

Integrating research and Inuit knowledge:
Critical approaches to archaeology in the
Canadian Arctic

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Abstract

In this study on the social and cultural life of Thule Inuit (A.D. 1250-1400), I have developed an innovative form of collaboration between archaeological and anthropological research, and the Inuit community. I conducted stylistic analyses of artefacts from three archaeological sites on Somerset Island in Nunavut (Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2, Learmonth PeJr-1, Cape Garry PeJq-5) based on Inuit elders' knowledge about their traditional material culture. To do so, I examined oral history archives from the Inullariit Elders Society in Igloolik and I organised group discussions around Inuit collections at the McCord Museum with Inuit elders visiting Montreal for medical reasons. Following the method of ethnographic analogy between contemporary Inuit and their Thule Inuit ancestors, the elders' perspectives were used to identify the various roles played by everyday life objects (hunting equipment, sewing paraphernalia, personal knives, body and clothing ornaments and amulets) in the construction of personal and group identities, the maintenance of family and community relations and processes of social differentiation among Inuit and their ancestors. I shed light on highly complex social networks within and between three Thule Inuit villages, in which life was centred on bowhead whale hunting, as well as the trade and accumulation of material wealth (meteoric iron, native copper, amber and ivory). I found that occupants of each village formed interfamilial alliances that were reflected in the settlement patterns and the distribution of the artefacts' stylistic attributes. I observed an intensification of social interactions around the *kariyit*, the ceremonial dwellings associated with the whale hunt. I also found that the mechanisms for social differentiation within each village were not only linked to the participation in whaling activities, but also to the gathering of complementary resources (ex: locally scarce materials and food). From a regional perspective, I found that the wealthier and internally more differentiated villages were also the ones that were settled in clusters. These communities reached a socio-economic equilibrium in these external social networks, between villages. Contrarily, I observed that an isolated village showed less accumulation of material wealth, but a better internal socio-economic equilibrium, notably at the gender level. Besides the contribution to archaeological knowledge, my collaborative approach participated actively in the valorisation of Inuit elders' traditional knowledge, while offering them an activity that was culturally relevant and socially inclusive during their medical stay in Montreal.

Résumé

Dans cette étude qui porte sur l'univers culturel et social des Inuits thuléens (A.D. 1250-1400), nous avons développé une forme innovatrice d'engagement entre la recherche anthropologique et archéologique, et la communauté inuite. Nous avons effectué des analyses d'artefacts provenant de trois sites archéologiques de l'Île Somerset au Nunavut, (Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2, Learmonth PeJr-1, Cape Garry PcJq-5) en nous basant sur les connaissances d'ânés inuits en matière de culture matérielle traditionnelle. Pour ce faire, nous avons examiné les archives d'histoire orale de l'Inullariit Elders Society à Igloodik, et organisé des discussions de groupe autour de collections inuites au Musée McCord avec des ânés inuits en visite médicale à Montréal. Suivant la méthode de l'analogie ethnographique entre les Inuits contemporains et leurs ancêtres thuléens, ces perspectives ont servi à identifier les divers rôles joués par les objets du quotidien (armes de chasse, outils de couture, couteaux personnels, ornements, et amulettes) dans les stratégies d'affirmation identitaire personnelle et sociale, de renforcement des liens familiaux et communautaires, ainsi que dans les processus de différenciation sociale chez les Inuits. Nous avons mis à jour des réseaux sociaux hautement complexes parmi trois villages thuléens, où la vie socioculturelle était centrée sur la chasse à la baleine boréale, ainsi que le commerce et l'accumulation de richesses matérielles (le fer météorite, le cuivre natif, l'ambre, et ivoire). Notre recherche a révélé au sein de chaque village des alliances interfamiliales reflétées dans les schèmes d'établissements et la distribution des attributs stylistiques de leurs artefacts. Nous avons observé une intensification des interactions sociales autour des *karivyit*, les habitations associées aux rituels et cérémonies de la chasse à la baleine. Nous avons démontré que les mécanismes de différenciation sociale à l'intérieur de chaque village étaient liées d'une part à la participation à la chasse à la baleine, et d'autre part à l'apport de ressources complémentaires (ex : matières premières et nourriture d'origine exogène). Dans une perspective régionale, nous avons découvert que les villages les plus riches et hiérarchisés à l'interne étaient également ceux qui sont situés les plus près les uns des autres. Pour ces communautés, l'équilibre socio-économique était atteint au plan des relations et interactions entre les villages. À l'opposé, nos analyses ont démontré qu'un village isolé accumulait moins de richesses matérielles, mais jouissait d'un meilleur équilibre social à l'interne, notamment au plan des rapports hommes-femmes. En plus de contribuer à l'avancement de ces connaissances archéologiques, notre approche collaborative a participé activement à la mise en valeur des savoirs culturels des participants inuits, tout en offrant une activité culturellement pertinente et socialement inclusive pendant leur séjour médical à Montréal.

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Introduction

This research is concerned with the social life and material culture of Inuit and Thule Inuit in the Canadian Arctic. I conducted an archaeological study of whaling communities on Somerset Island, Nunavut (c.a. 1250-1400 AD) informed by the perspectives of contemporary Inuit elders. Thule Inuit (ca. 1000-1600 AD) are the direct ancestors of current Inuit in Canada, with whom they share a common history and socio-cultural life. I studied pieces of hunting equipment, personal tools and ornaments from three archaeological sites – villages – to assess social relations between households and communities. The occupants of these villages were essentially bowhead whale hunters living in a network of communities which interacted with one another on a socio-economic and cultural basis (Savelle 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Savelle and Wenzel 2003; Whitridge 1999a, 2002). My research aims to contribute to the better understanding of these networks and their material traces in different villages.

My interpretations of Thule Inuit material culture and social life are inspired by perspectives of contemporary Canadian Inuit, notably oral history archives in Nunavut and group interviews with elders from Nunavik. Grounded in the tradition of postcolonial and collaborative studies, my methodology explores new ways in which communities are included in archaeological research about their ancestors. I develop interdisciplinary research methods that merge ethnographic interviewing, contemporary material culture studies and traditional archaeological analyses, challenging the boundaries between archaeology and socio-cultural anthropology. I also cross borders between the present and the past, to look at

how the past is perceived and constructed in the present, and how the present can be used relevantly in archaeological research.

Interrelations between past and present in contemporary Inuit society are multiple, and the practice of bowhead whale (*Balaena mysticetus*) hunting is an important one. Bowhead whaling has been part of Inuit identity and social life in Canada for over 800 years (Lofthouse 2013; Saladin d'Anglure 2013; Whitridge 1999b). These large baleen whales, which can measure up to 20 metres long and weigh up to 100 tonnes, were hunted by early Thule Inuit in large skin boats, using a complex harpoon technology of toggling heads and sealskin floats. This practice was the hallmark of Thule Inuit economic and socio-cultural life during their early history from the 13th to 15th centuries in the central Canadian Arctic archipelago. In this area, the landscape is filled with vestiges of Thule Inuit villages, including numerous house ruins made of bowhead whale bones. It is estimated that about 3,000 bowhead whales were killed around Somerset Island over three centuries (1200-1500 AD) (Savelle 2010b).

For reasons to be discussed shortly, bowhead whale hunting was gradually abandoned and almost entirely replaced in the Canadian Arctic by other hunting strategies, including seal, walrus, beluga whale and caribou hunting. However, it remained vivid in Inuit collective memory. Although very few Inuit still practised bowhead whaling in Canada in the recent past – during the 20th century – the tradition has remained an important aspect of their cultural and ethnic identity (Freeman 2005; Stevenson 1997). The practice was re-introduced among Canadian Inuit in the 1990's, as part of their cultural, legal and political activism (Saladin d'Anglure 2013).

Archaeological research about Thule Inuit whaling societies has timely implications for contemporary Inuit in Canada. It supports the intergenerational transmission of knowledge about bowhead whaling among Inuit, which has been partially interrupted by colonial history in the Canadian Arctic. Archaeological knowledge about Thule Inuit whaling communities plays a key role in documenting past traditions, and for their revival today among Inuit. Thus, archaeologists have a duty to acknowledge the impact of their work on contemporary societies and to be aware of how Inuit use archaeological knowledge and discourse for their own goals. Collaborative research, such as the present one, is based on such acknowledgement. As a general introduction, I describe two examples of the renewal of bowhead whaling in Canada, in Kangiqsujuaq (Nunavik) and Igloodik (Nunavut) (Figure 1). These case studies demonstrate the importance of the practice for Inuit today and the relevance of archaeological research on Thule Inuit during the bowhead whaling period. This introduction will also reveal the thinness and malleability of boundaries between past and present, as well as between Thule and contemporary Inuit.

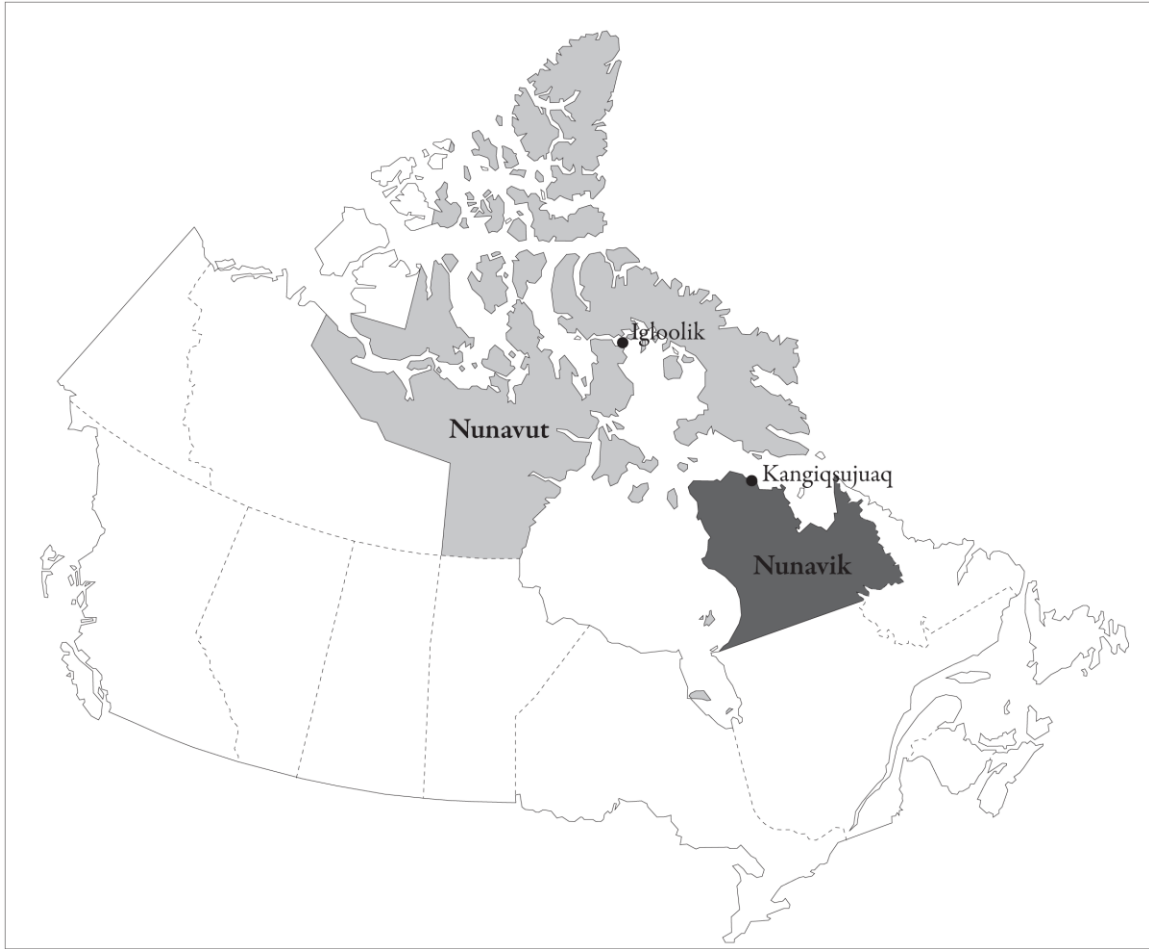


Figure 1: Communities of Igloolik and Kangiqsujuaq, where bowhead whale hunts took place in the 1990s and 2000s

Bowhead whaling revival in Nunavik and Nunavut

“We’re back with our ancestors” – Tuumasi Pilurttuut, Nunavik, 2008¹.

This declaration was made by a hunter from Kangiqsujuaq upon his arrival on the butchering site of the first bowhead whale hunt in over a century in Nunavik (Arctic Quebec). Pilurttuut was the great grandson of the last practising shaman in the Kangiqsujuaq area, and the bowhead whale was caught near the latter’s grave, which is still visible on this landscape (Saladin d’Anglure 2013: 78). Bowhead whale hunting was practised by Pilurttuut’s ancestors sporadically, and was still present in the memory of a few hunters in the 1960’s and 1970’s (ibid: 75-77). Some elders recalled how hunters in their kayaks used to push and trap bowhead whales in sea pockets created by low tide, before harpooning them. Others remembered how Inuit simply hunted bowhead whales from their kayaks, using harpoons and sealskin floats (Saladin d’Anglure 1967, 1984). However, due to the intense commercial whaling activities of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the species had become very scarce around the coasts of Nunavik. Consequently, this know-how was not passed down to subsequent hunters. As a result, hunters who obtained the right² to harvest a bowhead whale in Nunavik in 2008 had to relearn their ancestors’ ways. Five crews, each comprising four experienced hunters, were formed and trained by experienced bowhead whale hunters from Pangnirtung, Nunavut. The hunting technology had changed since their ancestors’ time, as

¹ http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/2008/808/80815/news/features/80815_1453.html (accessed July 1st 2013).

² Authorisation to hunt a bowhead whale was granted by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada.

Inuit are now using motorboats and harpoons with penthrite grenade heads. However, their ancestral knowledge and skills are still needed to track the animal, to harpoon it with strength and precision, to kill it efficiently with a lance, to haul it back onto the land and to butcher it fast enough to avoid the meat spoiling. Although it had partly fallen into oblivion in Nunavik, bowhead whaling still serves as a powerful link between contemporary Inuit of this region and their past.

The rupture in the practice of this hunting tradition, linked to colonial history in the Canadian Arctic, might be the very reason why its revival is so important for Inuit today. This rupture is actually a gradual decrease due to various ecological and socio-cultural circumstances in different periods and regions of the Canadian Arctic. First, a climatic cooling trend called the Little Ice Age, which began in approximately 1400-1450 AD, affected the migration routes of these cetaceans and is associated with the collapse of the Thule Inuit whaling societies in the Canadian Arctic archipelago (Savelle 2002a; Whitridge 1999b: 132-134). However, the practice was not completely abandoned, and continued to be part of Inuit subsistence and social life in some areas, notably in Hudson Bay, Foxe Basin, Hudson Strait and Davis Strait, though with less intensity. This period was followed by a second decrease of Inuit bowhead whale hunting practices in the Canadian Arctic, more generalised this time. The gradual arrival of Dutch, American and Scottish whalers in Canadian Arctic waters beginning in the 18th century, and the commercial hunting of bowhead whales that followed, led to a severe depletion of whale stocks by the early 20th century (Ross 1975). As a result, subsistence bowhead whale hunting has, since the late 1970's, been restricted by Canadian law, and any harvest has to follow quotas given by the

authorities – the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Nunavik, and Nunavut Wildlife Management Board in Nunavut.

Today, bowhead whaling has become both a form of cultural revival and political and legal activism for many Inuit groups in Canada. The renewal of the bowhead whale hunt was initiated by Alaskan Inupiat in the late 1970's, and was followed by Inuvialuit from the Mackenzie Delta in the early 1990's. In the case of Nunavut, the first of these recent hunts occurred in September 1994, when a small injured bowhead whale that had trouble swimming was harvested by a group of hunters in the region of Igloolik. This kill coincided with a special demand made by an elder from the community, Noah Piugaattuuq, on the local radio a few weeks earlier, to taste bowhead *muktuk*³ one last time before dying. The hunt in Igloolik in 1994 was illegal, as it was not organised with Nunavut Wildlife Management Board and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada. The hunters were charged with illegal hunting and appeared before a territorial court sitting in Igloolik in Spring 1995. This sparked a strong movement of solidarity in the Inuit community in Nunavut. Following a mediatised judiciary saga, charges were eventually dropped⁴.

A documentary about this hunt was made by Zacharias Kunuk, an Inuit filmmaker from Igloolik (Kunuk 2002). In the video, one of the hunters, Simeonie Qaunaq, tells the story of the hunt, and explains that the whale was killed in order to end its misery, as it was slowly dying due to injuries probably caused by a boat. They killed it to avoid the waste of the meat, and to satisfy the elders who craved the whale blubber. The documentary presented a discussion about the charges and the trial of the hunters. Paul Quassa, a political

³ *Muktuk* is the skin of the whale with the underlying layer of fat and grease. It is considered an Inuit delicacy.

⁴ <http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/archives/back-issues/week/60607.html#3> (Accessed July 1st 2013).

leader of Nunavut and supporter of the bowhead whale hunters, explained his view of Canadian and Inuit laws with regard to bowhead whaling. He used a Thule Inuit artefact to support his arguments, a comb made of ivory, with a bowhead whale hunting scene engraved on it:

These Fisheries and Oceans Officers were told that Inuit broke the law and they think charging them is the right thing to do, because it's their job. I don't think they have broken the law. We keep saying, this is the Inuit way, they were just following it. No one would ever break his own old way. For example, [the comb] I'm holding here, tells the story from the start. What is 'written' here in these ancient carvings, is that Inuit always hunted the bowhead whale. This was found right near Igloodik. There's a bowhead carved here, and people hunting them, the very Inuit, it shows exactly how they hunted. It's obvious, it's always been our way. It is written here. We were often told the Inuit way isn't written down. It may not be in words, but these pictures show what makes us who we are. This is what makes us strong, our way. We are being judged today for who we are. When it's like that, whoever follows his old way will never lose.⁵

The use of a Thule Inuit archaeological specimen in a statement about contemporary Inuit law and the right to hunt bowhead whales is evocative. It brings our attention to the role of Thule Inuit material remains in contemporary Inuit society, and how these objects are manipulated in various discourses and claims. And it brings us back to the present study, especially the question of contemporary meanings given to archaeological collections, and the boundaries between past and present in an Inuit context.

Although my research does not pertain to bowhead whaling practices in the present per se, it does address the links between contemporary Inuit knowledge and Thule Inuit

⁵ Kunuk 2002, original translation and captions.

bowhead whaling societies. Present day bowhead whaling in Canada provides an overarching framework that helps us to understand the relevance of such collaborative studies for contemporary Inuit. It also raises questions about the connections between the past and the present among Inuit. For example, how is the past perceived and articulated in the present? How is this past perceived by archaeologists as opposed to Inuit? Do both share similar views? How is the present useful for interpretations about the past? What are the limits, whether scientific or ethical, of basing archaeological interpretations on present day socio-cultural realities? What is the place of contemporary Inuit perspectives in archaeology?

My research has addressed these questions. I demonstrate that archaeology must take into consideration the present, especially in the case of Thule Inuit studies. There are methodological purposes for this (e.g. ethnographic analogy) in conjunction with ethical (postcolonial) considerations. I also assess how the Canadian Inuit past is conceived differently by archaeologists and Inuit, and consider how these two visions can be reconciled. Primarily, I find solutions to this problem in anthropological and social theories that emphasise the role of individuals and of objects in the social life of communities (Ingold 2000, 2007; Latour 2005; Tarde 1890, 1893, 1898). As I demonstrate in this research, using appropriate social science paradigms reduces the perceived gap between Inuit and academic perspectives about the Thule Inuit past. I also acknowledge the limits of using present Inuit perspectives in Thule Inuit archaeological studies. These limits are rooted in the various changes (social, political, economical and material) that Inuit people has been through in the past centuries. Cultural differences between time periods force us, archaeologists, to develop methodological tools that aim to overcome the difficulty. Specifically, I have developed an

innovative approach to ethnographic analogy, using ethnographic Inuit collections as methodological tools or catalysers for interviewing Inuit elders about their traditions (Gadoua 2014). I then analysed the elders' narratives so as to identify principles of their social life and material culture that I later applied to analogical archaeological contexts.

The bowhead whale hunt in Igloodik in 1994 and the use of the Thule Inuit comb in the documentary raise the question of contemporary meanings given to archaeological collections. What is the value of these meanings, especially when they are prompted by social and political contexts that have little or no correspondence with Thule Inuit realities? Do they have value only for contemporary Inuit, or can these values be somehow extended to Thule Inuit ancestors? If so, how? My research answers these questions by identifying ways in which the knowledge shared by elders can be applied relevantly to archaeological research about their ancestors. I also demonstrate how this kind of collaborative study benefits the Inuit, from a personal and collective point of view. Participants in my research were Inuit from Nunavik visiting Montreal for medical reasons as well as employees of Avataq Cultural Institute – members of the Institute's Local Cultural Committees from the 14 villages of Nunavik. My workshops provided participants with an opportunity to remember and share traditional knowledge among themselves and with the museum staff (Peers 2013). The resulting discussions also revealed the roles that ethnographic museum collections can play in the life of Inuit individuals today, providing a ground for remembering and sharing knowledge, reconnecting with ancestors, and reinforcing a sense of belonging to a culture and community (Gadoua 2013, 2014). The participants who were undertaking medical visits to Montreal particularly appreciated these cultural re-connections. Far away from their home

communities, relatives and habits, they are obliged to stay in an unknown environment for the purpose of medical appointments and interventions. The shock of the urban milieu, the foreign languages (since many speak neither French nor English) and their medical conditions are all important sources of stress, to which we can add the lack of culturally relevant activities to fill the time between their medical appointments (Grondin 1990; Grygier 1994; O'Neil 1986, 1989; Tester et al. 2001). Under these circumstances, the workshops at the McCord Museum were an opportunity for participants to take part in an activity that is emotionally and culturally positive for them, and that has the potential to alleviate some of the stress that they experience during their stay in Montreal (Gadoua 2011).

The elders who participated in my research immediately made me realise the meaning of collaboration and what kind of engagement it represents for us archaeologists. When I presented my study in my very first workshop, I told the Inuit participants that the main purpose of the activity was to help archaeological interpretation of Thule⁶ artefacts. Their first reaction was to ask: “What is Thule?” At that moment, I realised how far the work and discourse of archaeologists is from Inuit realities, even though collaboration had been initiated decades ago in the Canadian Arctic. From that instant, I began to modify my discourse and to talk about ‘your ancestors’ instead of ‘Thule Inuit’. From one workshop to another, my perspectives on Inuit and Thule Inuit material culture also changed, integrating more and more participants’ views. This required finding anthropological and archaeological approaches that would resonate with participants. I found that many recent developments in

⁶ The name ‘Thule’ has its origin in Greenland, from a settlement of the same name where remains of this culture were found for the first time by archaeologists from Denmark.

social sciences and material culture studies actually intersect at many points with these Inuit perspectives. It was my engagement with the elders in my workshops that allowed me to recognise these academic trends and use them effectively in my analyses, as I present next.

Content of the thesis

In Chapter 1, I discuss the method of ethnographic analogy in archaeology, looking at how ethnographic observations made in the present have been used in archaeological research throughout the development of the discipline. My aim is to identify the relevance, as well as the risks, of such practice, in a way to set the basis for my own methodology. I then turn in Chapter 2 to ethical and postcolonial considerations about the use of the present in archaeology. A review of the colonial nature of archaeology in settler societies such as Canada and the recent trends in the decolonisation of the discipline with examples throughout the world will be provided. This section pertains to the postcolonial critique, indigenous activism and collaborative and indigenous archaeologies. Related trends specifically rooted in social sciences are included in the discussion, notably post-processual perspectives on multivocality and the intersection between critical theory and archaeology.

In Chapter 3, these trends of archaeological practices and indigenous movements are assessed in the specific context of Canadian Inuit. A history of culture change from Thule Inuit to contemporary Inuit in Canada structures my use of ethnographic analogy for the present study. The chapter also presents the development of Arctic archaeology, with a special focus on collaborative practices with Inuit. A subsequent discussion about the ways in which Inuit perceive and use their past reveals how these collaborative trends can be developed productively in current and future research, from the points of view of both archaeology and Inuit. In particular, I suggest developing ways by which Inuit culture and knowledge can improve archaeological interpretations of material vestiges of their ancestors.

My research methodology, outlined in Chapter 4, first identifies the correspondences between contemporary and Thule Inuit material culture and social life, in order to support my use of ethnographic analogy and collaborative research. Concretely, I refer to ethnographic literature about North American Inuit in the late 19th to mid-20th centuries to build a general portrait of Inuit life at a time when life conditions were similar to those of their Thule Inuit ancestors. These sources of information are completed by an investigation of the role of material culture in Inuit life, through interviews with elders who remember life on the land prior to the 1950's and 1960's. These interviews stem from two sources. The first is a bank of 500 interviews with elders of the Inullariit Society, archived in Igloolik, Nunavut. Interviews pertain to traditional life on the land and touch many different topics of everyday life, including hunting, travelling, clothing production, shamanism, familial and social relations, sharing practices, training for adulthood, and gender relations. I studied these archives with a focus on the place and the role of everyday objects in the narratives. The second source consists of 11 group interviews with elders around ancient Inuit material culture that I organised at the McCord Museum in Montreal. A total of 85 participants were invited to share their knowledge, memories and comments about Inuit objects held at the McCord, which were collected in the North American Arctic between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries. These interviews revealed the specific areas of Inuit life that elders associate with everyday tools and personal objects, and the dynamics that link them together.

The articulation of these Inuit perspectives with archaeological research is at the core of Chapters 5 to 9. In Chapter 5, I identify intersections between Inuit and scientific knowledge as a way to overcome their problematical dichotomy. More precisely, I suggest

using social science theories such as the social network approach (Latour 2005) and social psychology (Tajfel 1978a, 1978b), and recent anthropological trends in material culture studies (Gell 1998; Ingold 2000) to support the articulation of these two forms of knowledge for archaeological purposes. Chapter 6 is a synthesis of ethnographic information about Inuit social and spiritual life in the early 20th century across Canada and in Northern Alaska. This serves as a background to understanding the role of material culture in the construction and maintenance of social relations, and material strategies for social differentiation among Inuit.

The latter are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. In these chapters, I proceed to the analyses of the Inulaariit oral history archives and the interviews at the McCord Museum. Specific classes of artefacts are identified, along with the various roles they play in the social networks of Inuit men and women in the early 20th century. Specifically, I discuss the roles of hunting equipment, household utensils, personal tools and ornaments and amulets in the development of personal identities, group belonging and inter-personal relations. In Chapter 7, Inuit material culture is assessed through its impact on the construction of personhood and the social equilibrium, as well as leadership and social differentiation. Chapter 8 develops this discussion through the notions of art, aesthetics and technology among Inuit, stemming from my analysis of the Inullariit archives and the workshops at the McCord Museum. I redefine the concept of art following Inuit paradigms, in order to facilitate the archaeological study of Thule Inuit artistic expression in their everyday objects.

In Chapter 9, I identify the traces left by these social interactions on Inuit material culture through a discussion around the notions of design and style. This section aims to

further prepare my archaeological analyses by recognising the material signs of identity construction, social relations and distinction among Inuit. To do this, I use archaeological and anthropological literature around the concept of design, style and identity (Carr and Nietzel 1995), in conjunction with Inuit perspectives gathered from the Inullariit archives and the workshops at the McCord Museum. Finally, I present Thule Inuit artefact classes that I identified as analogs to their counterparts in the Inuit social networks: harpoon heads, arrowheads, men's knives, women's knives (*uluit*), personal ornaments and amulets. I describe the objects, their nature and functions, as well as the basic notions of their design.

Chapters 10 to 13 present my archaeological analyses of three Thule Inuit whaling villages on Somerset Island, Nunavut. Archaeological collections from Qariaraqyuk (PaJs-2), Learmonth (PeJr-1) and Cape Garry (PcJq-5) are examined, looking at patterns in the design of harpoon heads, arrowheads, men's and women's knife handles, as well as personal ornaments and amulets. These designs are compared between households, with the aim of identifying social identities and relations at the site level. In particular, I studied kinship and whaling crew relations, and leadership and social differentiation among households, depending on differing degrees of participation in whaling activities. Assemblages were then compared between the villages, in order to assess regional networks between these whaling communities. Different degrees of wealth and social complexity between these sites were identified and explained in conjunction with their differential internal social dynamics. I found new patterns of social relations among the occupants of the villages. Some of them were motivated and supported by participation in the whale hunt, while for others, social relations transcended these patterns, using kinship or trading partnerships. One of my major

findings is that the equilibrium of social networks in these villages was obtained and maintained through different kinds of social strategies, recognisable in the styles of the artefacts and their spatial distribution. In addition, I observed various strategies for social differentiation among the different households in the villages, which also followed different paths: differential participation in whaling and/or the trade of exotic and locally scarce material. The comparison of the results for the three villages revealed networks of hunting cooperation mixed with competition between communities, resulting in a differential accumulation of wealth. This analysis also shed light on the different ways in which the occupants of these villages displayed their material wealth, whether it was with the design of their personal tools, body/clothing ornaments, and/or the possession and use of valued materials such as metal, ivory and amber. These differences have implications in terms of gender relations, which tend to be more unequal in the wealthier villages, to the advantage of men. In general, my findings disclose complex social networks within and between villages, thus contributing significantly to archaeological knowledge about Thule Inuit life during the bowhead whaling period, a knowledge that is based on, and aligned with, contemporary Inuit perspectives.

Crossing boundaries

My research crosses many boundaries, notably between socio-cultural anthropology and archaeology. Both disciplines are built around a perceived point of rupture between antiquity and modernity (Dawdy 2010) that does not resonate fully with Inuit history. In colonial settings such as Canada, this rupture is usually located at the time of first contact between indigenous societies and Europeans, around the 15th to 16th centuries. However, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, the most important socio-cultural rupture in Inuit society occurred in the 1950's and 1960's. This has enormous implications for the ways in which archaeologists can articulate information from contemporary Inuit life with Thule Inuit collections, notably memories of elders that pertain to the first half of the 20th century. Just as Inuit today remind us with the revival of bowhead whale hunting, the 'distant past' of Thule Inuit life is not so far behind in time, factually and in the minds of Inuit.

Another important boundary that my research crosses is between indigenous Inuit knowledge and archaeological/anthropological science. The perceived differences between the two forms of knowledge are mainly a construction of modern science and its propensity to dichotomise the world, for example mind/matter, written/oral, technology/art, function/style, past/present, indigenous/Western, etc. Although it is also used by some indigenous people in their activism for their rights to study their own past in their own terms, the rupture between the two forms of knowledge is actually an impediment to the development of collaborative research. My research proposes an alternative view of this dichotomy, working instead at the juncture of Inuit knowledge and some traditional social science trends, principles and paradigms.

Boundaries between individuals and social entities such as families, whaling crews and communities are also challenged in this study. This is mainly done through my use of social network theories and principles of social-psychology. As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, Inuit personal identities are fundamentally social: persons define themselves through their relations with members of their families and communities. In fact, this approach encourages us to view social relations as being contained in the individual. It inverts common sociological paradigms for which social groups contain individuals and their interrelations. I transpose this new perspective on my analyses of Inuit and Thule Inuit objects. On the one hand, this allows me to assess social relations through individual artefact designs. On the other hand, the comparison of object designs between households and villages leads to a deeper understanding of individual identities. In fact, I consider both personal and collective aspects of social life as being intertwined, and I studied them as if there were no real boundaries between them.

I also question frontiers between mind and matter, between aesthetics and function, and between art and technology. These perceived dichotomies do not resonate with Inuit worldviews and perspectives on material culture, as my interviews with Inuit elders reveal. As I demonstrate with the Inuit notion of art in Chapter 8, these aspects of their material world are inseparable. This perspective allows me to address Thule Inuit social, cultural and spiritual aspects of their lives in their technology, as well as technological aspects of their lives in their ornaments and art objects.

Intersections between the past and the present, archaeology and socio-cultural anthropology, Inuit and scientific knowledge, the individual and the collective, as well as

between art and technology form the nexus of the present research. Working simultaneously on these different planes sheds light on many different aspects of Inuit culture, ancient and contemporary, from material and social points of view. Temporal and cultural distances between Thule Inuit bowhead whaling societies and contemporary Inuit are thus reduced for the purposes of archaeological research and its engagement with Inuit society.

Part One: Towards a critical archaeology in the
Canadian Arctic

1. Analogical uses of the present in archaeology

1.1 Introduction

The analogy between the present and the past is a fundamental tool for archaeology. It refers to the use of information and observations about the present to make inferences about the past. It ranges from the simplest analogy, for example deducing the primary function of stone tools based on our knowledge of analogical contemporary tools among contemporary hunters, to more complex questions of human and social behaviour and their material traces. Essentially, most archaeological knowledge stems from the archaeologists' understanding of the present. But a good analogy is not just a simple and direct transposition of the present to the past. It is rather a complex method guided by rigorous theory and methodology.

Analogy is indispensable for my research, in which contemporary Inuit life-ways, perspectives and material culture are used to guide archaeological analyses of Thule Inuit material. In fact, analogy is a method extensively used by Arctic archaeologists (e.g. Friesen and Stewart 1994; Friesen 2001; Savelle 2002b; Savelle and Wenzel 2003). A relatively high degree of cultural and historical continuity⁷ in the North American Arctic allows us to apply this method systematically, to address a wide range of questions in all areas of Thule Inuit life.

This chapter presents a brief review of the uses of analogy in archaeology, from the earliest evolutionary trends in archaeology to the direct historical approach of culture

⁷ See Chapter 3 for a discussion on cultural change and continuity in the Canadian Arctic.

historians, and from the subsequent proposition of processual ethnoarchaeology to the post-processual critique. These trends are discussed in relation to one another, as they are often developed as criticism of older approaches and proposed solutions to their perceived flaws. I then address current concerns about the practice, especially regarding the biased nature of early ethnographic literature for its use in the direct-historical approach (a method which is applied in the present study). This introduces the question of the reflexivity of the ethnographer's perceptions and discourses about the communities they study. This last concern is presented at length in Chapter 2, in the context of critical theory and ethics in collaborative archaeology. Solutions to current concerns in the practice of ethnographic analogy are provided in my methodology section, in the light of Inuit history.

1.2 Ethnographic analogy in early evolutionary archaeology

The use of analogy in archaeology can be traced to the early days of the discipline. Analogical inference initially helped to identify artefacts such as stone tools which had previously been seen as magical, mythic or natural phenomena. Until illustrated accounts of contemporary hunter-gatherers in America became available to Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries, ancient arrowheads and other stone tools found in Europe were believed to have resulted from thunderbolts or acts of supernatural beings (Orme 1981: 12-13). For example, in an early attempt to discredit such magical explanations using ethnographic knowledge, British antiquary Edward Lhuyd once wrote about Scottish finds: "These elf arrowheads have not been used as amulets above thirty or forty years ... whence I gather they were not invented for charms, but were once used in shooting here as they are still in America" (Lhuyd 1713, cited in Orme 1981: 12). Without the reference to contemporary

analogues, the identification of archaeological material as cultural (as opposed to geological or supernatural) would not have been possible.

In the 19th century, the first systematic analogies were made, at a time when evolutionary thoughts prevailed in the social sciences and humanities. Contemporary ethnographic sources (native peoples of America, Oceania, Australia and Africa) were used as literal representatives of the primitive cultural forms identified in the archaeological record. John Lubbock set the tone for this approach in *Pre-historic Times, as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages* (1865), in which he argued, and demonstrated with sketches of modern tribal societies from around the world, that ‘primitive societies’, or ‘savages’ shed light on the behaviour of prehistoric human beings. His ideas were inspired by Darwinian evolutionism according to which, as a result of natural selection, human groups had evolved not only culturally but also biologically, and non civilised people, similar to prehistoric ones, were doomed to extinction.

Another notorious example of this practice is Sollas’ series of lectures *Ancient Hunters and Their Modern Representatives* (1924, but originally delivered in 1906). Based on their specific stone tool production, four ethnographically known hunting cultures were identified as the contemporary counterparts of four prehistoric ‘ages’. Sollas was clearly influenced by Tylorian evolutionism, where cultural elements from around the world are classified in order to show their rational evolution from simple to complex forms (Tylor 1871). Sollas depicted these modern hunter-gatherers as the surviving remnants of prehistoric groups that originally populated the European continent, pushed by the rise of civilisation to the margins of the world, where they now live in an ‘arrested’ and ‘primitive’ state of development:

The Mousterians have vanished altogether and are represented by their industries alone at the antipodes; the Aurignacians are represented in part by the bushmen of the southern extremity of Africa; the Magdalenians, also in part, by the Eskimo on the frozen margins of the North American continent and, as well, perhaps, by the Red Indians, on the one hand, and, on the other, by the Gaunches and sporadic representatives in France (Sollas 1924:599, cited in Wylie 1985a:66-7).

This “simple and direct reading of the past from the present” (Gould 1980: 446) opened the door to criticisms of analogy in archaeology. One of them is a worry that such inference presupposes a generalisation, uniformitarian principles leading to a vicious circle where one assumes what one is trying to discover (Clark 1951: 52). In other words, it is a circular argument. Also, this understanding of the past is based on an image of contemporary groups that is inevitably distorted by the archeologists’ ethnocentric perspective (Wylie 1985a: 68). Of course, these paradigms became obsolete as other approaches to analogy have been developed along with the evolution of the fields of anthropology and archaeology.

1.3 The direct-historical approach of culture historians

Ethnographic analogy was refined by culture-historians in North America, mostly in the tradition of Boasian cultural anthropology. North American culture history emerged in the southwestern United States through the work of Nels C. Nelson and Alfred Kidder (Kidder 1924; Nelson 1916; see also Bunzel 1929). These archaeologists examined the frequencies of various pottery types and their sequences, and explained these variations as the results of gradual cultural change. These chronologies were also complemented with studies of spatial distribution, thus recognising regional variants of temporal sequences.

Historical and cultural links could thus be made between the archaeological record and living Native groups in a given geographical area. This led to the development of the 'direct historical approach' in ethnographic analogy, where archaeologists use historical or ethnographic information about living cultures to interpret vestiges of their earlier stages (Steward 1942: 337-343). Proximity in time and space as witnessed in cultural connections is the main indicator of relevance under the direct historical approach (Stahl 1993: 242).

It is inevitable that cultures experience changes through the trajectory of history, and for this reason, we are reminded to remain cautious with the direct historical method. Archaeologists rely on ethnographic accounts and, conscious of the cultural change that inexorably occurs through time in any society; they try to focus on the earliest ethnographic works possible. This enables them to get as close as possible to their archaeological subject/s. Archaeologists also commonly rely on other sources, such as journals and archives written by non-anthropologists, such as explorers, traders or missionaries. The latter are most often used to support the knowledge gathered in ethnographies, for example, to confirm observations of geographical areas or time periods that were not or could not be covered by the ethnographers themselves. When using these sources in ethnographic analogy, attention should be paid to the possible biases of their authors. As we will discuss shortly, some cultural elements were commonly emphasised in these works, for example because of the personal interests of the authors, while others were dismissed by the researchers / writers or simply inaccessible to them. One cannot use these ethnographies as comprehensive truths about the sociocultural groups they present, but rather as pieces of

information about those cultures to be used as research hypotheses in the ethnographic analogy.

1.4 Processual archaeology and ethnoarchaeology

The British school of functionalism (e.g. Malinowski 1922, 1926; Radcliffe-Brown 1950, 1952; Evans-Pritchard 1950) also had a strong influence on a certain kind of archaeological analogy. Here, connections between the archaeological subject and the ethnographic source were sought in the functional relationships between behaviour, culture, social groups etc., and material culture. This led to what Ascher (1961) called the 'new analogy' that works with functional connections in the realms of (most commonly) modes of subsistence, technological adaptation and ecological setting (see also Clark 1951; Hawkes 1954). Analogues selected within the boundaries of these conditions are expected to present functionally connected similarities, in their material and behavioural manifestations. For example, this can be seen in the realms of social and political organisation, religion etc. This method was fed by the development of the New Archaeology, in which archaeologists reconstructed past life-ways and sought to understand archaeological remains from a functional point of view (Binford 1962, 1965; Binford and Binford 1968; Clarke 1968).

There was a growing interest in questions of human behaviour and socio-cultural processes, with a great emphasis on ecology, subsistence and settlement patterns set within a neo-evolutionary frame (White 1949). Cultural processes were seen as the result of human adaptation to environmental constraints, and it was considered that their evolution tended to a greater control over nature. However, in order to infer these socio-cultural patterns from

the archaeological record, processual archaeologists needed to refine their methodology, using models of human behaviour and their material effects, observed in the present, to formulate propositions about the past. These propositions could then be tested against the archaeological record. This approach to the study of the past, using the ethnographic record extensively and systematically to generate universal laws for the material consequences of human behaviour, is often perceived as one of the most efficient uses of ethnographic material for archaeological interpretations.

As discussed by Wylie (1985a: 84-85), New Archaeology paradigms strongly suggested abandoning ethnographic analogy as an inductive form of inference. From this point of view, inductive interpretations, or applying observations made in the present onto material from the past, leaves explanatory conclusions uncertain, as there is no way to verify the results. A strong improvement in research methodology was then advocated through the systematic testing of assumptions informing archaeological inquiry. This meant eliminating completely analogical reasoning. Instead, the suggestion was to base archaeological inferences on law-like propositions covering the principles and uniformities in the production of the archaeological record.

For some, like Binford (1978), who still considered ethnographic material as a useful resource for archaeological inference, analogical reasoning remained a valuable tool for formulating research hypotheses which could be systematically tested against the archaeological record. In the spirit of logico-deductive positivism New Archaeologists revitalised analogical inference and created the method of ethnoarchaeology to connect ethnographical material with archaeological data.

Kramer defines ethnoarchaeology as “ethnographic fieldwork carried out with the express purpose of enhancing archaeological research by documenting aspects of sociocultural behaviour likely to leave identifiable residues in the archaeological record” (1996, cited in David and Kramer 2001: 12). Even though the term ‘ethno-archaeologist’ first appeared in archaeological literature in the early 20th century (Fewkes 1900), it was not until the mid 1950’s that its explicit methodological agenda became clear – in a paper entitled “Action archaeology: the archaeological inventory of a living community” (Kleindienst and Watson 1956). The main goal of ethnoarchaeology, as defined by Kleindienst and Watson, is to refine analogical inference by developing a body of detailed ethnographic information about the specifics of how artefact assemblages, zooarchaeological vestiges, site structures and settlement patterns were produced in diverse cultural contexts. A principal concern is to establish systemic rules linking human behaviours to their archaeological vestiges, expected to hold under particular types of environmental or material conditions. This approach was directly influenced by ‘action anthropology’ developed by Sol Tax with the Meskwaki (or Fox Indians), where the work of the anthropologist was seen as valuable for the communities he studied (Eggan 1955; Piddington 1960).

Binford’s ethnoarchaeology of the Alaskan Nunamiut (1978) is a useful example of this method. He attempted to document “the relationship between the dynamics of a living system and the static archaeological remains deriving from that system” (Binford 1978: 451). In other words, he sought to recognise correlations between human behaviour in a given ecological setting and the material traces left by these behaviours. To do so, he studied the economic anatomy of sheep and caribou, establishing differential degrees of utility for each

body part. Utility was defined as the amount of meat, marrow and grease, both 'objectively' and considering the 'cultural' preferences of Nunamiut informants. He then followed Nunamiut hunters in their daily activities, examining their butchering and carcass transportation procedures, storage methods, food processing and consumption practices for an entire annual cycle. This enabled him to explore to what extent utility indexes were correlated with these behaviours. His conclusions demonstrated that Nunamiut were processing, transporting and consuming animal parts in a highly rational manner, based on their different degrees of utility. With this study, Binford sought to provide universal explanations for the correlation between human behaviour and the archaeological record, in this case the spatial distribution of animal remains. His intention was that these explanations could be used in subsequent ethnographic analogies with hunter-gathers, regardless of the region or time period.

Ethnoarchaeology developed by processualists, as Binford's example shows, represents the deployment of middle-range theory, searching for the behaviours at the origins of the archaeological record. As Trigger defines it, middle-range theory embraces:

... acts of identification, such as distinguishing different classes of habitations or base camps, as well as diagnosing the economic, social, and ideological functions of artifacts. It also [involves] identifying patterns of human behaviors as these might relate to subsistence activities, family organization, community structure, and political relations. In addition, middle-range theory also [subsumes] the investigation of cultural and natural site-formation processes, thereby embracing the study of regularities in physical processes as well as in cultural behavior (2006: 414-415).

Using methodological objectivism, middle-range theory seeks rational explanations of social phenomena, laws that can be generalised to all human beings. It sees cultures and behaviours in a somewhat ahistorical manner, rooted in biological and social evolutionary systems and behaviours.

Two further examples of the use of ethnographic analogy (ethnoarchaeology) in the processual agenda follow, both on the topic of artefact styles and social relations. Margaret H. Friedrich (1970) conducted a 14 month ethnographic study of contemporary pottery painting styles used by artisans in San José, in the Michoacan state of Mexico. Her goal was to investigate the social context of painting in order to link the various design elements in the decoration of pottery to the social interaction of the artisans. Her focus was explicitly on the social context of the painters and the final product of their decoration. She recognised a structural hierarchy in the organisation of the attributes of San José paintings, reflected in the subdivision of the surface of the vessels, the design elements and the different configurations of these elements. She used this hierarchy to compare the vessels of different groups of painters, represented by nuclear families, across the village. She observed that in San José, the pattern of variation of pottery decoration design is loosely organised in a network across the village. However, there was one exception to this: a San José family had developed an individual style where innovation and the introduction of new design elements were observable. Friedrich also observed that this family paid much more attention to each other's work when painting than to that of the rest of the village. Friedrich argued that this family's individual design style had a complex configuration that was not easily copied and thus didn't travel easily within the village. She concluded that the facility in which design

elements can be decoded and incorporated into an artisan network is an important indicator of the intensity of communication within that network.

Another example is that of Polly Wiessner who conducted a stylistic study of the Kalahari San projectile points, based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken from 1973 to 1977. Wiessner studied social relations within and between groups and stylistic variations of their artefacts, in order to draw correlations between them. Her research was oriented around the items and their formal attributes that potentially carried social information. She wanted to understand the conditions which determine the use of certain items to transmit social messages, and how patterns of stylistic variation over space pertain to social relations (Wiessner 1983: 253). She concluded that style, along with other verbal and non-verbal modes of communication, has strong potential to channel social relations. Furthermore, she developed a theory of style that accounts for the double strategy of personal and social identity formation (emblemic and assertive styles). The emblemic style pertains to the individual's determination to show his or her affiliation to a specific social group. The assertive style is the variation in material culture which is personally based and which carries information supporting individual identity (Wiessner 1983: 258).

1.5 Post-processual advances in ethnoarchaeology

The post-processual era of archaeology, beginning in the early 1980's, continued to develop ethnoarchaeological methods, but with different questions and paradigms. It was mostly inspired by symbolic and interpretive anthropological approaches, postmodern thought and the will to move away from the positivist, neo-evolutionist and cultural

ecological paradigms of processual archaeology. Some of its practitioners borrow ideas from structuralism and agency (e.g. social theorists Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu; archeologist Ian Hodder); others adhere to phenomenology and post-structuralism (e.g. social and cultural theorists Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, Maurice Merleau-Ponty; archaeologists Christopher Shanks and Michael Tilley); and others embraced most specifically critical theory (archaeologist Mark Leone). Post-processual archaeologists turned their attention to the relationships between culture, ideas, human agency and material culture. They challenged the ahistorical nature of processual archaeology and the objectification or de-humanisation of its research subjects. This led to the development of ethnoarchaeological studies focusing on the interaction between ethnicity, culture, mental processes and specific aspects of material culture, such as stylistic and/or symbolic elements of stone tools or ceramics, and taking into consideration the agency and intentions of human subjects, in their historical, social and cultural contexts.

An example of the post-processual use of ethnographic analogy is that of Michael Dietler and Ingrid Herbich, in their investigation of the social aspects of pottery manufacture among the Luo people of western Kenya, in order to apply their ethnography to stylistic studies of archaeological ceramics (Dietler and Herbich 1987, 1989). They investigated the manner in which social context affects material culture and the nature of the social and technical roles of material culture. For Dietler and Herbich, style is the immediate result of techniques (Lemonier 1986; Leroi-Gourhan 1943, 1964) and a wide range of social, psychological and technological constraints. They were inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu on *habitus* (1972, 1980). The *habitus* of a people consists of their disposition to act

in certain ways through the influence of the material conditions in which they live. Techniques are formed through a culture's *habitus*, through which people respond to practical demands that may stem from the environmental, economic or social domains of their lives. According to Dietler and Herbich, in order to understand material culture variability and change, we have to understand the *habitus* of the people that made and used the objects, the material conditions that influence the formation of the *habitus*, and the origin and nature of the demands that provoke responses. They found that an appropriate theoretical basis to answer such questions can be found in the anthropology of consumption and an historical cultural economy that consider the regional political economies of societies, rather than their bounded and homogenous cultural structures (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 248). In their study of Luo pottery, they found that techniques were transmitted to women by their mothers-in-law and other senior affines through the process of a post-marital re-socialisation (Dietler and Herbich, in press; Herbich 1981, 1987). Furthermore, material patterns observed in the spatial distribution of pottery styles were the results of choices made at various stages of the 'chaîne opératoire' ('operational chain' from clay procurement to firing) by local sets of potters working within a larger population of Luo artisans employing a homogenous set of tools and techniques (Dietler and Herbich 1989). The micro-styles of different communities of potters are not static. Rather, they respond to social and environmental demands, based on the potters' particular dispositions or *habitus*.

This example shows how ethnographic research enables the assessment of a variety of cultural, psychological, historical, social and technical factors that are responsible for the design of material culture. The objects of study of post-processualists are therefore human

subjects with their own intentions and agency, shaping identities and negotiating social relations in various manners, even within a given culture or society.

1.6 Current concerns about the ethnographic literature

My research mainly employs the direct historical approach to analyse analogically contemporary Thule Inuit and Inuit as described in early ethnographic literature. I therefore pay special attention to potential issues that might emerge from the use of these written sources. As mentioned earlier, ethnographies need to be used with caution because they represent the authors' perceptions about sociocultural groups. This draws our attention to the ways in which meanings about other people are created both in the past and in the present. It also points to the relations of power and authority between the different persons who create discourses about the past (Hodder 2003; Leone et al. 1987). Failure to recognise the inherent subjectivity of the ethnographic (and archaeological) enterprise can lead to misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the communities studied, and the reproduction of such mistakes in the analogy with earlier peoples.

Archaeologists who rely on ethnographic literature for analogical methods have to be aware of a series of biases inherent in these sources. Ethnographers, especially those of the early Boasian tradition, have the tendency to sort 'traditional' from 'non-traditional' practices among the groups studied (Roseberry 1989; Schrire 1984; Stahl 1993: 241-243; Wolfe 1982, 1984). Due to their belief that these cultures were bound to disappear in the face of the advancement of colonial forces, ethnographers took pains to record mainly, if not only, facets of these cultures that were not a consequence of European contact. This represents

the origin of the problematic concept of the ‘ethnographic present’, where cultures have been represented as frozen in time and traditions, clear from outside influence (Fabian 1983; McNiven and Russell 2005: 50-87; Trigger 1982; Upham 1987; Wobst 1978).

There are many consequences of this kind of practice for the content of ethnographies and their applicability to ethnographic analogy with archaeological material and ancient peoples. First, asking what is ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ is not a straightforward question. Interaction with other cultural groups and the adoption or rejection of practices or material items *is* a traditional practice in itself. Notions of a culture’s traditions transform through time, as elements from other groups and cultures are integrated and others abandoned. These types of tradition change often have internal drivers rather than being imposed by external forces. People choose whether or not to integrate aspects of others’ cultures, and they do it in ways that are consistent with their traditions. Thus, ruling out ‘non traditional’ aspects of a culture may in fact do the opposite by hiding some important ‘traditional’ elements related to dynamics of adaptations, inter-group relations and culture change, which constitute important questions in archaeology.

Cultural change should not be taken for granted, as ethnographers did in early ethnographic works, and as archaeologists replicate when they use ethnographies uncritically in their analogy. Instead, continuity and change should be treated as ‘empirical questions’ to be investigated. In emphasising the homogeneities or ‘traditional traits’ between archaeological cultures and those studied in early ethnographies, there is a danger of flattening time and diminishing our ability to address questions of change (Stahl 1993: 246).

Another potential problem with the use of ethnographies is their geographical span (Wobst 1978: 304-306). In early ethnographic works, researchers studied villages and communities, expanding their observations to wider social and spatial entities. Besides the sampling issues of such a practice, it potentially hides inter-group networks of relations, which include communities outside the scope of the research *per se*. In addition, some of these anthropological units of study were sometimes a product of colonial-administrative policy and did not necessarily refer to a real sense of group identity (Vansina 1989: 344). In the Inuit case, where families and camps moved annually across territories, in patterns that could change at any time because of the unpredictability of game animals, weather and individual personal wills, such geographically oriented ethnographies can be re-interpreted and applied to archaeological studies outside their original territorial span. Consequently, this problem does not limit the uses of these ethnographic writings – it expands them.

On another level, some early ethnographic accounts also have very strict structures: topics for treatment follow specific rules and conventions, set up by contemporary trends within the anthropological discipline itself, the institutions which sponsored the studies (often anthropology or natural science museums) and/or the interdisciplinary scientific goals of certain research teams. As we will see later with the Inuit cases, some very important aspects of material culture, of potential importance for archaeology, were almost completely ignored in early ethnographies, because the important anthropological topics at that time were social, political and religious institutions and their functional, not necessarily material, aspects. Their only detailed material analyses usually pertained to hunting equipment with questions of subsistence and ecological adaptation. This also reflects the androcentric biases

of these ethnographies that tended to focus on male activities, a bias which is often replicated in archaeological practice (Conkey and Spector 1984).

Despite this, the early ethnographic record still contains information of great value about the past life-ways of people connected to those studied by archaeologists: descriptions of modes of subsistence, social and kinship relations, beliefs and spiritual practices, conflicts, warfare, mythology, cosmology and so on. As long as the reader bears in mind the biases mentioned above – and there are many others that I did not mention – it is possible to use the ethnographic record in a rigorous application of ethnographic analogy. For a solid analogy, one should be sure to multiply and diversify the sources relating to a given sociocultural group or topic, examining how the studies were conducted, why and by whom. Bias is inevitable when undertaking and writing ethnographies, as everything that is written rests on observation by the ethnographer, filtered and processed in his or her mind, then transformed into words, sentences and chapters, organised in a certain narrative that itself gives meaning to the text. From this point of view, ethnographic accounts should always be regarded as a production of the ethnographer, and never as a direct image of the people he or she is referring to.

This last consideration raises a very important point, which will be discussed at length in the next chapter, namely the authority of the ethnographer and archaeologists when they write about other people's cultures, beliefs and ways of life. In the academic literature on ethnographic analogy (e.g. Wylie 1985a, 1988; Stahl 1993), critical examination of ethnographic sources is generally treated from a purely philosophical point of view. Concerns are mainly about the relevance of the connections between ethnographic sources

and archaeological material, and how one should go about making analogical inferences between them. However, a different set of issues surrounding the connections between present and past, raised by archaeologists in the late 1970's, have since become common themes within the archaeological discipline, especially in countries and regions that have a colonial past and a neocolonial present, such as Canada, the United States, Australia, Oceania and Africa. These questions relate to the continued contribution of post-processual archaeology to the enhancement of the method of ethnographic analogy, with regard to critical theory and the self-reflexivity of the researcher. These issues concern the acknowledgement of the colonial nature of archaeological and anthropological disciplines and efforts to decolonise such discourses and practices.

These critiques, now omnipresent within these disciplines, have led to the development of new practices, such as collaborative and indigenous archaeologies, which are the topic of Chapter 2. These practices continue to connect the past to the present and vice versa, but with different motivations than ethnographic analogy and ethnoarchaeology. Instead of relying solely on ethnographic accounts, archaeologists such as myself complement their work with the inclusion of the direct voices of the descendants or traditionally associated groups of the ancient peoples they study. Researchers make an effort to work in collaboration with the objects of their studies, and to reconnect the oral traditions or traditional/indigenous knowledge of contemporary people with their ancestors.

2. Critical and ethical uses of the present in archaeology

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 highlighted the fundamental role of the present in the construction of archaeological knowledge, using analogical reasoning and methods. It described how observations made in the present are integrated into archaeology in order to enhance archaeologists' knowledge about the past. To complement this, the current chapter explores critical and ethical concerns about the connections between past and present in archaeology. Moving away from strict scientific considerations, this section examines from a critical standpoint the various actors in the analogy (i.e. the archaeological objects vs. subjects, the ethnographic sources and the archaeologists) and their interrelations. It addresses the historical, social and political contexts of knowledge construction in archaeology, the kind of representations of the past which are created, how these images affect people in the present and the role of the archaeologists in this process.

For the purpose of this research, answers to these questions are found in the colonial and postcolonial context of archaeological practices. Prehistoric archaeology in North America, as in most settler societies, studies ancient societies to which Native groups claim ancestry or traditional connections. Therefore, the discipline of archaeology, its methods and theories, are necessarily entrenched in the relations between Native groups and their past. As a result, the work of archaeologists, their practices and their discourses impact on society in a way that goes beyond their intentions and expectations. This chapter addresses this reality, using perspectives from postcolonialism, indigenous activism and critical theory.

I first describe major trends in postcolonial thought and their intersection with archaeology. I depict the various colonial aspects of the discipline and concrete avenues for its decolonisation. Decolonisation is discussed both from the archaeologists' critical and ethical standpoint and from the perspective of indigenous activism, leading to a discussion of collaborative and indigenous forms of archaeology. Finally, intersections between these postcolonial and other academic trends are discussed, namely post-processual views on multivocality and critical theory. Critical theory is particularly useful as it allows us to step back and observe the decolonisation of archaeology from a scientific, political and philosophical point of view. This chapter will investigate the development of archaeology in the Canadian Arctic in relation to Inuit history and political activism. Additionally, it will contextualise my approach to archaeological research in its relationship to Inuit perspectives on their own past.

2.2 Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is an umbrella term that refers to ideas and practices that question and challenge traditional colonialist epistemologies, the knowledge about and the representations of colonised "Others", and that addresses the complex effects of colonisation, colonialism and decolonisation (Liebmann and Rizvi 2008: 2; Patterson 2008: 21). Colonisation refers to the arrival of a population on a new territory already occupied by other people, where the arrivals live as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin. Colonisation also implies a relation of dominance of the newcomers over the first or earlier occupants of the territory. Colonialism refers to the

various processes by which this dominance is established, maintained and renewed through interconnected political, legal, social, economic and cultural structures, events and actions.

Postcolonialism does not refer to the end of the colonial period because colonialism continues in various guises today. The term emerged in the academic world in the late 20th century, mainly as intellectual discourse developed within the social sciences, humanities, arts and literature. Examining the central ideas of some of its foundational texts could be of assistance in defining the notion of postcolonialism and the kind of ideas and challenges it deals with. One of the main inspirations for the intellectual movement has been Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which examines the role of essentialism in the construction of colonial discourses, focusing largely on post-Enlightenment European discourses about the Middle East. For Said, essentialism is a belief that people and objects have a set of characteristics or 'essences' which make them what they are, and that the task of science and philosophy is their discovery and expression. Such essences of identities are permanent, unalterable and eternal – when used by dominant classes in colonial contexts to define indigenous people, essentialism shapes and fixes certain types of identities which reinforce this dominance. For example, colonial discourse typically represents colonised peoples through a series of essentialist binary oppositions that favour the settlers' cultures and present the colonised as inferior, passive, savage, lazy, marginal, simple, static and primitive in contrast to the superior, active, civilised, industrious, complex, dynamic and modern colonial society (Liebmann 2008: 6). Said argues that these kinds of discourses yielded hegemonic perspectives where European culture was able to produce and manage the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively (Patterson

2008: 26). He showed that European or Western conceptions of history and culture, and the way they construct, represent and convey meaning about other societies are profoundly intertwined with real powers of imperialism, domination and exploitation (Lydon and Rizvi 2010: 20; van Dommelen 2011: 3).

The relation between discourse and power has been discussed extensively by Foucault (1980). For Foucault, discourse is not defined in mere linguistic terms, but as a system of representations and a group of statements which provide a language for talking about, defining and representing knowledge about a particular topic, historical moment or people. In fact, Foucault (1972) argues that discourse produces knowledge, and when we look at discursive practices in specific institutional settings, we see how some factions of society regulate others. The relation between knowledge and power, mediated by discourse, is of central importance to the question of the authority of science – the researchers and their writings – over their subjects of study. For the purpose of the present study, it is about the relation of power that is created by the discourses of archaeologists and anthropologists over the people they study.

Another important postcolonial perspective was elaborated by Homi K. Bhabha (1992, 1994) in his work on 'hybridisation'. Bhabha focuses on the formation of subjectivities and identities in the interactions and relationships between colonisers and colonised and most importantly on agency and resistance on the part of the colonised. Postcolonial societies are situated at the intersection of these relationships and emerge in the hybrid rearticulation of cultural differences. The notion of hybridity refers to new, transcultural forms produced through colonisation that cannot be classified into a single

cultural or ethnic category (Liebmann 2008: 5). This is a useful concept for archaeology, as it helps to avoid erroneous binary oppositions of coloniser vs. colonised material cultures and opens a theoretical space in which the ambiguous “in-between” (Bhabha 1994: 38) of hybrid cultural forms can be addressed.

The last author that I want to mention is Gayatri C. Spivak, who popularised the term ‘subaltern’ (1988) and addressed the difficulties inherent in attempting to give subaltern peoples voice. ‘Subaltern’ refers to the marginalised, silenced factions of populations such as indigenous peoples in colonial settings and Spivak discusses how Western discourses and representations of these groups are complicit with capitalist economic interests. Spivak also introduces the term ‘strategic essentialism’, to discuss how subalterns raise their voice, using widely shared forms of identity. Distinct from Said’s discussion, Spivak examines essentialism as it is used by and to the advantage of colonised people. Although essentialism is often accused of simplifying the heterogeneous nature of groups and/or reinforcing stereotypes, Spivak argues that in the context of strategic moves for empowerment, this simplification and ‘essentialisation’ of groups and identities has been proven to be advantageous and efficient (Spivak 1988, 1990). ‘Strategic essentialism’ is of particular importance for my discussion of the term ‘indigenous archaeology’ and of the relationships between Canadian Inuit and archaeology throughout history to the present.

Despite its profound moral engagement and promising impacts for colonised peoples around the globe, postcolonial theory has been criticised on many levels (e.g. Di Paolo Loren 2008; Liebmann and Rizvi 2008; Patterson 2008). The movement is often described as being too concerned with dialectics and dichotomies such as

coloniser/colonised or precontact/postcontact that hide the complexity of factors and specificities within each group and culture involved in the process of colonisation. It has also been noted that the period and phenomenon of contact is too often depicted as one single event, but in reality it has usually been a series of localised contacts, all with their specific dynamics (Ahmad 1995; Shohat 1992). Postcolonialists have thus been accused of homogenising colonial experiences. From another perspective, postcolonialism is sometimes criticised for perpetuating academic imperialism – as an intellectual movement, born and largely reproduced in universities and academic discourse, it is still largely rooted in the Enlightenment. It has also been blamed for being too theoretical and somewhat divorced from political realities (Ahmad 1992, 1995; Dirlik 1994, 1999). These last two criticisms underscore the elitist aspects of postcolonialism, which is still somewhat Euro-centred, and continues to undermine the agency and potential and actual empowerment of colonised people. It is important to take these last criticisms into consideration because the intellectual movement of postcolonialism is not the only decolonisation force that we observe in archaeology today; there is also another force coming from the colonised peoples themselves, in the form of indigenous activism for legal, political, social and cultural claims.

2.3 Indigenous activism

Indigenous activism was – and is still – instrumental in the development of postcolonial archaeology, in which the perspectives and demands of native communities began to be acknowledged and included in archaeological research agendas. What I refer to as ‘indigenous activism’ is those forces which drive the colonised people against the power of nation-states that were and are still active parts of their oppression, marginalisation,

assimilation and even destruction (Niezen 2003). There is a very intimate link between indigenous peoples and colonialism, as is made clear in the definition of indigenous people in a UN report by José Martínez Cobo:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present nondominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems (Cobo 1987: 48).

As Niezen has noted, the definition of indigenous peoples is not just an instrument for analytical or legal purposes, it is mostly a matter of self-determination, as well as developing collective, transnational connections and strategies amongst themselves (Niezen 2003, 2010). In general, this activism is directed towards the protection of indigenous rights, territories, traditions and languages, and it also acts as a counter-weight to the actions of powerful nation-states and the abuses of modernity more generally (Niezen 2010: 125).

A precursor of modern indigenous movements was petitioning (Niezen 2009: 22-4). For example, in 1704 a chief of the Mohegan tribe submitted a formal petition to the English Crown that complained of his people's dispossession of lands at the hands of the Connecticut colonial government. This petition was successful, as in 1705 an imperial commission found that the lands in dispute had been unjustly appropriated and should be returned to the Mohegans (Den Ouden 2005). With the development of institutions of international governance, such as the League of Nations in 1918, petitioning became

possible at a higher level than the nation-state or monarchy representing the oppressor. From this time on, leaders of colonised people had a new platform to denounce injustices and advocate their claims. This is exemplified by Six Nations Chief Deskaheh, who travelled to Geneva in 1923 with a delegation of his Nation's representatives to draw international attention to the Canadian Government's plan to impose on the Six Nations a new system of elected chiefs. He did not succeed, largely due to the fact that at that time, there existed no legal path for the recognition of a category of marginalised peoples, such as indigenous, in international law (Niezen 2010: 115-6).

This international recognition was first addressed by the 1952 report of the International Labour Organization entitled *Indigenous Peoples: Living and Working Conditions of Aboriginal Populations in Independent Countries*. Following this, and mostly since the late 1970's and 1980's, there has been a burgeoning of indigenous spokespeople making claims at the international level, followed by the formalisation of an international movement of indigenous peoples, particularly those made through the UN. This included the creation of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982, leading to the formation of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007.

The history of the emergence of indigenous activism is interesting because it shows how the very word 'indigenous', as it is commonly used and understood nowadays, was conceptualised and concretised first of all through international law and institutions of global governance. The term is now a powerful one, globally recognised, and is equated with more and more successful movements of colonised, marginalised people fighting their oppressors.

Over the past two decades this strength and popularity has led the term ‘indigenous’ to be translated from an “abstract category of right-bearers to a focal point of collective self-knowledge” by national and local communities (Niezen 2010: 122). The word has thus entered a sort of ‘vernacularisation’, and it has also begun to be used broadly, equating to a larger ‘counter-modernity’ attached not only to colonised peoples claiming and protecting their rights, but also to non-human entities such as ‘indigenous knowledge’ and ‘indigenous rights’ and to non-indigenous people who are sympathetic to indigenous causes (ibid: 123). This is exactly the context in which the term ‘indigenous archaeology’ emerged and still finds its meaning: a practice carried out either by indigenous or non-indigenous people, rooted in, supporting and made possible through indigenous activism.

2.4 The intersection of postcolonialism, indigenous activism and archaeology

A. The colonial nature of archaeology

Indigenous movements, their activism and lobbying, as well as the postcolonial climate in academia invited archaeologists to recognise the inherent colonial nature of archaeology, especially in countries like Canada, the United States and Australia. Nowadays, issues of repatriation and questions such as ‘Who owns the past?’ have become common concerns among archaeologists and indigenous peoples. The colonial nature of archaeology exists in many ways, though it is not always explicit, as is also the case for anthropology (e.g. Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Trouillot 1991). Anthropology shares many colonial traits with archaeology, and the two disciplines have from time to time reinforced one another (Trigger 1980).

Popular stereotypes about indigenous peoples influenced North American archaeology from the very beginnings of the discipline in the late 19th century. Views of North American Indians as brutal and biologically incapable of cultural development prevailed at that time. It was a time when Western governments were actively engaged in massive violations of the culture and rights of indigenous peoples, and setting up education systems such as boarding schools in the United States and Canadian residential schools. Such initiatives aimed to assimilate young people into the mainstream Euro-American and Euro-Canadian societies (Trigger 1980: 663). In addition, the archaeology of this period was marked by the adoption of eugenic theories, which viewed North American Indians as static and primitive – contemporary indigenous peoples were seen as living fossils of ancient prehistoric times that had been incapable of evolving beyond the Stone Age (Bowler 1992; McNiven and Russell 2005: 51; Russell 2001; Trigger 1980; see also chapter 1 on early ethnographic analogy in evolutionist paradigms). These views were rooted in a principle of uniformitarianism, in which phenomena and their causes in the present are considered identical to those from the past (Lyell 1830-33). This perspective had the effect of reducing the gap between the past and the present, associating contemporary Native peoples with a very distant past (Lyell 1863). The archaeologists' attitudes towards Native peoples, the descendant communities associated with the archaeological sites, were reflected in many ways in their research: a reluctance to see or seek cultural change in the native past, a lack of interest in developing chronologies that would link the present to the past, a reliance on theories of diffusion or migration when evidence of change was encountered in the archaeological record, and a practice of loose ethnographic analogy that reinforced the views of indigenous peoples as living fossils (Trigger 1980).

These theories, leading directly to an archaeology that supported racist views of indigenous peoples, have been outdated since the mid 20th century. North American archaeology, as well as archaeologies practised in other colonial countries, moved on to newer theoretical paradigms, but yet, many colonial perspectives endured. The remainder of this section will examine what McNiven and Russell (2005) call the ‘colonial culture’ of archaeology, which marked the development of the discipline, and which still prevails today. These authors regroup the colonial aspects of archaeology into two related phenomena: disassociation (of indigenous people and their past) and appropriation (of this past by archaeologists).

Disassociation happened in oft-cited cases such as the Mound Builders controversy and Kennewick Man in the United States. ‘Mound Builders’ represents various groups who built mounds of different shapes in the American Midwest and Southeast. The mounds are now known to have been made by Adena and Hopewell cultures in the Ohio Valley between 800 BC and AD 500, and by people of the Mississippian culture in the southeastern United States from AD 500 to 1550. When European settlers began to notice these thousands of earthworks in the 18th and 19th centuries, they did not believe that they could be the products of ‘primitive and incapable’ Native American peoples. These constructions – which often contained elaborate artefacts made of pottery, shell, mica and native copper – challenged the popular view of Native Americans as being inherently primitive. Instead the construction of the mounds was attributed to a ‘lost race’ of people, associated with various cultures including Egyptian, Tartar, Roman or Aztec – almost anyone except Native North Americans (Blakeslee 1987; Downer 1997; Silverberg 1968; Willey and Sabloff 1980: 19-25).

One of the first major archaeological investigations of these earthworks, and one which contributed to the myth of the Mound Builders, was that of Squier and Davis (1848) who surveyed a large number of mounds, some of which they excavated. A detailed research report was published in which it was concluded that:

“the facts thus far collected point to a connection more or less intimate between the race of the mounds and the semi-civilized nations which formerly had their seats among the sierras of Mexico, upon the plains of Central America and Peru, and who erected the imposing structures which from their number, vastness, and mysterious significance, invest the central portions of the continent with an interest not less absorbing than that which attaches to the valley of the Nile. These nations alone, of all those found in possession of the continent by the European discoverers, were essentially stationary and agricultural in their habits – conditions indispensable to large population, to fixedness of institutions, and to any considerable advance in the economical or ennobling arts. That the mound-builders, although perhaps in a less degree, were also stationary and agricultural, clearly appears from a variety of facts and circumstances (...)” (Squier and Davis 1848: 301-302⁸).

According to this citation by Squier and Davis, agriculture, sedentism and large populations were essential preconditions of the construction of the mounds. These socio-economic conditions are not principal characteristic of Native Americans of the region, who were thus dissociated from these archaeological features. This myth of the Mound Builders, which bears no resemblance or factual correspondence with living Native peoples of these regions, was refuted in the late 19th century by professional archaeologists (Thomas 1894), but by that time it had already made its way into the public mind.

⁸ Their book (a bestseller) was the first book published by the newly established Smithsonian Institution.

Kennewick Man is another well-known case of disassociation (see Powell 2005). This case refers to the skeletal remains of a Palaeo-Indian individual that were found on a bank of the Columbia River in Washington State in 1996. Radiocarbon dating and the discovery of the tip of an arrow point embedded in the right ilium of the pelvis associated the skeleton with the period between 9200 and 9600 years BP. However, the regional Deputy Coroner, archaeologist and forensic anthropologist James Chatters, attributed morphological features of the cranium to a European Caucasoid race. These conflicting views led to a nine year legal battle between scientists, the American government and Native American tribes who claimed that the remains were one of their ancestors. The interpretation of Kennewick Man as European challenged the thesis that Native Americans were the first inhabitants of the Americas, which, in turn, could undermine native land claims. In 2004, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that Native American tribes (notably the Umatilla, Colville, Yakama and Nez Perce) had no cultural link to the remains which could continue to be studied by scientists. Thus, access and authority over the interpretation of the remains was officially passed into the hands of science.

The second colonial aspect of archaeology raised by McNiven and Russell (2005) is the appropriation of the indigenous past through science. It concerns the dehumanisation of Native peoples' ancestors, mainly as a consequence of the use of scientific terminology. This is seen when archaeologists name and discuss historical episodes as scientific phenomena, and people as specimens. As a result, the landscape of the past seems to be merely populated by flint flakes, bones and pottery sherds (see Trigger 1980). The scientific language of archaeology transforms indigenous cultures into both the subject and the object of study

(McNiven and Russell 2005: 182). This is especially true for the archaeology conducted within a processual paradigm, for which history is set aside for the profit of science: past populations are seen as objects of study rather than subjects in their own history, and their culture as a laboratory in which generalising laws are developed and refined (Hanna 1997:73). The use of an exclusive scientific language also reduces the degree to which non-specialists can interact and engage with the discipline and thus benefit from it (McNiven and Russell: 181; Hanna 1997). This phenomenon, also called scientific authority, leaves us with the impression that the only valid account of the past can be written from the perspective of the archaeological discipline.

There are other commonly-reported problems with archaeological discourses, which have similar colonial effects. Among them is the widespread use of the term ‘prehistory’ and ‘prehistoric’. This term suggests that prehistoric peoples ‘don’t have a history’, or lived before the true history of a country began. For example, in Canada, this begins with the arrival of Europeans in the territory. The use of the term also creates a temporal and cultural disjuncture between contemporary indigenous people and their ancestors (McNiven and Russell 2005: 220-21). As we will discuss below, archaeologists tend to designate these ‘prehistoric cultures’ with names that are different from the names of their living descendants, which contributes to the alienation of indigenous people from their past and the appropriation of the ‘prehistoric cultures’ by the archaeologist through the very process of *naming* them.

Other words that are commonly used by archaeologists and which carry some strong colonial effects include the ‘abandonment’ of a territory and the ‘disappearance’ of a culture.

Ancient peoples may have moved around their territory for various reasons or left places that were used as main villages, to install themselves elsewhere. However, the departure from an ancient site does not necessarily imply 'abandonment'. It is possible that a strong attachment may be retained due to an intimate historical link with the village giving meaning to their present lives, or a new meaning given to an ancient site, such as the imposition of sacred status (see Watkins 2006 for an example of the Hopi and the 'abandonment' of Chaco Canyon). Although the word 'abandonment' refers simply to the absence of physical presence in an area, it could also be interpreted as the absence of cultural or emotional attachment to a place, and leaves the door wide open for such interpretation.

Similar reflections can be made about the concept of the 'disappearance' of a culture or tradition. While in some cases it might be true that communities have actually disappeared or died out, often it is more likely to be cultural change that is at work. People transform and traditions evolve, and we might attribute changes to migrations, diffusion, ecological adaptation or internal innovation. It is still the same group of individuals that make the decision to change, to include new elements in their culture, or to modify habits according to their needs, what they learn from others or from experience, or simply following inspiration. When analysing and classifying pottery or arrowhead styles, archaeologists speak about traditions that come and go, they name different traditions using separate terms, they talk about the 'appearance' and 'disappearance' of cultures. In doing so, not only do they decide arbitrarily on the identity of these peoples, they very often create ruptures with the living descendants of these ancient peoples.

Other common words like ‘collapse’, ‘deterioration’ or ‘decline’ that are used to qualify processes where elaborated and complex culture becomes simplified have some obvious roots in progressivist, evolutionary views of human groups. Archeologists move along these evolutionary scales, from small tribes to great civilisations, from the ascension of groups to their deterioration, talking about the complexification of social organisations or economies, then of the collapse of certain civilisations that have living descendants today, for example the Maya. These word choices, and the meanings we give them, have true psychological and political implications for the local indigenous groups that descend from them (see Watkins 2006). The impact of these words on indigenous people is not only a question of vocabulary; there is a social and political context around science which allows it to exercise its authority on these groups.

B. Scientific authority

Science has developed a form of authority over indigenous people, rooted in the intellectual context of the Enlightenment period. The intellectual advances of this provided the spirit, the impetus, the confidence and the political and economic structures that supported the search for new knowledge. This search was prompted by the political and economic contexts of exploration for new worlds and trade routes, the establishment of colonies and the systematic colonisation of Native peoples in the 18th and 19th centuries (Smith 1999: 58-59). The production of knowledge, perceptions and ideas about these newly ‘discovered’ people became as much commodities of colonial exploitation as other natural resources (Salmond 1991: 82). Notably in the Americas, Africa, Australia and New Zealand, archaeology was practised by a colonising population that had no historical ties with the

peoples whose past they were studying. While the colonisers felt they had every reason to glorify their own past, they had no reason to valorise the past of the peoples they were subjugating and supplanting. Indeed, by emphasising the primitive nature and lack of accomplishments of these peoples, colonisers justified their own poor treatment of the colonised (Trigger 1984: 360). Although these early evolutionary perceptions of Native peoples no longer prevail in archaeological discourses, scientific authority stills functions in other forms, such as in claims of scientific freedom (McNiven and Russell 2005: 239; see McGhee 2008 for an example of this attitude). Archaeologists use the arguments of objectivity, empiricism and rationality to claim the right to study indigenous pasts without consultation with contemporary communities (Smith and Jackson 2006: 314). But as Hanna points out (1997: 72), there seems to be confusion between scientific objectivity, which permits researchers to evaluate the relevance of evidence, methods, theories and interpretation, and a pseudo-objectivity, which suggests that what researchers do (science) is value-free. As it has long been argued by sociologists of science (e.g. Latour 1987), systems that produce knowledge are never value-free.

A very brief review of the development of North American archaeological science, and the social context surrounding it, will help us to illustrate this point⁹. The early days of archaeology as a discipline were marked by evolutionary thought, when Native people were systematically associated with very ancient remains through ethnographic analogy. This supported views of Native people as primitive and inferior in comparison to civilised and

⁹ This trend was also observed in socio-cultural anthropology, through what Clifford calls 'ethnographic authority', where the West has presented itself as the unique purveyor of anthropological knowledge about others (Clifford 1988: 21-64).

modern people, corresponding to the world of the scientists themselves (Meltzer 1983). The latter paradigm of cultural history, at least in North America, produced local chronologies in connection with the Boasian concept of culture areas. This was done in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, when indigenous peoples had already been massively relocated to reservations or exterminated by diseases (Hanna 1997). At that time, cultural change was explained by diffusion or migration, not innovation, and indigenous peoples began to be alienated from their own past (Trigger 1980, 1984). With the rise of processual or New Archaeology in the early 1960's, less emphasis was put on culture history as a desirable research goal – instead archaeologists began to seek explanations for cultural processes and formulate general laws of human behaviour. At this point, archaeologists began to study human beings as scientific objects or 'specimens'.

Interestingly, the peak of processual archaeology occurred approximately when North American indigenous peoples were becoming increasingly politically active, for example during the foundation and first actions of the American Indian Movement in the 1970's or the indigenous response to the Canadian Government's 1969 White Paper on Indian Policy, which aimed to assimilate Canadian Native people into mainstream society. Archaeology began to produce work that largely downplayed the importance of the history of indigenous peoples at exactly the time when the latter were beginning to reclaim and uphold their history and traditions within Canadian society (Hanna 1997: 73). Indigenous peoples began immediately to denounce what they perceived as a violation perpetrated by archaeologists on their lands and the lack of respect for their cultural values. They rapidly gained support from the public and even politicians, but archeologists took a little more time to react (Trigger

1980). Despite the interest of processual archaeologists in ethnoarchaeology, their interaction with ethnography and living indigenous people was largely based on the goal of generating universal scientific laws of human behaviour which has little, if any, relevance to these people (Trigger 1980). Instead, the general laws of processual archaeology mostly profited the Euro-American scientific knowledge system.

These attitudes began to change in North America toward the end of the 1970's and the start of the 1980's, when postcolonial thought began to emerge in academia and indigenous activism became more organised and effective. These shifts in the dynamics of society and academia had many repercussions in archaeology, including the acknowledgement of its colonial nature and of the rights of indigenous people to have a better control of their past, and the search for solutions to 'decolonise' the discipline.

C. Decolonising the discipline

Liebmann and Rizvi (2008: 4-9) identified three areas where postcolonialism and archaeology intersect. First, archaeology has the power to unveil past episodes of colonisation and colonialism. This was first done through 'historical' archaeology, studying the contact and post-contact periods when settler societies arrived in new territories and began to engage with Native people living there. This was the earliest application of postcolonial thought to archaeology, through the examination of the material traces of colonialism (e.g. Deetz 1996[1977]; Di Paolo Loren 2008). The works of Bhabha on hybridity (1992, 1994) are of particular relevance, as the notion helps to identify the transcultural forms that emerged with the interactions between the colonisers and the colonised, easily recognisable in the material culture of the contact periods. One of the

particular facets of Bhabha's notion of hybridity is that it breaks down simple oppositions such as coloniser-colonised, and acknowledges the agency of the colonised, their resistance and power of making choices and even of impacting on the culture of the colonisers. Here, archaeology can really offer something to postcolonial theory, as it recognises its complex dynamics and effects through material culture, and discovers that colonialism is not just a recent phenomenon undertaken by the Western world, but was a facet of the history of the Incas, the Chinese state and others (Gosden 2001).

Second, it is possible to examine the role of archaeology in the construction and deconstruction of colonial discourse, with a brief overview of the colonial culture or archaeology (Said 1978). Awareness of this aspect of the discipline is clearly a product of postcolonial influence on the discipline (as well as other academic theoretical trends, such as critical theory and postprocessualism, which I will discuss shortly). In the same self-critical trend, archaeology also explores how it can improve its practices to move beyond this and participate in the deconstruction of its colonial nature.

This leads us to the third and final area of the intersection of postcolonialism and archaeology which will be developed below: decolonisation through various ethical and collaborative practices. Similar to Spivak (1988), archaeologists are now asking how they can avoid presenting themselves as the authority to speak for and about indigenous peoples and how these previously silenced voices can be heard through their archaeological practices and discourses.

Over the past three decades, changes have been brought about by the postcolonial context surrounding archaeological practice and theory, as well as by indigenous activists defending their cultural heritage. Indigenous people often view archaeology as “the final act of usurpation in which white society, after taking control of the present, took control of the past” (Gosden 2001: 249). With reference to Australia, Smith and Jackson argue that “much archaeological and anthropological research has been nothing more than a tool of colonial exploitation” (Smith and Jackson 2006: 313). This perspective can be heard in a powerful statement by Ros Langford, a member of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community, in a speech addressed to Australian archaeologists:

You seek to say that as scientists you have a right to obtain and study information of our culture. You seek to say that because you are Australians you have a right to study and explore our heritage because it is a heritage to be shared by all Australians, white and black. From our point of view we say you have come as invaders, you have tried to destroy our culture, you have built your fortunes upon the land and bodies of our people and now having said sorry, want a share in picking out the bones of what you regard as dead past. We say that it is our past, our culture and heritage, and forms part of our present life. As such it is ours to control and it is ours to share on our terms (Langford 1983, cited in Smith and Jackson 2006: 321).

Similarly, Native scholar Deloria stated (1992: 595), in the name of American indigenous people: “We have been the objects of scientific investigations and publications for far too long, and it is our intent to become people once again, not specimens” (see also Deloria 1969).

The decolonisation of the discipline of archaeology is a consequence of these postcolonial critiques and dynamics. It consists of efforts to deconstruct colonial practices,

attitudes and discourse, both by researchers and indigenous peoples. It is about understanding the epistemological impact of the archaeologists' work, questioning the source of the authoritative voice, and establishing strategies to improve the practice of the discipline and its relation with indigenous groups (Atalay 2006; Rizvi 2008; Smith 1999).

The decolonisation of archaeology can take many forms (Bruchac et al. 2010; Preucel and Cipolla 2008; Rizvi 2008b; Smith and Jackson 2006; Smith and Wobst 2003). The area of archaeological research over which indigenous people have regained the most control is excavations. Archaeologists working in postcolonial settings commonly have to go through processes for obtaining permissions to do research on or near the land of indigenous communities, by the communities themselves. In contrast, in the past, archaeologists generally had to obtain permits from the appropriate government department or institutions. Indigenous institutions, such as ethics committees, research centres, museums and even governments also commonly control some aspect of the research such as permit systems, management of collections, excavation reports and so on. Access to knowledge is another area where archaeologists are now bound to provide reports and presentations of their research findings to the local indigenous communities and institutions. The area where indigenous people have less control is over the interpretation of the results and subsequent publications to the public and academia, as well as in sharing the benefits of the research (Smith and Jackson 2006: 329-332). Many indigenous people want to be involved in what is said about them and how it is said, and to have a share in the benefits – economical, cultural, and intellectual – that derive from the research (Isaacson and Ford 2003; Little 2002).

The decolonisation of archaeology is also made possible through new legislation. The best known case is the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in the United States (Fine-Dare 2002; McGuire 2004). Passed in 1990, this federal law requires agencies and institutions that receive federal funding to return cultural items to their original owners, their descendants or traditionally associated people. These items include, as the name of the law suggests, human remains, but also funerary objects, sacred objects and other objects of cultural patrimony. This law emerged out of a long period of lobbying by indigenous individuals and groups, mainly over the repatriation of human remains that were kept in museum reserves as scientific specimens or exhibited in their public displays.

Even though NAGPRA is an important victory for indigenous people in terms of control of their heritage and a major step towards the decolonisation of archaeology and museum institutions, it is sometimes problematic for some indigenous groups. On one hand, for some communities, repatriating such cultural items can represent an enormous financial and spiritual burden, and this is without considering internal disputes over ownership, and how and where to reburial remains (Nash and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2010: 99). On the other hand, for museum anthropologists and archaeologists, NAGPRA is not always an opportunity and a means towards justice and the decolonisation of their discipline and institutional practices. It can also represent a nuisance or a threat for their academic goals, for example by reducing their access to archaeological material or delaying their research programmes (ibid.). NAGPRA, even though it is an official law representing and implementing the power of indigenous people over their cultural heritage, in its ongoing

problematic shows how decolonisation is not a simple and straightforward process (Hemenway 2010). Even twenty years after this act was passed, in an era when postcolonial thought is inherent in many anthropological, archaeological and museum practices, the dialogue and adjustment between indigenous people and museum institutions are still evolving (Bernstein 2010; Graham and Murphy 2010; McKeown 2010).

In Canada, there is no such federal law for the repatriation of native cultural items, or to control the excavation of burials. Such repatriation and control depends on the province, the territory and the level of power of indigenous communities on their respective lands in the matter of heritage. When excavations take place on land that is owned by federal or provincial governments, and where indigenous communities have no control over the cultural items, archaeologists usually rely on the code of ethics of their archaeological associations (provincial and federal). For example, the Canadian Archaeological Association has a specific code of conduct for Native people, named the *Statement of Principles for Ethical Conduct Pertaining to Aboriginal Peoples*, where archaeologists are bound to recognise cultural and spiritual links between indigenous people and the archaeological record, to acknowledge their interest in participating in the research activities, to encourage their involvement in the research, to respect sacred places and human remains, and to communicate the results to communities¹⁰. However, these codes of ethics are not as binding as laws such as NAGPRA. The codes of ethics ask archaeologists to recognise the importance of the archaeological record for indigenous people and encourage consultation and collaboration. However,

¹⁰ <http://canadianarchaeology.com/caa/statement-principles-ethical-conduct-pertaining-aboriginal-peoples> (accessed 4 April 2012).

recognition of importance is more a matter of attitude than real action. Far from being requirements, codes of ethics are more like suggestions.

As a consequence, the decolonisation of archaeological practices in Canada often stems from indigenous activism and claims, as was also the case for NAGPRA in the United States. The main processes behind these changes are indigenous land claims, especially in northern regions, because they directly affect the exploitation of the resources that these lands contain, and include the excavation of material remains of ancient Native peoples by archaeologists (Andrews et al. 1997). In many of these land claim settlements there are specific clauses pertaining to archaeology. If the excavation permits are not issued by the Native communities themselves, they require that archaeologists obtain at least land use permits in order to gain access to the lands, before an excavation permit can be issued. In other cases, Native communities have the right and power to block the issuing of excavation permits. Sometimes, land claim settlement includes a system of excavation permits per se, as in the case of Nunavut, which I discuss in Chapter 3. In general, however, these land claim agreements call for increased consultation with Native communities, the management of heritage through Native boards and agencies, the repatriation and curation of artefacts in trust, and the dissemination of knowledge about Native heritage (Andrews et al. 1997).

D. Collaborative and indigenous archaeologies

The principal outcome of the decolonisation of archaeology is the development of different forms of collaborative archaeologies (e.g. Atalay 2006; Beck and Somerville 2005; Hodder 2003; Lea and Smardz 2000; Moser et al. 2002; Pope and Mills 2007; Preucel and Cipolla 2008; McDavid 2002; Silliman and Ferguson 2010).

There are many ways to name these practices (Silliman 2008a). The literature on the topic talks about ‘community archaeology’ (Marshall 2002), ‘new vision archaeology’ (Rossen 2006), ‘applied archaeology’ (Silliman 2008a), ‘indigenous archaeology’ (Watkins 2000), ‘internalist archaeology’ (Yellowhorn 2002), ‘ethnocritical archaeology’ (Zimmerman 1997, 2001) and ‘convenantal archaeology’ (Zimmerman 1996, 1997). I use the term ‘collaborative archaeology’ when the movement comes from the discipline itself or from non-Native archaeologists, and ‘indigenous archaeology’ when it is entrenched in various forms of indigenous activism.

Most commonly, these practices translate into consultation and collaboration with descendant communities or communities that are traditionally and geographically associated with the sites excavated. Descendant communities have biological, historical and cultural links with the sites and artefacts. Groups that are traditionally or geographically associated do not necessarily claim such biological descent, but they have emotional attachment with sites and artefacts in the area in which they live (Silliman and Ferguson 2010). In some cases, this attachment may also be mixed with land claims where the archaeological sites are situated. For various ethical and/or legal reasons and motivations, archaeologists now routinely consult and/or collaborate with these communities at one or many phases of their research projects.

The collaborative approach is not unique to postcolonial academic trends, but is very, if not more, common in Cultural Resource Management (CRM) archaeology in North

America and Cultural Heritage Management in Australia¹¹. CRM archaeology is a non-academic form of archaeological practice (but see Raab and Klinger 1977; Goodyear, Raab and Klinger 1978), entrenched in the processes and procedures of protection and conservation of cultural heritage items, regulated by codes of professional ethics, legislation and government policies. CRM archaeology works with the different sectors of societies that have interests in cultural heritage. It is subjected to local legislation about heritage and access to land and its resources. Consequently, CRM archaeology is an active player in constructing and defining relations between archaeology, indigenous interests and governments (Smith 2004: 9). Some say that academic archaeology is too concerned with the theoretical and discursive aspects of research to be really politically engaged with indigenous people (Marshall 2002; Smith 2004). However, this perspective is changing, with the postcolonial trends that are taking over academia, coupled with indigenous activism, which have true repercussions on the kind of research done by academic archaeologists.

Whether archaeologists work within the framework of CRM or academia, collaborative research ethics and methodology is now a common trend. However, the types and degrees of collaboration vary. Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson suggest a collaborative continuum, from “merely communicating research to descendant communities, to a genuine synergy where the contributions of community members and scholars create a positive result that could not be achieved without joining efforts” (Colwell-Chanthaphonh

¹¹ The term ‘cultural resource’ has been criticised by Aboriginals in Australia (Smith 2004) and by Native peoples in Canada (Trigger 1997), because it depicts the material remains of their ancestors as being commodities open to all. The term Cultural Resource Management (CRM) is thus less used in Canada and has been modified in Australia to Heritage Management, but it is still very common in the United States. Following Smith (2004), I still use the term CRM because of its current use and common understanding despite these criticisms and local variants.

and Ferguson 2008: 1). That is to say, what is commonly called ‘collaborative archaeology’ is not a uniform methodology, but a range of strategies and practices that seek to link archaeology with different publics working together (ibid: 1). The different types and degrees of collaboration depend on how the research goals are developed, how information flows among stakeholders, to what degree stakeholders are involved and how and to what extent the needs of stakeholders are considered and met (ibid: 10-14).

For example, some archaeologists decide to limit collaboration to community approval before undertaking research, and very often, this is prescribed by law and not necessarily the researcher’s ethics (see Chapter 3 for the Nunavut example). Others go further by communicating parts of their findings to the communities, often through public talks and artefact exhibitions. Others engage even further and involve descendant groups in research design and implementation, as well as in the interpretation of results. Another common form of collaboration can be seen in the proliferation of field schools that are intended, among other things, to teach Native students the discipline of archaeology, along with the discovery of the cultural heritage of their ancestors (see Bendremer and Thomas 2008; Kerber 2008; Mills et al. 2008; Rossen 2008; Silliman and Dring 2008).

As mentioned above, the reasons why archaeologists collaborate are various. Some are theoretical and/or ethical (inspired by postcolonial thought), some are legal (e.g. NAGPRA), and some are political (answering indigenous political activism). The latter gave birth to what is commonly called in North America ‘indigenous archaeology’¹², that is,

¹² It is important to note that in Australia, the term ‘indigenous archaeology’ refers to archaeology of the ancestors of Aboriginal groups, the equivalent of ‘prehistoric archaeology’ in North America. So the title of the

archaeology made with, for and by Native people (see Watkins 2000 for a seminal contribution). It is not just archaeologists who adapt their practices to the needs and demands of descendant communities; it is also members of the communities, Native individuals or indigenous activist groups who either engage or lobby directly with archaeologists and/or who enter the profession itself. This represents for them the culmination of the decolonisation of archaeology.

The goal of indigenous archaeology is to create new forms of archaeological practices that are reflective of indigenous perspectives and epistemologies, and that serve their needs and goals (Atalay 2006; Lippert 2006; Two Bears 2006; Watkins 2000, 2003). Indigenous archaeology is a more extreme form of collaborative archaeology than the ones described above: instead of trying to adapt common archaeological practices and discourses to indigenous perspectives, it directly challenges the authority and relevance of Western scientific knowledge and epistemologies. Even though some (e.g. Atalay 2006) advocate the development of indigenous archaeology that would be applied globally (for any archaeology that involves multiple communities and stakeholders), indigenous archaeology remains closely attached to the specificities of Native (or Aboriginal) epistemologies and claims.

These decolonisation efforts through indigenous activism were long overdue, and are generally accepted by the archaeological community, both CRM and academic. However, there are also some forms of reticence towards this counter-discourse, and I believe that this resistance is closely linked to two aspects of indigenous archaeology: its somewhat essentialist nature and its over-dichotomisation with Western science. In a provocative paper

Australian article 'Decolonizing Indigenous Archaeology' (Smith and Jackson 2006) would not make sense in a North American context, where indigenous archaeology refers to an 'already decolonised' form of archaeology.

published in the eminent archaeological journal *American Antiquity*, McGhee (2008) lengthily exposed the kind of reactionary views that can be triggered by the essentialisation of indigenous archaeology:

Aboriginals are assumed to have a special relationship with and understanding of the natural world. Their perception of time as cyclical or continuously present is more complex and less limiting than the linear concept of time on which Western historical scholarship is based. Some [characterise] Indigenous peoples as having access to a superior understanding of the past than that offered by the Western historical tradition and Western scientific methods (McGhee 2008: 583).

He also wrote:

such alternate methods [basing the archaeological interpretations on the evidence of oral tradition, religious faith or the imaginative use of other forms of information] must, however, be of only peripheral interest to archaeology lest their uncritical acceptance compromise the attributes of the discipline that make it a particularly effective means of talking about the past (ibid: 580).

Many replies have been written to this paper, of which a core argument has been that McGhee was criticising a caricature of indigenous archeology and misrepresenting it as a cohesive programme, a single agenda and set of values (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2010; see also Croes 2010; Silliman 2010; Wilcox 2010). I agree that McGhee represented indigenous archaeology in an over-essentialised way, and thus missed all the major rigorous analogical methods that are used to connect our knowledge of present descendant communities to the past. However, his paper reminds us of the risks of using the unifying term ‘indigenous’, when talking about the very complex and heterogeneous field of postcolonial, decolonised or collaborative archaeology. The notion of ‘indigenous’ is heavily charged with political, historical, cultural and even sometimes ontological meaning. As

mentioned above, the term 'indigenous' emerged with Native claims and movements of political lobbying. This is an example of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1988, 1993) where ethnic groups, communities and nations temporarily emphasise cultural integrity in order to achieve certain goals. This strategy is often used in legal contexts, where essentialised notions of cultures are efficiently used as a basis for claims, such as the repatriation of human remains and cultural heritage (Gosden 2001). However, it becomes problematic when there is an uncritical deployment of the concept, for example when the 'strategic' aspect of the notion is forgotten, leaving only the essentialisation process (Spivak, cited in Danius and Jonsson 1993: 34-35). This is what sometimes happens with indigenous archaeology, when it is presented as a unique, unified approach to the past, based on a set of values and epistemology that is drastically opposed to Western science. For example:

To a Native person, an object may be significant both because of its human creator and because of the Native person's perceived relationship to that individual, a genetically based relationship that to this day few archaeologists can share. A non-Native archaeologist may share human characteristics with the creator of shell gorgets from the southeast, but he or she cannot and should not claim that the traditions, heritage, and blood of the individual persist in himself or herself. It is difficult to clearly articulate the sense of identity that allows a Choctaw archaeologist to feel some sense of connection between herself and the creator of a Mississippian pot, given that the exact cultural or genetic link may be hidden in layers of time and earth. However a sense of community does exist. In fact, it may have come into being through the arrival of the colonists who then became the "others", or ones who were not *okla* or "people", like us (Lippert 2006: 437-8).

This kind of discourse for indigenous archaeology uses a sense of community, based on cultural, genetic and even blood relations between the Native archaeologist and the makers and users of the artefacts excavated, that a non-Native (Western scientific)

archaeologist will never have. The argument also points to another foundational aspect of this essentialised view of indigenous archaeology: its opposition to mainstream (Western, non-native, scientific) archaeology and society in general. Indigenous archaeology is often defined or presented through this very resistance: “Indigenous archaeology exists and is growing today because Indigenous people, marginalized and victimized by the early development and ongoing daily practice of anthropology, archaeology, and other social sciences, are finding ways to create counter-discourse that speaks back to the power of colonialist and imperialist interpretations of the past” (Atalay 2006: 294; see also Watkins 2000: 170). This is not unique to the context of the discipline. It follows a general tendency, where indigenous peoples “[i]n their role as a counterweight to the globally powerful, (...) have in popular consciousness come to represent an alternative to the ecological and political abuses of modernity” (Niezen 2011: 125).

Echo-Hawk and Zimmerman (2006), both Native archaeologists, have discussed this tendency in relation to the notion of racialism in American archaeology. They criticise the use of the term ‘indigenous archaeology’ because they believe it perpetuates ideas of racialism, and eventually its natural and common extensional concept of racism, which is inherently counter-productive. Racialism is “the cultural idea that humankind is composed of racial groups that are biologically distinct” (Echo-Hawk and Zimmerman 2006: 471). The concept of race based on biological criteria (skin and hair colour being very common) delineates groups that are in reality disposed on a continuum of phenotypic diversity. This concept is a human construction that, in categorising humankind, simplifies and homogenises the perceived nature of the groups created. The groups then become

naturalised, as if they had always existed as such. Echo-Hawk and Zimmerman argue that the notion of the American Indian is based on the paradigm of racialism (making reference to the name of the journal in which their paper is published, *American Indian Quarterly*), and they extend their argument to the concepts of ‘colonised’ versus ‘indigenous’, often equated with ‘white people’ and nations ‘of colour’. This phenomenon, coupled with the above-mentioned essentialisation of indigenous people, perspectives and knowledge, based on generalised socio-cultural criteria, gave rise to the idea that the field of indigenous archaeology is opposed to mainstream archaeology – Western, non-native archaeology, made by and for white society.

There is another potentially counter-productive effect of the use of the term ‘indigenous archaeology’, that I have observed in the literature on the topic. Watkins has noted that “while advances have been made toward integrating the wishes of American Indians and First Nations into the practices of archaeology, these advances are often seen as lateral moves rather than forward advances” (2003: 281). I believe that this is the main problem that arises from ‘indigenous archaeology’: though proponents of the idea and practice clearly want to integrate it into mainstream archaeology, the use of the name ‘indigenous’, the essentialisation of the concept and its inherent opposition to Western science makes this project even more difficult. In its original sense, ‘strategic essentialism’ is necessary and effective in dismantling unwanted (e.g. colonial) structures or practices. It allows silenced voices to speak and be heard, ultimately leading to a shift in society’s power relationships. However, when uncritically or over-employed, essentialism can become counterproductive. By over-emphasising the ‘inherent’, naturalised differences between

indigenous and mainstream (Western) archaeology, instead of integrating the former into the latter, it creates a greater divide between them.

A clear example of this can be found in the difficulty of integrating 'indigenous knowledge' with 'Western science', as a result of their essentialisation and the resulting over-dichotomisation of the two systems of knowledge. Usually, the dichotomisation focuses on the fact that these knowledges are developed in different institutional and cultural settings; each is passed down differently, generates different theories about the world, and is aimed at different goals (Cruikshank 1981; Stevenson 1996). Whereas Western knowledge is generally seen as analytical, reductionist, law-seeking, theoretical, supposedly value-free, objective, positivist, narrow in time, broad in geographical focus, seeking mechanistic explanations and changing with paradigms, indigenous knowledge is usually presented as more intuitive, holistic, practical, moral, subjective, experiential, broad in time, narrow in geographical focus, open to spiritual explanations, persistent, and traditionally oral (Stevenson 1996: 288).

