

Uiarnnerit. A historical study of immigration from East to West Greenland in the nineteenth century

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Article abstract

This article is about 50 East Greenlanders who settled in the Kap Farvel area in 1887, and about their encounter with the local population, the German Moravian Brethren mission, and the Danish mission and colonial administration. On the basis of this immigration, the article gives an account of a number of new issues and perspectives on settlement and the settlement policy for the overall immigration from East Greenland to South West Greenland and the traces left by these migrations on South West Greenland right up to now. Despite formal status as West Greenlanders, the immigrants and their descendants preserved East Greenlandic features which in many ways still exist, and today people in the area take a great deal of interest in the historical events, the distinctive features of the immigrants and their links with East Greenland. One motive for this study is thus a growing local wish to turn the focus on the migrations from East Greenland and to raise consciousness about their significance for the present-day situation. The following account is intended as a contribution to this consciousness-raising process. The article presents a hitherto unexploited body of historical and ethnohistorical sources which will be used as the basis for a future historical study of the immigration from East Greenland to West Greenland and to improve our knowledge of the cultural, social and other traces of East Greenlanders in South West Greenland, and how these traces were kept.

Uiarnarit. A historical study of immigration from East to West Greenland in the nineteenth century

Einar Lund Jensen*

Résumé: *Uiarnarit*. Une étude historique de l'immigration de l'Est à l'Ouest du Groenland au XIXe siècle

Cet article traite des 50 groenlandais de l'Est du Groenland qui s'installèrent dans la région de Kap Farvel en 1887, ainsi que de leurs relations avec la population locale, la mission allemande de Frères Moraves, la mission danoise et l'administration coloniale. Sur la base de cette immigration, l'article présente de nouvelles perspectives concernant la politique danoise de la colonisation dans l'Ouest du Groenland par des immigrants de l'Est et des traces qu'ils ont laissées jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Malgré leur statut formel de Groenlandais de l'Ouest, ces immigrants et leurs descendants ont gardé des traits venant de leur culture d'origine et sont présentement fort intéressés par les événements historiques liés aux migrations, les attributs distinctifs de leur culture et leurs liens avec l'Est du Groenland. Une des raisons ayant menées à cette étude a d'ailleurs été le désir de la population locale d'en savoir plus sur les migrations venant de l'Est du Groenland et de prendre conscience de leur importance dans la situation contemporaine. Cet article présente des données historiques et ethnohistoriques qui n'avaient pas encore été exploitées et qui pourront être utilisées pour mieux comprendre l'histoire sociale et culturelle de l'immigration de l'Est à l'Ouest du Groenland.

Abstract: *Uiarnarit*. A historical study of immigration from East to West Greenland in the nineteenth century

This article is about 50 East Greenlanders who settled in the Kap Farvel area in 1887, and about their encounter with the local population, the German Moravian Brethren mission, and the Danish mission and colonial administration. On the basis of this immigration, the article gives an account of a number of new issues and perspectives on settlement and the settlement policy for the overall immigration from East Greenland to South West Greenland and the traces left by these migrations on South West Greenland right up to now. Despite formal status as West Greenlanders, the immigrants and their descendants preserved East Greenlandic features which in many ways still exist, and today people in the area take a great deal of interest in the historical events, the distinctive features of the immigrants and their links with East Greenland. One motive for this study is thus a growing local wish to turn the focus on the migrations from East Greenland and to raise consciousness about their significance for the present-day situation. The following account is intended as a contribution to this consciousness-raising process. The article presents a hitherto unexploited body of historical and ethnohistorical sources which will be used as the basis for a future historical study of the immigration from East Greenland to West

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Greenland and to improve our knowledge of the cultural, social and other traces of East Greenlanders in South West Greenland, and how these traces were kept.

Introduction

Uiarpoq is the Greenlandic word for "to sail around something." *Uiarnertit* (singular *uiarneq*) is still used today as a designation for the people who sailed from East Greenland around Kap Farvel to West Greenland (Figure 1).

Throughout the nineteenth century there were migrations of people from the southern part of the east coast of Greenland to South West Greenland, mainly after the Moravian missionary station Frederiksdal was established in 1824. In the year 1900, the last large group of 38 people came, and the South East Greenlandic coast was thus depopulated. The number of individuals who immigrated from the east coast to Julianehåb District¹ in this period has been estimated to at least 725, and they made up a considerable part of the total population of the district (Gulløv 1995: 189ff and 2000: 4; Mikkelsen 1943: 25-26).

We have an account from 1887 of a group of 50 East Greenlanders who had chosen to settle in the area and thus form a part of the flux of immigrants from South to East Greenland in the nineteenth century. At first they settled at Pamialluk (Figure 4), to which the head catechist Isak Lund from Nanortalik was sent to obtain information, partly about the group and partly about the conditions on the east coast. From Isak Lund's report and an accompanying description by the manager at Nanortalik, J.C. Simony, it is evident that five umiaks (the large "women's boats") had come to Pamialluk with a total of 88 people. Three of the umiaks came from the southern part of East Greenland, more precisely Inuusartuut in Timmiarmiut Fjord and Uummannaq, and it was these people's intention to be baptized and to settle down in West Greenland. The other two umiaks came from the Ammassalik area and had gone part of the way south in 1885 with Gustav Holm's returning umiak expedition, had wintered at Umiivik and had then continued to West Greenland to trade, only to return to the east coast later on (Lund 1887).

At the spring meeting on 1st May 1888 in Julianehåb Superintendency, this large migration and its consequences were discussed. The reason for the discussion was that in the course of the winter poor relief had been given to "two heathens, hunters at Frederiksdal," and it was agreed that it was unfortunate that the East Greenlanders had settled down in Frederiksdal, where conditions were already very unfavourable. In other words, there were far too many people to live from hunting. In view of this, the superintendency asked the inspectorate in Nuuk (Godthåb) to approve a proposal to the effect that in the future, travellers to the district could not move into any settlement before the superintendent, in consultation with the existing residents, had sent a recommendation on the matter to the superintendency, which would give its final consent for the settlement (Rigsarkivet 1882-1899).

¹ The former Danish name of the colony and superintendency has been used here. The Greenlandic name for Julianehåb is Qaqortoq. When Greenlandic place names are mentioned, the 1973 spelling is used, but the original spelling is used in quotations.

