

HAUSER, Michael, 2010 *Traditional Inuit Songs from the Thule Area*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press and Meddelelser om Grønland, 346, vol. 1: 827 pages, vol. 2: 729 pages and CD.

Beverley Diamond

Volume 35, Number 1-2, 2011

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1012852ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1012852ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Association Inuksiitiit Katimajit Inc.
Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones (CIÉRA)

ISSN

0701-1008 (print)

1708-5268 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Diamond, B. (2011). Review of [HAUSER, Michael, 2010 *Traditional Inuit Songs from the Thule Area*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press and Meddelelser om Grønland, 346, vol. 1: 827 pages, vol. 2: 729 pages and CD.] *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 35(1-2), 297–302. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1012852ar>

References

- ADAMS, William M.
2004 *Against Extinction: the story of conservation*, London, Earthscan.
- ANONYMOUS
2007 Can Polar Bears Save the World? Simon Garfield on the new poster boys of global warming, *Observer Magazine*, March 4, 2007, cover text.
- DICKSON, Barney, Jon HUTTON, and William M. ADAMS (eds)
2009 *Recreational Hunting, Conservation and Rural Livelihoods*, Blackwells, Oxford.
- IUCN (INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES)
2011 *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* (online at: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/22823/0>).
- LEADER-WILLIAMS, N. and H.T. DUBLIN
2000 Charismatic megafauna as “flagship species”, in A. Entwistle and N. Dunstone (ed.), *Priorities for the Conservation of Mammalian Diversity: Has the Panda had its Day?*, Cambridge, University Press Cambridge: 53-81.
- HAUSER, Michael
2010 *Traditional Inuit Songs from the Thule Area*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press and Meddelelser om Grønland, 346, vol. 1: 827 pages, vol. 2: 729 pages and CD.

William M. Adams
Department of Geography
University of Cambridge
Cambridge CB2 3EN, U.K.
wa12@cam.ac.uk

This is a book the likes of which is rarely produced in the cash-strapped world of academic publishing. It is truly the *magnum opus* of Danish ethnomusicologist Michael Hauser whose keen and constant attention to the Inuit songs of the Thule area has been remarkable throughout his career. Now, in more than 1,600 pages replete with musical transcriptions and luxurious photographic documentation (nearly 300 pages, many in colour), he is presenting the fruits of his lifelong labour (albeit after publishing one other important book [Hauser 1992] on traditional Greenlandic music in addition to many articles). Hauser is old school, believing in comprehensive description, measurable scientific evidence, and the purity of traditions. Hence, some of the criteria that I might generally use to review a recent publication—knowledge of the discipline’s

latest intellectual developments or theoretical nuance, for instance—are arguably not relevant here. Rather, it is important to see what can be learned from an author who has paid painstakingly close attention to the details of music structure, and an author who studied with the “elder statesmen”—notably Erik Holtved whose work he describes knowingly as “an [...] epoch making collection” (p. 24), which he presents in volume 2—but also more recent filmmakers such as Jette Bang and Pauline Lumholt. Most importantly, what can we learn from an author who has maintained contact with Greenlandic families for nearly half a century? His own photos and dozens of important historic ones, sometimes obtained from family members of earlier collectors, sometimes from public archival collections, are truly a remarkable contribution in themselves, one that reflects his personal networks and relationships.