This division is actually a typical categorisation made by Western science itself, rooted in the Enlightenment mode of thinking, also dividing science from religion, technology from art and so on (see Latour 1991). It also echoes dualistic views of Western vs. indigenous knowledge (see Chapter 5 for a discussion on the topic). So on one side, Native peoples tend to emphasise the distinction between their systems of knowledge as part of a 'strategic essentialism'. On the other side, this reinforces the dualistic division made by 'Western, non-indigenous science'. This dualism is so entrenched at the core of both systems of knowledge that in order to reconcile them, one would need to filter, modify or avoid the said cores. Either way, integration seems to be flawed from the outset: 'indigenous

archaeology' will remain at the periphery of mainstream archaeology, and 'collaborative archaeology' will engage with the mere surface of indigenous perspectives, programmes and goals¹³. This represents the core problem of multivocality, a notion that archaeology has been struggling with for the past three decades. How should we integrate the different voices (indigenous, descendant communities, traditionally associated communities, scientific archaeologists and other stakeholders such as nation-states or local but non-descendant communities) that claim the right to be heard and to have their say in the research?

The postcolonial critique and indigenous activism are not the only influences that have contributed to the rise of collaborative practices in archaeology. Trends from within the discipline of archaeology and related social sciences have also set the stage for the inclusion of the communities' voices in research: the acknowledgement of multivocality by post-processual archaeology, and critical theory in its consideration of the social and political construction of archaeological knowledge.

2.5 Post-processualism and multivocality

Post-processualism is the archaeological manifestation of post-modernist thought, and was developed in reaction to processual archaeology. It is a movement that reacted against the positivist programme of scientific objectivity of the processualists, and instead emphasised subjectivity in the interpretations of the archaeologists (Hodder 1985). Grand narratives about the past, law-like and cross-cultural generalisations about culture and behaviours began to be rejected, to be replaced by multivocality and the empowerment of

¹³ I argue in Chapter 5 that a solution to the problem would be to avoid the over-dichotomisation of the two systems of knowledge, and instead focus on the points where they intersect.

minority interpretations. This approach was termed ‘interpretive archaeology’ by Hodder (Hodder et al. 1995), borrowing from hermeneutics in anthropology (e.g. Geertz 1973; Turner 1967, 1973). Turner (1973: 489) discussed the multiple and simultaneous meanings that cultural symbols may have in ritual contexts. For archaeological matters, this refers to the inherent multiplicity of meanings that an artefact could have had for those who made and used them, and consequently the corresponding multiplicity of possible interpretations that archaeologists can build around them. Geertz (1973) further developed this idea of multiple interpretations made by anthropologists. It adds another layer of polyvalence of voices that describe and make sense of cultural elements such as phenomena, rituals, symbols, human actors, artefacts and so on. Taking the example of the Balinese cockfight event which Geertz described at length, this socio-cultural event “is interpretive: it is Balinese reading of a Balinese experience; a story they tell themselves about themselves” (1973: 448). Interpreting it from an anthropological or archaeological perspective takes this ‘reading’ to another level, adding the voices of the researchers to the interpretation. In sum, multivocality in archaeology, inspired by Geertz and Turner, refers to the different meanings that are given to cultural elements both in the past and in the present.

The intersection of post-processualism with the decolonisation of archaeology is mostly situated in this attempt to accept multivocality in archaeological research, i.e. the inclusion of different (archaeological and non-archaeological) voices in the interpretation of the past. Hodder (2003: 58) also called it ‘reflexivity’; it is about recognising the value of multiple positions and how one’s position or standpoint affects one’s perspective about the past. In his research at Çatalhöyük in Turkey, Hodder developed an approach to archaeology

that takes into consideration the perspectives of multiple stakeholders with interests in the site: politicians, local communities, New Age groups and artists. From an ethical point of view, he argued for a closer interaction between archaeologists and these stakeholders because their interests in the site exist regardless of the archaeologists' will to pay attention to their voices. Hodder argued that it would be unethical for archaeologists to wash their hands of other stakeholders' claims to the past and to remain disengaged (Hodder 2002: 176).

The key processes calling for reflexivity and multivocality in archaeology, according to Hodder, are the claims to the past made by these different communities (2003: 56). However, although he discusses at length stakeholders' claims to knowledge, Hodder does not apply this examination directly to the archaeologists themselves: "to understand what these communities are and to understand the questions they would most like to have answered, is a specialist area of research" (2002: 174). Indeed, he strongly suggests hiring ethnologists in order to study these communities' claims and to help archaeologists answer them. Nevertheless, archaeologists and their ethnologist colleagues still retain ultimate control of the archaeological record, deciding what claims will be taken into consideration and how their questions will be answered.

As to the inclusion of stakeholders' voices in research reports and publications, Hodder says this should be done through the insertion of quotes from interviews, discussions and field notes. However, one can ask how these quotes are selected and how they are integrated into the main body of the archaeologist's text. Again here it is the archaeologist who controls everything and he/she does not really study how his/her own

claim to and perspective about the past is constructed and validated¹⁴. My goal in criticising Hodder's multivocal and ethical approach is to point out that acknowledging the existence and importance of other voices in the interpretation of the past is one important step, but not enough in itself for the decolonisation of archaeology. Archaeologists should also be self-conscious and self-reflexive of their own knowledge construction.

2.6 Critical theory and self-reflexivity

Self-consciousness in archaeology and in other social sciences is mainly a product of its intersection with critical theory. Critical theory, rooted in Neo-Marxist Frankfurt School philosophy, is concerned with the refutation of the objectivist pretensions of positivist social sciences and their “doctrine of value freedom” (Wylie 1985b: 134). Critical theory is the acknowledgment that social, economic, political, cultural and psychological factors influence researchers' conclusions, and it is often followed by a social critique of these factors (for example criticism of the social context of the research).

The discipline of archaeology took longer to embrace critical theory than other social sciences. In the 1970's in North America, while anthropologists were led by a self-criticism questioning the possibility of impartial and value-free social science research, archaeology was instead promoting positivism as a methodology to improve the discipline's knowledge about the past and its relevance in general (Kohl 1981, cited in Wylie 1985b). But in the late

¹⁴ One could argue in Hodder's favour, saying that Çatalhöyük does not have clear cultural and historical links with the local populations living nearby, and even less with the other stakeholders (New Age groups and artists) who are coming from around the world. Consequently, legitimacy can easily be claimed by archaeologists, who have the official permits to excavate and have the argument of being the 'official scientific discipline', in conjunction with ethnologists, to construct knowledge about the site (including their own selection of local voices). Therefore, scientific authority is always nearby and can be instrumentalised to legitimate archaeologists' voices, even when the latter pretend to facilitate multivocality.

1970's and early 1980's, some historical archaeologists began to acknowledge the socially and culturally specific aspect of archaeological research and its equally important social and cultural impact in society, especially in the realm of colonialism and the rise of capitalism.

Critical theory made its entrance in the discipline through historical archaeology, especially in the North American context, looking at class biases in archaeological interpretations. Historical archaeologists devoted much attention to researching the everyday life of slaves and industrial workers. Because these groups are poorly documented in written records, archaeology had the potential to make important contributions to research. Efforts have also been made to involve the descendants of the people being studied (Johnson 1996; Leone and Potter 1988; McGuire and Paynter 1991). Critical theory enlightened previous studies about the North American past in that it was concerned with revealing the biases that were intentionally and unintentionally built into them and that favoured the points of view of upper classes.

Deetz (1996 [1977]) was among the first to identify how historical archaeologists were projecting their contemporary values and especially their idealistic visions of the past on the life of early Americans of the first half of the 18th century, even though he did not discuss critical theory per se in this work. More precisely, he identified how the written documents used by historians and historical archaeologists tended to mask the difference between themselves – contemporary North Americans – and earlier generations, for whom writing was not a universal skill and was mostly reserved for individuals of higher socio-economic ranks. The study of everyday artefacts from dwellings and other life settings of ordinary people of the 18th century revealed a highly different set of rules and order. Deetz

argued that the romantic views of that past, as they are often depicted in outdoor museums and house reproductions, when things were thought to be prettier, problems fewer and life simpler, tells us far more about the minds of their contemporary creators than of the people they are meant to represent (Deetz 1996 [1976]: 255).

Similarly, Leone et al. (1987) have explained how the city of Annapolis in Maryland has structured a past for itself and for tourists that separates the history of White people from the history of Black people. The historical sources the researchers studied – including historical books, guidebooks and picture books, historical re-enactments and special tours, and historical talks – in addition to formal interviews, participant observation in the downtown Historic District, and interaction with the local historical preservation community, made them realise that the official history of Annapolis was divided in two. First, there was a history of the White people of the 18th century and second, a history of the Black people of the 19th century. Through the provision of two distinct histories, the ‘history’ of Annapolis, written almost exclusively by Whites, ignores the principal historical relationship between the two groups in the southern United States: slavery. Consequently, slavery is set apart from the history of the Blacks and becomes an elusive historical factor to account for the relations between Blacks and Whites today. This way of presenting the city’s history to residents and visitors conceals present political and social conflicts between Black and White groups – revealing these conflicts and using them as a basis for action would potentially be a threat to the political forces in the region. Building upon these observations, Leone et al. (1987) organised an archaeological site tour in the city of Annapolis, inviting visitors to question and challenge the guides and others who create and present the past.

Their main goal is to teach the people who take the tour to be more critical of presentations of the past.

These examples, where critical theory and archaeology intersect, show how contemporary relations of power are projected onto representations of the past and thereby legitimate and reinforce these relations in the present. Leone et al. emphasise this phenomenon through a special definition of 'ideology'. This definition, following Althusser (1971) and Barnett and Silverman (1979), refers to: "the givens of everyday life, unnoticed, taken for granted, and activated and reproduced in use. (...) [T]he means by which inequality, bondage, frustrations, etc., are made acceptable, rationalized or hidden" (Leone et al. 1987: 284). This perspective on ideology naturalises exploitation; it reproduces inequality without resistance, violence or revolution.

I find this notion of ideology useful when considering the colonial nature of archaeology and its current efforts to decolonise the discipline, for example when archaeologists acknowledge the colonial nature of their discipline and try to invert the related power relations through collaborative practices. What we may call the *colonial ideology* in North America, the relations of power and inequality between settlers' society and Native people, has been reproduced by archaeologists in their practices and projected in their discourses about the past of Native people. As discussed above, in their practice archaeologists assume power and authority over the remains of the past, and their interpretations make the divide between people and their heritage even more manifest. This also projects some ideas of Native people being inferior to settlers' society. Using the insights of critical theory, archaeologists can acknowledge the effects of this colonial

ideology on their work, and move forward by adhering to what I consider *postcolonial ideology*, where the decolonisation of the discipline becomes possible.

Acknowledging that archaeology reconstructs the past in the image of the contemporary, familiar and naturalised forms of life in a way that embodies and serves the dominant social and political interests, is what Wylie (1985b: 138) calls *reflective criticism*. However, a second criticism remains to be made if archaeologists really want to make use of critical theory: a *prospective social criticism* (ibid: 140). This is the recommendation that archaeologists should be concerned with unveiling the past that is usually concealed by unreflective archaeological practices – that is to say a past that would be different from the present, an alternative past that does not reproduce the political and social ideals of the present dominant society. Wylie, however, identifies a problem in this social criticism of archaeology. She suggests that this social criticism presupposes that it is possible to secure an ‘objective’ past that supersedes the unreflective, value-laden past created by archaeologists on which they project ideologies of the present, and that archaeologists simply need to direct their attention to the source of error so that the scientific research process can seek to control the error (Wylie 1985b: 142). However, it was exactly to rid ourselves of this kind of search for objectivity that critical theory was used in archaeology. Conversely, there would also be a problem with an eventual radical rejection of objectivity: it would leave no ground for preferring one alternative representation of the past over another; all interpretations would become equally legitimate relative to their own presuppositions or the interests they serve (ibid). This is not what critical theory is about.

Critical theory is somewhat in the middle ground between radical objectivity and radical subjectivity: it tells us to accept that “the past can be known only as a function of the present” (Handsman 1980: 2, cited in Wylie 1985b) and it invites us to admit that archaeologists should simply “allow the past to be the image of the present it must” (Leone 1981: 13, cited in Wylie 1985b). In other words, archaeologists should neither try to use objective scientific processes to control possible sources of errors in the reconstruction of the past, nor should they reject completely rational methods of criticism on the basis that knowledge claims will always be tied to interests. Instead, critical theory tells them to assess systematically the underlying assumptions that structure different claims and representations of the past.

This suggestion brings us back to some of the main issues underlying the method of ethnographic analogy in archaeology. As discussed in Chapter 1, the process of making sense of artefacts inevitably depends on our understanding of the present, for example, our knowledge of the technological, social and economic processes underlying artefacts’ production and use. Consequently, it is crucial for archaeologists to identify and rationally and objectively scrutinise the hidden assumptions that guide their projections of the present onto the past. In other words, archaeologists should first identify the premises and ideologies of the present that give form to how they interpret and present the past. Secondly, they should study these premises per se, as a critical commentary on the social and ideological forms that have informed these reconstructions (Wylie 1985b: 143-4). This means identifying and understanding the interests that guide different representations of the past, which will ultimately justify the archaeologists’ transpositions of information and ideologies of the

present onto the past. The precise approach to adopt when mixing ethnographic analogy and critical theory will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 4.

In this chapter, we saw that colonial and postcolonial ideologies are both present in contemporary archaeology. The colonial nature of archaeology is still alive, often unnoticed or not acknowledged by archaeologists, but it has real impacts on Native populations. The postcolonial forces and the resulting decolonisation of the discipline are slowly making their way into the practices and discourses of archaeologists, who are now constantly exposed to choices in the content and the direction that their research and interpretations will take. Archaeologists must remain critical in every choice they make, whether they bend towards the inclusion of the perspectives of, and collaboration with, Native people, or whether they decide to work with their own scientific methods and theory, or indeed both, as is often the case. This is necessary in order to fully acknowledge and understand the motivations, the related impacts and ultimately the relevance of their research for the scientific community and contemporary society.

My research uses critical theory informed by postcolonial thought, in order to address multivocality in the Canadian Arctic context. Mainly, I integrate ethnographic analogy with ideas of collaborative practices. In my approach, Inuit perspectives are included in order to improve archaeological knowledge about the Thule Inuit. In parallel, my research practices benefit the Inuit community and individuals at different levels. Before presenting the details of my research methodology, we need to have a close look at the social, cultural, historical and political contexts in which archaeology is undertaken in the Canadian Arctic, as well as the Inuit perception of their past. This will shed light on the choices that I have

made, and more generally on what is at stake in the collaboration between archaeologists and native people in this region of North America. It will reveal what has already been achieved and what remains to be done in order to continue to decolonise the discipline, while improving archaeological knowledge of the Arctic past.

3. Inuit perspectives on the past in the Canadian Arctic

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of Inuit history and culture change in the Canadian Arctic, in relation to the development of archaeology in Nunavut, Nunavik and Labrador. Social and academic trends discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, namely ethnographic analogy and collaborative/indigenous archaeology, will be examined in these historical and cultural contexts.

First, I present a history of Inuit in the Canadian Arctic from the 11th century to the present. On the one hand, this historical overview focuses on the continuities that support the ethnographic analogy between Inuit and Thule Inuit. On the other hand, it identifies the socio-cultural and economic changes that Inuit society has been through over the course of their history, in order to avoid some of the mistakes associated with the analogy (see Chapter 1). Acknowledging these changes and the resulting differences prevents us from over-projecting contemporary Inuit in a romanticised past or associating them with ideas of primitiveness. It also allows us to identify and rigorously select the areas of their life where the analogy is most efficient and justified.

Second, a history of archaeology in Nunavut, Nunavik and Labrador is provided, with a focus on the emergence of collaboration between archaeologists and Inuit. The social, political and academic contexts of this history are exposed in order to understand the reasons for and purposes of these collaborative trends. These two historical overviews also help to understand the third section of this chapter, which presents Inuit perspectives on

their past. I discuss traditional Inuit views about time, and how these perceptions changed in the light of the historical events and socio-cultural changes previously mentioned. I describe how the transmission of traditions have been transformed over the past few decades into efforts to preserve, promote and even revive cultural practices that would otherwise have been lost as a result of colonialism in the Arctic. I also discuss this trend as continuity in the Inuit conception of time – a concept that is adjustable and constantly adapting to the present and to the unpredictable future. I consider how Inuit awareness of and engagement with archaeological knowledge has served their political and legal activism, and strategies for cultural affirmation and self-determination. Finally, this chapter explores the different ways in which archaeologists and Inuit can collaborate with each other effectively, feeding each other’s cultural, political and academic agendas, and how this engagement can be developed further, notably through the interpretation of extant archaeological collections.

By and large, this chapter is a multivocal narrative of Inuit history informed by three different perspectives. Archaeological sources will be used to describe early Inuit history in the Canadian Arctic, mostly centered on subsistence activities, settlement patterns and movements of populations, in the processualist tradition. The more recent history, roughly from the 17th to the mid 20th centuries, will be presented through the work of historians and ethnologists. Finally, the Inuit perspective on their past is gathered from current anthropological literature. The resulting heterogeneity of this chapter draws our attention to the different discourses about the past in the Arctic and the importance of acknowledging the social and cultural contexts of their production. Although we will see how different these

perspectives can be, efforts will be made to identify where they intersect, notably in the Inuit use of archaeological knowledge in their own discourses about their past.

3.2 History and culture change among Inuit in Canada

Archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest ancestors of the Canadian Inuit, the Thule Inuit, originated in Northern Alaska during the 13th century AD (Friesen and Arnold 2008). At that time, Northern Alaska was populated by different peoples with diverse identities, involved in a variety of social and economic networks, marked by alliance and conflict. It is not clear for archaeologists how Thule Inuit, as a distinct group, emerged in this context (Gerlach and Mason 1992; Harritt 2004; Mason 1998; Morrison 2001), but it is generally agreed that Thule Inuit were mostly maritime hunters, and their subsistence, social and spiritual life were mainly centred on sea mammals, including seal, walrus and whales (Whitridge 2000).

The reasons why Thule Inuit left Alaska and decided to explore and settle in various locations of the Canadian Arctic are poorly understood. Several explanations have been put forth, but there remains no consensus among archaeologists. These groups left for a series of social, economic and demographic reasons (Arnold and McCullough 1990; Friesen and Arnold 2008). As to their decision to move east, into the actual Canadian territory, archaeologists have proposed different models. A first hypothesis suggests that they were following bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*), one of their main game animals as the whales moved east (McGhee 1969/1970; Morrison 1999). A second model proposes that the main factor for moving further east and north was the desire to obtain meteoritic iron from Cape

York in Northwest Greenland, as well as Norse metal and other goods (McGhee 1984a, 2000, 2004). Most recent hypotheses tend to amalgamate these models, suggesting that the location for the new settlements was most probably selected to find good places to live and reproduce the social and economic practices of their homeland (Friesen and Arnold 2008), in which access to both the bowhead whales and exotic and rare goods, such as iron, played a major role (Savelle 2002a, 2002b; Whitridge 1999, 2002, 2004a).

All the same, archaeologists suggest that this initial migration of more than 2,000km happened very quickly, probably within a few decades (e.g. Friesen and Arnold 2008; McCullough 1989). These pioneering Thule Inuit established themselves across the Western, Central and High Arctic. During the first centuries of occupation of the Canadian Arctic (beginning in the 13th century), Thule Inuit already showed a variety of regional differences from a socio-economic point of view, identified archaeologically. Some groups in the Central Arctic Archipelago were largely centred on the bowhead whales not just for subsistence, but also as part of their social and spiritual lives. They lived in semi-permanent winter villages and were organised into a complex social network at the regional level (Savelle 2002a, 2002b; Whitridge 1999, 2002, 2004a). In other regions such as the mainland coastal regions, Victoria Island, King William Island and the Baffin region, where bowhead whales were less regularly present, communities lived in smaller groups and used a variety of different resources (seals, walrus, belugas, narwhales, caribou, musk-ox, fish and small terrestrial mammals) (Savelle 1994; Savelle and McCartney 1988).

The initial expansion of Thule Inuit did not occur on vacant territory; the Canadian Arctic was already populated by the Dorset people, a Palaeo-Eskimo culture (ca. 900 BC to

1200 AD) (Figure 2). Dorset sites are found from Victoria Island in the west to Ellesmere Island and Greenland in the north and to Newfoundland in the southeast. Although they occupied the same territory successively, with an overlap period of a few centuries, the Dorset and Thule Inuit peoples are distinct culturally, historically and even genetically (Hayes et al. 2005; Maxwell 1985; Park 1993). There is no consensus among archaeologists as to the question of contact and interaction between Dorset and Thule Inuit (Friesen 2000; McGhee 1997; Park 1993, 2000). However, as I will discuss below, Inuit oral history contains many stories about the Tuniiit, a people who lived on the territory when the first Inuit arrived, and with whom Inuit do not identify. Stories about the Tuniiit describe them as being definitely distinct from Inuit, and mention different kinds of contacts between each group.

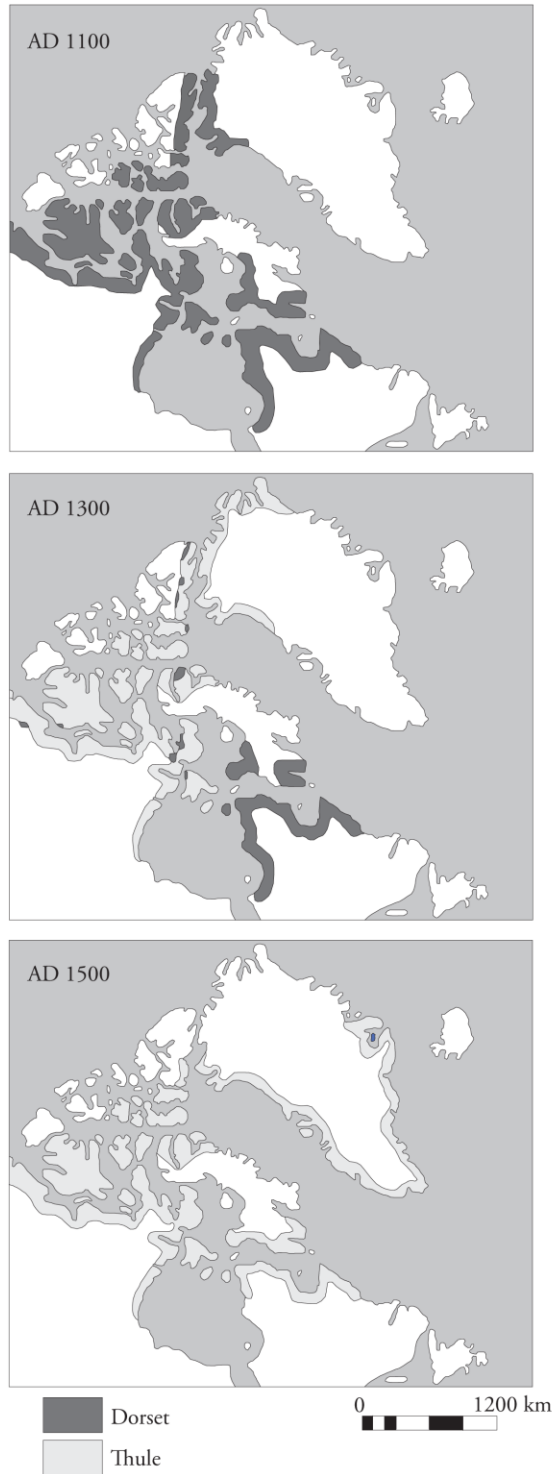


Figure 2: Dorset and Thule Inuit occupations in the Canadian Arctic (redrawn from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Arctic_cultures_900-1500.png).

According to archaeologists, Thule Inuit arrived on the North-Eastern Canadian Arctic in the 13th century and replaced the Dorset occupants. Around 1400-1450 AD, there was a drastic population decrease among Thule Inuit in the Central and Eastern high Arctic (including Somerset Island, the region of my archaeological analyses). This coincided with the Little Ice Age (a period of cooling that affected various regions of the planet around that time), and some researchers suggest that these climatic changes resulted in the depletion of some migratory marine resources, in particular the bowhead whale, and the increase of local species (e.g. seals and caribou) (Savelle 2002c). In the same period, archaeologists observe a diversification of Thule Inuit material culture and practices, which are usually interpreted as being regional adaptations to local resources. Archaeologists speak of a greater variability in Thule Inuit year-round hunting activities, smaller settlements (villages and camps), and a greater mobility on their territory (McGhee 1984b; Maxwell 1985). It seems as though, in comparison with the initial occupation of the Central Canadian Arctic when the social and economic life of the Thule Inuit was centred and depended on the bowhead whale, the succeeding centuries were marked by a higher level of cultural heterogeneity, fluidity and adaptation to the variations in the resources available in the different regions of the Canadian Arctic.

In the following centuries (17th and 18th centuries) written documents became available to testify about their lives, traditions, social relations and the changes that occurred in their history until the present. Although these sources represent the perspectives of the non-Inuit writers, and not necessarily how these changes were lived by Inuit, they provide us with great details on events that happened in the Arctic, involving different Inuit and non-

Inuit groups. These events marked the historical and cultural trajectory of Inuit, as well as the development of archaeology in the Canadian Arctic.

The process of ‘regionalisation’ initiated during the Thule Inuit period continued until European, American and Canadian people began to visit the Arctic (Figure 3). This ‘contact period’ began roughly in the 16th century and lasted until the 19th century, differing across regions. Damas (2002: 6-26) divides this period in two: an early contact, marked by the presence of explorers and whalers; and a second phase which included the missionaries, and the representatives of Canadian government, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The ‘contact period’ is often presented by archaeologists and historians as a form of break or rupture in the cultural and historical continuity of the Inuit: it marks the end of the ‘prehistoric Thule period’ and the beginning of the ‘historic Inuit period’.

The first Westerners to visit the Arctic – whalers, traders, explorers and scientists – did not usually stay for long periods. They would remain for a few seasons or a year or two at most (see Eber 1989, 2008 for Inuit oral histories about these first contacts). Others, mostly missionaries, remained for longer periods of time, up to a few years in a row. Their impact on Inuit lives was not as drastic as the changes that occurred after the 1950’s, which will be discussed shortly, however, it must be noted that epidemics resulting from direct or indirect interactions between Inuit and newcomers did notably affect Inuit demography during these early periods of contact. Smallpox, influenza, scarlet fever, measles, polio, tuberculosis and other epidemics killed thousands of Inuit across the Canadian Arctic as well as in Alaska and Greenland, and resulted in a reorganisation and redistribution of the population and its communities (Grygier 1994; McGhee 1994 and references therein).



- Inuit Groups of Canada
- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. North Alaskan Inuit | 6. Qikiqtani Inuit |
| 2. Inuvialuit | 7. Sallirmiut |
| 3. Inuinait | 8. Nunavimmiut |
| 4. Netsilingmiut | 9. Nunatsiavummiut |
| 5. Kivalliq Inuit | |

Figure 3: Regional Inuit groups in the North American Arctic (after Damas 1984b)

An exception to this is the region of Labrador (Nunatsiavut). The regular contact of Labrador Inuit with Europeans began somewhat earlier than did contact in the rest of Canada. In southeastern Labrador, there was a rapid development of sedentary seal and cod fisheries as early as the first half of the 18th century. Though relations were marked with hostilities, Inuit would still engage in trade with the Europeans. The most significant changes to Inuit culture in this region resulted from the presence of Moravian missionaries who

established a station at Nain in 1771, followed by eight others throughout northern Labrador, where most Inuit lived (Taylor 1977, 1984). Even though the main concern of the Moravians was to convert the Inuit to Christianity, their activities were expanded to trade, education and health care. Notably, they were able to maintain the monopoly on trade with the Inuit of Labrador, preventing the latter from travelling to other European trading posts in southern Labrador (Taylor 1984). Moravian records attest that Inuit gathered around their missions and engaged right away in a process of sedentarisation and assimilation – something that happened much later in the rest of Canada (see Gosling 1910). Recent archaeological research, however, shows that these written records, along with those of the Hudson’s Bay Company, failed to take into consideration Inuit families at the northernmost tip of Quebec-Labrador who resisted settling around the mission and retained traditional Inuit subsistence strategies, spiritual beliefs and lifestyles well into the 19th century (Loring 1998; see also Whitridge 2008).

Across Canada, interaction between Inuit and Westerners intensified when whaling ships from Europe (England, Scotland, Ireland) and New England began to arrive in the mid 18th century in the Eastern Arctic, and became more numerous in the 19th century (Goldring 1986). They were searching for the bowhead whales that provided the highly valuable oil, blubber and baleen for Western markets, for oil lamps, lubricants for industrial machinery and various luxury objects such as makeup and parts of clothing (Lofthouse 2013). Inuit were rapidly enrolled on these ships and began exchanging hunting techniques with the whalers as well as engaged in trade of goods and women. Among Inuit, the tradition of ‘spouse exchange’ was a traditional widespread and accepted social practice (see for example

Balikci 1984; Spencer 1971). During the time that the whalers were in the Arctic, Inuit tended to gather around certain settlements that became temporary local ‘whaling stations’ where Inuit and whalers interacted intensely (Eber 1989; Lofthouse 2013; Ross 1975; Stevenson 1997). Mixed marriages and children began to appear in these communities. New forms of music and dance inspired by Scottish traditions were adopted by these Inuit communities and are still present nowadays. Whalers left the region in the early 20th century, after nearly depleting the bowhead whale stocks in the Eastern and Western Arctic.

At the turn of the 20th century, over-hunting had severely diminished bowhead whale resources. The declining demand for baleen in women’s fashion and the replacement of whale oil by petroleum meant an economic shift towards the exploitation of the more profitable fox fur. Fur traders from the south began to enter the former whaling territory, establishing posts and encouraging Inuit to trap foxes (Barr 1994; Francis and Morantz 1983). Many Inuit engaged in trapping due to their reliance on goods they had been trading, in some cases for more than a hundred years, such as metal knives and needles, rifles, tobacco, fuel, textiles and food. Trader companies such as the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) and Révillon Frères began to settle across the Canadian Arctic, together with agents of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Inuit tended to settle in the vicinity of these trading posts in order to facilitate trade. Inuit participation in the fur trade was time-consuming and diverted attention from subsistence-oriented activities, thereby increasing Inuit reliance on foods obtained from the HBC to supplement their diet (Fossett 2001).

Missionaries began to enter Inuit territory in the late 19th century. Their interactions with Inuit communities happened at a different level and reached a deeper degree of

intensity than the whalers and traders (Laugrand 2002a; Taylor 1977). In order to achieve their initial goals of religious conversion, many early missionaries, especially the Catholics, decided to adopt the nomadic and hunting lifestyle of the Inuit and to adapt their religious practices to Inuit culture and language. The cultural exchange was mutual. Early missionaries learned the language and some missionaries even made dictionaries and grammars of the Inuktitut language (Laugrand 2002b), as well as adopting subsistence practices and customs of the Inuit. At the same time, they convinced and sometimes forced the Inuit to renounce shamanism and spiritual beliefs and practices connected to it, in favour of the Christian religion.

In the early 1930's the Canadian government determined that the Inuit could not continue to live self-sufficiently from the land and that they needed support from social welfare (Bonesteel 2008; Damas 2002). Its solution was to create programmes that acculturated and assimilated Inuit to southern Canadian culture (Jenness 1964). In addition, the federal government had a special interest in Arctic people for defence and sovereignty concerns related to the Cold War, which led to the relocation of Inuit to remote regions of the High Arctic. The government's agenda was to demonstrate Canadian sovereignty over the High Arctic by being able to point to 'Canadians' living on the land (Grant 2011). From the government's perspective these programmes, which involved the education of children, the provision of health services and the creation of wage-earning jobs, required Inuit to become sedentary and to live in permanent villages.

These federal welfare programmes caused striking ruptures in the material, social and economic life of the Inuit, from which they suffered and which left Inuit people with a deep

sense of loss (Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010). The changes imposed on the Inuit by the Government of Canada were rapid and dramatic – it was not a gradual progression, but a complete transformation. The final report of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission¹⁵ presents this situation in a very efficient way:

The decision to give up the traditional way of life was almost never an easy one, and once made, it proved to be irreversible. Inuit made enormous sacrifices by moving into settlements, living in permanent housing, giving up their *qimmiit*¹⁶, sending their children to school or accepting wage employment. Once they had made their decision, they discovered that government assurances of a sufficient number of jobs and better living conditions were illusory in many cases. Looking around, Inuit often felt and saw despair as they, their family members and neighbours struggled to adjust to circumstances beyond their control, even though some received benefits from living in settlements, such as less risk in daily life, better health care and options to work for wages rather than hunt. Settlement life imposed a new form of poverty, and hindered access to the land and the country food that nourished them (QIA 2010:8)¹⁷.

¹⁵ The Qikiqtani Inuit Association, representing the interests of the Inuit of the Baffin region, High Arctic and Belcher Islands, approximately one third of the territory of Nunavut, organised the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC). The aim of the QTC was to “create a more accurate and balanced history of the decisions and events that affected Inuit living in the Qikiqtani (formerly Baffin) region in the decades following 1950, and to document the impacts on Inuit life” (Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010:6). The QTC final report produced a local narrative of the changes that happened during this period, based on the voices of the Elders, in conjunction with archival research and interviews with non-Inuit who lived and worked in the North during this period. The themes addressed by the Inuit range from the relocation from traditional camps on the land to permanent settlements, the death of sled dogs, the removal of children from their families for extended periods of time (for education matters) and the separation of families due to the lack of medical services in the North.

¹⁶ Inuit sled dogs (*qimmiit*) were massively slaughtered by RCMP officers under the *Dog Ordinance of the Northwest Territories* (see Tester 2010; Lévesque 2010).

¹⁷ Other commissions addressed more specifically the relocation of Inuit from Inukjuak and Pond Inlet (Nunavik) to Grise Fiord on Ellesmere Island and Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People), and the Indian Residential School system (Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015). The final report of the former contains an entire section on the high Arctic relocations (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People 1996). Both reports present the voices of Inuit people, telling how they lived through these traumatic experiences, the impact on their lives then and today, as well as on the lives of their relatives and communities.

Soon after the commencement of these drastic changes, the Inuit started to react to their new life conditions, to organise politically and to assert a right to self-government. These movements were initiated in 1955, when an organisation called the Indian-Eskimo Association (IEA) started to support Inuit concerns. The IEA was formed by educators, church leaders and public servants who were preoccupied with the circumstances of Inuit and First Nations (Bonesteel 2008: 42). With its national and public support and funding, the IEA assisted the Inuit in launching their own national political organisation in 1971, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) (now Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami). The main aim of ITC was to lobby the Government of Canada for mechanisms to increase their autonomy, including self-government. Following the development of ITC, regional Inuit organisations were established¹⁸, which led to four land claims¹⁹. At the time of writing, the Inuvialuit are in negotiation for the Beaufort/Delta Government. The Inuit of Nunavik rejected in 2011 by referendum the proposition of Quebec and the Canadian Government for a Nunavik Government although negotiations are ongoing. The Labrador Inuit formed the Nunatsiavut Government in 2006 and the Inuit of Nunavut have had a Government of Nunavut since 1999. The structures of these four governments (or future governments) are different, and include both ethnically based and public governments (Figure 4).

¹⁸ The Northern Quebec Inuit Association (1971); the Labrador Inuit Association (1973); three eastern Arctic associations – Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Keewatin (now Kivalliq) Inuit Association and the Baffin Regional (now Qikiqtani) Inuit Association (mid-1970's). The Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement in the Inuvialuit region, which also includes other aboriginal groups of the Western Arctic, was actually created slightly before ITC and the subsequent Inuit organisations (1970).

¹⁹ Inuvialuit Final Agreement (1974); James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1973); Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement (1977); Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (1977).



Figure 4: Contemporary Inuit territories in the Canadian Arctic.

Overall, it can be said that Inuit society has transformed constantly throughout its history, with the most drastic socio-cultural, economic and political changes having taken place in the past six decades. Since the early and mid 20th century most of their energies have been focused on strategies and actions to cope with these changes, and this is an ongoing process. It was within this context of socio-economic struggles, general instability, political claims and activism that archaeology developed in the Arctic.

3.3 Archaeology in the Canadian Arctic: a historical overview

The history and development of archaeological research in the Canadian Arctic varies from one region to another, mostly depending on the different political contexts across time and space. The development of archaeology, and especially the engagement of Inuit with the discipline, was different in the Western Arctic (Beaufort/Delta region), Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut. However, the succession of attitudes, practices and timelines tend to form a pattern. In what follows, I build a portrait of three regions in particular. I will begin with Nunavut and Nunavik, which are directly involved in my research and where the collaboration between Inuit and archaeologists can be seen from an early stage. I will end with the case of Nunatsiavut, where the situation was and is still more problematic.

In Nunavut, archaeology in an amateur form began as soon as Westerners came into the Arctic. Whalers, traders and missionaries collected artefacts from the ground, or traded for them with Inuit. These artefacts found their ways to European and American museums, along with ethnographic collections. This fascination for native and exotic artefacts emerged during the 16th to 18th centuries, a period of European exploration and navigation throughout the world. A great curiosity for 'primitive' cultures, resulted in entire collections of weapons, utensils, ornaments and domestic objects being acquired through trade and exhibited in private 'cabinets of curiosities' (Jacquemin 1994). At the end of the 18th century, these cabinets of curiosities became the first anthropological museums, theoretically and methodologically shaped by contemporary tendencies in incipient anthropological thought. Objects moved from an anonymous state into the status of reference material, systematically organised and exhibited (Dias 1991).

The Inuit, realising the interest of Westerners in these artefacts, began to assemble collections, which they gave or offered for trade (Rowley 2002: 263). For example, archives of Oblate Missionaries in Ottawa contain several boxes of Thule Inuit artefacts made of bone, antler and ivory (see Gadoua 2010b). This collection was probably the result of gifts or exchanges made with Oblates, who have been very active in Nunavut and Nunavik since the early 20th century. It is not impossible that some of the artefacts might also have been collected by some of these missionaries. The collection was given to the McCord Museum of Canadian History in 2006. Similar collections were gathered by Inuit and given to missionaries such as Father Dutilly and Father Bazin. The collection of the former is now housed at the Canadian Museum of History (previously Canadian Museum of Civilization) in Gatineau and the latter at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, England (ibid.).

Excavations made by trained archaeologists in Nunavut began with the 5th Thule Expedition 1921-1924 (Mathiassen 1927a, 1927b). This was a multidisciplinary Danish expedition, archaeological, ethnological, and natural scientific, and the artefacts collected and excavated were sent to Denmark. Following these first archaeological excavations, legislative measures were taken by the Canadian government to make sure that it was properly informed of all exploration and scientific expeditions in the Arctic. These included the Ordinance Respecting Scientists and Explorers in 1926, the precursor of today's Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut research licence permit systems, and the Eskimo Ruins Ordinance in 1930, which prohibited excavations in the NWT without a license, and made

illegal the transportation of artefacts out of the country without the proper permission of the Commissioner of NWT (Rowley 2002: 263-64).

Towards the mid 20th century, archaeological fieldwork was facilitated by the construction of airfields in the Canadian Arctic. These airfields were built in Iqaluit (formerly Frobisher Bay), Coral Harbour and Resolute Bay in the decade following World War II. Consequently, the first fieldwork undertaken after the war was around these locations (Collins 1950, 1951, 1956). This was somewhat good news, because these early excavations were done near Inuit communities, which encouraged the hiring of Inuit people in the field. However, in the late 1950's the Polar Continental Shelf Project was created, which provided logistical support for workers and scientists in more remote areas (Foster and Marino 1986). In parallel with this, the development of aircraft technology during that period allowed archaeologists to access remote areas. In the same season, they could travel to and from areas very far from Inuit communities, which then contributed to lessening contact with Inuit, and decreasing their inclusion on the excavations (Rowley 2002: 264).

The post-World War II period, and until the 1970's, also marks the time when processual archaeology developed in North America, and this trend hugely influenced the kind of research that was done in the Canadian Arctic by Canadian and American archaeologists. Borrowing extensively from cultural ecology and structural functionalism (Steward 1955; White 1949, 1975), processual archaeology was very well suited for explaining cultural adaptations to the harsh Arctic environment. In accordance with an ideology of science that seeks general laws about human behaviour and that objectifies its research subjects, minimal consultation occurred between processualist archaeologists and Inuit. This

is not to say that archaeologists ignored the value of knowledge about Inuit life ways for analogical purposes (see Chapter 1). However, such ethnographic analogy was done mostly with the literature produced by their fellow ethnologists or gathered in ethno-archaeological projects, both of which excluded the Inuit voice (Binford 1978). The knowledge produced by archaeologists began to be incorporated into school curricula in the 1950's when the federal government took over Inuit education. The result is that Inuit were - and are still, to a large extent - taught about their past by southerners, using the knowledge created by researchers.

These trends began to change in the 1970's, as Inuit in Canada started to organise politically and to initiate land claims. This empowerment had a major impact on archaeological regulations and practices in the Canadian Arctic. These claims, by their very nature, concretely and directly concerned the material vestiges of ancient Inuit present on their lands (Andrews et al. 1997). Once the Inuit achieved a position of authority on their lands, they would have the power to approve or reject archaeological excavations on these lands before they were undertaken. This is now the case for Nunavut, Nunatsiavut and the region of the Inuvialuit, as I will discuss shortly. It was also in the 1970's that a pan-Canadian Inuit form of belonging was born, mainly through the creation of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. Being 'Inuit' then became the affirmation of a national political identity, in addition to being a personal and cultural trait. Before this time, Inuit collective identity and sense of belonging referred to groups of extended families that occupied specific territories across the Canadian Arctic. When Inuit began to claim rights over their common cultural heritage, including the archaeological record, it was done through this emerging national identity, and

these land claims also probably helped the construction and affirmation of this identity (see Stewart 2002).

This Inuit political activism in the 1970's enabled archaeologists to recognise that Inuit were truly concerned about their past and that some of them distrusted archaeologists (Swinton 1976). Steps were then taken by archaeologists to develop programmes designed to alter these perceptions (Rowley 2002: 265). Notably, in 1975 the archaeologist Allen P. McCartney initiated the Thule Archaeology Conservation Project, jointly funded by the National Museum of Man (now the Canadian Museum of History) and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (McCartney 1979). This initiative was taken because at that time Inuit carvers were using whale bones as raw material for their carving industry, which were taken from Thule Inuit winter houses in which they had been used as structural supports. Alarmed by this disturbance of archaeological sites, but aware that the carving industry and its reliance on whale bone was a crucial source of income for many Inuit, archaeologists decided to create an inventory of sites that contained whale bones, to map and excavate the sites (with the collaboration of Inuit) and then to stockpile the bones for the use of the Inuit carvers. This is an early, innovative and unique example of the kind of collaborative projects that began to emerge in Arctic archaeology in the 1970's.

A popular form of collaborative project to develop in the late 1970's in the Canadian Arctic was the field school formula for Inuit youth. The first of these was created in 1979 and lasted until 1986 (Northern Heritage Society Field School; Bielawski 1984). Another major example was created in 1990 in Igloolik (see Rowley 2002: 266-269). Among their goals was the introduction of students to the archaeological discipline and practice in

conjunction with the oral history of their communities. Their aims were not only to teach students scientific methodologies such as field techniques, surveys and excavations, but also to take pride in their culture, elders and ancestors (Rowley 2002: 268).

The empowerment of Inuit people towards the archaeological record was taken a step further with the creation of Nunavut territory. With the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (1993) Inuit gained concrete rights over the archaeological records of their territory. In the final version of the Agreement, there is a complete section on archaeology, which states:

33.2.1 The archaeological record of the Inuit of the Nunavut Settlement Area is a record of Inuit use and occupancy of lands and resources through time. The evidence associated with their use and occupancy represents a cultural, historical and ethnographic heritage of Inuit society and, as such, Government recognizes that Inuit have a special relationship with such evidence which shall be expressed in terms of special rights and responsibilities (Canada Department of Justice 1993).

These 'rights and responsibilities' translate into a permit system entirely managed by the Government of Nunavut under the Department of Culture and Heritage. Aside from managing the permits and excavation reports, this system involves the development of policies, technical standards and guidelines on archaeological research. It was also developed in conjunction with the Inuit Heritage Trust, dedicated to the preservation, enrichment and protection of Inuit cultural heritage and identity embodied in Nunavut's archaeology sites, ethnographic resources and traditional place names.

These rules and regulations were developed in concordance with Inuit perspectives on archaeological practices and ethics. The latter were notably expressed in 1994 at the

Ittarnisaliirijit Conference on Inuit Archaeology in Igloolik, organised by Inuit from Nunavut and Labrador. The goal of the conference was to discuss how Inuit could participate in archaeology on their homeland. The conference produced a series of guidelines for archaeological conduct in Labrador and Nunavut, addressing the themes of accountability, consultation, respect, attention to traditional protocols, approval and reporting systems (Webster and Bennett 1997). The Nunavut Inuit eventually developed a system of archaeological permits, reports and local curation strategies for the artefacts excavated. Since the creation of the Nunavut Government in 1999, anyone who wishes to undertake an excavation in Nunavut has to apply for a permit and report to the Culture, Language, Elders and Youth Department of Nunavut. This new system empowers the Inuit of Nunavut in the realm of the excavation and curation of the artefacts. However, even if this represents a movement towards Inuit empowerment over archaeology, most of the fieldwork and bureaucratic work is still done by non-Inuit employees of the Department of Culture and Heritage. The difference is that now they are following rules made by and accountable to Inuit institutions.

In Nunavik in northern Quebec, the timeline and development of archaeology in relation to Inuit culture is similar to that in the territory of Nunavut, but the political and cultural context is different. Until the 1950's, archaeology in Quebec was mainly nationalistic and focused on the past of French Canadians in the province (Gélinas 2000; Martijn 2002). Little systematic fieldwork took place in Arctic Quebec until the interests of anthropologists and archaeologists turned to Native people in the 1970's. This was done in the wave of the Quiet Revolution, a societal movement in Quebec, when a new climate of intellectual

ferment pushed academics to sustain and diversify their reflections on the Quebec population, including Native communities (Martjin 2002: 206). This new interest in native studies was also a way for people of the province of Quebec to establish their rights to what remained of the northern part of the provincial territory, which they called 'Nouveau Québec', and where Native people had for a long time been ruled by the federal government (Plumet 2002: 190), and studied by anthropologists from other Canadian provinces and from the United States (Gélinas 2000).

Beginning in the 1960's and 1970's, anthropology departments were created in Quebec universities (notably Université Laval in Quebec City and Université de Montréal), which led to a sharp augmentation of archaeological work in Arctic Quebec (Archambault 1981; Boutray 1981; Gosselin et al. 1974; Harp 1970, 1974-1975, 1975, 1976a, 1976b; Plumet 1969, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1980). Throughout the succeeding decades, archaeologists and their anthropologist colleagues from the province of Quebec engaged in wide-ranging discussions about the multi-faceted problems (economic, political, cultural and social) faced by the Native people of the province. Special attention was directed toward ethical and legal questions pertaining to the obligations of researchers towards Native people. As Martjin (2002: 206) noted from experience, this was done with the sort of sensitivity and awareness of French Canadians that comes from firsthand knowledge and familiarity with, and a long-term reflection about, minority status.

Partly stemming from this context, and also from the growing politicisation of the Inuit in the province of Quebec (the Northern Quebec Inuit Association was created in 1971), the late 1970's saw the emergence of a strong Inuit involvement in archaeology. The

first Inuit archaeologist, Daniel Weetaluktuk, came from Nunavik. Weetaluktuk was a strong advocate of the involvement of Inuit in archaeological research, and emphasised the crucial need to consult and include Inuit in research projects. He gave Inuit an effective medium for expressing concerns about cultural matters, especially those pertaining to cultural heritage and history, while he was a window through which they could better view northern anthropological and archaeological research. His career stands as witness to the fact that Inuit can become capable and productive partners in the archaeological enterprise (McCartney 1984: 111). His visions finally materialised with the foundation of the Avataq Cultural Institute in 1980. Avataq was created in response to the demand of Inuit elders to have an institute that would preserve and protect Inuit language and culture. In 1985, Avataq founded its own archaeological department. The Institute has been growing ever since, different departments have developed, and it is still mandated by the elders. Even though most archaeological projects in Arctic Quebec are conducted by, or in collaboration with, the department of archaeology of Avataq, legal control over the permits either passes through the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications of Quebec (for sites on the mainland), or through the Government of Nunavut (for the islands). Most of the excavated archaeological record is now kept at Avataq's collections in Montreal.

In Labrador, the history of archaeology and its relationship with the Inuit has been a little bit more problematic than that of Nunavut and Nunavik. Archaeologists from the United States, most notably William Duncan Strong (Strong 1930), undertook the earliest excavations in Labrador in the late 1920's and 1930's. These excavations included Inuit burials, some of which were quite recent, including burials from the abandoned Moravian

mission of the 18th and 19th century in Zoar. The artefacts and skeletal remains were sent to museums in the United States. Some Inuit were aware of these activities and tried to protest. But the story was gradually forgotten among the Inuit and the contents of the graves remained in southern museums for decades (Brake 2012). In the 1960's and 1970's, more systematic excavations began to be undertaken, notably by the Smithsonian Institution to document the ancient history of the Labrador Inuit (Cox 1977; Fitzhugh 1972, 1976, 1980; Kaplan 1983; Schledermann 1972; Tuck 1975). Yet in the 1970's the excavation of burials by archaeologists still continued. In 1971, Jacob Edison Way, a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto, excavated 79 Thule Inuit burials, representing 113 individuals, in Saglek Bay (Way 1978). The remains and associated artefacts were sent to Toronto for study and during the following decades they travelled back and forth between the University of Toronto and Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland (McAleese 1998).

Until the 1990's, archaeologists working in Labrador very rarely engaged with Inuit people. They used communities like Nain as logistical bases, but did not systematically interact with the local population or invite them to collaborate in the research. Archaeologists occasionally made presentations to the communities during or after their fieldwork, but they invariably brought the collections south where they were never to be seen again by the Inuit. As a consequence, the perception of archaeology by the Labrador Inuit was largely shaped by the excavation of graves and the fact that their cultural heritage was taken away from them and housed in southern museums (Hood and Baikie 1998: 11)

The situation began to change in the 1980's and 1990's, partly due to the emergence and actions of Labrador Inuit political and cultural organisations. The Labrador Inuit

Association (LIA), created in 1973, established the Torngâsok Cultural Centre in Nain in 1980. Initially designed for language programmes, it began in 1988 to coordinate a broader array of socio-cultural projects and to encourage contact and collaboration with visiting archaeologists and other scientists. This became the first venue in which archaeologists could interact with local Inuit communities. In 1991-1992, the LIA, along with the Innu Nation of Labrador, formulated research guidelines for archaeologists working within their land claims areas. Labrador Inuit were present at the Ittarnisalirijit Conference on Inuit Archaeology in Igloolik in 1994. Gary Baikie, who was then the director of the Torngâsok Cultural Centre, and who had worked in archaeology, was one of the three organisers of the Conference. Inuit at this Conference generally felt that archaeology could be useful to their people, if done properly. But the elders from Labrador who were present felt that “archaeology is harmful and it disturbs sites best left alone, and that it should stop entirely” (Webster and Bennett 1997: 249).

In 1995, the Thule Inuit skeletal remains that had been excavated by Way in 1971 were repatriated and reburied near their original location in Saglek Bay, along with close to 400 grave goods (McAleese 1998). This action was initiated by the staff of the Torngâsok Cultural Centre. More recently, in August 2011, the human remains excavated by Strong in the 1920’s were also repatriated and reburied on the initiative of the Torngâsok Cultural Centre and the Nunatsiavut Government (Brake 2012). Since its creation in 2006, the Inuit Government of Nunatsiavut has had full control over archaeological fieldwork undertaken on its territory. The Government issues permits that require reporting at the end of

fieldwork, and it also undertakes archaeological assessment of impacts related to land use and mineral exploration on their land.

Since the 1990's, then, archaeology in Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut has been opening up to more and more collaboration between archaeologists and Inuit. This is mostly due to the political activism of different Inuit organisations, but it also corresponds to a shift in the research practices and attitudes of Arctic archaeologists. For a long time the field was dominated by conventionally conservative scientific paradigms and practices, as well as schools of thought of specific universities (Hood 1998; Lyons et al. 2010). Though the field is still marked with processual and cultural ecological approaches, we can clearly observe now a new generation of archaeologists for whom being 'scientific' also involves working with Inuit²⁰. They go beyond hiring Inuit on the excavations, or sending reports to Inuit organisations; they also engage with Inuit traditional knowledge and perspectives in their interpretations.

These approaches are becoming common practice in the field of Arctic archaeology thanks to the development of its ethical, intellectual and theoretical frameworks, as well as the welcoming and facilitating aspects of Inuit organisations regarding archaeology. This unique situation in the Canadian Arctic, marked by Inuit political activism and the archaeologists' ethical concerns and collaborative practices, is also facilitated by the specific

²⁰ In 2011, I organised with student colleagues from McGill University a session on Arctic archaeology at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. The title was "*Inuit memories and archaeological reconstructions: contemporary reifications of the Inuit past*", and the session aimed to see if and how archaeological and Inuit perceptions of the Inuit past can be conciliated and integrated. Five PhD candidates in archaeology from McGill University and the University of Toronto presented their projects that actively involve Inuit perspectives in Nunavut and Nunavik.

historical context of the Canadian Arctic. As described above, the most drastic socio-cultural disruptions in Canadian Inuit history happened only six decades ago. This means that Inuit elders remember their life on the land, and despite the attempts of the federal government to assimilate Inuit to mainstream Canadian society, their traditional knowledge was and is still passed down and adapted to today's realities.

Concretely, for archaeology, this enables the use of ethnographic analogy as a fruitful research methodology. It is also an invitation to work with Inuit and to use Inuit oral tradition and traditional knowledge, in conjunction with ethnographic writings, to enhance our research questions and the inferences we make about the Inuit past. However, to do so in a relevant manner, it is important to know and understand Inuit perceptions of their past and their different values for Inuit society.

3.4 Inuit uses of their past

There is not one homogenous Inuit perspective on time (Briggs 1992). Rather, Inuit have different time frames that, in turn, are associated with different activities and goals. One Inuit perception of time is linear, whereby past, present and future follow one another in a single direction. It can also be perceived as cyclical, for example when something that happened in the past comes back repeatedly in the present and future. Finally, it can be approached as transformational, where the past is remade, or is being transformed into the present and future. Western anthropologists are familiar with the first two perspectives. Linear time can be seen, for example, when an Inuit woman prepares caribou skins in the late summer and early fall in order to make winter clothing for her family. She is undertaking

an activity in the present, planned in the prevision of known needs in a near future. A cyclical perspective can be illustrated by the Inuit belief in the rebirth of game animal souls. Many Inuit groups have ceremonies and everyday practices oriented around this belief, allowing and facilitating animal rebirth which, in turn, assures the Inuit that they will always have enough food to feed and clothe their families.

The transformational perspective requires that we take a closer look at Inuit actions in everyday life, and the strategies behind such actions that involve the time variable. In the Inuit world, it is a person who uses time, not time that uses people (Briggs 1992: 87). Time is a resource to be used for everyday activities in the same way that raw material is used to fabricate objects. For example, when Inuit talk about the day or the month of the present, they say ‘the day/month we are using’. Inuit division of time is also oriented to the actions they undertake during that time. Their months and seasons are named according to life cycles of some of the animals that are hunted during the period of the year in question, and also according to the fluctuation of the sun. The same principles apply to people. For example, it is not the age (number of years since birth) of a person that matters, it is the experience that the person has that will decide if he or she can be considered an adult, capable of marrying and raising children. Men and women usually refer to stages of their life by reference to key achievements, such as first menstruation, birth of own child, periods when specific children were nursed or carried in the *amauti*²¹, first animal hunted, time of marriage, and in term of disastrous events such as famine, illness and death (Briggs 1992: 88). This experience-oriented perspective on time refers directly to how Inuit use time as a

²¹ The *amauti* is the women’s parka that has a wide hood in which children are carried from their birth and during their toddler years.

resource in the service of the present. The transformational aspect of time is seen in the way in which Inuit incorporate aspects of the past and of the anticipated future into actions, creating and transforming materials such as objects and animals, persons and social relations to achieve goals and to meet the needs of the present and future (see also Stuckenberg 2006: 104-106).

Thoughts about the past and future are disciplined in the service of the present. Inuit expect change, not stability. Referring to an event that has not yet happened, Inuit do not say 'when it happens', but 'if it happens' (Briggs 1992: 102). Consequently, thoughts about the future, such as predictions or planning too far ahead, are not encouraged. Rather, Inuit concentrate on strategies and actions in the present that are potentially adaptable, or transformable into the unknown future. It is not to say that they do not have a sense of the future; rather, they concentrate their efforts on preparing themselves *in the present* for future events, predictable or not (Bates 2007: 89-91).

Thoughts about the past must also be disciplined. Inuit have an incredible memory for traditional knowledge and skills learned in their early adult years, as well as details of the landscape. But the past burden of painful experience should be forgotten. Overall, Inuit temporal world views organise action in the present as a variety of strategies for coping with the world, which is seen as highly changeable and unpredictable (Briggs 1992). This is also seen in how Inuit have adapted to new time systems, particularly those introduced by fur trading, missionaries, the bureaucracy brought by life in the settlements, school and wage labour (Stern 2003). Although these changes in Inuit life were accompanied by more individualistic subsistence activities, the introduction of clock time and calendars and

regularised social activities, Inuit have been able to adapt their activity rhythms while continuing to stress traditional values of time mentioned above (ibid: 159; Stuckenberger 2006: 107-109).

These insights help us to make sense of the various Inuit perceptions and uses of their past. Attitudes of the Inuit towards their past have varied greatly throughout their history and they are still not homogenous. Inuit oral tradition contains stories about the Tuniiit, a people that used to live on the land before the Inuit (Appelt and Gullov 2009; Bennett and Rowley 2004; Kleivan 1996). Usually, they are described as friendly giants, very strong and courageous, who taught Inuit about the resources of the land, but who nonetheless disappeared upon the arrival of the Inuit. Versions differ as to the reason for their disappearance; they were either afraid of or running away from Inuit, or the latter chased or killed them. They are sometimes mixed in oral tradition with mythical creatures (Bennett and Rowley 2004: 143-149). In terms of linking the Tuniiit to material vestiges, it is not clear if they should be identified as Thule Inuit or Dorset²². Even if it is unclear whether the Tuniiit were Dorset, Thule Inuit, mythical creatures or a combination of these, one thing is sure – Tuniiit are the ‘Others’ from the past, strangers, who occupied the land before the arrival of the ancestors of the Inuit: “We counted Tuniiit a foreign people, yet they spoke our language, lived with us and had the same habits and customs as we had” (Rasmussen 1931: 121, in Laugrand 2002b: 94).

The earliest material sign of Inuit uses of their past can be seen directly on the Arctic landscape. Inuit tend to re-use old camps over generations, building their houses on top of

²²Archaeologists commonly associate them with Dorset people (e.g. McGhee 1981, 1996; Meldgaard 1960).

ancient ones (Anawak 1996; Bielawski 1989; Dawson 1998). Inuit would clean up the house ruins and rebuild the walls and/or roof structures out of the material of the old houses. This includes Dorset houses, built by the people that occupied the Canadian Arctic before the arrival of the Thule Inuit. In addition, Inuit would sometimes re-use old Dorset tools, either in their primary function (for example, oil lamps made of stone) or they would be transformed into amulets (Bennett and Rowley 2004; Rasmussen 1931).

Inuit uses of the material vestiges that they found on their land began to change in the mid 20th century, with the advent of the modern industry of carving. Since the 19th century, Inuit had been trading their material culture with European and North-American explorers, travellers and whalers. At first, regular objects were traded, such as traditional tools and weapons that served as souvenirs. In some places, Inuit began to collect miniature objects from house ruins to sell to Westerners (Innuksuk and Cowan 1978). Collectors became interested in these miniatures produced by Inuit and their ancestors, minute models or replicas of everyday tools, and figures representing humans and animals. For Inuit, these miniatures had many and often interchangeable roles, ranging from children's toys to elements of divination games, ornaments, personal or shamanic amulets and offerings for the deceased (Laugrand and Oosten 2008). Inuit people started to produce more and more of these carvings, and they became common trade commodities with the non-Inuit. It is within the context of this new form of subsistence activity that Inuit began using intensely whale bones from ancient Thule Inuit villages to make their carvings (McCartney 1979). The bones chosen for carving were usually massive skull bases, mandibles, maxillae and vertebrae, recovered from Thule Inuit house ruins. The irregular shapes were appealing to

carvers. As a result, the taste and aesthetic sense of Inuit artists, as well as the demands on the market for spectacular carvings, prompted the selection and use of specific architectural elements of old Thule Inuit villages. The Inuit carvers selected the pieces in the function of the transformation they were about to make out of them. Just as Briggs noted (1992), material from the past is integrated into the present, recycled and reused according to the needs of the present and future.

Inuit uses of their past began to shift in the 1960's towards preservation strategies. Graburn (1998) identified two main periods in the development of what he calls the 'historical consciousness' among Canadian Inuit. The first period corresponds to the early 1960's, when Inuit had begun to settle in permanent villages. In the 1960's, elders had rather negative memories and perceptions of their distant past (before 1910), linking this period with selfish shamans, starvation, murders and high infant mortality. In contrast, their childhood memories, i.e. the period of the traders and missionaries (1910-1935), corresponded to a 'golden age'. Access to guns, wooden boats, relative wealth from high prices for pelts, and decrease of starvation and of murderous feuds over women are among the memories that fed this positive perception of this period. The more recent past (1935-1960) corresponded for these elders with a loss of the optimism of the prior period, with the beginning of government control over the Inuit and the loss of autonomy of the latter. In other words, in the early 1960's, elders did not regret the life on the land before the arrival of the Westerners; what is more, their best memories corresponded to the times of trade, acquisition of European goods and Christianisation. These perceptions changed over the following decades. Since the 1980's, the attitudes of the Inuit towards their past have shifted.

The distant past, before the arrival of the Westerners, became a 'golden age', with curing shamans, no disease brought by these newcomers, egalitarian sharing community, etc. Views of the more recent past, i.e. when Europeans, Canadians and Americans began to arrive, correspond now in the Inuit mind with a loss of autonomy and of traditional culture, introduction of diseases, alcohol, drugs, etc. (Graburn 1998).

This shift in Inuit attitudes towards their past echoes Briggs' (1992) and Bates' (2007) observations, in which Inuit use time as a function of their actions in the present and/or the future. It is crucial to see how Inuit use these perceptions of their past in order to understand these trends. In the 1980's very few elders could remember from direct experience life on the land before the gradual arrival and influence of the Euro-Canadians. In the present, this number is likely reduced to zero. This distant past has been somewhat mythologized: no one can attest to having lived it, but people 'remember' it as being the golden age of Inuit history. But why is this distant past suddenly perceived as a 'golden age'? There are many possible explanations for this phenomenon, linked to different areas of Inuit life and action: personal, cultural, collective and political.

To begin with, the perception of the distant past by Inuit elders in the early 1960's corresponds to personal, autobiographical memories, whereas the perception of the past expressed in the 1980's is more about collective memory (see Trudel 2002). Even though they intersect, the personal versus collective memories of the Inuit are, in fact, two different strategies of dealing with the past. Their needs and goals are similar at some levels, but the means to achieve them are different.

The personal, autobiographical way of remembering is not only a marker of the pre-1960's period; it is also still preferred by contemporary Inuit elders (Laugrand 2002b; Oosten and Laugrand 2000). When engaging in an interview or any conversation with an Inuit elder about Inuit culture and traditions, they often answer that they will only talk about their personal experiences and knowledge. Very rarely do they venture into generalisations about Inuit as a people, as an encompassing culture. Others do so, as we will see shortly, but elders tend to remain prudent with this practice.

Inuit collective remembering is intimately linked to different forms of identity formation among Inuit throughout their history. As mentioned above, before Inuit began to live in permanent settlements in the 1950's, 'collective identities' were attached to extended families and groups of these families that would gather annually for certain periods, for example during the dark winter months or for communal hunts (Laugrand 2002). Senses of belonging and the strategies for action, experience and remembering were mainly experiences at the personal, familial and camp level. While this is still true today to some extent, especially for elders, a new form of Inuit collective identity emerged in the 1970's, intimately linked to a new form of collective remembering. The sudden need for Inuit to defend themselves in the national political arena, to sign treaties, and to negotiate for their rights on national and international levels, as well as the modernisation of the means and technology of communication over their vast territory, provided the basis for redefining and drawing a collective boundary. The Inuit began to focus less on their regional differences and more on their broad cultural and linguistic similarities (Hicks and White 2000; Searles 2006; Simon 1996; Stevenson 2006). The first Arctic Peoples Conference in 1973 and the

creation of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1980 were important initial steps towards their recognition as a unique Inuit nation. The creation of the Nunavut territory and government played a central and decisive role in this process. Their self-determination has essentially been expressed by highlighting their distinctiveness from other communities within Canada, First Nations and non-Natives. Since the 1970's, Inuit define themselves largely in opposition to the ways, culture and values of the non-Inuit and the mainstream Canadian society (Briggs 1997; Searles 2008). This very distinctiveness from Euro-Canadians is also a strategy to resist the forces of colonisation in the Canadian Arctic.

A common goal for both ways of remembering is the transmission of Inuit knowledge and traditions. Before life in permanent settlements in the 1950's, remembering and transmitting Inuit knowledge and skills was something done automatically (Stevenson 2006). This is how Inuit were making a living. This corresponds to Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *doxa*: people's dispositions to perceive, think and act in certain ways, through the influence of the material conditions in which they live. These dispositions (*habitus*) are entrenched in the larger process of socialisation of individuals and they are somewhat taken for granted (*doxa*) (Bourdieu 1972, 1980). In the Inuit case, these dispositions include knowing how to hunt, how to travel on the land, how to transform animal skins into clothing, how to make goods and efficient tools, transmitting this knowledge, adapting it to present situations, and not being afraid to borrow elements from other cultures and integrate them into their own. This automatic transmission of Inuit culture, knowledge and traditions began to be systematically interrupted in the 1950's. Within one or two decades, Inuit were living in permanent settlements and their children were attending schools with non-Inuit

teachers, no longer with their families and learning Inuit ways. Fewer young men were becoming hunters and many took up waged jobs in villages, as did many women. By the 1960's Inuit quickly came to realise that their culture was threatened with extinction and began to take concrete action to remember, preserve, and protect it for future generations (Graburn 1998, 2006; Laugrand 2002b; Stevenson 2006).

This anxiety was felt at both the personal and community level. Elders were concerned about not taking their children and grandchildren onto the land anymore and not being able to teach them their personal knowledge and skills, but mostly the collective concern sat at the forefront of the Inuit struggle for their political power and autonomy. A collective form of Inuit national identity emerged at that moment, in which was entrenched a collective past to be remembered, preserved, protected and transmitted. This was and is still done in many different ways: programmes to preserve the Inuktitut language, actions to defend hunting rights, to encourage the consumption of country food, wearing traditional dress, organising Northern Games, etc. Cultural centres and local museums were created across the Arctic, as well as journals, movies, documentaries and TV and radio programmes (Graburn 1998, 2006; Laugrand 2002b). This era also saw the emergence of camp programmes that brought together elders and youth to teach them of the life on the land. Some of these programmes are used as therapeutic or correctional efforts for young people in urban communities (Fletcher and Denham 2008).

Niezen (2009) discusses this approach to the past through the concept of 'therapeutic history': when people refer to their origins in a process of cultural self-discovery and healing from past traumas such as cultural genocide, and as a source of self-esteem

building and for the maintenance of the collective self when facing injustices and rapid change. “It isolates and preferably brings to life through images, artefacts, and ceremonies, a time when one’s people were stronger, healthier, more autonomous, and above all, more respected.” (Niezen 2009:153). This phenomenon is typical of post-colonial contexts and is directed towards healing from the loss of land, cultural assimilation and economic dependency. Referring specifically to Inuit, Stevenson (2006) suggests that remembering the past through the practice of traditions has become for them a form of ‘Inuit technology of the self’ (following Foucault’s term; Foucault 1997), a form of personal ethics aimed at taking care of the self and to support Inuit cultural survival. It also implies a certain degree of personal transformation because these traditions have to be learned and integrated into one’s modern life – a process not necessarily natural or straightforward, especially in urban settings or for younger generations.

A more institutional way that Inuit integrate the past into their present struggles, is through the concept of *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ). This notion, which originates from Inuktitut, meaning ‘Inuit long-standing knowledge that is still useful’, was officially popularised with the creation of the Nunavut Territory in 1999 (Oosten and Laugrand 2002: 24). It represents the worldviews, knowledge, values, language, social organisation, skills, perceptions and expectations passed down from generation to generation. IQ also constitutes the major guidelines for the current Inuit political arena, as well as for their social, cultural, educative and environmental sectors (Oosten and Laugrand 2002; Wenzel 2004). IQ is a concrete example of how Inuit use their past collectively and institutionally, for present needs and future goals.

At the Qaujimajatuqangit workshop organised by members of the Government of the Nunavut Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Working Group, IQ was defined as:

The long practised tradition of passing Inuit knowledge, values and teachings from the Elders down to the younger generations; Inuit knowledge in all areas of life; a philosophy and a way of living and thinking that is difficult to put into a few words in a short piece of time; the knowledge of wildlife, hunting techniques and an understanding of animal life, biology and migratory patterns; a knowledge of survival skill without the use of modern technology, such as, but not limited to making clothing appropriate to the climate, how to make and use traditional tools and weapons, weather forecasting and navigation skills; a knowledge of traditional healing and counselling methods and a system of dealing with fellow Inuit who need help that is based on trust and love; an understanding of complex family relationships that is explained by Inuktitut kinship terminology. Every family member has a special word or term to explain his or her relationship to each other; a system of laws, values and consultations before making important decisions that affect the community (Working Group on Traditional Knowledge 1998: 14-15, cited in Oosten and Laugrand 2002: 23-24).

This collective construction of the past and identity promoted by contemporary Inuit views has some recurrent themes that were once ordinary cultural traits, and that are suddenly transformed into emblems (Briggs 1997). Among these emblems, a prominent one is that of the image of the male hunter, expressed in the term *inummarik* or *inullarik*, which means ‘a real Inuk’, someone who lives on the land from hunting (Brody 1975). Inuit also use the hunter image as a metaphor in their contemporary life (Graburn 2006). Although this image has been initially encouraged and facilitated by the work of early anthropologists (e.g. Birket-Smith 1924; Boas 1888; Jenness 1922; Murdoch 1892; Nelson 1899) it is still to some extent being promoted (Searles 2006). We now observe that this male-centred image that depends on knowledge and life on the land does not correspond to everyone’s notion of

what it is to be Inuit, especially for women or for young people who live in modern and/or in urban settings (Graburn 2006; Searles 2006; Stevenson 2006).

Another important aspect of this new form of Inuit collective past is its time depth. What is now commonly called 'Inuit cultural heritage' is not just widespread geographically, but is presented as being millennia old. For example, in a 1983 documentary by Maurice Bulbulian about the struggle of three villages of Nunavik against colonial forces, an Inuk states: "My name is Tamusi Qumaq. I have lived here on this land [Nunavik] for a very long time. More than 4,000 years"²³. In this sentence, Tamusi expresses his personal affiliation with all the people who occupied Nunavik before him, including the Palaeo-Eskimos who arrived there 4,000 years ago, before the Thule Inuit migration. Similarly, in an educational CD-ROM entitled *Arctic Peoples and Archaeology* produced by the Inuit Heritage Trust of Nunavut Government for Grade 8 students in Nunavut, it is stated: "For 4,000 years, Inuit survived in Northern Land". In the same CD-ROM, an elder says: "The Inummariit believed they have existed since time immemorial in the north where they live". This connection is also clearly stated in the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement: "The archaeological record of the Nunavut Settlement Area is of spiritual, cultural, religious and educational importance to Inuit." (Canada Department of Justice 1993).

The same observation can be made in Nunavik, where the Avataq Cultural Institute is the primary archaeological agent. In this region of Quebec, most of the archaeological record is composed of Palaeo-Eskimo vestiges and, yet, it is an Inuit cultural institute that

²³ « Je me nomme Tamusi Qumaq. J'ai vécu très longtemps ici sur cette terre. Au de là de 4000 ans. » (Bulbulian 1983).

acts as the keepers of their record. This echoes Silliman and Ferguson's (2010) discussion about traditionally associated communities which are not necessarily direct descendants but which claim attachment to archaeological sites and records that occur in the area in which they live. Silliman and Ferguson argue that archaeologists should seek out and consult with them as much as with descendant communities, and this is clearly what happens in the Canadian Arctic.

Inuit actively express their cultural attachment to the Palaeo-Eskimos, in the same way that other indigenous people group together across cultural, temporal and geographical boundaries for political and legal reasons. In doing so, they manipulate archaeological knowledge of the Arctic past to their advantage, even though Inuit oral tradition about the Tuniiit clearly states a cultural boundary between the Inuit and the people who lived on their land before their arrival. The 4,000 years time depth mentioned by Tamusi Qumaq in the 1983 documentary cited above demonstrates his awareness of the archaeological record and knowledge, and shows how he transforms it into a personal and communal claim of land occupation. He does this by expressing his cultural identity affiliation with all Native peoples that have been living in the Arctic before him. When Inuit claim their rights to the entire archaeological record on their territory, it enters their strategy of collective memory and identity. It has some personal and cultural components, but the main aim is political. They claim their rights over their ancestral land.

The response of the federal government to these affirmations of Inuit ancestral rights to Arctic land is generally favourable. In fact, the government actually encourages such

vision of the Arctic past, as shown in the government's Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy:

In our Arctic foreign policy, the first and most important pillar towards recognizing the potential of Canada's Arctic is the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North. Canada has a rich history in the North, and Canada's sovereignty is the foundation for realizing the full potential of Canada's North, including its human dimension. This foundation is solid: Canada's Arctic sovereignty is long-standing, well established and based on historic title, founded in part on the presence of Inuit and other indigenous peoples since time immemorial (Government of Canada 2010: 5).

It is important to note that the assertion of Canada's sovereignty and actions in the Arctic has not always been to the advantage of the Inuit, as stated in the citation above. The federal government's intrusion in Inuit lives in the 1950's in terms of education, healthcare and sedentarisation in permanent villages can be seen as part of the nation's will to assert its control over the territory, through the control of the Native people living on it. It can also be argued that the High Arctic relocations in 1953-1955 were partially instrumental in this, positioning new Inuit settlements in remote islands to assert Canada's presence during the post World War II period in Arctic waters (Dussault and Erasmus 1994: 115-133). In the 1970's, Canadian assertion of sovereignty in the North began to be advantageous for the Inuit. In 1973 the Government of Canada announced the resumption of treaty negotiations with Native peoples of Canada whose right to land had not been previously extinguished. The government demanded evidence of the extent, intensity and frequency of land and resource use by Inuit in order to define the area subject to negotiation. To do this, more than 80% of Inuit hunters in the Canadian Arctic were interviewed about their use and occupancy of the land. The results were presented in the three-volume report of the Inuit

Land Use and Occupancy Project (Freeman 1976). The Canadian government used this report as support to declare waters of the Arctic Archipelago to be internal waters over which it has full rights to regulate and to potentially exclude shipping (Fenge 2007/2008). The report also upheld the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) which had been signed in 1993. The mutual benefit of Inuit and the Canadian government on the country's sovereignty in the Arctic is clearly expressed in Article 15 of the Nunavut Final Agreement (Canada Department of Justice 1993): "Canada's sovereignty over the waters of the Arctic Archipelago is supported by Inuit use and occupancy". Inuit organisations that have negotiated land claims in Canada other than in Nunavut (Nunavik, Beaufort Sea region and Labrador) also support Canada's Arctic sovereignty (Fenge 2007/2008). This consideration of the federal government's agenda helps us to understand the facility with which Inuit can claim their title to their land, including the archaeological record embedded in it.

The birth and development of the collaboration between archaeologists and Inuit in the Canadian Arctic owes much to Inuit political activism. One could even argue that it is not so much the Inuit who collaborate with archaeologists, but the other way around. Inuit have been gaining more and more control over excavations and the curation of artefacts. This has been done at various levels, depending on whether it is done in Nunavut, Nunavik or Nunatsiavut. As soon as Inuit began to organise politically, whether at the regional or national levels, new forms of Inuit identities emerged, entrenched in collective forms of Inuit past. This Inuit collective past is geographically vast and temporally deep; it includes the entire archaeological record in the Canadian Arctic. Inuit have found ways to integrate this

huge cultural heritage in their more 'traditional' perception of their past, which is rather regional, personal and autobiographical.

The new strategy that Inuit have developed towards their past and their identity in general has opened the door to collaboration with archaeologists. This collaboration is still in its infancy and there remains room for exploring and creating new forms of engagement between archaeology and Inuit society, most notably at the level of interpretation of the archaeological record.

To explore how the notion of identity lies at the core of Inuit perceptions of their past, we need to have a closer look at how Inuit define themselves at the personal and collective levels. According to Dorais (2005) personal identity is more meaningful for Inuit individuals than collective self-definition. The latter may be very important in political forums, but in daily life, what really matters is one's position within the family, one's relationship to a specific place and one's link to the supra-natural world (Briggs 1997). Actually, people feel free to define who they are themselves, provided they seek some sort of continuity between themselves, their family and community and their ancestors.

This personal aspect of Inuit identity is open-ended and fluid; it cannot be labelled or enclosed within specific categories or defined according to a list of criteria (Dorais 2005: 9). As Robert Watt (former president of Avataq Cultural Institute) once said, "Inuit identity is not linked to one's physical look or specific cultural habit, but one's will to be an Inuk" (Watt 2000, cited in Dorais 2005: 8). The real concerns and issues about Inuit identity are exactly at this personal and highly fluid level. Inuit people may be confident about their

collective self-definition and identity, but many individuals may have problems concerning, for example, their own conciliation between tradition and modernity – between their past and their contemporary lives. Dorais argues that if scientists are to play a positive role in the modern Arctic, they must document and take into account what identity really means for the Inuit, taking into consideration flexibility in their relation to the past, the present, the personal and the collective levels.

The reconciliation between singular and plural aspects of Inuit identity, and between elements from the past and the present, are among the principal challenges and objectives of this study. The historical overview presented in this chapter highlighted the potential and the relevance of using the practice of ethnographic analogy between Thule and contemporary Inuit in archaeological research. The historical and cultural continuity between both peoples makes it a highly reliable and promising method. Also, as has been demonstrated throughout the chapter, the recent history of the Inuit people in Canada, which is marked by their political empowerment, creates a movement towards constructive collaboration with archaeologists. In developing collaboration, we need to be attentive to the ways in which Inuit perceive and use their past. This echoes the critical theory discussed in the previous chapter: certain visions or versions of the past are valued over others, for a variety of reasons. Inuit construct and handle different interpretations of their past, and these become part of their current political, social and cultural actions. Not only do archaeologists have to take into consideration the different ways in which Inuit make sense of their past, but they also need to understand the purpose of these versions of the Inuit past. Understanding the roles that the past plays in today's life is the key to successful archaeological research and to

collaboration between researchers and Inuit. In the next chapter, I present the method that I have developed to address these crucial issues for the development of a critical Thule Inuit archaeology.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the three stages of my research methodology. The first stage consists of the ethnographic analogy between Thule Inuit and Inuit people in Canada and Alaska, following the direct historical approach. The second stage is the examination of Inuit knowledge and perspectives about their traditional material culture, mainly objects from the early 20th century, analogous to Thule Inuit archaeological collections. Here I will describe the two sources of Inuit knowledge used for this purpose, the Inullariit Elders Society archives in Igloolik (Nunavut) and group interviews that I organised at the McCord Museum in Montreal with Inuit elders. Taken all together, the ethnographic literature, the Igloolik archives and the interviews at the McCord represent a new body of knowledge about the social meaning of Inuit material culture. The third and final step of my methodology consists of the archaeological analysis of artefacts from three Thule Inuit sites (Cape Garry, Learmonth and Qariaraqyuk), directly informed by the ethnographic and Inuit knowledge. Analyses of the nature of these assemblages, patterns of stylistic variability within and between classes of artefacts, and the spatial distribution of these patterns are used to answer questions about the social relations within and between these sites. Problems regarding the articulation of Inuit knowledge with traditional archaeological methods are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. I argue that the separation between Inuit forms of knowledge and science is a construction made by specific theoretical trends that have roots in our modern or post-Enlightenment era. Instead of seeing Inuit and Western scientific forms of knowledge in a dichotomy to be reconciled, I suggest that we identify the actual points of

intersection where Inuit worldviews meet with specific social science paradigms. These paradigms include social psychology, material culture theories such as anthropology of art and technology, and social network theories where the agency of objects and the social relations between humans and their material environment are stressed. These theoretical perspectives are then used to guide my analyses of the interviews with Inuit elders and my subsequent archaeological analyses.

4.2 Ethnographic analogy

The direct historical approach is commonly used in Thule Inuit archaeology (e.g. Friesen 1994, 2002, 2013; Savelle 2002; Savelle and Wenzel 2003). The historical and cultural correspondences between Thule Inuit and their North American Inuit descendants allow archaeologists to address a multitude of questions that pertain to cultural, social and spiritual aspects of Thule Inuit, using the ethnographic sources. However, as I stressed in Chapter 3, Thule Inuit and Inuit cultures have been through many changes throughout their histories, and such changes have to be taken into consideration when using the analogy. In what follows, I will discuss the issue of similarities and differences between cultures when using the method of ethnographic analogy, and suggest solutions for the current research.

Analogy is not exclusively a relation of similarity between the ethnographic source and the archaeological subject (Bunge 1973, cited in Wylie 1985a: 94). It allows for the existence of differences between them. In fact, a proper argument for analogy involves the claim that, despite the similarities and differences between the source and the subject, the source and subject are expected to share further relations of similarities, under the analogical premises.

This is not simply a formal, point for point assessment of similarities and differences between the source and the subject, assuming that, under some sort of uniformitarian principle, this pattern of associations will hold in any context. There is another factor that needs to be incorporated, which is the consideration of 'relevance'. Relevance refers to the principles of connection that structure both the ethnographic source and the archaeological subject and that assure, on this very basis, the existence of specific further similarities between them (Wylie 1985a: 94-5). These principles of connections are the causal mechanisms, processes or factors that determine the presence, or absence, of properties among the source and the subject. In other words, when assessing the relevance of an analogical argument between an ethnographic source and an archaeological subject, one needs to examine and identify the causal mechanisms that are responsible for the properties that constitute the similarities and differences between them. It is the connection between these causal mechanisms, or internal processes of both the source and the subject that will guide the analogy and determine its strength.

An example will be helpful to explain these principles. Let us take an archaeological subject A, who produced a series of tools that are very similar to the pottery-making tools of an ethnographic source B. In the first step of analogical reasoning, a set of similarities and difference are identified. In this case, similarities are based on a series of formal attributes which correspond to the shape of the objects. However, the archaeological tools of A are always made of stone, whereas for B, they are made of a variety of materials, including wood, metal and bone, but never of stone. This is the main difference between A and B. The second step in the analogical reasoning consists in examining the causal technological

mechanisms involved in the material properties of the tool for B, such as shape, raw material and their role in the function of the tool. Ethnographic investigation reveals that the materials used for these modern pottery tools are not a factor of their function. A contemporary tool for pottery making can be made of any material without making a difference to its use. This means that the similarities in shape between A and B hold consistently across a wide range of source contexts and raw materials. Therefore, the differences between A and B do not hinder the analogy, because the shape of this type of tool is indicative of its function regardless of the materials from which it is made²⁴.

This example shows that to improve the analogy between a given archaeological subject and an ethnographic source, one has to work rigorously on both sides of the analogical inference, the source and the subject, in order to establish the principles of connection that inform the selection and evaluation of the analogy. This means expanding the base of interpretation and elaborating the fit between the source and subject, not as a way to assess analogical conclusions after they have been made, but rather as a way to determine the connections between the material, cultural or behavioural variables of interest, and under what conditions they may or may not hold (Wylie 1985a: 101).

In the case of my research with Inuit and Thule Inuit, the similarities, the differences, and the principles of connections for the analogy pertain to the connections between their social life and their material culture. As described in Chapter 3, and as we will see in my analyses in the coming chapters, even if some aspects of their social life and some aspects of their material culture have changed through time, the principles of connections between

²⁴ See Curren 1977, cited in Wylie 1985a: 97-98 for the specific study used for this example.

both remained similar. The design of some objects have changed, sometimes because of the introduction of new materials, sometimes because technology has been improved, adapted or been the subject of innovations. But the role that these objects play in the social life of Inuit is still the same (analogical), in parallel to their main technological function. These key objects and their role in the social life of Inuit and Thule Inuit are identified and discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. They are at the centre of the analogy and of my archaeological analyses.

In order to establish the basis of the analogy, for the Inuit side I use multiple ethnographic sources written in the first half of the 20th century in Northern Alaska, and the Central and Eastern Canadian Arctic (Balikci 1970; Birket-Smith 1959; Boas 1888, 1901; Jenness 1922; Murdoch 1892; Nelson 1899; Rasmussen 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932; Spencer 1959, 1971; Stefansson 1919; Taylor 1970, 1974; Turner 1894). These ethnographies provide detailed descriptions of Inuit social life, gender relations, rituals, ceremonies and beliefs, which help me to build an idea of how Thule Inuit social and spiritual life would have been. Although each Inuit community in the North American Arctic had different versions of the same traditions, their basic principles were shared across regions. Such common threads existed in the rules and dynamics of social life, including familial bonds and hunting partnerships, the division of labour between genders, the development and training of individuals from childhood to adulthood, and the spiritual relations between humans and animals (see Chapters 6 and 7 for detailed descriptions of these notions). Since the archaeological collections included in this research correspond to Thule Inuit bowhead whaling villages, I use more specifically the ethnographic sources about North Alaskan Inupiat whalers (Burch 1981; Lantis 1938; Larson 2003; Lowenstein 1993; Rainey 1947; Sheehan 1997; Spencer

1959). These sources allow me to address questions pertaining to the whaling crews and their leaders, their relationships with the rest of the community, as well as the roles of the ceremonial houses in these societies.

I also pay special attention to the material aspects of these sociocultural trends in the ethnographies, in order to support the analogy with the material vestiges associated with Thule Inuit. However, descriptions of the role of material culture in the social and spiritual life of Inuit are not systematically developed in these ethnographies. Discussions pertaining to objects are mostly focused on technology, technical aspects of hunting gear and household tools, with little information about their social meanings. This is understandable since most ethnographers in the late 19th and 20th centuries used to work with bounded categories of human activity, such as subsistence, religion and social relations, and they discussed specific classes of objects directly within these categories. For example, hunting equipment is discussed under the topic of subsistence activities. Other objects, such as amulets, personal adornment and occasionally toys are ascribed to the category of religion. Ultimately, the area of social relations (kinship, leadership, partnerships) is not discussed in terms of material culture. Yet, anthropological literature on material culture has unveiled interconnections between social relations and tools of everyday life, notably in the hunting equipment of northern hunter-gatherer societies (Fienup-Riordan 1994, 2005, 2007; Ridington 1982, 1994, 1999; see also Ingold 2000 for a cross-cultural discussion). This is why these ethnographic sources need to be complemented by an investigation of Inuit oral tradition, where the links between subsistence, social relations, spirituality and material

culture are made more explicit and can be analysed from an anthropological point of view, in order to complete the bases for the analogy.

4.3 The Inullariit Elders Society archives

The Inullariit Elders Society archives contain about 500 interviews produced in collaboration with the Igloodik Research Centre in Nunavut. These are the outcome of a project initiated in 1986, following a meeting of Igloodik elders. At this meeting there was general agreement on the importance of recording and documenting traditional knowledge and oral history of the Amitturmiut – the Inuit living in the northern Foxe Basin area of Nunavut. The project had the following goals: the preservation of Inuit language, the creation of a record of how things were done in the past for the benefit of future generations, and the recording of family histories of the region. Researchers decided to try to cover as broad a range of topics as possible. The goal was also to record a body of accessible Inuit traditional knowledge to inform the larger world, especially southern researchers. Indeed, the interviews are widely used within Igloodik and beyond. Educators and researchers, particularly those engaged in linguistic, social and biological studies, consult them regularly, as do regional, national, and international media organisations. In Igloodik the tapes are cherished by family members, and broadcast from time to time over the community radio (MacDonald 2008).

The choice of topics in the interviews was determined variously by the elders themselves, by the staff of the Igloodik Research Centre, and sometimes by visiting researchers (*ibid.*). Major topics covered include: personal and family histories; contact

history, including the introduction of Christianity; social change; dispute resolution and social control; child rearing, traditional medicine and childbirth; spirituality and shamanism; hunting techniques; animal behaviour and biology; skin preparation and sewing; tool making; sled and qajaq construction; shelter construction; local geography and place names; astronomy; snow-drift formation; weather conditions, including climate change; navigation; and legends and myths.

Interviews were usually planned a day or two ahead of the actual interview session, and the topic agreed between the elder and the interviewer. This gave the elder time to prepare and to engage in some remembering in advance of the interview. Interview sessions usually lasted approximately an hour. Apart from keeping the interview within the bounds of the agreed topic/s, very little structure was imposed on the sessions. A conversational flow was encouraged in which the elder responded to a question fully before the next question was asked, usually based on some point raised in the response just given (*ibid.*).

All audiotapes were translated into English and transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. This ensured that points in need of clarification, particularly those relating to ancient or specialised vocabulary, could be verified while the interview was still fresh in the minds of both the interviewer and the elder. In the course of translation, specialised terms were noted and explained fully, either in parentheses within the text or as footnotes.

The interview collection can be accessed in three ways: by listening to the Inuktitut audiotapes; by reading the translations or transcripts; or by viewing the files on a computer monitor. The latter method is preferred when searching for information on a specific topic.

Using various word-search programs, it is possible to quickly locate all references to a given topic occurring in the entire collection. Having done this, the user has the choice of referring to the audiotapes identified in the search, reading the selected interview printouts, or simply browsing the appropriate files on-screen.

I searched the Inullariit archives in Igloolik in October 2009, using the computer files (translated in English and transcribed) and the keyword search methods. The keywords I used corresponded to the classes of objects that appear in the Thule Inuit archaeological collections. In alphabetical order, these keywords and phrases were: amulets, bows and arrows, boxes, drums, goggles, harpoons, fish hooks, knives, lances, needles, pins/buttons, pots, *qajait* (kayak), *qulliit* (oil lamps), scrapers, shovels, toys and *uluit* (women's knives). These keywords correspond to the objects that I study, as well as to objects that were used in conjunction with these, which can help me understand the set of practices around the objects. I also used the following general keywords: gear, implements, material goods, tools and utensils, because elders often talk about 'hunting gear' or 'sewing implement', and may not necessarily refer to the specific tool names that compose them. I also searched the database with words for the raw materials used in the fabrication of these various objects to see their different qualities and values for the elders: antler, baleen, bone, horn, ivory, metal, stone and wood. Finally, I searched the database with themes of social and spiritual life in which the above-mentioned objects were discussed. The goal was to obtain more complete narratives from the elders on topics that were connected to the objects, including cooperation, sharing, ownership, *innua* (a form of spirit attributed to certain beings and entities), leadership, kinship, shamanism, teaching, learning and trading.

This research revealed more than a thousand pages of citations from the entire corpus. Users of the archives do not have the right to copy entire interviews, but only sections. Accordingly, I identified and copied passages where objects are discussed, with the portion of the interview that contextualises the discussion where the object is mentioned. I classified these excerpts according to the keywords cited above, to make them easily searchable for my analyses. This corpus explicitly displays the role and the value of the objects in the elders' narratives about their past lives on the land. An interesting aspect of these archives is that the topics of the interviews were not necessarily about the objects per se. Consequently, the elders' narratives display spontaneously and naturally the roles and values of the objects in their lives.

The information I gather in these archives does not solely pertain to the technical function of the objects (e.g. a harpoon to kill a sea mammal, or an *ulu* to cut animal skin), but also relates to their role in the social life of their makers and users. For example, I pay attention to the links that are made between the ownership of certain tools and hunting equipment and social status in the community, the role of sharing personal belongings in the maintenance of social harmony within and between families, or the way children become socialised with specific kinds of toys. I also look at the criteria for the selection of raw materials when making tools, whether these criteria are technical and/or linked to social or spiritual considerations and values. As I will describe shortly, these are the type of questions I address in my archaeological analyses of Thule Inuit collections.

4.4 Workshops at the McCord Museum

To complement this first source of Inuit oral tradition and perspectives on material culture, I developed a method of interview with Inuit elders that pertained directly to the material culture of their ancestors. In this stage of my methodology, instead of observing how objects emerge from narratives, I examine how narratives emerge from objects.

Inspired by the work of anthropologist Fienup-Riordan (1998, 2005), I invited groups of Inuit elders to share their knowledge and memories around a selection of ancient objects from a museum collection, letting the objects trigger any kind of information that the participants wished to share. These group discussions produced a multitude of remembrances, stories, persons, names and demonstrations in which I observed the range of stories, the themes addressed, and the types and degrees of emotions expressed in conjunction with classes of objects or the physical attributes of the objects (Gadoua 2013, 2014). Fienup-Riordan (1998: 56) qualified this method as “fieldwork turned on its head”, because it refers to a reversal of the traditional fieldwork paradigm in cultural anthropology: whereas anthropologists usually travel to distant locations to study the resident Natives, here it is the Native elders who travel to one home of anthropology, the museum. Fienup-Riordan travelled with Yup’ik²⁵ elders to an ethnology museum in Berlin, which contains an important collection of Yup’ik objects collected by German Johan Adrian Jacobsen in the late 19th century (Fienup-Riordan 2005). In my case, Inuit elders were travelling from

²⁵ The Yup’ik is a group of Native peoples of western, southwestern, and southcentral Alaska and eastern Siberia. They share some cultural traits with Canadian Inuit, and they are part of the great Eskimo-Aleut family of languages, which also includes Inuit from Canada and Greenland, Inupiat from Alaska and other groups from Siberia.

Nunavik to Montreal for various reasons (which I will discuss shortly), and I invited them to discuss the Inuit collection of the McCord Museum of Canadian History. The McCord Museum was founded in 1921 with a mission to preserve, study and disseminate Canadian history through its collections. The museum's ethnographic and archaeological collection contains 16,000 aboriginal and Inuit objects, and the institution is actively engaged in collaboration with Native communities in their research, education and dissemination activities. Based on previous work experience at the McCord²⁶, I was aware of the museum's need to document their Inuit collection.

The workshops took place in a conference room, rather than in the museum's reserves where collections are kept. This decision was made because the reserves do not offer an appropriate space for group discussions around a table. This meant that we had to make a selection of objects to be brought to the conference room. For every interview I selected around fifty objects that are similar to the classes of artefacts discussed in the Inullariit Society's archives and the Thule Inuit archaeological collections under my investigation. These objects constitute the similarities for the analogical method (Wylie 1988). Hunting gear, household utensils, various personal tools, body and clothing ornaments, amulets, as well as some models of *qajait*, *umiait* (sealskin boats for more than one person) and *qamutiit* (dog sleds) were presented to the participants. These models are

²⁶ In 2006, I was hired by McCord Museum to complete the cataloguing of their Inuit ethnographic objects and art pieces that were collected throughout the North American Arctic from the late 19th century to the present. I studied about 1,600 Inuit objects, ranging from hunting equipment to household utensils, personal tools, body ornaments, amulets, clothing and art pieces (various crafts and sculptures). I identified the materials, measured them and assessed the geographical and temporal provenience for the objects that were undocumented (and which represent about two thirds of the collection).

perfect replicas of the actual means of transportation and are made with the same materials and the same techniques. Their inclusion in the selection allowed the elders to discuss these objects as if they were the real ones. The museum does not have full size *qajait*, *umiait* and *qamutiit*. Where possible, I selected different styles for each of these classes of objects, in order to have the elders' point of view about their different materials and designs.

The participants in my interviews came from Nunavik. The question as to which community they came from was not systematically asked, but at least half of the 14 communities of the region were represented in the sample. There were 85 participants in total (60 women and 25 men) divided into 11 groups. Except for one workshop where the participants were only women, each group had the two genders represented. The inequality in the gender representation was balanced by a general tendency that men had to talk more, whereas women tended to remain more discreet, or silent. Consequently, the narratives recorded represent an almost equal view from each gender. This equilibrium is also reinforced by the fact that women and men were able to discuss at length any tool, whether associated to men's or women's area of life. Expertise about Inuit material culture seemed to transcend gendered categories of objects and daily activities. Individual differences between narratives were not more or less pronounced than the differences between two persons of the same sex. The recordings represent a little more than 25 hours of audiovisual material. The discussions contain a variety of information, ranging from technical knowledge about the objects presented, personal stories and anecdotes inspired by the objects, and forms of collective knowledge and usages of them.

The workshops took place between April 2010 and April 2012. The first six groups of participants were members of the Local Cultural Committees (LCCs) of Avataq Cultural Institute (the cultural organisation of the Inuit of Nunavik, see Chapter 3)²⁷. Avataq LCCs are present in each of the 14 communities of Nunavik. They have individualised mandates based on the needs of the local community, with the ultimate goal of keeping Inuit culture and language alive and visible to everyone. The LCCs travelled to Montreal in April 2010 in order to visit Avataq offices and archaeological/ethnological collections. During their visit, they had also planned some cultural activities, which included visiting various museums in Montreal. Avataq added my interviews into the schedule of activities of the LCCs during their visit to Montreal, and provided a video camera and cameraman and an interpreter for the activity.

This form of involvement of Avataq in my research continued for the next set of interviews (5 groups), which were done with Inuit travelling from Nunavik to Montreal for medical reasons. These participants were recruited through the Quebec Northern Module, the government organisation supporting patients from Nunavik who reside temporarily in Montreal for medical reasons. The Module offers patients transportation, lodging, interpretation services and accompaniment to their appointments at the hospital. I worked primarily with the main administrator of the Module's social support programme. The mandate of the social support department is to facilitate and enhance the experiences of the patients while they are in Montreal, which includes, among other things, organising socio-

²⁷ Avataq Cultural Institute agreed to collaborate on my research project and invited me as a student partner in their CURA (Community University Research Alliance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) entitled *Inuunirilaurtangit ammalu sivullita iningit* (Time and Space among the Inuit of Nunavik).

cultural activities. My research was considered as one of these relevant socio-cultural activities, as it gave the patients special access to the McCord Inuit collections, as well as an opportunity for participants to share among themselves and with the museum staff their knowledge and memories about traditional culture (Gadoua 2011, 2013).

Participants were recruited through posters (Figure 5) that I created with the department of publication of Avataq. These posters were put up at patients' residences by the Module's social support staff. These staff members also helped to advertise the activity, explaining it in detail to the patients and recruiting participants.

ΔοϋΛϋοσβ ϑϑϑϑϑσβ SPECIAL INVITATION FOR ELDERS

ϑϑϑϑ ρϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ρϑϑϑ (McCord) ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ
 ΔοϋΛϋοσβ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ
 ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑ ρϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ
 Avataq Cultural Institute and the McCord Museum invite Elders of the Nunavik
 House to join a workshop about ancient Inuit tools.

ϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑ ρϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ
 Do you recognize these objects? Do you have any memories or stories to tell about Inuit tools?



ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ρϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ
 Δοϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ
 ϑϑϑϑ!

Discover one of the greatest collections of ancient Inuit
 objects in Canada!

Δϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑ
 ρϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ
 ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ
 ρϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ ϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑϑ!

Contribute to the promotion of Inuit culture by sharing
 your knowledge and memories about ancient Inuit tools!

Figure 5: Recruitment poster for the workshops at the McCord Museum

These workshops lasted on average two hours, and were lead by the curator of the collection and myself. They were all filmed and audio-recorded. An interpreter from Avataq was present each time, so that the participants could speak in Inuktitut if they wanted. The curator and I made sure that there was a constant rotation of the objects, following the rhythm of the elders' discussions. We waited until everyone had had the opportunity to comment on each object before introducing the next ones. The participants were allowed and encouraged to handle the objects as they wished, though we asked them to be careful with the most fragile ones – usually objects that had parts made of hide, which is very dry and highly breakable. Usually, as soon as participants were told that they could handle the objects, hands reached out and words flowed spontaneously (Gadoua 2014). My interventions were limited to requests for clarification about what had already been said, as well as questions about the meaning of the various design attributes on harpoon heads and the decoration on tools in general.

In my analysis of the workshops, using audio and video recordings, as well as my field notes, I first compiled the kind of information that was provided for each class of artefact. I transcribed the group discussions according to the classes of artefacts that were on the table, so that I could draw links to the segments from the Inullariit Society's interviews, and my archaeological analyses of analogous artefacts. I then studied the content of these discussions, i.e. the socio-cultural topics addressed for each class of artefact, and the attitudes and emotions expressed by the participants. I also paid a great deal of attention to the gestures of the elders because they often demonstrated how the objects were/are made and used. These analyses allow the identification of the principles that connect Inuit and

their material culture, to be used in conjunction with the Inullariit Society's archives to guide my analyses of Thule Inuit archaeological collections.

4.5 Archaeological analyses

The final stage of my research methodology consists of the examination of archaeological collections from three Thule Inuit whaling villages located on Somerset Island (Figure 6): Cape Garry (PcJq-5) excavated by McCartney (1979), Learmonth (PeJr-1) excavated by Taylor (Taylor and McGhee 1979) and Qariaraqyuk (PaJs-2) excavated by Whitridge (1999a). These collections are currently held by the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec. I obtained a loan of the objects from Cape Garry and Learmonth, which I studied in the archaeological laboratory of McGill University. At the time of my research, the collections of Qariaraqyuk were on loan to Professor Peter Whitridge at Memorial University (St. John's, Newfoundland). I travelled there in May 2012 to study the collections. The classes of artefact that I examined included harpoon heads, arrowheads, men's knife handles, women's knife (*ulu*) handles, sewing paraphernalia, body and clothing ornaments/amulets.

