

FITZHUGH, William W., Stephen LORING and Daniel ODESS (eds), 2002, *Honouring Our Elders. A History of Eastern Arctic Archaeology*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Arctic Studies Center, Contributions to Circumpolar Anthropology, 2, 319 pages.

Daniel Gendron

Volume 27, numéro 1-2, 2003

Architecture paléoesquimaude  
Palaeoeskimo Architecture

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/010817ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/010817ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Inuksiutiit Katimajit Inc.

ISSN

0701-1008 (imprimé)

1708-5268 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Gendron, D. (2003). Compte rendu de [FITZHUGH, William W., Stephen LORING and Daniel ODESS (eds), 2002, *Honouring Our Elders. A History of Eastern Arctic Archaeology*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Arctic Studies Center, Contributions to Circumpolar Anthropology, 2, 319 pages.] *Études/Inuit/Studies*, 27(1-2), 521–525.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/010817ar>

research. He has provided a much-needed method for distinguishing among types of smelted iron in terms of production technology, phase of production, source location and product quality. The slag analytical method will allow archaeologists to address an essential gap in their knowledge of Inuit and Norse metal use, production and acquisition. The identifications of non-Scandinavian smelted iron in the Danish colonial period, of non-Norse smelted iron in Inuit sites and of cold-hammered smelted iron exemplify both the complex, entangled nature of Inuit-European interaction and the challenge of interpreting it from the archaeological record. As well, Buchwald has offered us both a means to study the little understood impact of the post-16<sup>th</sup> century whaling and exploratory expeditions on the Greenlandic Inuit and a challenge to identify the source of iron from pre-19<sup>th</sup> century Inuit sites elsewhere in the Arctic.

### References:

- BUCHWALD, Vagn Fabritius and Gert MOSDAL  
1985 Meteoritic iron, telluric iron and wrought iron in Greenland, *Meddelelser om Grønland: Man & Society*, 9: 1-49.
- BUCHWALD, Vagn Fabritius and Helle WIVEL  
1998 Slag analysis as a method for the characterization and provenancing of ancient iron objects, *Materials Characterization*, 40: 73-96.
- Lynda Gullason  
Carleton University  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
Canada, K1S 5B6  
gullason@allstream.net
- FITZHUGH, William W., Stephen LORING and Daniel ODESS (eds)  
2002 *Honouring Our Elders. A History of Eastern Arctic Archaeology*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Arctic Studies Center, Contributions to Circumpolar Anthropology, 2, 319 pages.

This book is a compilation of papers that were presented ten years ago (Spring 1993) at a conference honouring Elmer Harp Jr., and other pioneers in Arctic archaeology. The sub-title is certainly misleading since it is not "A History of Eastern Arctic Archaeology," but, according to the editors, it is a series of building blocks that should initiate a reflection in this direction, and some of the articles included do have a direct bearing on the history of the discipline. The gap between the moment these papers were given and today has been partly alleviated by updates, but all authors kept the core of their original text intact. In this sense, the book itself becomes a part of the history it wants to build.

The book is a collection of 21 articles, not all of which were actually presented at the Dartmouth Conference. To give some organization to this important number of

eclectic contributions, the book is divided in four parts under general headings. A lengthy introduction (Fitzhugh and Loring, p. 1) sets the purpose and outcome of the book, and also expands on twelve themes that have been explored in the Eastern Arctic over the last fifty years of research, giving, in the process, some guidelines for a "History" of the development of Eastern Arctic archaeology. Two outcomes are clear: the need for such a history, and the necessity to develop a working relationship with the Inuit. One small "geographical" error is readily visible in this introduction: "[...] the Pre-Dorset ivory maskette from Ivujivik [...]" (p. 3). To my knowledge, there is no such artifact from Ivujivik. I imagine they mean the Tayara<sup>1</sup> masquette that was discovered by William Taylor, Charles Martijn, and Tayara himself in 1958 on Qikirtaq near Salluit (Taylor 1968).

Part One is entitled "Historical Perspectives" and contains four texts. The first text (Ernest S. Burch, Jr.) is a very personal account of the practice of Arctic ethnography, and how Burch came about to be a practicing ethnographer. Along his route he did meet some archaeologists (one Elmer Harp, Jr.) and was involved in some archaeological work. In his historical overview, it is easy to understand that the first ethnographers were often the first "archaeologists," but one wonders at the inclusion of this text in an archaeology book, since Burch was not a presenter at the Hanover conference, and his discourse — and especially the jokes — is clearly addressed to a completely different crowd. However, I do retain one of his comments about the state of cultural anthropology in the early 1960s because I believe it still does apply today, and in this very book: "They [the cultural anthropologists] were focused on form, not process, and social evolution was an alien concept" (p. 36). The second contribution is a text by J. V. Wright on Harp's contribution to bush archaeology (*i.e.* the boreal forest and the lichen woodland). This brief account establishes the circumstances and events that led to the definition of five "cultural" groups: Northern Plano Culture, Maritime Culture, Shield Culture, and Northwest Interior and Proto-Northern Athapascan Cultures. The third paper, although entitled "A History of Beverly Range Archaeological Research," has more to do with the actual results of the research than to the circumstances and context leading to the archaeological interpretation presented herein. The last text in this section is by David Morrison (p. 61) who identifies Diamond Jenness as the first Canadian Arctic archaeologist. The account presented is brief, yet informative, and proven: the Arctic cultures as it is understood today were there in Jenness' work.