Hauser’s study is a rare attempt at music history through detailed comparative analysis of song forms. Focusing on the Inughuit of the Thule area, he builds on earlier work that he published (Hauser 1978a, 1978b) on a particular song structure found in his 1962 collection, a form that he traced to the drum dance songs of southern Baffin Island, demonstrating that Baffin Island families who migrated to Greenland in the 1860s were the culture bearers. Here he provides additional data to extend his analysis of this song form (characterised by “level shifted iteration” or motives that are repeated starting on a higher or lower degree of the scale). He also takes on more intractable problems, particularly the question of why very few of these “level shifted iteration” song forms appear in the earlier Holtved collection of 1937, which had a very homogeneous structural profile. By tracing the genealogy of all of Holtved’s informants (as well as Holtved’s), Hauser learns that Holtved focused his attention on the “old” Thule families who had resided in the area before the Canadian Inuit arrived in the mid-19th century. He then looks at connections to earlier migrations and to linguistic lineages, confirming similarities to the Copper Inuit from the Western Canadian Arctic. By using historically deep data and large collections, he manages to show how song forms reflect divergent family histories of migration. His conclusions rely on the assumption that the tradition has been relatively stable, and he has sufficient instances of old and new recordings to make a rather convincing case (although I return to this point at the end of this review).

In Section 1¹ he surveys Inuit research both in Greenland and in Canada. Ever committed to the framework of geography, he organises this survey by region, even though some researchers worked in several regions. This is generally a thorough and valuable compilation, particularly with regard to Greenland. Much later, in Section 6, he returns to the histories of collecting and expands upon the information in Section 1. It would have been useful to have all this information in one place. In the section on Canada (p. 92) he uses Boas’ list of Inuit groups in the Cumberland Sound region but strangely omits mention of those further west, including the Copper Inuit who are central to his story of Canadian Inuit migration to Greenland. There is relatively little discussion of the positionality of these researchers: their disciplinary training and ideological dispositions, their jobs, or their countries of origin. It would have been useful to provide a basic introduction to landmark historical events in the lives of

¹ The more usual “chapters” designation is replaced with “sections.”

Greenlanders. There is passing mention (p. 44), for instance, of the increased interest in traditional Inuit culture after Greenlandic Home Rule began in 1979 but no discussion of the ways cultural production changed afterwards. The work of scholars and collectors is then presented, without reference to socio-political change, as if each researcher filled in the gaps in a static and fixed body of knowledge about Inuit culture in Greenland.

Section 2 outlines his transcription and analysis methods, and this outline extends into Section 3 where he describes the typology of song forms that underpins his investigation. His terminology is idiosyncratic, as was that of other researchers who worked on parallel repertoires in the late 20th century. While Hauser transcribes songs to the “optimum position” (which means that “uniform or closely related motifs” will be transcribed at the same pitch level), others used Bartok’s method of transcribing so that the final was consistently “G,” and still others used Kolinski’s method of using a consistent segment of the cycle of fifths. Each is arbitrary. These different approaches make comparison more difficult of course and, as a result, Hauser has sometimes done the hard work of retranscribing songs from other collections to enable comparison with the Greenlandic material. Terms such as “Nucleus” (for the initial phrase of a song), “Infix,” or “Suffix” do not become clear until Section 3, where the song forms and melody types are outlined. He derives these terms from linguistics, asserting that song composition paralleled language usage, an assertion that I would love to see defended more fully. Other terms never do become clear to me: “semi-stereotyped motif,” “superior form structure,” “obligatory and stereotypical” motifs, the “compulsory way” (frequently used in the transcription notes in Volume 2) or “deviating ” tones or structures to name a few.

New terminology is again introduced in Section 3. Some labels seem unnecessarily esoteric (e.g., “pleonasm” for “repeated tones”). While I have no doubt whatsoever that Hauser has a deep understanding of these song forms, his choice of labels for motifs is certainly idiosyncratic and, from my perspective, often counter-intuitive. Transition motives seem more like cadential motives. “Level shifted iteration” seems simply to be motives transposed to other scale degrees. Why are “Groups” used for motives in the central part of the song? And in what ways is “Formula Structure” that pertains to songs with a single repeated motive more “formulaic” than the other structures he describes? The logic might be clearer to me if I understood Danish.² He uses these analytical categories to define six “form and melody type” structures: Type A—Simple Refrain form; Type B—Spaced Refrain form; Type D—Developed Innovation-Iteration Form (the dominant form in the Holtved collection); Type E—Top Tone Variation Form; Type F—Level Shifted Iteration Form (shared by South Baffin Islanders and migrants from Canada to Greenland in the 1860s), plus Formula Structure, which may be Type C although I cannot find a reference to that letter designation in the relevant section. The form and melody types are not presented in alphabetical order but rather by age of the historical collections.