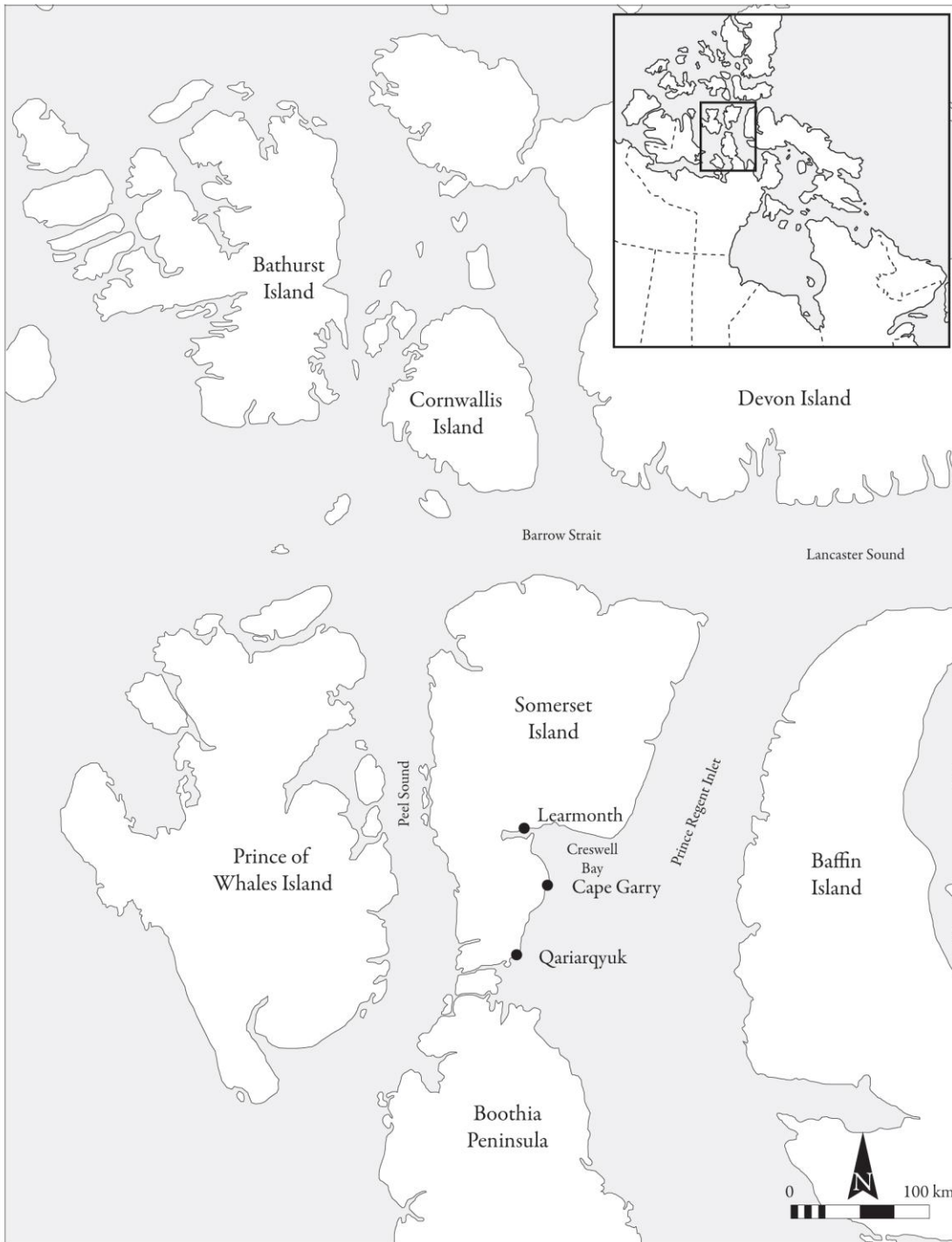


Figure 6: Qariarqyuk (PaJs-2), Learmonth (PeJr-1) and Cape Garry (PcJq-5).

Thule Inuit material culture displays patterns of stylistic variability within and across artefact classes. Throughout the development of Arctic archaeology, these patterns have been used extensively for chronological concerns, mostly with the construction of typologies and seriations (e.g. Collins 1937; Ford 1959; Mathiassen 1927a, 1927b; Stanford 1976). In these studies typical of the culture historical phase of archaeology, styles were used as labels of ethnicity. Subsequent research assessed the possible causes of this variability, mostly in the processual traditions (Le Mouël and Le Mouël 2000; Park 1994). These studies separate the ‘technological’ aspects of this material variability from ‘social’ and ‘symbolic’ ones. In general, however, they provide a better understanding of the former aspects of Thule Inuit tools than their role in the social and spiritual life of these people. My research specifically addresses this issue, by using an integrated approach to style, without boundaries between its technological, social and spiritual aspects (Gadoua 2005).

Previous studies on the Cape Garry, Learmonth and Qariaraqyuk sites began to address questions about the socio-economic and spiritual context of these villages (Grier and Savelle 1994; Patton and Savelle 2006; Savelle 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Savelle and Vadnais 2011; Savelle and Wenzel 2003; Whitridge 1999a, 2002). Based on settlement patterns, zooarchaeological and architectural analyses, as well as the distribution of exotic and rare materials, these studies suggest that Thule Inuit inhabitants of the Central Arctic Archipelago were essentially societies of bowhead whale (*Balaena mysticetus*) hunters. Their subsistence strategies were centred to varying degrees on the products of these animals, complemented by other marine and terrestrial species. Hypotheses suggest the probable existence of regional socio-economic networks and social hierarchy within and among Thule whaling

villages. Following the principles of ethnographic analogy with the whaling societies of 19th and 20th century North Alaska (Freeman 1979; Lantis 1938; Lowenstein 1993; Spencer 1959, 1971), it has been suggested that the spiritual life of these Thule Inuit was also centred on whaling activities.

I used these hypotheses as references and departure points in my analyses of Thule Inuit hunting gear, household tools and personal objects. My aim was to bring these reflections on Thule social life further in an effort to identify the nature of these relations centred on whaling activities, and also to identify eventual nuances in them. More precisely, I determined how these Thule Inuit communities balanced their individual identities within kinships groups, as part of hunting crews, as members of communities and in their relations between villages. I found signs of collaboration and cooperation at the familial/household level, and signs of competition and differentiation between hunting crews. Additionally, since some form of cooperation was suggested to occur between villages (Savelle 2000, 2002), it was also observed in the design of material culture.

Concretely, I analysed the design variability within and between the classes of artefacts mentioned above. I examined total design of the artefacts, including the materials they are made of, their general shapes, specific formal attributes and all forms of incised decoration. I then compared this variability between classes of artefacts, evaluating degrees of stylistic conventions and personal experimentation and creativity. Once these patterns had been identified, I examined their spatial distribution between households within the three sites and at the regional level between the sites. Finally, I interpreted these various stylistic patterns and their spatial distribution based on the guiding principles of Inuit material

culture, previously inferred from Inuit ethnographies, oral history and my interviews at the McCord Museum.

4.6 Interdisciplinarity

To conclude this chapter, I wish to emphasise the ways in which I integrated three types of data in my interdisciplinary research methodology: ethnographic literature, oral history archives, workshops (group interviews) with museum collections. Ethnographic analogy is one of the bridges that connect these data sets. Accordingly, I used ethnographies to build a thorough portrait of Inuit social life at a time when they were still living on the land on a year-round basis (late 19th and early 20th century). This understanding of Inuit traditional social life was subsequently used as an analogical reference throughout my analyses of Inuit and Thule Inuit material culture. These analyses were done in three steps. I first used the Inullariit archives to assess how everyday objects are discussed in the elders' narratives about life in the past. A special focus was put on the social aspect of these past experiences in which objects played a role. Second, I used my workshops at the McCord Museum to see what kind of narratives about life in the past emerge from contact with these objects. These two methods complement one another by looking at the interconnections between material culture and social life from two opposite angles: examining the place of objects in the elders' narratives, and identifying the kinds of narratives that emerge from their contacts with objects. I used both perspectives from Inuit elders to build a firm set of connections between artefacts from everyday life, their design and social life among Inuit, as a basis for the analogy with Thule Inuit. Once these connections between the material and social life of Inuit were well established, I used them as bases for my analyses of Thule Inuit

artefacts, which represent the third and final stage of my material culture analyses. The classes of archaeological objects that I analysed correspond by analogy to the objects discussed by Inuit elders. They represent the ancient versions of the same tools.

The collaborative aspect of my research, working directly with elders, with their oral history, and examining artefacts from their perspectives added an important anthropological aspect to my archaeological study. As I will discuss shortly, I had to analyse from an anthropological point of view the narratives of the elders in order to fully understand the social meanings of their everyday life objects, and to be able to apply them to an archaeological context. The next chapter focuses precisely on this question of interdisciplinarity: the ways in which anthropological and Inuit forms of knowledge intersect and can be articulated together to achieve a common goal, which is an archaeological analysis of Thule Inuit material culture.

Part two: Inuit social life and material culture

5. Integrating forms of knowledge

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the integration of Inuit perspectives with archaeological research. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, many collaborative/indigenous archaeology projects aim for reconciliation between indigenous knowledge and archaeological theories and practices. However, my experience working with Inuit people convinced me to tackle this issue differently. Inuit knowledge and archaeology, as well as social sciences in general, do not need to be reconciled, because they already coincide in many ways. In this chapter, I identify the points where these perspectives overlap and propose analytical methods that use these intersections in ways that are relevant for both worldviews.

Inuit knowledge works with a person-centred perspective fundamentally embedded in social relations that include not just humans, but materials, animals, natural and supernatural elements. This paradigm resonates with trends in social psychology and social network theories, in their focus on individuals and the way they engage with other individuals and social groups. However, when using such paradigms, as Briggs (1992) reminds us, an important distinction between individuals and ‘the individual’ needs to be made. The expression ‘the individual’, used extensively in the social sciences, focuses on what individuals have in common and creates a ‘universal individual’ that is set off against society and that is homogenous across social groups, cultures and time periods. This reflects a fear that we researchers have about too many details, seen as an impediment to our project of generalising about practices, behaviours, ideas, cultures etc. At the same time, however,

there is a general recognition that what we often call ‘culture’ consists of ingredients which people actively select, interpret and use in various ways, as opportunities, capabilities and experience allow. This is not done by ‘the individual’, but by individuals. Consequently, bringing individuals into our focus contributes rather efficiently to our understanding of how culture and its manifold components operates in persons and how persons operate with culture, each creating the other (Briggs 1992: 25-26). When I study the Inuit elders’ autobiographical narratives and acknowledge their highly personal aspects, I can reach a much deeper understanding of Inuit social and cultural dynamics.

The creation of meaning by Inuit individuals is thus the central point of my research. More precisely, I search for the ways in which Inuit elders create meanings about their everyday life objects in the workshops and Igloodik archives. These become my analytical tools when assessing how material culture once created meanings in the everyday life of the Thule Inuit. The key here is to avoid applying the elders’ stories directly to Thule Inuit assemblages. These narratives need to be understood in their own terms first, in order to identify principles that generate meaning between individuals and material culture. Only once this is done can we use these principles as analogical premises for archaeological research.

But what exactly do I mean by ‘meaning’? This chapter also addresses this critical question, more specifically in terms of the meaning of material culture. Given the active aspects of the relationships between persons and things in general, and given the ways in which elders talk about the objects in their narratives, I define ‘meaning’ as the role that

objects play in people's lives. It refers to the impacts that objects have in the personal and social development of individuals, in inter-personal relations and in social differentiation.

5.2 *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*

I use *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ), the 'Inuit long-standing knowledge that is still useful', as a starting point in defining and understanding the Inuit perspective on the world. IQ is a concept that was first defined by a conference on traditional knowledge convened by the Nunavut Social Development Council in Igloolik in 1998 (Wenzel 2004: 240). IQ was conceived for many reasons, one of them being the ability to communicate to non-Inuit social and natural scientists a genuine and complete definition and meaning of Inuit knowledge. One of the main aspects of IQ, as its name reveals, is its roots in the past and its use in the present. For these reasons, IQ offers us a useful introduction to the knowledge that Inuit elders shared in the Igloolik archives and the workshops at the McCord Museum, as well as ideas on how to use it for archaeological analyses.

First of all, IQ is not an abstract concept or a notion that can be defined easily in a few words. It refers to knowledge of the land, kinship patterns and customary law; it is a way of living and seeing the world, which empowers Inuit as a society, restores pride and increases self-esteem at the individual level (Henderson 2007: 191, 198). Although IQ is about Inuit values, it is grounded and transmitted in experience and practice. Also, it must be noted that IQ is not only about transmitting traditions, but it is also about innovation and improvisation. It is not based on a linear concept of life and time. As mentioned in Chapter 3, for Inuit people, ancestors precede the living in the cycle of life: the ancestors' names are

given to newborns along with their character traits and skills (Anawak 1996; Laugrand 2002b: 109-110). IQ is about individuals and society, the land, the animals, the humans, the minds and the practices, and the interconnectedness of all these elements of Inuit life. For example, generosity between persons is relevant to what occurs between humans and animals (Stairs 1992; Stairs and Wenzel 1992). IQ is thus holistic, as it emphasises the organic and functional relations between various elements of the Inuit social and natural environment. In IQ, everything is related in such a way that nothing can stand alone, nothing has a “circle or border around it” (Tester and Irniq 2008: 48-49).

IQ can be very challenging when it comes to its application to concrete situations, whether they be political, social or academic (Tester and Irniq 2008). In the academic realm, IQ is often seen as a kind of ‘indigenous knowledge’ opposed to ‘Western scientific knowledge’ (for example Bielawski 1989; Cruikshank 1981; Fienup-Riordan 1999; Stevenson 1996; Wenzel 2004). Accordingly, much effort has been put into the reconciliation of this paradigmatic dualism. My contribution to this debate begins with the refutation of such dualism, based on the following facts: (1) the concept of ‘Western scientific knowledge’ is far from being an homogenous body of theories and methodologies, and (2) among these theories and methodologies there are a growing number of approaches that have multiple intersections with Inuit perspectives.

In what follows, I first describe the overarching social theory and methodology that I consider to be the most appropriate for acknowledging and applying the Inuit perspective to Thule Inuit analyses, in a relevant and productive way. These approaches will be used throughout my discussion about Inuit social life and material culture, based on the Igloodik

archives, the workshops at the McCord Museum and the ethnographic literature about North American Inuit, as well as my own archaeological analyses.

5.3 The social network approach

What I call the social network approach stems from the social theory of Gabriel Tarde (1890, 1893, 1895, 1897 and 1898) and the work of Bruno Latour (2005) on Actor-Network Theory (ANT). The paradigms of Tarde and Latour offer multiple possibilities for understanding the interactions between individuals, groups and material culture, as well as facilitating the integration of Inuit perspectives in archaeological research agendas. In particular, they allow us to identify the various active roles played by objects in the social lives of individuals and groups, which is central to Inuit social life and crucial for archaeological research in general. Before exploring the specific relevance and concrete applications of Tarde and Latour's works, I first describe their theories and methodologies.

Gabriel Tarde's sociological programme stems from his personal experience of observing social behaviours among individuals as a judge and criminologist. He strongly encouraged the consideration of the psychological aspect of the interactions between persons (what he called *interpsychology*, another word for social psychology). Why do people follow leaders? Why do they think and act the same way? Why do groups differentiate? Why do people oppose one another? For Tarde, answers are in the individual interactions themselves (Tarde 1898). According to his theory, societies, groups and institutions are first and foremost composed of concrete and interacting individuals, and these should be the major concerns of social theory (Tarde 1893). These questions have now become the main

programme of social psychology, a discipline in which Gabriel Tarde is seen as one of the major forefathers (see Tarde 1973).

Tarde questioned the very existence of macrostructures such as society, developed in the mainstream social theory of Durkheim. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) is often described as the principal founder of modern sociology. He dedicated most of his works to the establishment of sociology as an objective science (following Auguste Comte's positivist programme), an autonomous discipline distinct from the concurrent social sciences of philosophy and psychology (Durkheim 1893, 1895, 1897, 1912). For Durkheim, sociology should not be concerned with individuals and their subjective minds. Instead, he argued that social phenomena should be studied as entities, distinct from persons (Durkheim 1963 [1895]: 10, 28). His first and most fundamental principle about social facts is that we have to consider facts as things (Durkheim 1963 [1895]: 15). Durkheim's goal was to give social facts a concrete force that would become the exclusive object of the study of sociology. The notion of *force* is central in Durkheim's programme: social facts are phenomena that have the force to constrain individuals. If people act in similar ways, it is because there is one force that directs them in the same movement (ibid: 11). Social facts are precisely recognisable by this very power of external coercion. They correspond to norms and tendencies established by society and its institutions. In other words, society and its institutional forces dominate individuals. Since these collective tendencies have a great uniformity, it was impossible for Durkheim to think that they emerged out of individual minds. Thus, according to Durkheim, "there is no other moral being in the world but society" (Durkheim 1897: 309). Consequently, for Durkheim and for the mainstream theories inspired by his works, research

about the social should focus on the macro level of ‘society’, which is distinct from and beyond individuals.

In opposition to these ideas²⁸, Tarde situated the main object of sociology in the individual. He argued that the macro levels of social phenomena are just a simplified extension of micro levels, which are in turn much more complex, logical and significant:

In general, there is more logic in a sentence than in a talk, in a talk than in a sequence or group of talks; there is more logic in a special ritual than in a whole credo; in an article of law than in a whole code of laws, in a specific scientific theory than in the whole body of a science; there is more logic in each piece of work executed by an artisan than in the totality of his behaviour (Tarde 1898, translated and cited in Latour 2001).

However, Tarde does not define the social solely through individuals. In fact, he was against the duality of individual/society, which became the bread and butter of modern sociology for the entire 20th century, and which was later transformed into similar dualities, such as agency/structure, as seen in the work of Bourdieu (1972) and Giddens (1984). But what is a social phenomenon for Tarde if it is located neither in the individual nor in society?

Tarde observed people’s tendency to share behaviours and thoughts, and also to oppose one another. He wanted to find the mechanisms at the origin of these phenomena. The social fact, for him, lies in the relations, the interactions, the associations between social actors (Tarde 1898). Tarde named this basic social fact *imitation*. By imitation, he meant the influence that human beings have on others, which causes them to think and act in the same

²⁸ Gabriel Tarde and Emile Durkheim were actually contemporaneous and academic opponents. A public debate between the two occurred in 1903 at École des Hautes Études Sociales in France (Vargas et al. 2008). However, their paradigmatic oppositions were mostly developed in their academic publications.

way and to associate with one another. He also developed the related concept of *opposition*, which are tendencies of imitations of the same nature (such as ideas, ways of doing) to go against one another, for example, the right and the left wings in politics. Oppositions are as vital as imitations because they legitimise and reinforce one another in their very antagonism. Following the same example, the existence of a right wing in politics would have no significance if there was no left wing, and vice versa.

The application of Tarde's social theory to concrete research programmes has been extensively elaborated by the sociologist Bruno Latour (2005). Inspired by Tarde's notion of 'monads', the stuff out which the universe is built (Tarde 1893), Latour argues that things and people are ontologically indivisible – they are all monads, or basic elements of the social world. Latour suggests seeing people and objects as entities that have always been entangled, forming a mixture without which they would simply not exist (Latour 1991; 2005: 63-86). The social world is neither made of humans nor of objects, but of a collective of mixtures and entanglements that incorporate human *and* material elements. Latour's work is an encouragement to see social phenomena as networks of peoples and things, and to trace the roles of each actor in these associations.

Latour's programme, called Actor-Network Theory (ANT), has gained much popularity in the past few decades. Basically, ANT encourages researchers to study the world in terms of networks where humans and non-humans, such as material objects, animals, and natural and supernatural elements of the environment, interconnect in order to form strings of actions. The *social*, for ANT as for Tarde, resides in these very connections. It is important to note that despite the name of the programme, ANT is not meant to be a *theory*, but it is

first and foremost a method. It is a tool that guides research at two levels: it tells us how to study the social phenomena that we observe and how to write our accounts about them (Latour 2005: 130-31, 141-43). In other words, a 'network' is not necessarily a concept or entity that exists in itself; it is rather a means to trace the relevant associations in which our objects of study are caught, to identify the connections that really matter. A network perspective focuses on the traces left by the actors – humans, objects, animals – in their interconnected strings of actions. To sum up, when adopting Tarde's social theory and Latour's methodology, we understand social dynamics by tracing the associations between people and things that are connected to our object of study, by figuring out what are/were the effects that those people and things have/had on one another. For example, when we study the social relationships between Inuit hunters in a given camp, we will not only look at the individuals, but we will also study their hunting equipment, the way they make, repair and use it, and the animals that these men hunt together. The hunters, their technology (tools and techniques), and the game animals constitute one of these social networks.

There is an apparent similarity between tracing these associations and other methods more commonly used in archaeology, namely the biographical and contextual approaches (Appadurai 1986; Hodder 1987; Kopytoff 1986). The biographical approach encourages us to study material objects through their life trajectories, as they have moved from the maker to the trader to the user, through technological, economical, social and sacred contexts, from one regime of value to another or from one sphere of exchange to another, and to identify the various meanings and values that people and societies inscribed in things throughout these processes (Kopytoff 1986). Similarly, the contextual approach (Hodder 1986, 1987)

draws our attention to the different contexts that have generated material forms, the uses and the meanings of objects. These contexts refer to the physical effects that an object has on the world, its place in social codes or structures and its symbolic meanings. They refer to action, structure and content; they are technological, social and ideological. An obvious similarity between these two approaches and ANT is that it encourages the researcher to consider widely all the possible connections that an object had during its life, with different people that had different goals in making and using it.

The biographical and contextual approaches both refer to individual intentions and agencies, as well as abstract forces, systems, milieus and cultures, through which things move and are injected with meanings. It is sometimes individuals who inscribe these meanings and values through their manipulation of the objects, or it is done through their culture, society or any other abstract contexts. With these approaches, material objects are passive recipients of meanings that are given either by individuals or by society, in their process of social construction.

ANT is different in that it encourages studying the object as a nexus to which are connected various other actors, both individual and non-human, in a way that ignores polarised levels of meanings such as individual/society, local/global or interaction/context. Latour suggests that we concentrate on fully visible and empirically traceable connections, without jumping straight to an overarching structure. This does not mean that there is nothing more than local and visible actors in interactions. Because what is acting or influencing at any one moment in any place might be coming from many other places and

time periods; it is not necessarily visible, although its traces are, and it is heterogeneous in that it is not only made of human beings, but also of material objects:

No wonder interactions provided social scientists with the strong impression that they were overflowing in all directions. They are! That does not mean that some solid overarching context holds them solidly in place through the grip of some hidden structural force. It means that a bewildering array of participants is simultaneously at work in them and which are dislocating their neat boundaries, in all sorts of ways, redistributing them away and making it impossible to start anywhere that can be said to be 'local'. (Latour 2005: 202).

In practice, when applying Tarde's theories to our archaeological research programmes, we are first encouraged to concentrate on observable phenomena, instead of the abstract social structure. Secondly, we should not delimit a geographical or spatial framework in which we will seek the interpretation of our data. Inter-house comparisons or regional studies can be highly revealing for questions pertaining to specific archaeological units, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 13. The same applies to any other pre-established scale, e.g. socio-economic class, cultures, ethnic boundaries and different areas of human activities, such as subsistence, religion, family and so on. To circumscribe our research by such frameworks before engaging in our analysis might yield the exact opposite result of what is expected, because those predetermined and bounded contexts will most probably hide, instead of reveal, the connections that we are looking for. Answers to our questions may, and surely will, be found outside our expected boundaries. In order to find these answers, we have to go from one connection to another, following the empirically observable traces that the actors have left behind. The key is to understand these very connections, because they are the main social facts.

The overarching social paradigm of Gabriel Tarde and the methodological approach of Bruno Latour represent what I call the ‘social network approach’. This paradigm shares many points with other more specific approaches – theoretical and/or methodological – that ignore dualisms such as nature/culture, individual/society, human/material, subsistence/religion, technology/art and so on. Not only do they acknowledge the porosity of these boundaries, but they also consider the connections between these areas of human life as keys to understanding social relations. The work of Bourdieu (1972, 1980) on *habitus* and practice are among these approaches, as well as the associated school of techniques in anthropology and archaeology (Dietler and Herbich 1989, 1998; Dobres 2000; Lemonnier 1986). The social network approach also brings to our attention the concept of agency in social and material culture studies (Dobres and Robb 2000; Gell 1998; Giddens 1984) and the importance of body techniques and skill (Ingold 2000; Mauss 1966 [1936]). It also questions the boundaries between the mind, the body and materials (Ingold 2007; Knappett 2005) and challenges dogmas around the concepts of art and technology (Gell 1992, 1998; Ingold 2000). This approach also underscores the role of the individual in the social world, inviting us to consider social psychological perspectives in archaeological research. These various approaches will be used throughout my analysis of Inuit perspectives on material culture.

The social network approach is also directly relevant to addressing the autobiographical nature of the stories and knowledge shared by Inuit elders in the Inullariit Elders’ Society archives and at the McCord Museum. The elders’ narratives pertain mainly to their personal lives and experiences. A typical way for them to begin an interview is by

affirming that they will only talk about things that they have seen, heard or experienced personally (Oosten and Laugrand 2000). However, an autobiographical narrative does not necessarily preclude the social; in fact, Inuit knowledge is fundamentally social, it stems from people's interactions with each other and with their environment (ibid: 9); the personal aspect of knowledge is actually more in the way it is communicated by elders. Elders tell stories and comment on artefacts from highly personal perspectives, which include their social relations in which this material culture is embedded. Such information shared by the elders has to be understood primarily within the social and material boundaries of the narratives per se. Our analytical efforts are thus first directed towards the identification and understanding of the interconnections between persons, objects and practices revealed by these autobiographical narratives among the Inuit. And these interconnections will become the premises for the analogy with Thule Inuit material culture and social life.

My analytical approach to the Igloodik archives and the workshops at the McCord focus on the personal, social and material interconnections that the narratives evoke, as I am looking for recurrent patterns of network interactions across their stories and comments. Studying these narratives from a social network perspective allows for the identification of the roles played by specific objects and the related practices in people's personal identities and social relations. Various kinds of interactions were evoked by the elders: the role of specific objects in the development of persons throughout their life cycles, becoming an adult, a man, a woman, a seamstress, a hunter, the creation and maintenance of relations within families and communities and the process of social differentiation within and between

communities. My analysis of these narratives is aimed at identifying the specific objects and material attributes that had meaning in the social life of the Inuit.

5.4 The meaning of material culture

What do we mean exactly when we talk about the meaning of objects? When archaeologists and anthropologists study and write about material objects in the context of their research, they often seek significance through analysis of objects' shapes, modes of fabrication, uses, exchanges and the technological, social, cultural, economical and historical context of these objects. In trying to make sense of objects, researchers investigate what they commonly call their 'meanings'. The notion of meaning is complex and can have many connotations, depending on whether we study it through the lenses of philosophy, linguistics, semantics, hermeneutics and so on.

Throughout the development of anthropology and archaeology, the notion of meaning for material culture has been defined and addressed in a variety of ways. For example, early evolutionary anthropology and archaeology considered material culture in terms of inventions, organised taxonomically from simple or 'primitive' forms to complex ones (e.g. Frazer 1954 [1922]; Morgan 1877; Tylor 1920 [1871]). Their meanings were oriented on an evolutionary scale, and concerned mostly cultural or technological adaptations to the physical world. Evolutionary paradigms were followed by cultural history in archaeology, Boasian anthropology and cultural ecological approaches for which the meaning of objects were mostly related to their capacity to represent certain cultures, traditions, time periods and geo-cultural areas, as well as the relations, influences and

transitions between these cultural categories. Material styles were then seen as labels of cultures, time periods, geographical areas and signs of migration and diffusion (e.g. Boas 1887; Kroeber 1957; Montelius 1903; Petrie 1901, 1939; Steward 1955). In French archaeology, objects were also investigated in terms of their techniques of fabrication, use and discard – mostly through the lenses of Leroi-Gourhan’s concept of *chaîne opératoire* or ‘operational sequence’ (Leroi-Gourhan 1943, 1964). Techniques and practices as forms of meaning were also developed by anthropologists (Bourdieu 1972, 1980; Lemonnier 1986) and are still fundamental to archaeology today (e.g. Dietler and Herbich 1998; Dobres 2000).

From a functionalist perspective, the meanings of objects are mostly associated with their functions in different spheres of societies and cultures, such as within religious systems, economies, social organisations and other institutions (e.g. Durkheim 1912; Malinowski 1922, 1979 [1931]). An analogous approach was also undertaken by proponents of the New Archaeology – processual archaeology – where objects are studied for their role in the technological, social and ideological spheres of societies and cultures (Binford 1962, 1965). It is important to note the bounded nature of these categories of meanings suggested by this archaeological tradition: their ‘technological function’, for example, pieces of hunting equipment primarily made for subsistence; their ‘social function’, such as the same hunting equipment having a function in the development of the owner’s social status; and their ‘symbolic function’, for example elements of these pieces, such as incised decoration, and the way they influence the souls of game animals.

The focus on the ‘symbolic’ aspects of meaning was intensified by structuralist, symbolic and interpretive paradigms in anthropology and archaeology. Here, things are

mostly treated as elements within a symbolic code that needs to be interpreted (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 1962a, 1962b; Hodder 1982). This approach often took inspiration from structural linguistics (Saussure 1915), hence the very popular metaphor of ‘reading material culture’: here, things have to be read in their socio-cultural contexts, like words in a sentence or in a text (Tilley 1990; Hodder 1986). These views were principally developed by post-structuralist thought in social sciences (e.g. Barthes 1968; Geertz 1973; Turner 1967, 1973) and post-processual archaeology (e.g. Hodder 1982, 1986; Miller and Tilley 1984; Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 1987b).

Some other meanings of material culture can include communication, for example communicating one’s status or identity within or between communities through the making, the use or the display of specific objects (Wiessner 1983; Wobst 1977) or the production and exchange of objects as gifts and/or commodities and the social and economical ramifications of such actions (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992; Malinowski 1926; Marx 1978 [1867]; Mauss 1923-1924; Miller and Tilley 1984; Strathern 1988, 1992). Finally, investigating these various roles and meanings often leads researchers to reconstruct the ‘biography’ of things, as they have passed from one hand to another, from one social, technological, cultural and/or economical context to another (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986). Here, the meanings of objects are found in their life history, the various contexts in which they were made, used, exchanged and discarded.

These different types of meanings intersect with one another in many ways. Assessing meanings simultaneously is thus the most relevant approach to adopt. However, this is also a difficult challenge, because it asks researchers to ignore the usual categories and

boundaries with which they are used to working. To continue with the example of the hunting equipment, technological studies about these kinds of objects tend to undermine their 'ideological' or 'symbolic' roles in society. Conversely, ritual objects like personal amulets are seldom studied as part of hunting technology and subsistence strategies. And yet it is widely documented in anthropological literature that hunting activities are not only performed to achieve physical subsistence, but are as much functions of the social and spiritual life of communities. Among the Inuit, hunting not only fulfils the biological needs of communities; it is also about securing and maintaining personal relations with the spirits of game animals. This is done notably through the skilful and efficient production and use of hunting tools – and these principles are also extended to the personal and domestic tools involved in the ceremonial treatment of the body parts of the animals, such as butchering, food preparation, skin preparation, sewing and discarding the bones. Consequently, when studying hunting equipment, domestic utensils for butchering, food preparation and sewing equipment, one would need to consider simultaneously most of the above-mentioned paradigms and theories about the concept of meaning. Before developing this suggestion further, I wish to point out a second difficulty that I see with the variety of meanings that archaeology and anthropology commonly give to material culture. This difficulty revolves around objects' material aspect.

In many of the paradigms that I have presented above, the meanings of objects are somewhat divorced from their purely material, physical aspects. This division mostly stems from the polarisation between the notion of meaning, which is often linked with abstract entities like the human mind and ideologies, and the physical aspects of objects, such as the

materials they are made of, their qualities and properties and their design. Here, I mainly refer to the approaches that investigate social meanings or that use the notions of symbols, where the said meanings are sought in codes of representations, ideologies, cultural and social contexts and so on. For example, when researchers say that they ‘read material culture’ they actually divide the objects into two distinct sets of components: the first composed of physical matter, and the second being ‘symbolic’ components that are read by the researcher (Jones 2007: 14-19). It is as if objects, in their material substance, present themselves to the world as brute and in a meaningless state, until humans appear on the scene to give them significance (Ingold 2007: 3). These paradigms also depict human interaction with objects in a hierarchical sequence where human thoughts lead, behaviours are secondary and material expression is at the end of the process (Knappett 2005: 35). Even the concept of ‘materiality’ that has become very popular and central to material culture studies in anthropology is very rarely related to the physical properties of objects. The ‘materiality’ of objects often refers to the human significance, the social and historical context of objects; the social life of materials in relation to the social life of persons. In other words, ‘materiality’ is about moving from ‘brute’ consideration of materials to their ‘social significance’ (Tilley 2007: 32).

Ingold has discussed at length the problems of addressing material objects in this manner (2007). His most important argument, in my opinion, is that this concept of ‘materiality’, as well as the concept of symbol, supposes a disengagement of individuals from the material world with which they are physically interacting on an everyday basis. However, the physical engagement of people with objects is not something that we should discard too readily in our search for the meanings of things. Instead, I suggest that meaning is present –

and produced – in the physical engagement of people and objects, and this is where it should be sought.

Here, Latour's approach used in conjunction with semiotics becomes very useful. The social network approach tells us to identify the observable traces left by such engagement between individuals and objects. These traces are reminders of the semiotic notion of 'index' (Peirce 1931-1935). Peirce proposed a very complex classification of signs, based on the multitude of possible relationships between the signifier and the signified. His approach reminds us that there is no one way for an object to signify something. The signifying process, called 'semiosis', is composed of three major elements: the representamen (or sign), the object itself, and the interpretant (or the interpretation). Depending on which perspective we use when we organise these elements, signs can be divided into three main categories: icon, index and symbol (ibid: para. 275). With icons, there is a relation of similarity between the sign and the object, for example a painted portrait. Here, the 'sign' is the prime character of the signification process. The symbol has an arbitrary relation with the object and responds to cultural conventions, for example a word and the objects it refers to. For symbols, the 'interpretant' is the main factor for the semiosis of this sign. Finally, the index has a concrete and causal relationship between the object and the sign, for example smoke as the index of fire. Here, the 'object' is the prime character of the sign.

Seeing objects as *indexes* or indicators of social interactions and practices allows us to identify the actions and interactions at the origins of the object itself, or the actions caused by the objects, and their material traces such as elements of design, mediums, marks of use, etc. It allows us to address both the agency of persons and of objects simultaneously and

their implications for the meaning of these objects and their material traces. For example, incised marks on hunting and fishing equipment were commonly made by Alaskan Inuit (Boas 1899). These marks were actual signatures of the makers and owners of the objects, a way to identify their tools among the ones of other hunters. They were specific to individuals and were transmitted from father to sons with slight modifications between generations. When analogous marks are encountered on Thule Inuit tools (as we will see in the coming chapters, in the case of a fish lure included in my archaeological analyses), to see them as 'indexes' allows us to automatically include the following factors in the search for their meaning: the man who made and used the object, the other men with whom he interacts, and the social context of the activity in which the object is used. If a person needs to identify his or her fish lure, it is partly because other people with similar objects are around, probably fishing together, and they do not want to get their belongings mixed up. They might also want to share the objects, and here the signature becomes helpful as a testimony or a reminder of the loan and the promise to bring it back. The incised mark is the index, the trace left by these interactions and social relations between individuals. Once these indexes are identified, we can suggest that the incised marks are symbols of communal fishing, inter-generational relationships, sharing practices, and so on. However, these symbols would need to be explained through the indexical relations previously identified.

5.5 The production of meaning in the workshops at the McCord Museum

The workshops at the McCord were organised in order to reveal the meanings of Inuit ethnographic collections, through the voices of Inuit elders. The elders shared a variety of personal stories and memories that echoed each category of meanings that I have

discussed above – technological, social, historical, economic and symbolic. However, these meanings were produced and shared, remembered, demonstrated and narrated, in a way that transcends these categories. For example, while discussing a series of kayak models, we heard in the same narrative about the technicalities of their fabrication, the names of their various parts, demonstration of the techniques for sewing the skins on them or for paddling in the Inuit way, remembrances of the times when the participants were children and their fathers would take them out in their kayak, and an explicit emphasis on the importance of the kayak in Inuit culture and survival.

It is very important to note that the participants mainly generated these different meanings through physical contact with and sensorial perception of the objects. The meanings did not simply originate from their minds and memories. They were produced in a sequence of actions initiated by the curator of the collection and myself, who organised the workshops, and the participants (Gadoua 2014, 2013). At the beginning of each workshop, the participants were invited to sit at a large table. While the interpreters, cameraman, curator of the Inuit collection and I were setting up the camera, the voice recorders, preparing consent forms and serving glasses of water, the elders were already busy observing and commenting on the objects laid out on a cart near them. Right away, the sight of the objects was generative of a first flow of discussion. When we finally brought the objects to the table, there was usually a short moment of reserve: the participants, who had been very lively and talkative a few minutes before, silently watched us handle the objects with care and with our curatorial gloves. Wearing these gloves, made of cotton or latex, is a conventional practice in museums aimed at protecting the objects from heat, moisture and/or dirt on our hands, and

vice-versa. But as soon as the curator and I told the elders that they could touch the objects and manipulate them as they wished, without gloves, hands reached out and words began to flow.

The physical and bodily perception of the objects – essentially sight and touch, but also the smell of certain materials, like seal oil on a blubber pounder and the sound they make, such as the different sounds of the metal blade of an *ulu* when one pinches on it, telling us if it is sharp or not – generated an automatic process of remembering knowledge, anecdotes and stories from the past. Simultaneously, these memories were expressed through narrations and gestures, perceived by the other participants, who, in turn, remembered and shared their own.

The mechanisms through which the participants gave meanings to the objects – a sequence of sensory perceptions, acts of remembrance, narrations, demonstrations and communication – have multiple implications as to how we researchers conceptualise the notion of the meaning of material culture. Here, I wish to consider two major implications: the dynamic relation between memory and material culture, and the importance of the physical, sensory perception of objects. To begin, it is probably more appropriate to talk about the process of remembering, than the concept of memory itself. The workshops clearly demonstrate that ‘memories’ are not inherently contained or stored in objects or in people’s minds, ready to be extracted at will. Rather, the objects provide the ground, the opportunity for humans to remember past events, activities, and stories in the present (Jones 2007). Here, I consider the process of remembering not as internal to the human mind, but as occurring in the bodily encounter between people and objects, in the sensory experience

of humans interacting with things. The same arguments can also be said about the concept of ‘meaning’. I suggest that meaning is not something inherently contained in objects that people have to retrieve, or *read*. Instead, the meaning of objects is produced in the physical encounter between people and objects in the present.

But what exactly is happening in this physical, sensorial encounter between people and objects that allows meaning to be generated? I have mentioned the process of remembering, but here I want to discuss the specific mechanisms that trigger the recalling, narration and re-enactment of memories. The concept of *affordances* developed by ecological psychologist James Gibson (1979) helps us to answer this question. The affordances of an object are the potentialities held by that object for a particular set of actions. In other words, affordances are the possible sets of actions that people could undertake when they perceive and manipulate an object. Affordances also go hand in hand with constraints that limit these sets of actions, which, in turn, are physically, logistically and culturally dictated. The meanings generated also depend on the person who perceives the object, and the context in which this perception is made. Let us take a chair for example. Physically and logistically, the materials and design of a chair allow certain actions to be undertaken, and preclude others. We can sit on a chair, stand on it, put our coat on it, but we could not, say, navigate waters or cook an egg on it. Culturally, and this refers also to the context and the person who perceives the chair, there are ways and moments to sit on a chair that depend on various factors: babies will not sit on a chair when they see it, but they may use it to pull themselves up and stand on their feet. An elder might not be physically able to sit down if the chair is too low. A chair exhibited in a museum display does not invite sitting; one can merely look

at it. These examples do not mean that the chair does not afford sitting – what the actor decides to do with the chair is completely dependent on his perception, which, in turn, is directly linked to his/her body, skills, knowledge, cultural background and the context in which he/she perceives the object. I consider the affordances of the object – the actions that the object can *and* does allow people to undertake with it – to be generative of its meanings.

I want to stress the importance of not dividing the physical world of objects from the mental, ideational world of humans that give meaning to it. This division often leads to a perception of human interaction with objects organised in a sequence where the object, the human body and the mind are separate entities. This starts with an external stimulus (the presence of an object), followed by the perception of the object through the senses (seeing and taking the object), which precipitates the creation of representations of the object in the person's mind (connecting the object with a cultural/functional category of objects) that allow the formulation of an appropriate response. This response is later conveyed in the body and enacted in the external environment (using the object in a culturally/functionally appropriate manner). The concept of affordances differs in the importance it gives to the physical engagement of humans with material objects, rather than their mental representations of the world – because for guidance on what to do next, humans interact with their material environment and not with representations in their minds (Ingold 2007). Of course, there are some cultural and ideological constraints that affect the way people use objects, but it is important to assess these constraints in the very physical aspects of the objects and the sensorial interaction between humans and things.

In the workshops at the McCord, objects were initially perceived through sight, which invites a first set of remembrances and narratives, usually simple comments about their nature and functions. The affordances of the objects in this context are that they allow the participants to remember past interactions that they had with similar objects during their life, for example, how they once made and used them, with whom, in what contexts, and to share these memories with the other participants. As I mentioned above, something important happened when the curator and I placed the objects on the table where the participants were sitting: the elders suddenly became reserved and stopped talking. The way in which we interacted with the objects, especially our use of gloves, suggested that the participants might not have been allowed to touch them with their bare hands. Culturally, socially and materially determined affordances and constraints emerged out of our physical interactions with the objects. The conventional use of gloves by the curator and myself and the desire of the participants to respect this convention and to behave in a socially appropriate manner in the context of the workshops temporarily blocked any sharing, and probably to a certain extent the remembrance, of memories related to the objects. These constraints shifted back to affordances when we informed the participants that they could touch the objects without gloves: quickly, hands reached out and objects came back to life in their hands, through their remembrances and narratives.

To illustrate the notion of affordance further, we can think of objects that resist interpretation until they are encountered in action. In the workshops, certain types of objects that we presented to the participants were not made or used the same way across the different regions of the Canadian Arctic, or sometimes they simply did not exist in every

region. For example, a snow probe, a long piece of antler that was straightened in order to test the depth of snow, was presented to all the participants (Figure 7). Depending on the region of Nunavik where the participants came from, their comments on this object were very different. Most of the participants didn't know its basic function, so they would examine it closely, manipulate it, and guess the function based on its material properties and design using their cultural and logistical categories of material forms and possible functions. Some even jokingly invented a new function and suggested that it was a back scratcher – and in fact the form of the object would be perfect for this purpose. Another object stimulated a similar set of reactions, but this time its form was more conventional and featured some typical traits of a skin scraper, most specifically in the handle and the blade (Figure 8). But this scraper was very large and had a 'strange' handle designed to be held with two hands rather than just one, which is unconventional for scrapers made and used by Inuit from Nunavik. The object was collected in Alaska and was used for scraping the blubber off the skin of large sea mammals. The moment that participants took the scraper in their hands and tried it out, mimicking the scraping of a skin, they would perceive its precise function, to scrape a skin with both hands, and they all appreciated and commented on the efficiency of its design. Here, the affordances of the snow probe and the large skin scraper were assessed through the perception of the material qualities and design of the objects, their manipulation, and the cultural, social and logistical knowledge/constraints of the participants associated with the objects.



Figure 7: Snow probe. McCord Museum M21105 (length 82.2 cm)



Figure 8: Ulu. McCord Museum M999.105.24 (length 32.1cm)

The concept of affordance allows us to simultaneously assess the numerous meanings of objects that emerge from their interactions with persons, during the various processes of fabrication and use, and all the social relations in which these processes are themselves embedded. In order to access these meanings, one should first investigate the role that these objects play in the lives of their makers and users, rather than the meaning

they might have had in their minds or culture. The roles played by an object in the life of the people who make and use it are empirically observable and traceable. Objects and their attributes are indexes of these actions and interactions. Once these roles, these impacts, are recognised and understood, they can be considered to be the meanings of the object per se.

Bloch (2005: 41-42) made a similar reflection when trying to find the meaning of beautiful and complex carvings made on the wooden house poles of the Zafimaniry people in Madagascar. When he asked the carvers 'what were the designs representing or meaning', the carvers would answer 'nothing'. When he asked if there was a cause or a point of these carvings, the artisans would answer that 'there was no point'. And when he would ask the carvers during their work 'what they were doing', the answer would be 'carving'. Another common answer was that these carvings 'made the wood beautiful'. Bloch initially found this answer frustrating because it appeared devoid of content and meaning. But when an informant explained that the carvings were to honour the wood, Bloch realised that the beautification of the wood was actually a very important practice for these people. Decorated wooden poles played crucial roles in the house construction of newly married couples for many different reasons: architectural, but also social and cultural. For these people, houses are the basis of ordered society and the mark of a successful life. Marriage takes a material form in the house that couples begin to build and furnish early in their relationship. Over the years, men solidify the houses and embellish them with these decorated wooden poles. Basically, the house and its decorated wooden poles *are* the marriage. Later, when the original couple dies, their children and grandchildren continue to use or visit the house to settle disputes or ask blessings from the original couple (ibid: 42-

44). So when the carvers stated that the decorations on the poles were meant to make the wood beautiful, their statement contained the key to the important meaning of this gesture in their lives and the associated object and persons (the house, the spouse, the family).

During the workshops at the McCord, I asked similar questions about various decorated tools: why these tools were decorated, what was the meaning, the purpose of these decorations? The answers would range from ‘these are not decorations, these are tools’, to ‘these are just different ways of doing by different camps’ (Robbie Tukalak²⁹, McCord Museum, 15 April 2010), or that they were meant to ‘identify the tools to the owners, so they don’t get lost among others’ (Nancy Palliser, McCord Museum, 28 April 2010). A man also told me that the decorated tools meant that the person was rich. And finally, one elder said that it was because these tools ‘were the most valued ones in the household’ (Qupanuaq Padlayat, McCord Museum, 27 April 2010). These answers to the question of the ‘meaning’ of decoration all point to the various roles of these objects in the lives of their makers and users: affirming social belonging in a community as distinct from others, affirming one’s personal identity within the group, building or reinforcing one’s special social status, or just making the object look beautiful because one is attached to it. And above all, the elders reminded me that these were first and foremost ‘tools’ and not ‘decorated objects’.

The implications of these discussions about decoration on tools will be developed further in the coming chapters. What is important to note here is that the meanings of objects or their specific attributes are to be found in the various roles they play in the lives of

²⁹ The participants of my workshops are cited in accordance with their consent forms. Some participants asked to be identified with their complete names, while other wished to remain anonymous. In the latter case, I only mention the gender of the participant.

their makers and users. These roles and the impact that objects have on the world are materially and empirically observable. They leave traces, just as with the Peircean index. We can recognise them in the elders' narratives in the Igloolik archives and at the workshops at the McCord, and we can recognise them in the objects themselves. The elders' comments and stories reveal the networks of interactions and associations between Inuit individuals, objects and their environment, and once we identify the precise material indicators or indexes of these interactions, they, by ethnographic analogy, help us to make our way back from Thule Inuit artefacts to the social networks per se.

This chapter has addressed key problems associated with the integration of different forms of knowledge when doing collaborative archaeology in the Inuit context. I have discussed the particularities of Inuit knowledge, especially the way it is shared by elders. Because of the autobiographical and person-centred aspect of this knowledge, it could be seen as an impediment for the analogy with Thule Inuit from a social point of view. However, if we analyse the elders' narratives and Inuit social life with the appropriate social science paradigms in mind, the individualistic aspect of this knowledge can easily be linked with social phenomena. The social network approach developed by Tarde and Latour offers us such an opportunity to integrate successfully Inuit knowledge with social sciences. With the social network paradigm, the meaning of objects is sought in the physical interactions between objects, humans and their environment. Consequently, this approach supports and facilitates the material aspects of my research questions, data and methodology. In the coming chapters, I will describe the Inuit social networks in which objects of everyday life are imbedded, using the ethnographic literature, the oral history archives of the Inullariit

Elders Society and the workshops at the McCord. As I will demonstrate, my analyses of these networks generate a series of material culture principles that are linked to social patterns, which I used in my analogy with Thule Inuit assemblages.

6. Social life among the Inuit: ethnographic perspectives

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents Inuit social life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as reported in the ethnographic and ethnological literature. Although these ethnographies do not explicitly emphasise the role of material culture in Inuit social relations, they represent an important part of the social network in which humans and objects are imbedded.

The ethnographies that I refer to in this chapter divide Inuit people into regional groups (see Chapter 3). The classification of human groups into geo-cultural areas was a paradigm that prevailed when most of these ethnographies were produced (early 20th century). Kroeber's division of Inuit people into two major areas (Western Arctic and Central-Eastern Arctic) and 25 regional variants from Alaska to Greenland is a typical example of this culture-area method, in which he draws a "picture of the totality of Eskimo culture as a unit, modified by emphasis or reduction of its traits in direct response to local exigencies" (1939: 22). These variants correspond to geographic locations named according to non-Inuit cartography (e.g. Labrador, Baffinland, Melville Peninsula, Boothia Peninsula, Coronation Gulf, Mackenzie River, Point Barrow and so on). Kroeber defines groups by their main mode of subsistence (seal hunting from kayak or ice edge, walrus hunting, seal hunting from breathing hole, caribou hunting, salmon fishing, beluga hunting, bowhead whale hunting and so on) and some associated technological/material traits.

Although these geographical and ecological classifications of peoples and cultures are no longer being made by anthropologists, they were proved to be representative of strong

associations between natural conditions, culture and social life among Inuit (Damas 1984b). As mentioned in Chapter 3, there has indeed been a tendency among Inuit to develop different traditions, life-ways and dialects depending on where they live. Obviously, a lot of this variation has to do with local means of subsistence, at least at times when Inuit were solely dependent on hunting, fishing, gathering, and trading to make a living. The North American Arctic has several different ecosystems – on the land, on the coast and on the sea ice during winter. Necessarily, Inuit living in these different conditions and seeking various resources had to develop different ways of doing, of hunting, of dressing up, of living and of talking about their lives. Consequently, the divisions made by ethnologists presented in this chapter reflect a specific reality.

However, it is good to keep a critical eye on these ethnographies because their boundaries might be arbitrary, for example the geographical span that a single ethnologist can cover when travelling by foot or dog sled for a limited amount of time. However, as we will see in this chapter, most of the Canadian Arctic and Alaska have been studied by ethnologists during the early 20th century, so when using all these sources, we can have a good idea of the regional variability of the Inuit at that time. The Arctic volume of the Handbook of North American Indians (Damas 1984a) provides such a synthesis of Inuit groups and cultural variants during this period. I use this source extensively as the basis of this chapter, and I refer to the original sources (earlier ethnographies) for specific details about social life when needed.

In what follows, I describe various themes of Inuit social life, discussing their recurrences and variants across different regions of the Canadian Arctic and Northern

Alaska during the period mentioned above. These themes include kinship relations, hunting partnerships, sharing practices, leadership and social conflict rules, gender relations, and the spiritual beliefs and practices associated with these various aspects of Inuit social life. More specifically, I describe how local bands and hunting groups stem from extended families or related nuclear families. Each family has a headman, usually a senior hunter, acting more as an advisor than an actual leader. In addition to the family, various associations link individuals within and between communities, such as trading partners, dancing partners, wife-exchange partners, seal-sharing partners and so on. Inuit social life can also be observed through multiple customs, including food sharing practices, gender differentiation, leadership manifestations and conflict resolution strategies. Although some differences are noted, communities of the North American Arctic and Greenland share a large number of these elements. However, whaling communities of the North Alaskan coast are characterised by a more complex social organisation, with a greater emphasis on non-kindred associations such as whaling crews, a stronger manifestation of leadership and a higher level of social conflict. The spiritual aspects of Inuit social life mostly concern rules and taboos that are meant to guide the relations mentioned above, to provide explanations or purpose, or to encourage individuals to follow their principles. As I will demonstrate, Inuit spiritual life is in fact a support to its social life.

6.2 Kinship

Kinship ties are the main foundation of Inuit social organisation. Kinship relations regulate the household and settlement composition, the cooperation, sharing, defence, flow of information and expression of leadership. Above all, the basic social units of all groups

are defined by the nuclear family or the patrilocal extended family. In the early to mid 20th century, Inuinnait and Inuvialuit bands were composed essentially of nuclear families. These groups were the basic hunting and consumption units. They lived in “irregular combinations of nuclear families” (Damas 1972: 222) and often shared the products of their hunt between them. All the other groups, North Alaskan Coast Inuit, Caribou Inuit, Netsilik, Iglulik, Baffinland Inuit, Quebec Inuit, Labrador Inuit, Polar Inuit, West and East Greenland Inuit were usually organised around patrilocal extended families. For example, a father with his married sons and their respective wives and children would live in the same household for North Alaska Coast Inuit, Labrador Inuit and East Greenland Inuit, or in a cluster of dwellings for Caribou Inuit, Netsilik and Iglulik. They all travelled together, men of these extended families hunted together, and the products of these hunts were shared within these units.

Beyond these observable facts, one can draw conclusions about the underlying principles of these differences. Damas (1972: 222) compared the degree of the kinship factor regulating social organisation among Inuinnait, Netsilingmiut and Iglulingmiut. Iglulingmiut groups are characterised by the most extensive kinship norms, including terminological and behavioural associations. Netsilik, and to a lesser extent Inuinnait, have a narrower scope to these standards. This goes along with the observation of their basic social units. Inuinnait go through their annual cycle aggregating and dividing in nuclear families. The cooperation between these families does not necessarily depend on kinship links. Netsilingmiut and Iglulingmiut have a wider span of kindred individuals or extended family as basic

production, consumption and cooperation units. I explain these principles further below, through the description of their food sharing traditions.

Other kin-based associations, such as adoption, betrothal and marriage, expanded the network of the nuclear and extended families (Damas 1971: 50). In a vast majority, marriage was organised through betrothal (Boas 1888: 170). In some cases (Inuinnait, Netsilingmiut, Nunavimmiut), such marriages were arranged within the kinship network, whereas in other cases (Iglulingmiut) specific rules prevented families from doing so (Saladin d'Anglure 1984: 493; Damas 1971: 41-42). It can be said that betrothal could have served either to expand or to duplicate the kinship network. Marriage also brought ties between the father and the son-in-law, among Inuinnait, Netsilingmiut and Iglulingmiut, through bride service: the husband worked for his spouse's family for a certain time before he could definitively take his wife with him (Damas 1971: 42). Although divorce occurred in most Inuit societies, it did not constitute a factor of social ruptures. Rather, the separated couple and their in-laws kept their connections and moral responsibility. In addition, ex-spouses had special ties to their respective new families, including new spouses and subsequent offspring. Consequently, it can be said that divorce actually created new social bonds (Heinrich 1971: 79).

Adoption was also wide-spread among Inuit groups (Saladin d'Anglure 1984: 493). One of its primary motivations was to extend the kinship network (Spencer 1959: 87). This practice is manifested by either the temporary presence of boarders in one's house for helping, the actual raising of orphans, or the adoption of newborns kindred or not (Saladin d'Anglure 1984: 493; Damas 1971: 43). Among Inuit groups in the Central Canadian Arctic, adoption was practised to balance the sex ratio in the families of both the donor and the

recipient (Dunning 1962, cited in Damas 1971: 43), thus providing an alternative for female infanticide. Other families would adopt if they were not able to have children themselves. No social stigma was attached to barrenness, but the Inuit needed children to look after them when they became old (Spencer 1959: 87). In all cases of adoption within a kinship network, caring was an obligation and a collective responsibility, like grandparents adopting grandchildren, or the adoption of a sibling's child or between cousins (Damas 1971: 43; Spencer 1959: 90).

6.3 Partnerships and associations

Beyond the nuclear and extended family level, all Inuit communities were organised through different relationships. They were formed by two or several individuals, and operated in the kinship, economic and affective contexts.

Usually, as stated above, kinship ties were the major focuses of social organisation. They were completed by many partnerships and associations that were maintained between the individuals of Inuit communities. In that sense, everyone had a multiple set of ties within and outside their own community. These ties defined social interaction to such an extent that, for example in Alaska, strangers without social connections could immediately be marked with hostility or even be killed on sight (Spencer 1971: 111). This was rare though, because of the varied and comprehensive nature of these non-kindred associations.

The hallmark of North Alaskan Coast Inupiat was the bowhead whale hunt (Spencer 1984: 320). Whaling was not only an economic priority – the products of the whale were necessary for subsistence as food, fuel, raw materials and trading goods with neighbouring

groups – but it was also the basis for social cohesion and the core of a ceremonial complex. Whale hunting among North Alaskan Coast Inuit being a highly specialised and collaborative subsistence activity, the associated whaling crew was the major social organisation existing beyond the family level. In addition, a political structure emerged from the whaling crew organisation. This structure had three major components: the leader of the crew (*umialik* singular, *umialiit* plural), the crew as an alliance, and the ceremonial house (*karigi* singular, *kariyit* plural) (Spencer 1971: 114). Recruited by the *umialik*, the crew would be composed of at least six men, the minimum required to paddle the whaling boat (*umiak*). The average size of the crew would be eight to nine men, including the leader (Spencer 1959: 178). Other members of the community could be asked to help with paddling in times of manpower shortage, but they would never be part of the real crew. The whaling team was a long-term alliance of men who lived and worked together throughout the year, expressing their solidarity in their *karigi* and competing with other crews in terms of whaling success (Spencer 1971: 116).

The group was recruited and maintained by the *umialik*. The recruitment criteria included real kinship ties, fictive kinship ties – for example a relation created between two non-kindred men through a wife-exchange partnership – and hunting skills, especially skilful handling of the harpoon (Sheehan 1985). Kinship and loyalties to the *umialik* and *karigi* membership were the principal factors of the alliance (Spencer 1959: 180). The economic relation between the leader and his crew members was fixed and reciprocal. Members would put their labour under the leader's direction, and they would receive in exchange shares of the whale as well as other game communally taken, and other products such as clothing,

weapons and kayaks. (Spencer 1959: 180). As multiple whaling crews existed in any one community, potential crew members could choose the *umialik* they wanted to work for, on the basis of his capacity to pay them. For that reason there was rivalry between the leaders to have and to keep the best paddlers and hunters of the community (Spencer 1959: 180).

These Alaskan whaling crews were the most organised social manifestation of a subsistence-based association within Inuit communities. Such crews have also been observed among Inuvialuit communities. In the Eastern Arctic, among Nunavimmiut and Labrador Inuit, associations existed around whaling, but the members were essentially kindred hunters of a community. In Nunavik and in Alaska, the whaling boat was also used as a means of transportation for the whole band during summer. The community cooperated in the recovery, maintenance, portage and propulsion of the boat, which was in turn owned by an especially prestigious hunter (Saladin d'Anglure 1984: 486). Consequently, the subsistence factor of this association was secondary to the communal and kinship ties.

Other types of economic associations existed, such as seal-sharing partnerships among Netsilingmiut and Inuinnait (Balikci 1984; Damas 1972) and inter-community trading partnerships among all Inuit. The latter usually involved coastal and interior hunters who exchanged marine mammal oil and caribou skins. Since these two materials are crucial elements of subsistence and are exclusive to each area, such economic trading relations were fundamental, even vital, for Mackenzie and North Alaska Inuit. Trading partnerships also existed between Iglulik and Netsilik men. Pairs of men agreed to meet at trading events, bringing items typical of their hunting region that complemented their partners. For example, coastal groups exchanged walrus ivory for caribou skin with groups from the

interior (Damas 1971). Other associations such as wife-exchange partnerships, dancing, joking partnerships and naming relations played an important role in social relations within communities beyond family networks (Balikci 1984: 425; Damas 1971: 44-47; Jenness 1922: 87; Spencer 1971: 113-114, 227-229). The last involved two types of name associations. The first linked the dead to the living, through the naming of a newborn after a recently deceased relative (Rasmussen 1929: 58-59; Rasmussen 1931: 219-220). Through this custom, Inuit pass the 'name's soul' of the deceased to the child, thus transferring its personality and skills. Mackenzie Inuit referred to this practice as the actual reincarnation of the deceased (Stefansson 1913: 395-402). The second name association present among all Inuit groups, and more relevant to their social interactions, is between two persons who share the same name. These two individuals would periodically exchange small gifts and would be friendly and helpful to each other throughout their lives (Damas 1971: 49). When they are of the opposite sex, it is appropriate for them to marry since their name relation is believed to be a good context of marital well-being (Hennigh 1971: 91).

6.4 Sharing practices

Sharing practices among Inuit communities have always been essential to the survival of the community and confer a material sense to its social structure. Inuit were, and still are, sharing within their basic social and economic units, between those units at the village level, and sometimes between neighbour communities. Consequently, the different sharing practices followed kinship ties, various partnerships and leadership patterns.

The first sharing category was completed at the basic social unit level, the nuclear or extended family. The hunter brought back to his household the killed animal or the part he got from a large game. With his wife's help, he distributed shares to the members of his family. In the case of communal hunting of large animal, different Inuit groups had specific distribution rules for the different anatomical parts of the animal, depending on the species (Boas 1888: 174). The prized portions of the carcass could be either given to the first harpooner, the owner of the *umiak*, the first hunter who saw the animal, the man who organised the hunt or the crew leader. Beyond the family unit, sharing operated within all the partnerships described above. Also, families living in connected or same households systematically shared their food following strict rules (Damas 1972: 225; Petersen 1984: 636; Saladin d'Anglure 1984: 490; Stefansson 1919: 135). Hunters were expected to give away parts of the fruits of their hunting, first and foremost to the hunters who collaborated, and to specific age-sex categories of persons (Kleivan 1984: 609). These rules ensured that all members of a community were supported, especially the unproductive elders, disabled or sick persons, children and so on. Non-hunting individuals who did not have a kindred hunter to provide them with food would thus receive gifts of meat from families in the community.

At a community level, communal meals were organised to share surplus or large game products or to provide food to everyone in times of shortage (Boas 1888: 156). For example, Inuinnait people would eat their principal meal of the day in the evening, in a group of about 25 individuals together in the same house. This custom was followed in all seasons, although during winter the meal was held in a ceremonial house (Damas 1972: 226).

These meals were sometimes accompanied by song performances, story-telling and game playing (Boas 1888: 169-170).

Other community level sharing practices operated under a redistribution principle, associated with leadership. Among Iglulingmiut, each camp had a leader (called *isumataq*). The *isumataq*, a senior hunter, had a certain authority to coordinate hunting activities and to divide tasks. One of his roles was to redistribute hunted resources to the village. Traditionally, the transfer of food went from the hunter to the *isumataq*, and then from the *isumataq* to his genealogical subordinates (Wenzel 2000: 64). The third transfer occurred between the *isumataq* and the general community; the *isumataq* would decide how the fruits of a hunt would be divided among all the villagers, usually in times of shortage (Damas 1972: 233-234). Similar forms of redistribution or meat gifts made by such leaders have been observed among Quebec and Labrador Inuit (Saladin d'Anglure 1984: 494; Taylor 1984: 520).

The redistribution of game resources through a leader is also observed among North Alaskan Coast Inuit. Here, this practice occurred on a regular basis and was administrated by the *umialik*. The killing of a bowhead whale required the collaboration of multiple whaling crews. Consequent to that and the size of the animal, the whale was divided among numerous individuals. Specific rules applied to the distribution of the various anatomical parts of the animal (Sheehan 1985: 130, after VanStone 1962). The *umialik* supervised the whole distribution. A disproportionate part went to the *umialik* whose crew was the first to harpoon the animal. The *umialik* redistributed surplus to his crew members and to the other crews who participated. Portions were also given to the *umialik*'s shaman and harpooner.

Finally, parts were saved for future feasts. The entire distribution process was supervised by the *umialik*, whether it be to his family, to the families of his crew, or to the entire community through feasts. Throughout the year, the *umialiit* of a village held feasts during which they redistributed the products of their hunts (Sheehan 1985: 129). Beyond the village level, *umialiit* gave whale products through the Messenger Feast. This annual ceremonial festival was a competitive one, to which an *umialik* invited rival *umialiit* from other villages. While the major function of this feast was to enhance the *umialik*'s prestige, it implied a series of gifts made by the host, who expected to be invited in return. Whale products thus redistributed to other villages created not only indebtedness for the latter, but also reinforced the status of the hosting *umialik*, its crew and its village.

6.5 Leadership

Each Inuit family or household had a headman. Usually the eldest hunter of an extended family decided the settlement movements and choice of hunting sites. He was also an advisor for hunting and travel matters. The other members of the family saw him as the sage of the group and voluntarily consulted him or followed his advice (Boas 1888: 173).

Above the head of the family, among Iglulingmiut, Nunavimmiut and Labrador Inuit, there were camp leaders (Mary-Rousselière 1984: 440; Saladin d'Anglure 1984: 494; Taylor 1984: 520). These leaders were usually the headmen of large families. They were skilful hunters, mature and experienced. Among Nunavimmiut, they also owned an *umiak*, on which the rest of the community depended for seasonal travelling. The Iglulingmiut leader, *isumataq*, consulted the heads of the other families of the village before coordinating

activities and dividing tasks. As stated above, he also redistributed parts of communal or big game hunts. The Nunavimmiut and Labrador leaders, called *angajuqqaq*, also had shamanistic powers or influences. Nunavimmiut leaders often had several wives and confronted each other in organised duels (ex: dancing or singing duels), defying their statuses. However, overall, these recognised leaders never abused their power. They remained successful hunters, whose advice was generally followed by the group, and generosity and humility were their key defining qualities.

The highest level of leadership is observed among North Alaskan Coast Inuit. This society was – and still is to some extent – structured in three hierarchical levels: the whaling captains and their families at the highest level, followed by their whaling crew members and their respective families, and finally those unrelated to whaling at the bottom. *Umialiit* would be skilful hunters, physically strong, successful with women, and wealthy. They would have specific character traits such as diplomacy, generosity and humour, and would be able to resist insults and slights from other men (Spencer 1959: 178; 1971: 114). Two other major elements would also be required to be an effective crew leader: owning an *umiak* and having a skilled harpooner – the most important whaling crew member (Spencer 1971: 115). *Umialiit* needed to have certain social skills, especially in recruiting the whaling crew members. These members worked for their leaders, and in return expected successful hunts and a distribution of whale products and other valuable goods. The leader had to maintain this relationship by continual demonstrations of social and economic support. In fact, the *umialik* was expected to make important sacrifices of time and property to maintain a good reciprocal relationship with his crew (Spencer 1971: 114). This engagement had to be properly fulfilled because

umialiit continually competed with one another on this issue. Not only would they support a whole whaling crew and their families, but they were also in charge of ceremonies held around the whale hunt. They were spiritual leaders for the purpose of ceremonies surrounding the whale hunt. The *umialiit* also had a responsibility over the whole community, since their wealth, prestige and war activities contributed to the material and ritual welfare of the other members of the society (Whitridge 1999: 101). A village with prestigious *umialiit* would be equally respected by the neighbouring villages. Finally, the *umialik* was the leader in times of regional social conflicts (Sheehan 1985: 126).

As to the matter of inheritance of the *umialik* status, since strong family support was essential to the success of their achievement, it is believed that the office tended to reoccur in some family lines (Spencer 1959: 179). The amount of gifts an *umialik* was expected to distribute in order to recruit a good crew could represent a losing financial gamble if he did not have a wealthy family to back him up. *Umialiit* also competed with one another, forming a hierarchy among themselves. Murdoch (1988: 430) observed the most successful *umialik* in the largest village in the vicinity of Point Barrow as being the Great *Umialik*, the highest ranked *umialik* in a given region.

6.6 *Social conflict*

Among Central and Eastern Inuit groups, social conflict was kept at a minimal level. Conflicting situations, usually between two individuals, could arise from jealousy between hunters, competition for women, avarice (for example through not following the sharing rules of the community), unauthorised adultery outside the wife-exchange contract, or

suspicion of witchcraft (Balikci 1984: 425; Boas 1888: 174; Mary-Rousselière 1984: 440). The best strategy for resolving hostilities was the withdrawal or avoidance of the conflict itself. If a conflict arose, mockery or derision was the most common approach for its resolution. Organised competitions, such as song or dance duels, also acted as conflict resolution strategies. By demonstrating that opponents had now established a peaceful and joking relationship, duels prevented violence and relieved tensions (Kleivan 1984: 615). Murder or community-approved execution sometimes occurred, but very rarely (Boas 1888: 174; Mary-Rousselière 1984: 440).

More violent acts were observed among Inuvialuit who were more willing to execute the offenders in a conflicting situation. Murder, wife stealing and theft were the most common offences leading to such a final action (Smith 1984: 354). Longstanding conflicts could also occur between families and develop into recurrent violence. Such blood feuds were usually initiated by a specific individual, but the contribution of other individuals was a matter of familial obligation (Sheehan 1985: 127). This has also been observed among North Alaskan Coast Inuit, for whom an escalation of such conflicts has led to actual warfare.

On the North Alaskan coast, the balance between kinship ties, partnerships and loyalty to the community was essential to the resolution of social conflict (Hennigh 1971). Among these Inuit groups, social crises could arise from conflicts between two individuals, two families or two villages, all involving these three loyalties. An individual involved in such crisis may have often seen his different social relations as being in conflict with one another. Consequently, he had to manoeuvre his loyalties in his best interests (Hennigh 1971: 90-93). On the one hand, one would express loyalty to his community during warfare. On the other

hand, when attempting to avoid war, people would search for distant kinship ties with members from the rival village. Also, when two villages were involved in common ceremonies, personal conflict between members or families of both villages may have been suspended. Some loyalties had a greater influence on others. For example, non-kindred partnerships did not have the power to decrease animosity between families or villages.

Warfare between North Alaskan villages was common (Burch 1974). These Inuit groups were highly competitive and competition was the initiating point of conflicts. Usually, competition between individuals, families or villages was regulated through games, contests, duels, trading and feasting. However, these organised events still brought the opportunity for individuals to insult or physically injure each other. Such behaviour, socially proscribed within a village, was the usual strategy to take the first aggressive action against members of another village. The response to such aggression always escalated. When two individuals or families of two different villages accumulated a certain fund of grudges and resentment, or when a major event brought matters to a higher conflict level, through murder for example, one party could decide to start a war. War was conducted by an organised party, typically formed of kindred men, with an *umialik* as a leader (Burch 1974: 6; Sheehan 1985: 127). The ultimate goal was to annihilate the enemy – the entire village, including men, women and children – without suffering any losses. In Northwestern Alaska, in the Point Hope area, warfare has had such a long history that it is responsible for a significant demographic reduction over the generations (Burch 1974).

6.7 Gender

Gender in Inuit social organisation is expressed in various ways. First, among all groups studied, there is a precise division of labour along gender lines that has implications in the relations between individuals. Men and women would each be responsible for a particular set of daily or seasonal tasks, all being necessary for their survival. Their respective labours complement one another. For that reason, families, essentially composed of couples, their offspring and relatives, were the basic economic unit. When a woman could not accompany her husband during a long journey, the husband would have borrowed the wife of a partner, the presence and work of a woman being crucial for his journey. In opposition, women needed the resources generally hunted by men to properly dress and feed themselves and their families.

The Inuit gendered division of labour follows a general and widespread pattern. Usually, women took care of and raised children. They prepared and sewed skins for clothing, bedding, tents and boat coverings. They maintained the oil lamp and prepared and cooked food. They also collected plants, berries, eggs, and seafood. They were implicated in small-scale hunting and fishing and sometimes they helped in communal hunts, on caribou drives or basking seal hunting. Finally, they assisted men on their departure and return from hunting and travelling. Men were essentially responsible for hunting and transportation. They drove the *umiak*, the kayak, and the dog sled and cared for the dog team and its gear. They were the manufacturers of tools and weapons, including the women's tool kits. Finally, they built the dwellings. Both sexes could be shamans, but men have traditionally outnumbered women in that role. Parents would start to teach children their genders'

assigned labour during early puberty (Boas 1888: 154-155, 158, 171-172; Mary-Rousselière 1984: 492).

Even though this division seemed rigid, a close reading of the ethnographies reveal that no strict rule bonded men and women to these specific roles. Women could conduct the *umiak* and hunt like men when needed. Men could also cook and mend their clothes. The Inuit division of labour was fluid and flexible (Crass 2001: 109). However, there was a lifetime of learning associated with each role. The fluidity and flexibility imputed to gender belies the degree of specialised expertise associated with each – a man may be able to repair a rip in his parka, but could not make a very good complete parka.

Another example of this fluidity in the concept of gender among Inuit is the procedure of name attribution to children. Inuit named their infants after a deceased relative, regardless of the sex of the latter and the child. The result is that a boy, with a woman's name, could be called a female kin term by his relatives. The opposite is also true, a girl being referred to in a male fashion. This practice can also be applied to dressing up and raising a child according to the opposite sex, until he or she reaches puberty (Crass 2001: 110). Inuit languages do not have gender-specific pronouns (Birket-Smith 1928, cited in Crass 2001: 108). During certain ceremonies and rituals, Greenland Inuit adults would dress up as the opposite sex (Maurie 2000: 281), and among the same group, ethnographers often witnessed women trained as hunters. The reason suggested is the unequal sex ratio in the area (Robert-Lamblin 1981, cited in Crass 2001: 111). Among some Central Inuit groups, it is believed that during their birth, babies can switch sex, whether it is achieved intentionally by the baby or naturally depending on the length of the labour. As told in many of their

creation myths, Canadian Inuit believe that at the beginnings of mankind, boundaries between sexes could be crossed; people could change sex in a fluid manner (Saladin d'Anglure 1990: 180). Gender fluidity in Inuit beliefs and rituals is omnipresent and offers a balance to the sex differentiation of Inuit daily life.

Regarding the status of men and women in Inuit societies, both were generally perceived and treated equally. Men and women lived side by side and depended on each other. Marriages offered both sexes a context of respect and equity. Although a certain subordination of the Inuit wife was sometimes perceived by ethnographers, as was observed among Inuit in North Greenland (Rasmussen 1931: 191), the wife still had a strong influence on the husband (Parry 1824, cited in Mary-Rousselière 1984: 425). Among Baffinland Inuit, it was reported that economic decision-making was wholly oriented toward equality. A woman may have stated a preference for certain foods, influencing her husband's hunting activities (Kemp 1984: 472). In addition, when a man held high status in his community, his wife shared the benefits. A good example in North Alaska, the *umialik*'s spouse had the same authority and respect as her husband in the feminine sphere. She was also expected to perform her daily tasks exceptionally and show high social skills. In consequence, the couple, as an economic and social entity, would be able to support a large household and accumulate wealth, influence and prestige within the community (Whitridge 1999: 100).

6.8 Spiritual beliefs and practices

Inuit societies, from Alaska to Greenland, had several cultural prescriptions, prohibitions and taboos, all aiming to maintain the equilibrium between humans and their

environment. Precise, strict and daily rules had to be observed thoroughly in order to keep good relations with game and the deities that ruled human presence on earth. These prescriptions also had the function to support persons during important stages of their life cycles, such as pregnancy, childbirth and death, and to keep away sickness. Special cults were also directed towards animals which played a major role in subsistence and social life, such as the bowhead whale among Alaskan Inuit. In addition, individuals wore and used a certain number of amulets, usually to enhance their hunting skills. Finally, shamans acted as intermediaries between the community and supernatural forces. Their principal functions included healing, predicting the future, influencing the weather, securing the hunt and fighting against evil spirits. These three different spiritual strategies, which aimed to secure successful hunting, health and luck, are described and compared between the Inuit societies under investigation.

The multiple rules and taboos observed by Inuit societies were meant to reduce the stress level brought about by the uncertainties of hunting and childbirth, and the fear of evil spirits. In addition, they would provide an explanation for sickness and misfortune: these occur when one breaks a taboo or does not follow a certain cultural prescription. These rules can be divided into three major categories. The first is the division of the land and the sea animals. The second involves numerous interdictions imposed on menstruating, pregnant or post-partum women. Finally, special treatments and cults would be reserved for game animals to favour their capture. As stated above, the precise goal of these various rules would be to secure hunting and the survival of individuals. These prescriptions and prohibitions are numerous, so I only identify the major trends for each category below.

Among these, I will expand on amulets, since they are the ones that will be discussed most extensively with Thule Inuit assemblages.

Whether to enhance the skills of a hunter, to protect one from evil spirits or to bring luck and good fortune, amulets were used by all Inuit. Some of them were personal and were carried around at every moment of the day, others would be attached to households, whaling boats or hunting gear. They could be carvings or animal body parts, and some of them were used along with songs and food taboos.

Personal amulets were common to all Inuit groups. Many would be worn as a protection against evil (Smith 1984: 355). Hunters had amulets sewn onto their clothing to protect them from the dangers and hazards of hunting (Gilberg 1984: 589). They were also worn in order to bring about productive hunting and good weather (Birket-Smith 1924, cited in Kleivan 1984: 618). Children wore amulets to help them acquire desired skills for their future adult life and many Inuit women, from as early as their childhood, wore a number of these little objects, usually parts of animals, for the sake of their future sons.

Boas (1888: 184) was able to collect detailed information on the nature, function and even the history of the use of amulets among specific groups. Amulets were made of parts of animals, such as a ptarmigan's foot, an owl's claw, a sea scorpion, a seal tooth or seal skin. It is believed that these animal parts conveyed the animal's power. However, according to Netsilingmiut oral tradition, historically people did not wear such a great number of amulets. In the past, individuals wore only one, representing a specific animal. It is believed that the wearer could turn into this animal whenever needed (Rasmussen 1931: 268). In other words,

in the past, amulets helped spirits that people carried around with them. In the 20th century, it seemed that the amulets had lost most of their power, hence the increase in numbers worn. In these more recent times, men could not turn into an animal, only powerful shamans could do it. The protections then arose from the high number of amulets that a person wore. The wearer had to place the amulet on his clothing, outside certain parts of the body that would benefit from the animal's qualities. The function of the charms was to give strength to men when fighting, bring luck when fishing and hunting, make them skilful bowmen and kayakers. Women and girls, as mentioned above, usually wore amulets to transfer these benefits to their sons, or sometimes for being clever seamstresses. As for the acquisition of amulets, they were given by one's mother, and could not be passed to another person.

North Alaskan Inuit had strict rules regarding the transmission of their personal amulets (Spencer 1959: 282-285). They were given by an elder, or more commonly by a shaman, along with a food taboo. The amulets may have been ivory or bone carvings of animals, stuffed bodies of small animals, or simply body parts of animals. Just like Inuit in the Central Canadian Arctic, a large number of amulets could be worn by individuals, sewn onto their clothing or in little skin bags. Some of these charms were believed to come from great antiquity, as they were passed from generation to generation, from old to young, or inherited. For example, a man who wished to be a good runner may have asked the family of a recently deceased runner to give him his amulets. New charms could also be created by shamans, or when one found an unusual object, one might have carved it or simply worn it.

The functions of the North Alaskan amulets correspond to their Central and Eastern Inuit counterparts, for example success in hunting, racing, fighting, and good fortune.

To enhance their powers, personal charms given by shamans were often associated with a food taboo and a song. Among North Alaskan Inuit, songs were not only social, but also magical, like amulets (Spencer 1959: 277-281). While social songs were common property and were sung during communal feasting, supernatural songs were personal property. They could be owned by anyone, or owned by the shaman to help his rapport with spirits. The songs were inherited or purchased. There were songs for every activity, including hunting, boat use, house raising, curing illness, and finding a lost object, but the repertoire was principally for hunting and weather, often associated with amulets.

North Alaskan Inuit also had household amulets (Spencer 1959: 285-286). The latter, not present in every house, were owned by the household and not by an individual. These amulets were round perforated stones, placed in the subterranean entrance of the house. Other charms, like dolls or human figures, were placed near the lamps or hung on the walls. Their function was to bring good luck to the household and keep sickness away. When needed, the charms were used for non-shamanistic curing of a sick person living in the house.

North Alaskan whaling charms and songs constituted another important category of such magic (Spencer 1959: 338-342). Each whaling crew's members and leaders had their own set of amulets and songs, kept in a wooden box carved in the shape of a whale. They were brought in the boat, and were necessary to the success of the whaling expedition.

Added to these, the *umialik*, the harpooner and the crew members all had their own specific set of amulets, worn on their person like the other personal amulets of all the community members. The whaling charms and songs were effective during the whole hunting process: they were meant to bring the whale close to the boat, to make it more tractable, to ease its harpooning, to prevent the lines from slipping, or the whale from spinning or moving away, to keep the floats attached to the whale when it had been killed, and so on. The singing of such songs was the responsibility of the *umialik*, the harpooner, and the older and more experienced whalers. Finally, whaling amulets were placed in the *karigi*, and were owned by the *karigi* itself (Spencer 1959: 184). They were hung on the roof beams, and placed on the floor, on the walls and elsewhere. They could take the form of a carved whale, a stuffed sea bird, and human figures in *umiak* or kayak. They were used to help during the whaling or other sea mammal hunting, and were important figures in the whaling ceremonial. They were treated with a great deal of respect by all individuals entering and holding activities in the *karigi*.

This chapter has presented the major principles of social life among Inuit from Northern Alaska to Greenland. It was important to present this wide range of regional variants for the purpose of the analogy with Thule Inuit bowhead whaling societies on Somerset Island. The first reason is that Thule Inuit groups, and potentially the ones that were living in my archaeological study area, are the direct ancestors of Inuit encountered by ethnologists throughout North America and Greenland. Consequently, we have to include them all when we build the premises of the analogy. The second reason is that Somerset Island was no longer occupied by Inuit groups at the time that explorers and ethnographers

arrived on the continent. As stated in Chapter 3, no one knows what happened exactly with the inhabitants of these villages, whether they relocated to other regions and if so, where exactly. Consequently, all possible historical and cultural links with Inuit groups have to be taken into consideration. For the sake of the analogy, we also paid special attention to North Alaskan whaling groups. Since the bowhead whale hunt requires specific social, political and technological organisation, we use the North Alaskan version of these traditions as relevant premises for the analogy. However, we have to bear in mind that these Alaskan communities are a regional and temporal variant, as much as the Thule Inuit communities under my archaeological investigation. Consequently, I consider them in my research hypothesis only, instead of applying their ways of doing and cultures directly to my analyses. Also, as Savelle and Wenzel (2003) remind us, information about the social life of Alaskan groups has to be completed by the equivalent information among Inuit in Canada. The more variants of Inuit social life we know, the more we understand how these variants work and the logics behind them, and the better we can understand by analogy their Thule Inuit ancestors.

In terms of the social network approach which includes humans, animals and material culture, this chapter has presented only a portion of what these networks would have been composed of, among Inuit. As stated in the introduction, these ethnographies did not focus on the social role of objects of everyday life. However, a few references to these roles were made about the Alaskan whaling crew social system, with the ceremonial house, the boat (*umiak*) and the whaling amulets. For ethnographies that pertained to Inuit living in other regions of the North American Arctic, the description of sharing practices and of the gendered division of labour also gave us an idea of the importance of material aspects of

social life in its construction and the maintenance of its equilibrium. The next two chapters specifically develop the material side of these social networks, following the explanations of Inuit elders in the Inullariit archives and during the workshops at the McCord.

7. Material culture and social networks

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the social life of Inuit during the first half of the 20th century, with examples from different regions of the North American Arctic taken from the ethnographic literature. To complement this, in the current chapter I develop the social network and material culture aspects of these relations.

I identify two main sets of social networks involving people and objects. The first pertains to the development of people through their life cycle and in their interactions with other members of their communities. It is about the way in which objects actively participate in the shaping of personal identities, gender relations, kinship relations, socio-economic partnerships and sharing practices. The second is about social differentiation and examines how objects impact on the development of leadership, social influence and power. More precisely, I examine how social asymmetries are produced and maintained with the material culture of everyday life, and the associated practices and relations.

As I will demonstrate, everyday objects play many roles in the Inuit elders' narratives in the Igloolik archives and at the McCord Museum³⁰. These roles often go beyond the primary functions of the tools. Harpoons do not just allow hunters to hunt, and women's knives do not just allow women to cut meat and animal skins. These tools are also active in the construction of identities and in the social interactions between persons, whether

³⁰ To alleviate the text, some quotes from the Igloolik interviews are presented in Appendix 1. References will be provided throughout the remainder of my thesis.

through the processes of fabrication or use. Very often, these objects – hunting equipment, personal tools, household utensils, ornaments and amulets – allow people to develop their identity, to position themselves in the community by building and maintaining relations with other individuals they live with. The first social relations that I study in conjunction with material culture are those that are meant to create and maintain harmony between individuals, within families and within communities. These relations begin with the personal development of individuals, from childhood to adulthood, a process in which they have to take their place in the community through the acquisition of technical and social skills. The second set of relations that I describe with the material culture point of view is social differentiation, mainly how leadership is acquired with the agency of specific items of everyday life.

7.2 Personhood and the social equilibrium

Among Inuit, in order to become an adult and to be allowed to take a partner and have children, young men and women had to master specific skills that were taught by family members. For example, Atuat Akittiq, talking about learning and social control during her childhood, said:

It was our parents' way of readying us for adulthood. Our mother tutored us while learning to sew, and how to take care of a family. The women got married already knowing the basics of running a home. The men were taught what they should do when they had a family, only when they know how to build an *iglu* (snow house)³¹ were they eligible to take a wife and they already knew how to hunt.

³¹ The term *iglu* (Nunavut dialect) or *illu* (Nunavik dialect) literally means 'house', even though it is sometimes referred to (often by non-Inuit) as snow house. In the Igloodik archives, the term designates snow houses, and a different word is used for the other type of house built by Inuit in the region: *qarmaq*.

Our mother and father were our teachers when it came to learning about everyday life (Atuat Akittiq, IE-341, October 17, 1995).

Similarly, in one of the workshops at the McCord, Quitsaq Tarriasuk (McCord Museum, 29 April 2010) affirmed that in past times, only when a man was able to complete the construction of a kayak was he allowed a spouse, and women were allowed to get married only when they knew how to sew. What he was expressing here used to be a common rule among Inuit. Men should know how to make their tools, and equipment for hunting and travelling, as well as their proper use, in order to bring food and other supplies to their family – animal skins necessary for clothing, bedding, making ropes and covering houses, as well as other animal parts such as sinew used as thread or blubber to heat and light the house and to cook. Women had to master the art of preparing and sewing skins in order to dress an entire family. For a woman, sewing was a way to connect with members of her family and to have control over her life (Issenman 1997: 221). For these tasks, she depended on the supplies brought by hunters in the family, who in turn depended on her work, especially the manufacture of warm and waterproof clothing, to be able to achieve their tasks.

There is an obvious division of labour between men and women among Inuit, as each was responsible for mastering complementary skills that were essential to make a living (Briggs 1974). The interdependence of men and women was not only essential to survival, but also to build and maintain social harmony within communities and with the souls of the hunted animals. Among Alaskan Inuit, women are considered pivotal to the hunt, as illustrated by a male expression: “I’m not the great hunter, my wife is” (Bodenhorn 1990,

cited in Issenman 1997: 220). As mentioned above, women had to follow specific rules and rituals while men were out hunting whales, and these actions were as important as the gestures of the harpooner. The woman is responsible for attracting the animal by butchering and sharing the meat so that the soul of the animal is pleased and returns again to the hunter, and sewing the skin with skill and artistry as a tribute to the animal's generosity in allowing itself to be killed. In other words, her needle helps to make her husband a great hunter, because animals are pleased by clean and beautiful clothes (Issenman 1997: 220). Also, in camps where many families were living together, hunters would gather to discuss hunting strategies, taking into consideration their wives' preferences for certain food and their specific needs for certain animal skins (Issenman 1997: 219).

The model described above was the most common, but it was not rare for a woman to know how to hunt. In fact, women, children and elders would regularly fish, or hunt and trap small game animals, like birds or hare, in addition to collecting berries, herbs, eggs, mussels, etc. As stated above, men also knew how to mend their clothes, and how to use the *qulliq*³², as they were often travelling for hunting or trading purposes. But when travelling for long periods of time, they would take their wives or other women from their family to share the daily tasks associated with life on the land. So even though there was a certain amount of flexibility in the gendered division of labour, certain types of objects played key roles in these activities, which in turn were crucial for the development of the person and his/her role in the family and community as a man, a woman, a husband, a wife, a father or a mother.

³² Traditional Inuit oil lamp made of stone, used to warm and light up the houses and to cook. It used sea mammal oil and fat for fuel. Plural: *qullit*

Hunting equipment, personal knives, skin preparation and sewing toolkits, *qullit* and clothing were the principal material components of these human interactions.

These interactions were shaped and maintained in different ways throughout the life cycle of individuals, but objects remained at the centre of these social dynamics. Learning to hunt or to sew in order to become an adult was an important skill, but other moments in the life cycle are also worth mentioning. In an interview where he told a few Inuit legends, Herve Paniaq mentioned the story of Arnapaktuq, a woman who transformed into different animal species, at the moment when she took the form of a human fetus:

While she was in the woman's womb, the house she was occupying became over-crowded and soon the side became wet and uncomfortable, so she thought of leaving her dwelling. So then as she had more and more urges to leave her dwelling, there were implements of all types, there were those that were for women, and there were those that were for men. These were the items that were on the way out. She thought to herself, when she starts to exit, which would she pick, she liked them all. So when she was going to be leaving, she grabbed hold of a man's implement then proceeded to exit, at first she thought that the exit would be too small, but she went out (Herve Paniaq, IE-424, December 3 1997).

In his version of the story, Herve Paniaq did not specify which instruments represented the man or the woman. But Saladin d'Anglure (2006: 37-59) reported similar stories told by Inuit from Nunavut and Nunavik, in which the tools are better described. One such story, told by Iqallijuq from Igloolik, talked about Arnapaktuq having to choose between men's implements – a harpoon, with its line and detachable harpoon head, and a knife – and women's tools – an *ulu* [plural *uluit*], or semi-circular knife, a *qulliq* and a cooking pot made of stone – during her transformation from a man to a woman. She said she picked

up the women's tools because she was tired of the cold, tiredness and the dangers associated with hunting in her previous life as a man (Saladin d'Anglure 2006: 50). Here, the man's harpoon and knife, as well as the woman's *ulu*, lamp and cooking pot are decisively associated with the choice of gender for the person at birth.

These objects also play a role in the gender formation and transformation of persons during childhood, notably through small versions of these tools as toys. As I mentioned above, gender and its associated activities are very flexible among Inuit. The name given to a child decides its gender. But it is mainly through the child's games and learning of gendered activities that he or she will concretely become a girl or a boy, even if this goes against his or her biological sex. The Igloolik archives contain plenty of childhood memories, where people remember experimenting with adult tasks while playing with their miniature hunting equipment, lamps, cooking pots, sleds (*qamutik*, plural *qamutiit*) and puppies, and wooden dolls to which little girls would sew clothing out of leftovers from their mother's sewing activities, and using small *ulus*, with real needles and sinew threads. George Agiaq Kappianaq was once asked by the interviewer Louis Tapardjuk about which dog boys were allowed to play with:

Perhaps he would start out with two dogs, and if there were pups a little bigger, then he could use them to pull loads with. He would use them to play around in the community, at the same time he is learning new skills and the pups are learning how to pull a load. If it is this size, then he would be able to pull a play sled, he might use two, three, four or even five pups (George Agiaq Kappianaq, IE-457, 19 June 2000).

Elise Qulaut, remembering her childhood, also told how she used to learn sewing with her wooden dolls and with the help of her mother. She does not mention sewing tools per se, but we can easily deduce from her narrative that she was using a knife, needle and thread:

When we were children we used to play with wooden dolls, so we used to make clothing for them from old pieces of clothing. The patterns would be made by our mothers and we would sew them. Whenever there were some materials available we would try and cut patterns for these wooden dolls, and we would also make footwear with them. When I played with them, I would treat them as if they were real people (Elise Qulaut, IE-133, 8 March 1990).

Martha Nasuk gives a striking example of the association of specific tools in gender during childhood:

I did not get to own an *ulu* as a child because I was named after a man, for this reason I did not get to own one at a young age (Martha Nasuk, IE-291, 19 November 1993).

Naomi Panikpakuttuk gives more detail about the instructive dynamics of these games, first experimental and voluntary and then entailing interaction with specific adults. When she was asked by the interviewer, Moati Kunnuk, how she began to learn to sew clothing, she said:

This way, since we started to try to take part in sewing, we learned how to make them [clothes] that way, but we were not taught. Based on our willingness to sew. By ourselves. It was not because we were being taught, it was because we wanted to make them. The way they were being made, we were trying to do the same, that is how we learn about them. But then, we learned from our mothers, from what they were sewing (Naomi Panikpakuttuk, IE-383, 24 August 1996).

In this last narrative, Naomi Panikpakuttuk indicates two ways of learning adult tasks with tools. The first being experimentation and the second being observation of an adult and the imitation of his or her gestures and techniques. Actually, they often occur simultaneously, in a sort of observation/imitation/trial and error. These learning processes and the way they use and produce social relations are very close to the ideas of Tarde, most specifically the notion of *imitation* as the basic social fact, bringing people together and maintaining collectives. Bourdieu (1972, 1980) has developed his own theories of this idea, with the notions of *doxa* and *habitus*. Habitus is the point of origin of the socialisation or education of individuals and their social trajectories, which are structured by their social milieu, as well as acquired and reproduced through practices – ways of acting, thinking, feeling. The concept of *habitus* refers to techniques of the body (Mauss 1966 [1936]) in conjunction with objects and the physical spaces in which people live. The Inuit way of learning also relates to Bourdieu's notion of *doxa*, which refers to the knowledge and perspectives that are taken for granted, that are acquired and reproduced somehow unconsciously in the context of the *habitus*. When imitating someone's way of doing in the process of learning, one acquires not only a particular set of techniques from this person or group of persons, but also a sense of belonging with that person and/or group. Bourdieu's theories are thus very useful to think about the links between the person, the body, objects and the social world. Here, Latour's social network approach is also helpful, where objects authorise, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible and forbid actions that have impacts in the social lives of persons (Latour 2005: 70). It is through this perspective that we can understand the Inuit way of learning, in a mix of personal experimentation and reproduction of practices in a given social milieu.

Experimentation is an important aspect of Inuit ways of learning. Briggs (1991, 1992, 1997), who studied the question extensively, explained how Inuit people balance personal experiments and improvisation with collectively shared traditions. They see the world around them in terms of their multiple qualities and potential uses. They observe and discover the potentials in people and objects to serve their needs, with the readiness to re-make or transform them in order to actualise their potentials and to serve present needs (Briggs 1991: 262). The question of the flexibility of gender is a good example of this: changing a child's gender because a boy or a girl is needed in the household, or because a recently deceased person has expressed their desire to have their name given to the child-to-be. The same is true with material culture. While traditions are easily recognisable in the design of tools, hunting equipment, clothing, houses architecture, etc., there is also a lot of room for improvisation within or even beyond different styles. I will discuss the concept of material styles and personal experimentations in the next section. In fact, Briggs (1991: 272) argues that to play with objects, to make them, un-make and re-make, or refurbish them is a way to develop one's flexible, pragmatic and creative attitude towards material objects and human relations.

These experimentations that mix tradition – imitation or *habitus/doxa* – and creation have also been discussed by Ingold (2000) through the concept of skill. People engage with their environment through technical skills that are themselves constituted within the matrix of social relations (Ingold 2000: 289). Technical skills, such as making or using tools with know-how and efficiency, are developed *simultaneously* with one's intentions, agency and the functionality of the objects themselves; skills are practiced with the body and the materials

not in isolation, but within the system of relations in which the artisan is engaged; they partly emerge through the person's dexterity and judgment and they are partly transmitted between individuals through practical and hands-on experiences (Ingold 2000: 291, see also Dobres 2000). This is exactly how Inuit describe the way in which they learn to be a hunter. Interviewee Mark Ijjangiaq illustrated these processes when he talked about his personal experience in his formative years of becoming a hunter:

I learned how to hunt without having to go to an institution as such. We learned by watching and taking active part in the process, this was a learning process that we went through. By watching others do things we were able to learn different techniques as each of the men have their own way of doing things. Some you wanted to follow their examples, be hunting or others including handling of dog teams and so on (Mark Ijjangiaq, IE-132, 8 March 1990).

Jana Harchareck, from Barrow, Alaska, narrates how she learnt to sew as a child, observing with all her senses her *aaka* (grandmother) sewing *mukluks* (boots)³³. Noah Piugattuk, interviewed by George Qulaut, tells us more about how children were taught during his childhood³⁴. He revealed the interconnections and interactions between persons – girls and boys and their kin relations – objects such as harpoons, animals such as the dog team and hunted prey, through the processes of observation, imitation, teaching, learning, experimenting, trial and error around key activities, such as leading a dog team, sewing and other household tasks and hunting. Looking at these phenomena from the perspective of social networks of individuals, objects, animals, practices, *habitus*, experiments and skills

³³ Appendix 1.1 Jana Harcharek 2005: 28

³⁴ Appendix 1.2 Noah Piugattuk and George Qulaut, IE-003, 15 October 1986

enables us to effectively identify the various active roles of material culture in the social life of Inuit people.

My attention thus focuses on those items that allow the practice of activities responsible for the development of persons from a child to an accomplished adult and for building and maintaining their social relations, which is the place and role of adults in the community. These objects are men's and women's personal tools for hunting, skin-working, sewing, cooking and maintaining the household as well as their clothing. These items accompany their owners everywhere, either attached to their clothing or around their necks, carried in bags or simply held in their hands. They literally become parts of the person. Harpoons, men's knives and women's *uluit* are such key objects. In an interview about survival and precautions when one travels on the land, Louis Alianakuluk answered a question from Maurice Arnattiaq about the importance of carrying a harpoon when walking on ice:

LA: (...) If you are going to the floe-edge then the harpoon becomes an essential item. Your harpoon is an instrument that you need to test the ice if it is safe or not.

MA: For instance, if you were going to go to the floe-edge to hunt, would you say that your harpoon becomes your companion just as you would with another hunter?

LA: Yes, that is his hunting companion. In fact that is his dependence. Like, this is his only helper that he will have to depend on. Of course he will likely be with other hunters, but there are times when you need to separate from hunters on the dangerous ice. So this is the reason why the harpoon is very helpful to the hunter on the dangerous ice. (Louis Alianakuluk and Maurice Arnattiaq, IE-322, 25 February 1995).

Of course, harpoons are linked to hunters by their primary function, which is harpooning sea mammals. The main parts of this hunting weapon are the detachable and toggling harpoon head, attached to the hunter through a line, the shaft whose dimensions are perfectly adapted to the size of the owner, and an ice pick at the rear end of the shaft (for the beathing hole hunting technique). When hunting groups of large sea mammals, the hunters' harpoon heads must be identifiable to their owners, since the catch was shared among the hunters, following precise rules, usually the best parts going to the hunter who gave the first strike. George Kappianaq explained how the distribution of prized walrus portions worked in the region of Igloodik:

The person who made the catch would get the shanks, and the head, including the ribs. If he was to get this part, that is the shank. He might have been the one who struck the walrus with the harpoon, or whoever made the strike first will be the one that caught the walrus. But now when firearm is used, it is difficult to tell who made the first strike. (George Kappianaq, IE-427, 5 December 1997).

George Kappianaq brings our attention to the decisive role of harpoons in the social relations between members of a community, sharing meat being a key strategy in the maintenance of social equilibrium among Inuit communities. The substitution of harpoons by rifles probably meant that the hunters had to adapt their rules for sharing the catch, since with a rifle it is much more difficult to know who shot the walrus first, when a group of men are shooting simultaneously. So this change in hunting technology also meant a change in social rules around hunting activities. The design of harpoon heads, the part of the harpoon which remained in the animal after its kill, was the item identified with specific hunters. Boas (1899) and Reynolds (1989) documented how Inuit from Alaska marked their harpoon heads

with property marks that were inherited from father to son, in order to be able to recognise them for the sharing of game.

Other objects strongly associated with persons are knives, especially the women's *ulu*. The *ulu* is often seen as the symbol of the Inuit woman and her work (Issenman 1997: 61). Every girl is given her own, to be used by her alone (Freeman 1978: 47). When a woman married, she would bring her *ulu* and lamp to her husband's home, and when she died she would be buried with them. The *ulu* is used for flensing and butchering animals, slicing food, preparing and cutting skins and sinew, chopping moss, reeds, and tobacco and cutting food. Larger *ulu*it can be used to butcher and skin large sea mammals (Issenman 1997: 61). In the Igloolik archives, women discuss lengthily their personal attachment to their *ulu*. Here is what Martha Nasook had to say about *ulu*it, when answering a question about the need to look after personal effects properly:

Anything that was useful needed to be looked after properly, anything that could be of some use should be looked after properly. If you had personal effects that met your needs, but because you did not look after them properly and just left them hanging around, that also goes for clothing materials or leftovers, or other items that you needed, if you did not look after them properly and left them laying around. You would have these things when you needed them but if you were not careful in looking after them properly then you would find yourself without when you needed them. So then, you have things like needles, *ulu*it, scrapping tools, these were the things that you had to look after properly, including sinew thread, especially when you were inland caribou hunting. Threads were the only things that you could make clothing with, so these things needed to be looked after properly (Martha Nasook, IE-348, 12 October 1995).

Therese Qillaq Ijjangiaq said, when she was asked if her *ulu* and her clock would be her own personal possessions:

Yes, these would be mine alone. However, should there be others available to replace them they still could be given out, should someone ask for them. If there are none available to replace them, then the person may not want to give it away (Qillaq Ijjangiaq, IE-102, 5 March 1990).

Here, I wish to cite again Martha Nasuk, who did not get to have her own *ulu* when she was a child because of her masculine name. After the quote that I discussed earlier, she adds a very important detail for the notions of possession and use of these objects:

I did not get to own an *ulu* as a child because I was named after a man. For this reason I did not get to own one at a young age. However, I did get to use *uluut* that were already made, but no one made an *ulu* particularly for my ownership (Martha Nasuk, IE-291, 19 November 1993).