Part two is titled "High Arctic: Travel, Philosophy, and Theory" and is represented by seven contributions covering a wide range of topics. The first one by Carpenter (p. 69) is a strange paper, and in my opinion does not belong here. Carpenter ignores completely the processes of evolution and development and links directly Late Palaeolithic art forms with what he terms "Eskimo art," not distinguishing between Early Palaeoeskimo and modern Inuit. An obvious example of form over process (*dixit* Burch). The Melgaard and Gulløv paper (p. 79) is an account of Danish Arctic exploration from the early 19th century to the Fifth Thule expedition a hundred years later. Interestingly, we learn that early 19th century research in Danish peat bogs lead to comparative studies in Greenland where "[one of the] result those early excavations

---

<sup>1</sup> This orthography of Tayara is exact, the old form, "Tyara," should be dropped.

in the lowest parts of middens was the recognition that ancient Greenlanders had used stone tools exclusively." Strangely this data vanished from common knowledge, and 100 years later, Matthiassen denied the existence of such ancestors. Next, Gulløv's (p. 89) article exemplifies convincingly the application of analogy to the ethnohistory of Greenland, and its relevance for archaeology. A slice of history comes next with Maxwell's (p. 99) 1958 field diary, which was his first — and not so fruitful — Arctic experience. This text should be among a suggested reading list for the young generation of archaeology students who are generally complaining about everything nowadays. Odess (p.113) revisits the "core area" concept, first by situating its historical inception, then embarks on a discussion about its weaknesses in light of our current knowledge of Eastern Arctic history. This text, written some time after the conference, reflects more the current theoretical trend among eastern Arctic archaeologists. The following two texts, Rowley (p. 121) and Mary-Rousselière (p. 127) are personal account of how they became involved in eastern Arctic archaeology.

The third part of the book comprises papers on "The far Northeast: Archaeology in Quebec, the Maritimes, and Labrador." The first paper (Fitzhugh, p. 133) is about transition between Pre-Dorset and Dorset occupations in the Eastern Arctic. The site (Nukasusutok 2) discussed in some details is not really significant, except that it serves to define yet another Pre-Dorset phase: Terminal Pre-Dorset. The definition of this phase is based on three sites and Fitzhugh concludes himself that it may not be a real phase or might eventually be classified with the "transition" (p. 157). I am perplexed about this continued use of the transition concept in the Eastern Arctic when evidence from many regions seems to indicate that there is no direct link between the end of Pre-Dorset and the arrival of Dorset (Gendron and Pinard 2000; Ramsden and Tuck 2001). There is also more and more evidence that Early Dorset is in fact part of the Pre-Dorset continuum (Ramsden and Tuck 2001; see also Gendron and Pinard 2000), and, so are Groswater, Independence II, and Dorset I in central-western Greenland. I am also intrigued by the following: "[...] the larger number of Transitional Period sites known in northern Quebec" (p. 159). I would have liked to see some of these sites marked down. This text assumes a lot, but proves very little. It is followed by a lengthy and interesting account of ramah chert sightings throughout the northeast from Northern Labrador to South Carolina and beyond (Loring, p. 163). An exploration of the socio-economic and cultural dynamics involved in this distribution network would make for an interesting paper. The next chapter was written by Plumet (p. 187), and is followed by an alternate opinion by Martijn (p. 205, written after the conference), with a short reply from Plumet again (p. 214). This trilogy of papers concerns the history of archaeological research in Arctic Quebec. Plumet's overview is largely biased, and he admits it candidly, while Martijn puts in perspective Plumet's grasp on what the latter calls the "Inuit Period" and adds clarification to what the Avataq Cultural Institute has accomplished since the creation of its Archaeology Department. Being myself an actor in this "Inuit Period," I can only say that Plumet's take on it is mostly inaccurate, and translates a certain frustration on his part. Also, Plumet relates some of his attempts and failures at involving Inuit in his project (p. 198, 215) blaming their lack of interest, but maybe their lack of involvement came from the attitude with which Plumet carried out his work in Nunavik.