² I do thank Hauser for writing in English in order to reach an international audience.

Section 3 also has a valuable introduction to all the informants of Holtved and Hauser, with lists of genealogical information and indications of their primary or secondary relationship to Canadian Inuit. The listing of informant information is rather clinical, but the many images humanise the presentation, as do the references to personal comments from Holtved's notebooks.

Section 4 presents parameters of the music. I found this chapter highly redundant with little information that was not already described in Sections 2 and/or 3. One of the most interesting observations in this chapter was a section on "deviations" (among them European influences) in which, among other things, he notes how Greenlandic performers were well aware of film conventions, sometimes "posing in an 'American' way" (p. 376) when the film camera was turned on. Altogether there are a number of references to "foreign" influences and repertoires, and indications of media awareness. Such references trouble his assertions that the tradition has been maintained with little change. Many would challenge his characterisation of such phenomena as "deviations," preferring to see them as responses to social and technological change.

Section 5, titled "The Song Tradition of the Inughuit" promised the socio-cultural information that would appropriately contextualise the song analysis. In particular, it includes "Statements" partially gleaned from a questionnaire called the Commentated Register created by Hauser and Bang for their 1962 field trip to gather informants' perspectives on the drum dance tradition. The 37 questions inquire about performance contexts, social roles related to gender, or special kinship categories such as song cousins, repertoire choice, cultural change, performance style, and meaning. They are posed with assumptions that both questioner and answerer have a priori knowledge. Curiously, these interesting areas of inquiry do not govern the chapter's organisation. Instead, Hauser focuses again on the music-analytical rather than on the social. Nonetheless, there are very important observations about performance, facilitated by pages of frame analysis from film productions, and about song terminology (also addressed in an alphabetical appendix). I appreciated the honesty about translation difficulties (pp. 458-459), as well as the clear-headed thinking about the ambiguity of references to "shamans songs" (p. 552ff). Hauser's explanations of unsynchronised drumming ring true to my own analyses. I also noted references to aesthetic preferences that are generally disregarded elsewhere in the study, most notably a comment that Euro-American songs are the "most-used" (p. 586) musical repertoires.

Sections 6 and 7 present what Hauser clearly sees as the important findings of the study. First, he expands his earlier work on the linkages between the South Baffin Island Inuit and those who emigrated from that area in the 1860s, both sharing a substantial preference for level shifted iteration forms (Song Type F). Then he looks further afield to try to find the origins of the older repertoires, particularly the dominant Song Type D in 103 of the 110 drum songs in Holtved's collection. He offers new transcriptions of Leden's 1912 collection en route and establishes a link to the Copper Inuit songs in Roberts' anthology of transcriptions of Diamond Jenness' early 20th-century collection.

Section 8 is a short summary and conclusion, Section 9 a useful terminological chart prepared with the aid of H.C. Petersen, Section 10 an annotated list of recordings and films (albeit missing some recent releases in Canada), and Section 11 a bibliography.

Volume 2 contains complete transcriptions and analyses of Erik Holtved's collection and comparative transcriptions and analyses of the Holtved and Hauser/Bang 1962 collections. Most of the Thule repertoire uses only vocables, and these are underlaid in the Holtved transcriptions along with occasional text. It is regrettable that there is no text underlay for the transcriptions of Hauser's recordings. A CD provides sound recordings of some drum songs.