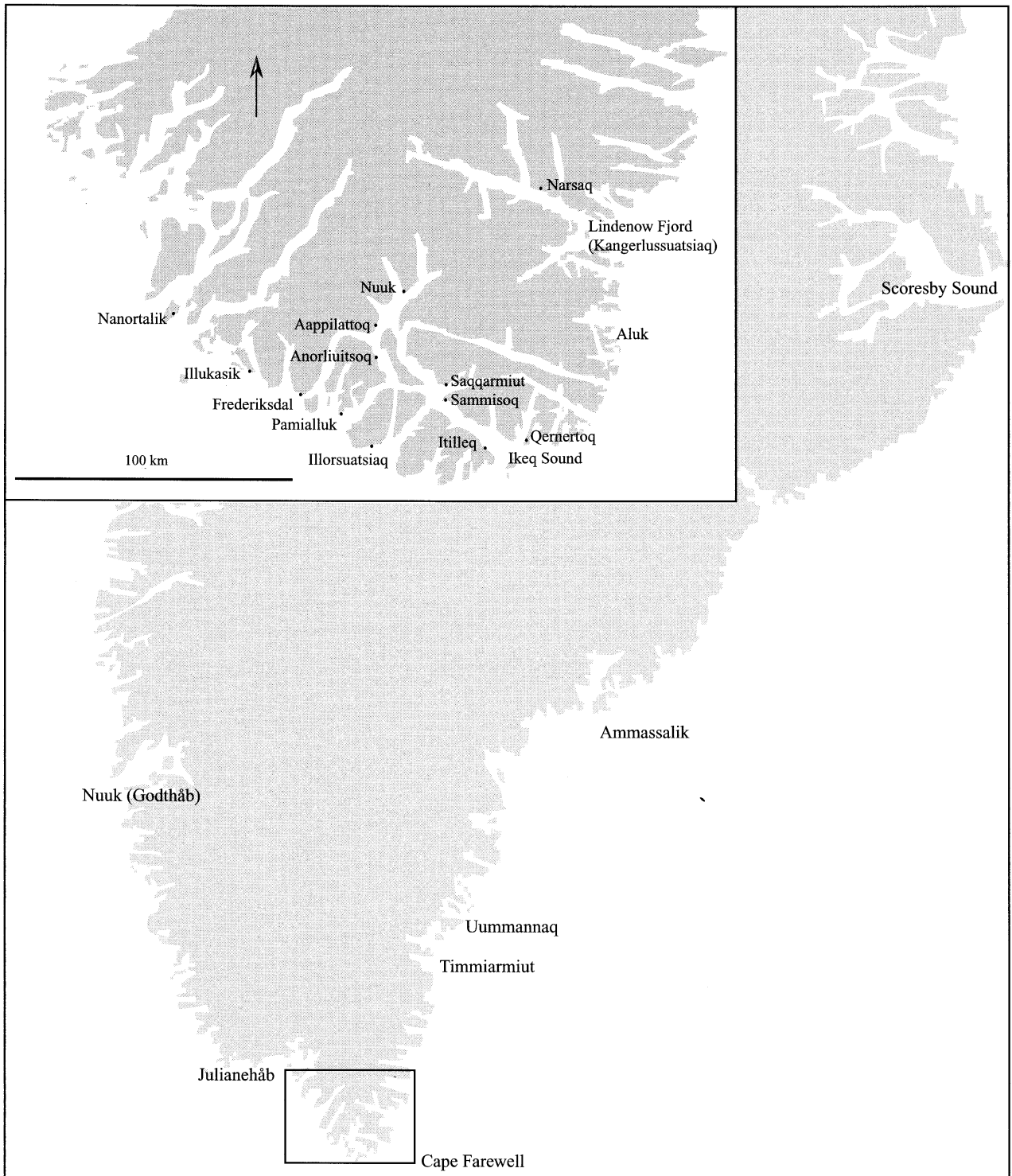


Figure 1. The southern part of Greenland with the locations of the place-names mentioned. Inset: Kap Farvel district at Nanortalik, which was the centre for the Danish mission and trading in the southernmost part of Greenland, and the Moravian Brethren's mission station at Frederiksdal. The majority of the population of the Greenlandic settlements south of here came from East Greenland and until 1900 belonged to the Moravian Brethren.

The situation furthermore prompted the central colonial authorities to consider a solution to the problem, and it was decided to establish a trading station on the island of Qernertoq on the southernmost part of the east coast to stop the immigrating East Greenlanders there. In the summer of 1893 a group travelled south from Julianehåb, led by the colony manager, who was to assess the conditions locally and take charge of the establishment of the new trading-post². On the journey too was Pastor Rüttel, who had been appointed missionary at the mission station that was to be set up in Ammassalik the next year, and who was now given the opportunity to meet people from East Greenland. He kept a diary of the whole trip and wrote of great problems with the ice conditions, which meant that they had to give up reaching the actual destination, Qernertoq, whereupon they decided on the spot to establish the new complex at nearby Itilleq on Eggers Island (Rüttel 1893).

The trading-post at Itilleq does not appear to have fulfilled its purpose of acting as a buffer against immigrant East Greenlanders. The range of goods was restricted to cloth, gunpowder, lead, tobacco and various ironmongery goods, but it was not possible for example to buy bread and coffee. Nor could blubber be traded. This was an attempt to prevent East Greenlanders from using a large proportion of their blubber and money for purchases in the shop and later experiencing scarcity as a result. However, the restrictions did not work, they only made people go to Pamialluk to trade (Meldorf 1902: 40) and at the autumn meeting of 25th September 1895 in Julianehåb Superintendency it was decided to send a request to open up free trade in all goods at Itilleq with the following argument: "The Itivdleq complex was after all originally established with the heathens in particular in mind, but the area is in fact only inhabited by westerners who are used to European food" (Rigsarkivet 1882-1899). In 1909 the KGH moved the shop and trading to nearby Sammissoq (Appelt and Raahauge 2002).

The source material

Just a few years after the last migration from South East Greenland in 1900 a report was published, based on statements and narratives from the people involved (Rasmussen 1906). There is only scattered information in the literature about the other

² Danish Greenland was divided into a number of administrative districts, where daily operations were controlled from the main town of the district, the "colony," by the "colony manager." In each colony district there were a number of small trading posts, *udsteder* (literally "out-places") which were run by a trading manager, also called an *udligger* (literally "outlier"). The trading manager was responsible for the local purchases of the hunters' products such as skins and blubber, and for sales of European goods in the shop. In addition there were a large number of settlements with no shop or trading place. Trade with Denmark and the administration of the "colonies" in Greenland were from 1848 on the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs, and daily management was left to the Royal Greenland Trading Company, *Kongelige grønlandske Handel* (KGH). Two "inspectories" were established as links between the central administration and the administration of the individual colonies. Of these, the South Greenland Inspectorate was placed in Nuuk (then known as Godthaab). From 1848, the Danish church mission, which was also in charge of the educational system, belonged under the Ministry of Culture. In each colony there was a missionary, and at the trading posts and the larger settlements, catechists were employed to run the school and to perform certain religious ceremonies. In the southern part of Greenland, the German Moravian Brethren mission worked side by side with the Danish mission, but from its own mission stations, with missionaries who had been posted from Germany or Denmark. At some of the inhabited places where the population belonged to the Moravian congregation, locally trained catechists were posted.

migrations that had taken place before this event, or about the East Greenlandic element in the population in South West Greenland in general. The study on which this article is based shows however that archival and other material can form the basis for a historical account of both individual migrations and the whole issue of East Greenlandic migrations in the nineteenth century (Jensen 2002).