The next article in this section is by Pintal and Martijn (p. 217) and covers the Lower North Shore region of the Gulf of St-Lawrence. The article is comprised of two sections: the first presents the different pioneers that contributed to the region's archaeological knowledge, starting with Wintenberg in the 1920s. Part two discusses the contemporary works that were carried out in the same area, including an all too brief account of Pintal's colossal work on the Lower North Shore. The final paper in this section is a contribution about an elusive Dorset collection (stored at the McCord Museum) from an even more elusive site supposedly located in Gaspésie (McCaffrey, p. 226). Most interesting is the exchange of correspondence and the planning of an expedition by some of the leading archaeologists of the time to locate this mysterious site. This expedition never took place. The postscript at the end of this article (about the author's work on the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, where an end blade of possible Dorset origin has been found), has little relevance to the rest of the paper.

The final section of the book is entitled "The Future of the Past" and comprises four articles. The first one is by Bryan Hood (p. 239) and is somewhat a prelude to his excellent theoretical review of Arctic archaeology published several years later (Hood 1998). For this reason he has left the present article almost as is, with the exception of a short prologue and a re-written conclusion taking into account the last 10 years of theoretical development. Helmer and Lemoine (p. 253) relate their difficulties in obtaining research permits from the local community where they were planning a multi-year research project. Although filled with good intentions, they were victims of the accumulation of distrust on the part of the local community towards archaeologists that suddenly had a say on what project could or could not take place on their territory. As they point out in a postscript written in 2001 (p. 259), all of that had a positive turn in the end. The third paper in this section (Rowley, p. 261) offers a historical overview of Inuit participation in archaeology and how the stereotype of the archaeologist came to be among the Inuit. The second part of the article develops on the increased involvement of Inuit in the practice of archaeology, especially through field schools and the changes in the political structure of northern regions. The author uses her own project to demonstrate the validity of these field schools. The last article in this book is by Hallendy (p. 273). This contribution is not about archaeology, but about Inuit traditional knowledge and how it can inform us on how Inuit perceive physical places and the past. Hallendy's text is what was told to him by Inuit Elders about an Inuit trial, but the importance of this text goes beyond that story. Hallendy has been able to go where no archaeologists had gone before: to the belief and the spiritual meaning of what we, archaeologists, see most of the time only as physical manifestations of a past long gone.

Overall, this book does achieve some of its goals, especially in preparing the grounds for a more exhaustive and coherent reflection about the historical development of eastern Arctic archaeology. In this past lies the roots of our future as a discipline. However, it remains to be seen if the eastern Arctic archaeologists will engage in this type of exercise. Hood's 1998 paper didn't steer much dust after all.

## References

- GENDRON, Daniel and Claude PINARD  
2000 Early Palaeoeskimo Occupations in Nunavik: A Re-Appraisal, in M. Appelt, J. Berglund and H.C.Gullov (eds), *Identities and Cultural Contacts in the Arctic*, Copenhagen, Danish Polar Centre Publication, 8.
- HOOD, Bryan  
1998 Theory on Ice: The Discourse of Eastern Canadian Arctic Paleoeskimo archaeology, *Acta Borealia*, 15(2): 3-58.
- TAYLOR, William E. Jr.  
1968 The Arnapiik and Tyara Sites. An Archaeological Study of Dorset Culture Origins, Salt Lake City, *Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology*, Society for American Archaeology, 22.
- RAMSDEN, Peter and James TUCK  
2001 A Comment on the Pre-Dorset/Dorset Transition in the Eastern Arctic, *Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska, NS*, 1(1): 1-11.
- Daniel Gendron  
Department of Archaeology  
Avataq Cultural Institute  
6700 Ave Du Parc, suite 400  
Montréal (Québec)  
Canada, H2Y 4H9  
severian@avataq.qc.ca
- GAGNON, Mélanie and Iqaluit Elders  
2002 *Inuit recollections on the military presence in Iqaluit*, Iqaluit, Nunavut Arctic College, Memory and History in Nunavut, 2, x + 346 pages.

L'Arctique canadien, on l'oublie souvent, doit une bonne partie de son visage actuel aux militaires de divers acabit qui y ont séjourné au cours de périodes plus ou moins longues depuis une soixantaine d'années. En plus d'avoir marqué directement le territoire et ses habitants, cette présence de Qallunaat fut à l'origine de l'implication croissante, à partir des années 1940, du gouvernement canadien, qui dut mettre un terme au laisser-aller caractérisant jusqu'alors ses politiques arctiques. La présence des militaires américains au cours de la Deuxième Guerre — des observateurs étrangers en sol canadien — compte parmi les éléments déclencheurs de cet éveil, puisqu'elle révéla au monde les conditions sociales dans lesquelles les habitants de l'Arctique canadien vivaient (famines, épidémies, etc.). Le travail entrepris par Mélanie Gagnon nous permet de jeter un coup d'œil sur cette présence militaire qui allait mettre en marche le développement et l'ouverture du Nord et qui entraîna de multiples changements pour les Inuit peuplant le sud de l'île de Baffin. En plus de traiter du développement des activités militaires à Iqaluit, l'ouvrage aborde des sujets tels que les relations entre les