These last two personal reminiscences indicate that some *uluut* were shared among people and some others were unique possessions. A girl with a man's name could not possess her own *ulu*, and a woman who owns one could show reticence to share it. These special *uluut* would have been recognisable in their design, as Lydia Qumaq (McCord Museum, 29 April 2010) told us in a workshop at the McCord. She was commenting on an *ulu* that had a bear canine attached (**Figure 9**), probably used as a whetstone. Pointing to other *uluut* on the table that did not have such attachments, she said these could have been used by anyone, but not the one with the attached canine. She said that Inuit are still like that today. If the family knows that an *ulu* belongs to the mother, and the mother uses it to cut furs and skins, they know they are not allowed to touch it.



Figure 9: Ulu with bear canine attached. McCord Museum M21015.1-2 (Length 8.5 cm)

The personal associations with these objects could also go beyond a person's life. They were often buried with the owners, as Hubert Amarualik explains, in a discussion about beliefs and rules of conduct around death:

The possessions of the deceased were taken to his grave for him to take along. When this person died his possessions must be taken along, it was taboo for a live person to have the things of the deceased. That was the reason, when the deceased was buried then all of his things were taken to his grave with him. That was the way it was. The main reason for this was that no living person must keep the possessions of the deceased, and they should not be used by others (Hubert Amarualik, IE-287, 19 October 1993).

However, some objects could be given by the owner before his or her death, and the original owner remained associated with the object. Philip Qipanniq told his interviewer,

Louis Tapardjuk, a story of two special harpoon heads that were given to him and that had a special value attached to their history and their previous owners³⁵.

Harpoons and *uluit* were thus personal possessions not always easily shared, but when one was in need, and expressing the desire to borrow such an item owned by someone else within the family, sharing it was very important. Antonin Qrunnut, when asked if he could easily remember the morals and social rules for living a life in harmony with the community, answered:

Sometimes, then I forget them. When I see something then it reminds me of the lectures that I have received. Then there is one that I get to remember once in a while, which causes severance of kinship relationship. It is said that the kinship ties are severed by material goods. If someone wanted to borrow something from me, it might be from my younger brother, nieces or my cousins. If I refuse them, often, when they want to borrow something from me, they will slowly start to alienate themselves from me. This is the thing that will divide the kinship ties. The thing is that any material goods belong to the family and used by them, if one of them own the material thing and he will not share it with anyone else, then they will get disinclined towards this individual, and the rest will not want to help him in any way. The others will get the feeling that this individual wants to be independent, so they will no longer care for this individual (Antonin Qrunnut, IE-486, 20 August 2001).

There is a readiness to talk of kinship ties in terms of sharing material goods in many narratives from the Igloodik archives. For example, the first thing that came to Rachael Ujarasuk's mind when asked if the kinship ties are better now than in the past:

³⁵ Appendix 1.3 Philip Qipanniq, interviewed by Louis Tapardjuk, IE-198, 5 September 1991.

I am afraid that most of us are starting to forget what family kinship ties are. In the past we were able to share our implements among family members without getting anything in return, because they are related to us (Rachael Ujarasuk, IE-423, 26 November 1997).

Speaking specifically about women, Seporah Inuksuk simply said that sharing material goods was the “the bonding mechanism for the women in the extended family” (Seporah Inuksuk, IE-499, 29 November 2002).

To sum up, some key possessions like harpoons and *uluit* were strongly linked to individuals in their personal development from childhood to adulthood, with a special emphasis on gender identity and associated tasks. They would learn how to perform key activities, such as hunting and making clothing, through observation of their relatives in the immediate and extended families, and through play and personal experimentation. They would thus imitate the ways of their fathers and mothers or uncles, aunts, older siblings or cousins, and would also add their personal signatures to some of the tools when they were wanted or needed. These implements would be their personal possessions, taken with them everywhere, even to the grave. But in order to maintain good relations with their families, they had to share them if asked to. This being said, some of these objects, like *uluit*, were owned by the household. One could tell by the design of the object if it was a special possession, or if it was made to be shared by the family.

7.3 Leadership and social differentiation

The social life of Inuit people is also marked by dynamics of social differentiation, where some individuals acquire leadership and influence over other individuals and become wealthier than the other members of the community. As mentioned earlier, family headmen,

such as *isumatait* among Iglulik Inuit, *angajuqqaat* among Labrador and Nunavik Inuit, and whaling boat captains such as *umialit* among Alaskan Inuit, are leaders that have obligations towards the community. So it is not a question of absolute power over a village, but of serving the interests of the community, through the acquisition of skills, knowledge (*isumataq* means ‘who has knowledge, wisdom’), experience (*angajuqqaq*, from the root *angajuk*, meaning ‘elder’) material wealth (*umialik* means ‘who has a boat’) and the respect from other individuals and spirits. A leader has to have and continuously demonstrate strong social skills, in conjunction with technical know-how and experience. Importantly, leadership and social differentiation is achieved through material means and maintained through the acquisition and demonstration of superior qualities and properties, including material wealth.

Social skills, technical know-how and the material means and results of such personal properties are not unique to headmen and leaders. Each man and woman among Inuit communities aims to develop these qualities, because they correspond to the appropriate, socially and morally valued way of living. Consequently, the difference between the qualities and properties of a leader and of other members of a community is one of degree, along a continuum. And this ‘degree’ is easily recognisable from a material point of view. It is seen in the accumulation and demonstration of material wealth, the possession and use of amulets and the care with which personal possessions are made, well-made tools being both technologically efficient and aesthetically appealing. Here, I describe these material processes of social differentiation from the point of view of Inuit elders, which will also feed my discussion around the concepts of art and technology (Chapter 8).

First of all, I want to stress the importance for Inuit to have guidance from a headman, to follow a leader. Social differentiation and leadership is thus entrenched in social equilibrium at the community level. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Inuit from the region of Igloolik had family headmen, and above them a camp leader (*isumataq*) who coordinated hunting activities and the sharing of food, and who took different forms of decisions for the camp such as seasonal travelling and the choice of camp location. In fact, the *isumataq* consulted each family headman before taking decisions that would affect social and subsistence activities at the camp level.

Seporah Inukshuk, when interviewed by Leonie Qrunnut, explained these roles held by the leaders in Igloolik³⁶. She described the difference between the headman or elder of each family, and the *isumataq* who was not necessarily the eldest, but someone who had leadership qualities. Noah Piugattuk explained how headmen and *isumatait* would also keep harmony within communities³⁷. Noah Piugattuk was a respected elder in Igloolik. He is the man who inspired the harvesting of a bowhead whale in 1994 by Igloolik hunters, as described in the introduction. When interviewed by Louis Tapardjuk, he also explained how he became a camp leader, with the help of family, material culture and dogs³⁸. His story illustrates the roles of familial and social relations through Noah's uncle, the elder Tapaattiaq, material culture such as his uncle's sail boat, animals such as the dog team and game animals, skills – for example being a good dog team leader and a successful hunter – amulet-like agents such as the part of his person given to the lead dog, and the

³⁶ Appendix 1.4 Seporah Inuksuk, IE-499, 29 November 2002

³⁷ Appendix 1.5 Noah Piugattuk, IE-247, 1 July 1992

³⁸ Appendix 1.6 Noah Piugattuk, IE-315, 9 November 1994

encouragement of members of the community in the process of becoming a leader. The social network perspective helps us make sense of these interactions between humans, objects, animals and even supernatural forces involved in such a social process. The dog team was an important factor in this process, in conjunction with Noah's capacity and apparent pleasure to hunt with their help. In fact, there is a direct relation between being a good hunter, knowing the land, being able to travel long distances, having an efficient dog team and being a leader. These interactions became even more apparent when the dog slaughter policy (Dog Ordinance of Northwest Territories) came into effect in 1929, changing the life of Inuit in Nunavut and Nunavik forever. Removing the dogs created multiple and irreversible shifts in the personal, social, economic and spiritual lives of Inuit (Lévesque 2008, 2010; Qikiqtani Inuit Association 2010; Tester 2010). In Noah's account, his competences as a hunter and a leader were prompted by his relation with a particular dog that was given a part of Noah's person to eat. The interviewer asks if this is a form of *pigusiq*. *Pigusiq* is a form of spell given to a child or a young person in order for him or her to acquire certain skills or qualities later in his or her life, sometimes given along with an amulet. The dog and his master form a symbolic whole, because the latter is the dog's *innua*, his vital soul (Lévesque 2008: 151-164). This close relationship is also visible in the word *qimutsik* referring to the entity "dog-master-sled" (Therrien 1987: 128). This hybrid entity in which humans, animals and objects are mixed together is a very good example of the social network perspective (Latour 2005).

Returning to the topic of leadership, other elders indicated the role of the camp leader in maintaining relations between different camps, and even sometimes in becoming a

great regional leader above other camp leaders. In the region of Igloolik, there was a camp leader named Ittuksaarjjuat who became a legend, because of his quality as a leader at the regional level. He and his wife Ataguttaaluk³⁹, who enjoyed an equivalent social status, are mentioned regularly in the elders' interviews⁴⁰. The elders explained the reasons why a regional leader would be helpful, to keep unity, communication flow and harmony between different camps formed of one or more extended families, especially in terms of food. Others explain their role in trading activities⁴¹. Although they refer to the trading dynamics of the Hudson's Bay Company in the 20th century, which concerns exotic goods and trading items very different from Thule Inuit goods, there are some relevant elements to retain from it: a regional leader was able to act as a trading intermediary between the source of exotic goods and the local camps. He thus had privileged access to these goods and could, if he wished, use his position to his advantage for example, for material profit. Certainly, he would have needed to have some sort of personal resources or wealth beyond the average in order to purchase and accumulate these trading goods in his home. So his home, his camp, would be a place where people from other places would converge for trading.

Another reason why people from his camp and outside would meet at his home would be to resolve social conflict⁴². Social conflict was sometimes regulated at the regional level by a supreme *isumataq*. Ittuksaarjjuat's wife, Ataguttaaluk is referred to as the Queen of

³⁹ The elementary school of Igloolik was named after Ataguttaaluk.

⁴⁰ Appendix 1.7 Noah Piugattuk, IE-247, 1 July 1992; Antonen Qunnut, IE-362, 18 April 1996

⁴¹ Appendix 1.8 Catherine Arnattiaq interviewed by Maurice Arnattiaq, IE-260, 9 February 1993

⁴² Appendix 1.9 Rosie Iqalliyuq, interviewed by Wim Rasing and Paul Irgaut, IE-26, 21 January 1987 and 6 March 1987

Igloodik (Mary-Rousselière 1950)⁴³. In conjunction with her personal life story and personality, she also enjoyed the social privileges of her husband, much like the *umialik*'s wife among Alaskan Inuit.

The story of Ataguttaaluk also refers to the gendered division of leadership, associated with gendered activities⁴⁴. However, Therese Qillaq Ijjangiaq does not tell us exactly *how* Ataguttaaluk interfered with leadership in their handiworks. Oakes (1991: 182) studied dynamics of skin clothing production among Copper and Caribou Inuit, and concluded that some elder seamstresses (one or two per camp of about 100-200 individuals) were fashion leaders who taught pattern development to young women. In other words, these leaders were transmitting sewing techniques and clothing styles to all the women in the community. But, as I will discuss further in the next chapters, conformity to these styles was alternated with personal taste, preferences and creativity of individual women. Accordingly, it should also be noted that the influence of such leaders was not absolute and people could still decide not to follow them or their advice, as some elders explained⁴⁵. This reminds us about the nuanced nature of leadership among Inuit. It is not about absolute power of one individual over others, but about a person who is respected and consulted when needed, and

⁴³ Fascination for Ataguttaaluk mostly stems from her unique life story which includes an episode of severe starvation when she was forced to eat human flesh in order to survive. Even though it occurred very rarely, cannibalism is a practice that Inuit sometimes had to turn to in order to survive, waiting for a bad season to end, a migration of animals or rescuers to come. People who had eaten human flesh were marked with taboos or proscriptions of different kinds for the rest of their lives. But sometimes, as was the case for Ataguttaaluk, it elicited some sort of fascination or respect from others, since having to eat the flesh of one's relatives – often one's children – and surviving severe starvation is seen as an act of courage and strength. What is particularly important, for the purpose of this research, is that she was also a leader because Ittuksaarjjuat rescued her and took her as a second wife.

⁴⁴ Appendix 1.10 Therese Qillaq Ijjangiaq, interviewed by Paul Irngaut, IE-19, 8 January 1987

⁴⁵ Appendix 1.11 Aipilik Inuksuk, interviewed by Wim Rasing, Paul Irngaut, IE-4, 28 October 1986

who is a resource for questions that affect the camp when multiple extended families gathered, for example in terms of subsistence strategy when on hunting trips or the sharing of big game hunts, and social harmony or social conflict resolution.

The networks described in this chapter have revealed the interrelations between Inuit and their material world for processes such as the construction of personal identities, social harmony within families and in the community, and social differentiation. I have identified a number of themes in which everyday objects played decisive social roles: the learning processes of children using specific toys such as miniatures of tools they will make and use later in their adult life, the construction of gendered identities, the transmission of knowledge and knowhow between peers working together and/or teaching each other, and the process of becoming a leader within the community. According to the social network approach, we still need to identify the material traces left by these interactions: which objects, and what aspects of these objects are the index of these social relations and actions? This question draws our attention not only to specific classes of objects and their agency in the Inuit world, but also the values that were attributed to these objects by their makers and users. The workshops at the McCord Museum were particularly helpful for answering these questions, notably for defining notions of art and technology from Inuit perspectives. These two notions are central to the social networks described in this chapter, and are fundamental for establishing the premises to the ethnographic analogy between Inuit and Thule Inuit material culture and perspectives. The next chapter is thus devoted to an analysis of the concepts of art and technology among Inuit, from both a contemporary and an archaeological perspective.

8. An Inuit notion of art

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I develop my investigation of the material aspects of Inuit social networks with the notions of art, aesthetics and technology. I first discuss the concept of material wealth, and more specifically prized materials involved in the fabrication of specific objects, and the ways in which these materials add a special connotation to the objects, to their makers and users. Secondly, I examine the notion of ‘art’, especially by comparing Inuit and non-Inuit perspectives. While acknowledging that this notion can be problematical for the purpose of the ethnographic analogy between Inuit and Thule Inuit, I explain the ways in which it can be made relevant. As I will discuss shortly, Inuit contemporary art forms such as sculptures, drawings and prints are recent material manifestations of Inuit creativity – they emerged in the mid 20th century and they do not have an analogical equivalent in Thule Inuit material culture. However, when we examine the Inuit concept of art, regardless of its material forms, and the artists/artisans, we begin to see relevant similarities between the Inuit and Thule Inuit contexts. My workshops at the McCord were particularly revealing on these matters. In this chapter, I present and explain these correspondences around the notions of art, aesthetics and technology from an Inuit perspective and for the purpose of the analogy with Thule Inuit material culture and social life.

8.2 The need for an Inuit concept of art

Social differentiation is not a process solely reserved for camp leaders and their spouses. In fact, the social and moral rules and principles related to these positions apply

equally to every person in the community. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the difference between a camp leader and a regular hunter is more a question of degree. Consequently, I could refer to it as 'social distinction' rather than differentiation. Not necessarily in the sense of Bourdieu's 'distinction' (1979), where members of lower classes sometimes try to imitate the cultural practices or *habitus* of the elite in order to valorise themselves socially. Dynamics of social distinction among Inuit are not directed towards an elite class, but towards the ideals of a morally and socially valued way of life. These values are accessible to everyone, and everyone has to conform to them for the well-being and social harmony of the whole community. But these idealistic ways of life are performed to varying degrees by each individual. Every Inuit man and woman wants to be a successful hunter or skilled seamstress in order to valorise themselves personally and socially. And this is where the form of distinction I am referring to is made visible materially, in the different degrees of success in the processes of being a skilled hunter or seamstress, having and displaying material means associated with these important tasks as well as different degrees of material wealth.

From the perspective of material culture, these differences are salient. Recognising and studying them are not just ways to identify such social distinctions, but also to understand the process better. Material wealth is a relatively straightforward indicator in that sense. For Inuit, and for the purpose of the analogy with Thule Inuit, this is mostly visible through the relative abundance of prized materials, being those that were locally scarce and/or exotic, for key artefact classes such as men's and women's personal possessions and body/clothing ornaments. Another important material culture indicator of social

differentiation/distinction that helps us understand the dynamics of the process itself is *art*. I use the italic form here, because my perspective on the notion, inspired by the Inuit point of view, is very particular and requires explanation. This is where the workshops at the McCord Museum proved to be most productive in terms of the social aspects of everyday life objects, most specifically through which kind of objects or which material attributes people distinguish themselves from others.

My use of the notion of art, inspired by the Inuit perspective, is somewhat different from mainstream approaches often used in archaeology. A fundamental work in this domain is that of Boas (1955 [1927]) who defined art in terms of a list of tangible traits and abstract meanings and effects that are common to all human beings. Boas' universal criteria pertain to technical pursuits of the artists, the aesthetic results, the expression of emotions or thoughts and the desire for artistic expression. For Boas, art is linked to the emotions of pleasure and satisfaction that arise from the contemplation of aesthetic forms, the mastering of skills that bring about these forms, and the ideas, memories or symbols that these forms evoke: "The form and its meaning combine to elevate the mind above the indifferent emotional state of everyday life." (ibid: 12)

This point of view is rooted in the post-Enlightenment perspective on art, one that is still very common in contemporary Western societies. However, in the course of history, from antiquity to the present, perspectives and definitions of the notion of art have been through constant transformations (Kristeller 1952b: 45). The modern system of fine arts that we are familiar with, and which is echoed in Boas' perspectives, only represents the cultural and social conditions of very recent times in our society, from the 18th century to the

present. For example, the visual arts, such as painting and sculpture, were not considered as arts until the Renaissance. Painters and sculptors of antiquity were not ‘artists’ but ‘artisans’ and had a very low social status, compared to individuals who were practising the most celebrated arts of that time: poetry and music. It was only during the Renaissance period that these artisans gained a higher social status, when they began to claim a higher prestige for their art⁴⁶.

In accordance with the Inuit perspective, I suggest an alternative to the paradigm of symbolism and the separation between art and everyday life. In accordance with the social network approach and the notion of index, I suggest an approach that focuses more on the *role* of art in the lives of the people that make and use it, and less on the *symbolic* meaning contained in artworks. I wish to turn away from questions about the essential nature of art, and will rather focus on its relational aspects. Why and for what do people make and use art, in which context of action, in relation to what and whom? These questions draw attention to the socially and culturally specific conditions of the production and utilisation of art. This relational approach emphasises the connections between art forms in their interaction with other tangible elements of the life of their makers and users.

This represents a radical shift in our most common definition of art, following Ingold’s critique of art as “a capacity, common to all human beings, to disengage

⁴⁶ It is also interesting to note that until the 18th century, other practices were also grouped under the banner of ‘art’: the liberal arts and the mechanical arts. The former had an academic nature (originally grammar, rhetoric and logic, to which were later added astrology, mathematics, and other disciplines taught in universities), and the latter included weaving, blacksmithing, war, navigation, agriculture, hunting, medicine and theatre. In these two different systems (that are now called sciences, techniques and crafts), visual arts were either absent, or sometimes, at best, scattered among them and considered as subordinate (Kristeller 1952a, 1952b).

consciousness from the current of lived experience, so as to treat that experience as an object of reflection” (Ingold 2000: 111). The perspectives of Inuit elders that I will present shortly teach us that engraving designs on tools or making carvings should not be seen as *symbolic* representations of lived experience. Instead, these are activities by which individuals engage themselves deeper into those experiences. It means that art, for Inuit individuals, is not a particular category of material production whose aim is to be admired and to symbolise worldviews. Rather, their art is an active player, or a tool, with which people create, negotiate and maintain relationships with other individuals and groups, as well as animals and other beings present in their environment. And finally, their art is not limited to the production of carvings, ornaments and incised decoration on tools; instead, it includes the entire corpus of technology used in everyday activities.

8.3 Problems for the ethnographic analogy

Before presenting the Inuit perspective on art and the role of art in social distinction, I wish to consider a potential problem that could arise in the ethnographic analogy between Inuit and Thule Inuit on this specific matter. An important discrepancy exists between contemporary or recent past Inuit forms of art and the ones produced by their Thule Inuit ancestors. The Inuit production of modern art forms is intended for a non-Inuit market – this is totally absent in Thule assemblages. The roots of this artistic production can be found in the late 18th century, when Inuit began exchanging everyday items with explorers, whalers, missionaries, traders and other non-Inuit travellers. At first, regular objects were traded, for example traditional tools and weapons that served as souvenirs. In some places, Inuit also collected Thule Inuit or Dorset miniatures from house ruins for sale to Euro-Canadian

travellers, traders and whalers (Innuksuk and Cowan 1978). Collectors began to show a growing interest in the miniatures produced by Inuit, minute models or replicas of everyday tools, and figures representing humans and animals. Inuit started to produce more and more of these miniatures, and they became common trade commodities with the non-Inuit. Other new art pieces also became very popular, such as hunting scenes or cribbage boards engraved on walrus tusks. It was James Houston, a young Canadian artist travelling in the Arctic in 1948, who 'discovered' this Inuit art. Along with the Canadian Guild of Handicrafts, he became one of the principal agents of the development of its market. Before the Houston era, these items were seen as 'crafts' by non-Inuit, and used as commodities (Hessel 1998: 21). For the Inuit, these miniatures had many and often interchangeable roles, ranging from toys for children, elements of divination games, ornaments, personal or shamanic amulets and offerings for the deceased (Laugrand and Oosten 2008). But Houston and the Guild redefined these pieces as 'art' in a modern and Western sense, opening the market inside and outside Canada, and revealing them in exhibitions of art museums. Eventually, Inuit people began to produce the larger carvings in soapstone or whale bone, and these have become now signature pieces, recognised at the international level. The major values that the non-Inuit associate with this new art are connection with the past, ethnic identity of the Inuit, national identity of Canada, Inuit cosmology and natural environment, and above all, human creativity (Graburn 2004).

For most archaeologists and art historians, there is a profound rupture between the production and meaning of Thule Inuit art and modern Inuit art. The first is mostly perceived as an 'ethnic' art, and the second is considered as a 'tourist' art. From such a point

of view, using the Inuit as analogues to the Thule people for studies pertaining to art can be risky. I argued earlier that the method of ethnographic analogy has to be applied with rigour, which means first to recognise the differences and similarities between the potential analogues. Here, I have identified a discrepancy, mainly based on the fact that modern Inuit art is made to be sold in the non-Inuit market, and includes forms that are not represented in Thule material culture. However, some important similarities exist between the two forms, making them highly suitable for the analogical method. The modern art of the Inuit was developed as a strategy to cope with social problems that were brought, notably, by colonisation, enforced sedentism and economic dependence on the federal government. This artistic and economic strategy should be seen as a typical Inuit way to adapt to the emergence of problems, using their long-recognised ingenuity, skill and creativity. I suggest that instead of concentrating on modern Inuit art *forms*, or the final products which have little, if any, connection with Thule Inuit material culture, we should rather build the analogy on Inuit as carvers, tool makers, seamstresses or artisans of an elaborated material culture actively involved in their social relations and living strategies.

8.4 An Inuit word for art

I propose to begin by identifying the Inuit equivalent of our modern and most common notion of 'art'. Interestingly, there is no actual word in Inuktitut for our abstract concept of 'art'. The word created by Inuit for their modern sculptures is *sananguaq*, which literally means the action of making, fabricating (*sana-*) and the idea of a model, imitation or representation (*-nguaq*). In Alaska, *nguaq* refers to the pretend games of children, and in Greenland it means little, miniature. The suffix *nguaq* is also used in other words, such as doll

(*inunguaq*, or little representation of a human), toy (*atinguaq* or little thing that plays, that pretends) or image-photograph (*atjinguaq*) (Swinton 1999 [1972]: 129). Thus, the word *sananguaq* is oriented in the action of making and the imitation of something that already exists. In other words, it is the making of a miniature, a model of a real thing, be it an object, an animal, a person or any other being present in the Inuit environment or imaginary. When Kenojuak Ashevak of Cape Dorset, one of the greatest Inuit graphic artists of Canada, was asked how to say ‘art’ in Inuktitut, she answered that there is no such word, but that they used *sananguatavut*, which means ‘from real to unreal’ (Swinton 1999 [1972]: 129). This completely inverts the relation between idea and object that is usually taken for granted by many archaeologists and anthropologists: it is not an ‘idea’ that is materialised in the ‘object’, but a real object, or being, that is being transformed in a representation.

8.5 Relations to materials

Another important Inuit perspective to be included in the analogy with Thule Inuit art is their relation to raw materials in the act of carving. Inuit carvers are not merely imposing a preconceived form on brute matter or ‘materialising’ a pre-existing idea. Instead, carvers are constantly responsive to the intrinsic qualities of the material, which they know perfectly well (Swinton 1999 [1972]: 14-15). An Inuit carver at work was observed by Carpenter: “As the carver holds the unworked ivory lightly in his hand, turning it this way and that, he whispers, ‘Who are you? Who hides in there? And then ‘ah, Seal!’... Then he brings it out: seal, hidden, emerges. It was always there. He did not create it. He released it: he helped it step forth.” (Carpenter 1966, cited in Ingold 2000: 126). A sculpture done by the carver Pudlo Pootogook and presented in Swinton’s renowned book on Inuit sculpture

represents this principle: a woman holds a piece of soapstone near her ear and listens to the rock that will reveal to her the image that it contains (Swinton 1999 [1972]: 41, illustration 60).

The same rule applies to materials used in the manufacture of tools and weapons, as revealed by the Oblate missionary Franz van de Velde, who worked closely with Inuit carvers for several decades in Nunavut:

The Eskimo creates a thousand and one things of his daily life. All with the alive quality and exact precision which stems from his living character and intellect. I believe this to be the only secret of a true artist. He has but to remove the excess parts of his model such as stone, bone, antler or ivory to show us what he has already seen in the abstract. This explains the perfection with which he fashions his working tools and hunting implements (van de Velde 1973: 3).

A concrete example of this principle is found in the Igloolik archives. Noah Piugaatuk answered questions about caribou antler, its qualities, properties and its potential uses. Depending on the age and the gender of the caribou – females also have antlers – and on the part of the antler, all sorts of tools and weapons could be made: blubber pounders, harpoon heads, whip handles, scraper handles, sled shoes, snow probes, pegs, fish hooks, bows, dog harness buckles, drying racks, etc. Because the antler size and quality varies widely, and not every piece of antler is suitable for every tool, carvers would pick up fallen antlers according to the object they needed to make. In other words, they would go out and search for appropriate pieces of antler that potentially ‘contained’ the tools that were needed. The same principle was applied to other materials, such as the wood used for kayaks, as revealed by Willie Etok in one of the workshops at the McCord Museum (14 April 2010).

He said that every rib of the kayak body had a different size and a specific name. When someone wanted a piece of wood to make a particular rib, he would call out the name of the specific rib to have someone give him the piece of wood of the right size. In fact, during the workshops at the McCord, when participants manipulated the objects, the first comments, questions or topic of their discussions concerned the material from which the objects were made. They would either consult one another to find out what kind of bone, from which animal, a scraper handle was made of, or they would reveal to us the properties of the materials and why they were chosen for particular objects. The same applies to different animal skins and fur, as well as the kinds of sinew used for making clothing, for example from the back or the limbs of the caribou. Different animals and parts of animals gave skins with various properties such as warmth, waterproof qualities, aesthetic qualities and different levels of softness, or flexibility that guided the seamstresses when making clothes. In fact, hunting expeditions were often decided upon the needs of the family in terms of clothing, bedding or dwellings such as tents made of caribou skins.

Materials could also transmit some of their qualities and properties to the user of the objects, as is the case with clothing. For example, among Copper Inuit, the caribou skin and the shape of the parka made from it, with two upstanding caribou ears placed on the hood, transferred the caribou's power of acute hearing to the hunter, thus improving his ability to pursue game (Issenman 1985: 106, 1997: 181). Sea mammal gutskin, the membranes of intestines, used in the production of light parkas, was believed to ward off evil spirits. Women would thus wear such parkas when sewing new sealskin kayak covers to stop evil influence affecting the kayak, and men wore them in the general belief that the material

prevented bad spirits from entering sea nets and keeping away seals. Puffin beaks on these gutskin parkas would rattle and scare off bad spirits (Issenman 1997: 205). The power contained in animal parts also required special acts of respect from humans, for example that of the polar bear. After being killed, the bear's soul accompanied its skin into the dwelling for several days and was considered an honoured guest. Gifts were given to the soul according to the gender of the animal killed, especially if it was a female: *uluit*, skin scrapers and needle-cases were hung up with the skin for a few days.

Different kinds of amulets were sewn onto men's, women's and children's parkas, either for spiritual protection, luck in hunting, or to help them develop specific physical qualities and skills. These amulets were often made of animal parts and it is the qualities of the animals that were transferred to the wearer. For example, fox bones were attached to women's clothing to ensure that their future sons would be fast runners and would have strong legs (Hall et al. 1994: 57). Wolf bones, loon skins, eagle beaks and claws, ermine skins, caribou teeth, ptarmigan, swan and lemming skins were all other types of amulets regularly sewn onto or into clothing in order to transfer some essential qualities of these animals to the wearers. These amulets were the physical mediators of the spirits which helped individuals (Issenman 1997: 184).

8.6 Aesthetics

Another important factor to discuss in the analogy between Inuit and Thule Inuit art forms pertains to aesthetics. Graburn and Stern (1999) suggest that the Inuit notion of beauty is closely linked to the appropriate behaviours that one needs to adopt in one's life, in

relation to other persons, animals and spirits. Conformity, the ordinary and the mundane are the main sources of genuine beauty. Frivolous behaviours or appearance are valued as unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Inuit do have their own criteria of aesthetics, related to elegance, decoration and ornaments, but these aesthetics have a specific purpose, which does not serve personal vanity, or the embellishment of everyday life. For example, it is reported in ethnographies of peoples in the North American Arctic that the aesthetic qualities of the clothing and weapons of the hunter have the purpose of pleasing and/or seducing the animal, encouraging it to give itself to the hunter (Brightman 1993; Chaussonnet 1988; Fienup-Riordan 1994; Fitzhugh 1988; Issenman 1997: 180; Willerslev 2007). This could include added ornamentation such as beadwork on clothing or incised decoration on tools, but it could also include well-made weapons or regular and perfect stitches on the clothing of the hunter. In general, it is believed that a neglected appearance would chase the animal away. The work of women who sewed the clothes of the hunter was thus primordial:

Animal skin, transformed into a second skin for humans by the work of seamstresses, still maintained its animal identity. From the killing of an animal through the tanning, cutting and sewing of its skin into a piece of clothing, the qualities and characteristics attributed to it in life were maintained and passed on to the wearer of the finished garment. This important spiritual principle linked animals, hunters, and seamstresses together in an intricate and circular set of relationships (...) A direct consequence of the continuum between live animals and animal products for clothing was that women had to observe certain rules in their art and show respect for the material, as did the hunter of the game (Chaussonnet 1988: 212; see also Issenman 1997: 179-221).

The sewing material of Canadian and Alaskan Inuit women is often richly decorated, as was the case for their Thule Inuit predecessors. This ornamentation was linked to the respect that needs to be shown to animals when working their skins, in order to maintain their qualities and characteristics, and to invite the animals to let themselves be killed again. As mentioned above, these gestures are crucial factors for successful hunts.

Carefully crafted objects and styles of clothing not only served to please the spirits, but also to construct, negotiate and maintain social relations within and between communities. Among Copper Inuit, special clothing was reserved for social gatherings, such as communal dances (Hall et al. 1994: 71; Issenman 1997: 203-204). The Messenger Feast in Alaska also required special garments to be made for the occasion, especially worn by the messenger (Issenman 1997: 205-206). This clothing was either richly ornamented or it integrated special animal parts such as the dancing loonskin caps of the Copper Inuit (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Dancing cap featuring a loon beak, made with loon skin, caribou, hare and weasel fur; Inuinnaq (Copper Inuit), McCord accession number M976.148 (Height 37 cm)

In addition, as I mentioned earlier, materials that are highly prized for their special physical qualities (brilliance, finesse, colour, malleability, durability) or their rarity (low abundance at the local level or exotic provenience) tend to be used to affirm personal wealth or status. In the Arctic past, these materials were commonly metal, ivory and amber (see McCartney 1991; Morrison 1987; Whitridge 1999, 2002). Metal was transformed into blades

for various tools such as knives and hunting equipment, or into bracelets and headbands for women. Beads and pendants made out of ivory, amber or blue glass beads from Siberia were common precious items among Inuit (Issenman 1997: 188-192). Owning and displaying these items was a sign of wealth and prestige (Hall et al. 1994: 79).

Specific personal objects, such as body and clothing ornaments and tools involved in principal activities, such as hunting for men and sewing for women, tend to be more carefully made than other types of objects. As I argued earlier, among Inuit men and women, mastering the skills of sewing and hunting, which also includes making the tools and weapons and travelling on the land, used to be the main requirement for young adults to be allowed to marry and become a productive and recognised adult in the community. Later in their lives, men and women would build and maintain their various places and statuses within the community through industriousness and the successful accomplishment of these tasks. Their resulting wealth and status was then made explicit, and thus maintained, through the demonstration and exhibition of their skills in carefully and skilfully made tools, weapons and clothing, and by the material sign of their wealth on their personal appearance through the wearing of bodily ornaments that show high qualities in their composition and realisation.

The choice of the raw material and ornamentation on, for example, women's sewing tools and bodily ornaments takes on a new dimension here. They are not a 'symbol' of gender or of worldviews (as in McGhee 1977, 1988; Sproull-Thomson 1979), but the actual tools used by women to build and maintain their social status and take an active part in the procurement of food, by allowing the hunter to 'seduce' the game animal, and by showing

respect to its bodily products. They are active players, or agents, in their building of manhood, womanhood and status in the community.

This Inuit notion of beauty is also observed in more recent times, as important criteria in their own appreciation of their modern sculptures:

In the case of the local Inuit audience, many of the Inuit try to convince their audience through specific characteristics of their art that they are strong, clever, persistent and observant about the natural world, by working hard rock (or dealing daringly with softer rock), by producing unusual visual effects, by finishing it thoroughly all over (e.g. not leaving the base or unseen parts rough), and by portraying the 'truth' (...). (...) a failure to display any of those desired characteristics leads the Inuit audience to judge that the artist is weak, lazy, has poor eyesight, and does not know the outside world intimately (e.g. spends his or her time in the tent or igloo and doesn't go out on the land) (Graburn 2005: 59).

The effects of this notion of beauty, i.e. skilfully made objects and/or realistic representations, were often made explicit during the workshops at the McCord Museum. First of all, as I mentioned earlier, very few comments were made spontaneously about the incised decoration on some of the objects used in the workshops. When I asked the question more directly, pointing to tools and pieces of equipment that had incised decorations and asking for their meaning, the participants seemed to have difficulty understanding the goal of my question. Asking the 'meaning' of carved incisions on an object could either refer to the purpose of the incisions, or to the thing or idea they might represent. I turned around my question in these various senses, and very often the participants answered that they simply did not know. Upon my insistence, some of them tried out few interpretations, which all went in the same direction: the incisions must have been individual preferences and styles in

the making of personal gear. In other words, they are different ‘ways of doing’. What might seem to be a very simple answer actually refers to the personal or group identity that one constructs and/or affirms when carving a particular object.

Other answers pointed to the value of the decorated objects for their makers and/or users, for example when Qupanuaq Padlayat (McCord Museum, 27 April 2010) said that a bow drill decorated with geometrical dots and line designs may have been a valued object in the household. The above mentioned example of the personal *ulu* as opposed to an *ulu* shared by all the members of a household also illustrates this principle. One of the participants, Charlie Tarkik (McCord Museum, 13 April 2010), also said that the best hunters in the community always have the ‘best’ – this I understand to mean the most carefully made and efficient – hunting equipment. In general, these comments are quite removed from archaeological interpretations of prehistoric ‘graphic arts’ as symbolic representations of belief systems. They rather point to the role and the value of the objects for the makers and users, the way attachment is claimed through their material design and the way that these persons achieve and maintain their role in the community through the making and using of these special objects.

Besides incised ornamentation on objects, the sight of generally well-made tools and hunting equipment triggered a series of passionate reactions and discussions. It was exactly the kind of response that we generally have when admiring a masterpiece in a fine art museum: exclamations, calling the attention of the other participants, lengthy examination of the object, and comments on its design and exactitude. One of the favourite objects for many participants, both men and women, was a skin scraper, undecorated but carefully

carved to fit the user's fingers and palm (Figure 11). Another object also provoked a reaction that demonstrates well the Inuit notion of beauty: a needle-case made of ivory, with an incised decoration representing a beluga whale, collected in Nunavik in the early 20th century (Figure 12). I had purposely selected this object to be part of the workshop, because I wanted to hear the participants' comments on the whale representation. First, I was disappointed to see that it was not a very popular object among the interviewees, probably because it was very old, and very few elders recalled seeing any needle-case of that shape and material. However, two men (Bobby Snowball and Alashua Amittu, McCord Museum, 13 April 2010), who are carvers, talked about it for a while. Since the discussions were all in Inuktitut, I waited eagerly to hear the translation of their passionate exchange. When they had finished talking, one of the participants turned to me with the needle-case in one hand, and said that the carver who made it was exceptionally skilful, because he was able to carve the interior of the tube in a square shape. I had personally never noticed that the object was squared inside, or I did not pay attention to it – my attention was mostly directed to its incised decoration, a typical reflex for an archaeologist. From my perspective, the decoration was the special attribute of the object, but for the workshop participants, the key attribute was the spectacular realisation of the shape of the tube.



Figure 11: Skin scraper. McCord Museum ME930.20 (Length 12.1 cm)



Figure 12: Needle-case. McCord Museum M18589.2 (Length 7.2 cm)

The Igloolik archives offer another example of the link between aesthetics, the usefulness of the objects and the skill of the carver. When discussing various tools and

techniques around the treatment of animal skins, Abraham Ulaajuruluk⁴⁷ adds the factor of pleasure while manufacturing the scraper. If it is made with care the carver knows it will become a useful object for someone in particular or for the household – he did not specify. This is an important aspect of Inuit art, the pleasure and satisfaction of making a beautiful, well-made and efficient tool of everyday life.

8.7 Art and technology

The first point that comes out of this incursion into Inuit notions of art is the Inuit engagement with objects of everyday life and the range of emotions that are triggered when they discuss their technology. If we think about the way in which we decide what is a piece of art and what is not, we would see that our process is similar: we use our own values, which might be aesthetics, and/or the amount and level of difficulty of craftsmanship involved in the realisation of the object, or its association to a particular style, in order to decide whether an object is ‘art’, merely handicraft, or just a banality. For Inuit, these criteria are mostly performative, and are associated with their notion of beauty, for example through being well-made, exact, efficient, conforming and overall morally good. So in this sense, we can say that the Inuit, and by analogy Thule Inuit, have a notion of art grounded in the skilled practice of making and using objects of everyday life.

Most importantly, the Inuit notion of art overcomes the problematical dichotomy ‘art/technology’ (see Ingold 2000 for a discussion about this duality and the notion of skilled practice that overcomes it). As was revealed in the workshops at the McCord Museum, well-

⁴⁷ Appendix 1.12 Abraham Ulaajuruluk, IE-238, 30 March 1992

made and efficient tools, as ‘ordinary’ as they might look to a non-Inuit public, were the most highly valued and admired items. The contrary was also often demonstrated: objects that were made in a neglectful manner, and that didn’t seem efficient when used, were commented on negatively. The participants reacted to them with indignation, either saying that they were surely made very quickly in order to be exchanged for a pouch of tobacco with a non-Inuit trader, or that those items were surely not from their homeland region of Nunavik, because they were not well-made and they would not have been efficient. The participants refused to associate themselves with such objects on the basis that they were not skilfully and efficiently made. These passionate reactions, positive or negative, occurred only with what we, non-Inuit, would identify as ‘technology’: skin scrapers, knives, dog harnesses, soapstone lamps, harpoons, etc.

The Inuit perspective on art is echoed by the work of Alfred Gell on the ‘technology of enchantment’ (1992). For Gell, art is a special component of people’s technology that is essential to the reproduction of societies. What makes art objects special, their ‘enchantment’, is the effect that they have on people, that stems from the technical virtuosity that was required to make them. Whether it is due to a difficulty of obtaining the object or its materials, complex and risky technical process and/or a great deal of time and energy required for their making, the nature and forms of these objects have a special value for their audience. This value therefore puts the owners or makers of such objects in a relation of power with other people: they possess objects, and/or the skills to make them, that others desire. This is how prestige or social status is achieved – through the making and displaying of well-made hunting equipment or exotic material in body adornment. As to the relation

with the spirits of game animals, using carefully made hunting tools is a form of respect, a gift that is made to the spirit, which puts the latter in a position of reciprocity: the spirit then 'owes' the hunter something – it will give itself, its body, in response to a well-made hunting tool.

Essentially, the aim of this perspective on art is to consider the notion of aesthetics in its social context (Gell 1998), displaying and using carefully carved objects in order to build and maintain social status in the community, to secure game animals and to please the spirits. The material items that are involved in the activities of everyday life, such as hunting, food and skin processing, sharing, cooking, eating, sewing, manufacturing and maintaining tools and weapons, travelling on the land or sea, and which depend on the maintenance of good relations with persons and the bodily products and spirits of animals, are active agents for the building and maintenance of such relationships. Their aesthetics, or beauty, i.e. if they were carefully made, sometimes with prized materials, sometimes decorated, efficient and conforming to the valued norms of the community, are the criteria that positively or negatively influence those relationships.

In conclusion, Inuit technology can be seen as an art (the art of making a living in the Arctic) and Inuit art as a form of technology (tools to create and maintain relations and the social equilibrium within families and communities). These perspectives on Inuit material culture are the basis of my archaeological analyses, especially when I use the concepts of style and design for Thule Inuit artefacts. When assessing the porosity of the boundaries between Inuit concepts of art and technology, we discover a similar situation with the frontiers between stylistic and functional attributes of artefacts. In archaeology, stylistic

attributes such as incised decoration on a knife are more readily associated with social and spiritual meanings, while functional attributes such as the sharpened edge of the same knife are studied in terms of the actual use of the object, its technological purpose. Instead of working with these dualistic premises, Inuit perspectives suggest that we blur these notions, or that we use analytical concepts that are more inclusive, such as the notion of design. The next chapter is dedicated to these questions, the material traces left by social networks on artefacts, and ways to identify and analyse them in terms of design, style and function, in order to answer questions about the social lives of their makers and users.

9. Design and style

9.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the traces left by Inuit social interactions on their everyday objects. Trends in material designs and stylistic variations will be discussed, using the Inuit perspectives from the Igloolik archives, the McCord Museum workshops and ethnographic literature. Two types of variability are identified. The first pertains to familial and social relations, revealed by material styles passed down and shared among social groups. Idiosyncrasies and unique combinations of commonly shared designs are discussed in terms of personal signatures on objects, revealing individual identities. The second kind of variation consists of social distinction or wealth, shown by personal ornaments, exceptionally finely crafted tools and the possession and use of valued materials.

These material indicators of Inuit social life are the premises of the analogy with Thule Inuit, and will be used as baselines for our archaeological analyses. According to these premises, five categories of Thule Inuit artefacts were chosen and are described at the end of the chapter. Harpoon heads, arrowheads, men's knife handles, *ulu* handles and ornaments/amulets/exotic materials are specifically discussed in term of their Inuit context and uses and possible Thule Inuit analogues.

Although the concept of style has been widely discussed in the archaeological literature worldwide, Arctic archaeology has yet to contribute to this discussion. In this chapter, I take up this challenge, defining style in a way that is relevant to the archaeological assemblages included in this research. To do so, I use various archaeological approaches to

style, which are echoed in Inuit perspectives. This chapter moves from general consideration about Inuit notions of style at different levels such as personal, family, community and region, to their most specific material manifestations at the artefact level. It is the culmination of our incursion into Inuit perspectives on material culture, or in other words a pragmatic guide for archaeological analyses of Thule Inuit social life.

9.2 Style and identity

I described earlier the social dynamics in which specific items of Inuit material culture played important roles. The personal development of becoming an adult, a hunter, a seamstress and maintaining social harmony within families and communities are among the most important. They include the inter-generational transmission of knowledge and techniques and the sharing of goods among families. They also contain a certain amount of individuality, illustrated by personal possessions that are shared only to certain limits, as well as personal signature and/or creativity in the production of certain items, such as clothing or hunting equipment. Inuit social life is thus constantly balanced between individuality and family/community relations and the material indicators of these dynamics display two corresponding tendencies: conformism to, or the reproduction of, familial and community traditions on the one hand, and personal creativity on the other.

In archaeological research, these tendencies are usually addressed through the notion of style. Stylistic studies in archaeology represent a wide variety of approaches that have succeeded one another throughout the development of the discipline. Numerous reviews have been written on the topic (for example Carr and Neitzel 1995; Conkey and Hastorf

1990; Dietler and Herbich 1998; Hegmon 1992, 1998). These different approaches were often parts of wider theoretical debates within the discipline, notably between culture historians and processualists and between the latter and post-processualists (see Binford 1973, 1986, 1989; Bordes 1973; Sackett 1986a, 1986b; Wiessner 1985). They also reflect regional schools of thought, especially the North American approach to style vs. the French school of techniques.

Culture-historical paradigms of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries provided the theoretical basis for many later approaches, defining style as a label of ethnicity, mostly used for spatio-temporal typologies and seriations (Childe 1929; Gräslund 1974; Petrie 1901, 1939; Trigger 2006). The processual agenda of the second half of the 20th century aimed at understanding mechanisms at the origin of style, its function, and the possible archaeological inferences that can be made from it. Embedded in paradigms of cultural ecology and neo-evolutionism, style was seen by processualists as the formal qualities of artefacts that cannot be explained in terms of environmental constraints, or the technological context of the object (Binford 1962, 1965, 1973). This premise resulted in the dichotomy between functional and stylistic elements of artefact design, where the former reflect adaptation to the environment and the latter correspond to social relations, ethnicity or belief systems. These stylistic attributes were either interpreted as signs of social interaction (Deetz 1965; Friedrich 1970; Hill 1970; Longacre 1964, 1970; Whallon 1968), social communication and comparison (Wiessner 1983, 1984, 1985; Wobst 1977), or individual expressions, ways of doing and skills (Hardin 1977; Hill and Gunn 1977; Sackett 1968, 1973, 1977, 1982, 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1990). Other approaches directed their efforts to investigating the meaning of

style (Conkey and Hastorf 1990; Hodder 1982; Plog 1983; Wiessner 1990). A different approach to material design and style was developed in parallel by French archaeologists and anthropologists, focusing on techniques of artefact production and use, and their technological and social contexts (Lemonnier 1986; Leroi-Gourhan 1943, 1964; see also Dietler and Herbich 1989; Herbich 1981, 1987). In general, processual, post-processual and French traditions focused on the development of anthropological, sociological and psychological processes that determine style and its social, cultural, symbolic and/or adaptive role, using contributions from the fields of ethnology and ethnoarchaeology.

This brief overview shows the complexity of the question, and most of all the absence of consensus among archaeologists about how to define and study style. But this heterogeneity of approaches is in a way justified, since the total design of objects is simultaneously dependent on a multiplicity of factors: technological, social, social-psychological, personal behavioural, personal psychological, cultural, and so on (Carr and Neitzel 1995). Given this, and following Carr (1995), I argue that these various archaeological approaches to style should not be seen as conflicting, but complementary. Thus, we need to address them simultaneously. Once again, the social network perspective on the material culture and social life of individuals allows us to address style from this multifaceted point of view. Object design contains indicators of a vast array of personal gestures, choices, beliefs and social interactions, and the aim of the archaeologist is to identify these indexes and their causes.

In my archaeological analyses, I use two different notions: design and style. Design refers to the total material attributes of an object, the raw materials, traces left by the

techniques used for its manufacture, and the totality of its shape, which are all possible formal attributes. My notion of style corresponds to recurrent patterns of design elements on a series of objects. In other words, I study the design of artefacts, looking for stylistic patterns among the totality of its formal elements. Very importantly, I do not classify material attributes according to their possible 'meaning' or causes before studying their occurrence and patterns of distribution. Rather, I study the total design of objects first, and once patterns are identified, notably the distribution of single elements or styles across assemblages and sites, I seek their significations, be they personal, social, technological, aesthetic, etc. (Gadoua 2005). In particular, I pay attention to the recurrence of certain styles and the occurrence of idiosyncrasies, as I consider them to be respectively traditions shared, transmitted and imitated among families, and personal signatures or creations.

Thule Inuit material culture displays interesting patterns of styles and creativity, within and across artefact classes. These are indexes of conformity to traditions and the expression of individuality. Throughout the development of Arctic archaeology, most attention has been dedicated to stylistic patterns for chronological concerns, mostly for the construction of typologies and series (Collins 1937; Ford 1959; Mathiassen 1927a, 1927b; Maxwell 1985; Stanford 1976). In these studies typical of the culture historical phase of archaeology, styles were used as labels of ethnicity, expressed through different material traditions and styles. Subsequent research assessed the possible causes of this variability, mostly in the processual traditions (Le Mouël and Le Mouël 2000; Park 1994). In these studies, the various formal attributes of certain artefacts, notably harpoon heads, were scrutinised and classified as either 'functional', for example adaptations to the environment

or subsistence strategies, or 'stylistic', which reflected cultural trends, and were evaluated for their potential for chronological studies. These studies recognise that many design attributes on harpoon heads simultaneously depend on ecological factors, subsistence strategies, cultural traditions and spiritual consideration. Thus, they are material indicators of a large spectrum of social, technical and cultural phenomena. Such studies of Thule Inuit 'stylistic' and 'functional' attributes conclude by acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of the design of harpoon heads and the resulting difficulty of sorting the analytical values of each attribute (Le Mouël and Le Mouël 2000; Park 1994).

To overcome this difficulty, I suggest looking at artefacts not from general 'cultural' or 'ecological' perspectives, but from the point of view of the individuals who made and used them. This means investigating personal reproductions of stylistic traditions as well as individual creativity and/or signatures in artefact design, as keys to understanding the meaning of designs. Studies of Inuit clothing design offer some ideas in this direction, as to how specific styles are created, how they circulate within and between communities, and what they are reflective of. As for many Inuit personal objects, the total design of skin clothing depends on a multiplicity of factors: weather, season, technology, snow and ice conditions, group identity, personal skills, aesthetics, social control, conformism, age, gender, body size, marital status, access to materials, trade, neighbour groups, clothing customs, ceremonies, dances, skin preparation techniques, natural resources and so on (Hall et al. 1994: 27-28; Oakes 1991: 179). Within total designs, broad stylistic patterns emerge and reflect regional differences in ways of doing and of adjusting to the above-mentioned factors between Inuit communities (Hall et al. 1994: 27; Issenman 1997: 98-177; Oakes 1991: 181).

But as Oakes (1991: 182) notes, these regional styles contain a certain amount of variability attributed to specific seamstresses. Outsiders may not be able to recognise these minute differences, but local seamstresses readily identify the seamstress-designer of each style. This was demonstrated by women in the workshops at the McCord Museum, when they discussed the differences in the shapes of the *amauti* (women's parka with a large hood to carry their children), between regions and communities within Nunavik. Only a few key seamstresses per community of about 100-200 persons were traditionally transmitting broad fashion designs. But seamstresses did not solely replicate the norms taught by these leaders; they also expressed their individuality through personal preferences for certain shapes, material and ornaments. Subtle differences and deviations from the 'norm' appear obvious and pronounced to local residents and these are in fact family or individual differences, not only cultural group variations (Oakes 1991: 182).

These personal and community aspects of style, in which the individual and the social and cultural are closely intertwined, are also true for various items of Inuit material culture. Elders' comments and narratives during the workshops at the McCord Museum illustrated this phenomenon with different kinds of objects, coming from diverse regions of the North American Arctic and from different communities within Nunavik. Therefore, I was able to evaluate the different degrees to which the elders from Nunavik identified themselves with objects from their community, their region or other areas of the Arctic. It was clear in each workshop that anything from Nunavik triggered more interest from the elders than the objects from other regions of the North American Arctic. The way they were expressing their interest was often said from a personal perspective, as Maggie Okituk

(McCord Museum, 24 November 2010) said when examining a kayak model from Nunavik: “This is something, it’s really close to us, it’s from Kangiqsujuaq (...) This really touches me”. This kind of comment reminds us of the importance of looking at style from a personal and social level simultaneously, as both are interrelated.

Discussions around *uluit* (women’s semi-circular knives), both at the McCord and in the Igloolik archives, also illustrate these personal and social considerations as to the design of the object. At the workshops, *uluit* from different regions of the North American Arctic were presented to the participants, and each time the elders associated them with different regions. *Uluit* from Baffin Island and Eastern Hudson Bay and Nunavik were generally well recognised, but the participants were less familiar with the ones from the Western Arctic such as those from the Copper Inuit, Inuvialuit or Alaskan Inuit. Therefore, they were not able to assign them to a specific region.

More personal considerations for the design of *uluit* were found in the Igloolik archives. Elders argue that the different styles of *uluit* were dictated by the women to the carvers, who might be a father or a husband, according to her preferences and the task to be achieved with the object⁴⁸. Another interview⁴⁹ shows the multiple factors affecting the styles of *uluit*, all related to their different uses, the qualities of the materials and, very importantly, the personal preferences of the user. But as Briggs (2012, personal communication) reminds us, thanks to the personal signature left by the carver, one could tell, years later, which man

⁴⁸ Appendix 1.13 Rachael Ujarasuk, IE-298, 19 May 1994

⁴⁹ Appendix 1.14 Therese Qillaq Ijjangiaq, IE-292, 19 November 1993

made a particular *ulu*, something that was also confirmed in the Igloolik archives⁵⁰. While it is the women and the tasks to be done that dictate the style of the *ulu*, there is some input from the men, as they would take the time to make the objects as best they could. This reminds us that the carvers had different skills, or maybe different carving techniques, different tools for carving, which would leave different traces on the final product. In other words, two carvers trying to produce the same *ulu* design, could, and probably would, end up making two distinguishable objects.

Harpoon heads are another category of object where these stylistic dynamics are made visible in the elders' narratives. At the McCord Museum, when showing participants Thule Inuit harpoon heads of various shapes and with different decorative design, variability was associated both with personal preferences and community traditions. I asked the participants to comment on these partly because these objects have no provenience; they were found in archives of Oblate Missionaries and we do not know exactly where they came from, although we think most probably Nunavut, or how they were collected. Robbie Tukalak (McCord Museum 15 April 2010) said that the harpoon heads are different because they come from different communities, from different regions. Daniel Nulukie (McCord Museum 24 November 2010) said that men from different camps had different harpoon heads, following their tastes for bigger or smaller ones. However, he said that the biggest of all were always for big game only, like walrus or whales. So again, it is very hard to disentangle the individual from the collective factors for harpoon head styles. Zachariasi Uqalik Aqiaruq, interviewed about the technology of the harpoon for seal and walrus

⁵⁰ Appendix 1.15 Maurice Amarualik, IE-290, 29 October 1993

hunting, tells us a little more about the design of harpoon heads, from an individual point of view⁵¹. Personal preferences refer to one's perception of the most efficient design: the harpoon head that will penetrate the most easily and will remain attached the most securely in the animal. It seems that technological efficiency of these tools is a question of personal perception, probably based on personal experiences with these kinds of tools. Thus, technological considerations are not an absolute value; they can be as subjective as cultural considerations when it comes to the design of harpoon heads.

Personal ownership marks on harpoon heads and arrowheads among Alaskan Inuit are promising in terms of identifying the individual and collective factors of design. Property marks are small symbols incised on certain types of tools. The ethnographic literature in Alaska reports marks on items including harpoons, arrowheads, fishing gear, knife handles, throwing boards, canoe paddles, rifles, traps, sleds, net shuttles, driftwood logs intended for future use, sealskin net buoys used in whaling, pots and communally stored meat (Boas 1899: 601; Ford 1959: 133; Giddings 1967: 44; Mathiassen 1930: 10, 23, 37, 57-58; Murdoch 1892: 238; Nelson 1899: 139, 322; Reynolds 1989: 89; Spencer 1959: 151; Stanford 1973: 90, 93, 95, 1976: 77; Weyer 1932: 184; Wissler 1916: 77). However, archaeologically, such ownership marks in the same area are reported mostly on harpoon heads and arrowheads (Reynolds 1989: 89). It is not clear which level of ownership was implied in these marks, whether they were individual, household, family, task group, camp, or if they were inherited from father to son, for example. Very often they are said to be individual (Birket-Smith 1953: 96; Hoffman 1897: 767-768; Lee 1984: 11; Ostermann 1952: 129; Spencer 1959: 150-151). However, it is

⁵¹ Appendix 1.16 Zachariasi Uqalik AQIARUQ, IE-289, 22 October 1993

also noted that fathers and sons, as well as brothers have very similar marks (Stanford 1976: 95). Pulu et al. (1983: 11) and Stefansson (1908) affirm that the objects were the property of a descent group. Alternatively, Boas (1899: 602) suggests that the level of property depended on the activity involved, such as hunting whales in group, or individual seal hunting (see also Fitzhugh and Kaplan 1982: 84-85; Weyer 1932: 181; Wissler 1916). For example, *umialiit* supplied equipment to their whaling crews (Chance 1966: 53; Spencer 1972: 116), so the crew's weapons would bear the *umialiit's* marks, except for the harpooner who would have his own equipment and his own mark (Spencer 1971: 115-116). Some report that ownership marks were inherited through fathers and sons (Nelson 1899: 326; Rasmussen, cited in Ostermann 1952: 129). However, Spencer (1959: 150) affirms that they were not inherited; they were created individually, although similar patterns were seen within families. Reynolds (1989) compared property marks on arrowheads and harpoon heads from three archaeological sites in Alaska and found that basic patterns of marks occurred simultaneously in different sites or camps that were geographically close. However, each camp had its own idiosyncrasies that did not appear in other sites. Within each site, and at the household level, the system of marking property was fairly uniform (Reynolds 1989: 103). In other words, property marks seemed to indicate individual interactions within families and relations between communities, but always with minute variations for personal distinctions within these systems.

Boas observed some correlation between property marks and other elements of design on Alaskan Inuit arrowheads and harpoon heads used in whaling and walrus hunting. He observed that in each village a certain group such as a boat crew, family or household use

a certain symbol for their implements, which, in connection with certain shapes and other decorative patterns, form their property mark (Boas 1899: 602). Consequently, he argues that form and decorative incisions must be considered as designating ownership. He adds that some harpoon heads lacking property marks were probably sufficiently clearly designated by their form and ornaments that they did not require additional signature (ibid: 604). Finally, he notes that harpoon heads from different villages differ considerably in their general shape, while many from the same village show the same shape although differ in ornamentation (ibid: 604-605). When I questioned the elders at the McCord Museum about the decoration on tools – a bow drill and harpoon heads – Nancy Palliser (McCord Museum, 28 April 2010) said that it was the signature of the owner, so the objects “don’t get lost” among other people’s possessions.

These considerations of Inuit ownership marks in Alaska inform us about the different ‘levels’ of signatures left on Inuit harpoon heads and arrowheads. Idiosyncrasies including property marks, other incised decoration or attributes represent individuals; recurrent patterns and styles within villages indicate social units such as families, households or task groups and sharp differences represent the work of people from different communities that are socially distinct. In addition, these systems would differ depending on the task achieved with the artefact, e.g. hunting individually or communally. Consequently, all elements of design on hunting equipment and other personal tools as well, like knife handles or ornaments are potential markers of ownership and identity, whether at the personal, familial, labour partnership or community level.

The distributions of these design elements and stylistic patterns reveal the different levels of personhood that are embedded in social interactions and developed variously in different contexts and activities. As we saw in Chapter 6, among Inuit, the person is an expression of the continuity of social life (Nuttall 1992: 60). The naming system, where children are given the name soul of deceased relatives, is a good example of this notion. This is a socio-centric notion of the self (Shweder and Bourne 1984: 193), where the person is seen as inextricably woven into a fabric of culturally prescribed social roles, patterns of interpersonal relations and corporate identities to such a point that we speak of the individual as a ‘person-in-relationships’, rather than a discrete, well-bounded unit. Strathern (1988: 13) developed the notion of ‘divisible person’, in which an individual is “constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them ... a social microcosm”. In the Inuit context, Stairs (1992: 119-120) refers to ‘ecocentric identity’, similar to the socio-centric notions mentioned above, but this time with relations encompassing humans, animals and materials, and located in a set of actions of everyday life (see also Rosaldo 1984: 146). Gell (1998: 20-21, 97-154) addressed precisely this material (non-human) aspect of the self, with the notion of the ‘distributed person’: personhood is constructed through social relations that are initiated, negotiated, maintained or severed through the use of objects – their fabrication, use, exhibition or exchange. This perspective simultaneously considers the agency of persons and of objects in the social life of people. The physical mediation of objects is thus crucial in social processes, because it is through objects that persons are ‘distributed’ in the social world, or where social personhoods are constructed. Briggs (1997) reminds us, as much as personhoods are created through social relations and cultural norms, individuals still play an important role as to how they use these

resources for their personal development. Inuit look at both people and objects in terms of multiple and shifting qualities and uses, instead of freezing them with labels and focusing attention on one or a few fixed attributes or uses to the exclusion of others (Briggs 1991: 262). Personal experimentations, the exploration of the potentials of materials, objects and social relations are thus the main processes through which Inuit develop themselves and live their lives. The world of objects can thus be imaginatively reshaped at a moment's notice, and any materials available, whether traditional or modern, can be incorporated and utilised to serve present needs in the most practical way, without regard for tradition, ritual, authority or possible future needs (ibid: 263-264). The same can be said about Inuit social relations: kin relations are constantly created and recreated, whether it is through naming or different fictive kinships systems or partnerships. This creative aspect of Inuit persons, relations and the object world must be kept in mind when addressing the design of everyday tools. Individuals construct their material and social life using a repertoire of cultural norms and technological principles. They combine existing elements shared by other members of their community, either in conventional or new ways, and they also create innovations. These are the processes through which object designs are created and/or reproduced, and become indicators of personal development and social relations.

Similarity and distinctiveness in the design of different objects are the main focus of my archaeological analyses. On one hand, shared design elements are the fruits of various social relations: transmission of techniques and styles between family members, or their replication by peers in the community. These are processes by which social relations are produced, reproduced and maintained. Distinct ways of doing, on the other hand, indicate

individual will to differentiate oneself from others, for various reasons: to claim a part of a game animal, to affirm and confirm one's belonging to one task group as opposed to another, or simply to assert one's individuality within the community. As we will see in the next chapters, most Thule Inuit artefacts indicate both processes simultaneously, the reproduction of shared design and different degrees of innovative elements.

These tendencies – reproducing cultural norms and creating distinctive forms – can also be understood in terms of social comparison processes and social identity formation. Social-psychologist Tajfel (1978a) states that individuals strive to achieve a satisfactory image of themselves, and that being members of specific social groups actively contributes, positively or negatively, to this self-perception. This sense of group belonging and the effect it has on the self-evaluation of individuals are essential parts of their social identity. Importantly, people evaluate their abilities, ways of doing or styles, and opinions, largely by comparison with the abilities, ways of doing and opinions of others (Festinger 1954). In other words, social categorisation and the social belonging or identity of individuals is a system of orientation that creates and defines the individual's place in society, mostly through comparison processes. The characteristics of one's group as a whole, their ways of doing things, their wealth, their skills, achieve most of their significance in relation to perceived differences from other groups and the value connotation of these differences (Tajfel 1978a: 65-66). A social group can fulfil its function of protecting the social identity of its members only if it manages to keep its valued distinctiveness from other groups; in other conditions, this distinctiveness must be created, acquired or fought for through various forms of actions (*ibid*: 67; see also Tajfel 1978b). Barth (1969) came to similar conclusions

when discussing the concept of ethnic groups. A critical focus of investigation is the *boundary* that defines the groups within or between societies, not the cultural stuff that it encloses (Barth 1969: 15). These boundaries are vital to any social units such as families, task groups or camps because of the importance of the social comparison processes mentioned above. Individual ways of doing things, including the design and styles of objects, are thus constantly compared with others, and what matters is how well the others with whom one interacts and to whom one is compared, manage to perform, and what alternative identities and sets of standards are available to the individual (ibid: 25).

This last consideration about the importance of boundaries and distinctiveness between groups is particularly useful for the notion of artefact design and styles. As described above for *uluit*, harpoon heads and clothing elements, there is a multiplicity of factors that account for their designs, such as personal, social, environmental, technical, cultural, physical ones. These factors often operate simultaneously, for the same attributes. Thus, when it comes to interpreting patterns of design variability, these different meanings or purposes blur and are hard to disentangle. In addition, the purposes of specific attributes on a number of artefact classes are simply unknown and we can only speculate about their meaning. Yet, their variability contains recurrent shapes and they have clear patterns of distribution across sites. Focusing on the distinctiveness between different designs and styles in addition to, or as an alternative to, their content and meaning is thus a solution to overcome these two difficulties. Following this, my analyses focus primarily on the comparison of different artefact designs within and between archaeological sites. The

assessment of the purposes or meanings of the design element and/or styles comes second, and brings an additional dimension to our understanding of these patterns.

9.3 Aesthetics and social distinction

The second set of social relations under investigation corresponds to a different kind of material variability, one that corresponds to the Inuit notion of art discussed earlier. Although it might sometimes be correlated with the first type of variation (stylistic similarities and social relatedness), the underlying dynamic and its material indicators function on another level. To begin with, there are stylistic variations that indicate personal belonging to various families, task groups and communities; they correspond to cultural, technological or social repertoires of ways of doing, where individuals choose their own combinations and/or create personal style that contributes to the construction and affirmation of their social relations and position in the community. Design variability can also correspond to the amount of care invested in the making of objects, the skills that their design required, their aesthetic qualities and the value(s) of their medium. The latter can sometimes be associated with wealth and social status.

In Thule Inuit archaeology, well-made and decorated objects, human and animal representations and the use of special raw materials are usually discussed under notions of ritual, religion and art. McGhee (1976) defined art as the 'aesthetic intention' of the artist to communicate 'symbols of feeling' in his work, based on the theoretical works of Haselberger (1961) and Langer (1953). Using this aesthetic/symbolic approach to art, McGhee observed a differential productivity in the Arctic in terms of four universal criteria: skill of

workmanship, degree of standardisation or innovation, amount of decorative ornament and amount of symbolic or ritual adornment or representation. With this broad definition, he argued that even though 'art' can be expressed through 'technology', the two areas of material culture are still very different, if not opposed. He created four hierarchical categories to rank the different archaeological cultures of the Arctic in terms of the amount and quality of their artistic productivity (McGhee 1976: 209):

- Material cultures rich in 'nonutilitarian' elements, or symbolic, or ritual designs and forms (human and animal figurines, fantastic figures, masks, grave art, etc.).

- Material cultures which generally lack apparent symbolic or ritual elements, but in which some artefact classes are consistently decorated or show aesthetic intent.

- Material cultures which are standardized in form, display good workmanship but are usually not decorated.

- Material cultures which show a general lack of standardization and relatively poor workmanship.

McGhee assigned the Thule Inuit to the third category, and concluded that their material culture is the most aesthetically monotonous in comparison with any other period in Arctic prehistory. Thule individuals did not produce the fine flint work and carvings of human and animal figures of their Palaeo-Eskimo predecessors of the Arctic Small Tool tradition and Dorset, nor did they decorate their tools and weapons as much as the presumably ancestral Okvik, Punuk and Birnik cultures. According to McGhee, the only artistic elements of Thule Inuit material culture are limited to the rare decoration on tools,

such as harpoon heads and most often combs, belt toggles and sewing tools, and the few carvings of “simple human figures, usually female, with no facial features and stumpy limbs, often reduced to a human silhouette, and small swimming-bird or bird-woman figures of the kind used in a hand game by historic Eastern Eskimos” (McGhee 1976: 208).

Thule Inuit ‘art’ has also been studied in term of its ‘symbolic meaning’ (McGhee 1977; Sproull-Thomson 1979), and was usually linked to Thule cosmology and gender. In the late 1970s, Sproull-Thomson (1979) argued that Thule art was a ‘symbol’ of the female and of life and fertility. She came to this conclusion because of the subject matter and the forms of the figurines, representations of females and birds that she associated with Sedna, a major deity in Inuit cosmology. Sea birds in the Arctic are often divers and remain submerged for minutes at a time. Based on this fact, Sproull-Thomson argued that in Inuit cosmology and art, birds are probably visiting Sedna the sea goddess and guardian of sea mammals, who lives under the sea⁵². In this early attempt to investigate the ‘symbolic meaning’ of Thule art, Sproull-Thomson sought inspiration in Inuit worldviews and applied them to Thule material. However, she failed to ask by which mechanism, or in which context, these figurines would have ‘symbolised’ the concepts of the female and life and fertility.

⁵² “Aside from the magical powers invested to the female form through Sedna, let us consider the position of the water birds to the Inuit. The arrival of these birds in the summer coincides with a time of feasting and plenty. With the onset of winter, they depart. Most of their time is spent in the sky or in the water, both places of magic and mystery to the Eskimo. Many of these birds are divers, remaining submerged for minutes at a time. Could they be with Sedna who lives in the sea bottom? Perhaps they are her messengers to the sky spirits such as the moon”. (Sproull-Thomson 1979: 487).

McGhee (1977) addressed this question in conjunction with raw materials. Using a structuralist paradigm, he identified a set of oppositions in modern Inuit worldviews and practices – namely female/sea/winter life opposed to male/land/summer life – that he subsequently tried to recognise in the distribution of raw materials in Thule technology. His argument was that women’s tools tend to be made of sea mammal material (ivory), and men’s tools of terrestrial mammal material (antler), in order to follow the rules and taboos of their cosmology and everyday life. Regardless of his conclusions, which I find problematic, my interest here lies in his research hypothesis: the ‘symbolic’ or artistic attributes of Thule technology were suggested to reside in the choice of raw materials. Here, unlike Sproull-Thomson, McGhee tried to understand *how* and *why* those attributes ‘symbolise’ Thule worldviews – mainly through a set of rules and taboos intended to please the deities who control game animals. This attempt is a noteworthy explanatory effort that moved beyond the view of Thule art as a passive symbol of a hypothetical ideology. However, McGhee omitted to investigate among Inuit whether the choice of raw material was really linked to spiritual rules, before applying this principle to their Thule ancestors. As will be shown below, a close examination of Inuit practices and oral tradition demonstrates that their choice of raw material tends to relate mostly to the form of the objects that need to be made, the availability of materials, which includes accessibility to prized materials by individuals of a certain social status, and their physical qualities.

As I stated earlier, my approach to art diverges from these archaeological studies. I consider art as a form of technology aimed at creating social relations between individuals, and technology as the art of making a living in a given social and physical environment,

through the making and using of well-made and efficient objects. In other words, art is a component of technology, and technology is a form of art. As Gell (1992: 43-44) explains it, art – even the modern system of Fine Arts – is a component of a vast and often unrecognised technical system essential to the reproduction of human societies. The power of art objects stems from the technical process they embody. Technical virtuosity is intrinsic to the efficacy of objects in their technological and social contexts. The technical activity which goes into the production of a tool is not only the source of the tool's prestige as an object, but also the source of its efficacy in the domain of social relations (Gell 1992: 56). It creates asymmetries in the relations between people by placing them in an essentially asymmetrical relation to things (ibid: 52). This asymmetry is based on specific material qualities and resistance, which has to be overcome in order to access the object. It is either that the object is difficult to obtain because it is locally scarce, exotic, and/or highly prized, or because it is hard to produce, requiring complex technical processes and a great deal of time and energy, at the expense of other activities (Gell 1992: 58). Skilled artisans and the spectacular aesthetics of their final products also have the power to influence spiritual forces, like the souls of game animals, either as a form of respect (Brightman 1993: 103-135; Chaussonnet 1988: 208-226; Issenman 1997) or seduction (Willerslev 2007: 101-103). Thus, the artisans may become vehicles not only for technical knowledge, but also for moral qualities and for the supernaturally or ancestrally sanctioned ethics and power-ideology; their act of skilled crafting actively maintains the vital links believed to connect people with supernatural forces in their environment (Helms 1993: 17).

These considerations apply equally to hunting equipment, personal tools and ornaments. Personal objects showing exquisite designs have the power to please the souls of game animals, demonstrate one's talent in craftsmanship, one's technical knowledge, reinforce one's self-image as a successful hunter or skilled seamstress, and to display one's wealth. It does not necessarily require originality or frivolity; in fact the Inuit concept of beauty does not encourage this. Rather, it is about executing techniques and producing efficient material designs with mastery (Gell 1992: 54). Concrete material indicators of such phenomena are objects that have symmetrical shapes, regular contours, polished surfaces, minute details, shapes and attributes that are difficult or that take time to carve, and/or decoration, in comparison to simply, rapidly or crudely made objects.

Another important dimension of this variability is the value of the raw materials from which Inuit and Thule Inuit tools are made. In the North American Arctic, objects, clothing and dwellings are made from different materials, organic and inorganic. Animal products such as skin, fur, tendons, bones, teeth, tusks, baleen, antlers, horns and beaks and natural elements such as driftwood, native copper, meteoric iron, stone and grass were the main raw materials available to make a wide variety of everyday objects. Some types of objects tended to be made systematically from specific materials, while others were open to a more flexible range of choice. Also, the geographical distribution of these resources varied: some were available throughout the Arctic, while others were typical of some regions and absent in others.

The question of value is a complex one. One can talk about the production value, the use value, the exchange value, or specific culturally defined values such as aesthetic, moral,

spiritual, magical, etc. (Graeber 2001). When studying the raw materials used for Inuit tools, these different values have to be taken into consideration, simultaneously. In general, the use value, the qualities and properties of materials and their potentiality for making specific objects, is the most important one for the majority of Inuit material culture. The choice of one raw material over another for making a specific tool or garment depends first on its physical properties: size, texture, softness, malleability, hardness, solidity, permeability, sharpness. The second criterion for the value of raw material is accessibility. All qualities being equal, locally available resources are preferred. This is true for whale bone and caribou antlers, which are the main raw materials used for most of the Thule Inuit assemblages under investigation. They are locally abundant and their physical qualities are suitable for many of the Thule Inuit material needs.

However, for some materials which are not locally available but that have high use value, Inuit are willing to travel to their source and/or trade other items in order to acquire them. In the region of the archaeological sites under investigation, this is the case for metal, used for blades, drill bits, engraving tools and ornaments, and different types of hard organic and inorganic material like the amber and ivory used for ornaments. These materials are valued first for their physical qualities in relation to the object being planned, but additional value is added to it: the difficulty of obtaining them, their local rarity or exotic provenience. These materials then have an exchange value added to their use value, which puts them above all the other materials in a scale of value. Possessing and exhibiting tools and/or personal ornaments made with metal, amber or ivory are signs of ultimate success and wealth. It is important to note that these valued materials change completely as we move

geographically and temporally, as availability and accessibility shift. For example, near Igloolik in the early 20th century, the use value and local scarcity of whale bone and wood to make tent poles, harpoon and lance shafts, sleds and kayaks conferred to these materials a special value. Metal and ivory, which were highly valued in the context of the sites presented in Chapter 10, 11 and 12, were only valued for their use, because they were easily obtained in the region through Hudson's Bay Company trading posts and the abundant presence of walrus. Consequently, two sets of values acted together to transform raw material into a sign of wealth: its potential to be transformed into an efficient, durable and well-made object, and its scarcity or exoticism.

The exchange value of a medium or object is rather complex and needs to be discussed a little further. Anthropological literature on the exchange of commodities and gifts, as well as barter, discloses the various cultural, social and economic factors surrounding these activities (Chapman 1980; Graeber 2001; Gregory 1982; Humphrey and Hughes-Jones 1992; Malinowski 1922, 1926; Marx 1978 (1867); Mauss 1923-1924; Munn 1986; Sahlins 1972; Strathern 1988, 1992; Weiner 1992). Certainly, Inuit modes of exchange within and between communities were as complex and various. Gifts were given at Messenger Feasts in northern Alaska, with the social and cultural obligation to reciprocate, as described in Mauss' essay on the gift (1923-1924); regular exchange of products from the land with products from the sea occurred in many Arctic regions, between inland groups and coastal groups; exotic products, such as blue beads from Siberia and Europe were, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (and as early as the 16th century in Labrador), trading commodities that had great value. There are examples in the Alaskan ethnographic literature of two beads

being exchanged for three or four caribou skins (Jenkins 1972: 36-37), three large bearded seal skins or a seal bladder full of whale oil (Issenman 1997: 191). It is even reported that an impoverished man who arrived at Point Barrow with one blue bead traded it for a sled and five dogs, ten slabs of baleen and six fox skins (Bockstoce 1977: 89).

Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986) offer a useful framework to study the circulation and value of commodities, as they move from one hand to another, from one regime of value to another, following the shifts in the surrounding social, economic and cultural contexts of such exchanges. One object during its life trajectory within a given society is given different value depending on these contexts (see also Graeber 2001: 129-149). This is what happens with raw materials among Inuit, and by analogy, with Thule Inuit. Depending on the geographical area and the time period, different objects and materials have different exchange values, according to the material needs of communities, availability of mediums, accessibility and trading possibilities. Certainly, privileged access to these materials was an indicator of a person's socio-economic success and wealth (McCartney 1991; Morrison 1987; Whitridge 1999a, 2002). For example, Rasmussen (1931: 26-27) reported that among Netsilik Inuit in the early 20th century, "there was a sort of halo about the man who owned a knife [of iron] or a sledge of wood, and the woman who could sew her husband's clothing with a needle of iron or steel was the envy of all her sisters".

Accordingly, objects that are made with particular care, designs that require particular carving skills, and/or that are made with highly valued materials are indicators of social distinction. The two forms of material variability described in this chapter are expected to intersect at some points. For example, nicely made tools can be a personal signature or

ownership index. The use of exotic materials can inspire the creation of new artefact designs, which become a recurrent style within a given social unit such as family or whaling crew, thus entering into other dynamics of variability.

9.4 Thule Inuit material culture

Five classes of artefacts were chosen for my stylistic analyses. Two main criteria were used for this selection. First, I identified the Thule Inuit analogues for the Inuit objects that play key roles in the personal development and social interactions among Inuit. I previously identified the most important practices where Inuit identities and social relations are built and maintained: activities around hunting for men and the production of clothing for women. In addition, I have argued that different styles of clothing and clothing ornaments contribute to the creation and maintenance of different identities. Also, displaying beautiful personal possessions and wealth is a way to achieve social differentiation and distinction among communities. These different practices involve the making and use of a wide variety of objects among Inuit: men's manufacturing tool kits for working bone, antler, ivory and stone, hunting and fishing equipment and means of transportation such as the kayak and sled, tools for butchering and skin preparation, women's sewing paraphernalia, household utensils including lamps and pots, clothing, body and clothing ornaments, amulets and toys. These objects were all parts of the workshops at the McCord Museum, and were researched within the Igloodik archives; in both, a small number stood out as being more important than others in the personal development and social relations of individuals.

The archaeological visibility of such objects in Thule Inuit assemblages is unequal. By visibility, I mean sample sizes that are large enough to allow stylistic comparison between houses, as well as the degree of variability within these classes of artefacts. With these criteria in mind, the categories of Thule Inuit artefacts studied here are: sea mammal harpoon heads, arrowheads, men's knife handles, *ulu* handles, body and clothing ornaments and amulets, animal effigies – ornaments or amulets – and objects that present exceptional aesthetic qualities such as various toggles, bag handles, etc. The Thule Inuit and Inuit versions of these objects are relatively similar, with only a few changes in the design and raw materials. I also study the distribution of locally scarce and exotic material within and beyond these Thule Inuit artefact classes.

Before turning to archaeological analyses per se, I wish to present the categories of Thule Inuit artefacts investigated, in terms of their range of design variability, and our general understanding of these variations. Although my analyses focus principally on the comparison of designs between houses and villages rather than the content and meaning of the styles, consideration for the roles of these design elements help us to understand better what kind of identities and social interactions they convey, and how.

A. Harpoon heads

Archaeologists have long recognised the importance of sea mammal hunting harpoon heads as Thule Inuit cultural indicators: “The harpoon is one of the objects on which Eskimo implement technique and inventiveness come to their highest expression. It is a rather complicated weapon which can be varied in many ways, and this is in particular true

of that part of it that is most important, the harpoon head itself, which is to force its way into and hold the game.” (Mathiassen 1927b: 11) (Figure 13, Figure 14).

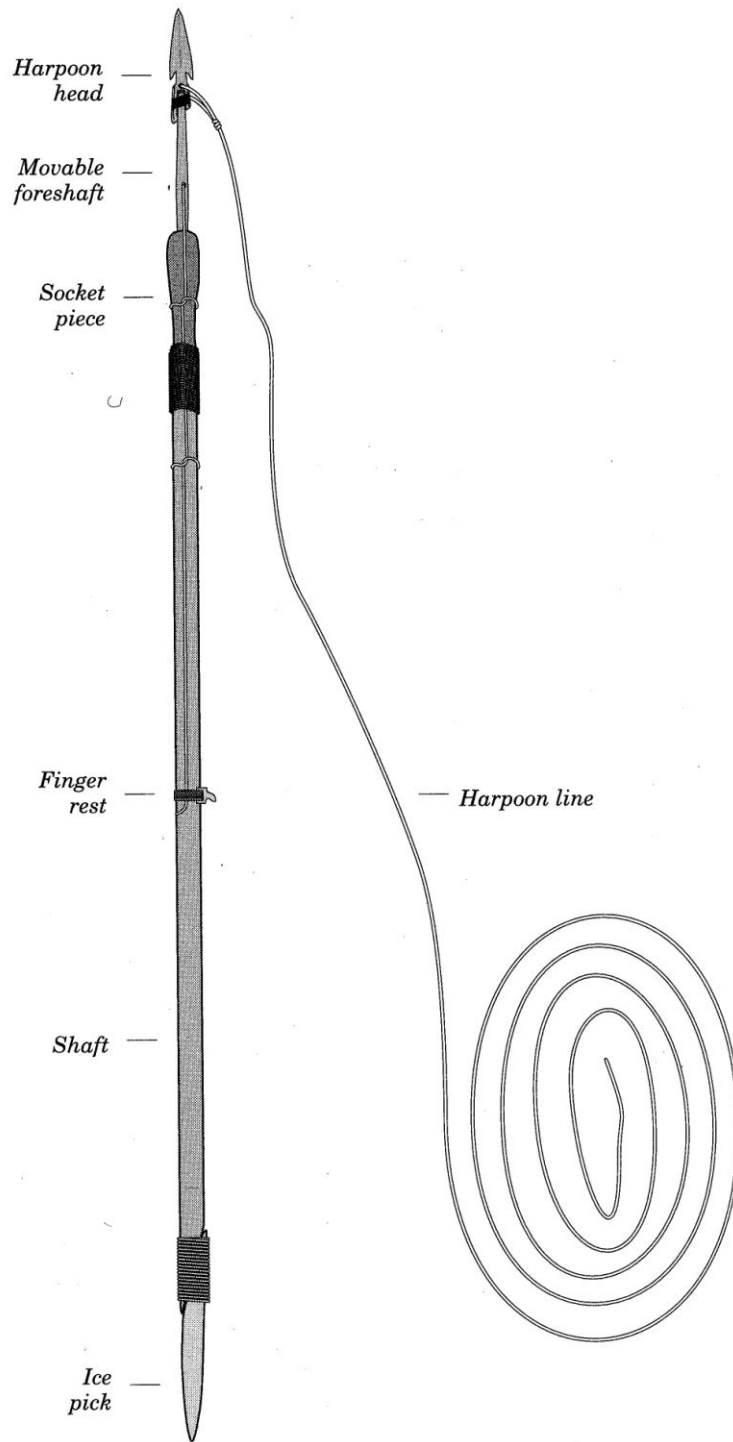
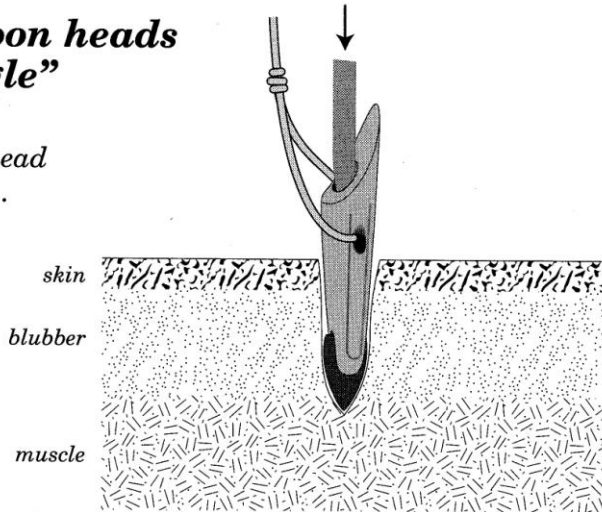


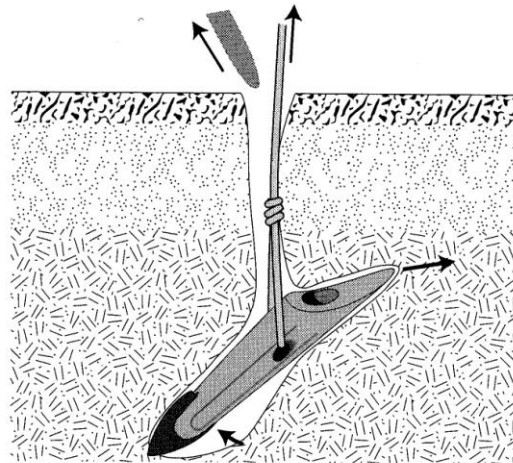
Figure 13: The complete Thule Inuit harpoon (Park and Stenton 1998:3)

How harpoon heads “toggle”

*The harpoon head
is inserted...*



*The harpoon head
separates from the
foreshaft and tension
comes on the harpoon
line, causing the spur
to catch*



*The harpoon head
pivots around the line
hole into the toggled
position*

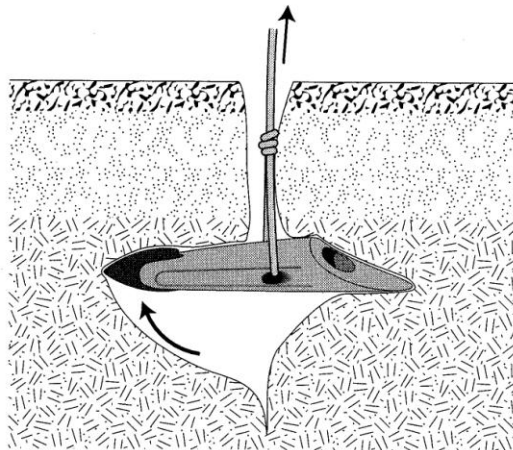


Figure 14: The toggling technology of Thule Inuit harpoon heads (Park and Stenton 1998: 24)

Therkel Mathiassen was the first archaeologist to create a typology of Thule Inuit harpoon heads, followed by Collins (1937), Ford (1959) and Stanford (1976). The major types are presented in Figure 15, Figure 16, Figure 17, Figure 18, Figure 19 and Figure 20. These objects are usually studied for chronological questions (Park 1994) and the function or meaning of their various design elements are very poorly understood (Le Mouël and Le Mouël 2000). In previous research (Gadoua 2005), I compared harpoon head assemblages of two well-known Thule Inuit archaeological sites in the Canadian Arctic (Clachan and Skraeling Island), and addressed questions of differentiation and social comparison between groups of hunters, based on the work of Tajfel (1978a and b). This study indicated the role of harpoon head design in the construction of new identities of migrant communities, even if the meaning or function of their complex shapes is not yet fully understood by archaeologists. I used the same approach for the analysis of harpoon heads in this present research.

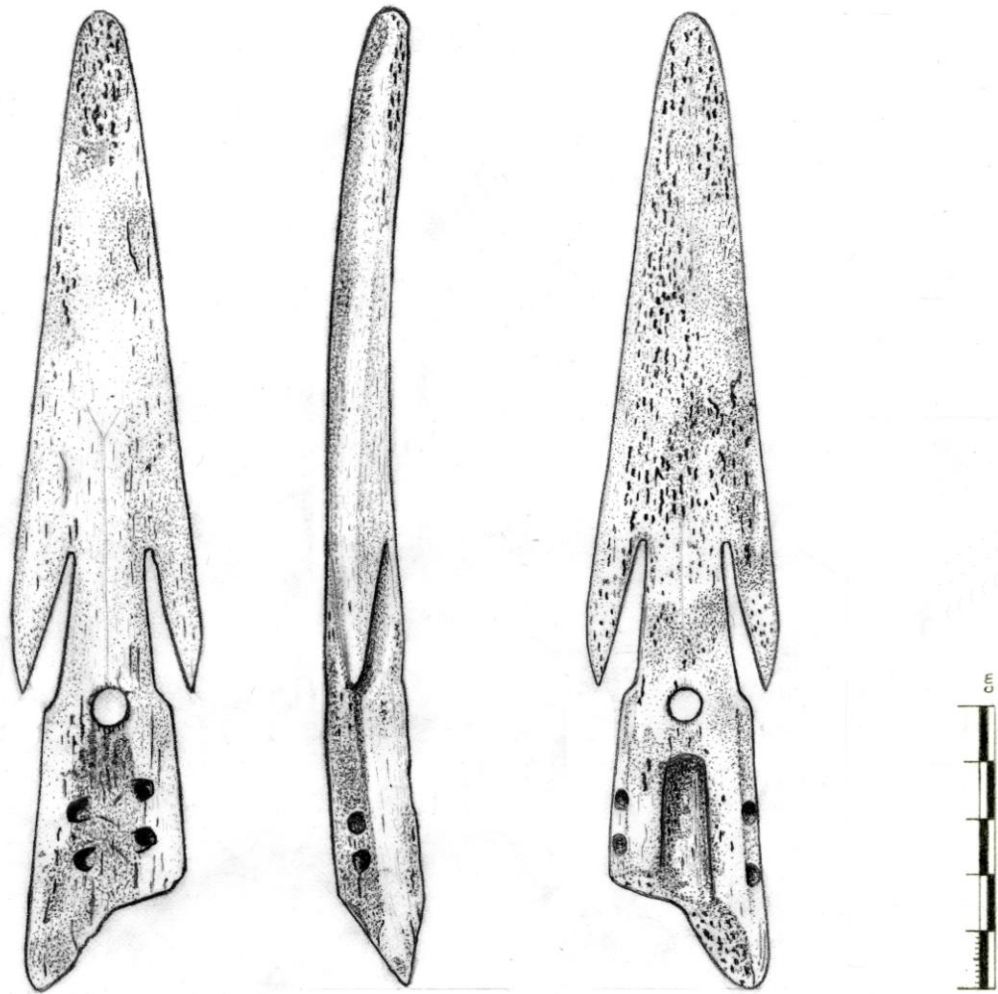


Figure 15: Harpoon head Type 2 (PcJq-5:485). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

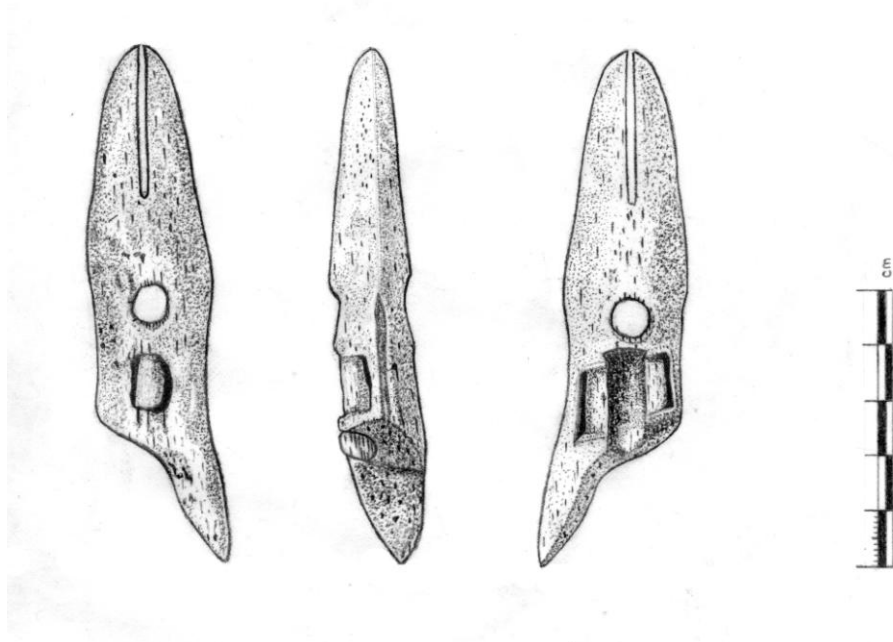


Figure 16: Harpoon head Type 3 (PeJr-1:952). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

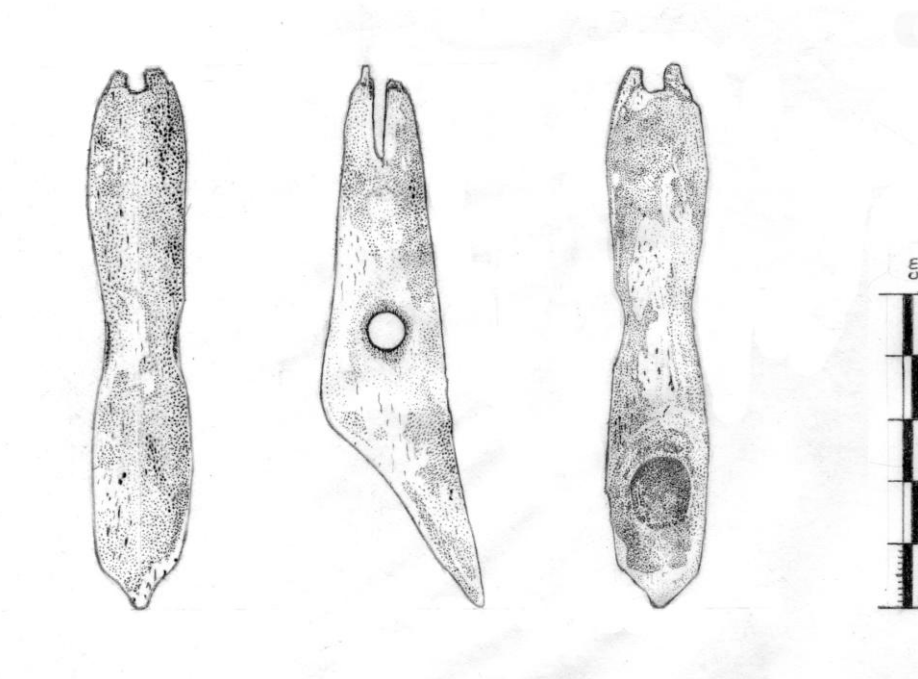


Figure 17: Harpoon head Nuwuk Type (PeJr1:1379). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

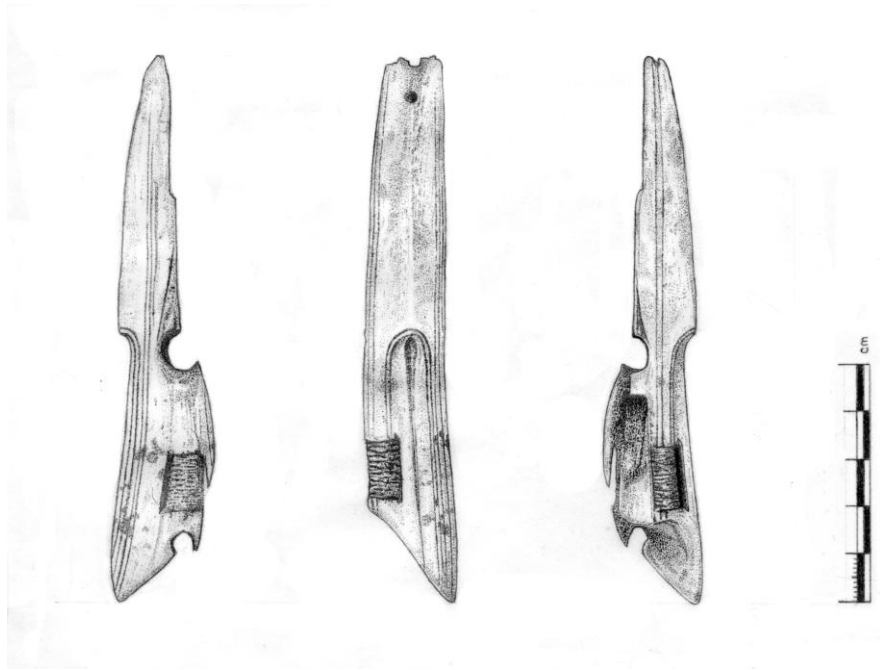


Figure 18: Harpoon head Sicco Type (PcJq-5:350; specimen broken in half). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

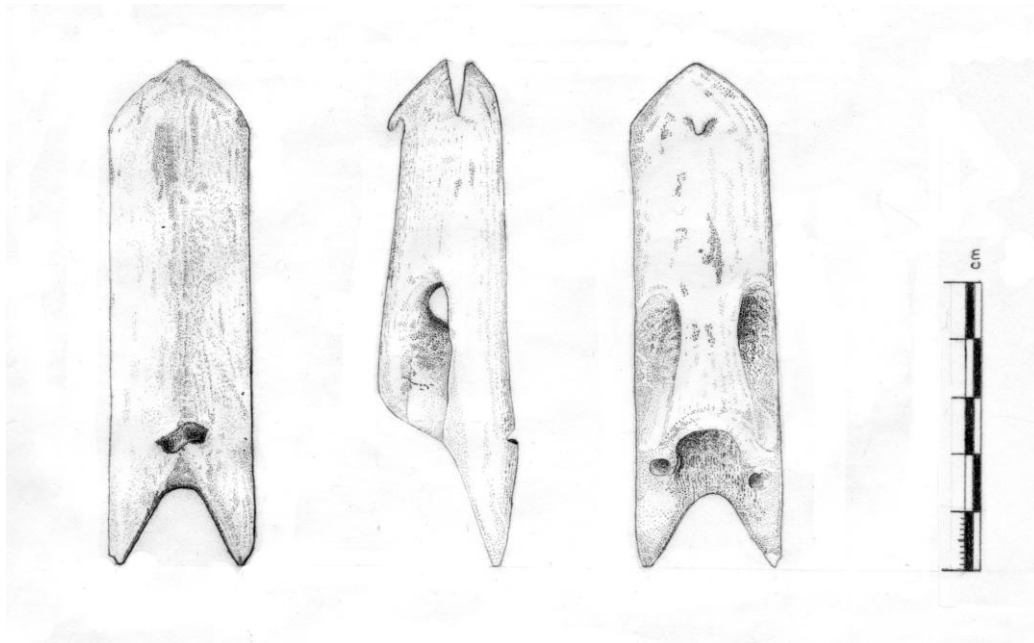


Figure 19: Harpoon head Type 5 (McCord Museum M2006.48.439). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

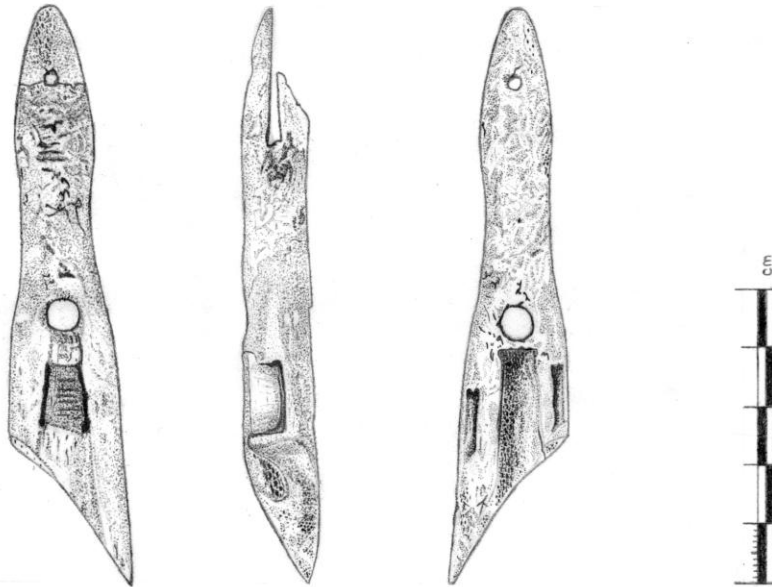


Figure 20: Harpoon head Clachan Type (PeJr1: 1025). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

It is important to note that no whaling harpoon heads have been found at any of the Thule Inuit sites investigated here. Assemblages consist of sealing harpoon heads. This is not a unique situation, as whaling harpoon heads are very rare in Thule Inuit sites, including the whaling villages of the Central Arctic Archipelago. Assuming that whale hunting was practised only by a fraction of hunters in a given community, statistically speaking, whaling harpoon heads would have been less numerous. This number could be lessened by the fact that there was only one harpooner per boat. Also, the sites studied here are winter villages, and not summer/fall whaling sites, where broken whaling harpoon heads would have been left behind. In addition, whaling harpoon heads were probably used until they broke, and

then refurbished into other artefacts, which is a reasonable possibility given their size, ranging from 20 to 30 cm in length. Another possibility is that they would have been subjected to a different treatment than sealing harpoon heads. Lantis (1938, cited in Savelle and Vadnais 2011: 97) reported that in some places in Alaska, whaling implements or clothing were destroyed at the end of the whaling season. Alternatively, when a bowhead whale hunter died, his hunting weapons were buried with him (Spencer 1959: 253).

The more common sealing harpoon heads are crucial indicators of personal identities and social interactions between all hunters of the community, not only whalers. Among Inuit living in coastal regions – the majority of Inuit in Canada – seal hunting is practised by all hunters. Depending on the geographical area, season and ice and water conditions, seal hunting is practised either on the sea ice through the seals' breathing holes, on the ice (basking seals in the spring), at the flow edge or in open waters from kayak. Each technique requires a different set of hunting equipment. Traditionally, the hunt at the breathing hole necessitated a seal indicator to warn the hunter of a seal's approach, so he could strike the animal before it swam away. This technique also required the presence of an ice pick at the distal end of the harpoon shaft in order to enlarge the breathing hole when hauling the animal onto the ice. The foreshaft, which linked the harpoon head to the shaft, was fixed to the shaft; only the head would detach upon impact. When hunting from a kayak, the foreshaft was also attached to the shaft, but it was moveable upon impact. This is to prevent the shaft from breaking on impact or being entangled with the harpoon line (McCullough 1989: 96).