The sources consulted include very little information that comes directly from the people at the centre of events — that is, the immigrating East Greenlanders. The information usually comes from middlemen as with the above-mentioned account written by Isak Lund in 1887. However, much can be learned from the official material (*e.g.* for example parish registers, census lists and reports from civil servants posted to the areas) whose objective was to describe the conditions of the local Greenlandic population.

The sources are dominated by archival material from the Danish colonial authorities. With the sinking of the Greenland ship *Hans Hedtoft* in 1959, the archives disappeared from the South Greenland Inspectorate in Nuuk, which had material from the colony managers and inspectors, that is the local and regional officials in Greenland. However, the central colonial authorities in Denmark had copies of some of this material, which together with — among other things — annual reports on the conditions in Greenland provide information on the events and developments in the country, the reactions and decisions of the authorities and their motives for making these decisions.

In addition to this we have information from the German Moravian mission, which was widespread in South Greenland, and with which most of the immigrating East Greenlanders became associated. The Moravian Brethren were in Greenland until 1900, after which they left the country, and their congregation merged with the Danish missions. When they left, the Moravian Brethren took their archives, which are now at the mission's central archives in Germany (Wilhjelm 2001: 401-07).

Besides the source material from the authorities or people who represented public services or similar bodies, there is material of a more private character such as diaries, letters and articles. These often view the events from a different angle and include other information than what the authorities were interested in, so they can help to provide a more nuanced picture.

The East Greenlandic immigrants³

In his account Isak Lund (1887) draws up a list of the names of all 50 people who remained in West Greenland. The list was categorized according to those who sailed in each of the three umiaks⁴, whose owners were Nervalik, Oqaluartâq and Kuvânia. The

³ Greenlandic personal names are cited as they appear in the various sources.

⁴ Inuit normally travelled in umiaks ("women's boats"), the crews of which had relations of kinship or friendship with one another. Women and children travelled in the umiak, but the umiak owner and the other hunters accompanied the umiak in kayaks.

first two of these are also mentioned by Holm, who in connection with his umiak expedition to Ammassalik received information from them in 1883, when they were on a trading journey to the Nanortalik area, and he accompanied them to Timmiarmiut in 1884; the last-mentioned of the East Greenlanders later became an informant for the Eskimologist William Thalbitzer during the latter's exploration of the Kap Farvel district in 1914⁵ (Holm and Garde 1889: 64ff; Thalbitzer 1914 and 1917: 32ff). Lund's list provides information on which individuals were hunters and hunters' wives, which were widows, which were children, and who these children's parents were. There is thus a lot of information about the people's families and their social and occupational status.

Ten people from the three umiaks were, as formulated in Isak Lund's account in the translation into Danish, "ordered by the German missionary to live in Frederiksdal." Frederiksdal⁶ was the Moravian mission station, which had been established in 1824 to christianize immigrant East Greenlanders. At baptism, the new members of the congregation were entered in the parish register and besides their new Christian name, the heathen name was also recorded, as well as information about family relations for those who had been baptized, which is more comprehensive than Isak Lund's information. Hence, it also provides information about the adults in the group, stating which were brothers or sisters or parents of the person in question (Kirkebog 1824-1900) (see Figure 2).

The parish register gives the estimated year of birth of those baptized, although in the case of adults this information must be rather uncertain, but it does provide a sufficient basis for an outline of the age and generation distribution. In 1887 the group consisted of 22 people aged sixteen or below, while 28 people were adults or of working age. Of the latter, four people were estimated to be over the age of forty, that is two widows and a married couple where the husband was Oqaluartâq, one of the umiak owners (Figure 3). The group consisted of 28 women / girls and 22 men / boys.

The widow Pápítalik, along with five children, two sons / daughters-in-law and two grandchildren, was associated with the umiak owned by Kuvânia. Another of the umiak owners, Nervalik (see Figure 2), was according to the parish register married to Pavfingitsoq, who was in turn the sister of Oqaluartâq, that is the owner of the third umiak. In Nervalik's umiak was among others Majuariaq, who was the sister of Pavfingitsoq. Oqaluartâq's wife was called Nukarpa, and her sister Qâjaq and her brother Tipingitsoq are both listed under Oqaluartaq's umiak. These few examples suggest that the 50 people did not form a randomly composed group, but that there were family relations across the three umiak crews.

⁵ Holm gives their names as Navfalik and Oqaluartoq. Thalbitzer gives the name of his informant as Kuannia or the baptismal name Hendrik (originally Heinrich).

⁶ The German name of the mission station was Friedrichsthal. The Greenlandic name of the place was formerly Narsaq Kujalleq; today it is Narsarmijit.