In sum, this monumental study offers a unique perspective on how song form might reflect human migration. In this regard it ties in with studies of diaspora and globalisation. Its dogged focus on the relationship between song forms and geography sometimes obscures other interesting lines of inquiry; structural definition of song genres, for instance, is treated in passing but might, in fact, be worthy of closer scrutiny. References to cultural change are fleeting but intriguing. The book does have weaknesses. There is a lot of redundancy and, if there were ever to be a new edition, I might suggest the following changes: merging Section 1 and the parts about collection history in Section 6; deleting Section 4, which adds little to the analysis of Section 3; and eliminating replicated transcriptions by referring to them in Volume 2 (and certainly not repeating them twice within a single volume, as is the case in a number of instances in both Volumes 1 and 2). The work is limited in many ways: its assumption of cultural stasis; its disregard for the changes in repertoire and media access in the course of the 20th century; its lack of attention to socio-political change in Greenland, change that undoubtedly enabled or hindered different sorts of cultural development; and its assertions that the tradition remains stable in spite of occasional hints about changes in performance practice that may incorporate film or popular music elements or may reflect changes in transmission. In his conclusion, Hauser acknowledges that these aspects would have been good to study. Tantalising suggestions about new cultural developments in the post-1979 period of Greenlandic Home Rule will, hopefully, be the subject of his next book. For now, it is enlightening to see how song reveals much about northern Indigenous migration, and a joy to see many important Greenlandic culture bearers come alive through this detailed study.

References

HAUSER, Michael

- 1978a Inuit Songs from Southwest Baffin Island in Cross-Cultural Context (Part 1), *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 2(1): 55-83.
- 1978b Inuit Songs from Southwest Baffin Island in Cross-Cultural Context (Part 2), *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 2(2): 71-105.
- 1992 *Traditional Greenlandic Music*, København, Kragen.

Beverley Diamond
Canada Research Chair in Ethnomusicology
Research Centre for Music, Media and Place
Memorial University
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador A1C 5S7, Canada
bdiamond@mun.ca

KRUPNIK, Igor, Claudio APORTA, Shari GEARHEARD, Gita J. LAIDLER and Lene Kielsen HOLM (eds)
2010 *SIKU: Knowing Our Ice. Documenting Inuit Sea Ice Knowledge and Use*,
Dordrecht, Springer, 501 pages.

For the wider public, images of the hockey stick graph, stranded polar bears, or an ice-free Northwest Passage in the Arctic have become emblematic of global warming. Yet emblems like these seem to fail to communicate the urgency, enormity, and immediacy of the climate situation to large parts of the wider public, if measured by actual political action and changes in lifestyle. One of the reasons may be that these kinds of images are simply too abstract and remote to challenge people to connect climate change to their own particular lives, livelihoods, and experiences.

While providing more concrete images of the impacts of climate change on everyday life may be a minor objective for the increasingly intensive collaboration between scientists and Arctic communities, it is an important one to keep in mind when reading *SIKU: Knowing Our Ice. Documenting Inuit Sea Ice Knowledge and Use*. This collection of case studies evolved from collaborative projects between researchers and Indigenous communities to gain new data, insights, and approaches to climate change observation, monitoring, and adaptation that would provide both scientific and local communities with new data, useful technologies, and experiences and models of collaboration. By nature, such a localising approach to science also communicates strong and accessible images of climate change concretely affecting the actual lives of people. For all of these reasons, this book is an important resource not only for researchers and anthropologists but also for educators, policy-makers, and people actively involved in climate change advocacy.

The history of *SIKU* is interconnected with the International Polar Year (IPY 2007-2008). The research programs and projects under the auspices of the IPY produced and made accessible large amounts of new descriptive data and new insights into the causes and processes of climate change. More than that, the pressing situation of anthropogenic climate change also provided an opportune moment to include the social sciences and humanities in the research vision of the IPY; their task was to deal with what is often termed the human dimensions of Arctic climate change. The IPY project "Sea Ice Knowledge and Use: Assessing Arctic Environmental and Social Change" International Polar Year project (2006-2009) was set up to follow the model of the Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project (Freeman 1976) in its descriptive and mainly ecological system approach to Arctic socio-economic life. Organised as a "coordinated international study of local knowledge and use of sea ice in several indigenous