Experimental archaeologist Tim Rast (2010) argues that the shape of the foreshaft and the socket piece linking the main shaft to the foreshaft determine the way that the foreshaft will roll out of the shaft. By varying the placement of the lashing holes in the foreshaft and main shaft and by adjusting the tension piece attached to the harpoon line, the hunter can preset the foreshaft to bend whichever way he wants, to take full advantage of the barbs and the toggling action of the harpoon head. In a workshop at the McCord Museum, Mattiusi Iyaituk (29 April 2010) demonstrated this technology, when he corrected a harpoon on which the head had been placed on its wrong side, which had rendered it functionally incompetent because it would not toggle properly.

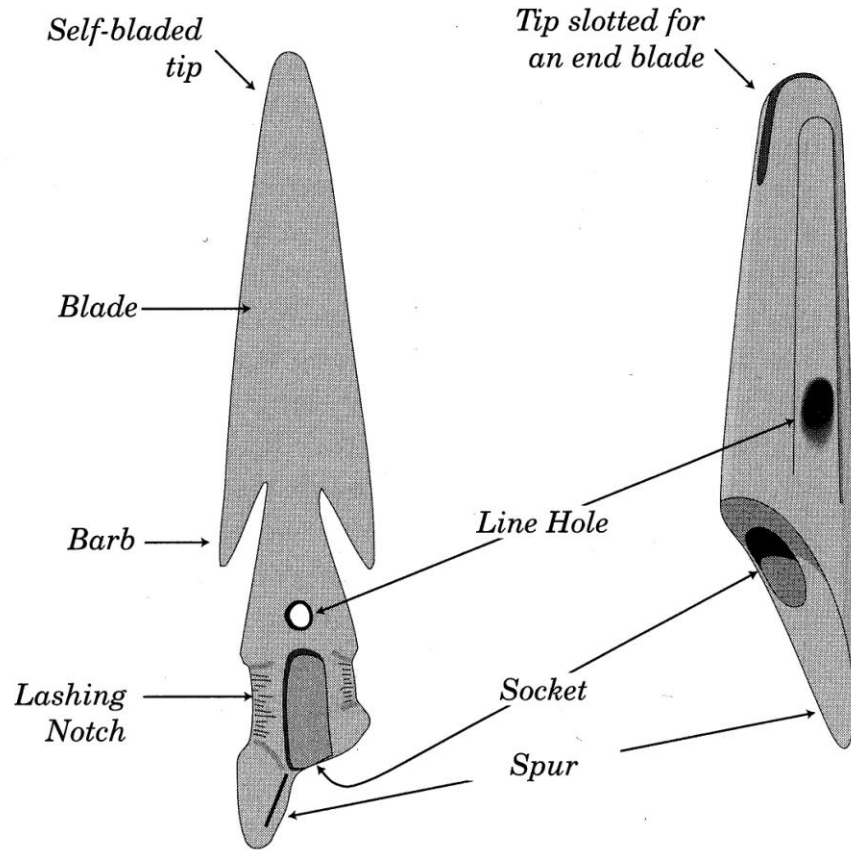


Figure 21: Nomenclature of harpoon head attributes on a Type 2 and a Type 4. (Park and Stenton 1998: 5)

This short discussion about harpoon technology illustrates the complexity of the design of each piece of the sealing harpoon, the precise purposes of each attribute and their interrelated functions (see Figure 21). We also have to keep in mind that hunting techniques and technological aspects in their design are indicators of personal and familial perceptions and ways of doing, as much as decorative patterns. Harpoon head design elements present in our archaeological assemblages will be discussed further in terms of their personal, social and technological roles.

B. Arrowheads

As mentioned earlier, Inuit people ceased to use bows and arrows many generations ago, and the Igloolik archives and workshops at the McCord Museum have not provided much information about these objects. Archaeologists usually study Thule Inuit arrowheads to answer chronological questions, in particular the shape of their proximal ends which are thought to follow patterns through time (Mathiassen 1927b; Morrison 1983; Stanford 1976; Taylor and McGhee 1979; Turcy 1990). My analyses, however are mostly inspired by the work of Mathiassen (1927b: 45-51), who considered arrowheads with their overall design, including but not limited to, their proximal end. He recognised four major types of arrowheads: A) large arrowheads, self-bladed, with or without barbs; B) large arrowheads with an inserted blade; C) bird harpoons; D) blunt arrowheads. My analyses concerned specimens of the first two categories: self-bladed with barbs, self-bladed without barbs, and inserted-blades, which are always without barbs. Other design elements are studied within these main categories (see Figure 22, Figure 23, Figure 24, and Figure 25)

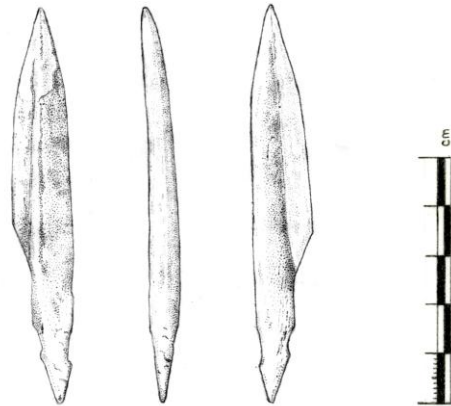


Figure 22: Arrow self-bladed without barb (PcJq-5:32). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.



Figure 23: Arrowhead self-bladed and barbed (PeJr1-974). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

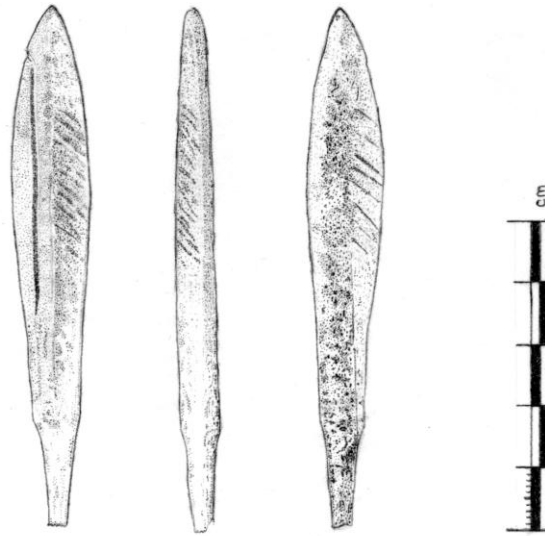


Figure 24: Arrowhead self-bladed and decorated (PeJr-1:933). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.



Figure 25: Arrowhead with an inserted blade (PcJq-5:48; blade missing). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

C. Men's knife handles

Mathiassen (1927b: 68) identified seven types of men's knives: A) long knives for holding with both hands, with end blades, used as flensing knives; B) medium-sized knives with end blades, often with suspension hole which are meat knives; C) side-bladed knives with a blade on one side, used as whittling knives; D) side-bladed knives with blades on both sides; E) short knives with small end blades which are splitting knives; F) composite knives with the handle formed by lashing two pieces together, used as whittling knives; G) knives with handle and blade in one piece, of slate. Assemblages in the present research contain mostly specimens of the first five categories. They are studied according to these functional classes, but some of their design elements, such as the shape of their bases, suspension holes and incised decoration are addressed beyond these categories (Figure 26, Figure 27)

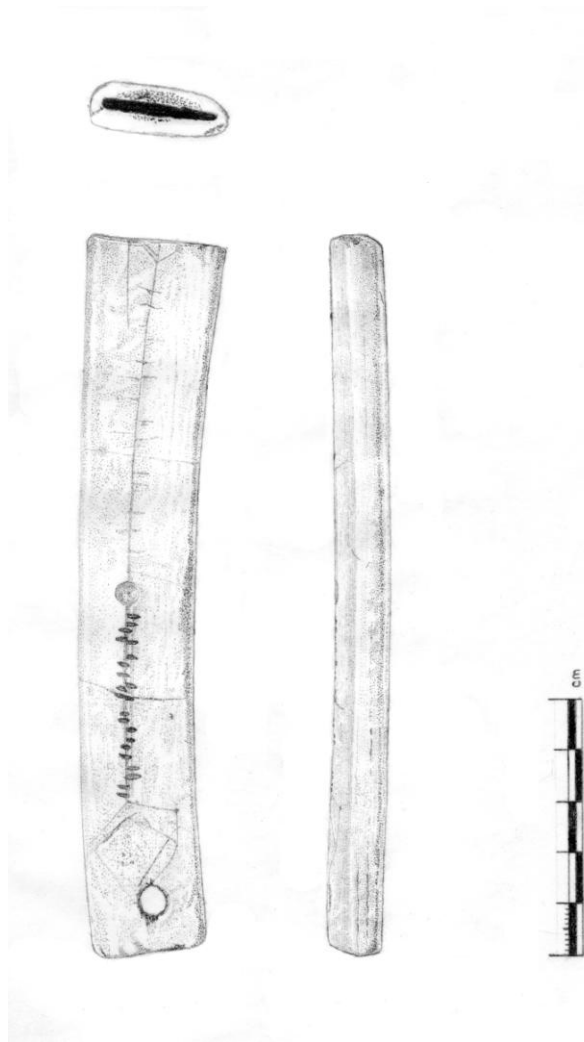


Figure 26: End-blade knife handle, medium size (PcJq-5:769). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.



Figure 27: Side-bladed knife (PeJr-1: C-520). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

D. *Ulu* handles

Archaeologists classify Thule Inuit *ulu* handles based on their shapes (e.g. Mathiassen 1927b: 87-89; Taylor and McGhee 1979: 88-92). These studies give seven or eight types that account for the recurrent styles observed in Thule Inuit assemblages: handles with expanded back with and without holes; handles with a smooth transition between back and blade section; handles with large central holes; thick curved handles; small curved handles; thin handles with and without holes; and compound handles. Most of these categories are represented in our assemblages. However, I consider them as design elements or styles, within three overarching functional categories identified by Inuit in the Igloodik archives and at the workshops: large *ulu* for scraping skins, small ones to cut patterns or peel off thin strips of baleen, and medium-size ones for cutting meat, but that could also be used to scrape skins and cut patterns, if needed. I used these three categories as my main analytical categories, and compared the design elements of these categories between house assemblages (see Figure 28, Figure 29, and Figure 30).

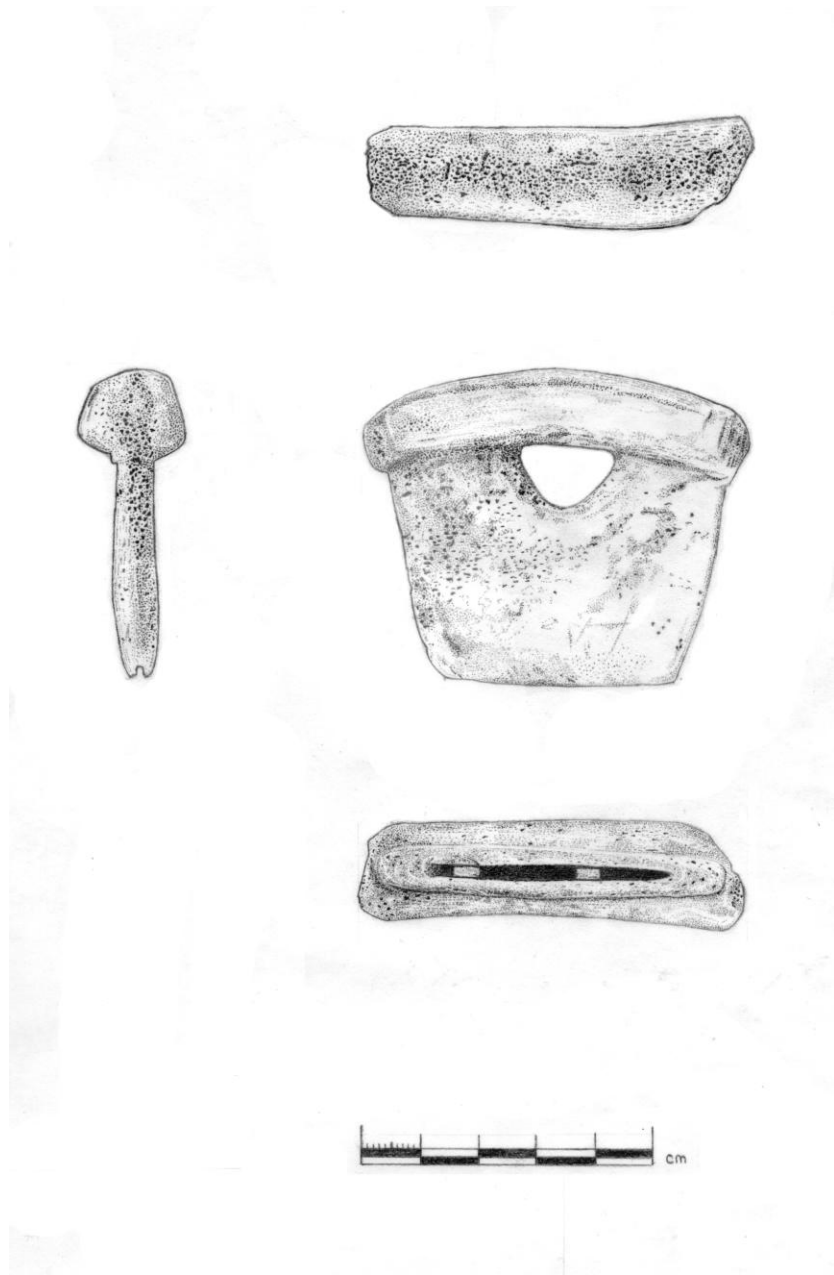


Figure 28: Small ulu handle (PeJr-1: 830). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

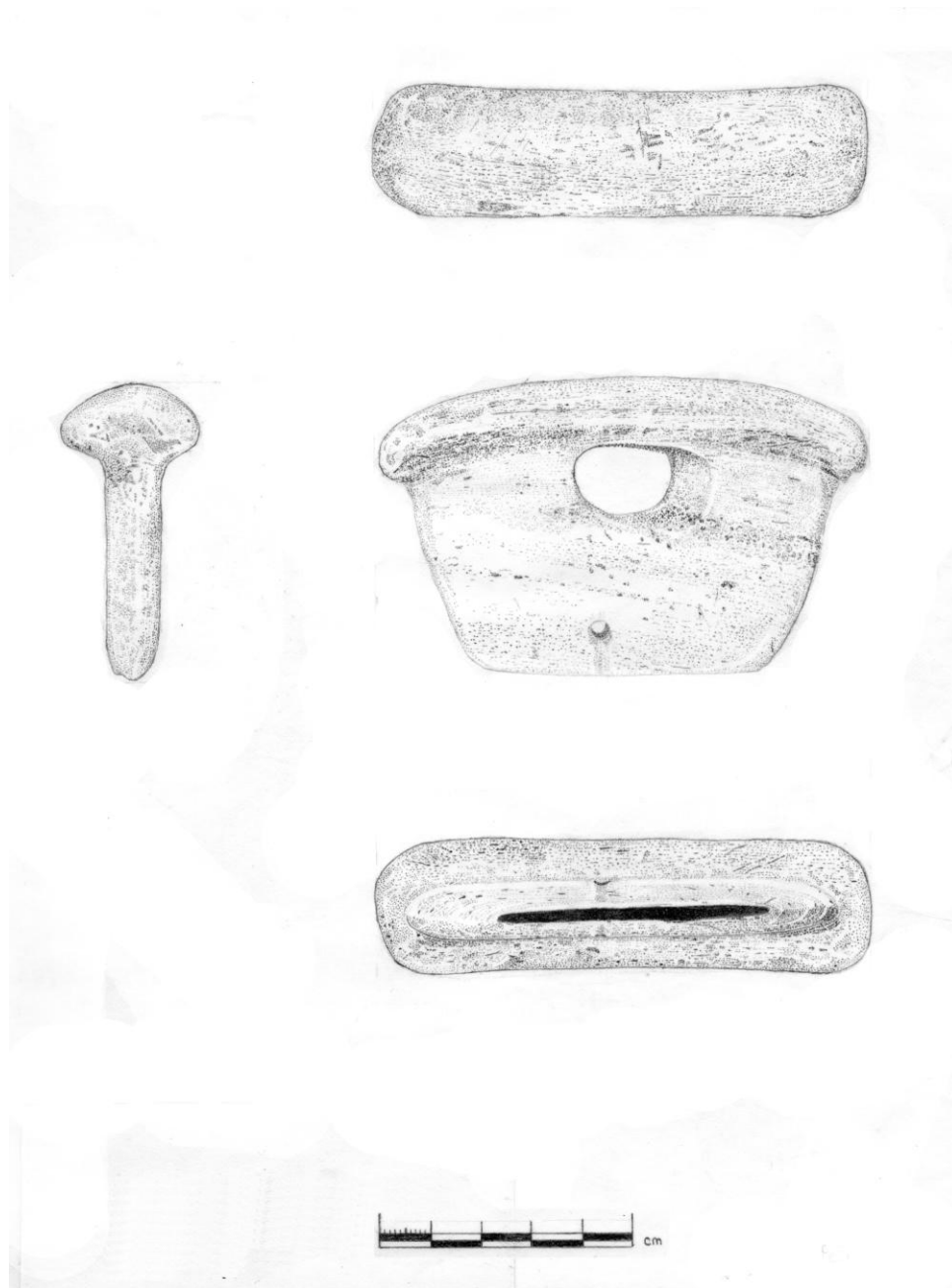


Figure 29: Medium size ulu handle (PeJr-1:1233). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.



Figure 30: Large ulu handle (PcJq5:425). Drawing by Jonathan Goldner-Jacobs.

E. Ornaments and amulets

This category of artefacts includes: clothing ornaments which are mostly drop-shaped pendants made of ivory and drilled seal or fox canines; body ornaments such as beads of various shapes and materials and probably worn as jewels, head bands, bracelets and labrets; ornamental and ritual chain pendants made of ivory; animal effigies used as pendants, carvings or animal shapes carved on various handles and toggles; decorated ivory objects such as toggles and unidentified objects and ivory combs and needle-case paraphernalia, often worn by Inuit women around their necks and/or attached to clothing, made of ivory. These are all different categories of objects with different functions, but they intersect as follows: they play roles in the maintenance of harmonious and productive social and spiritual relations between humans and animals; they bring luck in hunting; they give special physical qualities to their owners; and they participate in the strategies for social distinction or differentiation within the community.

Animal teeth with drilled holes are common clothing ornaments among Thule Inuit assemblages, and were also popular among Inuit (Issenman 1997: 191). Both Inuit men and women would drill hundreds of teeth for decorative purposes, dangling from the end of beaded strings (Parry 1824: 497). Most of these teeth were of caribou, fox and seal, and sometimes musk ox. Among Alaskan Inuit, these rows of animal teeth were also considered as personal amulets, for protection or to acquire the qualities of the animals (Spencer 1959: 282). Such fringes were sometimes ornamented with bone and ivory pendants, very similar to the 'drop pendants' common to Thule Inuit. These carved pendants and animal teeth

were not only ornamental, they were also auditory, adding to the merriment at feasts and dances (Issenman 1997: 191).

Drilled bear canines are also commonly found in Thule Inuit assemblages, and they probably had different functions. Some have traces of abrasion, suggesting that they were used as whetstones. Drilled holes mean that they were attached to other objects, such as a knife or an *ulu* handle (Issenman 1997: 63). Another possibility suggested by Whitridge (2013, personal communication) is that they were used as engraving tools. Their shape and size is convenient for gripping in the hand while it was used to incise a line in wood or bone. Elders at the McCord Museum workshops identified them as fishing lures used in conjunction with a fishing spear (*kakinak*), or as part of a shaman's necklace. Given the place of bears in later Inuit culture (Saladin d'Anglure 1990), the dangers that hunters face when they hunt bears, and the relative importance of depictions of bears in Thule Inuit assemblages, we can suggest that bear canines were especially valued and their possession was prestigious, regardless of the kind of object they were turned into. Pendants and beads were also used as earrings, or necklaces or attached to head or brow bands. Brow bands made of bone, antler or metal were very common among Inuit, especially women, and are often found in Thule Inuit assemblages.

Ivory chains are (see for example plate 21: 41A) very common in Thule Inuit assemblages, and were used by Alaskan Inuit in whaling rituals. According to Rousselot et al. (1988: 169), these chains were attached to the wooden vessel used by the *umialik's* wife to give the dead whale a drink of water. They were also part of the *umialik's* dancing paraphernalia, attached to dancing caps (Rainey 1947: 250). These chains were made from

one piece of ivory, and were probably the most spectacular demonstration of Thule Inuit carving skills. Helms (1993) and Gell (1992) discussed the potential power of this kind of object, emanating from the skills and knowledge of the carvers that were mobilised to make them. The effects of these chains as amulets or ritual objects were probably a function of their special and delicate design.

Ivory combs and sewing paraphernalia are also included in this category of Thule Inuit material culture. Their shapes are related to both aesthetics and technology. For example, at the McCord Museum workshops, finely crafted and decorated Inuit combs were only discussed in terms of lice removal. Their very thin and tightly aligned teeth required special carving skills and the thinner and closer to one another, the more efficient they were. Their aesthetic qualities were thus closely linked to their technological efficiency. Inuit and Thule Inuit needle-cases, made of bone or ivory, were often richly decorated. Among Mackenzie Inuit, they sometimes had bead inlays. They were either hung on a string around the neck, or attached directly to the women's parka.

Men's body ornaments also include labrets, or lip plugs. These piercings marked the end of adolescence, and were made following a special ritual (Spencer 1959: 241-242). Different kinds of labrets were used by Alaskan Inuit, depending on the age of the man, his wealth and the occasion. Some of the most expensive had blue beads, showing the prestige of the wearer. Exposing one's wealth through such ornaments was a typical practice for *umialiit*, but it had to be done with parsimony (Spencer 1959: 154-156). A great *umialik* should never boast of his success, but by showing his material wealth, he signaled his success as a hunter. His generosity, materialised by gifts to members of his whaling crew and other

members of his community, was another way to express this wealth. It is reported that *umialiit* also had tattoos on their cheeks indicating the number of whales they had taken (ibid).

Wealth was also typically constructed and expressed through the possession and exhibition of nicely crafted ornaments, often made with valued materials. Among Inuit, glass beads obtained through trade with Europeans were the most desired (Parry 1824: 497). The analogical equivalent among Thule Inuit would be amber beads, originating from Siberia, northern Ellesmere Island or Greenland. As we saw earlier, the acquisition and display of native copper and meteoric iron were also common ways for Thule Inuit to transform hunting success into material wealth. Men were the greatest consumers of these materials and tended to use them for personal tools and hunting equipment, and for women, pieces of metal were turned into body ornaments, such as brow bands and bracelets (Whitridge 2002).

In this chapter, I have completed my discussion of Inuit social networks from a material culture perspective, oriented towards the ethnographic analogy with Thule Inuit. I addressed the question of style in archaeological research in a way that goes beyond the usual dualism style/function in artefact analyses. I have presented my approach for the study of Inuit artefact design and style, in a way to answer questions about social relations and personal identities. The designs of women's knives (*uluit*) and of harpoon heads were used as examples to illustrate these notions from the perspective of Inuit elders. The balance between socially shared styles/design and personal creativity was also discussed through Inuit notion of the self – personal and social – and ways of experimenting with traditions. More concretely, I have explained how material culture participates in the construction of

Inuit social life and identities through the expression of stylistic variability, aesthetics and material wealth. In other words, I have presented the ways in which notions of art and technology unfold materially in the Inuit social realm. The concept of value was also discussed from an anthropological point of view, in order to help us understand how social and material wealth is constructed among Inuit.

This discussion of the notions of style, design and value in the context of Inuit social life led to the selection of five artefact classes for my ethnographic analogy with Thule Inuit. These artefacts were chosen because of the central role they play in Inuit social networks and on the basis of their archaeological visibility. Their presence in Inuit and Thule Inuit lives has remained constant over the centuries, with only a few changes in their design. For all these reasons, they are focus points for the analogy and for my archaeological analyses. In what follows, I present the archaeological study of Thule Inuit social networks in three whale-hunting villages, guided by these Inuit notions of style, aesthetics and identity.

Part three: Archaeological analyses

10. Social networks at Qariaraqyuk (PaJs-2)

10.1 Introduction

Qariaraqyuk is one of the largest known Thule Inuit bowhead whaling villages in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago during the 13th to 15th century (Figure 31). The site consists of a row of 57 semi-subterranean winter house depressions, the remains of dozens of tents and *qarmat*⁵³ occupied during warmer seasons, and numerous caches, exterior hearths and burials.

Qariaraqyuk was surveyed and excavated by Peter Whitridge in 1992, 1993 and 1994. At the time of my stay the artefact assemblages from this site were kept at Memorial University, Newfoundland. I visited their archaeological laboratory in May 2012 to begin my analyses, which were later completed with photographs of the artefacts (courtesy of Peter Whitridge).

⁵³ *Qarmat* are Inuit and Thule Inuit dwellings, with walls made of stone and roof made of sod. It is an inter-seasonal type of house, lighter than the semi-subterranean winter dwelling.

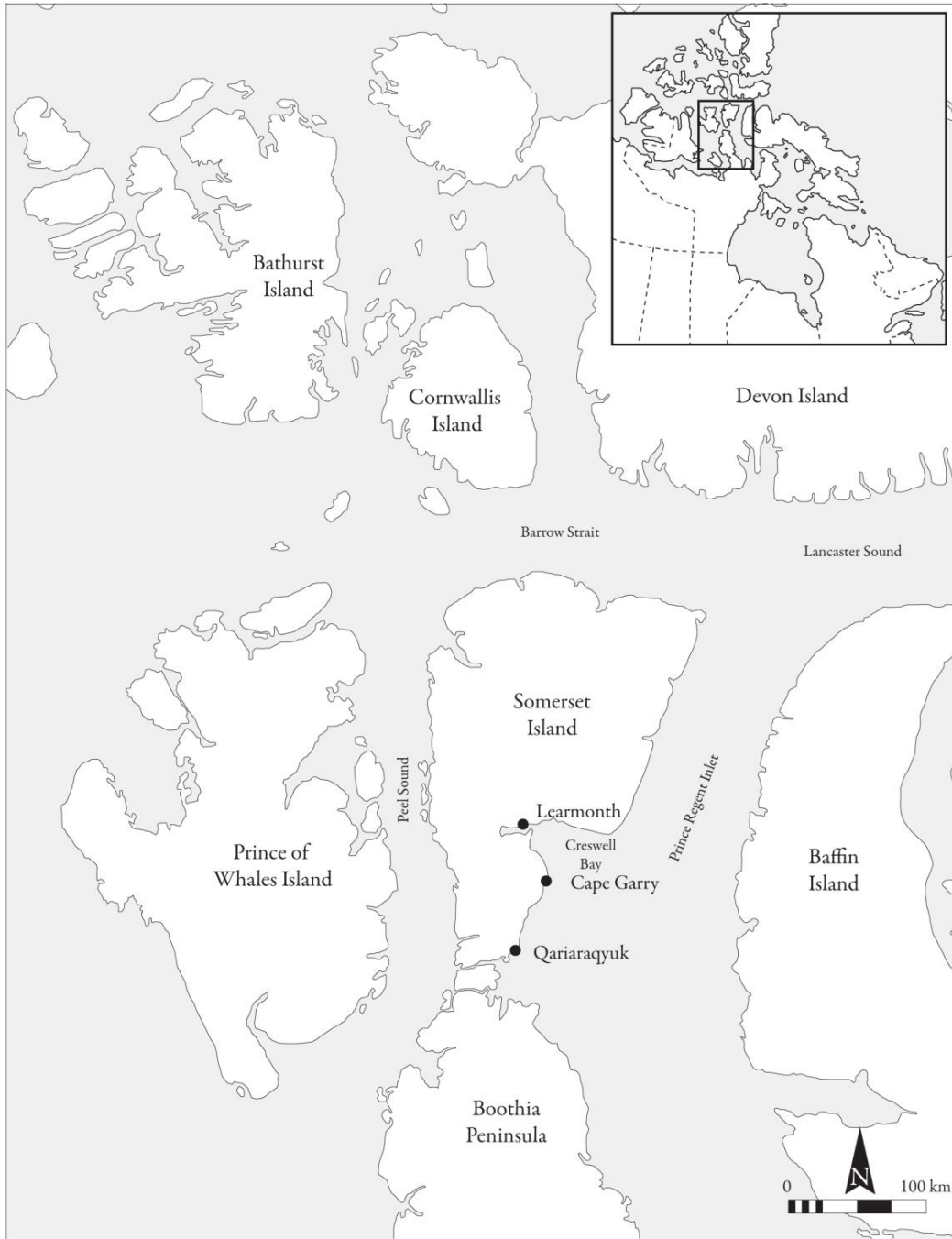


Figure 31: Map of the study region

This chapter presents the major findings of Whitridge (1999a) about the social differentiation around whaling activities at this site. Whitridge's research was based on settlement pattern, zooarchaeological analyses and preliminary examination of material content of the houses excavated. I used his conclusions as a starting point for my own analyses, which consisted of a detailed examination of everyday life objects found in the houses. Whitridge considered some of his conclusions as 'problematic', because some indicators of high social status were found outside the whaling areas of the site. My analyses use Whitridge's as a basis and complement them by resolving the problematic results using Inuit notions of material culture and stylistic analyses for harpoon heads, arrowheads, *ulu* handles, ornaments and exotic/locally scarce materials.

10.2 Excavations and previous studies

Whitridge's excavation efforts were concentrated on a spatially restricted portion of the site. Six dwellings were excavated: Houses 29, 33, 34, 35, 38 and *karigi* 41 (Figure 32). Evaluated through calibrated ¹⁴C and seriations of harpoon heads and arrowheads, the occupation of these houses spanned approximately 200 years, from about AD 1200 to AD 1400, with a substantial occupational overlap between the late 13th century and the early 15th century (Whitridge 1999a: 186).

Based on ethnographic analogy with Alaskan Inuit, archaeologists suggest that Thule Inuit semi-subterranean dwellings were occupied by an average of seven or eight persons, and that there would be one hunter for three or four dependants – women, children, elders or any other non-hunting individuals (Binford 1991; Burch 1981: 14; Foote 1965: 224;

McCartney 1979; Taylor 1974; Whitridge 1999: 187). Each whaling crew would have been composed of seven to eight hunters. Qariaraqyuk could thus have potentially mustered nine to ten whaling crews contemporaneously. Whitridge (1999: 195) suggests that such a large number of crews would have created competitive intra-community dynamics among *umialit* and their crew members.

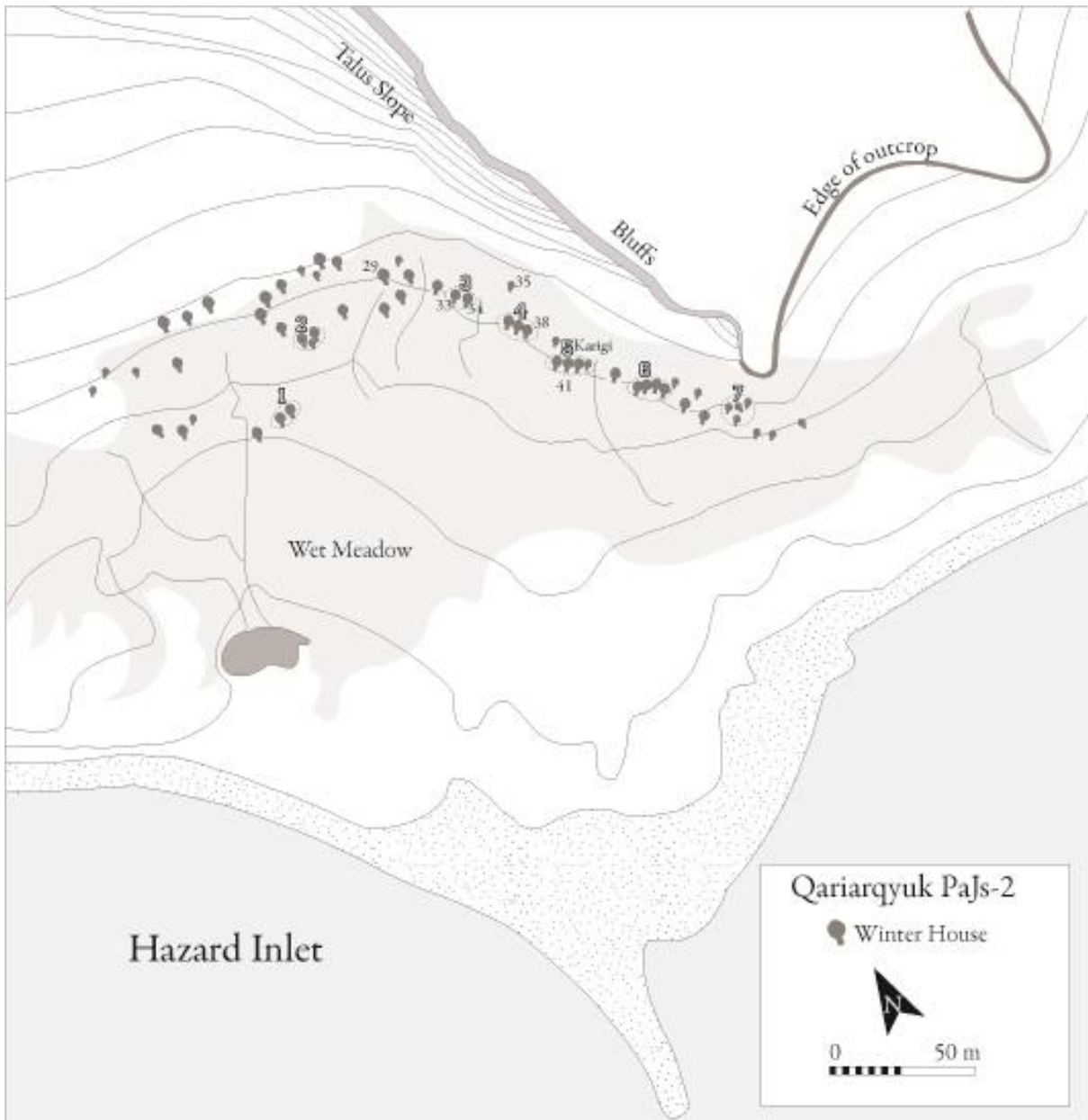


Figure 32: Map of the site Qariaraqyuk (PaJs-2)

Whitridge’s analysis of the houses’ settlement pattern revealed the presence of a certain number of *upsiksui* (1999a: 209-212). *Upsiksui* are groups of 2-9 adjacent dwellings,

occupied by different families (related or unrelated), often including a *karigi*. Among North Alaskan Inuit, *upsiksui* were individually named and provided the core membership of the whaling crew organisation (Burch 1981: 45). This kind of settlement pattern would have occurred only in large villages, such as this one. Whitridge identified seven house groups at Qariaraqyuk analogous to the Alaskan *upsiksui*. They concentrate in the eastern part of the settlement and they all contain a *karigi* (Whitridge 1999a: 201), suggesting social proximity among their occupants. Whitridge named this area of the site the ‘whaling neighbourhood’.

My analysis of the material culture from Qariaraqyuk rests on some of Whitridge’s conclusions about social differentiation therein, and answers the questions that he left open. Through zooarchaeological analyses, architectural and settlement pattern analyses, as well as the distribution of whaling gear, ‘symbols of rank’, ‘ritual paraphernalia’ and exotic/locally scarce materials, he assessed the relative participation of Houses 29, 33, 34, 35, 38 and 41 in whaling activities. Whaling and non-whaling households would have represented different levels in the social differentiation at Qariaraqyuk. Whitridge identified four whaling households and two non-whaling households, based on the following criteria:

- 1- Abundance of whaling gear (large harpoon foreshafts and shafts, large lance heads, parts of sealskin floats and boat parts⁵⁴).
- 2- Amount of prized portions of whales in the house assemblages, notably the distal flipper which was often the successful hunting crew’s *umialik*’s share. Each house assemblage was studied according to a

⁵⁴ The only whaling harpoon head found by Whitridge occurred on the surface, in a tent ring at the easternmost edge of the site. Thus, it was not included in the present study which compares the assemblages of the semi-subterranean houses excavated.

prestige whale bone index, based on ethnographic analogy with the distribution of whale parts among Alaskan Inuit groups.

3- House size and complexity. Bigger houses were more likely occupied by wealthy families, who had members in whaling crews. Architectural complexity was identified with evidence of sod roofs (structure), separate kitchen/living/sleeping areas, heavy sleeping platforms with storage compartments, storage alcoves and shelves in the entrance tunnel.

4- Occurrence of the house in *upsiksui*, proximity with a *karigi*, and eventually with other *upsiksui* and whaling households.

5- Occurrence of locally rare or exotic material within house assemblage. The trade and consumption of these materials were critical to the maintenance of Thule Inuit whaling economies. Trade provided the means of converting the whaling surplus into other valued commodities (Whitridge 1999a: 252). These materials, archaeologically visible, are ivory, muskox horn and teeth, amber, copper and iron.

6- Occurrence of material symbols of social rank in house assemblage. Whitridge considered these to be the incorporation of precious materials (locally scarce or exotic) into utilitarian objects for which local substitutes were also in use, as a message to other members of the community about one's social rank, for example, metal blades on knives and harpoon heads. Also, bodily ornamentation was considered by Whitridge to be a sign of high social rank and incorporates beads, pendants, labrets, bracelets and brow bands.

7- Occurrence of ritual paraphernalia in house assemblage. This category of material culture (archaeologically visible) was associated with amulets and gaming pieces, which give evidence of communal gatherings.

Whitridge's analyses were conclusive for the first four criteria (whaling gear, prized portion of whales, architectural complexity and settlement pattern, and consumption of

locally scarce and/or exotic material). He identified whaling households and a *karigi* which are all consistent with these criteria (Houses 33, 34, 38 and 41). As for the material symbols of social rank and ritual paraphernalia, their distribution was not coherent with the other whaling criteria. These were found in households that did not correspond to whaling activities (Houses 29 and 35), and were absent from some major whaling houses (identified as such based on the first four criteria). The phenomenon was also observed with the distribution of ivory, a locally scarce material.

These inconsistencies are intriguing in terms of the roles played by the occupants of the non-whaling households 29 and 35 in the social life of the village. Access to locally rare material, possession and exhibition of bodily/clothing ornaments and the use of amulets and gaming pieces seems to have no specific link to whaling activities. These results that Whitridge qualified as problematic were taken as points of departure for my own analyses.

In fact, my analyses drew from and complemented Whitridge's in the following ways:

- 1- Assessing the social relatedness between the excavated houses, both whaling and non-whaling, within and between *upsiksui*, based on comparative stylistic studies of key artefact classes.
- 2- Re-visiting the question of social differentiation between houses with exotic and locally scarce material distribution, as well as with the additional criteria of skilled craftsmanship behind everyday life objects (as indicated by my research on Inuit material culture through oral tradition and group discussions at the McCord museum) and the social relations identified in the stylistic studies.

The two levels of my material culture analysis allowed me to address Whitridge's problematic results in terms of locally scarce materials, symbols of social rank and ritual objects, and to gain a better global understanding of the social relations at Qariarkyuk. In what follows, I

present the six houses excavated by Whitridge, his analysis in terms of their participation in whaling activities and social differentiation, and the content of the material culture assemblages included in my analyses.

10.3 House 41

House 41 was identified as a *karigi* (Whitridge 1999a: 196-201). In contrast to the remaining houses that have been excavated, some architectural features, such as the lack of kitchen area and sleeping platform, a circular floor and bench uprights, a central pit, and multiple bowhead crania in the wall and roof construction confirmed that this was not an ordinary household for a single family. In addition, the artefact assemblage of House 41 is mostly composed of men's manufacturing tools and debitage, as well as whaling and other hunting gear. This indicates a gendered use of the house, oriented toward the production and repair of men's toolkits. The high presence of ornaments and objects associated with games, drumming and rituals suggest that other activities were held in House 41, probably social gatherings, such as communal dances, special rituals and ceremonies and/or leisure activities. These are all material indicators for *karivyit*, based on ethnographic data and archaeological research (Rainey 1947; Spencer 1959, 1972, 1979; Whitridge 1999: 104-105, 196-201). Artefacts from this house that were included in the present study are presented in Table 1:

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 1	1	3%	Self-bladed	28	35%	End-bladed	77	71%	Bear canine	31	31%
Type 2	12	34%	Inserted blade	1	1%	Side-bladed	19	17%	Seal/fox/dog tooth	22	22%
Clachan	6	17%	Fragment	51	64%	Fragment	1	1%	Chain	5	5%
Type 3	5	14%						Pendant	1	1%	
Type 3 Sicco	2	6%						Bead	3	3%	
Type 4/Nuwuk	2	6%						Comb/comb tooth	3	3%	
Type 5/Nuwuk	1	3%						Button	6	6%	
Preform	1	3%						Brow band			
Fragment	5	14%						/bracelet	3	3%	
								Labret			
								Amulet/amulet box	1	1%	
								Sewing paraphernalia	4	4%	
								Gaming pieces	18	18%	
								Drum elements			
								Animal/human effigies on tools	4	4%	
								Fish lure			
Total	35	100%	Total	80	100%	Total	109	100%	Total	101	100%

Ulu Types		
Small Ulu	9	60%
Medium Ulu	5	33%
Large Ulu	1	7%
Total	15	100%

Table 1: Artefact assemblages in House 41 (PaJs-2)

10.4 Houses 33, 34 and 38

Houses 33, 34 and 38 were identified by Whitridge as whaling households. They are typical semi-subterranean households, with a distinct kitchen area near the tunnel entrance and a sleeping platform in the main occupational area. House 33 is the largest among them, but House 38, with its bilobate living area and dual sleeping platforms could have been able to accommodate as many people as House 33 (Whitridge 1999a: 246). House 38 is architecturally more complex, with storage alcove and shelves in the main tunnel, and shelves along one of the walls of the living area (ibid: 248). Houses 33 and 38 also had the highest amount of whaling gear compared to the other houses excavated. House 33 contained the highest amount of prized whale portion remains. House 38 is close to a *karigi*

(House 37) and to the largest cluster of the site, the whaling neighbourhood in which *karigi* 41 is situated. Houses 33 and 34 form a cluster on their own, without *karigi* in it, and a little further from the whaling neighbourhood. There is no spatial clue as to which *karigi* they would have belonged to. Artefacts from these three houses that are included in the present study are presented in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4.

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 1			Self-bladed	4	57%	Composite	1	11%	Bear canine	4	27%
Type 2	1	25%	Inserted blade	2	29%	End-bladed	5	56%	Seal/fox/dog tooth	6	40%
Clachan			Fragment	1	14%	Side-bladed	3	33%	Chain		
Type 3									Pendant		
Type3 Sicco									Bead		
Type 4									Comb/comb tooth	1	7%
Type 5/Barrow	3	75%							Button	1	7%
Preform									Brow band		
Fragment									/bracelet		
									Labret		
									Amulet/amulet box	3	20%
									Sewing paraphernalia		
									Gaming pieces		
									Drum elements		
									Animal/human		
									effigies on tools		
									Fish lure		
Total	4	100%	Total	7	100%	Total	9	100%	Total	15	100%

Ulu Types

Small Ulu	1	50%
Medium Ulu		
Large Ulu	1	50%
Total	2	100%

Table 2: Artefact assemblages in House 33 (PaJs-2)

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 1			Self-bladed	6	50%	Composite	1	11%	Bear canine	3	18%
Type 2	6	46%	Inserted blade	2	17%	End-bladed	6	67%	Seal/fox/dog tooth	5	19%
Clachan			Fragment	4	33%	Side-bladed	2	22%	Chain		
Type 3	6	46%							Pendant	2	12%
Type3 Sicco									Bead	1	6%
Type 4									Comb/comb tooth	3	18%
Type 5/Barrow									Button		
Preform	1	8%							Brow band		
Fragment									/bracelet		
									Labret		
									Amulet/amulet box	3	18%
									Sewing paraphernalia		
									Gaming pieces		
									Drum elements		
									Animal/human effigies on tools		
									Fish lure		
Total	13	100%	Total	12	100%	Total	9	100%	Total	17	100%

Ulu Types		
Small Ulu	4	67%
Medium Ulu	2	33%
Large Ulu		
Total	6	100%

Table 3: Artefact assemblages in House 34 (PaJs-2)

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 1	1	5%	Self-bladed	17	77%	Composite	3	14%	Bear canine	14	15%
Type 2	7	37%	Inserted blade			End-bladed	12	57%	Seal/fox/dog tooth	34	35%
Clachan			Fragment	5	23%	Side-bladed	6	29%	Chain	3	3%
Type 3	4	21%							Pendant	7	7%
Type3 Sicco	1	5%							Bead	10	10%
Type 4	2	11%							Comb/comb tooth	5	5%
Type 5/Barrow									Button		
Preform	2	11%							Brow band		
Fragment	2	11%							/bracelet	5	5%
									Labret	1	1%
									Amulet/amulet box	2	2%
									Sewing paraphernalia	2	2%
									Gaming pieces	6	6%
									Drum elements	2	2%
									Animal/human		
									effigies on tools	4	4%
									Fish lure	1	1%
Total	19	100%	Total	22	100%	Total	21	100%	Total	96	100%

Ulu Types		
Small Ulu	1	17%
Medium Ulu	2	33%
Large Ulu	3	50%
Total	6	100%

Table 4: Artefact assemblages of House 38 (PaJs-2)

10.5 Houses 29 and 35

Houses 29 and 35 were identified as non-whaling households, mainly because they have low quantities of whaling gear, and they are architecturally simpler. House 35 was probably used for a brief occupation. Also, they are not part of a house cluster and they are far from *kariyuit*. In terms of prized whale portions, House 29 is below average, but that of House 35 is near the means of whaling households. Artefacts from these two non-whaling houses that were included in the present study are presented in Table 5 and Table 6.

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 1			Self-bladed	8	89%	Composite	1	12%	Bear canine	6	32%
Type 2	2	33%	Inserted blade	1	11%	End-bladed	7	88%	Seal/fox/dog tooth	2	11%
Clachan			Fragment			Side-bladed			Chain	3	16%
Type 3									Pendant		
Type3 Sicco									Bead	1	5%
Type 4									Comb/comb tooth		
Type 5/Nuwuk	3	50%							Button		
Preform	1	17%							Brow band		
Fragment									/bracelet		
									Labret	1	5%
									Amulet/amulet box		
									Sewing paraphernalia		
									Gaming pieces	1	5%
									Drum elements	1	5%
									Animal/human		
									effigies on tools	1	5%
									Fish lure	3	16%
Total	6	100%	Total	9	100%	Total	8	100%	Total	19	100%

Ulu Types		
Small Ulu	1	20%
Medium Ulu	3	60%
Large Ulu	1	20%
Total	5	100%

Table 5: Artefact assemblages of House 29 (PaJs-2)

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 1			Self-bladed	2	50%	Composite			Bear canine	3	21%
Type 2	1	25%	Inserted blade			End-bladed	3	75%	Seal/fox/dog tooth	1	7%
Clachan			Fragment	2	50%	Side-bladed	1	25%	Chain		
Type 3									Pendant	1	7%
Type3 Sicco									Bead	1	7%
Type 4									Comb/comb tooth		
Type 5/Nuwuk	3	75%							Button		
Preform									Brow band		
Fragment									/bracelet	2	14%
									Labret		
									Amulet/amulet box		
									Sewing paraphernalia	3	21%
									Gaming pieces	2	14%
									Drum elements		
									Animal/human		
									effigies on tools	1	7%
									Fish lure		
Total	4	100%	Total	4	100%	Total	4	100%	Total	14	100%

Ulu Types		
Small Ulu	1	50%
Medium Ulu		
Large Ulu	1	50%
Total	2	100%

Table 6: Artefact assemblages in House 35 (PaJs-2)

10.6 Distribution of exotic and locally scarce materials

The distribution of locally scarce material such as ivory, musk-ox horn and teeth and exotic material such as metal and amber were calculated by Whitridge (1999a) for each house and are presented in Table 7 and Table 8. Exotic material was analysed via two means – frequency of actual material found in house assemblages and the blade slot width of harpoon heads, *ulu* handles and men’s knife handles. Following the work of McCartney (1988: 71), slot width below 2mm were considered as being made for metal. When copper and iron was found, it was either a fragment of the raw material with no definite shape or function, blades or ornaments.

		House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
Locally scarce material*	Ivory	8%	5%	4%	6%	8%	4%
	Muskox horn/tooth	1%		1%	3%		
Exotic material*	Iron	3%	16%	4%		1%	6%
	Copper	3%		10%	5%	13%	17%
	Amber				5%	1%	1%

(* total house assemblage PaJs-2)

Table 7: Distribution of locally scarce and exotic material per house (PaJs-2)

	House 29		House 33		House 34		House 35		House 38		House 41	
	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S
<i>Metal (M) /Stone (S)</i>												
Harpoon head	1	1	2	1	4	5	2		4	3	4	4
Arrowhead		1	2		1						1	
Knife		9	10	3	3	5		1	7	8	23	39
Ulu		5	1		1	4				1	1	14
Total	1	16	15	4	9	14	2	1	11	12	29	57
House %	6%	94%	79%	21%	39%	61%	67%	33%	48%	52%	34%	66%

Table 8: Blade material by house, based on analysis of slot width (after Whidridge 1999)

10.7 Artefact analyses

The artefact analyses indicate that the social dynamics at Qariaraqyuk connected the whaling and the non-whaling households together in various ways. The settlement patterns in this village are not simple reflections of kinship relations, but reveal the complexity and flexibility of social dynamics among these villagers. Houses 38 and 41 show the highest rates of exotic materials, of finely made ornaments and of stylistic variability for each class of artefact. The styles and design of artefacts found in Houses 33 and 34 are sharply distinct

from one another; at least for harpoon heads, they are actually complementary. On one hand, artefact designs from House 34 correspond more to those of Houses 38 and 41. On the other hand, artefacts from House 33, a large whaling household, clearly correspond with the ones from the non-whaling household in House 29.

The location of Houses 33 and 34, as well as the design of their artefacts, are probably the most revealing results for questions of social relations and differentiation at Qariaraqyuk. Their presence in the same cluster and their material dissimilarity evoke the will of two unrelated families to form a social alliance, through an *upsiksui*. The occupants of House 34, being related to the whaling neighbourhood, represent a link between this important faction of the community and other families/group.

The fact that the large whaling household in House 33 is closely related to the isolated, non-whaling household in House 29 helps us to understand the relatively high presence of ornaments, amulets and ritual paraphernalia in the latter house. Whitridge (1999a: 327-328) had considered this assemblage as problematic, because the occupants of House 29 did not participate in whaling activities. However, this becomes much less problematic with the explicit demonstration of their relatedness with the occupants of House 33, as seen through the design of their tools, hunting equipment and ritual paraphernalia. Whitridge (1999a: 241-242) suggested that the economic strategies of House 29's occupants were fundamentally different from those of the whaling households, based on the low frequency of whaling gear and high representation of fishing and bird and small game hunting gear. It was suggested that these different hunting strategies were meant to complement their low access to whaling products. The artefact design analyses, evoking

strong relatedness with the whalers of House 33, suggests that they might have had indirect access to whaling products, either as part of the familial obligation to share food, or in exchange for complementary subsistence products. The light architecture of House 29, seen in the apparent lack of sod roof, suggests that this house was not occupied throughout the winter, as the whaling households were (Whitridge 1999a: 242). This implies that the occupants of House 29 were travelling during this season, most probably by dog sled, a suggestion compatible with the relatively high frequency of dog trace buckles found in this house compared to the other houses (Whitridge 1999a). The high amount of locally scarce material found in this house confirms the suggestion that its occupants enjoyed a good status in the community, partially because of their relatedness and interactions with the whalers in House 33 and probably through their complementary economic activities and eventual capacity to provide the community with locally scarce materials. Only hard organic locally scarce materials such as ivory and musk ox horn and teeth are visible archaeologically, but occupants of House 29 might have been travelling in areas where they could have hunted caribou for their highly valued pelts or traded such items with communities of caribou hunters living inland, bringing back these items to share or exchange with the villagers of Qariaraqyuk. Ritual paraphernalia found in House 29 point in the same direction – the ivory chains and drums used by Alaskan Inuit in the 19th and 20th centuries in whaling rituals (Rainey 1947: 250; Spencer 1959: 339) were only found in House 29, in *karigi* 41 and in the wealthy whaling household in House 38. Whitridge (1999a: 278) suggested that House 29 might have gained cultural or social capital through a spiritual role and involvement in the community, such as shamanism, knowing that in North Alaska, shamans were not necessarily part of a whaling crew and needed to provide services to the community in order

to have access to whale products in exchange (Spencer 1959: 308). In addition, the tools found in House 29 were in general very well-made, with more care than the assemblages from the other houses. They do not necessarily show fine or complex decorations or exotic materials, but they were skilfully made, with regular and symmetrical contours and highly polished surfaces. Thus, the whaling network was not the single system of social interactions and differentiation at work at Qariaraqyuk. Complementary activities, such as hunting other animal species, trading with neighbouring groups and ceremonial activities were also essential to the production and maintenance of a socio-economic equilibrium in the community.

The isolated, non-whaling household in House 35 also shows signs of wealth that is somewhat inconsistent with its non-participation in whaling activities. This wealth is seen in its access to prized whale portions, and the relatively high amount of exotic materials and ornaments found therein. Whitridge (1999a: 328) suggested that this architecturally light house had at some point served as a temporary late autumn/early winter residence for a relatively high status family from another community, perhaps while participating in trading or ceremonial activities. This brief occupation would be consistent with the small sample of artefacts found in this house, along with the relatively high amount and quality of ornaments and communal gaming pieces. This distinct identity and the interaction with other households at Qariaraqyuk is supported by the unique design of one of the harpoon heads found in House 35, which occupants of Houses 34 and 38 tried to replicate without success.

Another major finding revealed by artefact design analyses is the sharp difference between assemblages of the two largest whaling households in Houses 33 and 38. These

intriguing results suggest that whaling crews in this large whaling village belonged to unrelated families, supporting hypotheses for a complex social life at Qariaraqyuk (Whitridge 1999a), and eventually including interactions with other villages of the region (Savelle 2000). House 38 was socially related to the local whaling neighbourhood and its *karigi* 41. House 33's relations and interactions, as mentioned above, were limited to House 29 and House 34, with no direct evidence of interaction with groups of the local whaling neighbourhood. This is a sign of distinct whaling crews collaborating, but also competing for the outcome of the hunt and the sharing of its products. This competition between whaling crews should be seen as a mechanism useful for the social equilibrium, showing the bonds existing between members of families and crews themselves. The social differentiation created by successful crews in this competition allowed the accumulation of whale surplus, to be exchanged through trade or gifts with other communities at the regional level, thus creating efficient socio-economic networks necessary for their access to important resources locally unavailable (Whitridge 2002). In what follows, I explain the material analysis behind these conclusions, by class of artefacts.

A. Harpoon heads

Harpoon heads at Qariaraqyuk are the strongest indicators of the social dynamics described above. Houses 29 and 33 have a prominence of a type called Nuwuk, with bifurcated and trifurcated spurs (plate 1: 29C, 29D, 33A, 33B, 33C). Nuwuk specimens form less than 10% of the assemblages for the remaining houses, whereas for Houses 29 and 33 they represent 50% and 75% respectively (see Figure 33 and Figure 34). Many of them have complex spurs, a design element completely absent in the other houses. These two houses

also yielded some unique specimens. In House 33, for example, a Nuwuk specimen was recovered with an open socket and a general shape resembling Type 5s, which is a type appearing mostly in the late Thule Inuit period, and still in use today (Park and Stenton 1998) (plate 1: 33B); and in House 29 a composite Type 2 occurred, in which the base and the blade are separate but bevelled and riveted in order to be attached together (plate 1: 29E, 29F). There also seems to be the distal end of a pre-form of a similar Type 2 in House 33. These unique specimens, the predominance of Nuwuk types and their complex spurs are considered to be personal signatures of the hunters occupying Houses 29 and 33. Harpoon heads in these houses are uniformly very well-made, which is not the case for those in Houses 34, 38 and 41, as we will see shortly. The contours are carefully defined and symmetrical, and they are highly polished. Simplicity and elegance would be the most appropriate way to qualify these two house assemblages, in addition to their complementarity with respect to the remainder of the houses at Qariaraqyuk. House 35 only yielded one specimen, a Type 4, which has a unique design and will be discussed shortly.

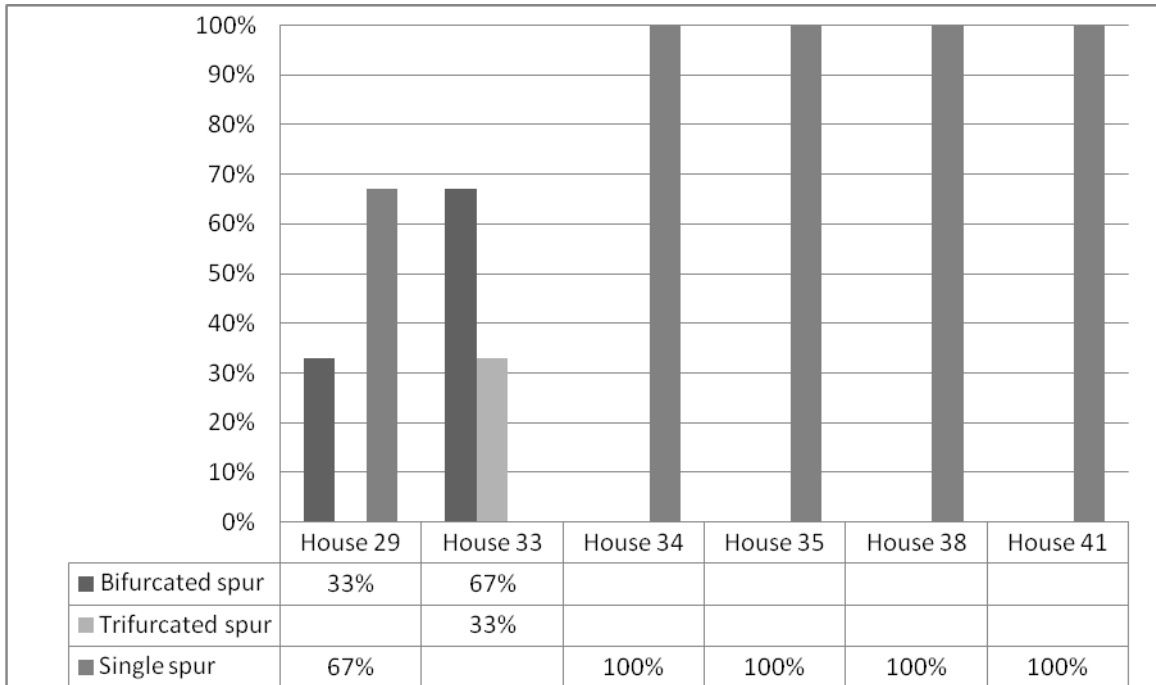


Figure 33: Relative frequencies of single, bifurcated and trifurcated spurs per house (PaJs-2)

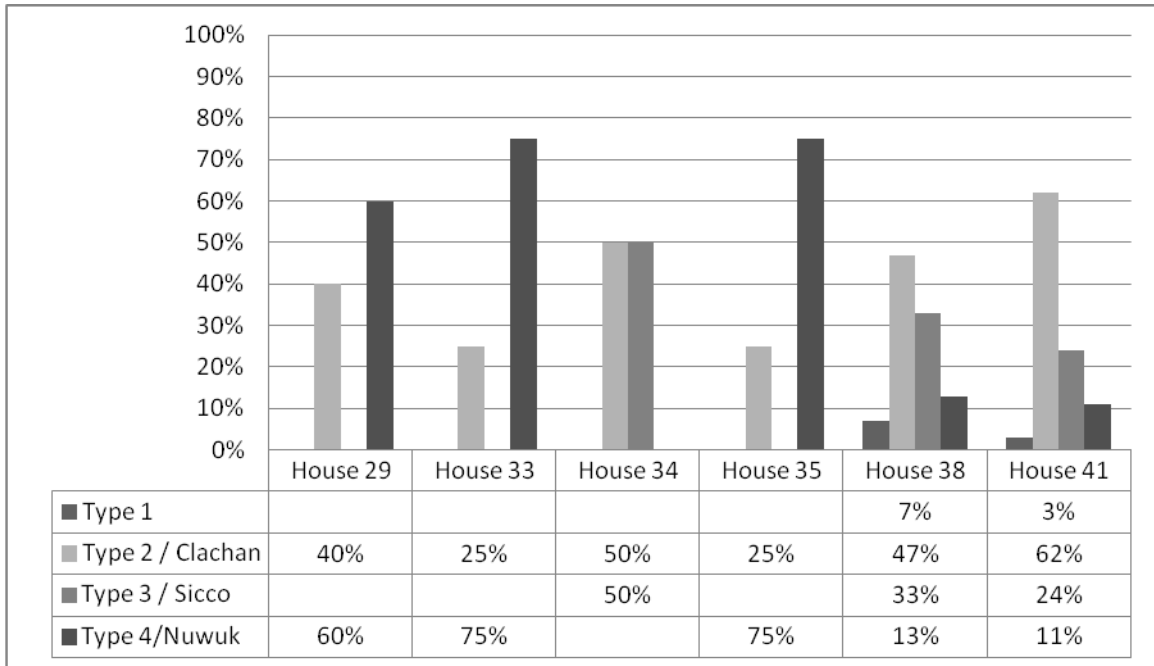


Figure 34: Relative frequencies of harpoon head types per house (PaJs-2)

Houses 34, 38 and 41 have a predominance of Type 2s and Type 3s, which were also the most widespread sealing harpoon head types among Thule Inuit during this period in this region. Nuwuk and Type 4s were not as common at that time period; they are associated with an earlier Thule Inuit period, and with Western/Alaskan cultural traditions (Collins 1937: 111; McCullough 1989). A few Nuwuk and Type 4s were found in these houses, but they were rather simply made (plate 2: 38H, 38M, 38N, 38O; plate 3: 41Q). Many of the artefacts are preforms, or specimens that were left unfinished because of technical difficulties, probably due to a lack of knowledge and/or experience in making these designs. By contrast, Type 2s and Type 3s in these three houses seem to display the technical expertise of the carvers/hunters, and material ways to experiment and display different levels of skill and stylistic signatures. Design variability of Type 2s and Type 3s in these houses is very high. Sampling sizes for these types in Houses 34, 38 and 41 are higher than the total

assemblages of Houses 29-33, which may also play a role in this perceived difference in style variability. However, considering the sharp complementary nature of these two house group assemblages, the sample size factor is diminished: the largest assemblage in House 41, for example, only yielded two Nuwuk types out of 27 diagnostic specimens (6%). With this information in mind, we can reasonably affirm that the stylistic variability and high numbers of Type 3s and Type 2s are not just consequences of statistics, but actual design strategies of carvers/hunters. The design elements of this stylistic variability for Type 2s are the presence/absence of an inserted blade at the distal end, of lateral ridges and shoulders at the base, and of incised decoration. For Type 3s, this variability can be described as a continuum of shapes from straight Type 3s to the Sicco type – constriction or ‘waist’ at the line-hole and/or a keeled fore-end, lateral vestigial blade slots at the level of the line-hole and incised decoration above the line-hole. Except for the inserted blade on Type 2s which are present only in Houses 34 and 41, all the other design elements appear in a crescendo of frequency and multiplicity of combinations from Houses 34, 38 and 41, in this order (see Table 9 and Table 10: Stylistic attributes of harpoon head Types 4, Nuwuk and 5 found in each house (PaJs-2). This crescendo is also observed with the other artefact assemblages, as we will discuss shortly. It is an indicator of a greater will or need to leave personal or individual signatures on harpoon head types that are made by all hunters. House 38 being located near the largest house cluster in Qariaraqyuk, and House 41 being the men’s workshop at the centre of this cluster, this crescendo of stylistic variability and personal signatures is a direct indicator of the greater amount of social interactions in which the occupants of these houses were engaged, and the need to distinguish themselves in comparison to others, in the production, ownership and use of these objects.

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
TYPE 2s (styl. att.)						
Clachan						3
Inserted blade			2			4
Self-bladed		1	1		6	4
Symmetrical barbs		1	3		4	3
Asymmetrical barbs			2		1	1
Round line hole			5		3	10
Triangular/rectangular line hole						1
Lateral ridges at the base			3		3	5
Shoulders			2		4	6
Lashing slots			1		1	5
Lashing holes			1		1	1
Straight spur						2
Angled spur			1		1	7
Facetted						
Oval or flat			4		3	7
Decoration : line			1			1
Decoration : triangle						2
Decoration : inverted "Y"					1	3
Total specimens		1	6		7	17
TYPE 3s (styl. att.)						
Waist			2		4	4
Keeled fore-end			2		4	4
Shoulders			1			
Vestigial blade slots						
Sicco type					1	2
Round line hole			6	1	5	5
Triangular line hole						
Lashing slots			3		3	4
Lashing holes			3	1	2	1
Straight spur			2	1	1	
Angled spur			3		3	4
Facetted			2			2
Oval or flat			3	1	2	2
Decoration : line			1		2	2
Decoration : triangle			1		1	2
Decoration : inverted "Y"					1	
Total specimens			6	1	5	4

Table 9: Stylistic attributes of harpoon head Types 2 and 3 found in each house (PaJs-2)

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
TYPE 4 (stylistic att.)						
Regular fore-end						
Winged fore-end			1	1		1
Single spur				1		1
Bifurcated/trifurcated spur					1	
Straight spur				1	1	1
Angled spur						
Total specimens			1	1	1	1
Nuwuk (stylistic att.)						
Single spur	1					1
Bifurcated/trifurcated spur	1	2				
Straight spur	1	2				
Angled spur	1					
Total specimens	2	2				1
TYPE 5 (stylistic att.)						
Single spur						
Bifurcated/trifurcated spur		1				
Straight spur						
Angled spur		1				
Total specimens		1				

Table 10: Stylistic attributes of harpoon head Types 4, Nuwuk and 5 found in each house (PaJs-2)

The incised decoration observed in these houses, mostly on Type 2s, but also on a few Type 3 specimens, presents specific patterns. The designs are vertical and linear incisions running from the blade to the line-hole, and ending with one of the following patterns: (A) a smooth opening and bifurcation of the line, delineating the contours of a long and narrow inverted triangle; (B) the same shape but this time with the full triangle carved out; or (C) the typical Thule Inuit ‘inverted Y’ pattern (plate 1: 34D; plate 2: 38B, 38G, 38L; plate 3: 41B, 41C, 41E, 41H, 41I, 41K). Specimens from House 38 contain the three patterns, one being a Sicco specimen with the inverted Y above the line-hole, with two straight parallel lines on

each side running from the tip to the proximal end, a waist at the line-hole and out-flaring fore end, which are valorised by the straight incised line (plate 2: 38L). House 41 also contains the three patterns, including the fragment of a Sicco specimen, and with a general predominance of the inverted Y. I have regrouped these incised decorations into three categories, but in reality, each decorated specimen is unique, not only in the way in which the decorative style was made, but also in conjunction with other design elements. It leaves us with the impression that these harpoon heads were all made by different men, who ‘signed’ their pieces with their own combination of a communally-shared repertoire of design elements, and their own way of performing/reproducing them.

Other design elements present in these three houses inform us about the identities of the house occupants and their inter-relations. Two Type 2s with the same unique pattern of asymmetrical barbs were present in Houses 34 and 38 (plate 1: 34B; plate 2: 38A), and Type 2s with inserted blades were only present in Houses 34 (plate 1: 34D, 34E) and 41 (plate 3: 41G). Sicco specimens were only present in Houses 38 and 41. As indicated by the incised decorations, these patterns suggest a certain number of individuals combining in different ways and sometimes creating their own variations of the common design. As mentioned in Chapter 7, an Inuit notion of art is not necessarily about innovation, but about performing skillfully and with care the communally-approved aesthetic standards. Where we see individual signatures or creativity is in the unique combinations and personal versions of these canons.

The only unique design found in this house group is the Clachan type in House 41 (plate 3: 41H, 41J, 41K). The Clachan type is a variant of Type 2, but the tip of the blade and

the barbs were made of an inserted or riveted copper blade. It is a type characteristic of the Coronation Gulf region, where the source of native copper is situated, and where Thule Inuit and Inuit groups integrated copper throughout their material culture (Morrison 1983: 76-82; Whitridge 1999: 77). I have argued elsewhere (Gadoua 2005) that the Clachan type was created in this area as a way to construct a local group identity slightly distinct from typical Thule Inuit shapes, and mostly featuring or valorising the copper blade. As it was shown in Table 7, House 41 contained the highest rate of copper among the excavated houses. Even if the Clachan specimens found in this house are bladeless or broken at the distal end, it could reasonably be suggested that such a blade was once inserted in them. If not, the uniqueness of this style in comparison to the other houses, and its inter-regional provenience or inspiration indicates at the very least a will to distinguish oneself from the rest of the community, imitating a trend associated with the exotic provenience of the valued copper. Again, here, no sharp innovation, but the personal expression of a specific culturally valued norm. The presence of these specimens in a *karigi*, the structure owned by a whaling crew leader and also a leader in trading activities, is not surprising.

House 35 yielded only two harpoon heads, one of them highly intriguing and revealing at the same time (plate 2: 35B). It is a Type 4 with a keeled fore-end, a design resembling that of Sicco-like shapes. This style is very rare and mostly found in early Thule Inuit assemblages in the Eastern High Arctic, and it has some stylistic correspondences with earlier cultures in Alaska (McCullough 1989: 93, 250). Its presence in House 35 supports Whitridge's suggestion that the occupants were a visiting family from another community, maybe from the Eastern High Arctic, where meteoric iron is found. Interestingly, two

'experimental' specimens of this type were found in Houses 34 and 38. The latter is a preform showing only one of the two wings at the fore-end, an asymmetrical design which would probably have jeopardised the performance of the toggling effect of the head when used (plate 2: 38M). It is suggested that these were poor imitations or experimentations of this uncommon type at Qariaraqyuk, indicating a specific social interaction between occupants of these houses – local hunters trying to reproduce the exotic style of the hunters of House 35 who were probably a rich or high status family visiting Qariaraqyuk for trading and/or ceremonial activities. This form of experimentation among Inuit (Briggs 1991; see also Chapter 3) can be seen as a strategy to integrate new techniques and designs in order to adjust or improve both the technological performance of the harpoon and the personal image of its maker, owner and/or user, both being interrelated.

One last design element to be discussed is the raw material used for these harpoon heads. The total assemblage of the site is made of whale bone and antler, each house containing the same relative frequency of each material (see Figure 35). Only one preform specimen made of ivory was found in House 29, most probably a closed-socket type 4/5/Nuwuk. The only pattern found with regard to material is relative to harpoon head types. For each house, the majority of Type 2s are made of antler, and the majority of Nuwuk are made of whale bone. Specimens of Type 3 are equally divided among antler and whale bone. Whale bone and antler were equally available and accessible in the region. As shown by the harpoon head assemblage at Qariaraqyuk, both materials allowed the carving of Type 3s, but antler was preferred for the long and thin, often decorated and finely carved, Type 2s and the whale bone was favoured for the closed socket and thicker Nuwuk

specimens. These types were probably not made in response to the material at hand, since antler and whale bone were equally available at this site, but they were strategically thought out and the materials were selected in accordance with the intention and preference of the carvers.

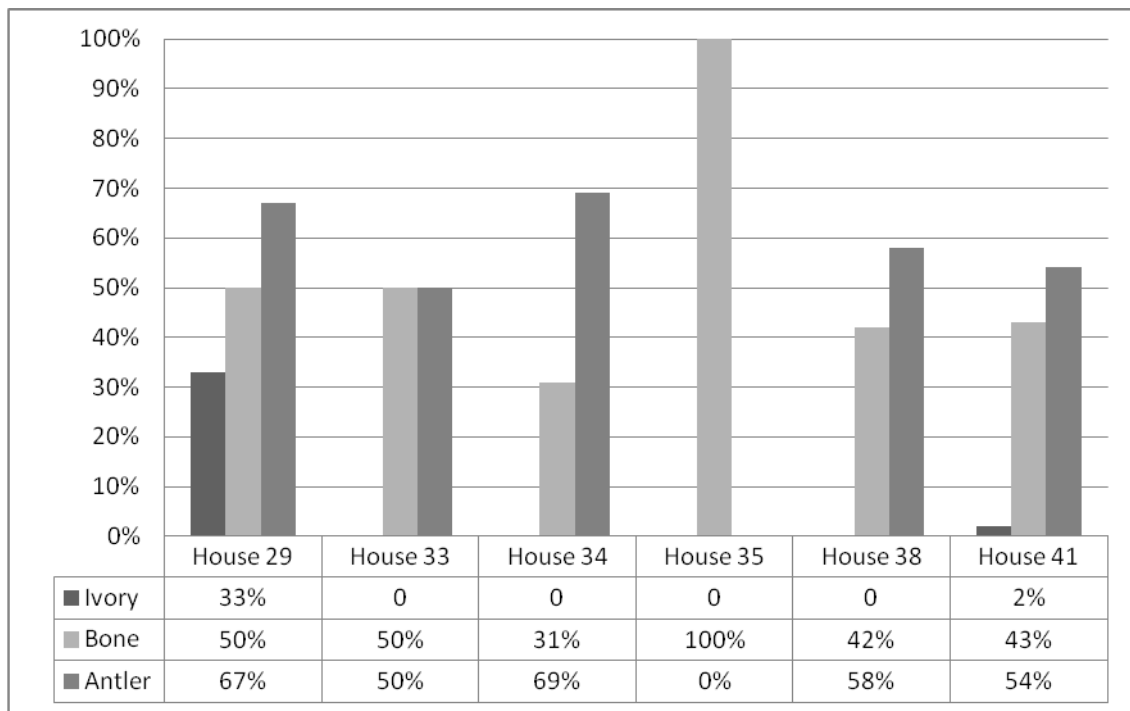


Figure 35: Relative frequencies of harpoon head materials per house (PaJs-2)

B. Arrowheads

The first pattern observed is the occurrence of arrowheads with inserted blades almost exclusively in Houses 29, 33 and 34. One specimen was found in House 41, but this represents only 4% of the assemblage, compared to 11%, 33% and 25% respectively for the three other houses (see Table 11 and Figure 36)

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
Self-bladed arrowhead	8	4	6	2	17	28
Inserted blade arrowhead	1	2	2			1
Total	9	6	8	2	17	29

Table 11: Occurrence of arrowhead types per house (PaJs-2)

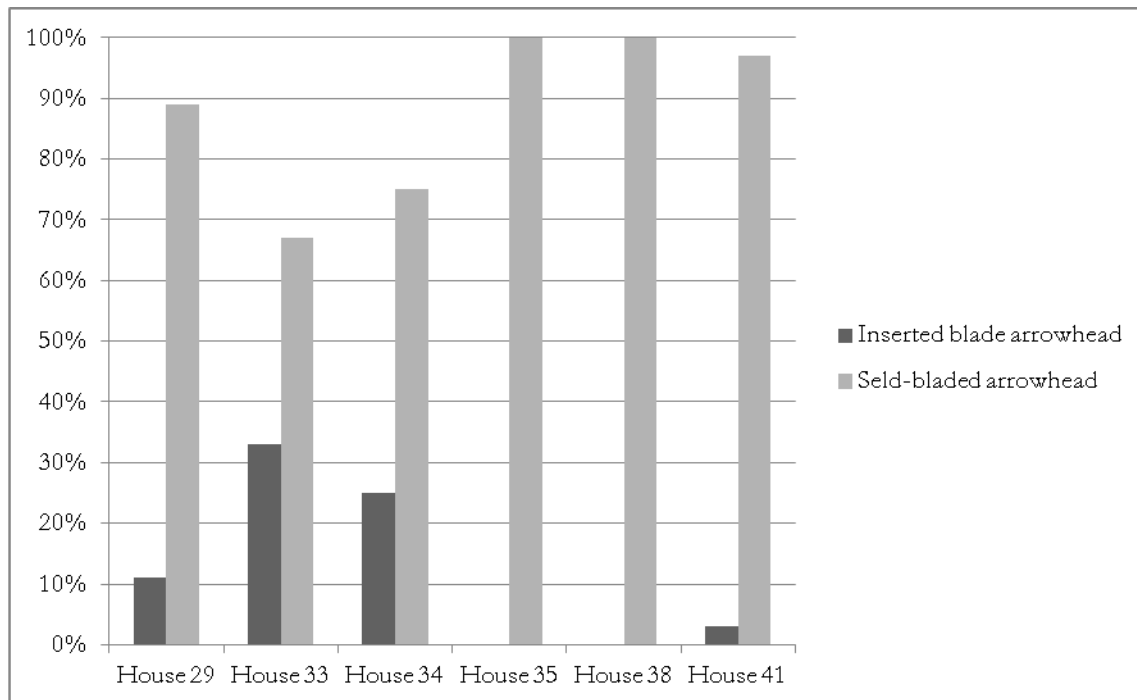


Figure 36: Relative frequencies of arrowhead types per house (PaJs-2)

The second pattern concerns the occurrence of incised marks on artefacts found in Houses 29, 38 and 41 (see Table 12 and Figure 37). More than half (56%) of House 29's specimens show an incised line along the barb, delineating the latter with the main body of the arrowhead (plate 4: 29A, 29C, 29D, 29G). One of them also has a series of notched marks along this line (plate 4: 29G), which I suggest are explicit ownership marks. Incised

lines were also found in Houses 38 and 41, but to a much lesser proportion, respectively 6% and 17% of complete or diagnostic specimens. These marks follow a regular pattern, a simple line delineating the barb (plate 6: 38C, 38G; plate 7: 41A, 41C). The two specimens in House 41 are unique – for one, this line is double, and for the other it is not clear if it is a decoration or the unfinished intention to carve a barb. I counted it as an incised decoration, but this evidence is questionable and this would lower the frequency of decorated specimens for that house to 14%. In general, I consider these marks as aesthetic efforts in the final design of the arrows, and personal signatures with a similar function to that of explicit ownership marks. Among Inuit, caribou hunting is an activity often done in groups, and it is likely that hunters would have wanted to identify their arrows either to claim their ownership if found on the ground for hit and miss, or to identify which hunter killed a caribou.

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
Incised marks	5				2	5
Plain	3	3	4	2	9	6
Total	8	3	4	2	11	11

Table 12: Occurrence and relative frequencies of incised marks on arrowheads per house (PaJs-2)

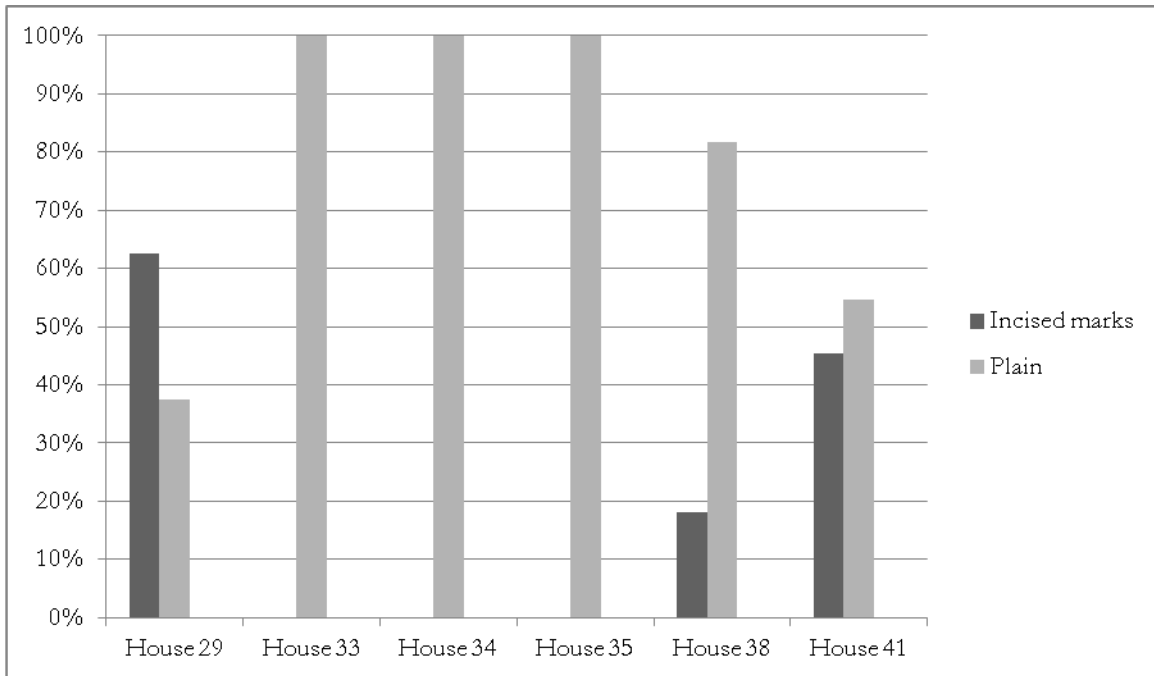


Figure 37: Relative frequencies of incised marks on arrowheads per house (PaJs-2)

Other designs were present in Houses 33, 34, 38 and 41, following the same crescendo of stylistic variability as for harpoon heads (see Table 13 and Figure 38). This confirms the high level of social interaction within and/or between these houses, but a little less clean cut with Houses 29 and 33 (as for harpoon head analysis).

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
One barb	5	2	2		9	8
Multiple barbs	1				1	4
Base : cone			3			5
Base : bulb		1		1	4	3
Base : one spur						3
Base : symmetrical spurs					1	4
Base : asymmetrical spurs	5	2	3	3	4	18
Base : ring					1	1

Table 13: Occurrence of design attributes on arrowheads per house (PaJs-2)

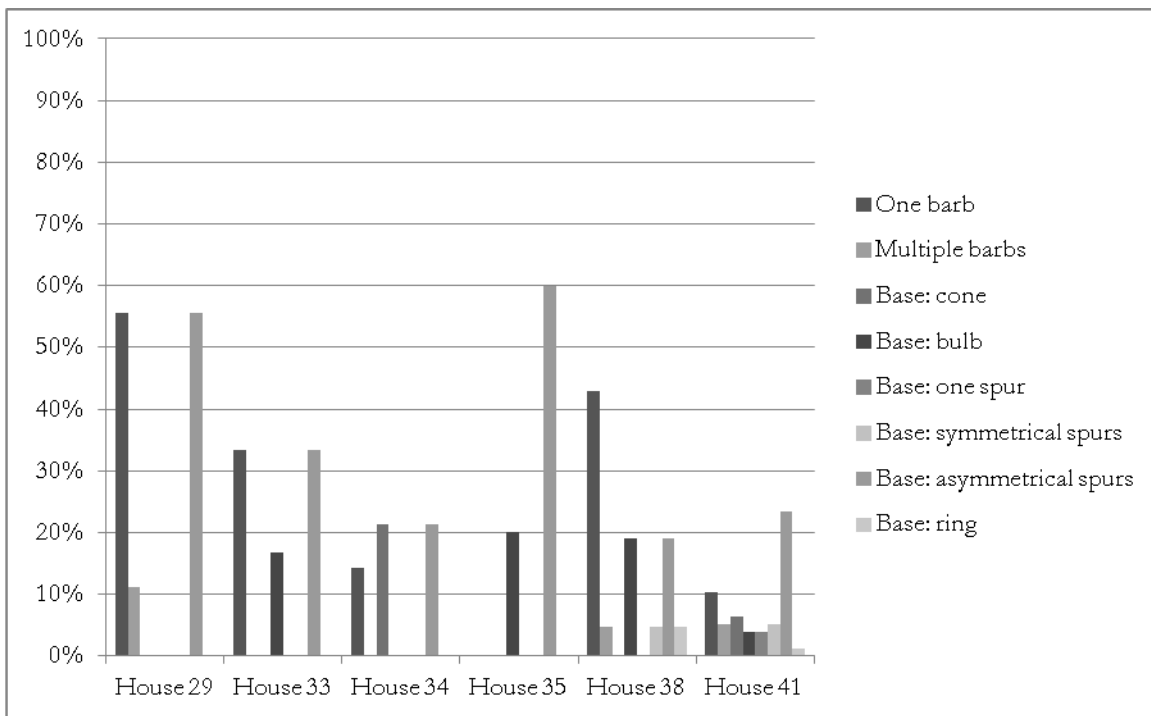


Figure 38: Relative frequencies of design attributes on arrowheads per house (PaJs-2)

In terms of raw materials, there is a pattern in the distribution of antler and whale bone arrowheads between houses, and this pattern is also linked to design choices. Houses

35, 38 and 41 contained a distinct majority of antler specimens (see Table 14). Houses 29, 33, and 34 more or less equally divided the two materials, but their specimens with inserted blade, which account for 11% to 33% of their assemblage, were all made of whale bone. This indicates that antler was the preferred material for arrowheads in general at Qariaraqyuk, unless one wanted to carve and use arrowheads with an inserted blade, either made of metal or stone. Blade slot widths of these arrows in Houses 33 and 34 indicate that they were designed especially to accommodate metal arrow points, probably as a way to express their owner's wealth. This strategy will be discussed shortly, in the section on exotic materials. In the meantime, what it tells us about such designs and their makers in Houses 33 and 34 is that these caribou hunting arrowheads were important indicators of social distinction within the community.

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
Antler	56%	43%	57%	100%	95%	81%
Bone	44%	57%	36%		5%	16%

Table 14: Raw materials used for arrowheads per house (PaJs-2)

C. Men's knife handles

All types of knife handles described in Chapter 7 were found at Qariaraqyuk (Table 15, Figure 39). The larger flensing knives occurred only in the whaling households (Houses 33, 34, 38 and *karigi* 41). Similarly long, but much thinner side-bladed knives were also found in these houses, in addition to House 29. These very long 'whittling knives' would probably have been used for splitting antler and bone as the long handle provided leverage for such a task. If so, the handle was probably reinforced at the blades' level by some lashing so that

the tool could stand the pressure. Composite knives were only present in whaling households. The remaining categories of knives were present in all houses. The medium-size meat knife handles are around 10cm long, and the smaller whittling knife handles, either end- or side-bladed, are less than 10 cm long. Therefore, in terms of these categories, the general tendency is that whaling Houses 33, 34, 38 and 41 contained all types, Houses 29 and 35 lacked the long flensing and composite knives, and House 35 lacked the long side-bladed whittling knife (see plate 8: 29A to 29H, and Plate 9: 35A). It is tempting to see this pattern as a result of sample size, especially for the whittling and composite knives, even though they are basic tools for bone and antler carving, an activity potentially done by every man in an Inuit community. These knives only make up 10% and less of the larger assemblages. Sample size explanation would also hold for the large flensing knives, whose occurrence was also below 10% for the houses that contained them, but given the fact that they were probably associated with the butchering of large whale carcasses, it is also tempting to see a cultural and socio-economic explanation to their absence in the non-whaling households.

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
End-bladed knife	7	5	6	3	11	69
Side-bladed knife	1	3	2	1	6	11
Composite knife		1	1		3	16

Table 15: Occurrence of knife handle types per house (PaJs-2)

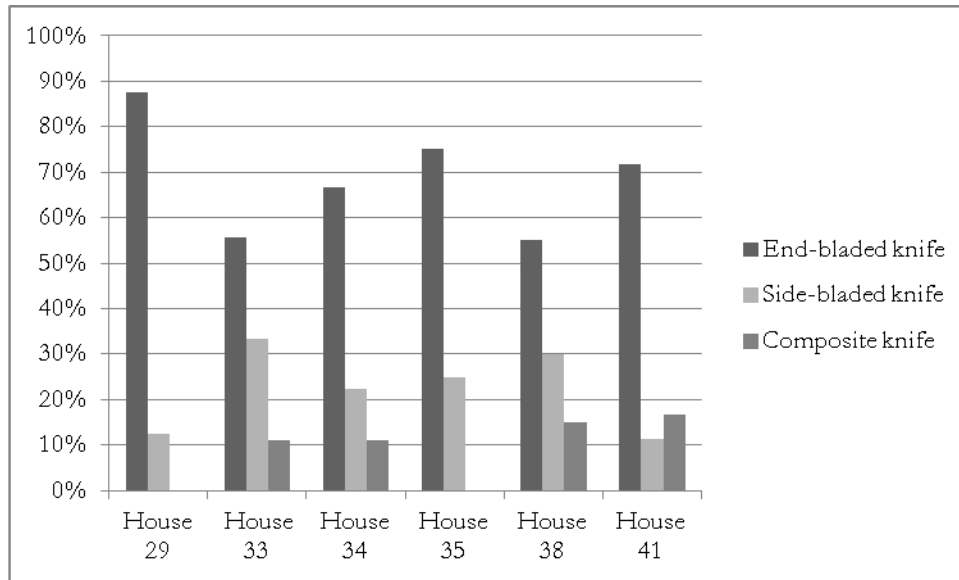


Figure 39: Relative frequencies of knife handle types per house (PaJs-2)

If we look at design elements other than the size and position of the blades and the functional categories per se, other patterns emerge. Suspension holes were gouged or drilled on many specimens, at their proximal end. Variations in the shape of the hole were more frequent in the specimens from Houses 34, 38 and 41 where they were round, rectangular and triangular. In Houses 29 and 33, holes were drilled and circular (see Table 16 and Figure 40). This type of hole is the most common, and present in all houses, except for House 35. In House 34, one specimen had a triangular gouged hole and incised decoration (plate 9: 34A). House 38 also held a knife with a triangular gouged hole and decoration (no photo

available). House 41 contained the widest variety of shapes for this attribute, being round, triangular and rectangular. House 35 only had one specimen, and it was triangular. The shape of the proximal end also varied in Houses 34 and 41. In the former, one specimen had an L-shaped base, a style also seen in House 41. The latter also had a specimen with a bifurcated base. This general tendency towards variation in Houses 34, 38 and 41 echoes that of the three previous classes of artefacts. This may be caused by sampling sizes, and/or intensification of social interactions happening in the whaling neighbourhood.

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
Circular	4	2	2		2	24
Rectangular					1	3
Triangular			1	1		4
Total	4	2	3	1	3	31

Table 16: The various shapes of suspension holes on knife handles per house (PaJs-2)

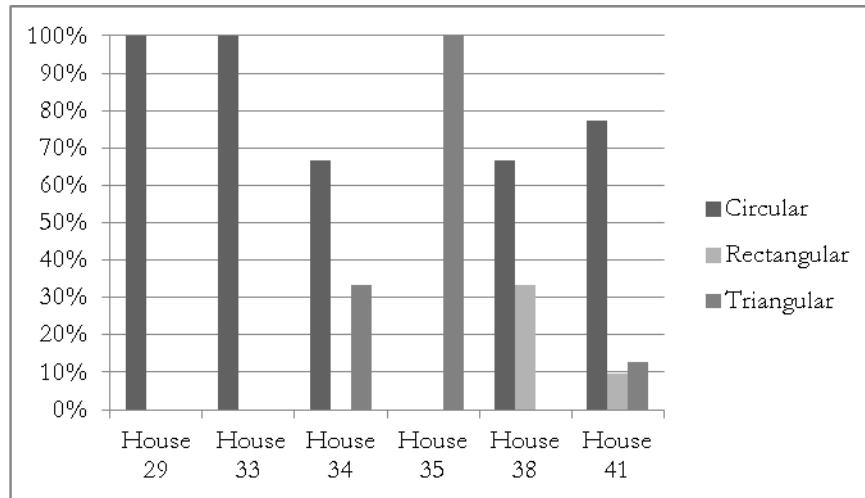


Figure 40: Relative frequencies of the various shapes of suspension holes on knife handles per house (PaJs-2)

Some specimens in Houses 34 and 41 had incised decoration that was very idiosyncratic (plate 9: 34A; plate 11: 41G; plate 13: 41X). These marks occur on two flensing knives in Houses 34 and 41 and on one small whittling knife. On the former, the decoration is geometrical, including the typical inverted Y pattern, also commonly found on harpoon heads, but for the latter, the decoration is figurative. It represents a caribou hunting scene. On one side there is one man in a kayak, one caribou, one man standing and shooting an arrow and one *inukshuk* – a man-like construction used to direct caribou herds in a specific direction. On the other side, three caribou without antlers and two men in a kayak are

depicted. These figures are not centred; some of them appear almost on the edge of the handle, at a very uncomfortable place for carving. This suggests that this knife handle was probably refurbished. This caribou hunting scene represents the drive hunting technique, where men direct a caribou herd in a given direction in order to set up an ambush. The herd could also be directed into a river, towards deep water areas, where they become slow moving targets for hunters waiting in their kayaks. This is a practice mostly done by Inuit living on the continent such as Innuinait and Inuit of Kivalliq region (Arima 1984: 449; Damas 1984: 398). The presence of such a scene on a knife in *karigi* 41 is intriguing. It indicates the value given to such animal and hunting activity, and/or the people who practise it. It is possible that some hunters from Qariaraqyuk were travelling to the continent in the autumn, during the season of caribou hunting, in order to provide the community with caribou pelts. Such pelts were highly valued, as they are the warmest of all animal fur, and used for clothing and bedding. Caribou also provided the precious sinew used for sewing. These materials were locally scarce, and also had a great exchange value, since they were only available through travelling and hunting/trading efforts. One could possibly add a production value to it, since such caribou hunting technique was not the speciality of hunters at Qariaraqyuk, and maybe the knowledge and skill required to practise it was considered special (Helms 1993: 153-154), hence their presence on a personal knife in the *karigi* (see also Whitridge 2013).

The final observations about knife handles at Qariaraqyuk concern the entire assemblage. Many fragments were either broken or deliberately cut, and then refurbished, more than any other artefact class included in the present study. This means that a high level

of care was awarded to these personal objects. They would not simply be thrown away and replaced when broken, even though this would have been technically simpler to do. It seems that, instead, men were attached to their knives and repaired them systematically when broken. As we will see shortly, they often had metal blades for more than hunting equipment. There is an obvious functional reason for this, since metal was more efficient than stone for carving bone and antler, and was used extensively by Thule Inuit men on Somerset Island to make their various tools (Blaylock 1980). However, since metal is an exotic material, owning a knife with a metal blade was also a sign of socio-economic success (Whitridge 2004). Taken all together, these criteria and uses make these knife handles very important tools for men. They are generally very idiosyncratic, but always within design norms. There is no sharp design pattern between houses, as for harpoon heads or arrowheads. The only actual ‘pattern’ is the augmentation of variability, from Houses 34 and 38 to *karigi* 41.

D. *Ulu* handles

To begin with, there is no clear pattern in the distribution of *ulu* types (small, medium-size multi-task and large) among the houses (see Table 17 and Figure 43). Only two patterns of other stylistic elements were found, grouping Houses 29, 33 and 41 together, and Houses 34 and 38. However, these patterns are not as sharp and complementary as with other artefact classes such as harpoon heads and arrowheads. *Ulu* handles, like men’s knife handles in general, are rather idiosyncratic; their design is more linked to the people who used them – the size of their hands, the stylistic and ergonomic preferences of the women, the tasks they were meant for, and eventually the carved ‘signature’ of the maker. In

addition, the function of knife handles is simpler than harpoon heads, in that the technological rules to follow when one carves them are very simple, compared to hunting weapons that needed to be projected a certain distance, to penetrate the skin and blubber layer of animals, to remain in the prey and eventually cause its death. For these objects, a small design mistake could annihilate its total efficiency. For knife handles, the technological rules for their design were less complicated and more flexible. These criteria all taken together are responsible for the highly variable nature of these knife handle assemblages.

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
Small	1	1	4	1	1	9
Medium	3		2		2	5
Large	1	1		1	3	1
Total	5	2	6	2	6	15

Table 17: Occurrence of ulu types per house (PaJs-2)

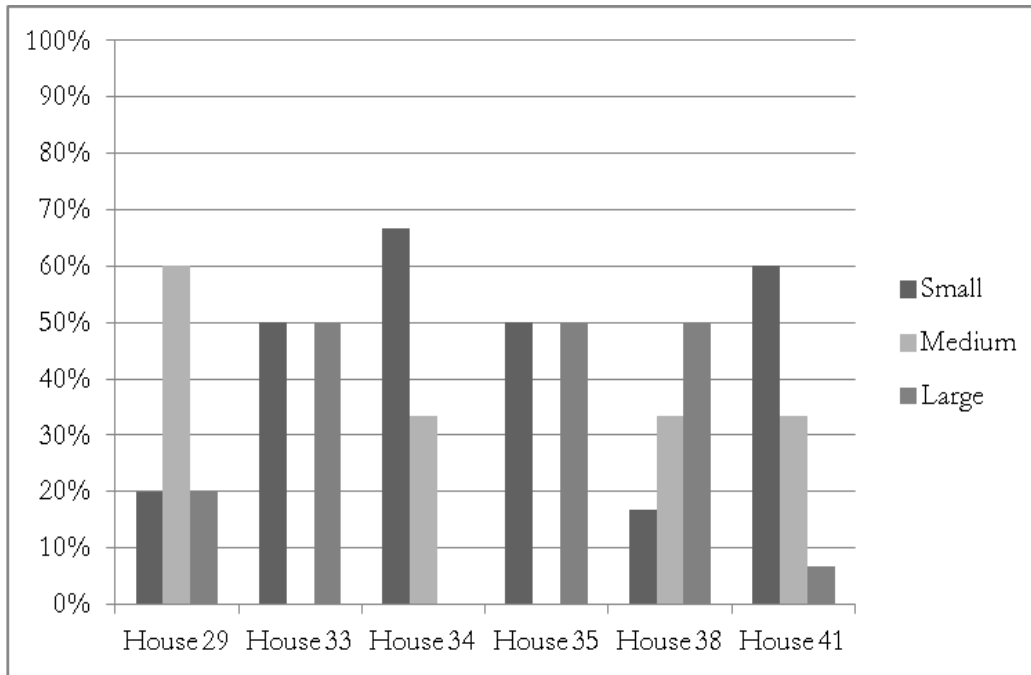


Figure 41: Relative frequencies of ulu types per house (PaJs-2)

The first stylistic correspondence between *ulu* handles occurs between Houses 29, 33 and 41 which contained medium-sized multi-task and small *uluit* with a trapezoid shape (plate 14: 29A, 29B, 29C, 33A; plate 15: 41F, 41J; see Table 18 and Figure 42). This shape, with the width at the hand grip larger than at the blade is particularly efficient for small and detailed movements or cuts, and accommodating for the palm of the hand. This design also requires more skill and probably more time to make, in order to achieve the symmetry for

the two angular sides of the handle. The three specimens of the medium-size category in House 29 have this shape, with one showing a unique triangular hole to accommodate the finger.

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
Trapezoid	3	1				4
Curved	2	1		1	4	
Rectangular			1			7
Semi-circular			5	1	2	4
Total	5	2	6	2	6	15

Table 18: Occurrence of ulu handle shapes per house (PaJs-2)

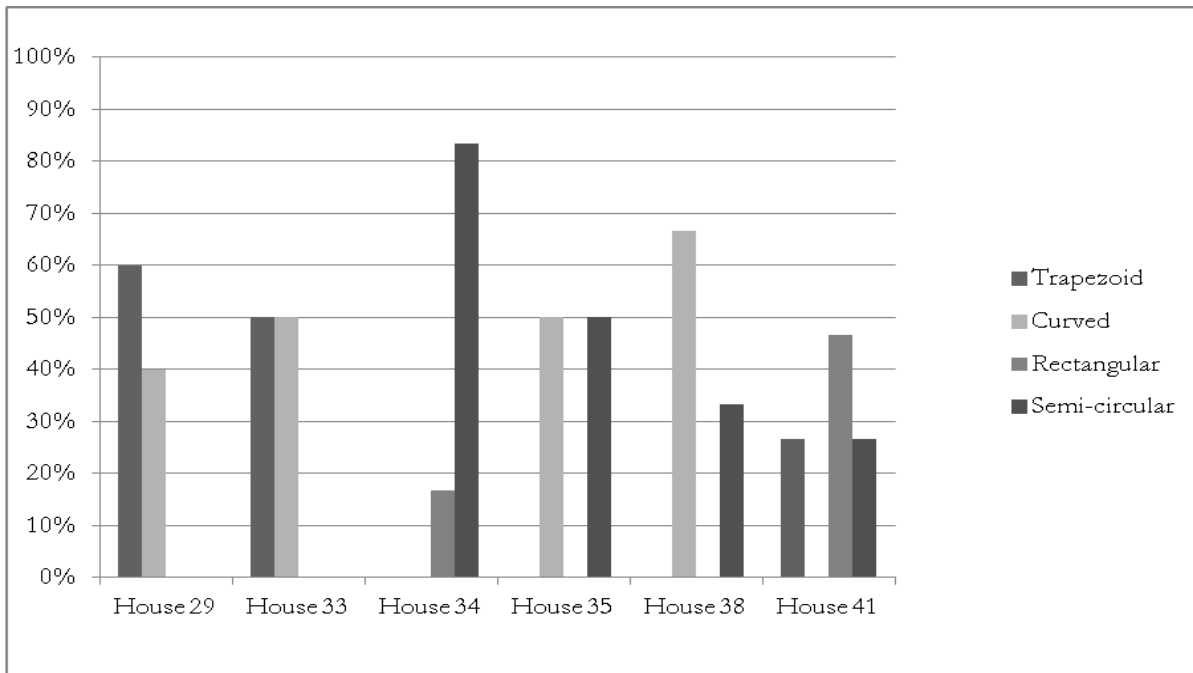


Figure 42: Relative frequencies of ulu handle shapes per house (PaJs-2)

In the other Houses 34 and 38, the small and medium categories of *ulu* handles were usually semi-circular, and/or rectangular, and made in a more expedient way. There was only one possible exception in House 38, where a specimen of the medium size category is somewhat half-circular on one side, and trapezoidal on the other. I did not consider it as being a fully trapezoidal style, based on its comparison with the other houses.

Houses 34 and 38 also had a correspondence in the presence of medium-size handles without holes to accommodate the finger (see Table 19 and Figure 43). House 41 also has this style, but I considered it as a preform that was abandoned because the blade slot snapped before it was finished; it looks unused and may have been intended to have a hole in it. The handles without holes are semi-circular and rectangular. House 35 only yielded a small and crudely-made *ulu* handle, which is consistent with the short term occupation of the dwelling. No stylistic correspondence could be made with any other houses.