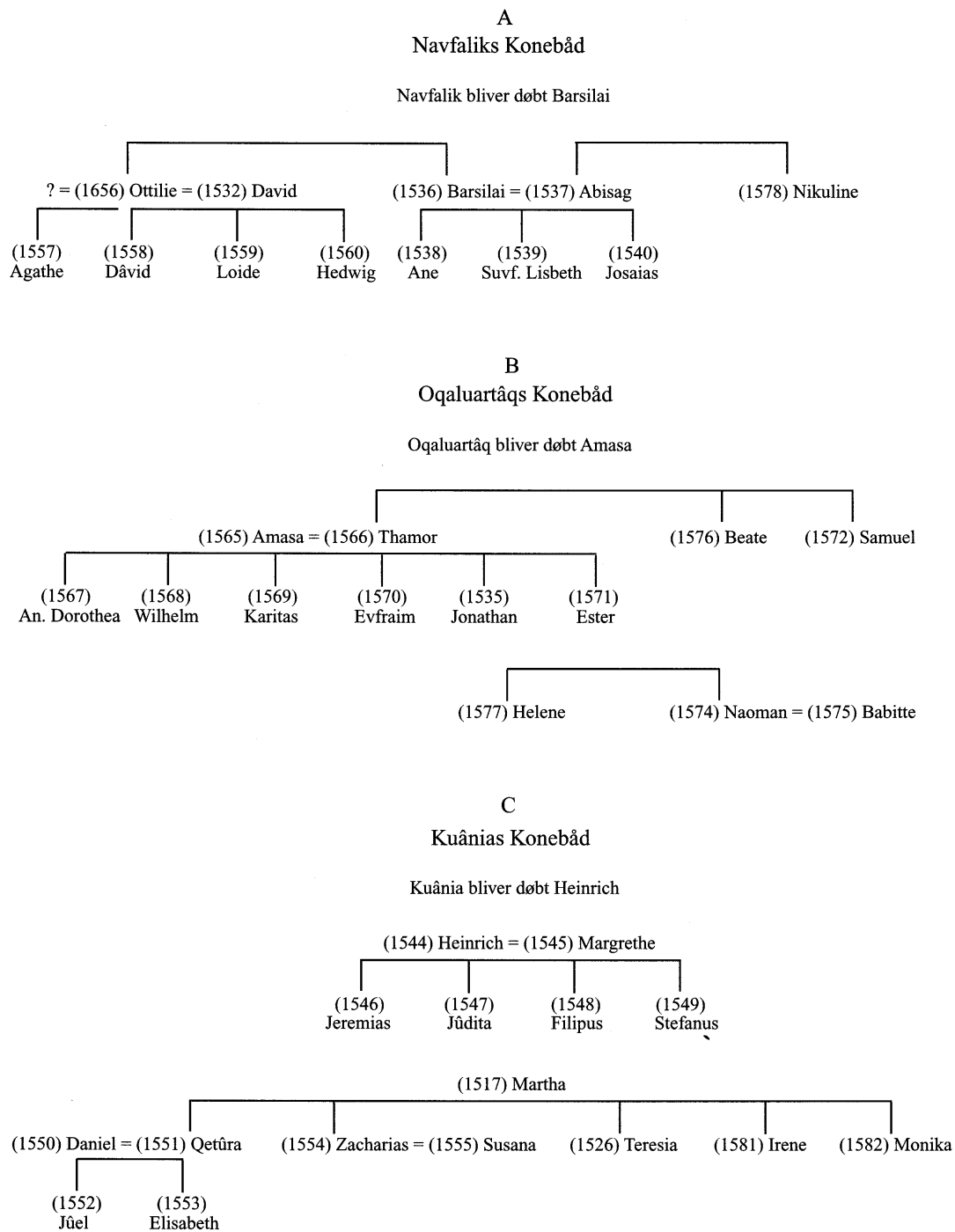


Figure 2. Family relationships of selected individuals in each of the three umiak crews that travelled together from East Greenland to South West Greenland in 1887. The information comes from the Frederiksdal Parish Register 1824-1900, which is why the individuals are indicated with a number in the parish register and a baptismal name, while the association with the individual umiak is evident from Isak Lund's list from 1887. Oqaluartâq's umiak crew consisted, besides the umiak owner's own family, of his wife's siblings, Beate (1576) and Samuel (1572) as well as others. Also among the members were a younger pair of siblings, Helene (Kisimitoq) (1577) and Naoman (Nuliaqângitsortaq) (1574) and the latter's wife, Babitte (Pûssêq) (1575). In Navfalik's umiak were also his sister, Otilie (Natsertortôq) (1556), her husband, David (Nipûjuk) (1532), and four children, the eldest of whom was not the daughter of David (1532). Also in Kuânia's umiak, besides Heinrich (Kuânia) (1544), his wife and four children, were the widow Martha (Papitalik) (1517) and five children, two of whom were married, one of these with two children. The study further shows that there were close family relations between central figures in at least two of the umiaks. Hence the umiak owner Amasa (Oqaluartâq) (1565) was the brother of Abisag (Pavfíngitsoq) (1537), who was married to the other umiak owner, Barsilai (Navfalik) (1536), in whose boat was also Nikuline (Majuariaq) (1578), a sister of the two brothers.

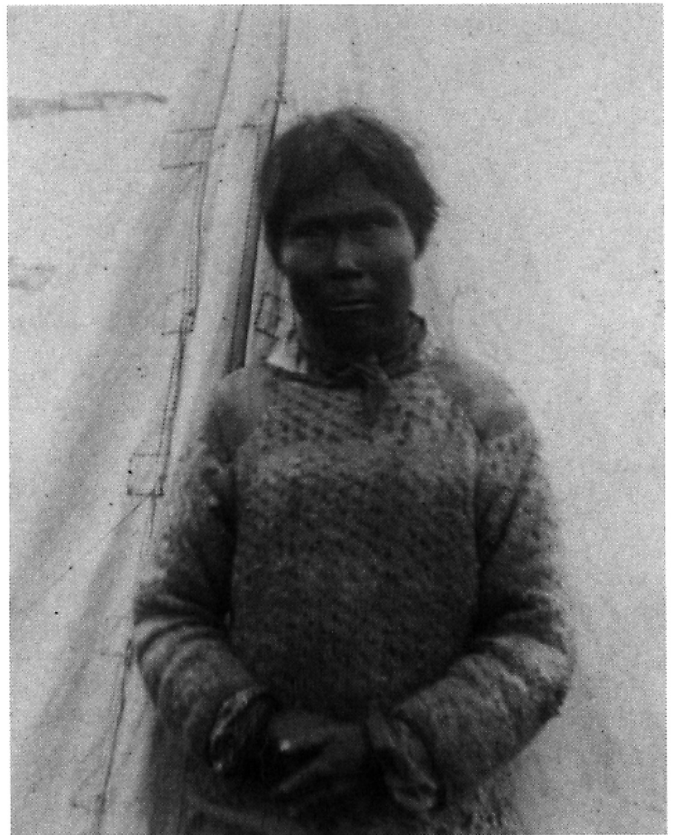


Figure 3. Navfalik (left) and Oqaluartâq (right). These two men had been in West Greenland as early as 1883, where among other things they met members of the umiak expedition of 1883-85 led by Gustav Holm. When the umiak expedition began on the actual journey to Ammassalik the next year, they went with it and functioned as guides on the first part of the journey. The photos were taken by Hans Knutsen, a member of the umiak expedition. Photos 08631 (left) and 08599 (right) from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.

A comparison of Isak Lund's list and the Frederiksdal parish register reveals a number of differences in the original Greenlandic names given. For example Isak Lund mentions the names Nervalik, Pápítalik, Pavfigigsoq and Napa, corresponding to the parish register's Navfalik, Papítalik, Pavfingitsoq and Nápa, but these are easily recognizable, and the differences must be attributed to minor misunderstandings and inconsistencies in spelling in general. The reason for the two different spellings of the name Ítoqaq (in the parish register) and Inutoqaq ("old person") (in Isak Lund) should be sought in dialectal differences, since the parish register gives the East Greenlandic form and Lund the West Greenlandic form of the same name.

It is remarkable that for almost half of the 50 immigrants the two sources give quite different names; this confirms that people in East Greenland normally had many names and that they changed their names. The East Greenlandic tendency to change one's name was also noted by Rüttel during his stay at Kap Farvel. During his trip in connection with the establishment of the trading post at Itilleq, he made good contacts with a few people from the Ammassalik area, who had gone south to trade, and one of these changed his name to "Kravdlunak" ("white man / woman" or "Dane") in honour of Rüttel, on which Rüttel's comment was: "The easterners are mad about their names!" (Rüttel 1893). Name-changing in the East Greenlandic population is described elsewhere (Holm and Garde 1889; Robbe 1981), but in this situation it seems to have been on a quite massive scale. Furthermore, this has the effect that it is difficult, in a first comparison of Isak Lund's list with the information in the parish register, to identify a couple of the people with full certainty.

