

***Boat Building in Winterton, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland.* By David A. Taylor (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Mercury Series no. 41, 1982)**

Michael Bird

Volume 6, Number 1-2, 1984

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081235ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081235ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (print)

1708-0401 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Bird, M. (1984). Review of [*Boat Building in Winterton, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland.* By David A. Taylor (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Mercury Series no. 41, 1982)]. *Ethnologies*, 6(1-2), 149–150.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1081235ar>

Comptes rendus / Reviews

Boat Building in Winterton, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland

By David A. Taylor

(Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Mercury Series no. 41, 1982)

Originally written as a Master's Thesis for the Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, David Taylor's study of boat building in a small Newfoundland community is a fine achievement, indeed. The purpose of this meticulous study is, as the author declares, the recording of the living tradition of boat construction in a selected Newfoundland village, and a description of how that tradition fits into the cultural context of the community. To accomplish this contextual analysis, he develops a brief historical background in which we are given a uniquely clear picture of the role of fishing (and, implicitly, boat-building) from the period of initial settlement to the present day. In this section is to be found an insightful view of certain external factors effecting boat construction at Winterton, including a sometimes conjectural but convincing interpretation of how government policy (i.e., unemployment compensation) may undermine incentive in a community industry. Particularly compelling is the argument that modes of design and construction, traditionally of an unself-conscious and non-specialized form, have been forced to yield to specialization as a consequence of restrictive government requirements in granting financial assistance under federal fishing vessel programmes designed to help commercial fishermen with the purchase of new fishing boats.

The heart of this discussion is concerned with three elements of boat building as a "living tradition" – design, construction and use. And what a superb analysis it is! David Taylor reveals most succinctly his earnest pursuit of objective documentation, and painstakingly accounts for each step of the research approach devised. In the realm of mechanics we might be inclined to praise this section as an engineering marvel; in material culture, it is solid and brilliantly articulated methodology. Design is analyzed as a cultural phenomenon; that is to say, Taylor considers the alternative possibilities of conceptualization as either "selfconscious" or "unselfconscious" processes (a reference to categories used earlier by Christopher Alexander in his *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*). The boat-building tradition of Winterton falls within the second, characterized by an intuitive approach to design, absence of specialization, and decisions made more by custom than by individual originality. In such cultures, the process of learning tends to be largely by example and involves a generation-to-generation passage of traditional knowledge. All of these qualities Taylor shows to be dominant in the context here under study. To document designs as manifested in completed forms, he has devised several means by which he can measure boats. The importance of this work can be fully appreciated only if one recog-

nizes that accurate recording procedures have not been a characteristic element of earlier boat-building studies. Rather than outline Taylor's ingenious techniques — which he was forced to invent on his own — I exhort the reader to devote special attention to the author's own account of the procedures used. For all its scientific rigour, the technique developed is equally fascinating as evidence of the researcher's remarkable ability to develop for the specific circumstance a set of means not *a priori* available from the broader context of general theory. To be certain, future studies will derive benefit from the applicability of this "Taylor method" to other case situations.

The study achieves particular focus in its descriptive analysis of craftsman Marcus French, recording from start to finish his construction of a rodney (a round-bottom carvel planked open boat), and subsequent consideration of factors which affect outcome of the construction process.

All in all, *Boat Building in Winterton* is not simply one good study among others. This is to say far too little. It is an intellectually monumental accomplishment, and will at the very least exert strong pressure upon all students of material culture to establish solid contexts and frameworks of study. David Taylor reminds us of the need for approaches which adequately place objects of investigation within their cultural settings (a requirement taken too lightly in most discussions of Canadian folk art, for example). He has, in particular, demonstrated the complexity of view and depth of intelligence required in the otherwise seemingly modest effort "to document the living tradition of boat building in one, small Newfoundland community..."

Michael BIRD
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ont.

Suivant l'étoile du nord.

La tradition acadienne

Par Allan et Léontine Kelly,

éd. par Ronald Labelle

(Moncton: Centre d'études

acadiennes, 1985. Disque 30cm, CEA

1002 et document d'accompagnement de 20 pages)

« Le microsillon intitulé *Suivant l'étoile du nord*, produit par Ronald Labelle au Centre d'études acadiennes de l'Université de Moncton présente pour la première fois un ensemble de chansons traditionnelles acadiennes accompagnées par une information abondante au sujet des interprètes. Les 24 pièces du disque sont chantées par Allan et Léontine Kelly, qui les tiennent de la tradition orale. Résidents de Newcastle au Nouveau-Brunswick, les Kelly ont demeuré à plusieurs endroits dans l'est de cette province, où des centaines de chansons étaient transmises oralement, autant chez les Acadiens que chez la population de descendance irlandaise. Leur répertoire reflète bien l'éventail des chansons qu'on pouvait y entendre pendant les premières décennies du 20^e siècle. Il y a des chansons de composition locale, comme « La misère dans les chantiers » qui décrit les malheurs des travailleurs forestiers et « La call chez Narcisse » qui parle d'une veillée de danse dans le village de Pointe-Sapin. Il y a aussi une complainte acadienne intitulée « Au pied d'un haricot » qui raconte une tragédie survenue en 1812 à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard, alors que la courte chanson intitulée « Chanter des Alléluia » rappelle une coutume folklorique qui se déroulait pendant la nuit de Pâques.

Plusieurs anciennes complaintes d'origines françaises sont comprises sur le disque ; mentionnons « La bergère muette », « Le roi Dignard » et « La blanche biche ». Celles-ci sont interprétées par Allan Kelly dans un style authentique très ornémenté. La chanson humoristique a aussi une grande importance dans la tradition acadienne et on en