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
Without hole	2	1	6	2	5	10
Round hole		1			1	
Elongated hole	2					5
Triangular hole	1					
Total	5	2	6	2	6	15

Table 19: Occurrence of ulu handle hole designs per house (PaJs-2)

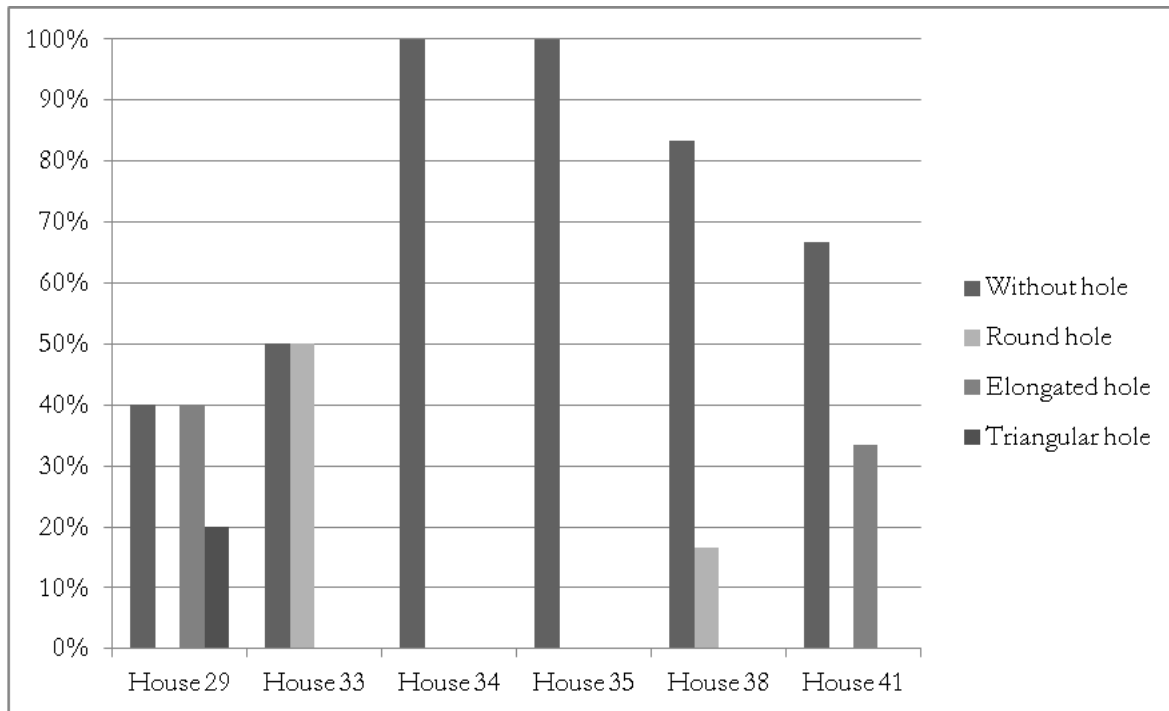


Figure 43: Relative frequencies of ulu handle holes per house (PaJs-2)

In terms of raw materials, the only pattern found is linked to one design element: the presence or absence of a hole in the medium-size category of handles (see Figure 44). 89% of multi-task *ulu* handles with holes were made of whale bone and 75% of the ones without a hole were made of antler. The two other categories are divided, at 40% and 60% – the larger ones being 60% whale bone and the smaller ones 60% antler. This aligns with the qualities and properties of each material. Whale bone allows for more robust objects, and its

homogenous density, compared to antler which has a porous centre, is more suitable for carving a hole in a handle with smoothly polished and solid contours.

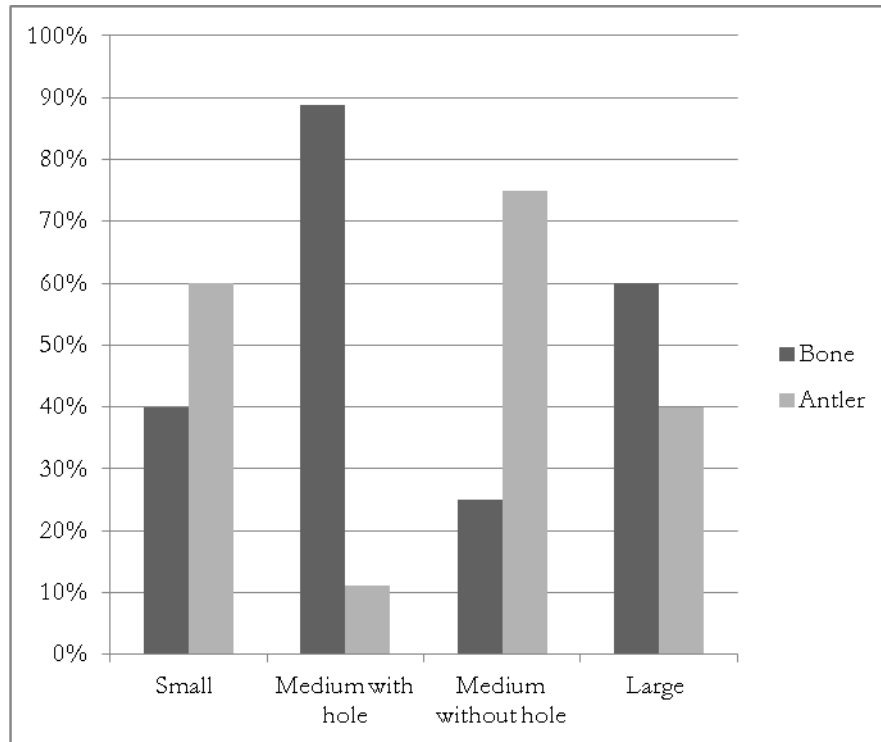


Figure 44: Relative frequencies of raw materials per ulu handle type (PaJs-2)

E. Locally scarce material, exotic material, ornaments, amulets and communal artefacts

As Whitridge noted (1999a: 252-278), ornaments and amulets were not only found in whaling households. This led him to conclude that the primary axis of social differentiation, i.e. the whaling and exotic material trading networks, was crosscut by other axes, identified as ritual expertise, geographical knowledge and wealth of scarce materials. He argued that these different axes provided scope for resistance to, and negotiation of, imputed social status; heterarchy thus tempered hierarchy at Qariaraqyuk (ibid: 333). Effectively, some forms of ornaments and amulets were found in every house. But in some, they were found

in a higher frequency and they were made with greater skill and/or exotic materials.

	House 29	House 33	House 34	House 35	House 38	House 41
Bear canine	6	4	3	3	14	31
Seal/fox/dog tooth	2	6	5	1	34	22
Chain					3	5
Bead	1		1	1	10	3
Pendant			2	1	7	1
Labret	1				1	
Brow band/bracelet				2	5	3
Comb/comb tooth		1	3		5	3
Button		1				6
Sewing paraphernalia				3	2	4
Drum element	1				2	
Animal/human effigies	1	1	1	1	4	4
Amulet/Amulet box		3	3		2	1
Gaming piece	1			2	6	18
Fish lure	3				1	
Total	19	16	18	14	96	101
% of ornaments ritual and communal artefacts per total house assemblage	6%	4%	2%	10%	5%	4%

Table 20: Occurrence of ornaments, ritual and communal objects per house (PaJs-2)

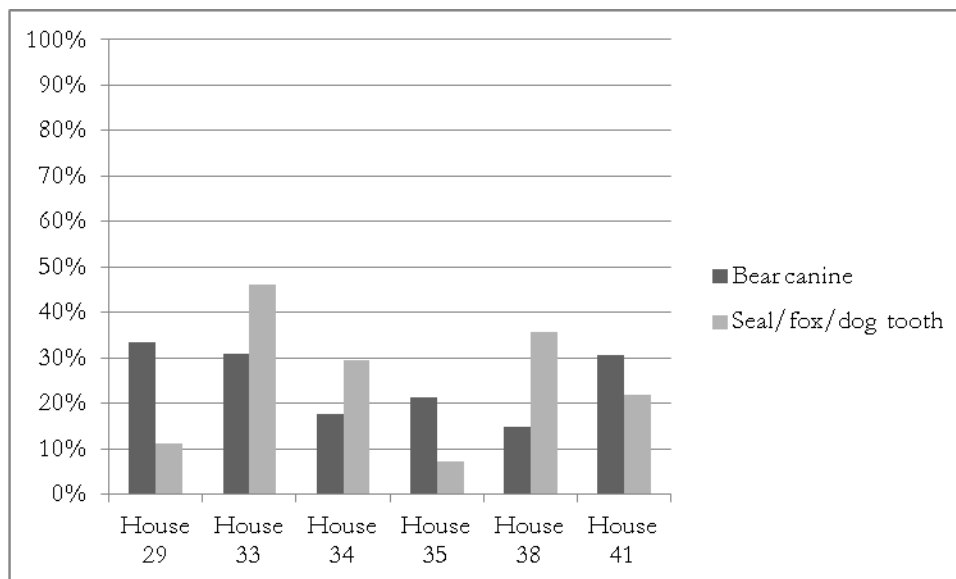


Figure 45: Relative frequencies of animal tooth pendants per house (PaJs-2)

Drilled animal canines such as those from fox, dog, seal and bear are the most common, and their relative frequencies for each house are somewhat similar (see Table 20 and Figure 45). Different types of animal effigies were found in dwellings 29, 35, 38 and 41 (Figure 46). House 29 had a cord fastener made of ivory which was carved into a bear head, with additional geometric patterns at the neck, giving the impression that the bear wears an ornamented parka (plate 16: 29H). This house also held two very finely made ivory lures and one preform, in the shape of a small fish (plate 16: 29F, 29G). Though the form of these objects is obviously technological, to attract bigger fish, their realisation speaks for the talent of the carver and the time and care invested in such fishing implements. This echoes the particular and constant care with which the other hunting implements of this house were made, in comparison with the corresponding assemblages in the other houses. House 33 had

an ivory harpoon finger-rest made in the shape of a human being with clothing-like incised decoration on it (plate 17: 33C). House 34 had a waterfowl figurine with a lateral gouged perforation slit on the thorax, reminding us of animal effigies attached to the side of ceremonial bowls used in whaling ceremonies among Inuit in Northern Alaska (Smithsonian Institution, Alaska Native Collections⁵⁵) (plate 17: 34C). House 38 held a toggle carved in the shape of a bear head, similar to that of House 29 in that it has some decorative elements that evoke the neck of a parka (plate 19: 38A). A very fine seal drag handle made of whale bone was carved in the shape of a seal. The representation closely resembles the ringed seal species (plate 19: 38B). This house also contained two whale effigies, probably whaling amulets (photos not available). *Karigi* 41 contained a small female effigy or miniature made of ivory, exquisitely made. The shape evokes the typical wooden dolls played with by little girls, but this one is much smaller. It is not impossible that it may have been a small figurine for play, but it could also have been an amulet for an adult (plate 21: 41P). *Karigi* 41 also yielded an animal effigy pendant, probably an ermine (plate 21: 41Q).

⁵⁵ <http://alaska.si.edu/browse.asp> (accessed July 26th 2013)

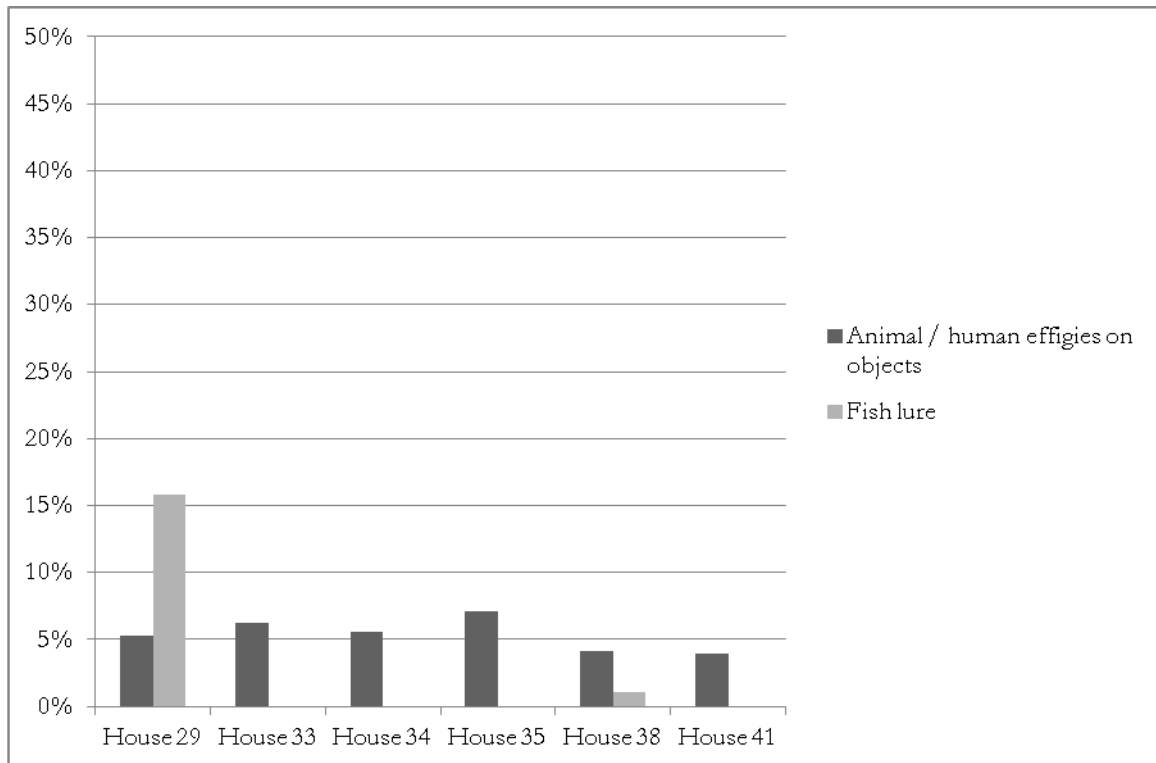


Figure 46: Relative frequencies of animal/human effigies on objects per house (PaJs-2)

Other types of ornaments (beads, pendants, bracelets, brow bands and combs) and amulets occurred only in some houses, in greater quantity in the whaling neighbourhood (Figure 47). House 38 yielded the most impressive assemblage, both in terms of quantity and quality, in addition to the 35 drilled animal canines. This house also held four ivory pendants that were probably used as clothing ornaments, all different but having the general shape of a drop (plate 18: 38D, 38E, 38F, 38G). Nine beads were found in this house, again of all different shapes and material, such as bone, amber, green nephrite and ivory (plate 18: 38I, 38J, 38K, 38L, 38M, 38N, 38S, 38T). Two brow bands and one bracelet made of copper, as well as two fragments of such ornaments made of ivory also made this house unique (plate 18: 38O, 38P, 38Q). These body ornaments are very common among Inuit, across Canada.

Four ivory combs were also found, all different, two with incised decoration (plate 19: 38C, 38D, 38E, 38F). Three of these are perforated and were probably worn as body or clothing ornaments, aside from being essentially used to remove lice from the hair. Two possible amulets were found in this house: a complete set of articulated caribou incisors and a quillwork object (no photo available).

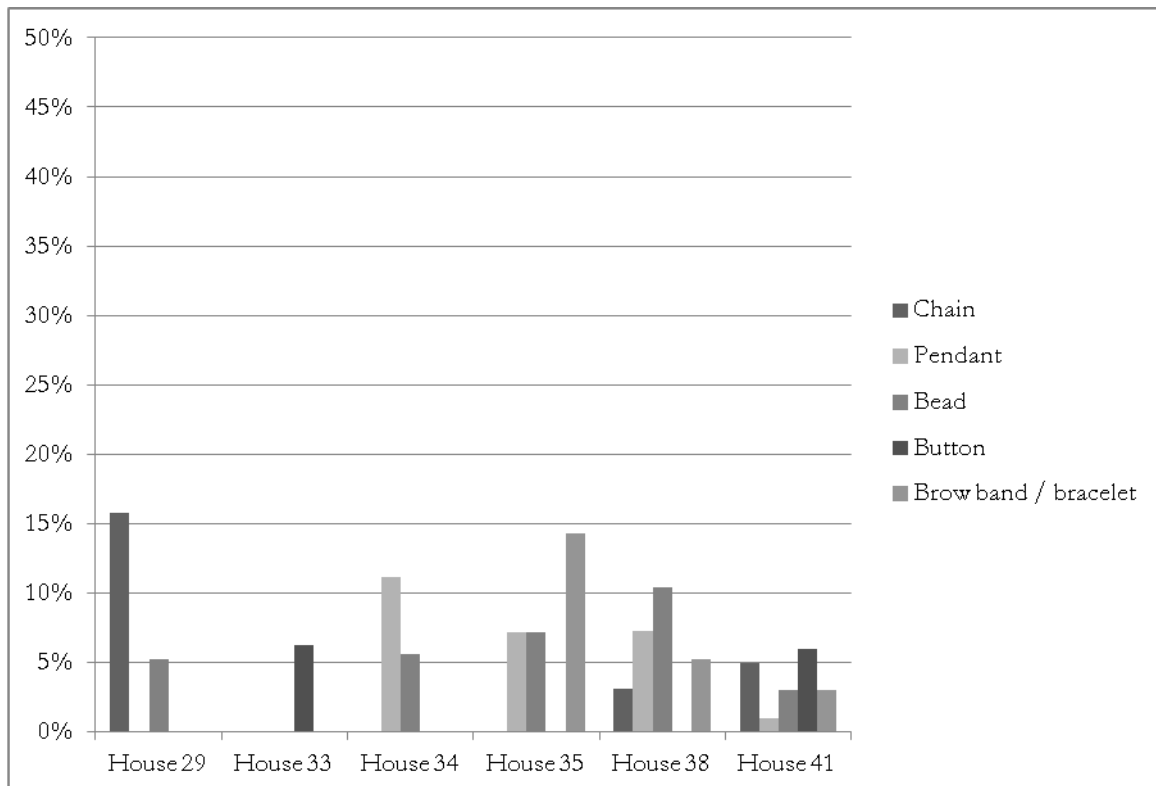


Figure 47: Relative frequencies of body and clothing ornaments per house (PaJs-2)

In terms of sewing paraphernalia, one possible needle-case fragment made of bird bone and a nicely made thimble holder fragment were found in this house (plate 19: 38K). This assemblage indicates the presence of wealthy women for whom ornamenting their bodies and clothing and/or those of their family members was very important. One pendant-like object found in House 38 was identified by Whitridge (2012, personal

communication) as a possible labret (plate 18: 38R). Finally, three ivory chains – one complete, one fragmented and one preform – were found in this house (plate 18: 38A, 38B, 38C).

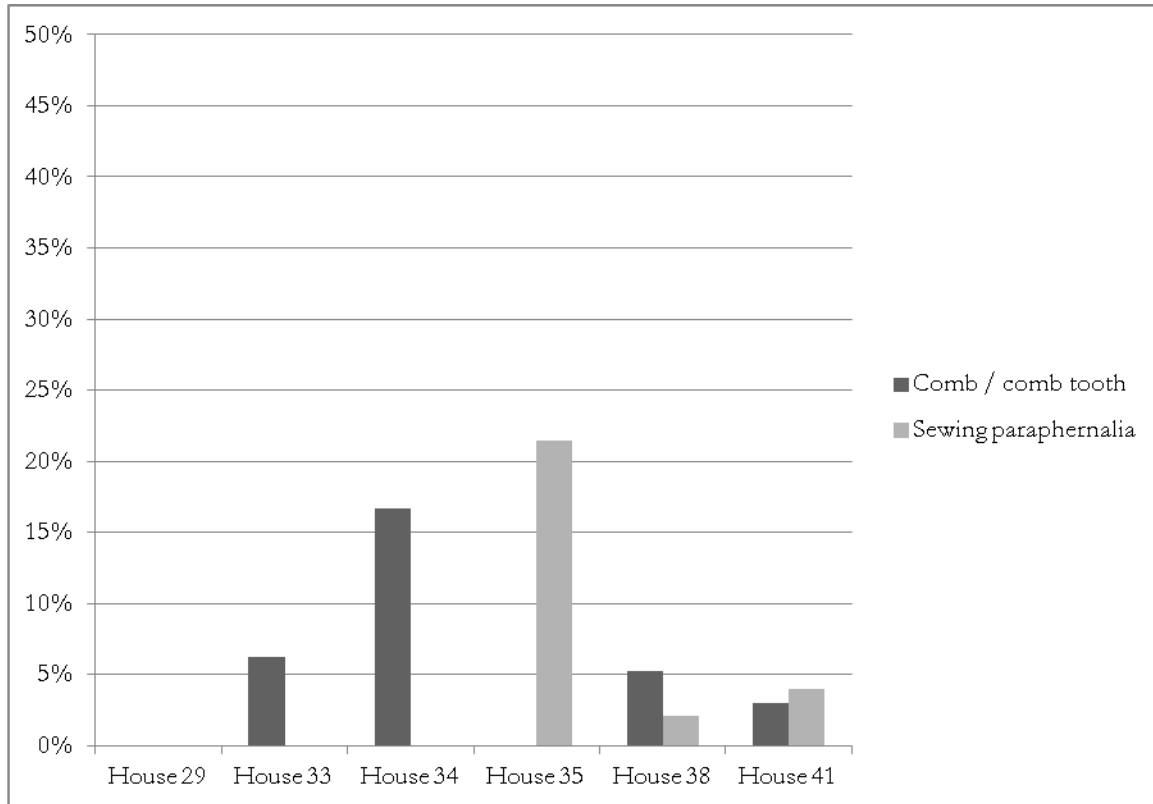


Figure 48: Relative frequencies of women's combs and sewing paraphernalia per house (PaJs-2)

If we look at *karigi* 41, the same type of ornaments and amulets were found, but a little less spectacular, except for one ivory chain (plate 21: 38A). For the rest, i.e. drop pendants, beads of various materials such as amber, bone and ivory, brow bands and bracelets made of bone and antler, and one ivory comb were also found in *karigi* 41, but in less quantity (plate 21). Interestingly, the comb has the exact same shape and very similar decoration to one found in House 38, but with a central perforation, the same kind of

gouged perforation as another comb found in House 38. In terms of combs, therefore, there are very strong correspondences between these two houses. A few crudely made ivory buttons for clothing were also part of this assemblage. One needle-case preform and a thimble holder, both made of ivory, were also found in House 41. Finally, House 41 contained a decorated wooden amulet box (no photo available).

The two non-whaling Houses, 29 and 35, also stand out for this category of artefact, each for a different aspect. House 35 contained the most finely made ivory drop pendant of the entire site assemblage, in addition to one amber bead, fragments of one decorated brow band and one bracelet, both made of antler, as well as two ivory needle-case toggles. One is a thimble holder, the same shape as the ones found in Houses 38 and 41 (plate 17: 35C). There is also one possible needle-case made of bird bone. This house also yielded one amber bead. Given the very small sample size of this house for all classes of artefacts, the presence of these ornaments is intriguing. It indicates the wealthy and possible high status of its occupants, probably visitors from another village, as stated above, and indicates their participation in communal gatherings or ceremonies where body and clothing ornaments would have been worn and exhibited to the rest of the community. Spencer (1959: 157) observed among Alaskan Inuit that strangers to a community were somewhat suspect and sometimes subjected to various indignities by residents, unless they came to the group with fine clothes and beads. If they did this, they were treated considerably better, because only a man with definite kinship support could show off finery, and there would be hesitation to treat persons of obvious affluence roughly.

House 29 stands out, with three ivory chains – one preform, one exquisite complete specimen, and one very well-made fragment (plate 16: 29A, 29B). This indicates that some occupants of House 29 were experts in carving these ritualistic objects. Another special object found in this house is a round disk made of stone, perforated at the centre, with circular lines incised on one side and punctuated dots on the other. There was also a possible labret in House 29. This ornament and amulet assemblage in House 29 is consistent with our earliest observation about the carving skills of its occupants. In addition, it indicates the participation of the latter in ceremonial and ritual activities with the rest of the community. Effectively, the presence of ivory chains in House 29 intersects with their distinctiveness observed for other classes of artefacts, notably harpoon heads. This assemblage indicates that the occupants of House 29, otherwise distinct in terms of their hunting, travelling and settlement pattern strategies, were included in the community on the basis of rituals and ceremonies.

The two remaining households, the whaling Houses 33 and 34, were the least spectacular in terms of ornaments, but stand out for the presence of amulets. The latter are essentially pieces of animal hide and fur sewn together with sinew, either in the shape of a belt or rolled up in a bundle. These amulets were probably sewn on or within clothing, to help the wearer in their endeavours. House 34 also yielded a wooden amulet box. This high occurrence of amulets is consistent with the suggested involvement of these houses' occupants with whaling activities, notably the dangerous hunt itself that would have required spiritual support through such amulets. In terms of ornaments, besides drilled animal canines found in the two houses and the seagull ornament found in House 34, Houses 33

and 34 only contained a few ivory comb teeth, one crude ivory button in House 33, and in House 34 one bead made of stone and a perforated disk made of stone resembling that of House 29 (plate 16: 29D), but more crudely made and undecorated (plate 17: 34A). The relatively poor assemblage of ornaments in these two whaling households can be simply linked to small sample size, in relation to Houses 38 and 41. However, if we compare the sample size of these two houses with that of Houses 29 and 35, the relative absence or presence of ornaments in these four houses confirms the suggestion that there is no direct correlation or causation between participation in whaling activities and possessing and wearing personal ornaments. This confirms once again the complexity of social relations at Qariarkyuk that is not solely centred on whaling activities, but also on complementary sources of wealth and social status.

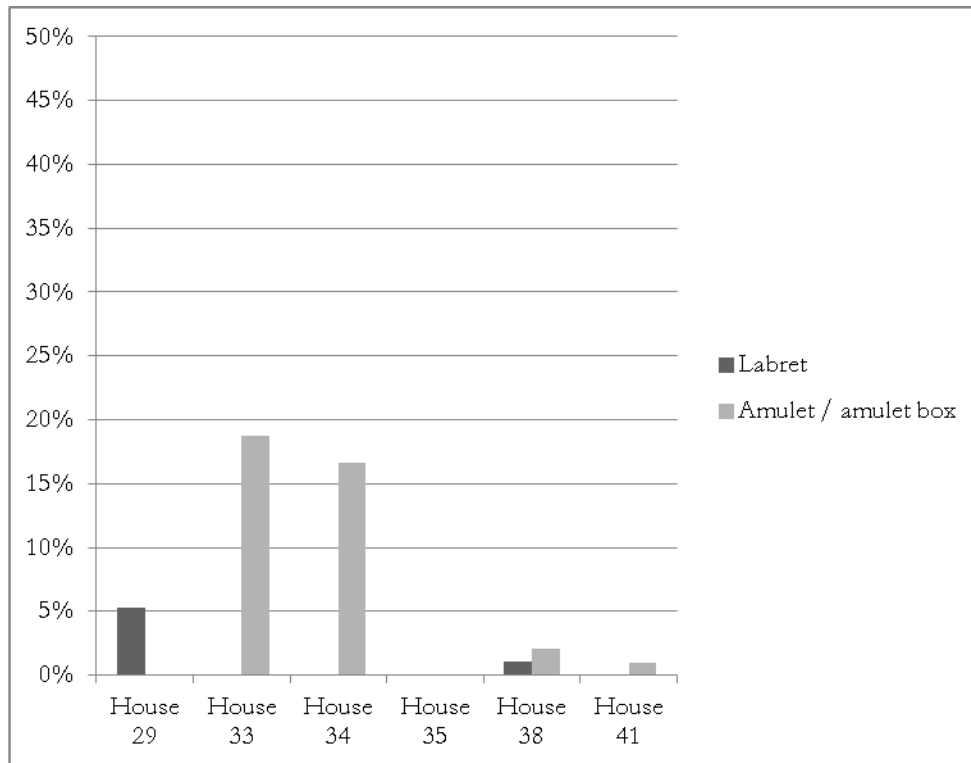


Figure 49: Relative frequencies of amulets and labrets per house (PaJs-2)

The same can be said about communal games. Small bone and antler plaques of slightly different shapes, sometimes decorated with incisions, were found in all houses, except House 33. In House 38, there was one specimen made of wood and one of baleen. In *karigi* 41, these plaques are very numerous, and also show the highest variability of shapes and decoration (plate 20). These pieces would have been used in a kind of gambling game (Mathiassen 1927a: 77). Their relative frequency is consistent with the general sample sizes of each dwelling, and of the function of *karigi* 41. Fragments of drum rim and/or handle were found only in Houses 29 and 41. Among Inuit, drumming is associated with singing, dancing, shamanistic rituals and various ceremonies. The uses of the drum are thus potentially variable, but one thing they have in common is the communal aspects of these

activities. The presence of drum fragments in *karigi* 41 is thus not surprising. However, a piece of drum rim found in House 29 confirms again that participation in communal activities and eventually ceremonies and rituals was not limited to whaling households at Qariaraqyuk.

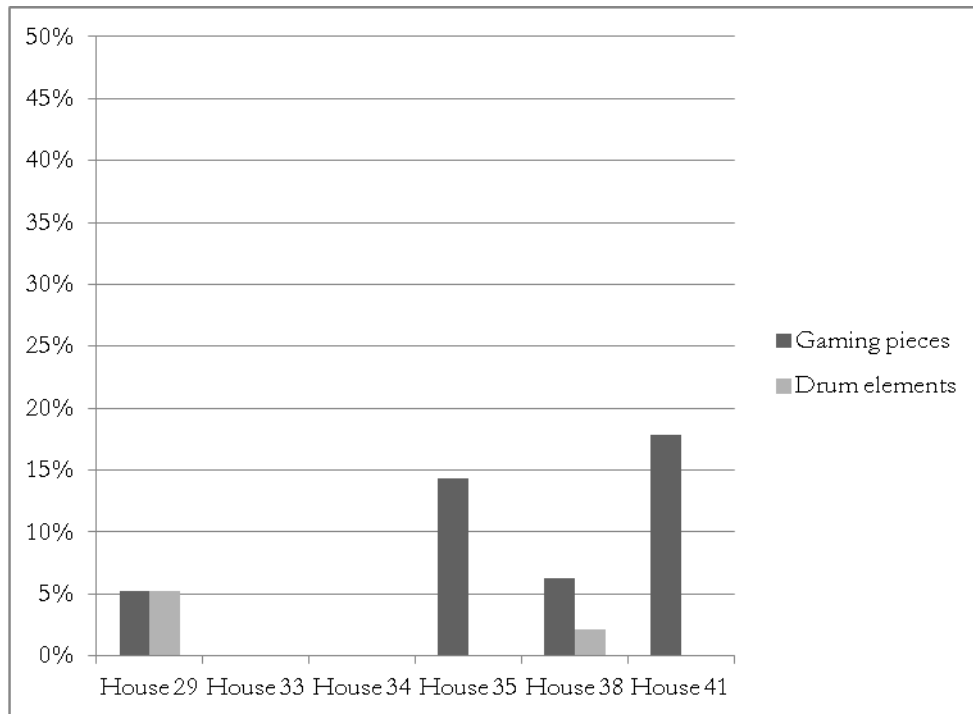


Figure 50: Relative frequencies of communal objects per house (PaJs-2)

The distribution of exotic materials per house is shown in Figure 51. Results show that exotic materials are more abundant in whaling households (as previously noted by Whitridge 1999). Copper was more abundant in *karigi* 41 and Houses 38 and 34. Iron is the hallmark of House 33. Blade slot widths of various tools were also measured in order to assess what kind of blade they were designed for, metal or stone (Whitridge 1999a: 260-270, 2004). For those, the kind of metal could not be determined, but the highest rates of metal were found in Houses 33 and 35, as well as House 38 (Figure 52). Metal blades were mostly

reserved for men's implements such as hunting gear and knives. In general, men were the greatest consumers of metal, mostly used in tool manufacturing, and hunting to a lesser extent (Figure 53). Women at Qariaraqyuk used far less metal, mostly in ornaments such as brow bands and bracelets, rather than tools. Their use of metal was not centred on the same material qualities and properties as men's. Men preferred it for its hardness, sharpness and relative easiness to shape, while women preferred it for its colour and brightness. Based on ethnographic analogy with Inuit and on his own analyses of material culture, Whitridge (1999, 2002) concluded that there was a differential gendered use of metal at Qariaraqyuk (Table 21, Figure 54). There was a privileged access to the most precious trade goods (here metal) by men and whaling households. Within these whaling households, women and men deployed their preciousities in different areas of their life, competing for different kinds of socio-cultural capitals. The women's sewing toolkits and body ornaments are where the precious materials were used, whereas for men it corresponds to metal-bladed tools, notably knives, harpoon heads and arrowheads. These objects correspond to key activities in the personal development of these men and women, as well as the construction of their social lives.

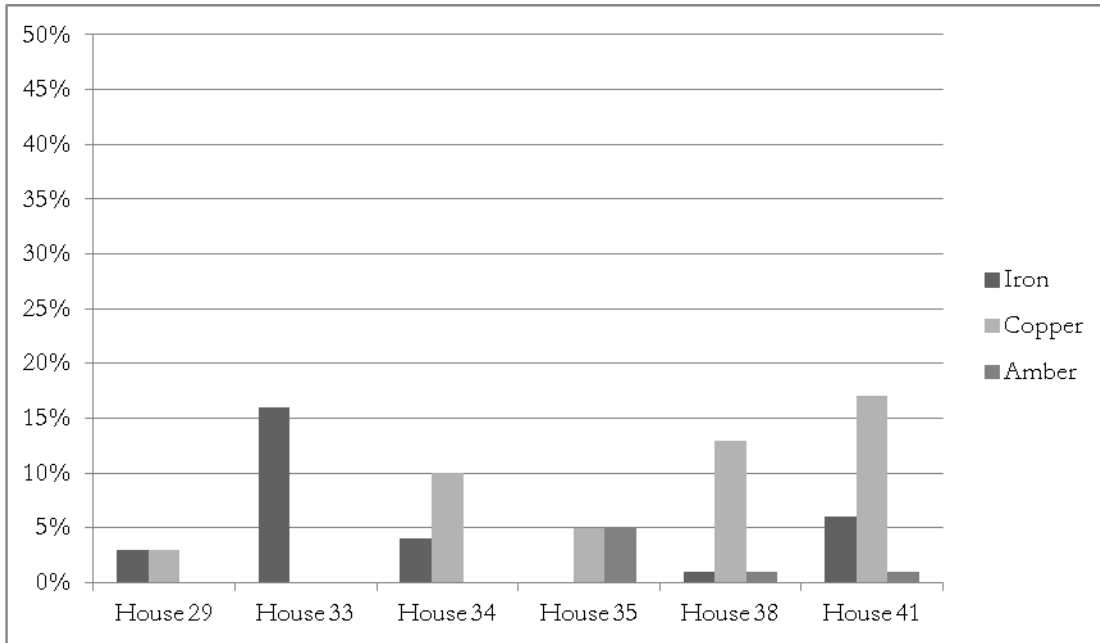


Figure 51: Distribution of exotic material per house (PaJs-2)

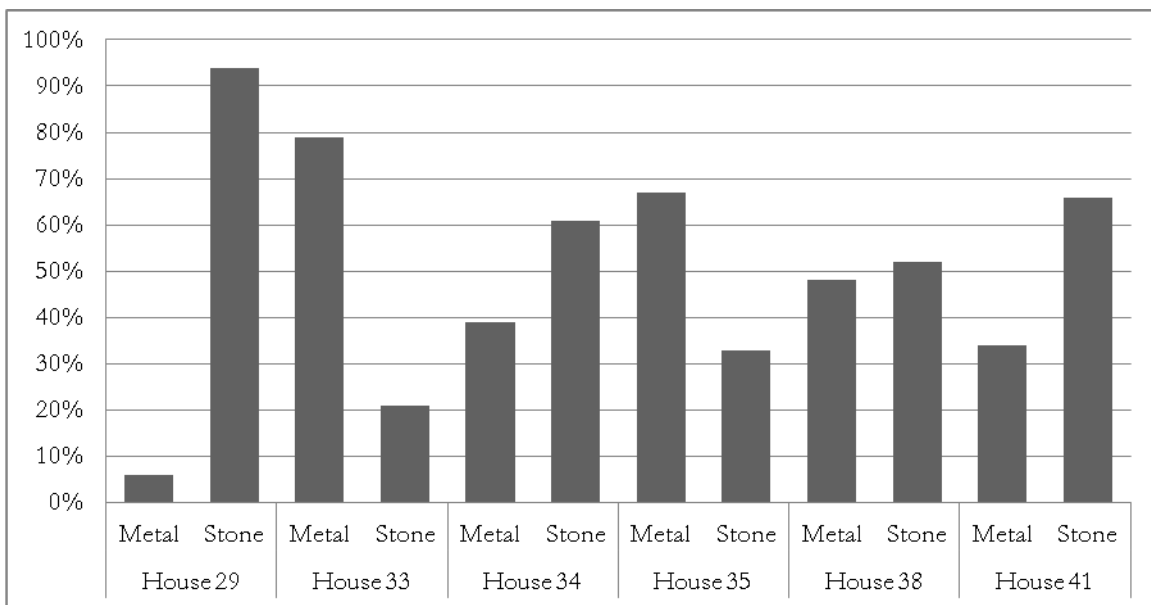


Figure 52: Relative frequencies of blade material per house, inferred from slot width (PaJs-2)

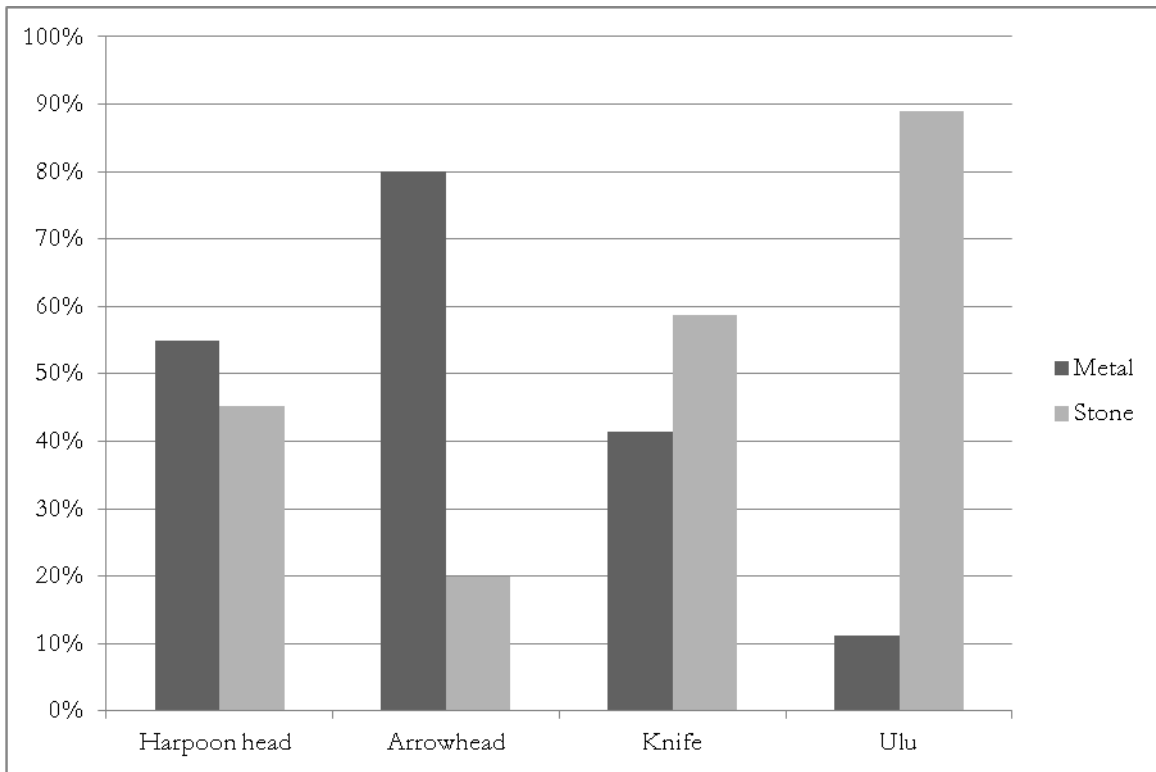


Figure 53: Relative frequencies of blade material per artefact class, inferred from slot width (PaJs-2)

		Iron	Copper
Women's artefacts	Bracelet		1
	Brow band		2
	Needle		2
	Scraper		1
	Ulu blade	3	2
	Total	3	8
Men's artefacts	Adze bit	2	1
	Arrowhead blade	1	
	Baleen shave blade	2	
	Knife blade	9	1
	Engraving tool bit	2	1
	Harpoon head blade		1
	Rivet		2
	Total	16	6
Gender neutral or uncertain	Blade	2	27
	Slotted object	1	
	Metal nugget		5
	Metal sheet		1
	Fragment	1	28
Total	4	61	

Table 21: Differential use of metal based on gender (after Whitridge 2002)

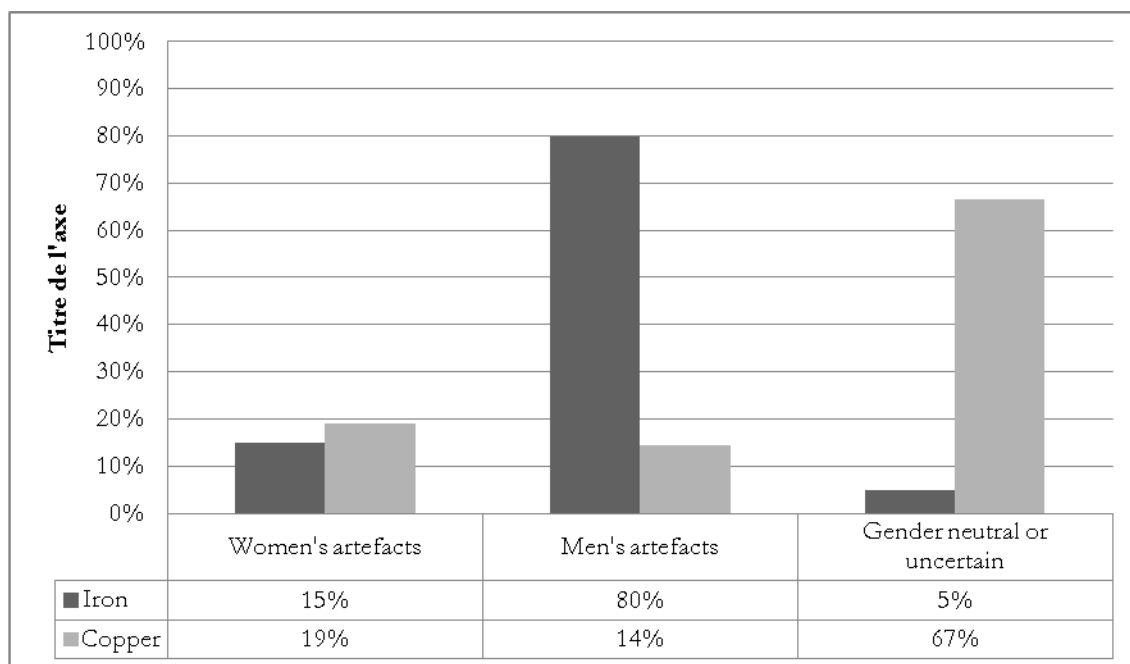


Figure 54: Differential use of metal based on gender (after Whitridge 2002)

As for the locally scarce materials ivory and horn, they were more evenly distributed among households (Figure 55). Musk ox teeth made into probable pendants and horn surviving as fragments and snow knives were found almost equally in each house. Ivory seemed to have been preferred for small, detailed and/or decorated objects, maximising the following qualities: its density, homogeneity – fine-grained, allowing the carving of very small shapes and details, and its bright colour. For these reasons, it seems to have been preferred for clothing and body ornaments, combs, needle-case paraphernalia, figurines, bag handles, toggles and various small parts of hunting equipment, especially those with decorations and animal effigies. There was no marked difference in the kind of uses of ivory between households, other than quantity. Its frequency was higher in Houses 29 and 38, confirming again the possibility of achieving socio-economic distinction both within and outside the whaling network.

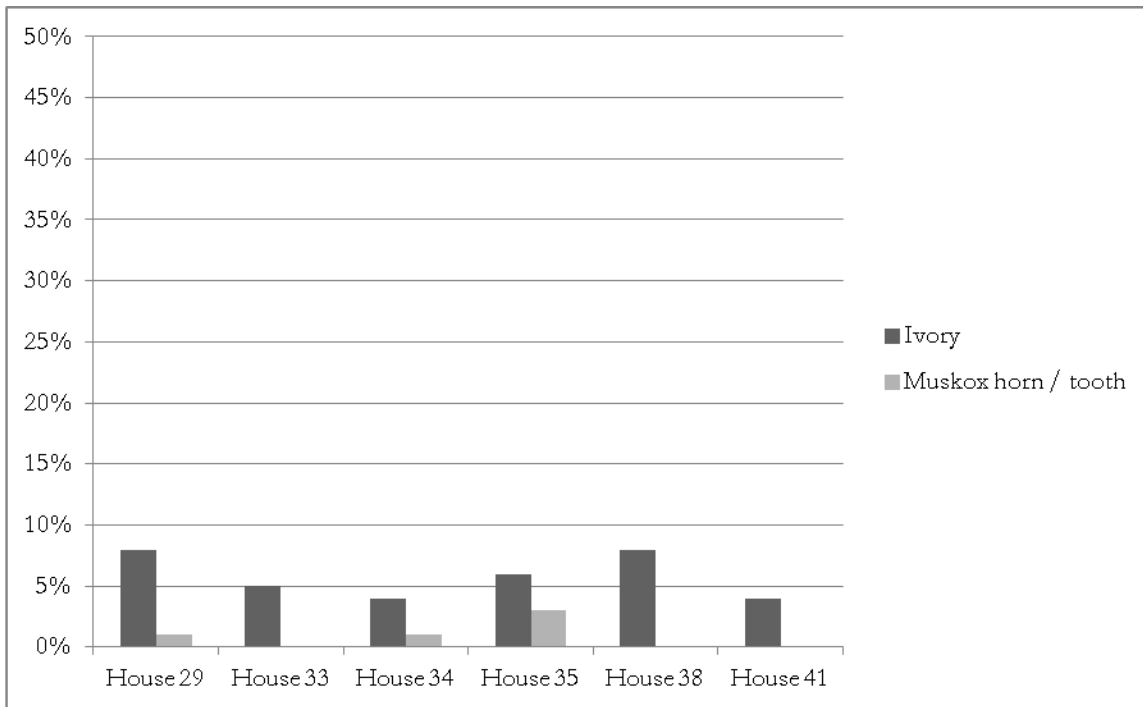


Figure 55: Relative frequencies of locally scarce materials per house (PaJs-2)

To sum up, locally scarce and exotic materials were both indicators of social distinction at Qariaraqyuk. Men in whaling households were the greatest consumers of copper and iron, mainly for tool manufacture and hunting activities. Women in the whaling House 38 and the non-whaling household in House 35 – the probable high status visiting family – had the most abundant clothing and body ornaments, as well as combs and sewing paraphernalia made of copper, amber and ivory. The high frequency of ivory in House 29 was divided among the men’s and women’s material realms, with a slight tendency towards masculine use – with one harpoon head preform, three fish lures and one labret. These results are indicative of the relative highest wealth of whaling households, visiting families

interacting with the whaling faction of the community and households engaged in complementary subsistence activities, travelling and trade with neighbouring groups.

10.8 Discussion

My analyses at Qariaraqyuk revealed a set of social relations between the houses that were excavated, and helped with understanding the various processes of social differentiation within the village. The ‘problematic’ results raised in previous studies on these matters were re-assessed in the light of Inuit knowledge and perspectives on material culture and social life. Knowing that social relations and differentiation among Inuit happen through the production and use of everyday life objects – and not just with ‘ritual paraphernalia’ and other special artefacts – allowed us a deeper understanding of the social dynamics in this site.

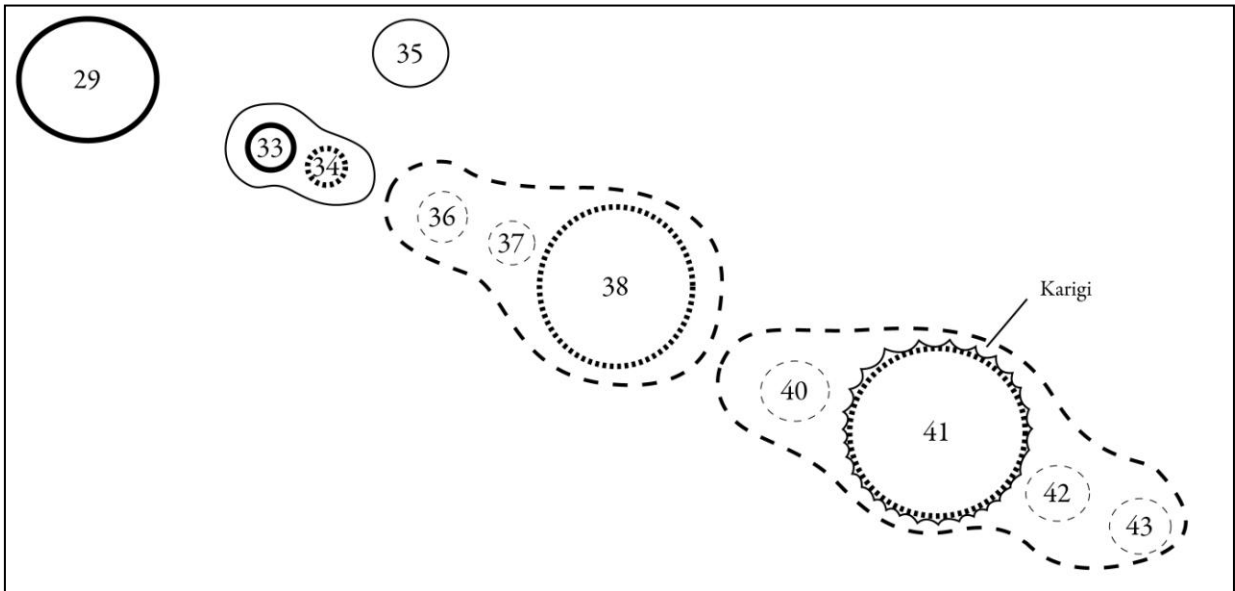


Figure 56: Diagram showing familial relations and social differentiation at Qariaraqyuk. Familial links between houses are represented by their contours, and differential wealth is shown in house size (the wealthier, the larger).

As shown in Figure 56, the stylistic comparisons of harpoon heads, arrowheads, knives and *ulu* handles between houses confirmed the presence of unrelated families in the same house groups (*upsiksui*). This corroborates Whitridge's suggestion of a great degree of social complexity at Qariaraqyuk, going beyond immediate family ties. Precisely, this was seen in the sharp stylistic differences between Houses 33 and 34 which are nevertheless in the same house group. Also, the stylistic connections between houses that are not in the same house groups (between Houses 29 and 33, and between Houses 34, 38 and 41) help us understand how these social relations and social distance were balanced with the settlement patterns.

Secondly, being aware of these social dynamics has provided a frame for re-interpreting some of the problems raised by Whitridge (1999a), regarding locally scarce materials, ritual paraphernalia and symbols of social rank. The fact that the non-whaling household in House 29 contained material signs of wealth and participation in communal/ritual life in the village has become less problematic, now that we know that the occupants of this house were related to the large whaling household in House 33, probably through kinship. Material signs of wealth and social status in the community are relatively high frequencies of locally scarce materials, ivory chain pendants, labrets, beads, gaming pieces, drum elements and extremely well-made tools of everyday life. These material elements confirm the important place that the occupants of House 29 had in the social life of the village, and their will to show it off, by wearing signs of wealth and participating in communal events. Whaling was not the main source of their status, but rather complementary subsistence activities, travel, and trade both within and outside the village.

As for House 35, stylistic analyses confirmed that its occupants were not originally from Qariaraqyuk. They were probably from the Western or High Arctic (harpoon head design showed a connection with Alaskan or Ellesmere Island groups), and came to Qariaraqyuk to build or reinforce social relations with the occupants. The Western and High Arctic are regions where the copper, iron and amber at Qariaraqyuk are most likely to have originated (Whitridge 1999a: 256). The material remains found in this house confirmed the regional and inter-regional network of social relations that Thule Inuit people formed during that time, centred on the accumulation of whale products and their exchange for exotic valuable material.

The occupants of Houses 29 and 35, their different kinds of material wealth and their different relations with the occupants of whaling households at Qariaraqyuk revealed that whaling activities were an important aspect of social complexity and differentiation in this village, but it was not the only one. As explained in the previous chapters, Inuit social life throughout the North American Arctic rests on a variety of sets of relations and partnerships, based on kinship, work collaboration, gender, trading, games, singing, drumming, shamanism, name relation and so forth. This is exactly what I observed through my material culture analyses at Qariaraqyuk – a social equilibrium, made of hierarchy, cross-cut by heterarchy, all based on social relations such as kinships and other kinds of partnerships.

As for the whaling households involved in these relations, our analyses revealed a very high level of interactions, of personal signatures on everyday life objects within a shared stylistic repertoire. As expected from the Inuit notion of art that I presented earlier,

originality was not the hallmark of these material affirmations of identity. Rather, I observed personal variations on the realm of culturally and socially valued designs, within and across the whaling households. This circumscribed variability reached a climax in the *karigi*, where men from different households would have met to make their tools, refurbish them, and organise rituals and communal activities, probably around the whaling theme. As we will see in the next two chapters, these social and material phenomena are also observed at Learmonth and Cape Garry.

11. Social networks at Learmonth (PeJr-1)

11.1 Introduction

The Learmonth site is a Thule Inuit bowhead whaling village located on Somerset Island. It is situated on a small southward-facing point of land on the north shore of Creswell Bay. It is surrounded by five other archaeologically known whaling villages north and south of Creswell Bay. The site contains remains of 78 structures, including 28 whale bone winter house ruins.

This site was excavated in 1961 by William Taylor and in 1976 by Allen McCartney. Excavation reports were published by Taylor and McGhee (1979: 8-48) and McCartney (1979: 289-292, 294). Artefact assemblages are currently kept at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau. A loan was obtained for artefacts included in this study, which were analysed and photographed in the archaeological laboratory of McGill University.

In this chapter, I first present a description of the site, with a focus on the settlement patterns, architecture and main content of the houses that were excavated. I then present the main lines of my material culture analyses, in relation to the settlement patterns and house architecture. Finally, I explain my analyses for each class of artefact, followed by a discussion of the implications of my conclusions for a general understanding of Thule Inuit social relations and differentiation at this site and from a regional point of view.

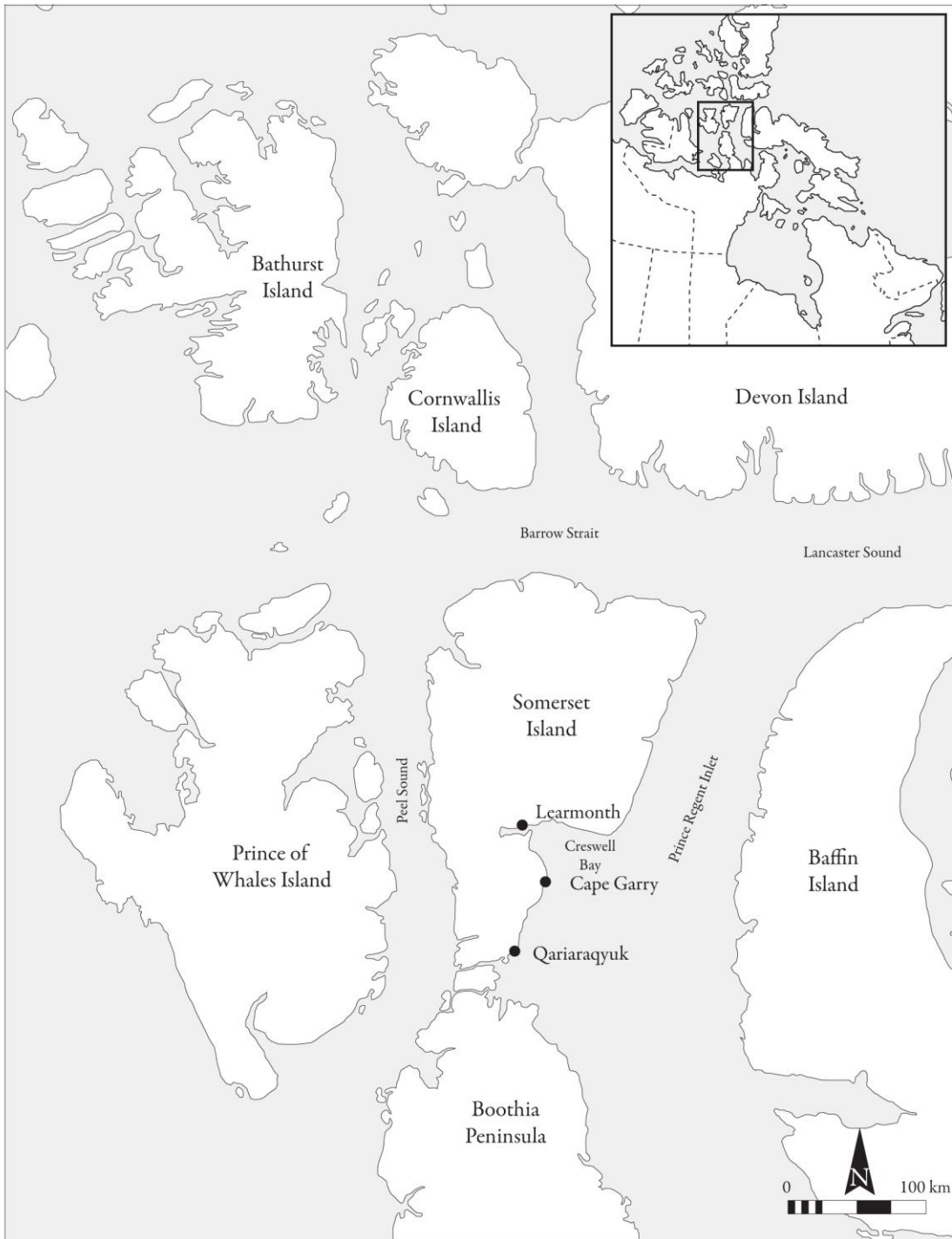


Figure 56: Map of the study region

11.2 Excavations and previous studies

The settlement pattern of this whaling village is somewhat similar to that of Qariaraqyuk, in that the semi-subterranean houses are aligned along beach ridges, and organised in groups (from 2 to 11 houses). The possibility that these groups might correspond with the Alaskan *upsiksui* (house groups), which provided memberships to whaling crews, depends on the presence of whaling households and *kariyit* in the said groups. The Learmonth site has not been previously analysed as extensively as Qariaraqyuk, especially in terms of zooarchaeological assemblages. Consequently, I identify whaling households and *upsiksui* mostly through architectural composition and complexity of the dwellings, occurrence of whaling gear and settlement patterns.

Five house groups were identified within the village, based on their localisation (Figure 57). A first row of 13 closely-set houses are crowded together along a beach ridge fronting the bay (Group 1). A second row of five houses extend east to west in the north-western part of the site, at about 13 metres elevation (Group 2). On the flatter land, between these two house rows rests a dried up pond and swampy area, a suitable source of sod for building winter houses. In this area are clusters of five (Group 3), three (Group 4) and two (Group 5) winter houses. 50 smaller house depressions are scattered throughout the site, some of which may have been remains of Thule Inuit dwellings for warmer seasons. Supposing that the winter houses at Learmonth were occupied simultaneously, and based on the criteria mentioned in the previous chapter⁵⁶, this village could have contained eight

⁵⁶ The evaluation is 7 to 8 persons per house, one hunter supporting 3-4 individuals, and 7-8 hunters per whaling crew.

whaling crews. However, looking at the settlement patterns, if we make the same evaluation but this time by house groups, the number of possible whaling crews is closer to 6 – three crews for group 1, one large crew (11 hunters) for groups 2 and 3, and one crew for group 4 (for a total of five crews).

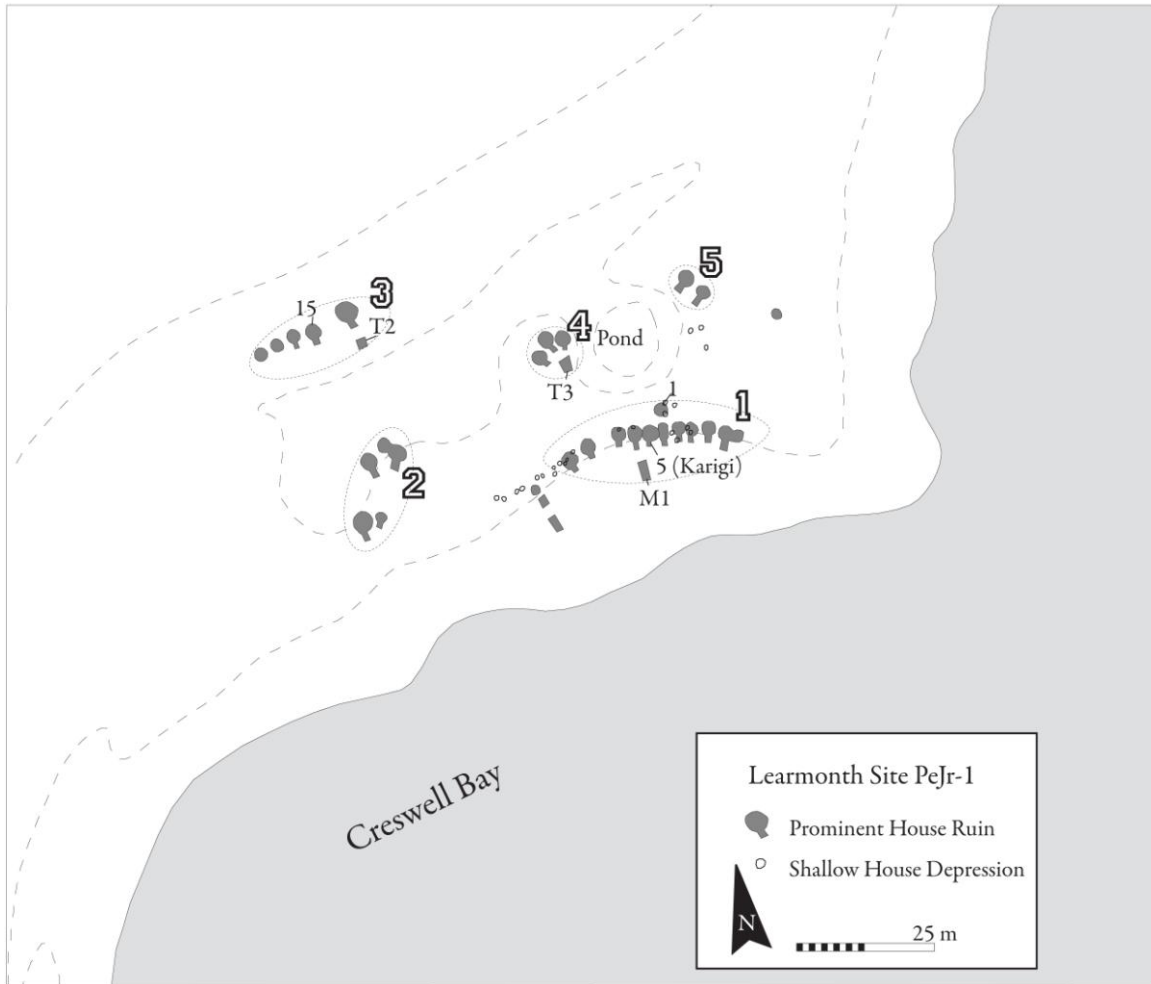


Figure 57: Learmonth PeJr-1 (after Taylor and McGhee 1979)

This suggestion has to be refined with the identification of whaling households and *kariyit* within the house groups. In what follows, I present the suggestions of previous research on these matters at Learmonth, which are also the point of departure for my material culture analyses.

The Learmonth site did not contain any ceremonial houses with architecture different from other households, as was seen with *kariji* 41 at Qariaraqyuk. However, Savelle (2013 personal communication) has suggested that some houses in Learmonth were used for

ceremonial or communal purposes, based on the inordinate amount of whale bones such as skulls, mandibles and maxillae in these houses' structures. Based on ethnographic analogy with North Alaskan Inuit, Patton and Savelle (2006) argued that the presence of whale crania elements in house construction had a spiritual significance, as the house was a symbol of the whale's body (Lowenstein 1993; Rainey 1947). An overabundance of whale crania in the construction of *umialiks*' households was also an indicator of their whaling success (Savelle 2000: 333). This criteria, used in conjunction with the occurrence of whaling gear found in the house remains and the excavated middens, enables us to identify which households participated in whaling activities: House 1, House 5 and the house adjacent to the latter (associated with Midden 1).

	House 1	House 5	Midden 1
Lance head	1	4	1
Float gear		1	1
Umiaq gear			1
Total assemblage	134	442	433

Table 22: Occurrence of whaling gear per house (PeJr-1)

As shown in Table 22, Houses 1, 5 and the house adjacent to the latter (associated with Midden 1) are the only excavated dwellings which yielded whaling gear. The quantities (total and relative) of these elements of hunting equipment are similar between the houses. Regarding the criteria of whale crania elements (skulls, mandibles and maxillae) in house architecture, Houses 1 and 5 stand out, compared to the others (Table 23). As for Houses 4 and 15, as we will see shortly, they show clear signs of social differentiation, but not necessarily based on whaling participation (similar to Houses 29 and 35 at Qariaraqyuk),

because they lack whaling gear, they have relatively less whale crania architectural elements and they are somewhat isolated from the core of the site.

	House 1	House 4	House 5	House 15
Skulls		2	2	
Mandibles and maxillae	73	54	118	29
Total	166	196	277	148
% cranial element	44%	29%	43%	20%

Table 23: Amount and relative frequencies of cranial elements in the house architecture (PeJr-1)

11.3 House descriptions

House 1 is situated directly behind the centre of the central row of the villages' winter houses. It has a typical Thule Inuit architecture – flagged floor and a sleeping platform in the main room. It has a separate kitchen alcove near the entrance passage. This complex architecture is indicative of the social status (linked to whaling activities) of the occupants. A total of 134 artefacts were excavated from this house (see Table 24).

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 2	2	40%	Arrowhead frag.	1	100%	End-bladed	3	60%	Seal/Fox Tooth	3	75%
Clachan harpoon head	1	20%				Side-bladed	2	40%	Miniature oil lamp	1	25%
Type 3	1	20%									
Nuwuk	1	20%									
Total	5	100%	Total	1	100%	Total	5	100%	Total	4	100%

Table 24: Artefact assemblages for House 1 (PeJr-1)

House 4 is situated at the eastern end of House Group 1. It has a flagged floor and two sleeping platforms facing the central floor, at 90 degrees to one another. Left of the entrance is a separate kitchen area. 234 artefacts were excavated from this house (Table 25).

Artefact analyses of House 4, as we will demonstrate shortly, have revealed a certain level of stylistic distinction, for harpoon heads, mens' knife handles and ornaments. This reminds us of House 29 at Qariaraqyuk, in that it shows interaction with whalers and whaling activities, but still maintains a certain distinctiveness from them.

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 2	2	33%	Arrowhead frag.	1	20%	End-bladed	2	67%	Seal/Fox Tooth	81	95%
Clachan or Type 2	1	17%	Self-bladed	4	80%	Side-bladed	1	33%	Bear canine	2	2%
Type 3	2	33%							Sewing paraphernalia	1	1%
Nuwuk	1	17%							Decorated toggle	1	1%
Total	6	100%	Total	5	100%	Total	3	100%	Total	85	100%

Ulu Types		
Small	1	33%
Large	2	66%
Total	3	100%

Table 25: Artefact assemblages for House 4 (PeJr-1)

House 5 is situated in the middle of the main row. It has two separate rooms, the main room having one sleeping platform and two probable benches. There is no separate kitchen area in the main room. The second room was only partially excavated and was probably a second dwelling space. The main room is the same size as that of House 4. Based on these architectural features, Savelle (personal communication 2013) suggests that House 5 was used as a *karigi*, i.e. a communal men's house. It was probably owned by an important member of a whaling crew, perhaps the leader, and was used as a place of reunion with the other members of the crew, such as for workshop, communal and ceremonial activities. 442 artefacts were excavated from this house (Table 26).

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 2	2	29%	Inserted head	1	14%	End-bladed	9	75%	Seal/fox/dog Tooth	18	72%
Clachan	1	14%	Self-bladed	3	43%	Side-bladed	3	25%	Bear canine	2	8%
Type 3	1	14%	Fragment	3	43%				Chain	1	4%
Type 3 Sicco	1	14%							Pendant	1	4%
Type 4/Nuwuk	1	14%							Bead	1	4%
Fragment	1	14%							Comb/comb tooth	1	4%
									Fish lure	1	4%
Total	7	100%	Total	7	100%	Total	12	100%	Total	25	100%

Ulu Types		
Medium	6	100%
Total	6	100%

Table 26: Artefact assemblages for House 5 (PeJr-1)

Midden 1 corresponds to a large trench excavated on the sloping bank at 1.7 metres below the entry passage of a house adjacent to House 5. 11 squares were excavated within this midden/refuse area, associated with the said house. The house was not excavated nor described in the site reports. Consequently, only the settlement pattern (location) and material culture analysis were studied for this feature. 433 artefacts were recovered therein (Table 27).

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife Handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 2	3	33%	Self-bladed	3	43%	End-bladed	5	83%	Seal/fox/dog Tooth	3	25%
Clachan or Type 2	1	11%	Fragment	4	57%	End-bladed			Bear canine	2	12%
Type 3	4	44%				and			Musk-ox tooth	1	8%
Type 4/Nuwuk	1	11%				Side-bladed	1	17%	Chain	1	8%
									Bead	1	8%
									Comb/comb tooth	1	8%
									Sewing paraphernalia	1	8%
									Amulet	1	8%
									Gaming piece	1	8%
Total	9	100%	Total	7	100%	Total	6	100%	Total	12	100%

Ulu Types

Small	3	38%
Medium	2	25%
Large	3	38%
Total	8	100%

Table 27: Artefact assemblages for Midden 1 (PeJr-1)

House 15 is a small isolated house located on a hill slope behind the front row of houses. It has a small sleeping platform at the rear of the house. A possible storeroom was identified to the left of the entrance passage. 145 artefacts were found in this house, including a relatively large amount of ornaments (Table 28).

Harpoon Head Types			Arrowhead Types			Knife Handle Types			Decorated objects and ornaments/amulets		
Type 1	1	20%	Self-bladed	2	100%	End-bladed	3	60%	Seal/fox/dog Tooth	6	25%
Type 2	1	20%				End-bladed					Bear canine
Type 3	3	60%				and			Chain	2	8%
						Side-bladed	1	20%	Pendant	3	8%
						Side-bladed	1	20%	Bead	6	8%
									Browband/Bracelet	2	8%
									Amulet/amulet box	1	8%
									Fish lure	1	8%
Total	5	100%	Total	2	100%	Total	5	100%	Total	12	100%

Ulu Types		
Medium	1	100%
Total	1	100%

Table 28: Artefact assemblages House 15 (PeJr-1)

Five remaining features at Learmonth provided artefacts which were included in my analyses. House 3 is situated in the western part on the site, on a terrace. It is a light semi-subterranean dwelling, probably used during the milder time of year. Taylor and McGhee (1979: 47) suggest that it was covered with skins supported on a low light framework of lashed antler, bone or wood fragments. It did not have an entrance tunnel, but has a sleeping platform. Three other trenches yielded artefacts that were included in my analyses. Trench 2 corresponds to a refuse midden of a dwelling adjacent to House 15. Trench 3 is located four feet from the passage end of the most westerly of the three winter houses in the central area of the site (next to the pond). It corresponds to the refuse middens of these houses. Trench 4 is also located in front of the entrance passage of three houses clustered tightly together in the western part of the site. Trench 8 is situated below the entrance passage of House 3.

These five features did not yield specimens of all the classes of artefacts included in the present study, which creates a sample size problem for comparisons matters (Table 29).

Consequently, the study of their content was only made to support my analyses of the overall material variability and settlement patterns at this site, such as whaling vs. non whaling neighbourhoods.

	House 3	Trench 2	Trench 3	Trench 4	Trench 8
Harpoon head type 2	1				
Arrowhead inserted blade			1		
Side-bladed knife			1		
Medium ulu		1	1		1
Large ulu			1		
Seal/fox/dog tooth			1	1	
Pendant			2		
Animal/human effigies on tools			1		
Amulet/amulet box			1		

Table 29: Artefact assemblages for House 3 and Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 8 (PeJr-1)

11.4 *Artefact analyses*

There is a definite correlation between settlement patterns and the distribution of artefact designs at Learmonth. Each household has its own stylistic signature, in terms of the frequency and combination of design elements, but they all overlap in House 5. This is consistent with Savelle's suggestion of House 5 being a *karigj*, where crew members would meet with each other, including the *umialik*, for social and/or ceremonial occasions including sessions of tool manufacture and refurbishment. As we will see shortly, this overlapping is observed with harpoon heads, arrowheads, and knife handles. House 5 also displayed the largest amount of personal signatures on harpoon heads and knife handles, whether ownership marks or any other attributes, such as the Y incision patterns, and triangular suspension holes on knife handles. *Ulu* handles display a different pattern, but they support

the *karigi* nature of House 5. The distribution of the three functional categories of *uluit*, identified in Chapter 9, among the houses at Learmonth reveals different activities performed by women in these houses. Serving and eating meat were the main activities undertaken in House 5. This is consistent with activities usually done by women in *karigis*: bringing and serving food to their relatives; and the *umialik's* wife sharing whale portions between the crew members (Spencer 1959: 187).

The non-whaling House 15 displayed the highest amount and finest quality of ornaments and the highest amount, both absolute and relative, of amber. This is reminiscent of House 35 and House 29 at Qariaraqyuk, showing that social and spatial closeness to the core of the whaling network was not the only condition to attain a certain social status within the community.

There are different strategies of social distinctions for the *karigi*, the households adjacent to it, and isolated dwellings. On one hand, metal use was the hallmark for the *karigi* and the houses included in its cluster. On the other hand, body and clothing ornaments made of local, rare and exotic materials were found in high quantities in households spatially and/or socially distant from the whaling cluster. These kinds of artefacts were also present in whaling households, but in lesser quantities. If we add these material indicators to the stylistic analyses of tools, where correspondences occur mostly in the whaling centre, it suggests that different social relations and interactions were taking place at Learmonth, simultaneously. Related families, involved in whaling activities, settled in the main house cluster and used House 5 as a gathering place. Other houses and families, more distant socially and spatially, were actually enjoying a high social status, displaying this visually with

numerous ornaments. House 15 is the best example of this, along with House 4, positioned at the extremity of the whaling cluster. We can see this as a sign of participation in communal ceremonies, where clothing and body ornaments were usually worn, and/or as a strategy for visiting strangers to be accepted into the community during their stay.

In what follows, I describe the stylistic analyses for each class of artefact, and the analyses of exotic and rare materials. In terms of raw materials, harpoon heads, arrowheads and knife handles were equally made of whale bone or antler, without distinctive patterns of distribution across artefact types, or styles, or across houses. This absence of pattern is probably due to the small sample size of the Learmonth artefact assemblage, in comparison to Qariaraqyuk. Consequently, raw materials will only be discussed when they represent locally scarce or exotic materials such as ivory, metal and amber.

A. Harpoon heads

House 5 contained one Clachan harpoon head specimen, one Sicco-like type 3, one elongated type 3, being a shape similar to the Clachan type, one large type 2, and one Nuwuk (plate 23: 5C, 5G, 5E). These designs were also found in the other houses, but the only place where they all overlapped is in House 5 (Table 30).

Only two stylistic elements were not present in House 5. The first is Type 2s with an inserted blade found in House 4 and Midden 1 (plate 22: 4C; plate 23: M1G). However, the orientation of the blade is different for those two specimens in that one is parallel to the line hole, and the other is perpendicular. The second missing element is the presence of lashing beds (instead of lashing holes or slots) on three harpoon heads of Midden 1 (plate 23: M1A,

M1B and M1I), one specimen in House 3 (plate 24: 3A) and one specimen in House 15 (plate 24: 15C).

	House 1	House 3	House 4	House 5	House 15	Midden 1
TYPE 2s (styl. att.)						
Clachan	1			1		
Large Type 2	1	1	1	2		2
Small Type 2	1		2	1	1	2
Inserted blade			1			2
Self-bladed	2	1		2	1	1
Symmetrical barbs	3			2		3
Asymmetrical barbs		1	1	1	1	
Round line hole	3	1	3	3	1	3
Triangular/rectangular line hole						1
Lateral ridges at the base			2	1	1	3
Shoulders			2	3	1	3
Lashing slots	1		1	2		1
Lashing holes	1		1	1		2
Lashing bed		1			1	1
Straight spur	2	1		3	1	
Angled spur	1		2			3
Facetted				1		4
Oval or flat	2	1		2	1	
Decoration : line						
Decoration : triangle						
Decoration : inverted "Y"				2		
Total specimens	3	1	3	4	1	4
TYPE 3s (styl. att.)						
Elongated (towards Clachan silh.)			1	1		
Waist				1	2	
Keeled fore-end				1	1	
Shoulders						
Vestigial blade slots				1		
Sicco type						
Round line hole	1		2	2	3	4
Triangular line hole						
Lashing slots			1	2	1	1
Lashing holes	1		1		2	2
Lashing bed						2
Straight spur	1		1	1		3
Angled spur			1	1		
Bifurcated spur					1	
Facetted			1	1	2	1
Oval or flat	1		1	1	1	3
Decoration : line						1
Decoration : triangle						
Decoration : inverted "Y"			1			
Total specimens	1		2	2	3	4
Nuwuk (styl. att.)						
Single spur	1		1	1		1
Bifurcated/trifurcated spur						
Straight spur	1		1			
Angled spur				1		1
Decoration	1					
Total specimen	1		1	1		1

Table 30: Stylistic attributes of the harpoon head types found in each house (PeJr-1)

Designs that are unique (from the perspective of the entire site) occur in the whaling neighbourhood: House 4, House 5 and Midden 1. This includes decorative patterns (plate 22: 4D; plate 23: 5F and M1:F), and a Nuwuk specimen with an open socket (plate 22: 4A). Although by definition a Nuwuk harpoon head should have a closed socket, this one is still considered as part of this category given the general shape of the artefact. This reinforces the suggestion that a lot of social interaction occurred in the whaling neighbourhood of the site, hence the need for its occupants to display nicely made hunting equipment with personal signatures.

B. Arrowheads

Arrowhead designs follow a similar distribution pattern (Table 31, Figure 58). What are called 'lanceolate' styles – self-bladed designs with curved sides and a pointed apex – were found in Houses 5 and 4 (plate 25: 4C, 5B, 5C). Large specimens with inserted blades were represented in Houses 5 and 15, the latter having a specimen made of ivory, the only arrowhead made of such material in the entire site (plate 27: 15A, 5D, 5E). Again, a convergence of designs appeared in House 5. The most widely distributed design is the self-bladed style with one lateral barb and an incised line separating the barb from the main body of the head, found in each house of the site. This is a very common type found also at Qariaraqyuk.

	House 4		House 5		House 15		Midden 1	
Self-bladed barbed	3	60%	1	14%	1	50%	1	17%
Self-bladed lanceolate	2	40%	2	29%	1	50%	1	17%
Self-bladed straight			1	14%			4	67%
Inserted blade			3	43%				
Total	5	100%	7	100%	2	100%	6	100%

Table 31: Distribution of arrowhead types and design (PeJr-1)

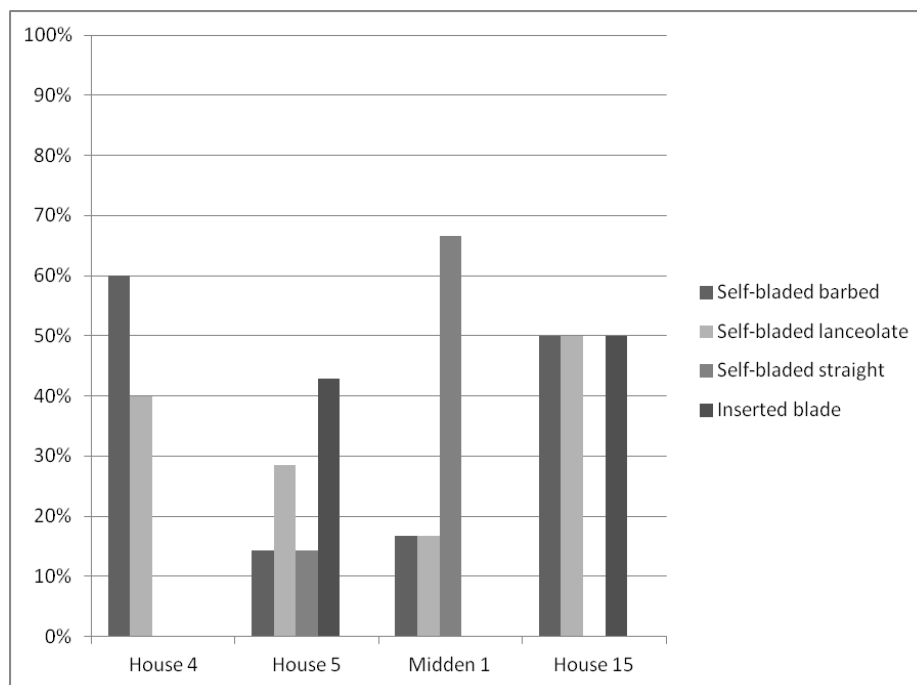


Figure 58: Relative frequencies of arrowhead types and design (PeJr-1)

Special features were visible in House 4 such as specimens with multiple barbs (plate 25: 4E), House 5 with a decoration design on a lanceolate specimen (plate 25: 5B) and House 15 where we found a possible ownership mark on a unilateral barbed specimen (plate 27: 15B) and the ivory arrowhead mentioned above (plate 27: 15: A).

C. Men's knife handles

The following men's knife handles' designs also converged in House 5 (Figure 59): large flensing knives, shared with Midden 1; small specimens with irregular and curved shapes, shared with House 4; handles with gouged suspension holes, shared with Midden 1; and side-bladed knives. The latter was the most common type in the entire site, represented in all houses, which was also the case for rectangular small and medium sized handles with or without a drilled suspension hole. The only exceptions were Trenches 2 and 3. Attributes not present in House 5 were composite, mainly whittling knives, and knife handles made in two parts, with bevelled sections and drilled holes to be lashed together, both found in Midden 1 and House 4. Distinctive L-shaped handles were found in House 1 and Trenches 2 and 3 (plate 28: 1F; plate 32: T2A, T3A). Distinct design attributes occurred in each house, notably the shape of the suspension holes and incised decoration (see plates 28 to 32). As was the case at Qariaraqyuk, men's knife handles were the most idiosyncratic artefacts at Learmonth, showing different stylistic elements in the shape of the base, suspension hole and decoration.

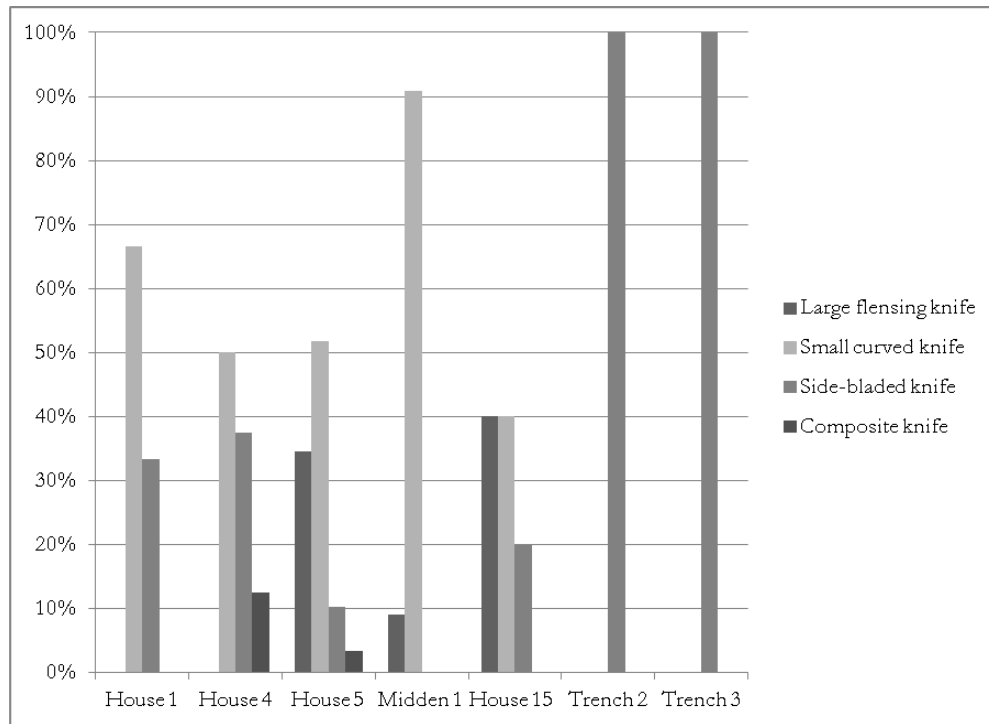


Figure 59: Relative frequencies of knife handle types (PeJr-1)

D. *Ulu* handles

As for *ulus*, their styles were also very idiosyncratic from house to house. Each *ulu* was unique, even within house assemblages (plate 33 and 34). Rectangular, trapezoidal, semi-circular and curved handles were spread across the houses without any apparent pattern (Figure 60: Relative frequencies of ulu handle shapes (PeJr-1)).

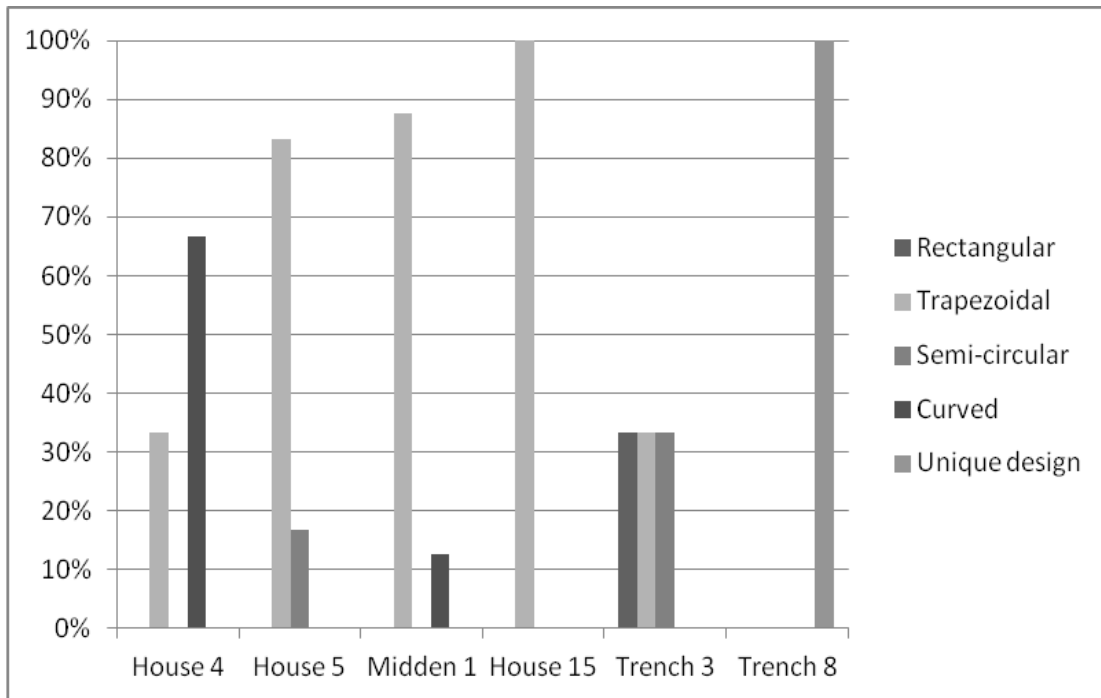


Figure 60: Relative frequencies of ulu handle shapes (PeJr-1)

However, the three ‘functional’ categories – large handles for scraping skins, the multi-task medium size type and the small *ulu*it for cutting patterns – were only present simultaneously in Midden 1 and Trench 3 (Figure 61). House 5 lacked the small *ulu*it for cutting patterns and the large scraping *ulu*it. House 4 lacked the medium-size multi-task *ulu* handles, and Houses 1 and 15 only yielded one specimen of the medium-size type. These results raise the question of women’s activities in each house, which seem to differ here. Sample size may be responsible for these variations for Houses 1 and 15 (and eventually Trench 3), but Houses 4 and 5 and Midden 1 held enough specimens to suggest specific activities. House 4 only displayed *ulu*it for skin preparation and sewing. House 5 contained only the medium-size multi-task type, which were first of all for cutting meat, serving and eating food (and only if needed, for other tasks around clothing production), which is

consistent with the hypothesis of House 5 being a *karigi*. Midden 1 contained the three specialised types – three small, three medium and two large. This suggests that female activities in House 4 were oriented towards clothing production and House 5 towards cutting and sharing food. The house associated with Midden 1 was used for all activities. The same situation is observed in Trench 3 – the three categories of *ulu* were represented therein. This is consistent with the settlement patterns of the three houses associated with this midden. They form their own house group, and one can suggest that all the female activities were conducted within this social group.

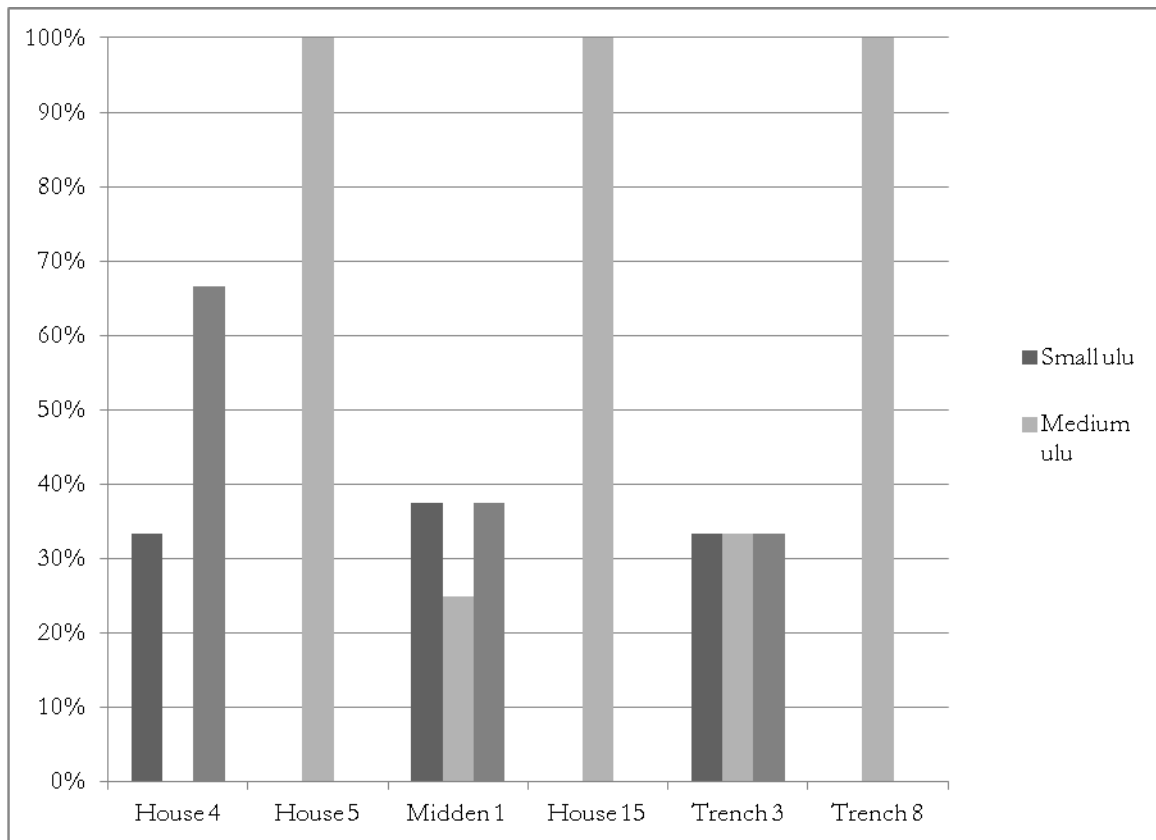


Figure 61: Relative frequencies of ulu handle types (PeJr-1)

E. Locally scarce material, exotic material, ornaments, amulets and communal artefacts

As at Qariaraqyuk, exotic material at Learmonth was analysed via two means: frequency of actual material found in house assemblages (Table 32) and the blade sloth width of harpoon heads, *ulu* handles and men's knife handles (Figure 63, Figure 64 and Table 33). When copper and iron was found, it was either a fragment of the raw material with no definite shape or function, or it was blades or ornaments. Our access to this data was via the site catalogue only, and it did not give precise information about the kind of blade.

	House 1	House 4	House 5	House 15	Midden 1	Trench 3	Trench 4	Trench 5
Copper			1	2	4			
Iron		1	2					
Amber			1	2				
Musk ox tooth					1			
Ivory	7	1	7	12	12	2	3	1
Total house assemblage	134	248	442	145	433	118	46	6

Table 32: Occurrence of exotic and locally scarce material (PeJr-1)

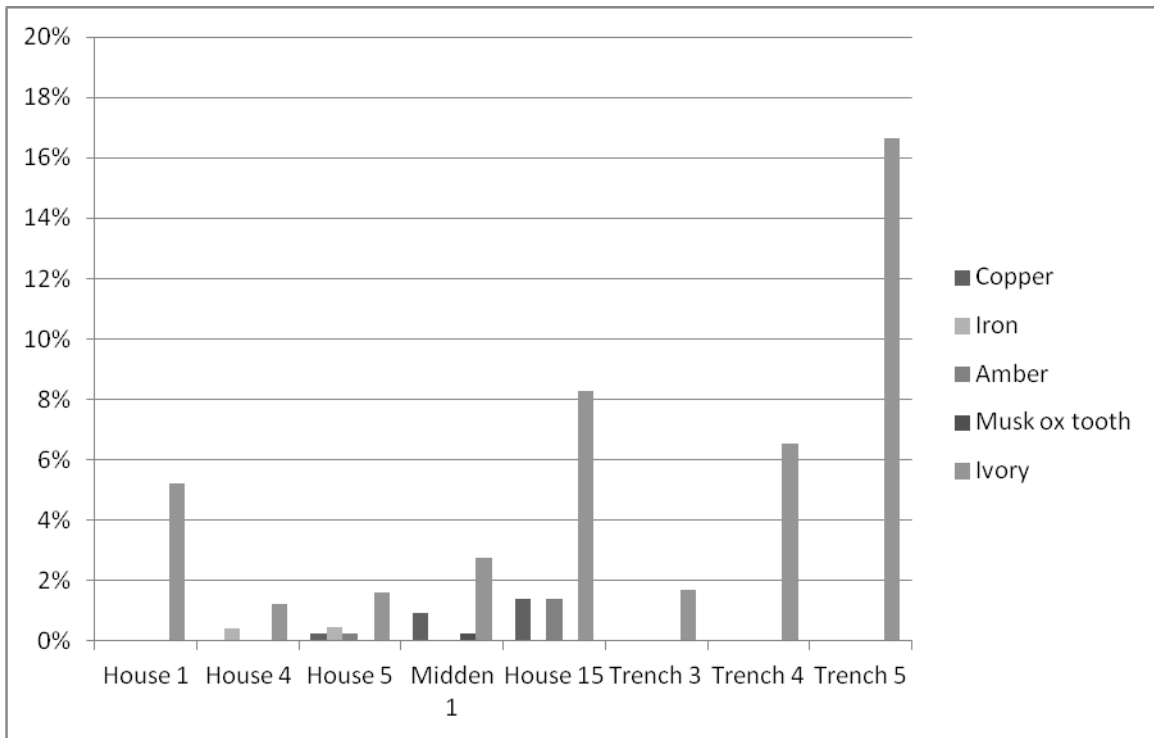


Figure 62: Relative frequencies of exotic and locally scarce material (PeJr-1)

These results were expanded and refined with the blade slot width analyses, for which House 15 had the lowest. The kind of artefact with inferred metal blades was different among these houses, as shown in Table 33. All harpoon heads with blade slots seem to have been made for metal blades except for those found in House 15. Midden 1 had a high percentage for each type of knife, and Houses 4 and 5 were more selective, showing lots of metal for *uluit* in House 5 and men's knives in House 4.

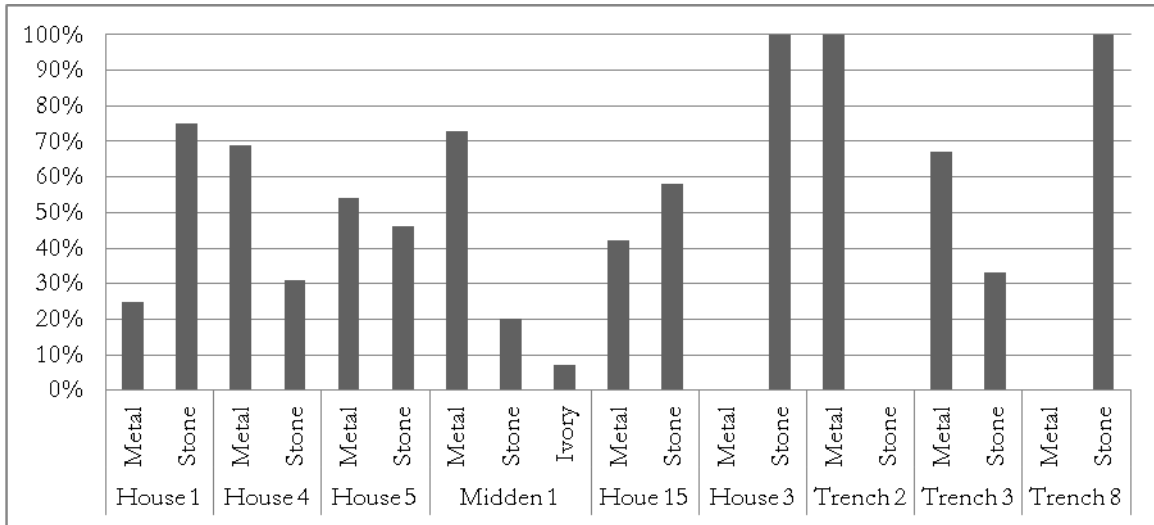


Figure 63: Relative frequencies of blade material by house, based on analysis of slot width (PeJr-1)

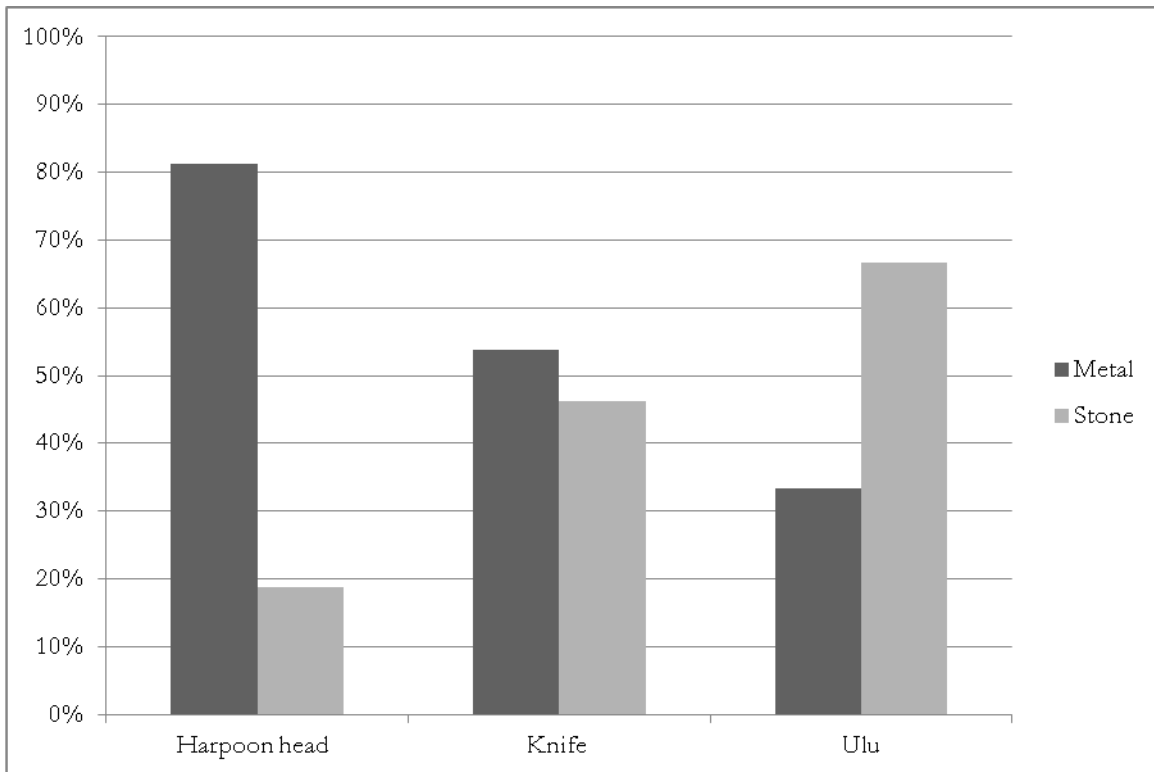


Figure 64: Relative frequencies of blade material per artefact class, inferred from slot width (PeJr-1)

	House 1		House 4		House 5		House 15		Midden 1			Trench 2		Trench 3		Trench 8	
	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	I	M	S	M	S	M	S
Harpoon head slot		2	3		4		2	1	4		1						
Knife slot	2	4	5	2	7	9	3	4	7	3		1		4	2		
Ulu slot			1	2	3	3		2									1
Total	2	6	9	4	14	12	5	7	11	3	1	1		4	2		1

Table 33: Blade material by house, inferred from slot width (PeJr-1) (M: Metal, S: Stone, I: Ivory)

In general, Houses 4 and 5 and Midden 1 stand out in terms of metal use. Occupants of House 15 had access to these exotic materials, but the uses they made of it were different. The relative frequency of amber beads in this house is six times higher than in House 5, and the only copper artefact found is a pendant. This indicates a demonstration of socio-economic status in a different way for House 15, which becomes more explicit with the analyses of ornaments. It suggests a stronger female demonstration of wealth in this house.