An addition made to Isak Lund's account, about a dramatic episode connected with the story of the 50 East Greenlandic immigrants, also tells us something about the uncertainty of identifying names. Pavfigigsoq, according to Isak Lund, was the second wife of Sanimuínaq, one of the umiak owners who had gone back to Ammassalik, but as early as the first part of the journey there had been disagreement between the two, and Sanimuínaq had stabbed Pavfigigsoq in the thigh with a knife and threatened to kill her when they got back to the east coast. However, she had succeeded in escaping from her husband by hiding in a cave, and now Nervalik took care of her, so she was listed under his household. In the parish register, Pavfigigsoq (written Pavfingitsoq) was however listed as Nervalik's wife, and the same is true of Hansêraq's list of the inhabitants of the east coast of Greenland drawn up in the autumn of 1884 during Gustav Holm's umiak expedition to Ammassalik (Hansen 1888: 185). As one can see, there was some confusion about the names of the East Greenlandic immigrants!

The East Greenlandic immigrants settled at Frederiksdal to receive instruction and baptism, which in most cases took place in two sessions in April 1888. However, as early as the autumn and winter of 1887 / 88, six of the immigrants had been baptized. All of these died shortly after baptism. According to the records in the parish register, a further 13 of the East Greenlandic immigrants died in the period up to 1900, that is a total of 19 out of 50 people (Kirkebog 1824-1900). This appears to be a high mortality rate, especially in view of the fact that the group consisted of many children and young people. In *Indberetning fra Kolonien Julianehaab for Handelsaaret 1887-88* ("Report from the colony of Julianehåb for the trading year 1887-88"), the colony manager Carl

Lützen wrote that "the Greenlanders who travelled from the east coast in the summer of 1887 have been ravaged by a good deal of illness, probably dysentery, much of which is thought to have been caused by malnutrition" (Rigsarkivet 1873-94). Several people appear to have been so enfeebled by illness that the mission station considered it necessary to get them baptized quickly, even though they might have lacked sufficient introduction to Christianity.

Settlement and population in the Kap Farvel district

In the nineteenth century, West Greenland had the attraction of a magnet for the population of South East Greenland, who had contacts with and knowledge of the society there from regular hunting and trading journeys. The depopulation of South East Greenland can be explained by the declining hunting in the area and as a result of the increased pressure on the indigenous religious institutions, which made the population seek a more secure existence in West Greenland (Gulløv 2000; Lund 1887; Wilhjelm 2001: 31).

Trading and mission stations had been founded farther and farther south to receive the arriving East Greenlanders, and the German Moravian Brethren in particular had great success in attracting them to their mission. Frederiksdal (Figures 5 and 6) was the southernmost of these mission stations, and practically the whole population in the Kap Farvel area belonged to the German congregation (Gulløv 2000: 190).

At first sight a migration of 50 people may not look like much, but if one compares this number, as in the following examples, with the size of the population and changes in the population in the same period, one gets a different impression. The population of Frederiksdal and the settlements farther south grew from 447 people in 1886 to 506 people in 1887, that is by more than 10%, which shows a clear effect of the East Greenlandic immigration (Israel 1978: Table 1). If we view the figures in a larger context, the annual report from the South Greenland Inspectorate for the financial year 1887 / 88 on the conditions in South Greenland said that there had been 209 births and 161 deaths; this was an increase in the population of 48 individuals. The East Greenlandic immigrants must be added to this figure (Rigsarkivet 1873-1894). The growth in the population of South Greenland in 1887-88 due to the East Greenland immigrants thus corresponds to 25% of the number of births throughout the whole region and is of the same order as the population growth in general in that same region.

In 1890, 146 people lived in Frederiksdal and of these, 14 people can safely be identified as belonging to the group that arrived from East Greenland in 1887. At the surrounding nine settlements, 371 people were to be found, which thus also included the remainder of the new arrivals (Israel 1978: Tables 1 and 3). The majority of the immigrant group only lived at Frederiksdal itself for a few years, after which they moved out into the district around the mission station (Figure 8). It would take more detailed investigation to find out whether the move to other smaller settlements was due to the wish to find better hunting grounds or perhaps from pressure from the authorities.

In 1890, Heinrich (formerly Kuvânia) lived with his wife and four children in Frederiksdal. Later, the family was to be found in Saqqarmiut, and later again in Sammisoq (Israel 1978: Table 3; Rigsarkivet 1899-1916: autumn meeting 26/9/1899; Thalbitzer 1917) (Figure 7). This and other examples suggest that the normal pattern was for immigrant East Greenlanders to settle first in Frederiksdal to receive instruction and baptism there. Some of these carried on living at Frederiksdal, but the majority gradually moved out and settled in the area south of Frederiksdal. The material further makes it seem likely that there was generally a high degree of mobility in the population, and that there was a good deal of moving back and forth in the area, in connection not only with the traditional journeys to and from the summer camps, but also with changes in the winter settlements, which normally had a more permanent character (Appelt and Raahauge 2002).

Many eye-witness descriptions from the time after the last East Greenlandic migration mention the East Greenlandic element in the area. In a memoir from a stay in both South Greenland and Ammassalik, Hastrup (1944) writes that in the population of the southernmost districts there are still customs from heathen times, and that language and culture show influences from East Greenland. This is confirmed in notes by William Thalbitzer, who in the summer of 1914 travelled through the whole Kap Farvel area. He says that when he arrived at Nanortalik he felt "a breeze from East Greenland" blowing towards him. This impression was further reinforced the farther south he went, where he calls the population "East Greenlanders," on the basis of their language, traditions and their whole fundamental way of life (Thalbitzer 1917: 20ff).

In 1921 one could read of the then existing settlements in the Kap Farvel district that they had formerly belonged to the Moravian Brethren's mission, and it is even emphasized as regards the population of Sammisoq and Frederiksdal that "most" and elsewhere "many" of the inhabitants had immigrated from the east coast (Amdrup *et al.* 1921: 529-37). Observations from the 1930s also testify that the population is greatly influenced by the East Greenlandic element (Pedersen, n.d.).

The above information suggests that the East Greenlanders who had immigrated to West Greenland towards the end of the nineteenth century, after a brief stay at the mission station Frederiksdal, normally moved out into the surrounding districts, where, especially in the Kap Farvel area, they made up the bulk of the population. On paper they had become West Greenlanders, but they had brought their language, culture and way of life, and this gave them a clear East Greenlandic stamp which persisted, even far unto the twentieth century. For example, material with roots in the East Greenlandic tradition forms the greater part of the legends and tales from South Greenland that have just been published in Greenlandic and Danish, and are also to be published in English (Vebæk 2001a and 2001b).



Figure 4. View of Pamialluk. Until the establishment of the new trading station Itilleq in 1893 it was the southernmost trading post in Greenland and therefore the first destination for the groups of East Greenlanders who journeyed to West Greenland in the nineteenth century, primarily to trade. Photo: William Thalbitzer. Photo 07930 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.



