Argillite: The Material"; (3) "The Form of Haida Art"; (4) "The Haida and Tobacco"; (5) "A Chronology for Argillite Artifact Types." The remaining fifteen explore the various artifact categories from what are likely the earliest "Ceremonial Pipe Forms" modelled after wooden tobacco pipes, to the later "panel" and ship-motif pipes, animal bowls, plates, human figures, model crest poles, and chests. All chapters, with the exception of 4 and 5 and the Appendix by Alan L. Hoover, were written by Peter L. Macnair.

One weakness of the volume is the somewhat disjointed and fragmentary effect these numerous subdivisions have upon the reader. Some chapters seem tight and overly condensed; others seem out of order. Hoover's essay on the history of argillite carving research, for example, would have contributed to a greater structural coherence were it not an Appendix but placed instead among the introductory series of chapters. As it stands, the individual chapters may seem cryptic to a general reader, especially because the critical stance adopted by Macnair assumes a specialized audience, familiar with existing literature on Haida argillite.

One might also question the uncritical adoption of Bill Holm's ahistorical definition of Northwest Coast art style in Macnair's chapter on "The Form of Haida Art," a static characterization limited in time to the nineteenth century, in space to the three northern coast tribes, and in genre to only certain forms of two-dimensional expression.

Detailed observations made in *The Magic Leaves* on specific argillite forms, their chronology and iconographic transformations at times deviate considerably from those of their predecessors. Thus, Macnair takes issue with both Kaufmann and Wright as the source of inspiration for geometric rosettes on argillite plates and platters. Instead of pie-crimpers or steamship paddle-wheels, we learn, the most likely influence was pressed-glass tableware made by the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company about 1840 (p. 91), a much more convincing source. With such observations, the book also contributes to a growing literature on the "art of acculturation," to the study of native art forms in a contact situation. Macnair, in particular, highlights the interplay of native and European cultures as this affects the development of Haida argillite carving.

Space is insufficient here for full comment upon such specific issues as those mentioned above. More important, perhaps, is this reviewer's opinion as to the book's more general scholarly significance. It is considerable.

The major value of *The Magic Leaves* is not that it is a definitive study of argillite, but the contribution it makes to the infant methodology of native art history. The authors' call for much more rigorous and critical use of museum and archival documentation than has been done in the past by both museum ethnologists and art historians cannot be overemphasized. Careful and evaluative scrutiny of museum records, they insist in the concluding Appendix, is essential if such unacceptable theses of historical development as those of Marius Barbeau and Carole Kaufmann are to be avoided. Barbeau's view of argillite carving as "childish imitations" of the scrimshaw work of American whalers is erroneous — the result largely of fanciful speculation rather than sound documentary research. Weaknesses in the more recent investigations of Haida argillite by Carole Kaufmann are at least analytically based and much less serious, but similarly to be explained in terms of her uncritical acceptance of museum catalogue data and her reliance primarily upon a stylistic sequence based on formal analysis of the argillite items themselves. A critique of the major argillite studies of Robin Wright and Carol Sheehan similarly confirms the vital importance of careful docu-

mentary research in both chronological and interpretive studies of native art forms.

The maturation of native art scholarship, which acknowledges the historical dimension and the need for rigorous museum and archival research as the fundamental starting point for all serious investigation, is being finally reached in the 1980s. *The Magic Leaves* will no doubt contribute significantly to that process of maturation of native art as art history.

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