IVORY		House 1	House 4	House 5	House 15	Midden 1	Trench 3	Trench 4	Trench 5
Men's artefacts	Harpoon head/ blade	1				1			
	Cord fastener/ knot coverer		1						
	Dog harness buckle	1							
	Snow probe	1							
Gender neutral or uncertain	Blade				1	1			
	Handle								1
	Toggle				1		1		
	Fish needle					1			
	Bead			1					
	Pendant/ ornament			2	6	1	1		
	Unidentified	5				8	2	6	
Women's artefacts	Comb				1				
	Thimble holder		1						
	Ulu handle				1				
	Awl				1				

Table 34: Distribution of gender-specific artefacts made of ivory, per house (PeJr-1)

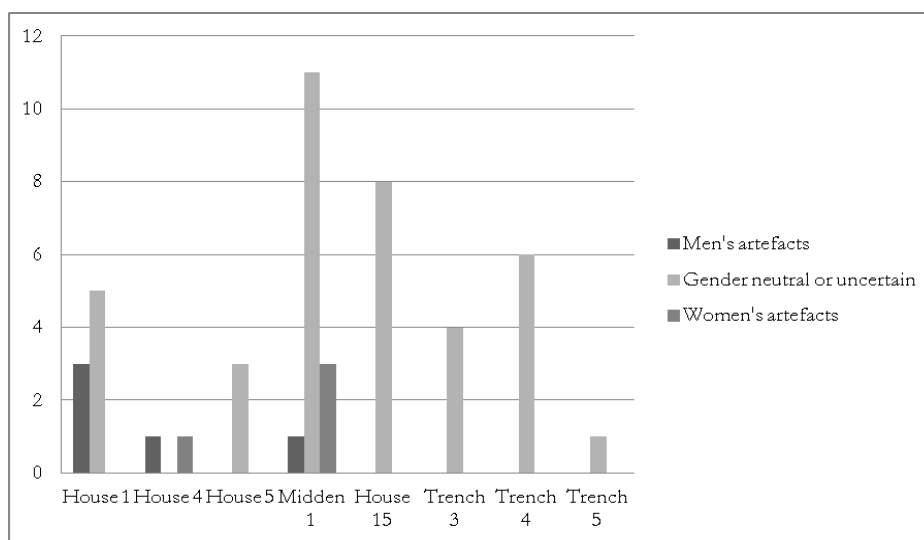


Figure 65: Distribution of gender-specific artefacts made of ivory, per house (PeJr-1)

House 15 therefore exceeded all other houses in terms of quantity and quality of body and clothing ornaments and amulets (plate 37: 15A-J). This house also exceeded the others in terms of the relative frequency of ivory, which is closely linked to the abundance of

ornaments therein (Table 34, Table 35, and Figure 65). Finely decorated ivory pendants, a piece of ivory chain, amber beads, brow bands, a whale pendant and a finely crafted and decorated comb all contributed to the uniqueness of this house. A bead blank was also found in this house: a long fragment of ivory, divided into a series of identical sections, each with a perforation (plate 37: 15K). The final beads would have looked like some of the specimens from Qariaraqyuk (plate 21: 41F, 41G, 41J). Similar bead blanks are commonly found in other Thule Inuit sites, including the contemporary whaling village PaJs-13 in Creswell Bay (Savelle 2013, personal communication) and the Naujan site, a contemporary whaling village on northwestern Hudson Bay, 500-600 km away from Learmonth (Mathiassen 1927a: Pl.31, 16). This indicates that the occupants of House 15 were carving their own beads, and not acquiring them through trade.

	House 1	House 4	House 5	House 15	Midden 1	Trench 3
Bear canine		2	2	1	2	1
Seal/fox/dog tooth	4	81	18	6	3	
Musk-ox tooth					1	
Chain			1	2	1	
Bead			1	6	1	
Pendant			1	3		2
Brow band/bracelet				2		
Comb/comb tooth			1		1	
Sewing paraphernalia		1			1	
Decorated toggle		1				1
Fish lure			1	1		
Amulet/Amulet box				1	1	1
Gaming piece					1	
Total	4	85	25	22	12	5
% of ornaments ritual and communal artefacts per total house assemblage	3%	34%	6%	15%	3%	4%

Table 35: Occurrence of ornaments, ritual and communal objects per house (PeJr-1)

House 15 had an intriguing assemblage, given that this dwelling does not belong to the whaling house cluster, had no whaling gear and had a relatively low amount of whale skulls in its architecture. This phenomenon is analogous to that of Houses 35 or 29 at Qariaraqyuk, suggesting again that kinship or participation in whaling activities with the other occupants of the village was not a necessary precondition for wealth and/or social status. Instead, being either a rich family visiting from another village or a family involved in complementary economical and/or socio-cultural activities such as trading, hunting or shamanism allowed its members to keep up with the rest of the village in terms of social ranking. House 15 yielded only one material sign of personal investment into hunting activities complementary to bowhead whaling: an ownership mark found on a large arrowhead, probably for caribou or musk ox hunting (plate 27: 15B). Interestingly, a similar mark is observed on the same kind of arrowhead in House 29 at Qariaraqyuk (plate 4: 29G).

House 5 and Midden 1 had similar assemblages of ornaments and amulets. Ivory chains and pendants, a moderately high amount of animal tooth pendants, an amber bead, a whale effigy probably used as an amulet and brow bands were found in these houses. One of the brow bands (plate 36: 5I) has a unique design, with finely crafted details, identical to one found in the Naujan site (Mathiassen 1927a: Pl.31, 16), and very similar to another one from PaJs-13, a large whaling village adjacent to Qariaraqyuk (Savelle 2013, personal communication). House 5 also yielded a distinctive ownership mark on a fish lure, identical to some found in Northern Alaska (Boas 1899; Reynolds 1989) (plate 36: 5E). The only game piece – a bone plaque similar to those in Qariaraqyuk – found in Learmonth was in Midden 1 (plate 37: M1B). All taken together, these artefacts indicate the will of the occupants of these houses to distinguish themselves by wearing ornaments, finely crafted and/or made with valued materials. This distinction is also seen in the tendency of hunters in House 5 to mark their hunting equipment with personal signs, more often than in the other houses.

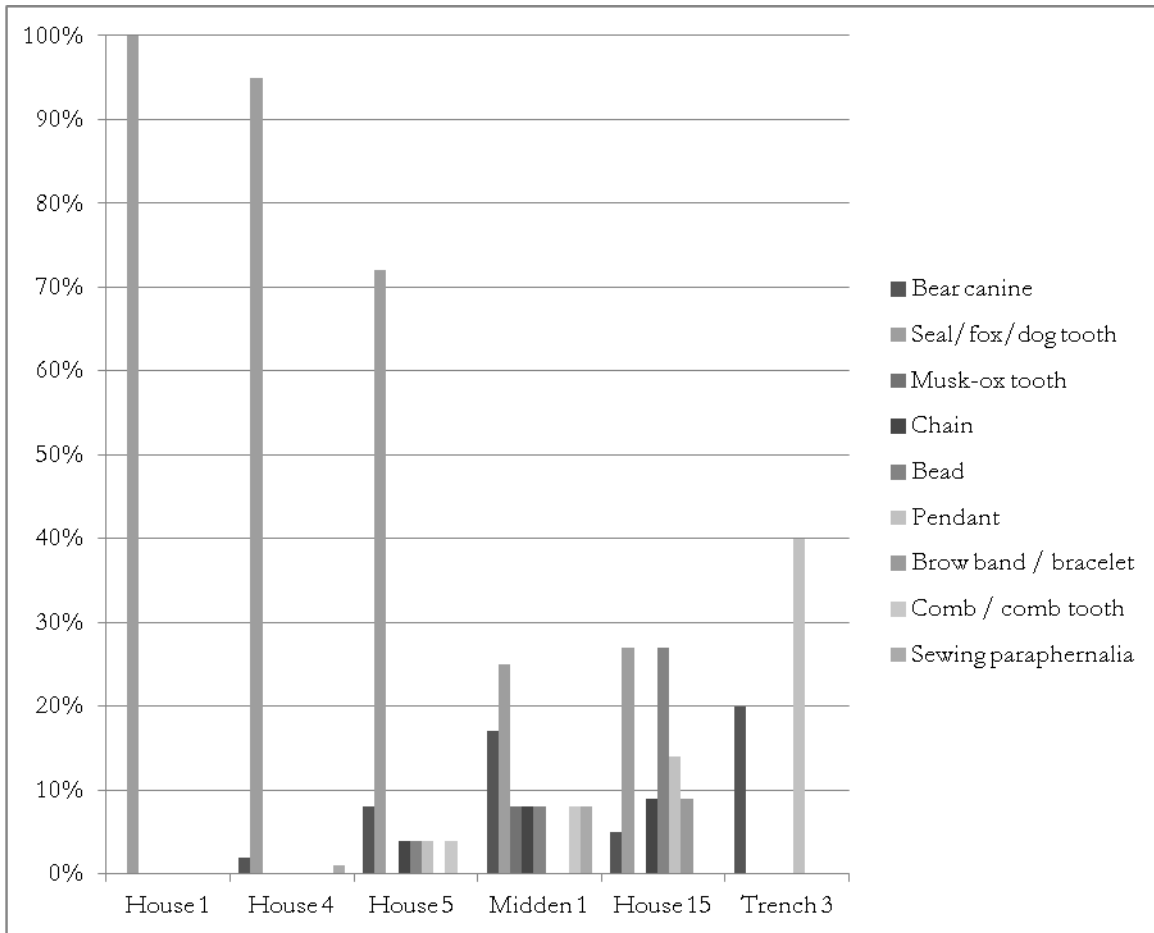


Figure 66: Relative frequencies of ornaments, women’s combs and sewing paraphernalia per house (PeJr-1)

The assemblage of ornament and amulets in House 4 is intriguing. It contained 88 animal tooth pendants, mostly seal and fox canines, but also included four caribou incisors and two bear molars. This is an excessively high number. These kinds of pendants occurred in much lower frequencies in the other houses (Figure 66). Given the small sample size of House 4’s assemblage, compared to the other houses, this amount of tooth pendants definitely stands out. However, if we consider the kind of women’s activities held in this house, as inferred by the types of *uluit* found therein, this amount of tooth pendants, probably used as clothing ornaments, could mean that the occupants of House 4 were in the

course of producing an ornamented, perhaps ceremonial, piece of clothing, probably a parka or *amauti* (woman's parka). House 4 yielded two special stone pendants (plate 35: 4B). The first has an incomplete drilled hole, with a simple flat, round design. The other is unique, as it is a cooking vessel fragment, probably a pot, whose edges have been smoothed by polishing. The lip of the original pot is still visible. It is not clear if the suspension hole was the original hole of the pot, which would have been suspended above the oil lamp, a very common practice among Inuit, if it was a repair piece, or if it was drilled later in order to transform the fragment into a pendant. Stone pendants are common in Thule Inuit assemblages at this time period, and shapes vary greatly within and between sites (i.e. Mathiassen 1927a: Pl.31). This one can be seen simply as a variation amongst others. However, the fact that it was once a cooking vessel, a highly personal object, in the same way as the oil lamps, points to the transformation of a personally valued object from the cooking area of activities to personal adornment. This reinforces the attachment of the owner and/or user with these kinds of objects. It could alternatively have been the cooking pot of a relative, either deceased or alive, turned into a piece of adornment, a form of amulet to commemorate this person, and/or to appropriate his or her qualities. A wooden bear carving was also found in House 4 (plate 35: 4C), with a shape similar to others found at the Skraeling Island site, an early Thule Inuit village in the Eastern High Arctic (McCullough 1989: 207, 209). Their shapes, with unseparated legs, a distended stomach and a long neck, are identical to that of House 4 at Learmonth. The material of this carving, wood, is the same as that used for dolls among Inuit and frequently found in Thule Inuit sites. This may suggest a similar function for this bear, a toy for children. However, animal figurines are also common amulets, used either as a way to bring luck in hunting and travelling, or to acquire

the valued qualities of the animal. The latter hypothesis is more likely, given the special value of bear among Inuit (Saladin d'Anglure 1990) and the presence of bear carvings on various Thule Inuit tools, as seen at Qariaraqyuk. In addition to these ornaments and amulets, House 4 displayed two very finely crafted and decorated ivory tools: a thimble holder and a cord fastener very similar to those found at Qariarakyuk (plate 35: 4D).

In summary, House 4 did not yield the same kind of ornaments and amulets as Houses 5 and 15 and Midden 1, but their relative frequency and qualities are not negligible. This observation makes sense, if we add to it the distribution of metal, for which House 4 was among the average of the site. The only difference is that the occupants of House 4 were wearing and using a large amount of animal teeth pendants of various species and stone pendants with special shapes and meanings, which are different from the ornament and amulet patterns of the other houses.

House 1 only yielded three seal canine pendants, which reflects the average of the site. It also contained the only drum fragment of the entire site. Taking into account its proximity to House/*karigi* 5, this artefact suggests a social interaction with the whaling core of the site, since drumming is linked to communal gathering and whaling ceremonies.

The last ornaments and amulets found at Learmonth were found in Trench 3, associated with a three-house cluster adjacent to the pond. This assemblage consisted of a drop pendant made of bone, a wooden amulet box and a unique seal drag handle made of bone, with two human faces carved at each extremity. Human face carvings are extremely rare in Thule Inuit assemblages. The faces have prominent cheekbones, which are a typical

facial feature of Inuit people (plate 35: T3C). The relative frequency of ornaments and decorated tools in Trench 3 is similar to that of House 1 and 5 and Midden 1, but the uniqueness of these objects, especially the seal drag handle, goes hand in hand with the settlement pattern of the house group: isolated from the rest of the site.

11.5 Discussion

The results of my analyses at Learmonth show social dynamics reflected in material culture and settlement patterns which are analogous to those of Qariaraqyuk. There is a definite ‘whaling neighbourhood’ at Learmonth, located in the main row of 13 houses, fronting the bay. At the centre of this house row is a probable ceremonial house – House 5 – in the form of a residential dwelling with two separate rooms. The convergence of social interactions in this house (Figure 67), revealed by my stylistic analyses of harpoon heads, arrowheads and knife handles, support this conclusion – that is, House 5 being a dwelling where whaling crew members from different families would meet for work, social and ceremonial purposes.

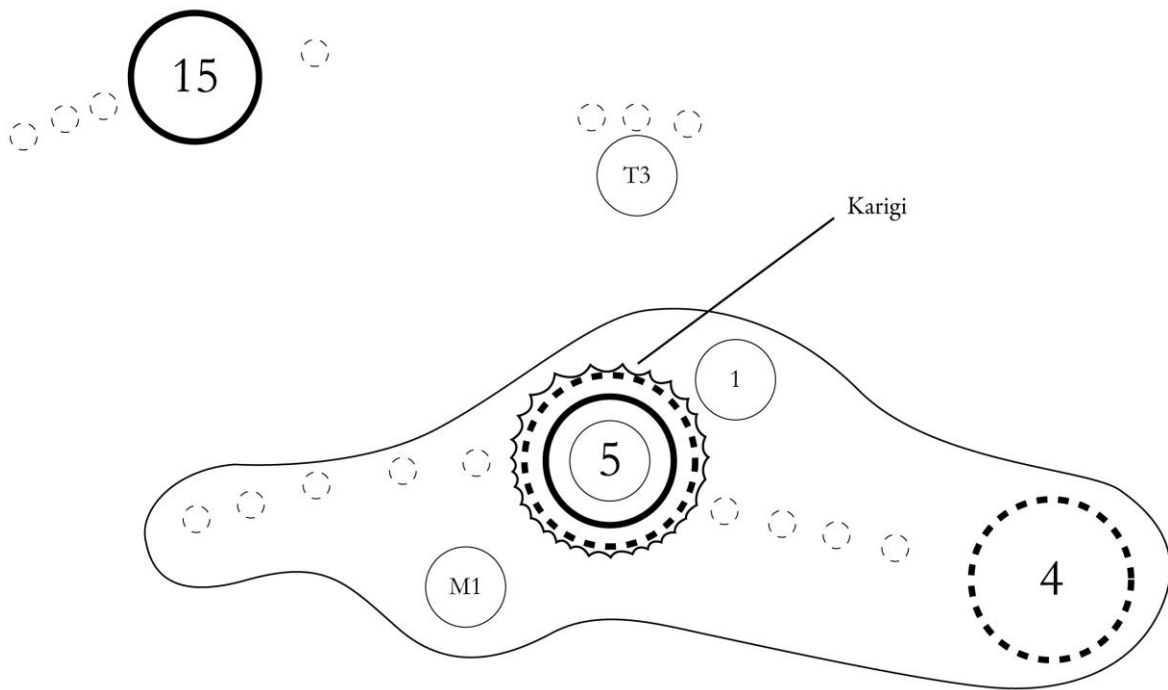


Figure 67: Diagram showing familial relations and social differentiation at Learmonth. Familial links between houses are represented by their contours, and differential wealth is shown in house size (the wealthier, the larger).

The distribution of *ulu* handle types across households also confirmed the communal nature of House 5, where women’s activities would have been focused on food service and consumption. *Ulu* handles also indicated that the occupants of House 4 were engaged in clothing production, with many ornaments (drilled animal teeth) added to garments. Ornaments are also the hallmark of House 15, in a way which suggests a feminine demonstration of wealth.

As was the case at Qariaraqyuk, houses located outside the whaling neighbourhood at Learmonth showed some social distinctiveness from occupants of the whaling houses, as well as social differentiation. These occupants may not have actively participated in whaling activities, but they were nevertheless wealthy families. Socio-economic hierarchy and heterarchy were both present at Learmonth. As we demonstrate in the next chapter, a similar phenomenon is also observed at Cape Garry with different houses revealing distinct ways to affirm material wealth in the process of social differentiation.

12. Social networks at Cape Garry (PcJq-5)

12.1 Introduction

Cape Garry, the third Thule Inuit bowhead whaling village included in this research, is located on the eastern shore of Somerset Island. It is situated half-way between Hazard Inlet (Qariaraqyuk site) and Creswell Bay (Learmonth site) (Figure 68). Cape Garry consists of two rows of 26 Thule Inuit winter houses, positioned on two beach ridges which almost meet in a V-shape, with a pond and peat marsh area in the middle (McCartney 1979: 287).

The site was excavated by Allen McCartney and his crew in 1976, as part of the Thule Archaeology Conservation Project. The excavation report and a general description of the site's architectural structures were published by McCartney (1979: 287-289, 293). Artefact assemblages are currently kept at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau. A loan was obtained for artefacts included in this study, which were analysed and photographed in the archaeological laboratory of McGill University.

This chapter presents the settlement patterns, architecture and material culture content of the houses that were excavated at Cape Garry. I demonstrate my principal results in terms of social relations and differentiation between the occupants of the houses. These results are refined with the presentation of my artefact analyses for each class of artefacts, followed by a discussion from a more general point of view – at the site and regional levels.

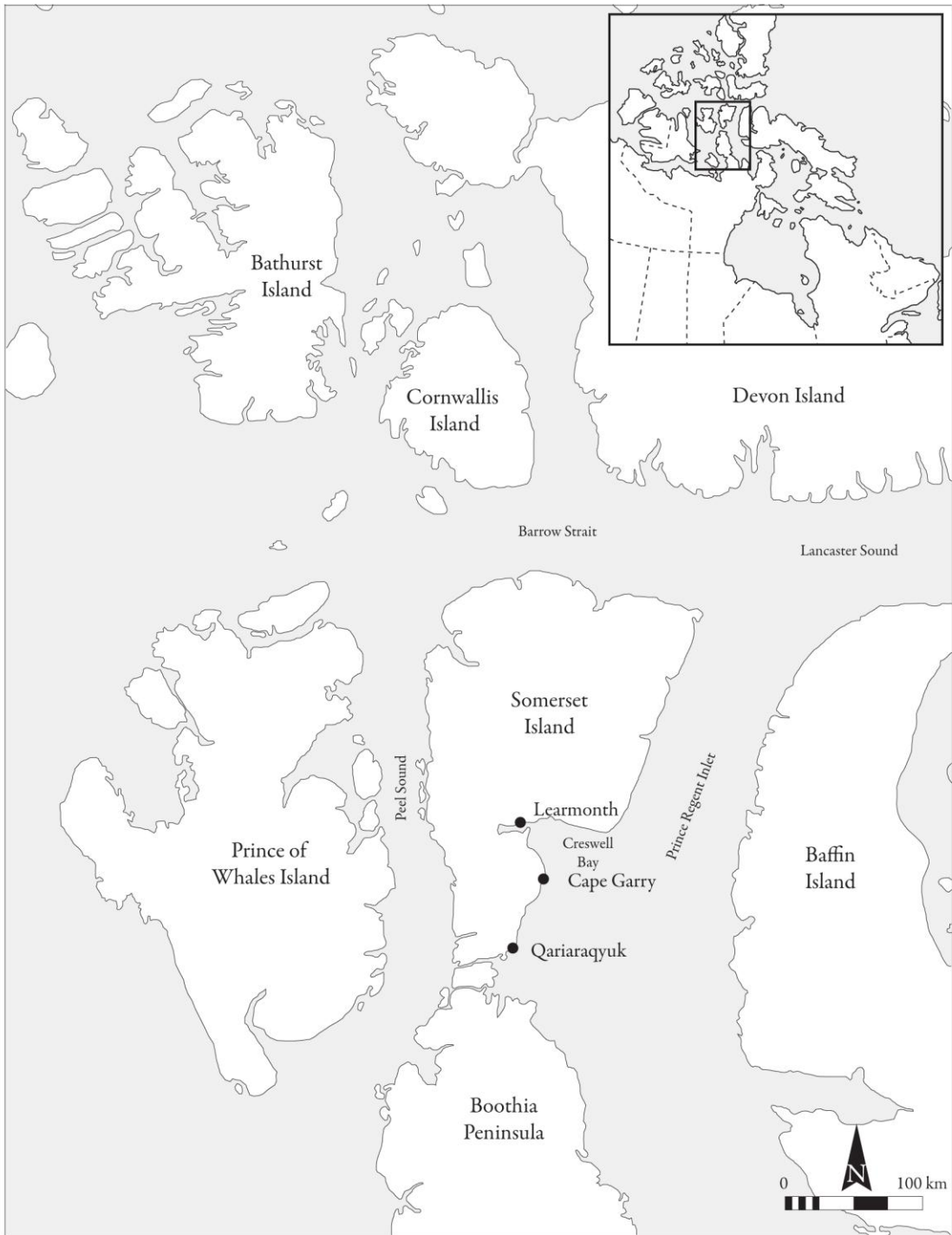


Figure 68: Map of the study region

12.2 Excavation and previous studies

The settlement patterns at Cape Garry are similar to those of Learmonth and Qariaraqyuk. Dwellings are aligned along ancient beach ridges, facing the water. Savelle and Wenzel (2003: 111-112) identified four house groups corresponding to extended families, and a potential of also about four whaling crews (Figure 69). Group 1 contains seven semi-subterranean dwellings (none of which has been excavated), Group 2 has seven dwellings (one excavated), Group 3 has six dwellings (two excavated) and Group 4 has seven semi-subterranean dwellings (none of which has been excavated). Using again the ethnographic analogy with Alaskan Inuit to calculate the possible number of hunters and whaling crews per house group, I estimate that the village would have mustered about eight hunting crews (two per house group).

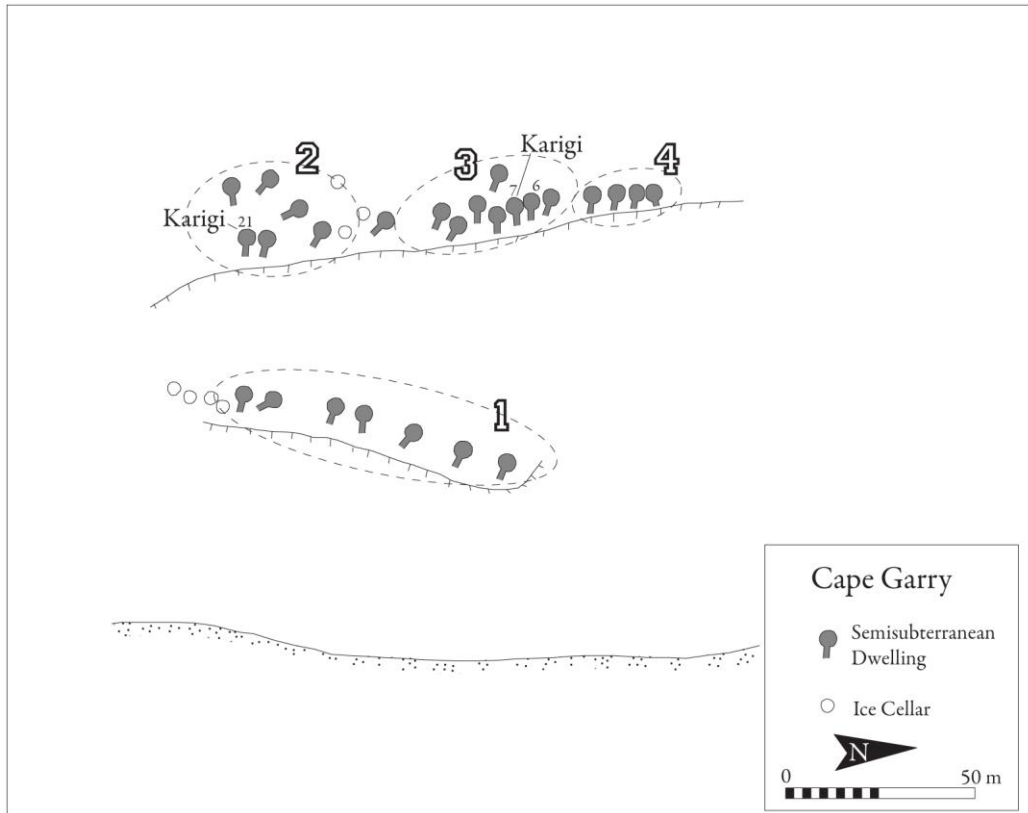


Figure 69: Cape Garry PcJq-5 (after Savelle and Wenzel 2003)

12.3 House descriptions

Houses 6, 7 and 21 were excavated. They were chosen for their variety of architecture: House 6 included a jumble of surface boulders, House 7 presented a ring of whale skulls protruding above the surface vegetation and House 21 appeared to be relatively undisturbed with a doorway lintel still in place (McCartney 1979: 288).

House 6 has a flagged stone floor and a small alcove to the right side of the main room. It also has a sleeping platform at the rear of the house. A separate cooking area was also identified near the opening of the tunnel passage. House 7 is larger than the adjacent House 6. At least eight whale skull bases were originally set on edge to form wall elements

with their maxillary and pre-maxillary bones curving in to form rafters (ibid: 288). This dwelling lacks sleeping platforms. Instead, upright boulders around the wall may have supported bench stones, suggesting that this dwelling might have been a house for communal meetings. House 21 has a flagged stone floor, as the two other houses. The house was knocked apart, leaving a jumble of whale bones on the lower floor, but two sleeping platforms were still intact and visible.

In terms of architecture, Houses 7 and 21 stand out for the amount of whale crania in their construction which indicates a special relation of their occupants with whaling activities (see Table 36). House 6 has a total of 117 bone elements of which 25 are cranial, House 7 has 77 of which 22 are cranial, and House 21 has 223 whale bones of which 69 are cranial in their construction (McCartney 1979: 293). House 7 is larger and deeper than average. Savelle and Wenzel (2003: 112) identified House 7 as a *karigi* based on these architectural lines of evidence. House 21 could also have had a relation to whaling activities because of the high amount of cranial elements in its architecture, but it was a residential dwelling, evidenced by its two sleeping platforms, and it has no whaling gear (Table 37). However, its artefactual content, other than whaling-related gear, shows signs of social differentiation for the occupants of this house.

	House 6	House 7	House 21
Skull	1	10	9
Mandiible and maxillae	24	12	60
Total cranial elements	25	22	69
Total bone assemblage	117	77	223
% cranial element	21%	29%	31%

Table 36: Amount and relative frequencies of cranial elements in house architecture (PcJq-5)

	House 6	House 7	House 21
Lance head	1	1	-
Float gear	1	-	-
Umiaq gear	-	2	-
Total House assemblage	275	503	70

Table 37: Occurrence of whaling gear per house (PcJq-5)

12.4 Artefact analyses

Houses 6 and 7 are definitely contemporaneous. Evidence shows that they were used by the same individuals at least once, because two different pieces of a single harpoon head were found in each of these houses (plate 38: 6A, 7E). Contemporaneity is also supported by the design analyses of the harpoon heads, arrowheads, *ulu* handles and men's knife handles of these two houses, as shown in Table 38,

Table 39, Table 40 and Table 41. However, these two houses also contained their own distinct design elements. House 6 was likely the household of an *umalik* or another high ranked crew member, given its closeness to the *karigi*, House 7, the presence of whaling gear, a drum frame and high percentage of metal blades for their tools, as inferred by the blade slot widths. The amount of ornaments and amulets and material indicators of communal activities in House 7 confirm its function as a *karigi*. In addition, House 7 contains the highest amount of artefacts, mostly men's tools, suggesting that the *karigi* was also used as a men's workshop. As with House 5 in Learmonth and House 41 at Qariaraqyuk, the *karigi* at Cape Garry contained the greatest amount of tools with incised decoration such as carvers' signatures and ownership marks.

House 21 contained a very small amount of artefacts compared to Houses 6 and 7, which makes efficient stylistic comparison and assessment of participation in whaling difficult. However, the relative frequency of ornaments and amulets, ivory and the amount of whale crania in the architecture of this house suggest a high rank for its occupants (Table 42). Overall, Cape Garry yielded a smaller amount of artefacts than the Qariarakyuk and Learmonth sites, which limits archaeological interpretations for this site. However, the inter-site comparisons explored in the next chapter will help to shed more light on the social life of its occupants. In what follows, I present the design patterns for each artefact class. As for Learmonth, harpoon heads, arrowheads and knife handles were made of either whale bone or antler, without specific pattern of distribution across artefact categories/types and houses. The only class of artefact that was entirely made of whale bone is *ulu* handle, and the

implications of this observation will be discussed below. In what follows, I describe the analyses of each artefact class, comparing the three houses together.

	House 6		House 7		House 21	
Type 2	2	25%	3	33%	-	-
Type 3	4	50%	6	67%	-	-
Nuwuk / Type4	2	25%	-	-	-	-
Type 5	-	-	-	-	1	100%
Total specimens	8		9		1	

Table 38: Occurrence of harpoon head types per house

	House 6		House 7		House 21	
Inserted blade	2	33%	3	25%	-	-
Self-bladed	4	64%	5	42%	2	100%

Table 39: Occurrence of arrowhead types per house (PcJq-5)

	House 6		House 7		House 21	
Small end-bladed	9	60%	4	17%	1	50%
Large end-bladed	3	20%	8	35%	-	-
Side-bladed	3	20%	9	39%	-	-
Composite	-	-	2	9%	1	50%

Table 40: Occurrence of knife handle types per house (PcJq-5)

	House 6		House 7		House 21	
Small ulu	1	25%	2	29%	-	-
Medium ulu	2	50%	4	57%	1	50%
Large ulu	1	25%	1	14%	1	50%

Table 41: Occurrence of ulu handle types per house (PcJq-5)

	House 6		House 7		House 21	
Bear canine	2	20%	-	-	1	14%
Seal/fox/dog tooth	6	60%	2	33%	2	29%
Pendant	-	-	1	17%	-	-
Brow band / Bracelet	-	-	-	-	3	43%
Comb/Comb tooth	-	-	1	17%	-	-
Labret	-	-	1	17%	-	-
Drum piece	1	10%	-	-	-	-
Amulet/Amulet box	1	10%	-	-	1	14%
Gaming piece	-	-	1	17%	-	-

Table 42: Occurrence of decorated objects and ornaments/amulets per house (PcJq-5)

A. Harpoon heads

The most striking observations in harpoon head analyses are the stylistic correspondences between Houses 6 and 7 (Table 43, Table 44, Figure 70). This applies to ten specimens of Type 3s and Type 2s that seem to have been made by the same carver (plate 38: 6F and 7H, 6H and 7I, 6D and 7C). One of these, as mentioned above, is actually broken in two, and the fragments were found in the two houses. Unique and complementary designs are also found in each house. A finely decorated Sicco specimen (plate 38: 7A), a

Sicco-like Type 3 specimen (plate 38: 7D), and two large Type 2s were found in *karigi* 7 (plate 38: 7B, 7G). The Sicco harpoon head stands out in terms of its decoration which is imbedded into its general shape. Extremely fine incised lines delineate the contour of the object and valorise its total design. The harpoon head is also highly polished – it is made of antler, but almost looks like ivory. It is broken in half, unusable, but was perhaps kept by the occupants of the house as a souvenir, or as a model to inspire skillful carving. House 6 contained two closed socket type specimens. House 21 did not yield any Thule Inuit harpoon heads.

	House 6	House 7	House 21
TYPE 2s (stylistic att.)			
Large Type 2	-	2	-
Small Type 2	2	1	-
Self-bladed	2	3	-
Symmetrical barbs	2	2	-
Asymmetrical barbs	-	1	-
Round line hole	2	3	-
Triang./Rect. line hole	-	-	-
Lateral ridges at the base	2	1	-
Shoulders	2	-	-
Lashing slots	1	1	-
Lashing holes	1	-	-
Lashing bed	-	1	-
Straight spur	2	2	-
Angled spur	-	1	-
Facetted	2	1	-
Oval or Flat	-	2	-
Decoration : line	-	-	-
Decoration : triangle	-	-	-
Decoration : inverted "Y"	-	-	-
Total specimens	2	3	-
TYPE 3s (stylistic att.)			
Elongated (Clachan like)	1	-	-
Waist	1	-	-
Keel fore-end	1	-	-
Shoulders	-	-	-
Vestigial blade slots	-	-	-
Sicco type	-	1	-
Round line hole	3	5	-
Triangular line hole	-	-	-
Lashing slots	1	4	-
Lashing holes	2	1	-
Lashing bed	-	-	-
Straight spur	1	4	-
Angled spur	2	1	-
Bifurcated spur	-	-	-
Facetted	-	2	-
Oval or Flat	3	3	-
Decoration : line	1	2	-
Decoration : triangle	-	-	-
Decoration : inverted "Y"	1	2	-
Total specimens	3	5	0

Table 43: Stylistic attributes of harpoon head Type 2s and 3s found in each house (PcJq-5)

	House 6	House 7	House 21
TYPE 4s (stylistic att.)			
Single spur	1	-	-
Bifurcated/trifurcated spur	-	-	-
Straight spur	-	-	-
Angled spur	-	-	-
Decoration	-	-	-
Total specimens	1	-	-
Nuwuk (stylistic att.)			
Single spur	1	-	-
Bifurcated/trifurcated spur	-	-	-
Straight spur	-	-	-
Angled spur	1	-	-
Decoration	-	-	-
Total specimens	1	-	-
TYPE 5s (stylistic att.)			
Single spur	-	-	-
Bifurcated/trifurcated spur	-	-	1
Straight spur	-	-	-
Angled spur	-	-	-
Total specimens	-	-	1

Table 44: Stylistic attributes of the harpoon head Type 4s, Nuwuk and Type 5s found in each house (PcJq-5)

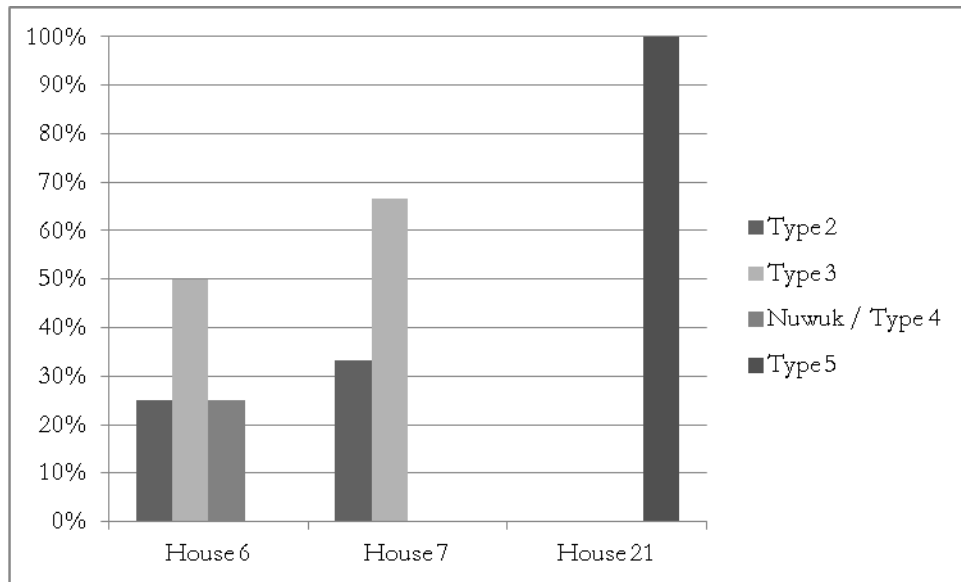


Figure 70: Relative frequencies of harpoon head types per house (PcJq-5)

B. Arrowheads

The comparison of arrowhead design patterns between the three houses revealed many correspondences, as shown in Table 45 and Figure 71. However, these correspondences are based on single attributes only, and do not display the same level of similarity between house assemblages as for harpoon heads, except for the specimens with inserted blades, which are identical not only between Houses 6 and 7, but also with specimens from Learmonth and Qariaraqyuk. In other words, beyond these shared attributes (the inserted-blade specimens), the total design of each arrowhead is otherwise distinct (plate 39, 40) (Figure 72, Figure 73, Figure 74).

	House 6	House 7	House 21
Inserted blade	2	3	-
Self-bladed	4	5	2
Barbed	2	3	1
Multiple barbs	-	1	1
Symmetrical barbs	-	-	-
Asymmetrical Barbs	-	1	1
Lanceolate (unbarbed)	1	3	-
Decoration	1	1	1
Base:spurs	2	6	2
Base : conical	1	1	-
Base : bevelled	2	1	-
Total specimens	6	12	2

Table 45: Distribution of arrowhead types and design per house (PcJq-5)

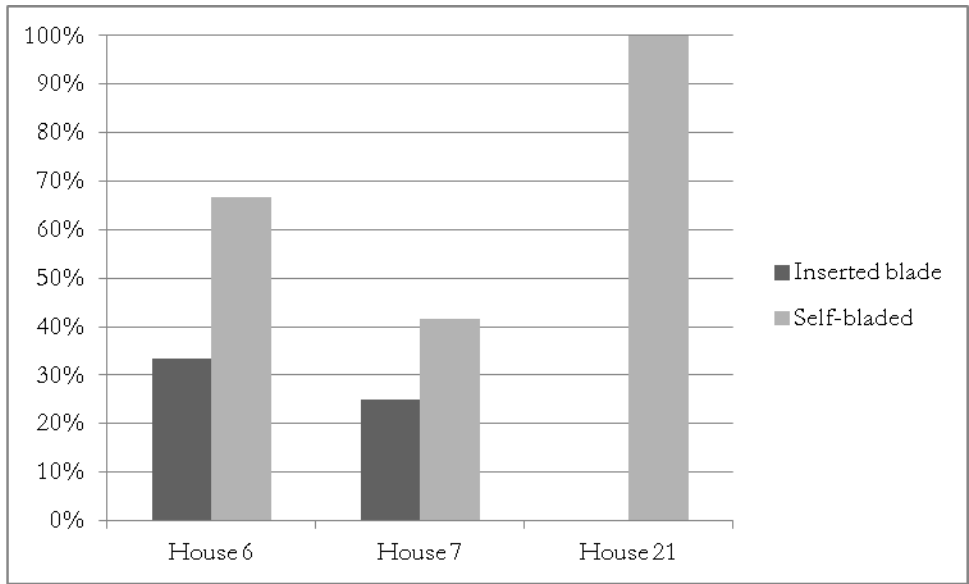


Figure 71: Relative frequencies of arrowhead types per house (PcJq-5)

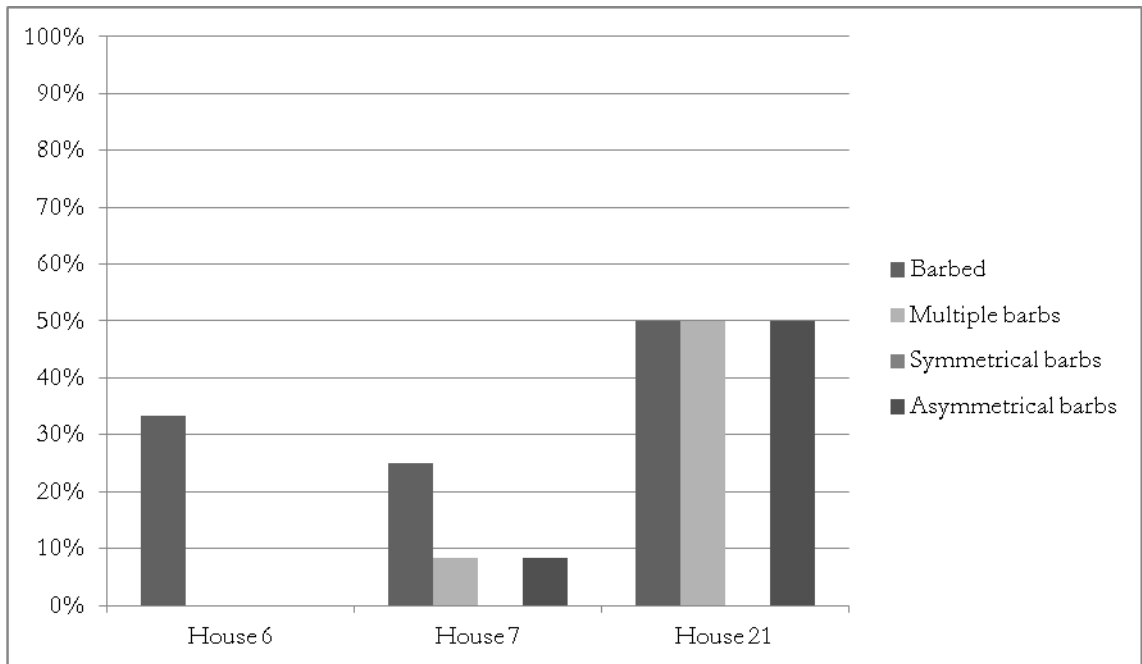


Figure 72: Relative frequencies of arrowhead barb designs per house (PcJq-5)

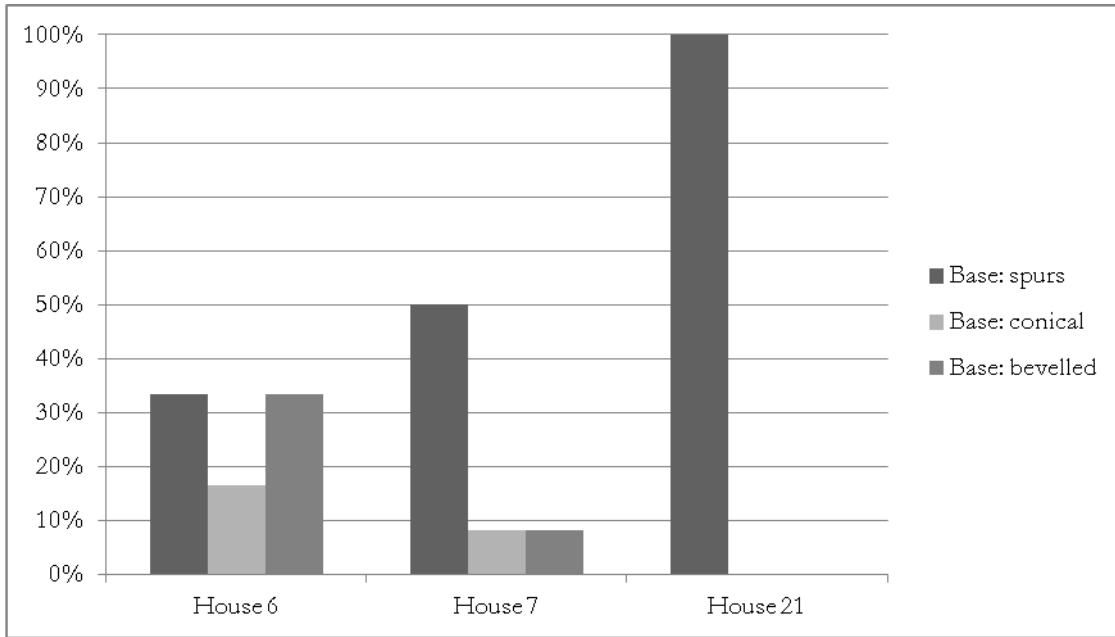


Figure 73: Relative frequencies of arrowhead base design per house (PcJq-5)

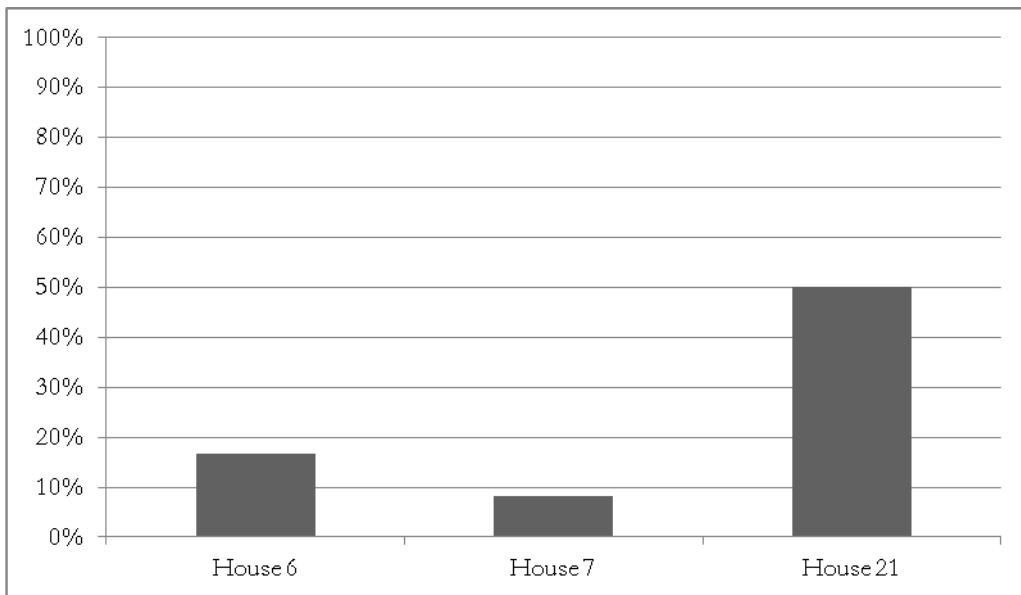


Figure 74: Relative frequencies of decorated arrowheads per house (PcJq-5)

C. Men's knife handles

End-bladed and side-bladed knife handles were found in each house (Table 46, Figure 75). The composite type was absent from House 6. Composite knives in Houses 7 and 21 were made of bevelled and drilled parts (plate 41, 42, and 43). Two decorated specimens were found in House 7 (plate 42: 7B; plate 43: 7J) (Figure 77). The decorated handle from House 6 is a preform of a side-bladed knife, displaying multiple series of Ys, oriented differently (plate 41: 6G). The shape of suspension holes in Houses 6 and 7 also correspond, both including single drilled holes, double drilled holes and gouged rectangular holes (Figure 76). However, handles found in House 7 also contain one triangular hole and two asymmetrical double drilled holes (plate 42: 7J and 7M), whereas the double drilled holes on handles found in House 6 are symmetrically positioned on the handle (plate 41: 6J).

	House 6	House 7	House 21
Small end-bladed	9	4	1
Large end-bladed	3	8	-
Side-bladed	3	9	-
Composite	-	2	1
Decorated	1	1	1
One suspension hole	7	14	2
Double suspension hole	1	2	-
Drilled suspension hole	7	11	2
Gouged suspension hole	1	4	-
Total specimens	15	23	2

Table 46: Occurrence of knife handle types and design elements per house (PcJq-5)

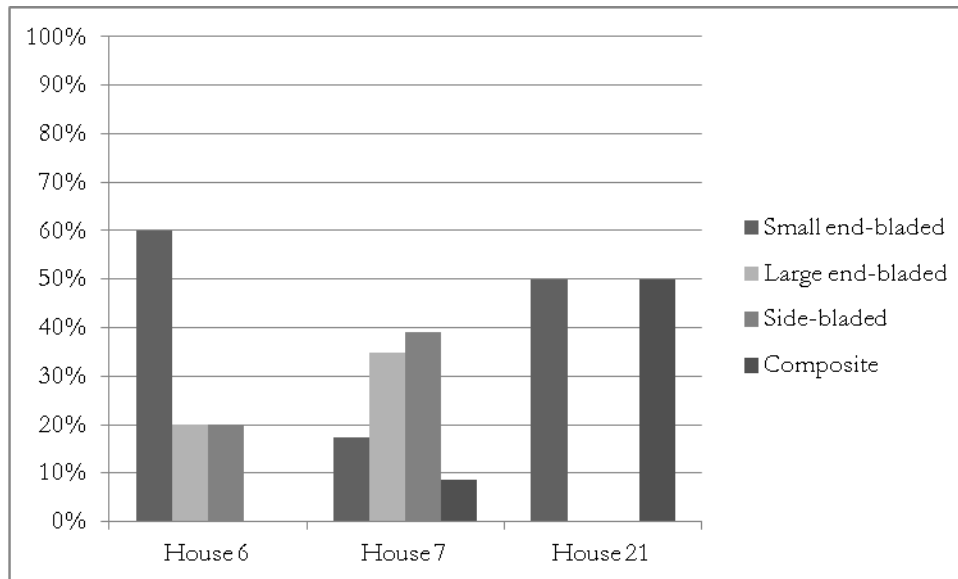


Figure 75: Relative frequencies of knife handle types per house (PcJq-5)

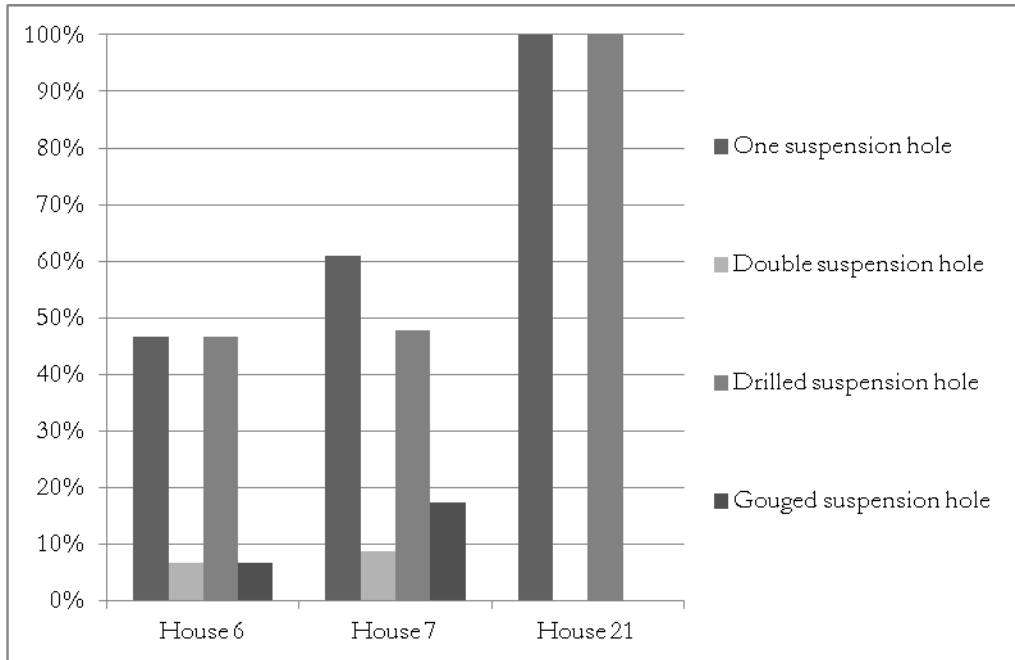


Figure 76: Relative frequencies of knife handle suspension hole types per house (PcJq-5)

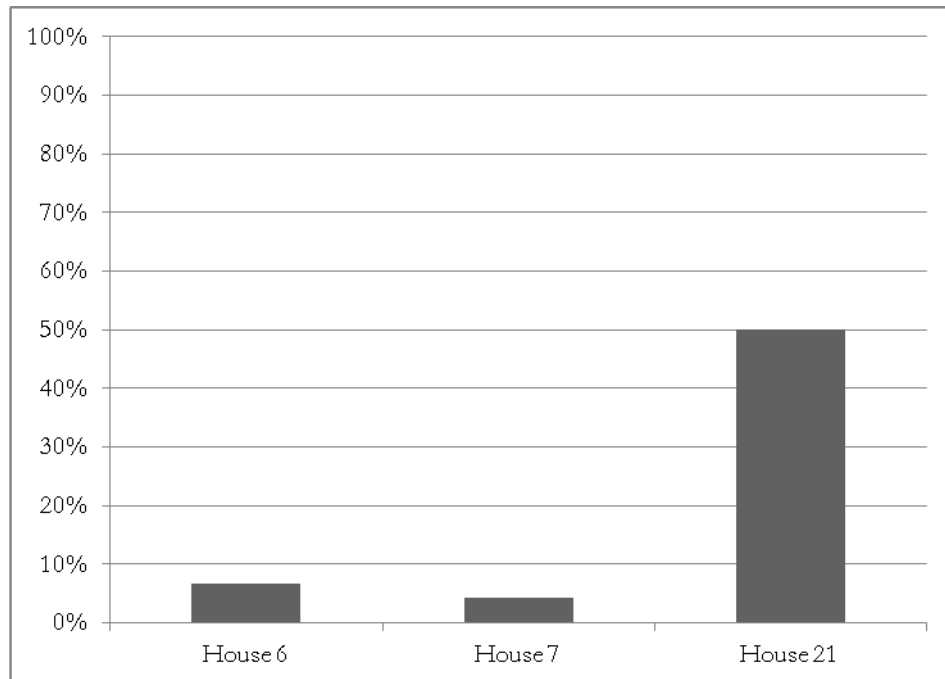


Figure 77: Relative frequencies of decorated knife handles per house (PcJq-5)

D. *Ulu* handles

The first observations common to all *ulu* handles at Cape Garry are their sturdiness, thickness and the care with which they were made. Except for one semi-circular specimen in House 7, they were all made of dense, heavy whale bone elements, are highly polished, have regular and symmetrical rectangular or hexagonal contours, and most show a marked protuberant edge above the hole. Houses 6 and 7 yielded specimens of the three functional categories, while House 21 lacked the small type (Table 47, Figure 78). House 7 contained a large *ulu* handle with an ownership mark representing a triangle (plate 45: 7B). This house also showed the greatest stylistic variability, thus reinforcing the suggestion of it being a communal house where men of different families would gather to make tools for themselves and their wives, daughters, and other women in their family (Figure 79).

	House 6	House 7	House 21
Small ulu	1	2	-
Medium ulu	2	4	1
Large ulu	1	1	1
Rectangular	1	1	2
Trapezoidal	3	4	-
Semi-circular	-	1	-
Curved	-	1	-
Tanged	-	2	-
Total specimens	4	7	2

Table 47: Occurrence of ulu handle types and design elements per house (PcJq-5)

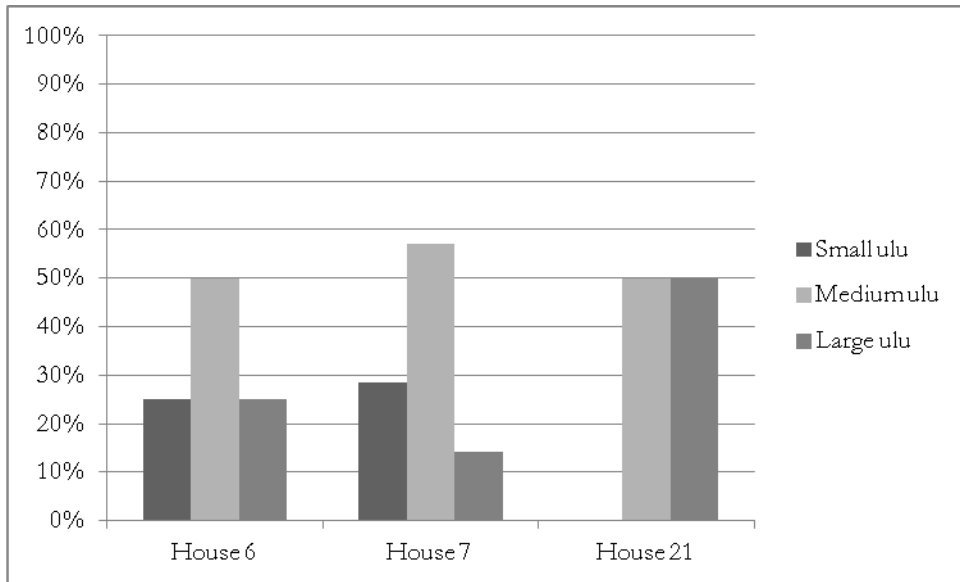


Figure 78: Relative frequencies of ulu handle types per house (PcJq-5)

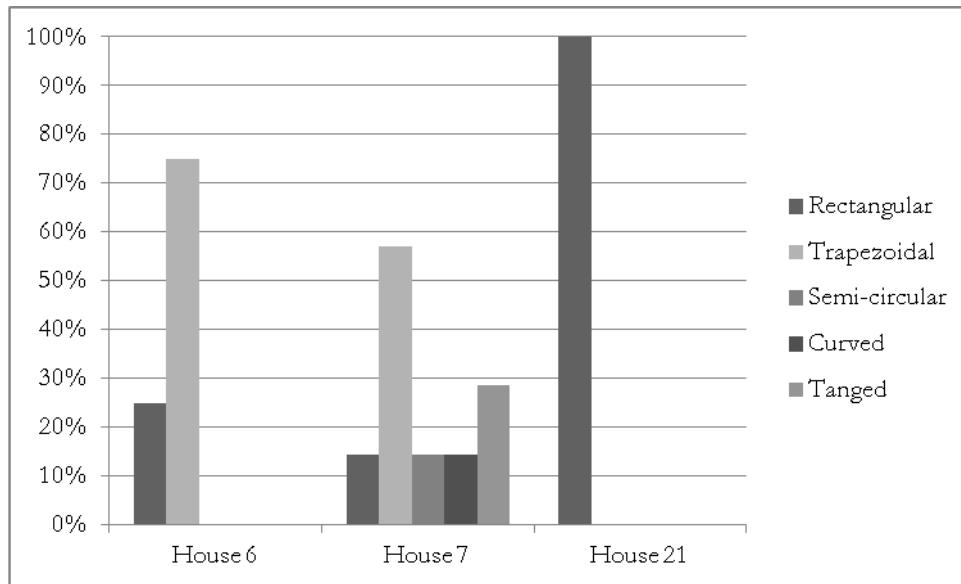


Figure 79: Relative frequencies of ulu handle shapes per house (PcJq-5)

E. Locally scarce material, exotic material, ornaments, amulets and communal artefacts

Metal blades, points and fragments were only found in Houses 6 and 7, in greater quantity in the latter (Table 48, Figure 80). However, metal points and blades inferred from blade slot widths on knife handles and hunting equipment were distributed equally among all houses (Table 49, Figure 81). In terms of artefact classes, the relative frequency of *ulu* with a metal blade is higher than any other artefact class within *karigi* 7, followed by men's knives and harpoon heads (Figure 82). House 6 lacks the data for *ulu* handles because the slots are broken. However, the sizes of the handles, especially their thickness, and visual examination of what remains of the broken slots, point towards metal slots for all specimens. This suggests that women were displaying their material wealth and that of their husband (or

father, or other male relatives) simultaneously, since metal could only have been obtained through trading against resources collected by men, most probably products of the whale hunt. This is also consistent with the special care with which the *ulu* handles were carved at Cape Garry.

As for harpoon head blades, those in House 6 displayed a higher frequency of slots for metal blades, compared to *karigi* 7 and House 21. In terms of ivory, the distribution was equal between Houses 7 and 21, and slightly more abundant in House 6. In House 21, the only artefact with an inferred metal blade slot was an *ulu* handle.

	House 6	House 7	House 21
Copper	-	3	-
Iron	6	3	-
Unidentified metal	-	1	-
Ivory	5	6	1
Total house assemblage	275	503	70

Table 48: Occurrence of exotic and locally scarce material per house (PcJq-5)

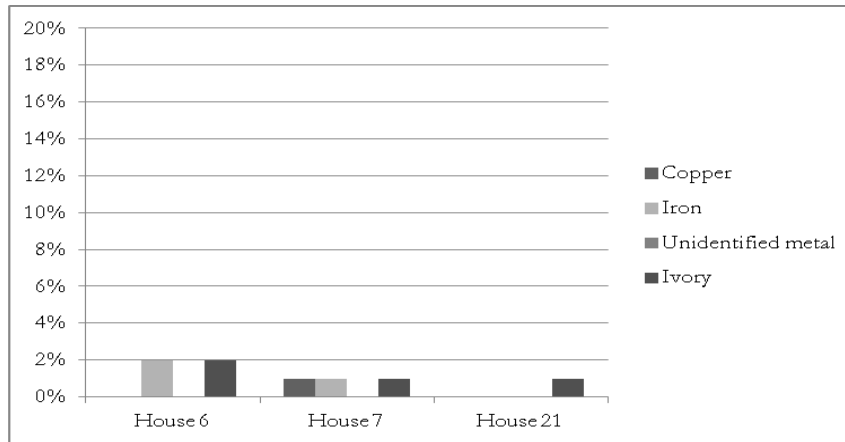


Figure 80: Relative frequency of exotic and locally scarce material per house (PcJq-5)

	House 6		House 7		House 21	
	M	S	M	S	M	S
Harpoon head slots	4	1	2	2	-	-
Knife slots	4	2	12	8	-	1
<i>Ulu</i> slots	-	1	3	1	1	1

Table 49: Blade material by house, inferred from slot width per house (PcJq-5)

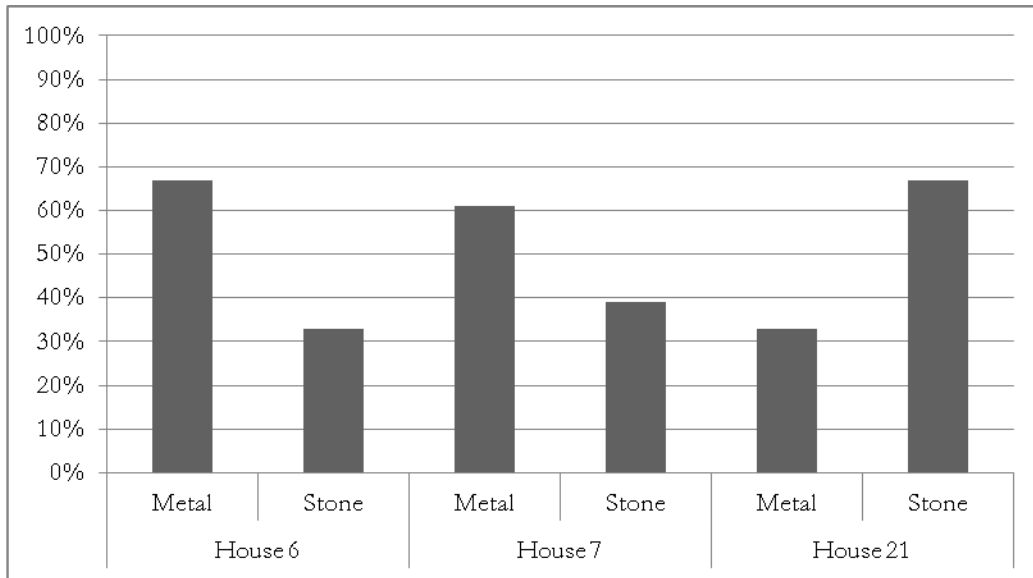


Figure 81: Relative frequencies of blade material by house, based on analysis of slot width per house (PcJq-5)

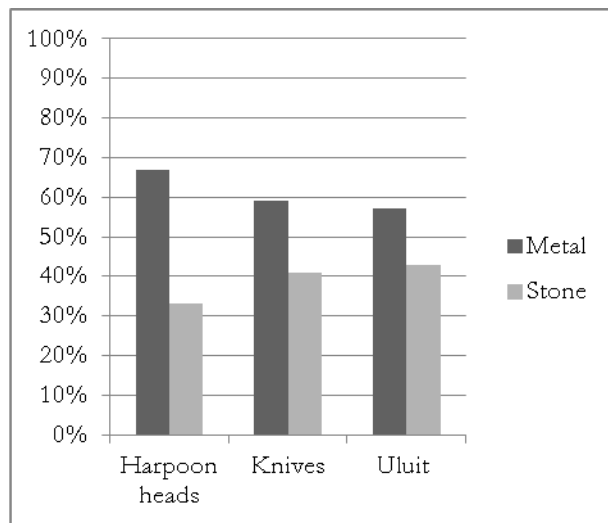


Figure 82: Relative frequencies of blade material per artefact class, inferred from slot width per house (PcJq-5)

Ornaments and amulets were not numerous at Cape Garry in comparison to Learmonth and Qariaraqyuk (Table 50, Figure 83, Figure 84, Figure 85). Their presence is more important in *karigi* 7 and in House 21 (plate 46) compared to House 6. A decorated

comb fragment, a stone pendant and a possible labret were found in House 7. Two brow bands and a bracelet were found in House 21. A bone pendant was found in House 6, made from the distal part of a fox femur, and might represent a whale tail. This reinforces the suggestion of the household being occupied by whale hunters and their families. Tooth pendants were found in each house, in higher number in House 6. The stone ornament in House 6 is not gender specific; such pendants were worn by both men and women among Inuit. It is thus suggested that both men and women were wearing ornaments in *karigi* 7 and House 6, but only women in House 21. This complements the ways in which women were displaying their wealth in Houses 6 and 7 (*ulu* handles with metal blades) – women in House 21 were showing it on their body, rather than in tools.

	House 6	House 7	House 21
Bear canine	2	-	1
Seal/fox/dog tooth	6	2	2
Pendant	-	1	-
Brow band/ bracelet	-	-	3
Comb/Comb tooth	-	1	-
Labret	-	1	-
Drum piece	1	-	-
Amulet/Amulet box	1	-	1
Gaming piece	-	1	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
% of ornaments, ritual and communal artefacts per total house assemblage	4%	1%	10%

Table 50: Occurrence of ornaments, ritual and communal objects per house (PcJq-5)

The drum frame found in House 6 and bone plaque game piece in House 7 are indicators of communal activities in this area of the site. A wooden amulet box was found in

House 21, with a notch at the bottom that could have served to attach a cord around the box, holding a lid on (plate 46: 21C). This amulet could have been for personal use, whereas the game piece and drum part from Houses 6 and 7 point more to collective (and eventually ceremonial) gatherings of whaling crew members.

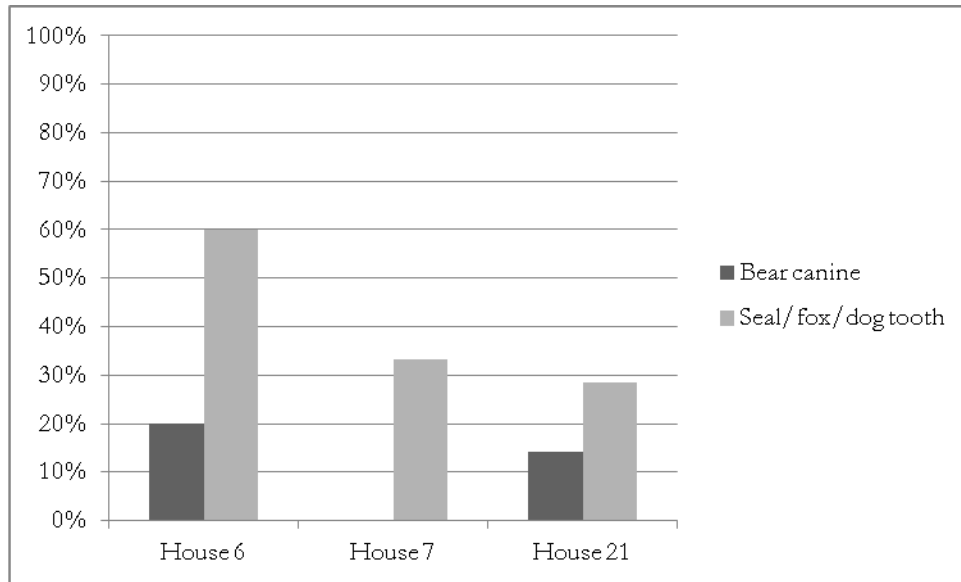


Figure 83: Relative frequencies of animal tooth pendants per house (PcJq-5)

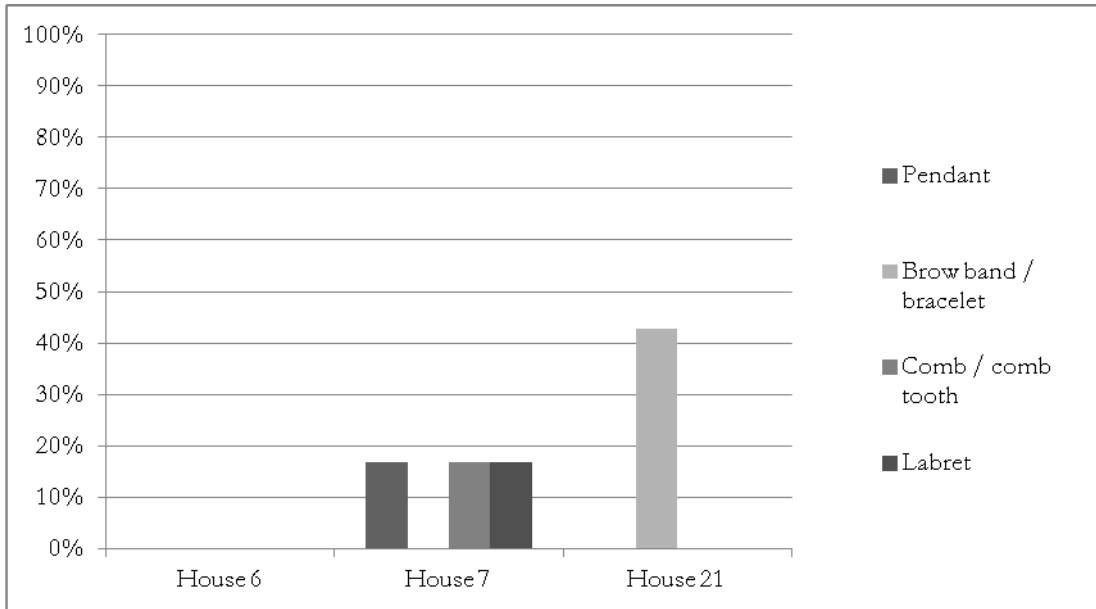


Figure 84: Relative frequencies of body and clothing ornaments per house (PcJq-5)

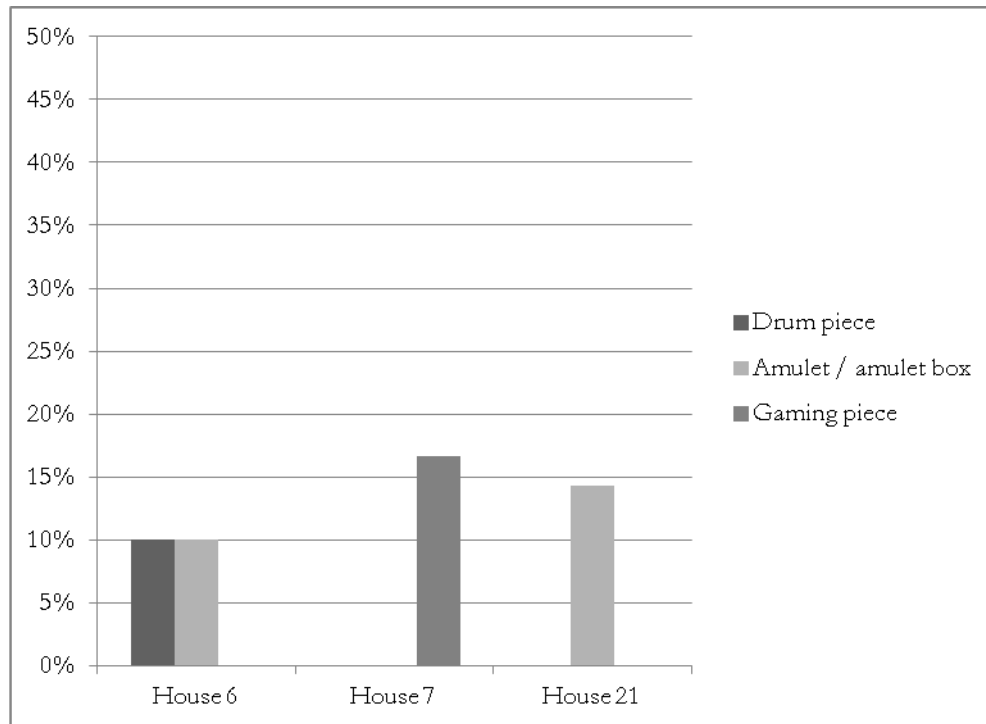


Figure 85: Relative frequencies of communal objects and amulets per house (PcJq-5)

12.5 Discussion

The social networks at Cape Garry, as revealed by material culture and settlement patterns, are similar to that of Learmonth. *Karigi* 7 was clearly used by occupants of the adjacent House 6, a pattern similar to House/*karigi* 5 at Learmonth and the dwellings in its cluster. Another similarity between the two sites is the complementary nature of House 21 assemblage, which suggests that it was occupied by a different family, distinct from Houses 6 and 7 (

Figure 86). Unfortunately, House 21 yielded no harpoon head, which would have been the object most indicative of male relatedness. Its distinct nature is interpreted here on the basis of the unique composite knife handle and the different ways by which women from this

house display their wealth through body ornaments. This reminds us of House 15 at Learmonth – distinct from the main whaling neighbourhood, but yet wealthy. The wealth of House 21 is inferred from these ornaments and from the high amount of whale crania in the architecture. As to Houses 6 and 7, it is inferred mostly from the amount of metal found therein.

Material indicators of social distinction at Cape Garry are different from those found at Learmonth and Qariaraqyuk. The relative amounts of metal and inferred metal blades and points from slot widths are actually higher than Learmonth, but lower than Qariaraqyuk. The relative frequency of ivory is the same at Cape Garry as at the two other sites, but ornaments and amulets are under-represented. This is not the result of sample size, at least when compared to Learmonth, since the same amounts of artefacts per house were excavated in each village. This brief inter-site comparison, which will be expanded in the next chapter, indicates that occupants of Cape Garry had a different strategy when it came to using and displaying material wealth, more oriented towards the possession and display of exotic and technologically sophisticated materials such as metal, than ornaments.

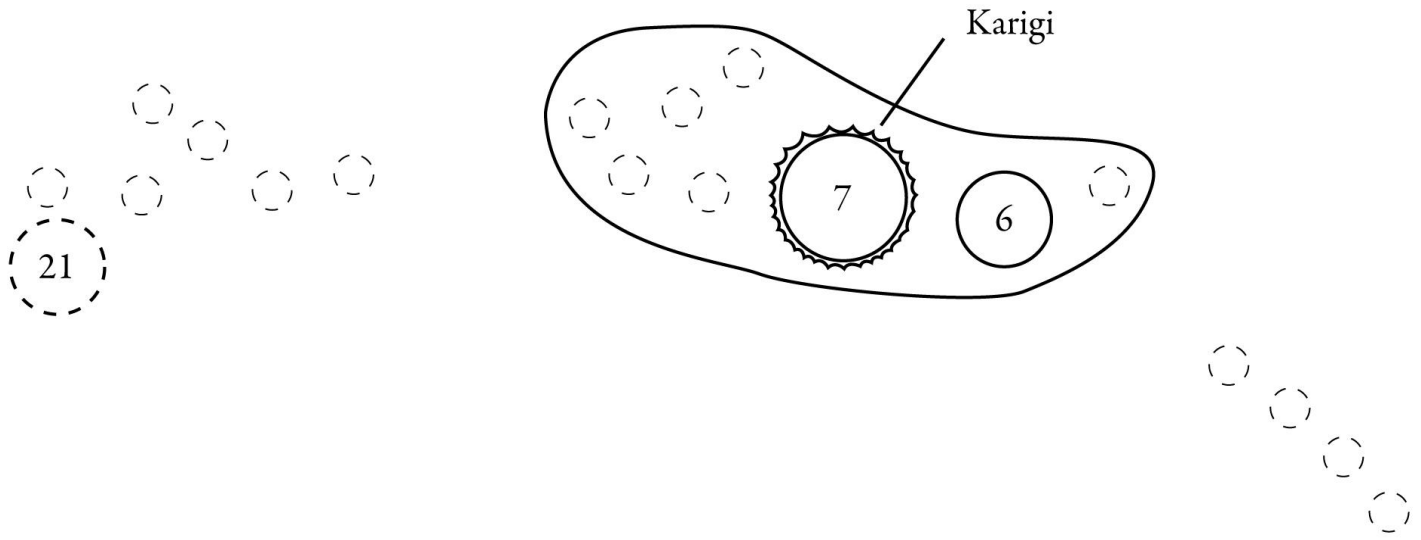


Figure 86: Diagram showing familial relations and social differentiation at Cape Garry. Familial links between houses are represented by their contours, and differential wealth is shown in house size (the wealthier, the larger).

13. Inter-site analysis and discussion

13.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I study social life at Qariaraqyuk, Learmonth and Cape Garry from a comparative point of view. The comparison of these three Thule Inuit villages allows me to reach a better understanding of their social networks both at the village and regional levels. The similarities and differences that I observe between these sites reveal a variety of social practices, personal and group interactions among Thule Inuit that a single site study alone could not display. I also assess the possible interactions that would have connected the villages together.

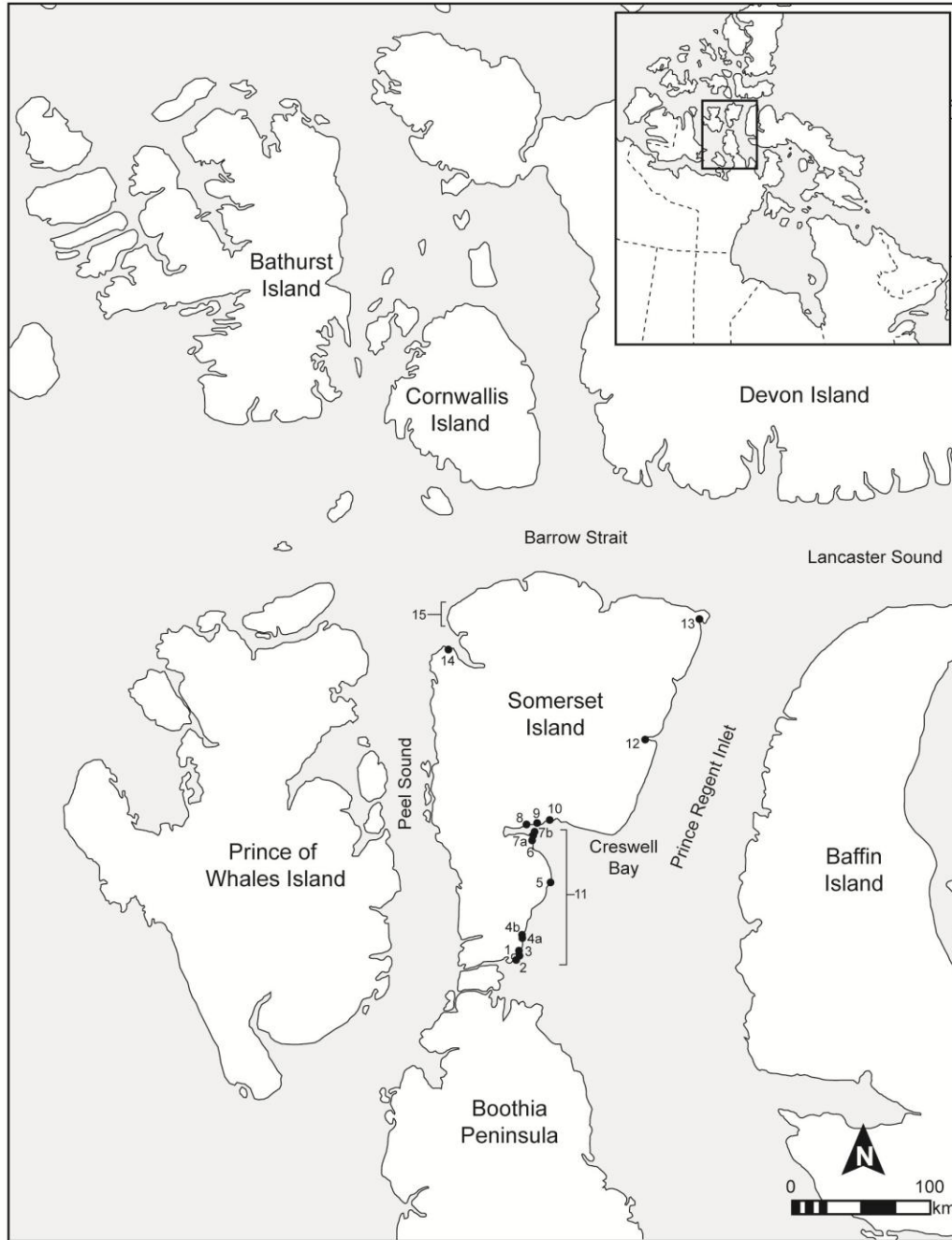
I discuss the strategies for social differentiation within and between the villages, and the ways in which social relatedness and distinctiveness was expressed materially at the regional level. I first present the differential ritual treatment of whale crania in each village, followed by a comparison of the architecture of *kariyit* at the three sites. This reveals the ways in which Thule Inuit whaling communities were distinct from one another in terms of architecture style and ritual habits, even though they shared the same culture and regional social network. As I will discuss shortly, this is supported by ethnographic analogy with Alaskan Inuit whaling societies, for which geographical proximity did not necessarily mean social or cultural cohesion (Burch 1981: 47; Spencer 1984: 327). However, since extended families and whaling crews formed the basic social groups both at the village and regional levels, these social relations often transcended settlement patterns. Consequently, cooperation did occur between these villages, and this was probably based on work and

trade partnerships, as well as kinship. In this chapter I discuss these hypotheses with the analyses of settlement patterns, the whaling success of each village, and their differential wealth. Wealth will be discussed through the relative frequencies of exotic and locally scarce material for each site, and the various ways in which this wealth was used and demonstrated by the occupants of the three villages. These differences are correlated to the settlement patterns (isolated villages vs. villages regrouped in a cluster) and have implications in terms of gender differentiation.

13.2 Ritual treatment of whale crania: regional variability

Savelle and Vадnais (2011) have studied the different ritual uses of whale crania among Thule Inuit whaling villages in the Central Arctic Archipelago, including the Cape Garry, Learmonth and Qariaraqyuk sites. They found two different patterns in the treatment of whale crania after the hunt. Hunters from Qariaraqyuk and Learmonth did not bring all the cranial bones of the captured whales back to their permanent villages. Many were instead left at the nearby autumn whaling camps (PaJs-4 and Near sites, see Figure 87). Occupants of Cape Garry, on the other hand, brought the cranial bones back to their main winter village. In both scenarios, the cranial bones were used in the construction of dwellings and *kariyit*. Savelle and Vадnais (2011) sought an explanation for these differential practices in the ethnographic analogy with Inuit whaling societies in Alaska (Burch 1981; Lantis 1938; Larson 2003; Lowenstein 1993; Rainey 1947; Sheehan 1997; Spencer 1959). In the Alaskan context of the 20th century, two types of ritual practices were indeed observed: some used the bowhead whale cranial bones in the construction of ceremonial dwellings and/or the *umialit*'s households, while others systematically returned the whales' crania to the sea. As

they contained the whale's soul, returning them to the sea would ensure the soul's reincarnation. At the Thule Inuit villages studied here, the crania of the whale were systematically used in dwelling construction, but in two different ways: at the whaling autumn camp, or at the more permanent winter village. For the analogy, we have here a consistent fact between the past and the present: whaling communities in the same region and social networks had distinct practices in terms of the use of whale crania. This coexistence of distinct ritual practices has been observed among Alaskan societies, for which villages were politically and economically self-sufficient and conceptualized as separate districts (Burch 1981 and Harritt 2003, cited in Savelle and Vadnais 2011: 110). That is, spatial proximity did not necessarily mean social and cultural homogeneity. This reminds us of Tarde's notions of imitation and opposition as forms of interactions within social networks. The opposition of different social groups, expressed here in differential cultural practices, plays a role in the creation of the social equilibrium between whaling communities at the regional level. These differences are also observed in the architecture of *keariyit* presented below.



Thule Inuit Whaling Sites

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Qariarqyuk | 6. Idlout Point South | 11. Beach Sites |
| 2. Ditchburn Point South | 7a. Idlout Point Middle | 12. Batty Bay |
| 3. Ditchburn Point North | 7b. Idlout Point North | 13. Port Leopold |
| 4a. PaJs-4 | 8. Learmonth | 14. Aston Bay South |
| 4b. PaJs-13 | 9. Near | 15. Aston Bay North (6 sites) |
| 5. Cape Garry | 10. Qoak | |

Figure 87: Thule Inuit sites on Somerset Island (after Savelle 2000)

13.3 *Kariyit architecture: regional variability*

Spencer (1959: 182-184) described different types of *kariyit* from various villages in Northern Alaska in the first half of the 20th century. They were built along the following architectural continuum: solid semi-subterranean dwellings, large snow houses, large skin tents and upturned *umiaks*, depending on the type of settlement, the season, the means, the needs and the customs of the whalers. Often, their architecture was identical to that of family households.

An analogical variability was observed among the three sites of the present study. Communal non-residential structures were found at Cape Garry and Qariaraqyuk. Both sites include circular paved floors surrounded by remnants of a bench; they lack sleeping platforms and have numerous bowhead crania built into the wall – six in House 41 at Qariaraqyuk, and ten in House 7 at Cape Garry. At Learmonth, no such structure was found. Instead, a large dwelling with two main rooms, two bowhead crania and a total of 277 whale bones included in the construction is considered to be the household of an *umialik*, also used as a ceremonial or communal house (Savelle, personal communication 2013). Burch (1959: 182-184) observed similar practices at Point Hope and Tikeraaq, where *kariyit* were built in essentially the same way as usual dwellings, but larger. Of the two rooms of House 5 at Learmonth, one had a sleeping platform and a possible bench. The other room was not excavated fully, so it is impossible to confirm its function. However, due to its size, it has been suggested that it was a second dwelling area (McCartney 1979: 290). The overlap of the different artefact designs occurring in House 5 suggest that this dwelling was used for communal gatherings involving individuals from other houses, thus confirming the *kariyit*

nature of this house as a communal dwelling used by whaling crew members, notably for rituals, ceremonies, games and tool manufacturing and maintenance.

The inordinate amount of whale bones, especially crania, in the construction of these *kariyit* can be interpreted as a way to signal the power of the whaling crew leader who owns the house. Cranial bones exposed in the entrance of communal houses signal efficiently the amount of whales that an *umialik* was able to capture. They are the embodiments of a large amount of human energy, the technical skills of a whaling crew and the ability of their leader to mobilise their work. Such monumental architecture (Trigger 1990), built with the very products of the *umialik*'s power, is significant of his supremacy, and tends to reinforce it. The *kariyit* identified at Qariaraqyuk, Learmonth and Cape Garry are thus direct signs (Peirce's notion of index) of their power, and of the processes of social differentiation in the villages. However, occupants had different ways of signalling their power architecturally speaking, with formal communal houses at Cape Garry and Qariaraqyuk, and an adjacent room to the leader's house at Learmonth.

13.4 Regional settlement patterns: cooperation and competition

In comparing the communities in the study region, we can observe correlations between settlement patterns and differential whaling success. Savelle (2000) identified in the present research area village clusters (including Qariaraqyuk and Learmonth) for which whaling success was higher than in isolated villages such as Cape Garry (Table 51). Savelle suggested that this success was the result of coordinated whaling activities between these villages, located within a maximum of 10 km radius. In these cases, whaling crews from

different villages would have probably met at whaling camps in the region. This was the case with the Learmonth village, associated with the Qoak winter village, the Near whaling camp (22 dwellings and *karjyit*) and Idlout Point sites (3 winter villages), as well as Qariaraqyuk, associated with Ditchburn Point sites (2 winter villages,) the winter village PaJs-13 and the whaling camp PaJs-4 (60 dwellings and *karjyit*). The winter village Cape Garry is isolated, without any other villages or whaling camps within a 20 km radius.

	MAU	Dwelling	Whaling success (average MAU Dwelling)
Qariaraqyuk	1089	67	17.02
Learmonth	252.5	16	15.78
Cape Garry	190	26	7.31

Table 51: Whaling success of Qariaraqyuk, Learmonth and Cape Garry villages, assessed by the ratio of individual whales killed (MAU - Minimal Animal Unit) per dwelling (after Savelle 2010)

Table 51 shows how whaling success is calculated with zooarchaeological data. The Minimal Animal Unit (MAU) corresponds to the amount of individual whales that were hunted and brought back to each village. When we look at the MAU in relation to village size, differential whaling productivity for each community is revealed. Qariaraqyuk and Learmonth have an average of 17.02 and 15.78 whales per house, more than twice that of Cape Garry at 7.31. These results are particularly striking for Learmonth. Although the smallest site of the three in terms of house numbers, Learmonth exhibits high whaling success, close to that of the large village Qariaraqyuk. Comparatively, Cape Garry, larger and more socially differentiated in terms of *karigi* architecture has much lower whaling success than Learmonth. An explanation for this phenomenon is found in the regional settlement

patterns: despite being large and socially differentiated, an isolated village does not have the same level of whaling success as others that are in a cooperative network and geographical cluster.

13.5 Whaling success, trade and gender differentiation

Regional interactions and differential whaling success are not the only socio-economic features in which these three villages differ in meaningful ways. The relative amounts of iron, copper and ornaments for each site reveal different socio-economic realities and strategies for each village, which are explained again by the presence or absence of regional interactions (Table 52⁵⁷).

	Metal	Amber	Ivory	Musk ox horn / teeth	Ornaments
Qariaraqyuk	6.5%	1.17%	5.83%	1.67%	3.93%
Learmonth	0.81%	0.21%	3%	0.07%	10.73%
Cape Garry	1.24%	0%	1.4%	0%	2.44%

Table 52: Relative frequencies of exotic/locally scarce materials and ornaments found in each site

Whaling success, exotic material trading networks and socio-economic differentiation are interdependent phenomena among Thule Inuit bowhead whaling societies. In successful years, the bowhead harvest would have generated food, oil for fuel and useful raw material such as baleen that probably exceeded the needs of whaling villages, including the larger ones. Trade in exotic and locally scarce material provided the means of converting the

⁵⁷ Blade slot widths are not included in this comparison, because measurements for Qariaraqyuk were not made using the same method as for Learmonth and Cape Garry.

whaling surplus into other valued commodities through interregional trade networks (Whitridge 1999a: 256). Exotic and locally scarce materials would have been essential for the basic well-being of the community. Caribou hide was probably one of the most important materials imported, much needed for making clothing, tents and bedding. However, it has very poor archaeological visibility. Other locally scarce and exotic materials such as ivory, horn, metal and amber are more commonly found in Thule Inuit archaeological sites, with sample sizes that allow for regional comparison (Whitridge 1999a: 252). As discussed in previous chapters, these are considered luxury goods because they could all have been replaced by locally abundant materials in order to achieve the same technological purposes – materials such as whale bone, antler and stone.

Luxury goods were integrated into internal socio-economic strategies at the village level. Ethnographic analogy with Alaskan Inuit suggests that Thule Inuit *umialiit* recruited boat crew members through a mix of technical, social and material influence and power, which included rewarding crew members with commodities obtained through interregional trade networks, in exchange for their labour. Whitridge suggests that the additional flow of these resources from wealthy *umialiit* and crew members to poorer households resulted in unequal relations of gift-incurred debt and ultimately lower status and social differentiation at the village level, which would have been the case at Qariaraqyuk (Whitridge 1999a; Whitridge 2002: 170-171). Effectively, most of the exotic materials found at this site were concentrated in the largest cluster of whaling households, Houses 38 and 41. This kind of differentiation also occurred at Learmonth, but was less pronounced. This concentration of wealth in the whaling social networks of Qariaraqyuk and Learmonth goes hand-in-hand

with the intensity of social cohesion and interactions revealed by artefact styles in these whaling households. As mentioned above, these houses yielded the highest amount of decoration and personal signatures on men's tools, as well as the greatest levels of stylistic variability on these artefacts, but always within specific norms, for example the styles of Type 2/Clachan and Type 3/Sicco-like harpoon heads, arrowheads with a unique barb and incised linear decoration, or men's knife handles with round, triangular and rectangular suspension holes. These specific norms are also visible in other Thule Inuit sites throughout the Canadian Arctic during this time period, especially the Sicco and Clachan harpoon heads (Collins 1937; Ford 1959: 86; Le Mouël and Le Mouël 2000: 191-192; Morrison 1983: 78, 90-92; Taylor 1963; Whitridge 1999: 77), reminding us of the interregional aspects of these whaling networks.

It is intriguing to see that people at Learmonth, although they had whaling success almost as high as Qariaraqyuk, did not import as much exotic material. However, Learmonth village yielded relatively higher numbers of ornaments than Qariaraqyuk, and these are types of ornaments mostly associated with women. This comparison suggests that at Learmonth, it was important for wealthy women to materially demonstrate their status, by wearing body and clothing ornaments, more than women living in wealthier villages like Qariaraqyuk. This may have been a sign of inter-village interaction in which unrelated families were making alliances through marriage (Savelle, personal communication 2013), a practice documented among Inuit (e.g. Damas 1971; Guemple 1971). House 35 at Qariaraqyuk and House 15 at Learmonth support this hypothesis, as they contained unusual amounts of ornaments and

were neither spatially nor stylistically fully integrated in the communities. It is suggested that occupants were visiting families.

From this perspective, the low occurrence of ornaments at Cape Garry becomes logically understandable. Its isolated position from other villages and whaling camps, both spatially and socio-economically, reduced the need of its occupants to demonstrate wealth in terms of body or clothing ornaments. This does not mean that they did not have any contact with other villages in Creswell Bay and Hazard Inlet; they surely participated in trading networks, since copper and iron were found in larger quantity than at Learmonth. Occupants at Cape Garry also had an active ceremonial life, very similar to that of Qariaraqyuk, as revealed by the specialised *karigi* (House 7). However, receiving visitors from other villages, an occasion for which people would have felt a great need to ‘wear their wealth’, was not a common practice at Cape Garry. Instead, as discussed in Chapter 12, women living at Cape Garry had access to metal in a very high proportion, equal to if not more than men, and were using it in their most important everyday life tasks with their *ulu*, as indicated by blade slot widths. In addition, *ulu* handles at Cape Garry compared to the two other sites are made with more aesthetic care and dexterity and are made with heavier and sturdier whale bones. One specimen even has an ownership mark, which is usually a practice associated with men’s tools and equipment. This gives the impression of greater gender equilibrium at Cape Garry, in comparison to differentiation at Qariaraqyuk (Whitridge 1999; 2004), and Learmonth. I thus suggest that self-sufficient socio-economic strategies at Cape Garry could only work with an internal social equilibrium. Since the basic socio-economic unit among Inuit is the couple, gender equality automatically becomes necessary under these

conditions. Internal gender inequalities at Qariaraqyuk and Learmonth, in which most exotic material was acquired and consumed by wealthy whalers, and where women wore a lot of ornaments, a social strategy that pertains to inter-site and regional levels of social interactions.

13.6 Discussion

The comparison of the material culture found at Qariaraqyuk, Learmonth and Cape Garry has revealed three main conclusions about social life within and between these Thule Inuit communities. First, their occupants had different practices in terms of whale crania disposal and use, and in terms of *kariyit* architecture. Both practices relate to ritual and ceremonial treatment of the whale remains, as well as the construction and expression of socio-economic rank and leadership of powerful *umialiit*. This means that whaling crews and their leaders from different communities had distinctive cultural practices specifically oriented around ceremonial life and the monumental display of their statuses and identities. These stylistic signatures, visible from a communal point of view, would have served to create and maintain a feeling of belonging for the members of the communities and they would have been a way to distinguish members of this community from neighbours visiting the village. This brings us back to the analogy with Alaskan whaling societies and their Messenger Feast, during which a powerful *umialik* invited peers from neighbouring communities in order to engage in a series of games, competitions and displays of wealth. With such a cultural, political and economical context analogically in mind, the architectural and ritualistic differences between Qariaraqyuk, Learmonth and Cape Garry make complete sense. The occupants of these villages were probably engaged in different forms of social

and economical interactions, and needed to display certain levels of distinctiveness for these matters.

The second major conclusion presented in this chapter pertains specifically to these interactions between the three villages. It is clear from settlement patterns and differential whaling success that some villages cooperated with each other in order to enhance their productivity. This cooperation was certainly marked with competition, which is typical of traditional Inuit social life as explained in Chapter 6. Friendly competition was a way to build and maintain good relations among and between communities, while allowing individuals to valorise their personal skills and statuses. In the whale hunt, several crews from different communities would have cooperated to kill the animal, to bring it back to the shore and butcher it; however, only the first harpooner (its leader and crew member) would 'win' the hunt. Among Alaskan whaling societies, winning the hunt was a sign of honour stemming from the technological, technical and social skills of the leader and his crew, and this honour was further reinforced by the sharing of the best parts of the carcass to the winning team and the special roles that they would play in the ceremonies after the hunt. With this analogy in mind, and in the light of Tarde's social laws of imitation (forms of cooperation between hunters) and opposition (friendly competition between hunters), we understand better these competitive aspects of cooperation between Thule Inuit whaling communities. Strong and effective social networks within and between communities were necessary to this coordination of whaling activities at the regional level. In these networks, the more interaction through friendly competition and collaboration, the higher the success. This

success was then converted into material wealth, which is the subject of the third main conclusion of this chapter.

This third and last finding explains further the socio-economic differentiation between whaling crews and communities. By looking at how the whaling surplus was converted into material wealth, we understand better the motivations of *umialiit* to compete in order to gain more successful hunts. The trading networks discussed in this chapter show very well how locally scarce and exotic materials, both valued for utilitarian and aesthetic reasons, were obtained. The acquisition of these materials depended on the whaling success of individuals and their social networks, so the possession and display of objects made with them participated in the reinforcement of their statuses. Iron, copper, ivory, amber, musk-ox horn and objects finely crafted with these materials, were then entrenched into these social phenomena, playing additional roles in the social life of their makers and owners. However, and very importantly, strategies for displaying this wealth varied from one village to another. Metal used in men's implements such as blades for harpoon heads, arrowheads and knives were predominant at Qariaraqyuk. Ornaments made of ivory and amber, mostly for women, were particularly abundant at Learmonth. At Cape Garry, material wealth was shared equally among men and women's daily implements, and this represents a unique socio-economic strategy for the occupants of this village centred on gender equality.

To conclude, this comparison of my material culture analyses for the three whaling villages proved to be highly revealing for our archaeological knowledge of Thule Inuit social life. It has disclosed a wide range of possible strategies in terms of social bonding, competition and cooperation, as well as the gender differentiation and equilibrium within

and between communities. This contributes substantially to archaeological knowledge of Thule Inuit social networks and the role played by material culture therein.

Conclusion

This final section offers some reflections on the three main contributions of my research to anthropology, archaeology and the Inuit community. I first discuss how I developed an innovative method for the ethnographic analogy between Inuit and Thule Inuit, notably by integrating different sources of ethnographic information (written and oral) and by generating new anthropological knowledge about Inuit material culture (ethnographic collections from the 20th century). My use of ethnographic analogy was also innovative as it integrated trends from critical theory: undertaking research *with* Inuit, not only *about* Inuit; an ethnographic analogy that is relevant simultaneously for archaeological science, anthropological knowledge about Inuit and for Inuit themselves.

Secondly, I reflect specifically on my archaeological findings and their relevance for Inuit people. I discuss the complexity of Thule Inuit social networks revealed by my research, and how this new knowledge can be made valuable for Inuit today. Thus, I explain ways in which my research fulfills a decolonisation agenda in Arctic archaeology. I also stress how my research with Inuit elders and the ethnographic collections at the McCord Museum proved to be useful and relevant for them, both at the personal and the collective levels. Thirdly, I comment on my methodology for archaeological research engaged with Inuit people. This goes beyond simple collaboration with Inuit individuals and communities; it is about developing a moral and ethical engagement as researchers towards Inuit people and their sociocultural paradigms.

Critical ethnographic analogy

My research has demonstrated the value of Inuit ethnographic literature and Inuit ethnographic collections for Thule Inuit archaeological research, in the direct historical approach (Stahl 1993; Wylie 1985a, 1988). I have developed new ways to connect various sources of information about Inuit social life and material culture of the present and recent past: early 20th century ethnographies from different locations in the North American Arctic, anthropological publications about Inuit traditions and socio-cultural change, and Inuit elders' stories about their social lives and material culture. I have integrated these different written and oral sources with the aim of identifying within them trends of information about Inuit social life and material culture that reinforce and complement one another, and that were oriented towards my archaeological research questions.

Very importantly, I have developed an innovative methodology for doing ethnographic analogy in the direct historical approach, using museum collections. I selected Inuit ethnographic artefacts analogous to their Thule Inuit archaeological counterparts with the aim of studying them with Inuit elders in a way that fed into my research hypothesis and guided my archaeological interpretations. I also analysed the elders' comments in the light of cutting-edge theories in material culture studies (e.g. Ingold 2007, 2000; Gell 1992, 1998) and relevant anthropological and sociological theories (e.g. Latour 2005; Tarde 1893, 1898). I built premises for the analogy, thoroughly studying both sides of the equation, ethnographical and archaeological. My research has generated new knowledge not only in the field of Thule Inuit archaeology, but also in the ethnological and anthropological field of Inuit studies.