Figure 5. Frederiksdal, the largest settlement south of Nanortalik and the Moravian Brethren's southernmost mission station in Greenland. In the foreground we see the Greenlanders' houses, built of stones and turf, most with the traditional flat roof construction, a few with a new construction with a high wooden roof. In the background, the church and the residence. Photo: F.C.P. Rüttel. Photo 000.80 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.



Figure 6. The Moravian Brethren's church and residence in Frederiksdal, where the immigrant East Greenlanders first settled in order to be baptized. When the Moravian mission stopped working in Greenland in 1900, the congregation merged with the Danish congregation, which also took over the buildings. Photo: William Thalbitzer. Photo 04636 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.



Figure 7. Group of people in Sammisog, whose inhabitants had immigrated from East Greenland. In 1909 the Royal Greenland Trading Company (KGH) moved its shop and trading from Itilleq to Sammisog, which thus had the status of a trading post until the closure and depopulation in 1944. In the background, we see the mountaintops on the island of Annikitsog. Photo: William Thalbitzer. Photo 04523 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.

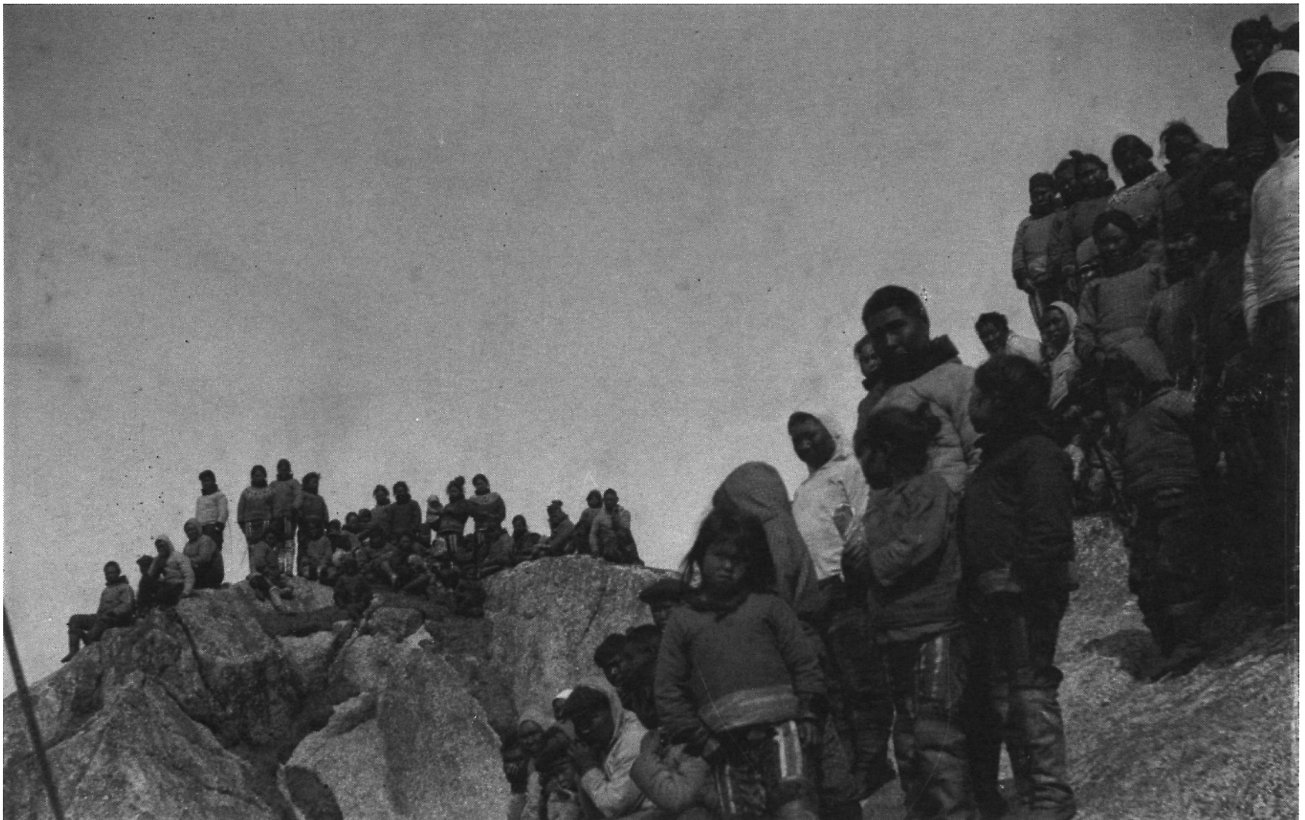


Figure 8. Group of people at Illukasik near Frederiksdal. It was one of the settlements where the majority of the inhabitants came from East Greenland and belonged to the Moravian Brethren mission. Photo: William Thalbitzer. Photo 04525 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.

Social conditions

The annual reports on conditions in the "colonies" in Greenland regularly speak of great social problems in the southernmost district, and several times they specifically mention Frederiksdal and the dense population concentration there as a problem in the years after 1887 (Rigsarkivet 1873-1894 and 1894-1899, *e.g.* from the years 1888 / 89, 1892 / 93, 1893 / 94, 1895 / 96 and 1896 / 97).

In the years after the last immigration in 1900, several accounts give the impression of poor occupational and social conditions in the area. Thalbitzer writes: "On the west coast the situation has deteriorated for the immigrants because they do not know the hunting grounds and the hunting area here as well as the natives of the coast. Their huts are small and wretched and they lack the means of keeping their tents, boats and other equipment in as good condition as their native area once offered them. In short they lead a shadowy existence" (Thalbitzer 1917: 20). Reports from the church testify to the same conditions: in 1922 Gerhard Egede writes from Frederiksdal that "it is the poorest population I have visited so far," and in the dean Frederik Balle's travel account of 1937, the Kap Farvel district is described as a "sad and neglected district" (Rigsarkivet 1920-40). From the same period comes a travel account that gives the impression that the farther south one goes in Greenland, the poorer are the conditions and the more impoverished the population (Pedersen, n.d.). On the basis of the above information there can be no doubt that in the Kap Farvel district there was not a sufficient resource basis to feed the immigrant population group. The population density was too high and the East Greenlandic settlers and their descendants lived in very poor social conditions.

Settlement policy and occupational conditions

As a large concentration of immigrant Greenlanders arose at the mission stations of the Moravian Brethren, this created a tense relationship between the Danish authorities and the Moravian Brethren. The establishment of Frederiksdal too prompted Danish requests to spread the population, but without results (Wilhjelm 2001: 48-50). The sudden population increase in Frederiksdal in 1887 gave rise to concern in the Julianehåb Superintendency⁷, which in the spring of 1888 sent a proposal to the South Greenland Inspectorate suggesting that immigrants to the district should not be allowed to settle without the consent of the superintendency. The next year the inspectorate approved this, and the superintendency thus now had the formal authority to regulate settlements and moves within its district (Rigsarkivet 1795-1901: Letter No. 57, 30/4/1889).

⁷ In 1857, the superintendencies were established as a form of municipal councils within the individual colony districts with duties in the social and commercial areas. The members were the colony's Danish officials and a majority of Greenlandic members, the superintendents (*paarsisut*). The superintendencies were replaced in a reform of 1908 by *kommuneråd*, proper municipal councils covering smaller areas, and two *landsråd* or provincial councils, which were to deal with cases important to the whole country or region.

At the same time the inspectorate sent letters to the Moravian missionaries in Julianehåb District informing them of this decision, and these letters explicitly stated that the intention was to "prevent a repetition of the unfortunate circumstances that occurred in 1887, when the heathens who came from the east coast that year were concentrated at Frederiksdal" (Rigsarkivet 1795-1901: Letter No. 58, 30/4/1889).

The plans to establish a trading post at Qernertoq, which arose as a result of the social problems in Frederiksdal, seem to have had a sympathetic response from the Julianehåb Superintendency, which at its spring meeting in 1893 again discussed the scarcity and the social conditions at Frederiksdal and proposed that some of the population there, as a further result, should be relocated to the Qernertoq area. In addition, they wanted approval for a proposal that anyone who arrived in the future from the east coast would be told that they could only stay at Frederiksdal for a short period, and that they must then return to the new trading post and settle there "as really belonging there." Just two months after this, the approval of the inspectorate was granted. In the same letter the inspectorate also approved the superintendency's proposal that a superintendent should be elected from the new trading post (Rigsarkivet 1882-99, minutes of meeting, 25th April 1893, and Rigsarkivet 1795-1901: Letter No. 67, 25/6/1893).

On the other hand the management of the Royal Greenland Trading Company was very dissatisfied with the location of the new trading post, since they thought that it was too close to Pamialluk to achieve the main aim, which was to stop the East Greenlanders before they reached the west coast. The manager in Julianehåb was therefore asked to investigate whether the newly founded trading post at Itilleq could be moved without great difficulty and expense, not only over to the other side of the Ikeq Sound to Qernertoq, but a good distance up the east coast, preferably to Narsaq by the Lindenow Fjord (Kangerlussuatsiaq) or at least to Aluk or a suitable place in the vicinity. The next year the question of removal was however set aside, since the colony manager had said to the management that the establishment of the trading and mission station at Ammassalik, which took place in 1894, would probably have the result that the inhabitants of the east coast would stop going to the west coast, and thus the establishment of a trading post on the southern part of the east coast would become superfluous. However, for the time being, the management wanted the trading post occupied (Rigsarkivet 1795-1901: Letter No. 41, 15-3-1894 and Letter No. 27, 1/5/1895).

In the wake of the immigration of East Greenlanders to South Greenland a discussion thus arose about the settlement pattern in the Kap Farvel area and about the measures that should be taken to counteract overpopulation and the resultant scarcity. The discussions continued in the first half of the twentieth century, now prompted not by immigrations, but by changes in the occupational situation. Sealing was in decline, while fishing was correspondingly increasing in social importance, although apparently still without creating an adequate occupational basis for the population. The issue was dealt with by the municipal councils and the South Greenland Provincial Council, where there were ongoing discussions of developments and possible precautions. In 1930 the municipal council proposed moving the trading post Sammissoq to Itilleq (that

is, back again!), since the population in Itilleq was now larger than in Sammisoq, and since it was thought that better harbour conditions in Itilleq would contribute more to the development of the occupational base. However, no move was approved.

By 1943, the situation in the area appears to have deteriorated. Hence, during a discussion on improving the situation of the population in southernmost Greenland as a result of the poor occupational conditions, the Provincial Council recommended that measures be taken to facilitate the relocation of the population from Julianehåb Southern District to remedy the situation there. In 1944 the trading post was closed down and the area was depopulated (Appelt and Raahauge 2002).

Immigration, resource problems and changes in the occupational basis in the southernmost part of Greenland prompted a political discussion among the colonial authorities and local bodies of a settlement policy towards (in the first instance) immigrants and (later) permanent residents. In time the changing occupational conditions altered the specific reasons for the individual decisions, but in principle the result was the same. The immigrant East Greenlanders and later their descendants had to submit to certain decisions made by the surrounding society, which had consequences for where they could settle.

The East Greenlandic migrations in a new light

It is the general view that accounts of the migrations from East Greenland and especially of life in East Greenland have in the past been shrouded in a certain amount of secrecy, and that the general — or perhaps more accurately — the official attitude, has been that one should not mention the old heathen past now that people have become Christians. It is however also said that stories from ancient times continue to be told, but that people make sure that the children have gone to bed first, so that they at least would not be harmed by this (Jensen 2002: 57)⁸.

Although the stories have thus lived on for a long time in the shadows, the memory of the migrations and the immigrants is still very much alive in the awareness of their descendants. In 2001, on the centenary of the baptism of the last immigrants, their descendants arranged a commemorative ceremony in Nanortalik, and this was followed by several interviews on KNR (Greenland Radio). It is said that people who had moved away from Nanortalik municipality, after hearing the subsequent radio programs, called and told the organizers how happy they were about the initiative, and many said that it was only through the broadcasts on the radio that they had understood the true facts of the migrations from East Greenland and the large East Greenlandic population element in South West Greenland. It is similarly said that after the events of 2001, people have made contact with other people in the Ammassalik area with whom they share ancestors (Jensen 2002: 54-59).

⁸ The same information was given orally by Mâliâraq Vebæk, who grew up in Frederiksdal, and has later worked with tales from South Greenland (see Vebæk 2001a, 2001b).

There is thus a consciousness-raising process in relation to the East Greenlandic migrations by part of the present population and their relatives in East Greenland. For example, cooperation with the local museum could strengthen historical interest and thus a sense of identity in the affected population, and at the same time give a historical perspective to the whole population of the area.

Conclusion

In the course of the nineteenth century, groups of East Greenlanders immigrated to West Greenland. They travelled to destinations that seemed attractive, in this case because of the better living conditions in West Greenland, and the migrations can be seen as expressing a colonially determined dynamic in East Greenlandic society. In West Greenland, there was a tendency for the immigrants to settle in just a few places, but this was later counteracted to a certain extent by moves out to smaller settlements, partly on their own initiative, partly under pressure from the authorities.

During the period discussed here, the majority of the immigrants settled at first in and around Frederiksdal, but later they spread down to the Kap Farvel area, which was consequently inhabited at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first part of the twentieth century by a population group with a clear East Greenlandic influence. The hunting basis in the area does not seem to have been able to bear the large growth in the population, social hardship was great, and the East Greenlandic immigrants and their descendants lived in conditions which — even viewed with contemporary eyes — were wretched. Nor did the transition from hunting to fishing create an adequate occupational basis, and in the mid-twentieth century the area was depopulated. This last relocation was a forced one, and today parallels are drawn with the relocation of population that took place a few years later in the Thule area with the establishment of the American base.

The immigrant East Greenlanders are very silent in the existing archival sources, but by looking into the material and especially by comparing several sources, one can find some information that sheds light on their motives and their conditions, and one can thus piece together a picture both of individuals and of the East Greenlandic element as a whole. The migrations and the consequent problems put pressure on both the central and the local authorities, and on social bodies which had to relate to the situation and adopt measures that were supposed to solve the problems that had arisen or at least prevent conditions from getting worse. In one specific case this resulted in the establishment of a trading post that was meant to work as a buffer against the immigration from East Greenland, and in the empowerment of the superintendency to regulate settlement.

The migrations in the nineteenth century from South East Greenland to West Greenland can be seen as a chapter in the history of the East Greenlandic population and as a part of the history of Eskimo migrations in Greenland, which concluded with the last migrations in 1900 (Gulløv 2000). The story of the 50 migrant East Greenlanders in 1887 also shows, however, that the various events and issues are not restricted to the migrations in the nineteenth century and the conditions of the

individual immigrants or immigrant groups, but that as a result of this, one can consider crucial issues of more general, overall significance, for example settlement policy, social conditions, the interrelations between different authorities and bodies. The story further shows that these events and their effects did not stop with the last migration of 1900, but that their influence extended far into the twentieth century. The migrations are part of the history of the population and settlements not only in the Kap Farvel area, but in the whole of South Greenland.

In Nanortalik municipality today, a broad interest has arisen in shedding light on themes of local history. The historical pilot project which formed the basis for this work demonstrates that in the archives there is a wealth of historical sources, and conversations with people in Nanortalik show the existence of a corresponding body of valuable ethnohistorical sources. This material forms the basis for a historical investigation of the migrations from East Greenland in the nineteenth century as whole, which is necessary if we are to understand the consequences of this particular cultural encounter in a wider perspective.

Acknowledgements

The project "Tunup Saqqaa: contacts between East and West Greenland," headed by Research Professor Hans Christian Gulløv of the National Museum of Denmark, intends, on the basis of archaeological, historical and ethnohistorical material, to shed light on the migrations from East Greenland to West Greenland, to give an account of their cultural origins and to place them in their context. The project is one of the focus areas of SILA — the National Museum's Centre for Greenland Research, and the point of departure for archaeological investigations in the far south of Greenland. These investigations are being conducted in close collaboration with the museums in the three South Greenlandic municipalities.

The study on which this article is based was conducted as part of the "Tunup Saqqaa" project, and has had the aim of providing an overview of the source material that could carry the archaeological investigations into historical times. The historical pilot study took the form of archive studies and interviews with descendants of East Greenlandic immigrants in Nanortalik. SILA made facilities available and Research Professor Hans Christian Gulløv and the staff of SILA provided great support and scholarly inspiration. My special thanks go to Museum Curator Kristine Raahauge of the Nanortalik Museum, for practical and scholarly support and commitment, and for the incredible hospitality that I experienced in connection with my study trip to Nanortalik.

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Figure 1. The southern part of Greenland with the locations of the place-names mentioned. Inset: Kap Farvel district at Nanortalik, which was the centre for the Danish mission and trading in the southernmost part of Greenland, and the Moravian Brethren's mission station at Frederiksdal. The majority of the population of the Greenlandic settlements south of here came from East Greenland and until 1900 belonged to the Moravian Brethren.

Figure 2. Family relationships of selected individuals in each of the three umiak crews that travelled together from East Greenland to South West Greenland in 1887. The information comes from the Frederiksdal Parish Register 1824-1900, which is why the individuals are indicated with a number in the parish register and a baptismal name, while the association with the individual umiak is evident from Isak Lund's list from 1887.

Oqaluartâq's umiak crew consisted, besides the umiak owner's own family, of his wife's siblings, Beate (1576) and Samuel (1572) as well as others. Also among the members were a younger pair of siblings, Helene (Kisimitoq) (1577) and Naoman (Nuliaqángitsortaq) (1574) and the latter's wife, Babitte (Pûssêq) (1575). In Navfalik's umiak were also his sister, Otilie (Natserqortôq) (1556), her husband, David (Nipûjuk) (1532), and four children, the eldest of whom was not the daughter of David (1532). Also in Kuânia's umiak, besides Heinrich (Kuânia) (1544), his wife and four children, were the widow Martha (Papitalik) (1517) and five children, two of whom were married, one of these with two children.

The study further shows that there were close family relations between central figures in at least two of the umiaks. Hence the umiak owner Amasa (Oqaluartâq) (1565) was the brother of Abisag (Pavfíngitsoq) (1537), who was married to the other umiak owner, Barsilai (Navfalik) (1536), in whose boat was also Nikuline (Majuariaq) (1578), a sister of the two brothers.

Figures 3. Navfalik (left) and Oqaluartâq (right). These two men had been in West Greenland as early as 1883, where among other things they met members of the umiak expedition of 1883-85 led by Gustav Holm. When the umiak expedition began on the actual journey to Ammassalik the next year, they went with it and functioned as guides on the first part of the journey. The photos were taken by Hans Knutsen, a member of the umiak expedition. Photos 08631 (left) and 08599 (right).

Figure 4. View of Pamialluk. Until the establishment of the new trading station Itilleq in 1893 it was the southernmost trading post in Greenland and therefore the first destination for the groups of East Greenlanders who journeyed to West Greenland in the nineteenth century, primarily to trade. Photo: William Thalbitzer. Photo 07930 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.

Figure 5. Frederiksdal, the largest settlement south of Nanortalik and the Moravian Brethren's southernmost mission station in Greenland. In the foreground we see the Greenlanders' houses, built of stones and turf, most with the traditional flat

roof construction, a few with a new construction with a high wooden roof. In the background, the church and the residence. Photo: F.C.P. Rüttel. Photo 000.80 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.

Figure 6. The Moravian Brethren's church and residence in Frederiksdal, where the immigrant East Greenlanders first settled in order to be baptized. When the Moravian mission stopped working in Greenland in 1900, the congregation merged with the Danish congregation, which also took over the buildings. Photo: William Thalbitzer. Photo 04636 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.

Figure 7. Group of people in Sammisog, whose inhabitants had immigrated from East Greenland. In 1909 the Royal Greenland Trading Company (KGH) moved its shop and trading from Itilleq to Sammisog, which thus had the status of a trading post until the closure and depopulation in 1944. In the background, we see the mountaintops on the island of Annikitsoq. Photo: William Thalbitzer. Photo 04523 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.

Fig. 8. Group of people at Illukasik near Frederiksdal. It was one of the settlements where the majority of the inhabitants came from East Greenland and belonged to the Moravian Brethren mission. Photo: William Thalbitzer. Photo 04525 from the Arctic Institute, Copenhagen.