I developed this analogical method with a strong post-colonial awareness (Bruchac et al. 2010; Liebman and Rizvi 2008; Smith and Jackson 2006; Smith and Wobsts 2003), very much informed by critical theory (Leone et al. 1987; Wylie 1985b). Working hand-in-hand with Inuit elders at the McCord Museum and using their oral history archives from Igloodik was my first step to contributing to the decolonisation of Thule Inuit archaeology. Here, the ethnographic analogy (direct historical approach) was done directly with Inuit individuals and not only with written works about them. My research integrated their voices directly in the analogy and gave them an opportunity to participate actively in research about their ancestors and their material culture. Critical theory brought self-reflexivity to my research and awareness of the assumptions underlying representations of the past (Wylie 1985b). I critically studied representations of the Inuit past from the point of view of historians, ethno-historians, anthropologists, archaeologists and Inuit themselves during different time periods. I weighted the relevance of these multivocal perspectives according to my research questions. I did not apply the elders' knowledge and stories directly to the Thule Inuit assemblages of Qariaraqyuk, Learmonth and Cape Garry villages. Rather, I synthesised the elders' narratives, filtered them and analysed them in order to build analogical premises that were aligned with my research questions and that were informed by anthropological theories of material culture and social networks. Critical theory encouraged me to acknowledge my role in the analogy, while making my research as relevant as possible for the Inuit elders that I worked with. By 'relevant' I mean aligned with the elders' perspectives for the sake of reconstructing a version of their ancestors' social life that Inuit would recognise and value, while being archaeologically and anthropologically significant and groundbreaking.

Archaeological findings

The portrait that I built of Thule Inuit whaling societies from Somerset Island discloses social networks that were substantially complex. Although guided by common principles, expressions of personal identity and social relations differed from one village to another. My archaeological analyses revealed that these differences were mainly linked to various degrees of involvement in regional socio-economic networks. Although familial relations were the main determinants of social life, regional interactions had a marked impact on intra-village social life and identities. Both levels of analyses had to be considered to understand their social networks and material culture. The comparative approach between house and site assemblages was thus an essential methodological tool to answer questions about the social dynamics of Thule Inuit whaling communities, not only from an archaeological perspective but also in accordance with contemporary Inuit social life and knowledge.

This nuanced perspective on Thule Inuit social relations resonates with the postcolonial trends presented in Chapter 2. Notably, by avoiding monolithic and fixed representations of the past, I have contributed to the re-construction of Inuit ancient history that is closer to contemporary Inuit. Even in the restricted geographical area and time span of the present study, I have identified the various ways in which Thule Inuit individuals and communities experimented with their social relations, in conjunction with their material culture, similarly to that of present day Inuit (Briggs 1991). Each of the three villages studied had its own version of Thule Inuit social life, just as contemporary Inuit communities today develop their unique local trends within Inuit traditions (Briggs 1997). Although many Inuit

easily identify with a national, and even international, Inuit collectivity, each town, village and community has its own version of Inuit customs, practices, stories and dialects. My research demonstrated that eight centuries ago, Thule Inuit whaling societies had a similarly textured socio-cultural life.

Additionally, social differentiation between households and villages revealed a Thule Inuit society that was more complex and hierarchical than that of their Inuit descendants. This completely inverts evolutionary visions of prehistory typical of late Victorian colonial trends, in which ancient hunter-gatherers are depicted as primitive, at the bottom of the evolutionary scale (Service 1971; Steward 1955). Thule Inuit bowhead whaling societies accumulated whale surplus, trading it for exotic items which served mainly to reinforce the prestige of leaders, and to allow them to further their success, socially and economically. Although the sharing of resources was one of the most important rules of social life, it was mainly done through redistribution by leaders to the rest of the community, creating a form of debt and obligation towards the leaders. The material wealth observed at some villages, especially Qariaraqyuk, demonstrates how hierarchical these communities were. This level of socio-economic complexity is unique and has never been seen again in the history of Inuit in the Canadian Arctic, at least until modern times.

From this perspective, the revival of bowhead whale hunting in the Canadian Arctic in the past 25 years can be seen as a way to re-connect with a very complex, textured and prosperous past – and not a return to primitive and simple ways of living. Hunting these large whales not only requires special Inuit knowledge and physical skills, it also mobilises entire communities, activating social relations on a large scale, which requires a complex

organisation in the preparation of the hunt, the hunting itself, the butchering and the sharing of the animal. Bowhead whaling is a social act, a highly complex one. It creates, organises and reinforces cohesion within and between communities, both in the past and in the present. The hunters from Kangiqsujuaq who undertook their first hunt in Nunavik in 2008 (Alaku 2013; Annahatak 2013; Arngak 2013; Kiatainak 2013; Nappaaluk 2013; Qisiiq 2013; Qisiiq and Qisiiq 2013)⁵⁸ all agreed on these points: hunting a bowhead whale is a hard task. It is dangerous and intimidating. It requires not only skill, but also a lot of courage and determination. Pulling the animal back onto the beach and butchering it is the most difficult part of the adventure, as the harpooner recounts: “We weren’t able to get the whole carcass onto the land. We had tried to get it ashore by hauling on its tail. So we were only able to work on it when the tide went out, and we had to stop when the tide came back in. We worked on that carcass for four days, going there in the morning and going back to the community in the evening” (Annahatak 2013: 124). The whaling crews actually lost part of the meat because they did not have the right cutting tools to butcher it: “The meat was wasted as a result. We were continually sharpening the cutting tools because the skin was so tough that it made them dull quickly. That was why the job took so long. Butchering a bowhead whale requires more manpower than we had available. And determined people are needed to handle this very hard job.” (Annahatak 2013: 124-125). This narrative confirms the important role of settlement patterns, technology and social networks (cooperation between whaling crews and eventually communities) for the success of the hunt. This is not just about the capture of the whale, but also processing the carcass and making sure not to

⁵⁸ The narratives of these hunters were published after the completion of my research, so hypothesis and interpretations could not be included. However, they are useful when reflecting on the importance of this practice both in the past and the present, as I do in this conclusion.

waste the product of the hunt and the hard work of the hunters who risked their lives to harvest the animal. With the revival of the bowhead whale hunt in 2008 in Nunavik, Inuit realised and acknowledged the social and technological incomparability of their Thule Inuit ancestors on these matters.

My research specifically documented this complexity of Thule Inuit social life imbedded in technological virtuosity. Elements of this technology, such as hunting equipment, sewing and other personal tools were studied principally in terms of their social roles in their owners' lives. Their various designs allowed the identification of personal identities, familial and group relations, from a social network point of view. Also, the degree of aesthetic investment in these tools and the value of their raw materials indicated different strategies of social differentiation. Personal ornaments and amulets were also interpreted in these social contexts, in addition to their roles in the economic life of Thule Inuit. Playing along such boundaries between art and technology, as well as function and aesthetics, was thus the key to reach the full social signification of Thule Inuit material culture.

This research not only focused on past meanings, it also allowed contemporary Inuit to create and express new significations for their ancestors' tools. As Walter Benjamin noted, as objects age and become 'archaeological', they acquire more intensely affective and complex meanings (Benjamin and Tiedemann 1999). They have to be acknowledged in such a shifting perspective. The Thule Inuit comb⁵⁹ discussed in the introduction is a good example of this phenomenon: its meaning shifted from a personal ornament or hygienic

⁵⁹ A Thule Inuit ivory comb with a bowhead whale hunting scene engraved on it, presented by a contemporary bowhead whale hunter as a 'written' document supporting the ancestral right of Inuit to hunt these animals.

tool, to a document used in Inuit activism around contemporary bowhead whale hunting in Nunavut. Ancient Inuit collections used in the workshops at the McCord Museum were also given new forms of meanings, sometimes applicable to the Thule Inuit context, sometimes more relevant to the present, and often to both (Gadoua 2013). Participants said in many instances that the ancient Inuit objects of the McCord are very important, because without these tools, Inuit would not be alive today. Even archaeological artefacts that I presented to them stimulated that kind of reflection. Suddenly, there was no time gap between early periods of their history and the present.

The contact between participants and the material culture of their ancestors revealed new roles that these objects can play in Inuit lives today, especially in the context of medical visits to southern cities, as was the case for the participants in my workshops (Gadoua 2011). These medical stays are recognised as causing stress to the patients (Grondin 1989; Grygier 1994; Hodgson 1982; Kaufert and O'Neil 1990; O'Neil 1986, 1989; O'Neil et al. 1998; Tester et al. 2001). The group discussions at the McCord Museum represented an opportunity for the participants to take part in an activity that was culturally comforting and valorising, as well as entertaining. Participants exchanged knowledge, learnt and benefited from the activity. During and after each workshop, the participants have always been thankful that we offered them the activity. It was especially appreciated by the elders, as it allowed them to remember positive stories and people from their past, to share them with their peers and to listen to others' memories. According to the director of the social support programme of the Northern Module, the workshops reduced patients' psychological and physical stress, improved self-esteem, provided emotional support, empowerment and a

sense of belonging, and helped to reduce feelings of loneliness (Francine Brochu 2012, personal communication). Participants also learned about the material culture of Inuit groups from regions other than Nunavik and it was an opportunity for them to valorise their knowledge about past material culture, knowing that the discussions would be used for academic research. They were pleased to contribute to the preservation of Inuit language and traditions, as they knew that their discussions would be archived by Avataq Cultural Institute.

Methodological engagements

The many ways in which my methodology benefited the participants brings us to reflect on the collaborative aspects of my research. To collaborate means to ‘work with’, from the Latin roots *com-* or *co-* which means ‘with’ and *laborem* or labour which means ‘to work’. As mentioned in Chapter 2, collaboration happens on a continuum of practices, of different degrees, from mere consultation, to participation and finally full involvement between stakeholders (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008). Minimal actions are sufficient for practices to be labelled as collaborative: informing community members about the research, adding one or two administrative tasks such as requesting permission and providing a report to the community, or communicating preliminary results to the community. These examples do not entail any significant modification of the archaeological research per se. Archaeologists can continue to do their work as usual, in parallel with the collaborative practices. Thus, working ‘in collaboration’ with communities does not automatically affect the construction of knowledge about the past of Native people, which is what my research actually aimed to do.

More than collaboration, my research was rather a form of engagement with the communities – from the French words *en gage*, or ‘under pledge’, (*en* ‘make’ + *gage* ‘pledge’). Engagement entails the interaction, or the commitment to interact, between two people or groups, in a way that is meant to have an impact on both parties. It requires the participants in this engagement to have an awareness of the world and the people around them, acknowledging that their actions have effects in this world, intended or not. Engagement can lead to collaboration, but it does not necessarily mean to work ‘in person’ with the

communities, their institutions and members. It mostly refers to a moral commitment towards those communities on which our work has impacts. It is mostly about ethics that must be reflected in archaeologists' research methods and discourse.

Engagement not only aims at the descendant or traditionally associated communities; it also includes academic disciplines, archaeology and others, that can enhance the outcome of our work. This is about science and the advancement of archaeological and anthropological knowledge about the past, with full commitment to the present world and its societal realities. The interdisciplinary aspect of my research, which brought together archaeology, socio-cultural anthropology, theories in social psychology and Inuit knowledge stems from this philosophy. As Dawdy (2010: 778) puts it, the point is not only to find ethnographic analogies for ancient peoples, but to find archaeological continuities and contingencies for the present. It is about showing that we can learn something about contemporary societies by investigating their material practices and their past, and vice versa. In this way, archaeology indicates its relevance and positive value for the study of all periods. My research has demonstrated that Inuit ancient history and contemporary society were never completely disconnected. In fact, they are more than ever significant for one another. Arctic archaeologists play a privileged role in securing this connection, exploring ways in which contemporary society and archaeology can benefit from one another in full reciprocity.

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APPENDIX 1: Inuit elders' quotes (from publications and from the
Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

1.1 Jana Harcharek 2005: 28 (see bibliography)

Her thread, made from caribou sinew, was quite long – as it should be, I learned later in life. She sewed with a discernible rhythm. Her needle clicked against the thimble as she inserted it into the skins, then clicked again as she pulled it through. This was followed by the sound of the thread sliding through the pieces of skin, which were beginning to take shape of a pair of warm and beautiful *muklaks*. Different seamstresses have rhythms that seem to me to be discernible. Hers had a very comforting quality to it. The tranquility and quietude was disturbed only by the rhythmic sound of her needle clicking against her thimble.

I broke the stillness by asking *aaka* why her thread was so long. She giggled softly upon hearing a question that, I'm sure, was the last thing on her mind. Then she turned to me with a gentle teasing smile. At that very moment she had pulled her needle through and was drawing the long thread out. She had a sparkle in her eyes and she pulled out the sinew, then aimed the needle purposely towards my protruding tummy. 'You better not to get too close! I might poke you!' she exclaimed. It was some time before I learned that the thread used to sew *mukluk* soles has to be long enough to go all the way around without a break in it. She knew that, with time, I would come to understand.

1.2 Noah Piugattuk and George Qulaut, IE-003, 15 October 1986 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

NP: Before we had the southern way of teaching we learned by going out hunting and watching and that is how we as men learned. As for women, since they stayed at home and as they were growing up they would watch and be taught at the same time. We didn't realize it but by watching we were learning at the same time. We, as boys when we were old enough to go out hunting with our fathers, we would be watching and learning at the same time. Even at play in the camp we would imitate what we had seen while out hunting with our fathers. This was our way of learning to survive.

GQ: Oh?

NP: Yes, we were continuing to learn as we grew up. As we were old enough to go with our father then they would really start to teach us how to use the weapons. Weapons other than guns, like harpoons, how to use them and that's when we really started to learn.

GQ: Just by watching, you were learning?

NP: Yes.

GQ: Not just by being told?

NP: Yes, not only by words. We were continually learning as we were doing things, then later on we could start to do things by ourselves. If we were too eager to do things and were clumsy about it, then later on we would realize our mistakes. From our mistakes we would have a better idea how to do them the next time. What they have said and taught us has

always been true but in our eagerness to do things, we as boys used to make mistakes. Even at adulthood they used to make careless mistakes and sometimes they would miss an opportunity to make a kill and that became their character. My *qiturngaqati* [person who adopted one of my children] grew up to an adult and in his eagerness he would sometimes miss an opportunity to make a kill. When they didn't have the proper tools, that was the way it was. Before they had fast equipment in their eagerness to hunt they would alert the animal and in that way they were clumsy and that has always happened in the past.

GQ: I seem to understand it this way: when a child is born he learns how to walk, then he learns to talk by listening to words. While at the talking stage there are a lot of names to things, so he is taught how to say them. When the child is able to memorize and pronounce the words, then he is taught the things that he or she will do in the future, through stories. He or she is taught through words then when he is old enough to do things, he is given toys and he learns more with them. Either by pretending to sew or running a dog team, the parents are preparing them for their adulthood. When they are old enough to sew or go out hunting, then they are allowed to use the tools. Throughout their growing stage they are learning.

NP: Oh yes. Right from the start when they can talk up to their adulthood, they were taught and they learned. When they came to the age when they are able to hunt alone, they would listen to other men, other than their fathers. They listen when the men are relaxing and eating and at the same time they are being taught. The young men are taught who they can rely on when they are hunting big game and they were further taught about hunting

techniques. These things are very hard to forget when you are talked to instead of being scolded.

**1.3 Philip Qipanniq, interviewed by Louis Tapardjuk, IE-198, 5 September 1991
(Inullariit Elders' Society archives)**

PQ: In my younger years I used to hunt whenever there was an opportunity. I noticed in particular two individuals that had shown their gratitude to me. One of them just before death had said that I will be successful and bring back game animals. It was immediately after that I really started to catch a lot of seals even when others were having difficulty in catching seals. I was able to provide for a lot of dogs without any difficulty. It was at that time I knew that I was being helped.

LT: What did you do to that individual that made him so grateful to you?

PQ: My father and I had arrived in this camp where there was this very sick person who was yearning to have caribou meat. It so happened that I had just caught a caribou as I was the only one who was able to hunt as this was in my youth. I believe I had caught four caribous at the time on my way to Naujaan. This individual had said that he might have passed away soon. My father had taken a piece of caribou meat for him. It was at that time he started to regain his health. It was a year later that he finally passed away. He had said that the animals that I caught were good as they had the power to make one get better when they were sick, so for that reason he made it known that he wanted me to be successful in catching game animals. He was so ever grateful for getting his wish come true.

There was another, an old man by the name of Kukik. He no longer hunted or anything of the like due to his advanced age. He had made a harpoon head throughout the summer for me. He said that in his younger hunting years he was able to bring back game animals even

when he went out alone on hunting trips. Once he had completed the harpoon head he had given it to me for my use. And again as this was in the spring when he gave me the harpoon head we were hunting for young seals through seal breathing holes. Again I was the only one that kept harpooning seals through the breathing holes. I truly believe that the words of the elderly are powerful and can help if they so wish it to happen to someone in particular. That spring I was catching more seals than other times. I planned to keep the harpoon head with the line for a long, long time. This was in the spring and our dogs were not in want of food but a pup might have taken the harpoon line from our sled. It was the time of year when the shores had started to melt so that there were plenty of holes on the ice where the streams had eaten through and where the tide had worked its way on some of the ground. I lost the harpoon line at that time shattering my plan to have this particular harpoon head for a long time. We would look all over the place not once, but whenever we could all over the place to no avail. When I was using that harpoon line, I could catch young seals every time we took positions in the breathing holes. There was no way I was going to say that I did not feel right for being the only one who was catching all the seals while the others were not as successful, but there were times when other hunters would catch some seals but I was the one who was catching most of them.

1.4 Seporah Inuksuk, IE-499, 29 November 2002 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

LQ: In the past, did Inuit have leaders?

SI: Just in their camp. In those days they use to be led by the Elder of the camp. In fact, this person cannot be considered as a boss. His young people were free to go where they wished to go, at the same time they obeyed the wish of this leader. They did not consider him to be the boss, but they depended on him to make decisions as to where hunters should go, to places where game animals might be found. They listened to his instructions, at the same time they did what they wanted. That was the way it was.

LQ: Was this the eldest in the camp?

SI: It was not necessarily the eldest of the camp, but someone that had good leadership skills who had good judgement. I also remembered the time when there was this older brother who did the bidding of his younger brother. I have seen this personally, the older brother was now an Elder, though this person called his older '*angajuannuk*' (dear older brother), yet he dictated to his older brother. So then this can happen if people were pleased with his decision making. So it is for this reason that it was not necessarily the oldest of the camp who lead the camp. At the same time they would listen to their Elders of the camp. I have seen this myself.

LQ: So they really did not dictate what everyone had to do?

SI: Yes, they could not be considered as the ones that dictated everything. The oldest in the camp was the one that did that. Of course each individual had different personality and

reasoning capacity. When his faculties do not agree with the people, then the people would be hesitant to do his bidding. On the other hand when people agreed with his faculty, though he may not be the oldest in the camp, they would follow his decision. This is what people would say.

1.5 Noah Piugaatuk. IE-247, 1 July 1992 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

When the people before us used to live in their own camps in a place of their own choice, sometimes they all would live in one community that consisted of extended family members and sometimes there would be members of more than one extended family in this community before they dispersed to their respective camps. When the extended family members lived in their own camp, the main reason was to supplement each other so that there would be enough food to go around to the family members. Their elder would be able to keep them unified by telling them what needs to be done as it is their responsibility to do so. When there is large kinship under his responsibility there would be quite a few people living in one camp.

1.6 Noah Piugattuk, IE-315, 9 November 1994 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

LT: When did you become a leader in your camp?

NP: We were living beyond Kapuiviit where I spent my younger years. When we moved to another location where there were more people, I had dogs that helped me out a lot to secure game animals, indeed they were very helpful to me. It was at that time that I really spent a great deal of time hunting for game animals. It was the time when my late wife, the mother of my children, and I started to live together. At this time my uncle got a sail boat so he and I would concentrate on hunting, me helping him out. It was at this time that I started to appreciate hunting much more and understood the hard work needed to secure game animals. It was now so convenient to hunt with the sail boat so that I found it so much enjoyable to hunt. My dogs also really helped me out in securing game animals. As it turned out I had been given a special gift so that the dog would assist me in my hunt, indeed, I used to have a team that did not tire easily. As it turned out an old man had given me special blessing when I was going to get my first team, a team that I could call my own. The old man helped me with my dog so that they could help me. I believe this had a lot of effect in my ability to secure game animals. I used to have a dog team that did not tire easily. When we were hunting a game animal that was ferocious my dogs would get close to me for protection, as it turned out they were there to help me out in time of need.

It was at that time that people saw that I was more able than others that they started to encourage me to lead them. I never had the desire to become a leader, but it was the people that looked up to me to lead them. We started to make our home near Kapuiviit where we had a boat that was convenient to do hunting. We used to have people staying in our camp

that needed help, especially securing dog food. It appears as if I helped them to secure food with my hunting, I led the community and expanded beyond soon afterwards. I never took it upon myself to become a leader.

LT: What did the old man do to you, did he give you *pigusiq* or something?

NP: He had made certain that I had one particular dog that I would call my own. He got something from my person which he included in the meat that I was to feed the dog with. As it turned out he was in fact doing something that would help me. This was before the introduction of Christianity; this was a custom that we practised. The little old man Tapaattiaq knew all about these things, he was the one that got me my helpers. The dog that I called my own, when he first started to eat solid food, he was made to swallow something that came from my person, as it turned out he was making helpers for me with my dogs.

1.7 Noah Piugattuk, IE-247, 1 July 1992 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

Ittuksaarjjuat was well known for this type of a setting, he was an elder and was the leader to others beside his kinship; he was able to moralize everyone no matter whom the person may have been associated with in the family. This was the reason why many people lived in his camp.

Antonen Qunnut, IE-362, 18 April 1996 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

From what I have heard and from what I have seen, he was the leader in this area. He had many peers in this area, he always had other camps checked to see that they were doing alright, if one particular camp was in need, then he would get someone to go and take them to his camp so that they too could be looked after, that was the way it was.

**1.8 Catherine Arnattiaq interviewed by Maurice Arnattiaq, IE-260, 9 February 1993
(Inullariit Elders' Society archives)**

MA: I have heard that Ittuksaarjjuat used to have goods to trade?

CA: That is right. I remembered the time when I started to remember things that happened around me, people coming in to buy some goods, such as ammunition, tea, and tobacco. I believe these items were brought in from Mittimatalik.

MA: So Inuit would go to his household to trade?

CA: Yes, they would bring in fox pelt which were taken back to the trading post. I believe he was told how much each item cost when he took the trade goods. I believe he never kept a record as to what he sold. In those days the only trading commodities were fox pelts.

MA: Where did he keep all the trading goods?

CA: He had them stored nicely in the porch of a *qarmaq*. They had wooden tobacco cases in those days, the tobaccos were plugs. I do not think there were too many. There were also wooden cases of ammunition.

1.9 Rosie Iqalliyuq, interviewed by Wim Rasing and Paul Irmgaut, IE-26, 21 January 1987 and 6 March 1987 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

Q: When a man and a woman who were married are having problems of any kind, could other people be involved in this matter and try to solve the problem? Would the *isumataq* or the elders be involved?

RI: They would be talked to by other people. My husband and I were never directly talked to because our leader was Ittuksaarjjuat. Since he had many sons, he was a leader to his sons. If one of the couples had a conflict, he would gather all of his sons and their wives in one place like a meeting. He would talk to the couple in question and lecture all of us as he wanted us to have a good relationship between ourselves. Our brother-in-laws and sister-in-laws were many and with us women, even if we were not sisters in nature, we treated each other like sisters. Our traditions were much better in that way. Although there were subjects that were embarrassing, he would treat it like it was not and it used to help us with our relationship.

I would like to talk more about Ittuksaarjjuat. I mentioned that he used to talk to his own family but they weren't the only ones he talked to. When he heard conflicting stories of other people in the Igloodik area, he would ask the people in question to come to his camp. He would start asking why there was a conflict and whether it was between two men or two women. These people would answer his questions and he would start to lecture them in order to have a better relationship. In the past when an Inuit disliked a person he would kill the person. Not because of drunkenness since they didn't have alcohol then. He didn't want this sort of thing to happen so when he heard of conflicts in the Igloodik area, Kangirujjuarmiut (Steensby Inlet area) and Urquarmiut (Hall Beach area) he would talk to

the people involved and straighten them out with his lectures. People used to be scattered in camps and when they came to his camp and he heard rumours about conflicts between two people he would send out for the other party and lecture the two people as he didn't want any murders occurring.

**1.10 Therese Qillaq Ijjangiaq, interviewed by Paul Irngaut, IE-19, 8 January 1987
(Inullariit Elders' Society archives)**

TQI: And his wife, who was known as Ataguttaaluk, was also our leader in regards to handiwork.

PI: What was Ataguttaaluk like? Did she have different way of doing things?

TQI: One thing I know for certain was the fact that she use to scold a lot. Whenever she saw children fighting amongst themselves she would *kasukartuut* (headbutt) the misbehaved, it did not matter whether they were her own grandchildren or not, that was because she wanted them to behave. She was not intimidated by anyone.

PI: We used to be so afraid of her, she had us well disciplined.

TQI: Very much so. She and her husband would not talk about someone behind their backs.

**1.11 Aipilik Inuksuk, interviewed by Wim Rasing, Paul Irngaut, IE-4, 28 October 1986
(Inullariit Elders' Society archives)**

Q: Was there anything you can remember in a camp, who was the leader and the rules that you had to learn?

AI: Inuit did not have a single leader in those days. For instance for us that made our home here in Igloodik, like I mentioned earlier, there is an old house up there where they used to make their home in the autumn. Those that resided in that place had Ittuksaarjjuat for their leader. He had the rest of his family living in harmonious relationship with each other.

I remembered that he had his family members living in a harmonious relationship. He gave each of his peers responsibilities that each would have to do during the summer period. Sometimes I used to go along on hunting trips which he would have arranged.

Q: Did everyone listen to him?

AI: In most part yes, I would imagine there were also times that his orders were not carried out as this happens to all of the people. Some of us do not always do what we are told to do, so no doubt there were those that did not carry out his wishes. He was mainly concerned about his immediate family members and he did not interfere with other people that resided in other areas. In those days each of the communities had their own leader who was an administrator.

Q: How many were there in the camp?

AI: There were not many, sometimes people would go there for short periods. They all did not live *qarmait*, some made their dwellings in an igloo and some had (VOC) (TUGALIAGAQ) [hewn ice for their dwelling]. The numbers varied from time to time.

He did not control everyone in the community, there were some that resided in the same community but did what they wanted to do without having to be asked by this person; nevertheless they kept him informed as to what they were going to do.

These people would keep him informed as to what they were going to be doing the following day or in the near future. For those that were going on a trip they were told that they should keep him informed which direction they were going. For those that did not keep them informed became the subject of disapproval. For those that leave on a hunting trip without informing anyone became the subject of disapproval.

1.12 Abraham Ulaajuruluk, IE-238, 30 March 1992 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

The scapula of a caribou was used to be made into a *qalunt*. Scapula from the left shoulder is better than the right one when it is made into a *qalunt*, I believe the joint is at the end is already structured so that it can be used for handle. There are different types of scapulas, some are hollower than the others and the former is preferred when the scapula is going to be made into a *qalunt*, when you are making a *qalunt* which does not have as much hollow you do not get as much joy out of making it in comparison to the one with deeper hollow, all you think about is just to complete the task. When you are making a *qalunt* with deeper hollow in making one you know that it is going to be a useful tool so you end up paying more attention to it and try and make a best job as you could out of it.

Qalunt serve many purposes, its most use is for caribou skin with hair or sometimes it can be used for de-brittlelizing membrane especially if the bone is thicker. It is used most for wet hair of a caribou skin either with water or with an infant's urine which is the primary reason for the *qalunt*. If the child wets the bedding before the urine gets cold she will scrape the water with this tool and will immediately rid of all moist in the hair of the skin, as a matter of fact it will remove all the urine scent. When the skin is going to be readied for drying sometimes the blood will soak the hair of the skin so you would use this tool to remove the blood, if the blood is a bit too dry to scrape, water will be used to soak it completely and as long as it will not remove any hair this tool then becomes important in scraping off the blood from the hair of the skin.

1.13 Rachael Ujarasuk, IE-298, 19 May 1994 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

Q: Does it matter how you make the stem, which is from the handle to the blade, do you have a preference what kind of handle?

RU: They used to have an *ulu* of their own preference; each of the women would have a different style according to their own specification. However, the *tang* must be solid so you either can use the yellow metal or the red and silver colour metal. These types are preferred for the *tang*. The *tang* is made according to specification of the woman, as for us who do not have a choice we will be satisfied with what is available for *tang*, but some other women will want the type they like, and sometimes the *tangs* are made in this fashion with two and riveted in here, these styles are preferred by some women. And there are plain *tang* shaped like this, sometimes they are red and sometimes they have the colour of the shell of ammunition, and sometimes they are silver, however, they must not be flexible but sturdy. Women will make their own preference known to whoever is going to make the *ulu*.

Q: What kind of handle is the best, do you use walrus tusk, or antler?

RU: When tusk is used as handle, when they get coated with blubber they are too slippery, that much I know, they usually try and use something hard for handle, when an antler or an ivory, or any other type of bone is coated with blubber they are too slippery, I personally prefer any type of hard wood for handle.

The antler or ivory handle are good when you are going to use the *ulu* for something other than blubber or oily meat that you have to work with, however they are not good when they get coated with oily substance.

Q: Would you have different types of *ulu*?

RU: Yes, the smaller *ulu* are too small to use on a skin as they are only for cutting patterns, the ones that get sharp easily, or the one that are sharp are the ones that I usually use to prepare skins, that is the way I know it.

The largest *ulu* is the one that remove the blubber from a skin, that size of *ulu* is used for that particular purpose, it is called QAJJAUTI.

Q: So there are three kinds?

RU: Yes. It is good to have three kinds of *ulu*, but as for myself when I cannot an *ulu* to get sharp I would just use any sharper *ulu*.

1.14 Therese Qillaq Ijjangiaq, IE-292, 19 November 1993 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

LO: Who makes *ulu*it?

TQI: I had heard only men make *ulu*it but recently women are making them too. It was common to use caribou antlers for a handle of an *ulu* – the ones made from an ivory were too slippery when the *ulu* is oily but the antlers is more rough and is not slippery like the ivory is, the ivory becomes too shiny.

When I learned to scrape seal skins I also learned that if the handle of the *ulu* was too small then it is very tiring on hands to scrape a skin, it is better to have quite a large size handle to have for seal scraping *ulu*.

LO: When you were going to have an *ulu* made for you did you decide on a pattern?

TQI: Yes, we would cut out a pattern and the men makes them it would be just the blade but while a man was making it they would let us take a grip of it to see how it was.

LO: Do you have a special *ulu* that was given to you in the past?

TQI: There was one *ulu* that was given to me when someone in the family died, I still have it. These *ulu*it were not taken away right after the death of a woman because it is an essential tool around ones dwelling.

LO: How did you carry your *ulu* when you were traveling?

TQI: I never used to have a box so I would just wrap it with a cloth or something to take it with me.

There are other kinds of *uluit* especially the one that has no *tang* rather there is a handle which is joined on either ends of the handle and the blade is made to meet the ends so that there is a hole where you hold your *ulu*. I never find these *ulus* to be comfortable to use, I never owned one of that kind. There are different shapes depending on what people like to make. Some look like whale flippers, I also don't like *ulus* that are sharply curved around the blade because you have to sway it in order to cut anything.

LO: Have you heard about people using stone *ulus*?

TQI: Yes, it was out of ULUKSARNNAK, slate that *ulus* were made out of because it does not wear off quickly and sometimes when the flints (KUKIKSAQ) were plentiful you can use a flint for an *ulu* they are supposed to be sharp. When we found these slate *ulus* they would be shaped to be used as scrapers too. My father used to make a knife for scraping meat off a caribou back sinew out of caribou leg bones, it was sharp enough even for cutting meat. I guess the caribou antlers could be used for making knives. I am sure they had been used as knives. But the ones my mother used to have varied in size depending on a size of a caribou leg. They were good for removing meat off the caribou back sinew because it does not cut the sinew. The ankle part would be a handle of the knife, it was split in half.

1.15 Maurice Amarualik, IE-290, 29 October 1993 (Inullariit Elders' Society archives)

Q: Do the *uluit* have *ipintaujaq* (*tang*)?

A: Yes.

Q: Does the length of the *ipintaujaq* differ for a specific use of the *ulu*?

A: From what I have heard when the *ulu* is made for cutting frozen meat then the *tang* must be fastened much more securely, this is for both, riveting at the blade and at the *kimaktuuta* (handle). That is the way the *ulu* must be made if it is to be used for cutting up frozen meat. A small *ulu* was made when it was going to be used for cutting up patterns for clothing; in this type of *ulu* the *tang* is longer.

Q: What about the *tang* on the meat cutting *ulu*?

A: As for that *ulu* for meat cutting the *tang* was thicker and the rivet and the handle attachment were much more secured.

Q: Does it matter the length of the *tang* between the blade and the handle?

A: Sometimes there were two *tangs* that ran from the handle to the blade, the shape of a pant (*qarlinjanguakuluk*), and there were others that had a single *tang*, so there were two types of *tangs*.

Q: Why is that?

A: In those days there was not much else to do except to make things that they need so they would have more time to make the things that they would need so they had time to make

things the way they want it done. They enjoyed working with them, when the conditions were not suitable for hunting they would have spare times to kill so they would try and make everything as perfect as they could.

Q: What about the blade, does it matter whether the curve is too curved, which was preferred?

A: There were different styles depending on who made the *ulu*. There were some that had a curve like this and there are those that are shaped like this towards the handle and there are those that are shaped like this. They used to make them differently.

Q: The one that you mention as shaped like this towards the handle is like being pointed towards the handle while others are not pointed. I mention that just to clarify that. Are some of them considered too curved on the blade?

A: I am not certain about that, there are those that are really curved and there are some that are not as curved, it all depends on the woman who is going to own the *ulu*, her husband or someone in her family will follow the instruction of the woman. It depends on the woman how the curve is to be made; whoever is going to make the *ulu* will follow her design.

Q: So there is no standard on the design of an *ulu*?

A: Yes, at least I have not heard what the standard is going to be, however the only thing that I know is the *ulu* for cutting patterns and another that is not for cutting patterns. That is all.

Q: So there needs to be different sizes of *ulu*, and different in length on the *tang*?

A: Yes, that is all. However, the woman whom the *ulu* is going to be made for will decide on the style of the *ulu* she wants made, that is all I know.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like add to the topic?

A: The only thing that I can add are the *uluut* that have holes in them, that is only another style.

Q: Which style is better?

A: The woman will want an *ulu* made according to her specification; that style is her choice as she knows which she likes better to work with. It can either be the one with a hole (*putulik*) or the other style. The woman will decide the style she wants.

1.16 Zachariasi Uqalik AQIARUQ, IE-289, 22 October 1993

Q: We used to see a *tuukaq* (harpoon head for bigger game), are they also used for walrus hunting?

A: Yes, they were used because they are sharp. Some used to have blades that were parallel to the line hole while others were flat. The one that had *tuukaq* made from a caribou antler had the blades parallel to the line hole. Some had it flat. It all depends what the man preferred especially the way they thought would be the more acute.

Q: Some *sakkut* (harpoon head) were made very thin so that it looks sharp while others were triangular, why is that?

A: I suppose it all depended on the person who made them; they would make it according to their choice. Some caribou antlers when made into a *sakku*, they would appear to have *akirmaq* (dull lump) even though they would have a blade that was bigger than others. Some would just make it so that they are flushed with the blade. I suppose that is made so that it is acute.

Q: So it is all right if you were to make *sakku* in any way, is it not true that if I was to make a *sakku* or a *tuukkaq* and it was nice and smooth so that it seem easily penetrable, is this type more acute than the ones with triangular shape?

A: I have not discovered the difference between the two shapes, I do not know which is more acute, and this is because I was not a harpooner. Some people used to say that they have a favourite *sakku* because it is acute. (Inaudible)... then they can penetrate and attached securely. I am not certain about the ones that are nice and smooth.

APPENDIX 2: Photo plates of artefacts from Qariaraqyuk (PaJs-2),
Learmonth (PeJr-1), and Cape Garry (PcJq-5)



Plate 1: Harpoon heads Qariaraqyuk Pajs-2

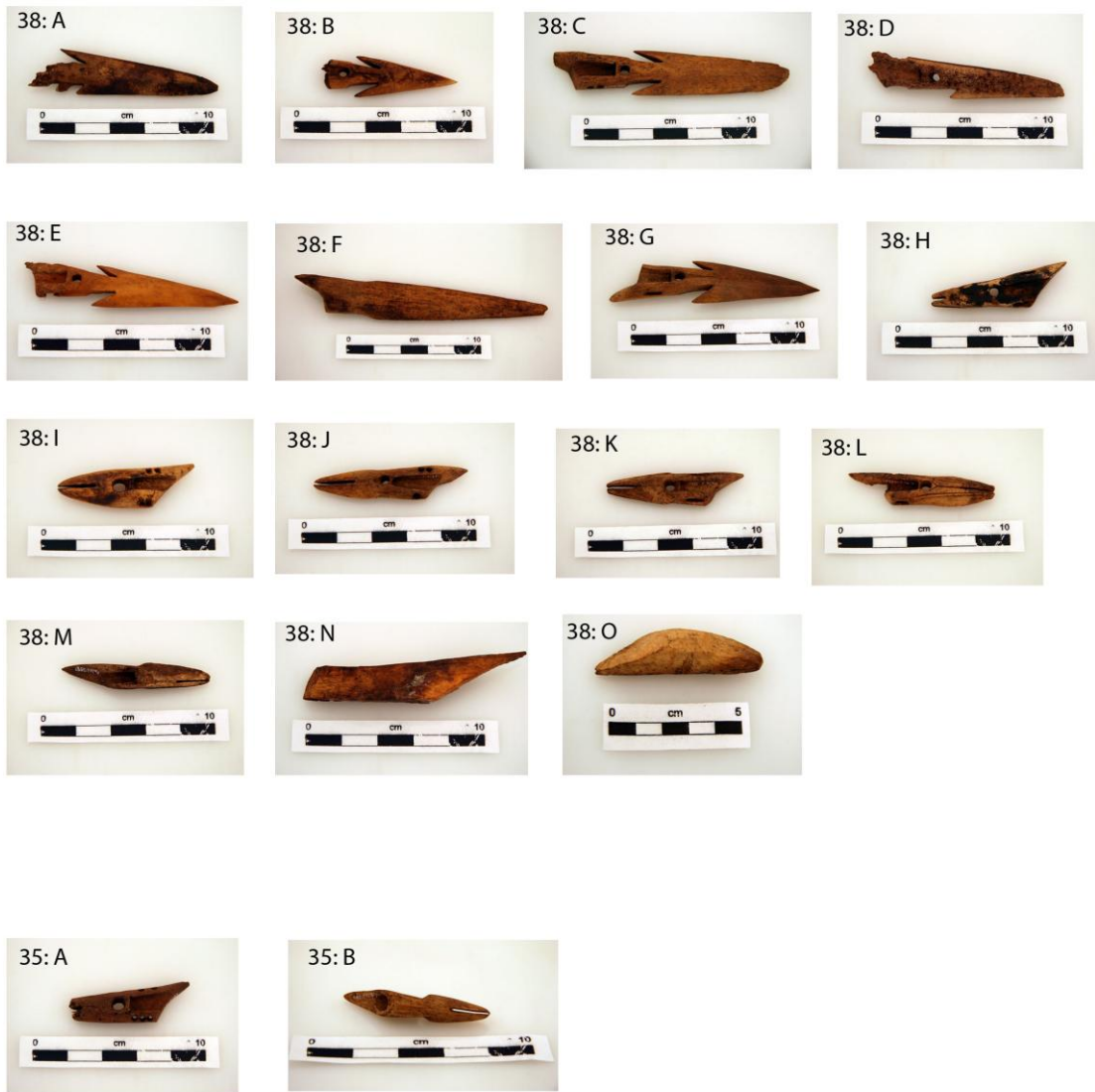


Plate 2: Harpoon heads Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

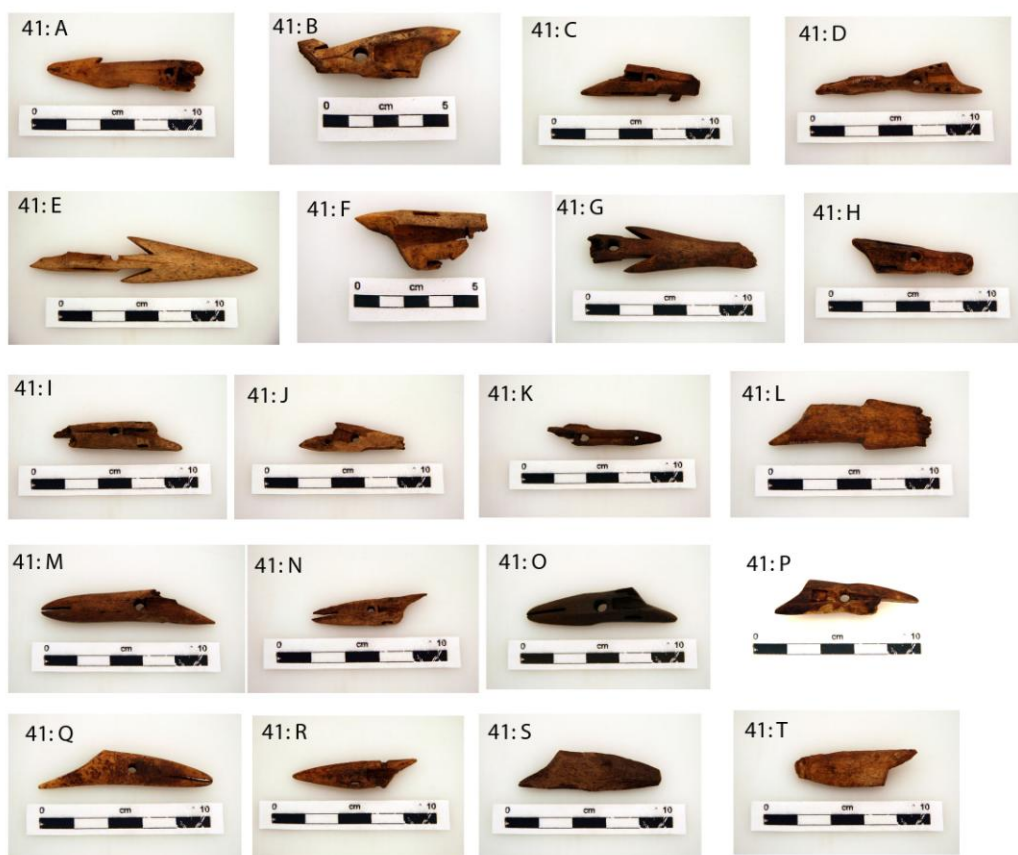


Plate 3: Harpoon heads Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

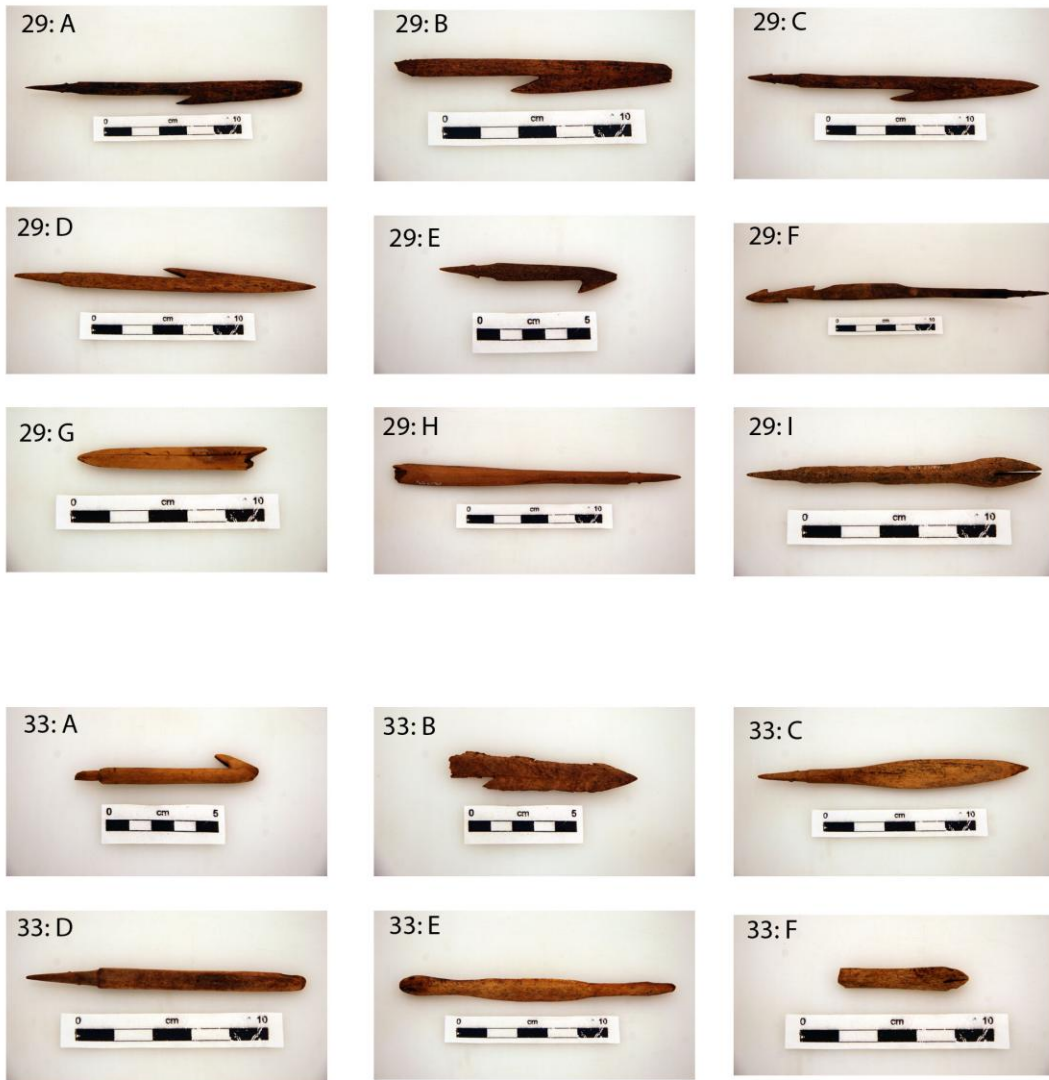


Plate 4: Arrowheads Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2



Plate 5: Arrowheads Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

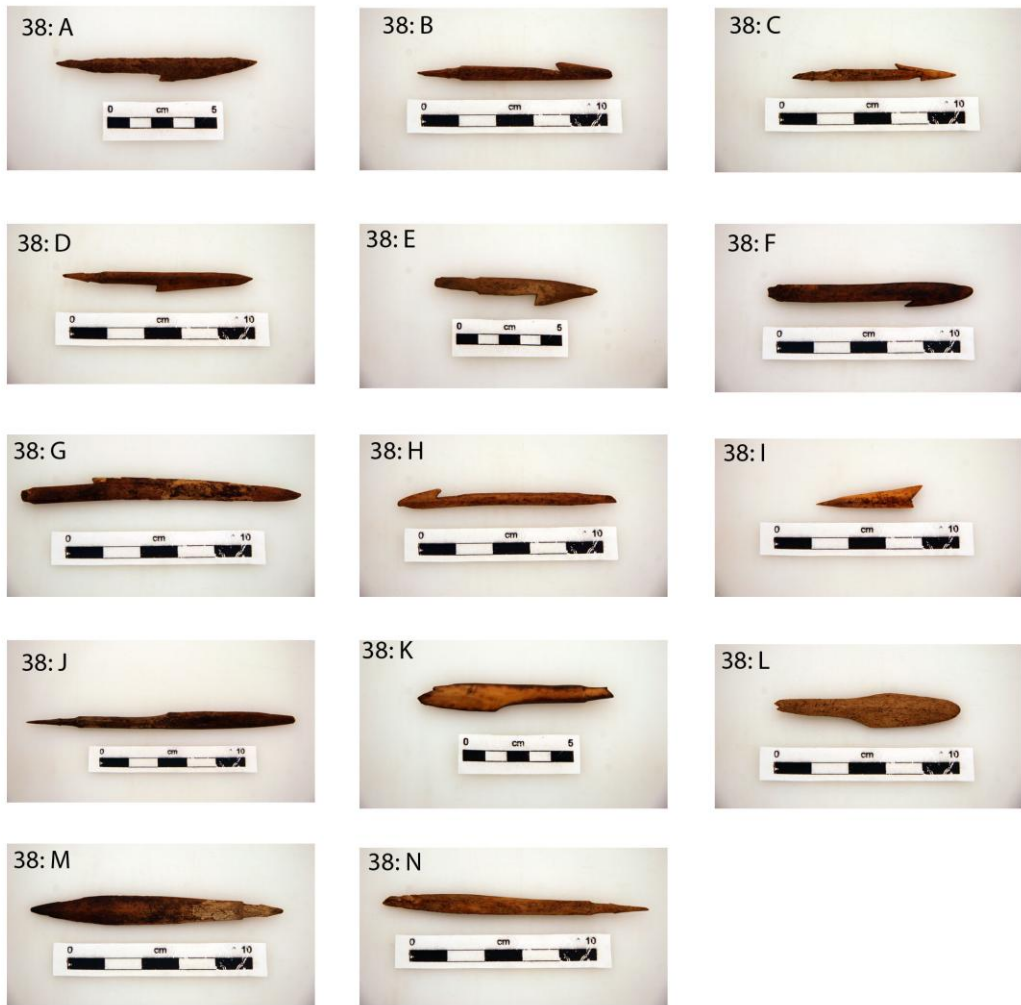


Plate 6: Arrowheads Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2



Plate 7: Arrowheads Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

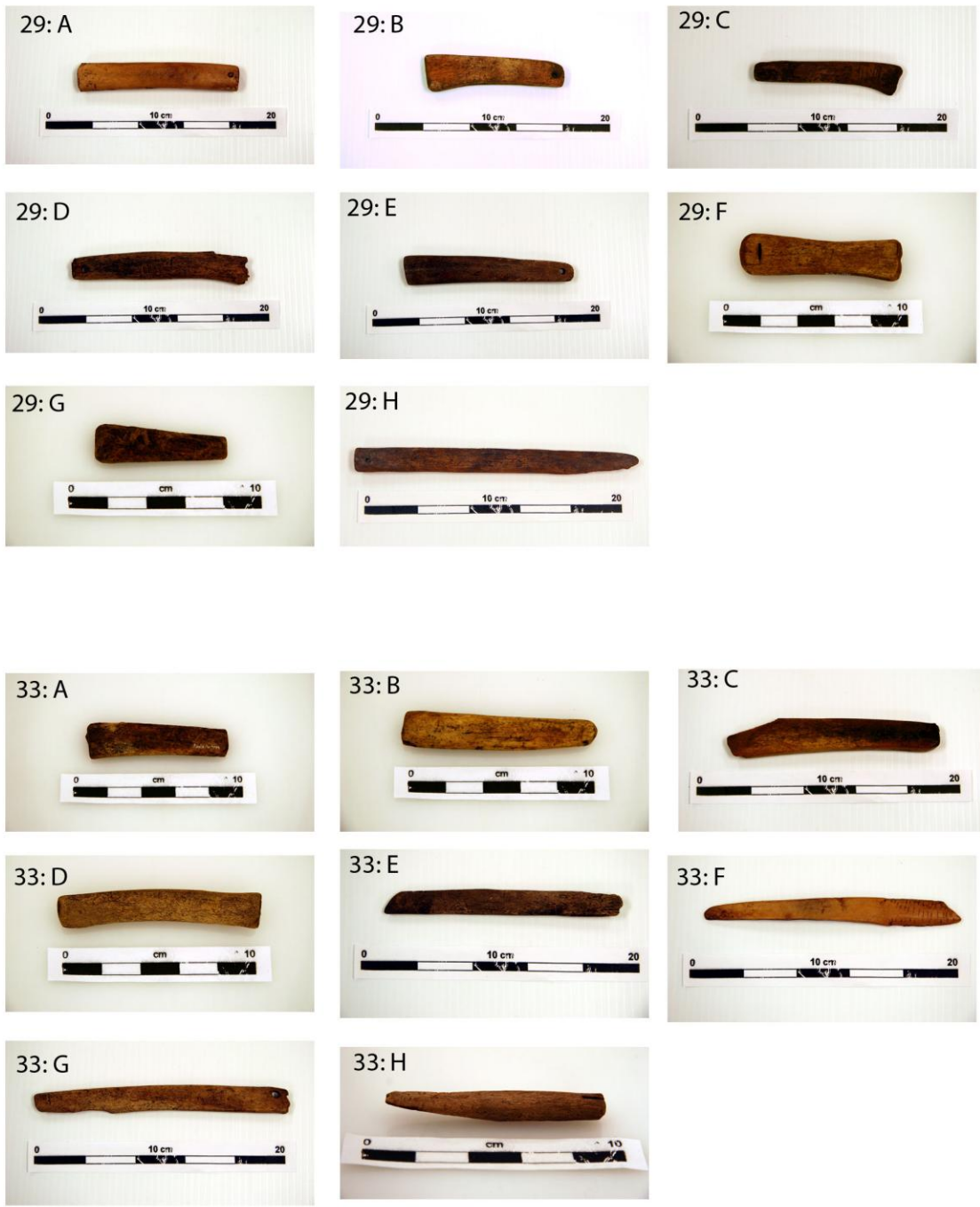


Plate 8: Men's knife handles Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

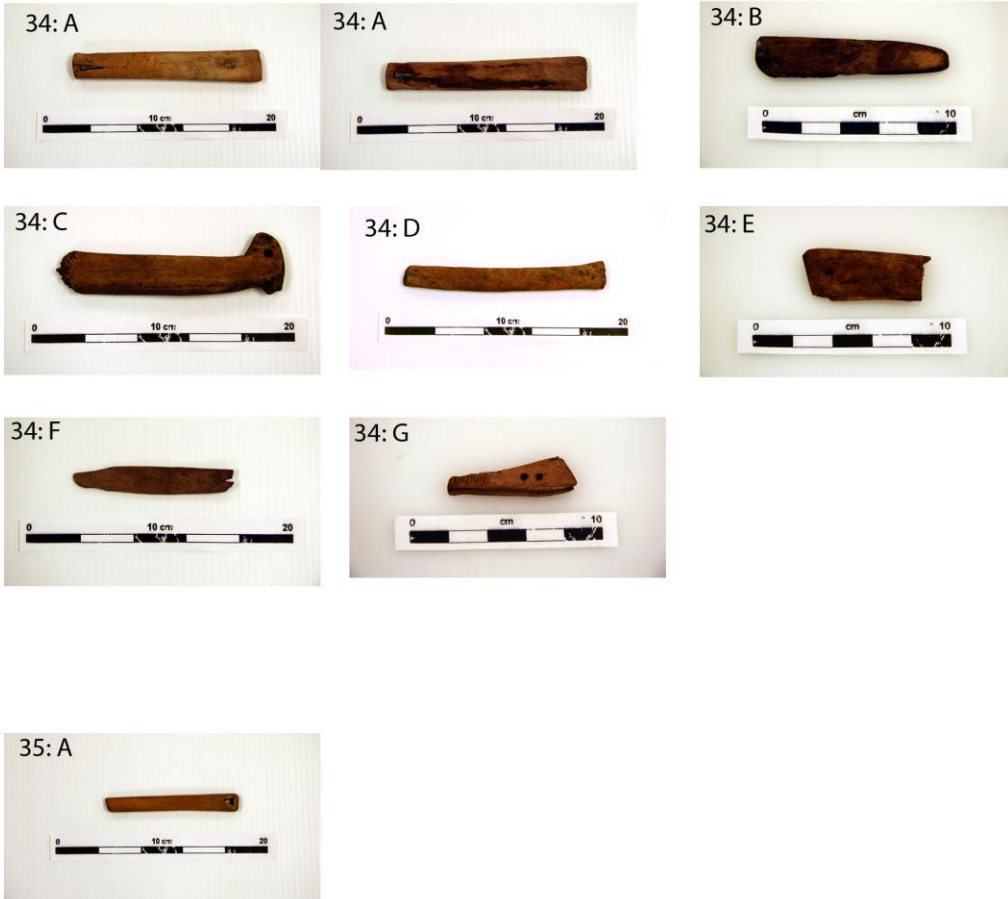


Plate 9: Men's knife handles Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

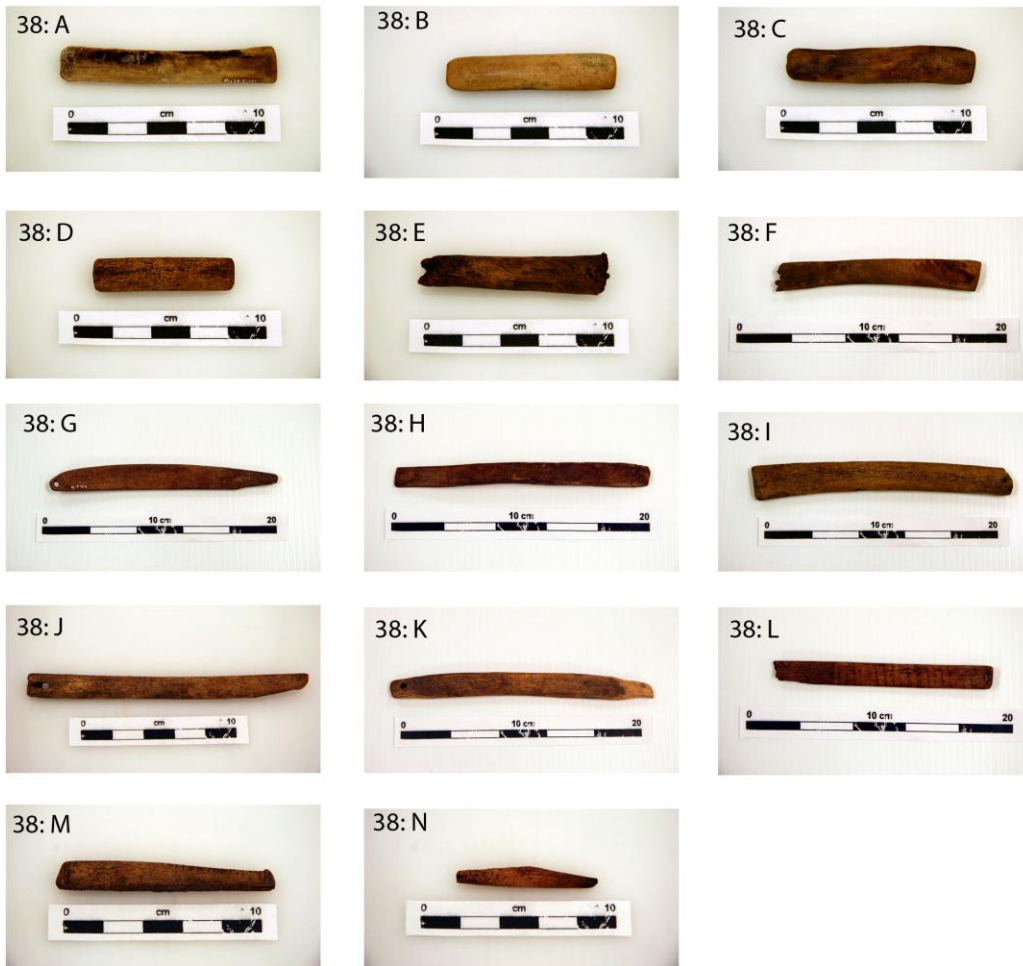


Plate 10: Men's knife handles Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

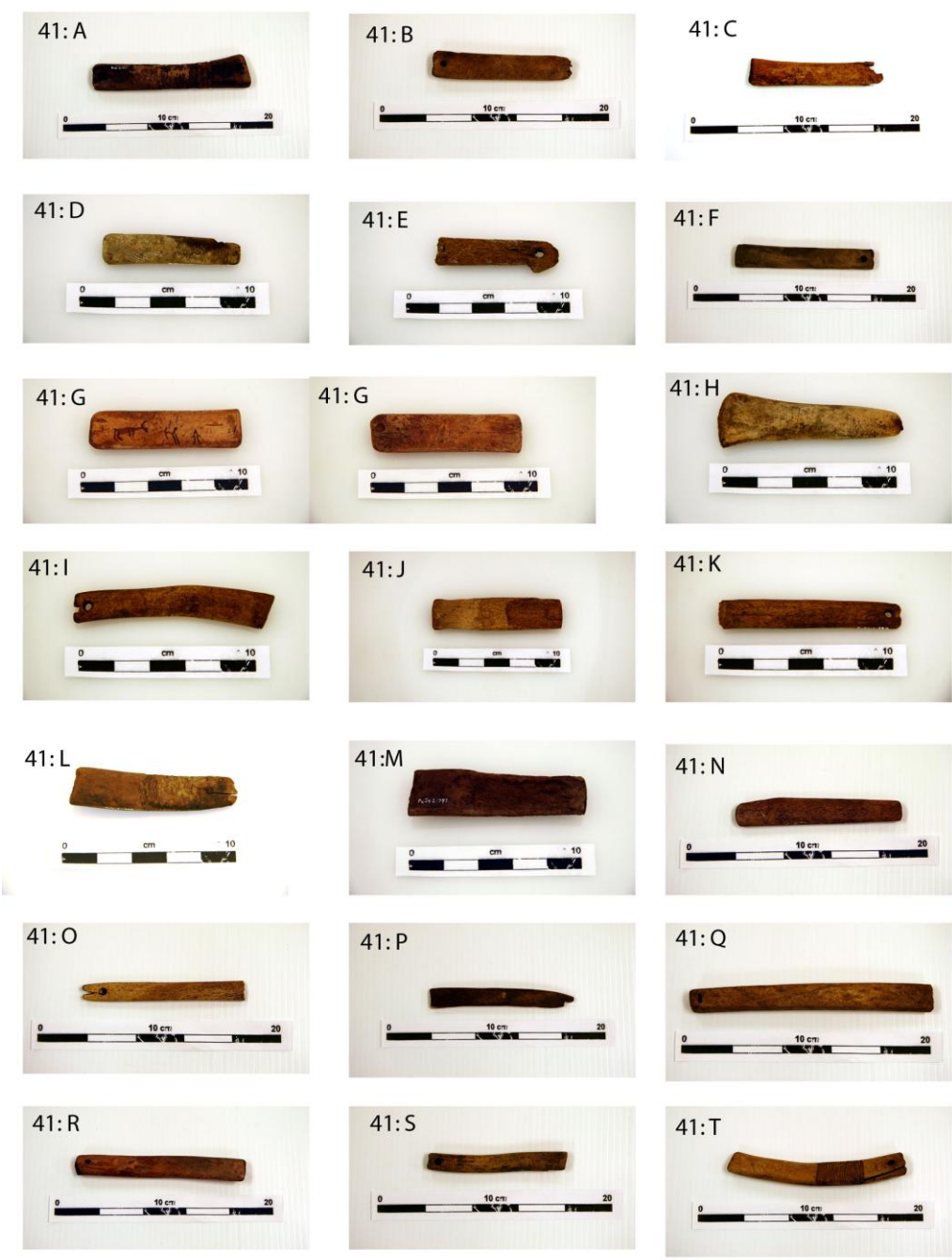
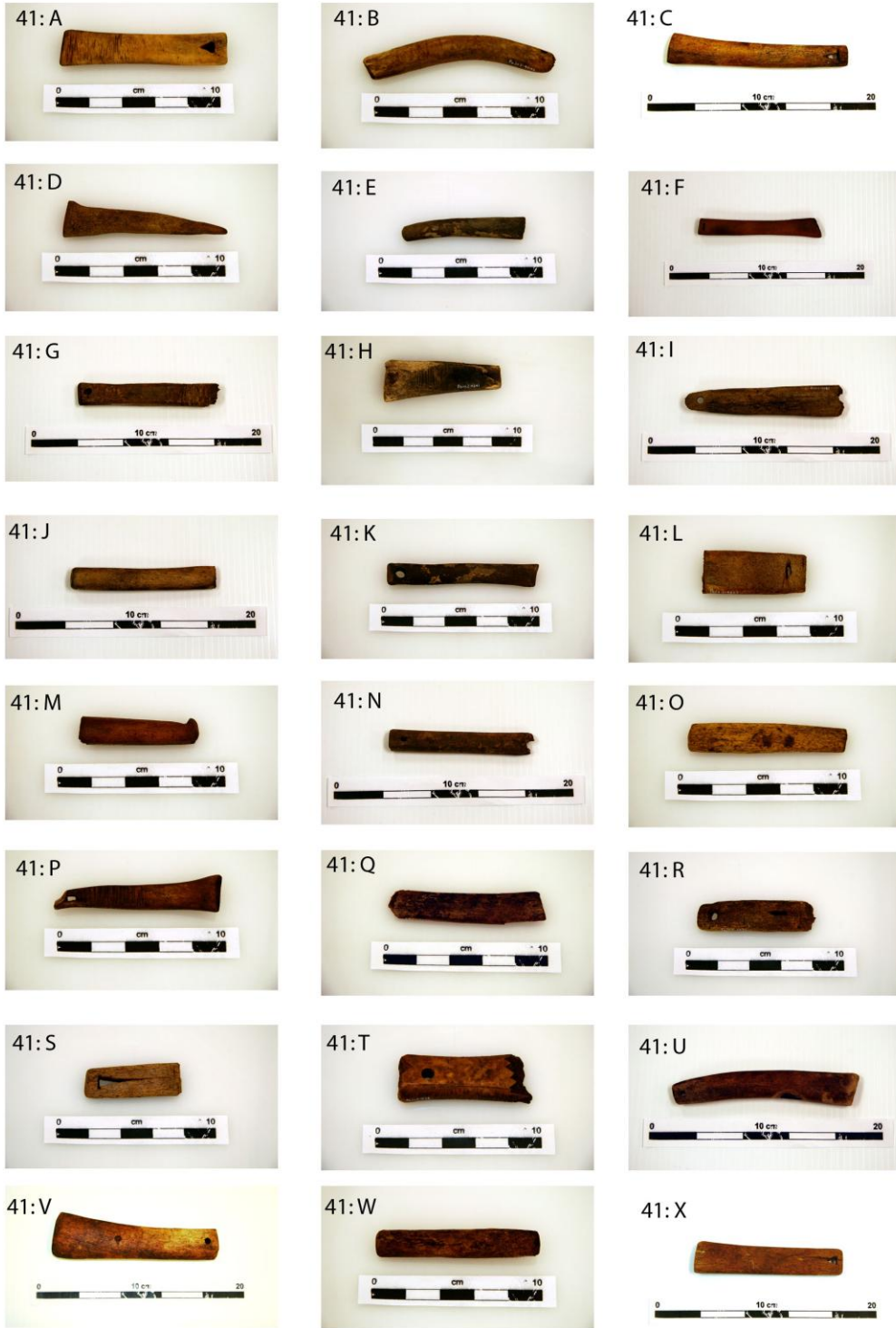


Plate 11: Men's knife handles Qariaraqyuk Pajs-2



12: Men's knife handles Qariaraqyuk Pajs-2

Plate

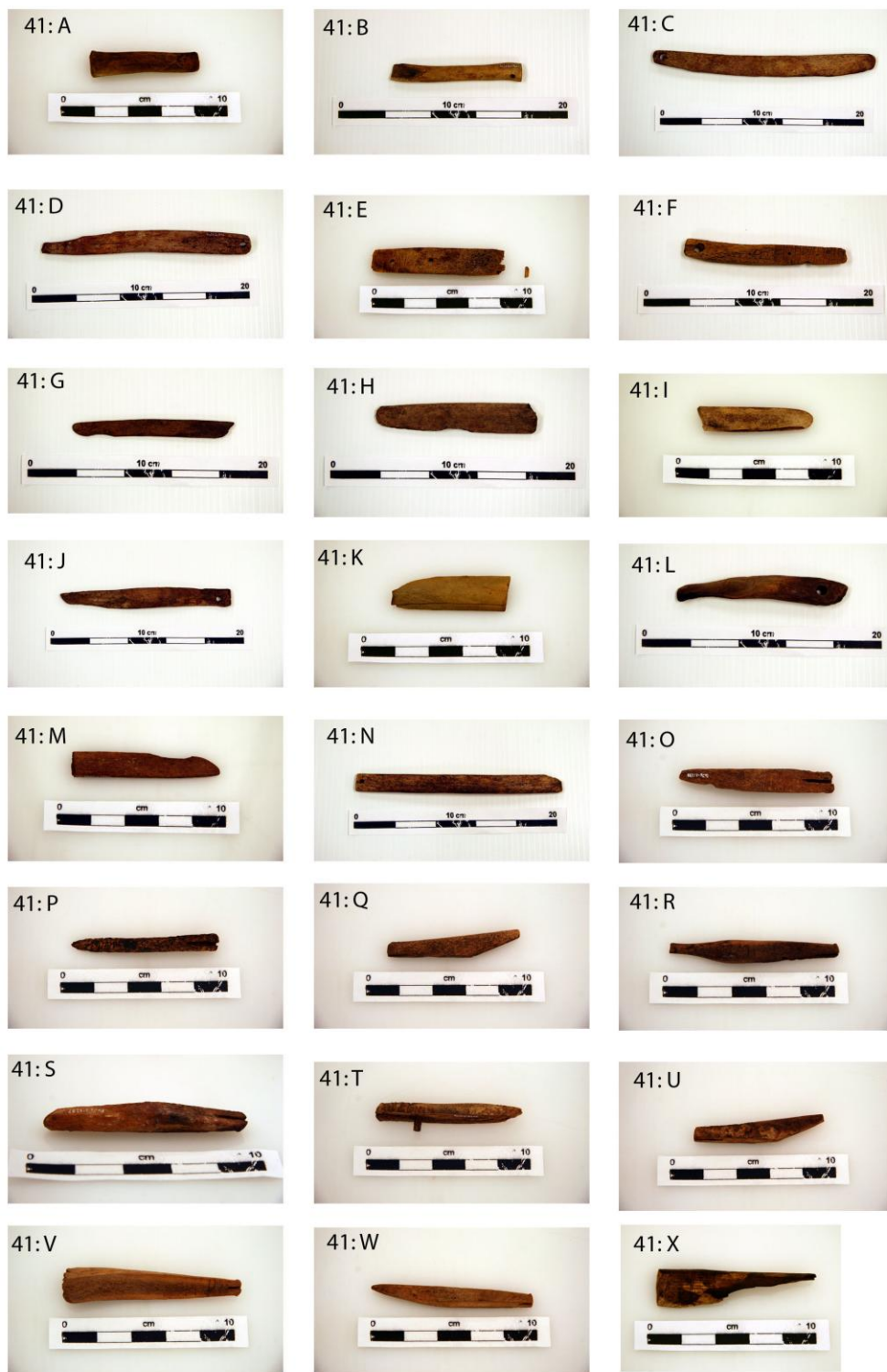


Plate 13: Men's knife handles Qariaraqyuk PaJs-

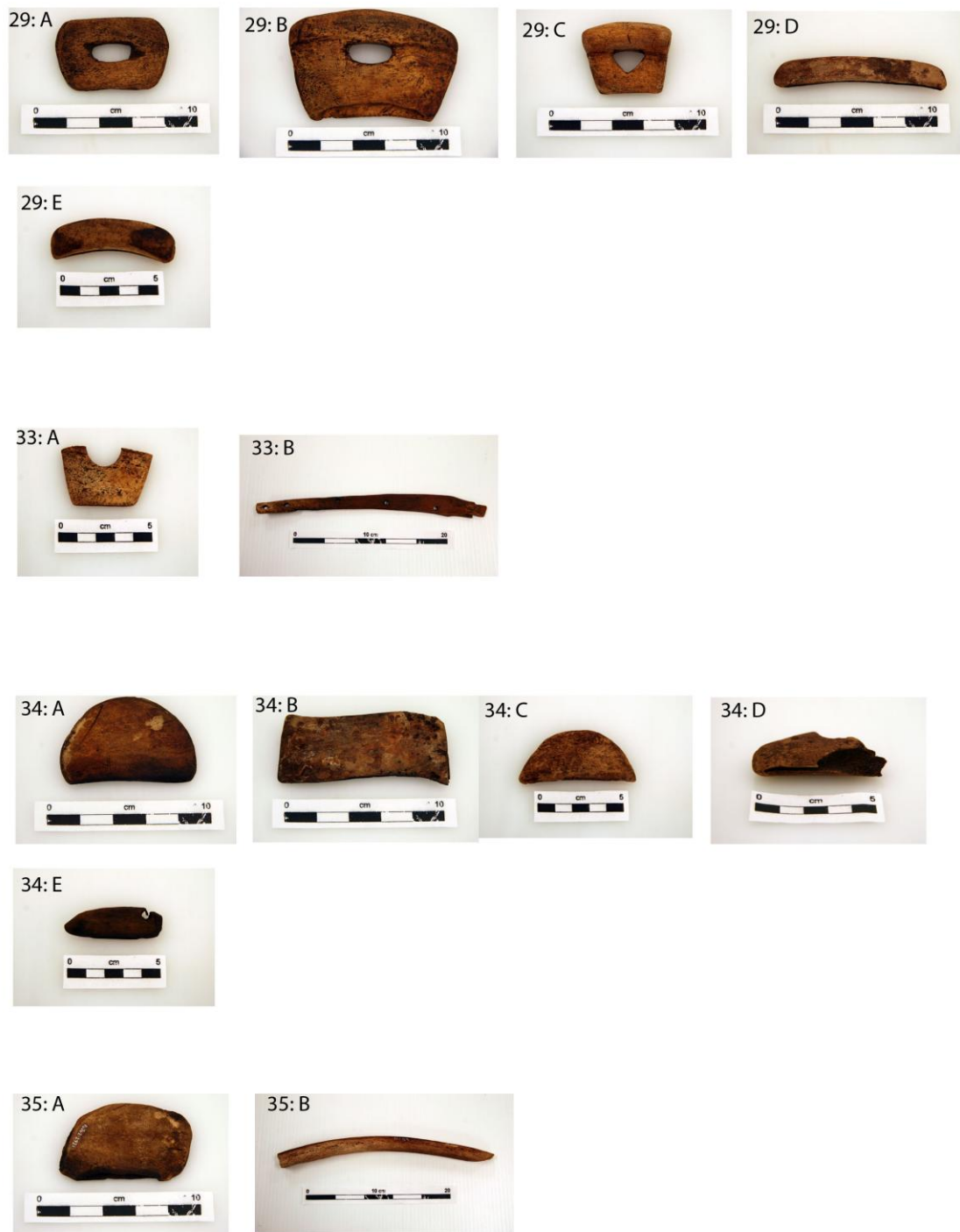


Plate 14: Uluit Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

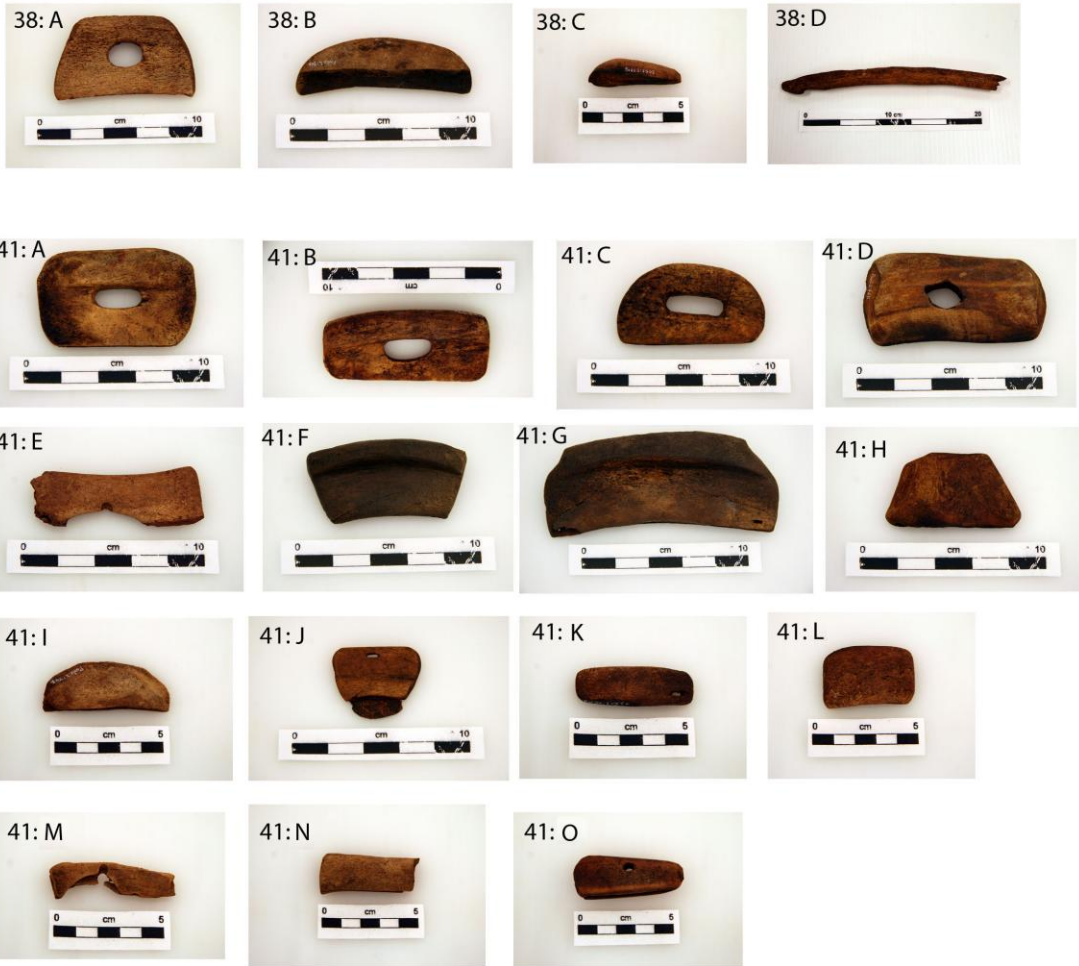


Plate 15: Uluit Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2



Plate 16: Ornaments, amulets and decorated tools Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

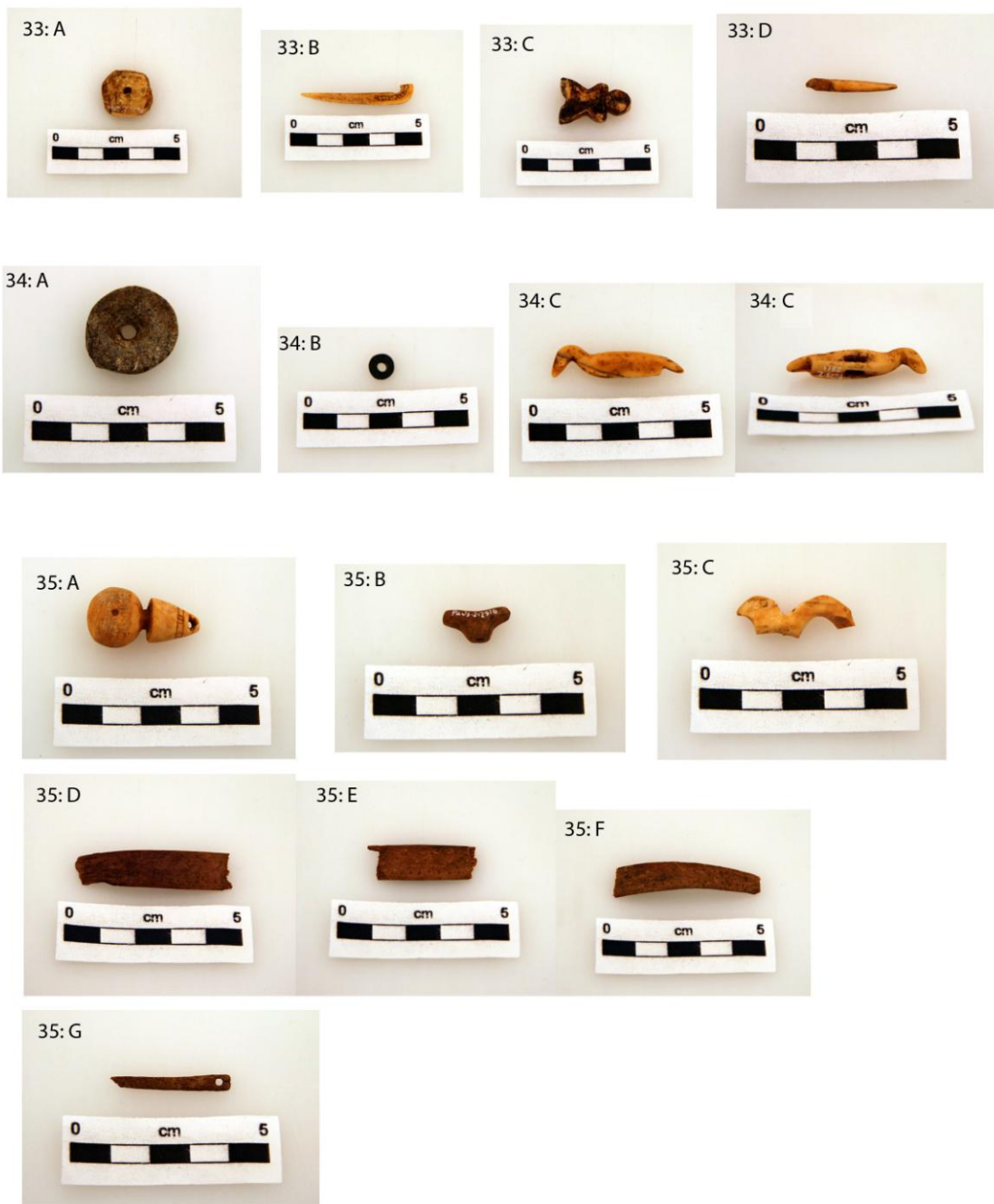


Plate 17: Ornaments, amulets and decorated tools Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

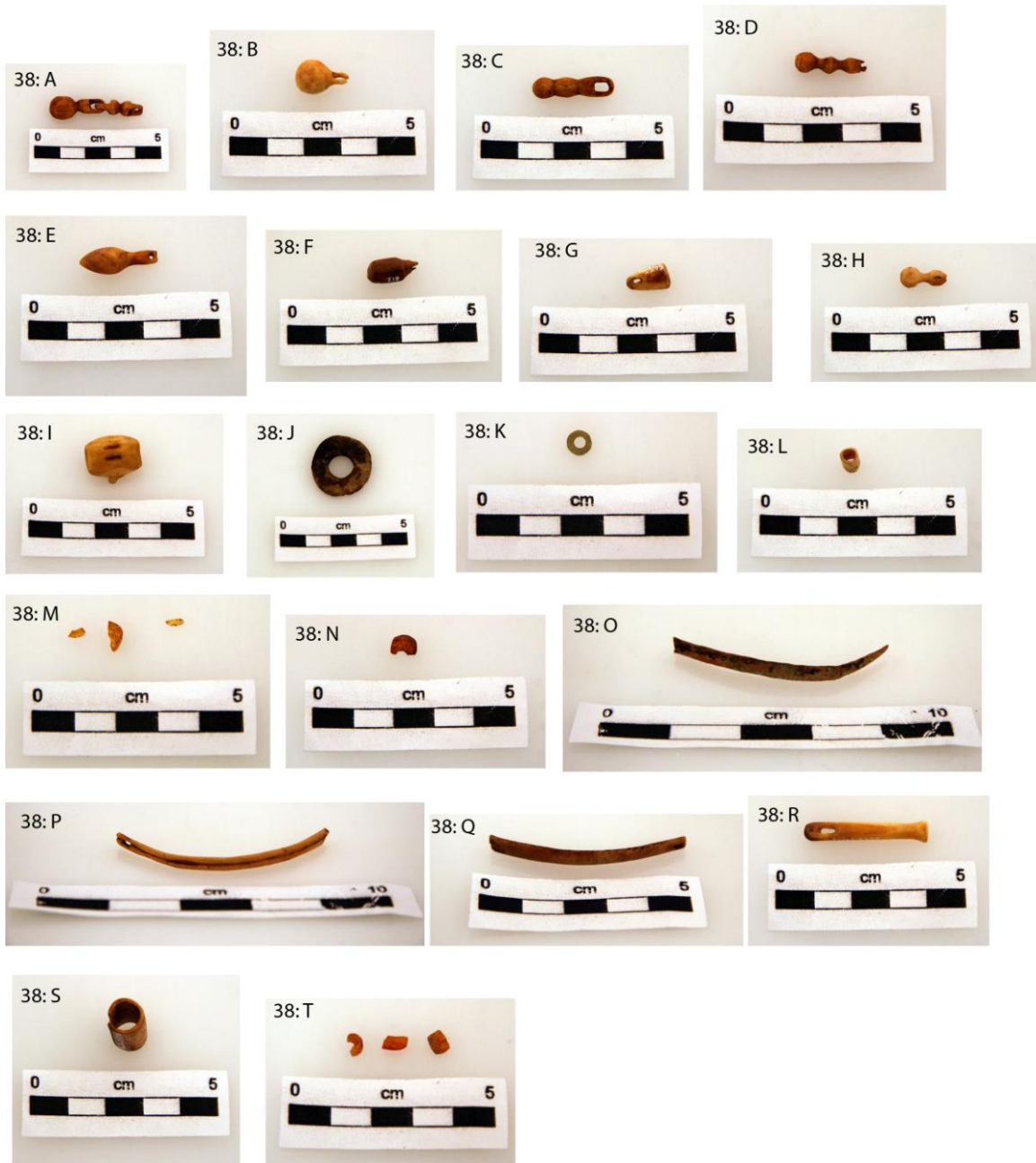


Plate 18: Ornaments, amulets and decorated tools Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

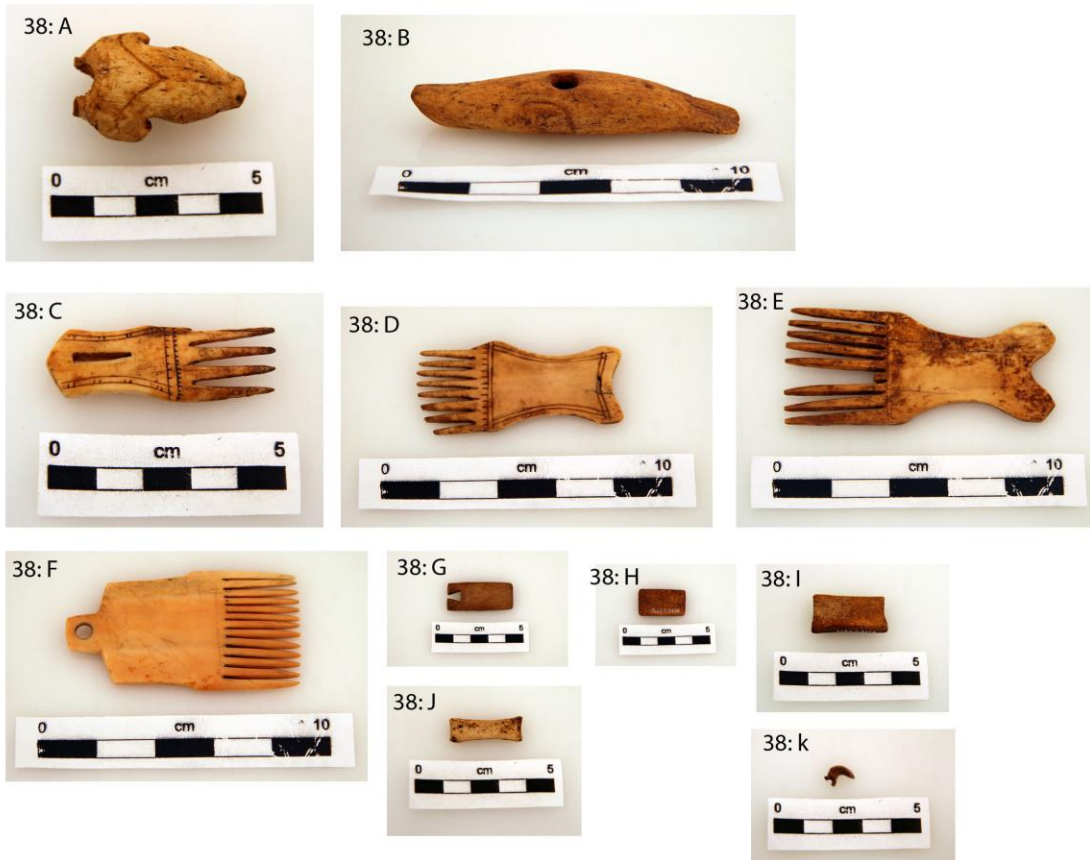


Plate 19: Ornaments, amulets and decorated tools Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

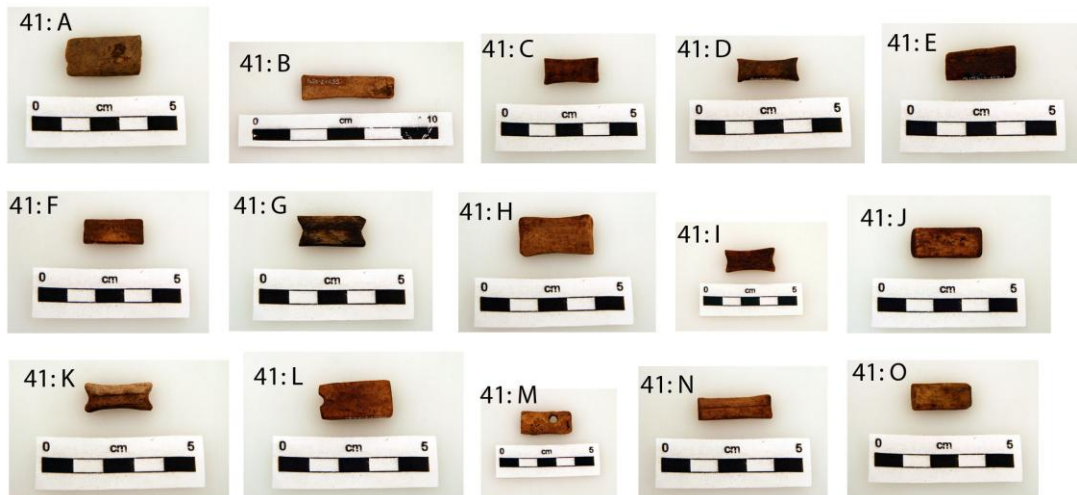


Plate 20: Game pieces Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2



Plate 21: Ornaments, amulets and decorated tools Qariaraqyuk PaJs-2

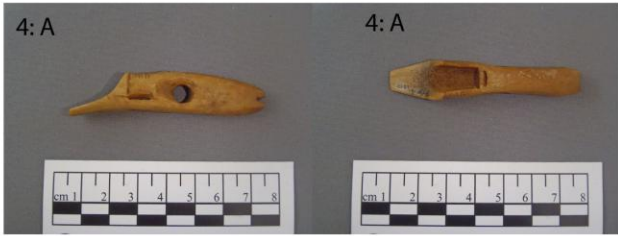


Plate 22: Harpoon heads Learmonth PeJr-1

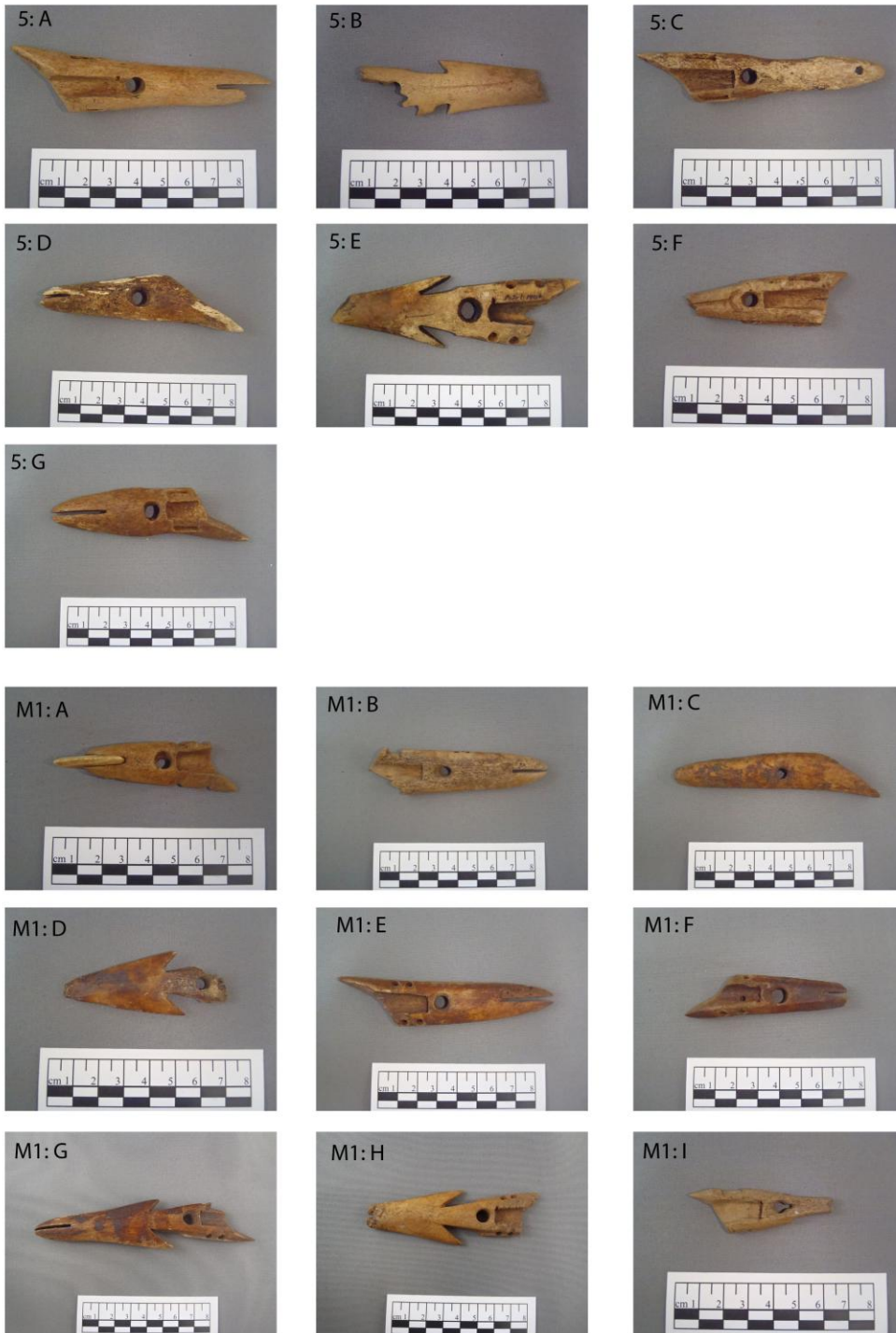


Plate 23: Harpoon heads Learmonth PeJr-1



Plate 24: Harpoon heads Learmonth PeJr-1



Plate 25: Arrowheads Learmonth PeJr-1



Plate 26: Arrowheads Learmonth PeJr-1

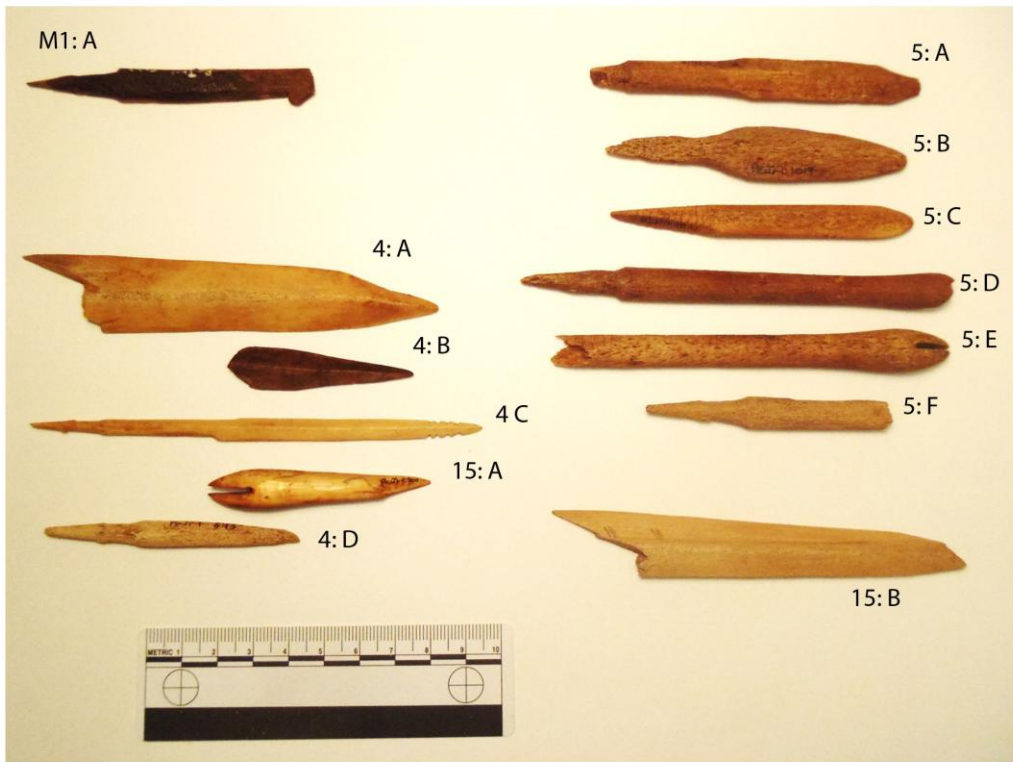


Plate 27: Arrowheads Learmonth Pejr-1

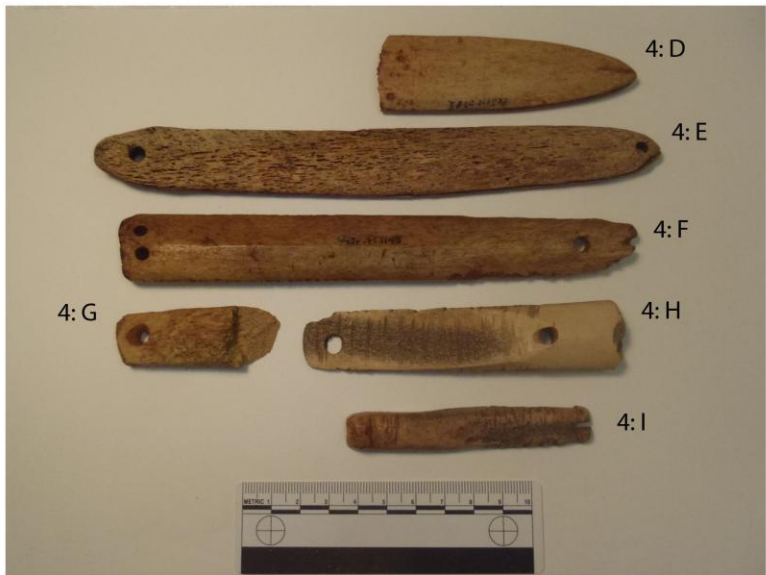


Plate 28: Men's knife handles Learmonth PeJr-1



Plate 29: Men's knife handles Learmonth PeJr-1



Plate 30: Men's knife handles Learmonth PeJr-1

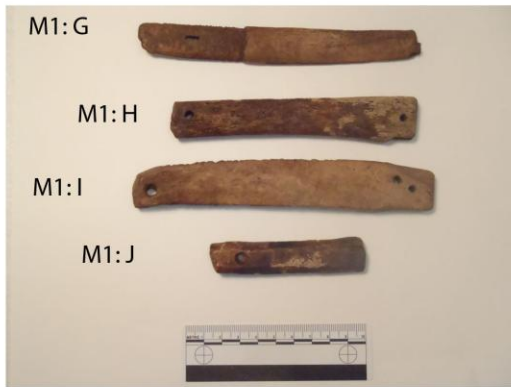


Plate 31: Men's knife handles Learmonth PeJr-1



Plate 32: Men's knife handles Learmonth Pejr-1

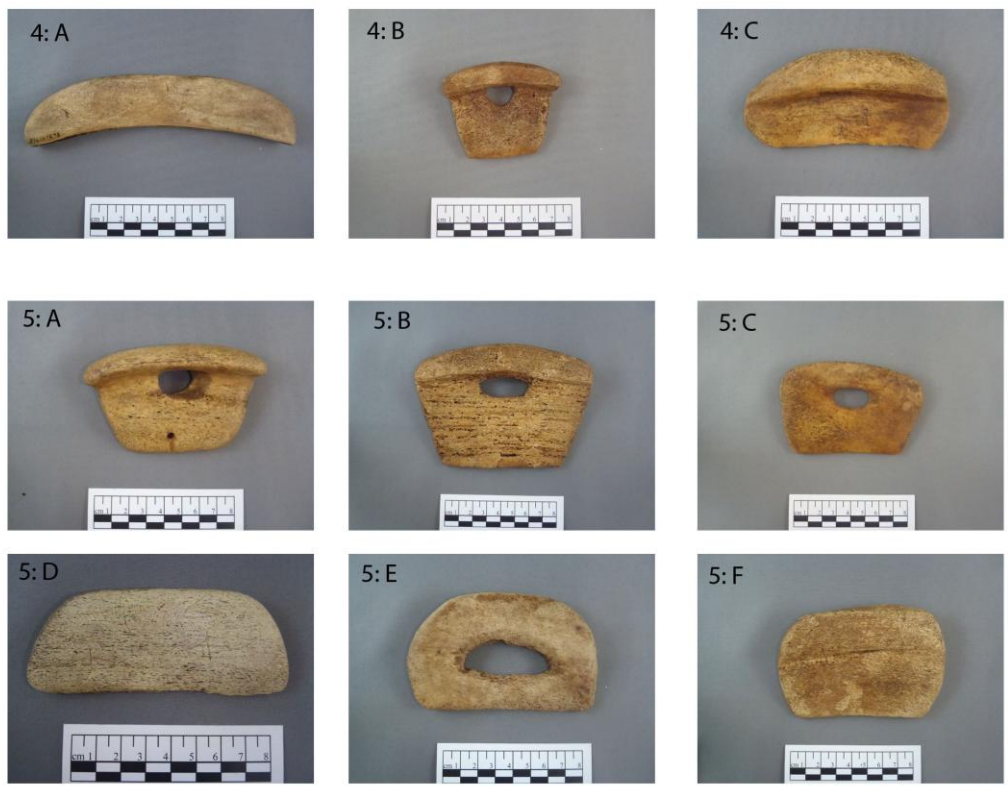


Plate 33: Uluit Learmonth PeJr-1



Plate 34: Uluit Learmonth PeJr-1



Plate 35: Ornaments, amulets and decorated tools Learmonth PeJr-1

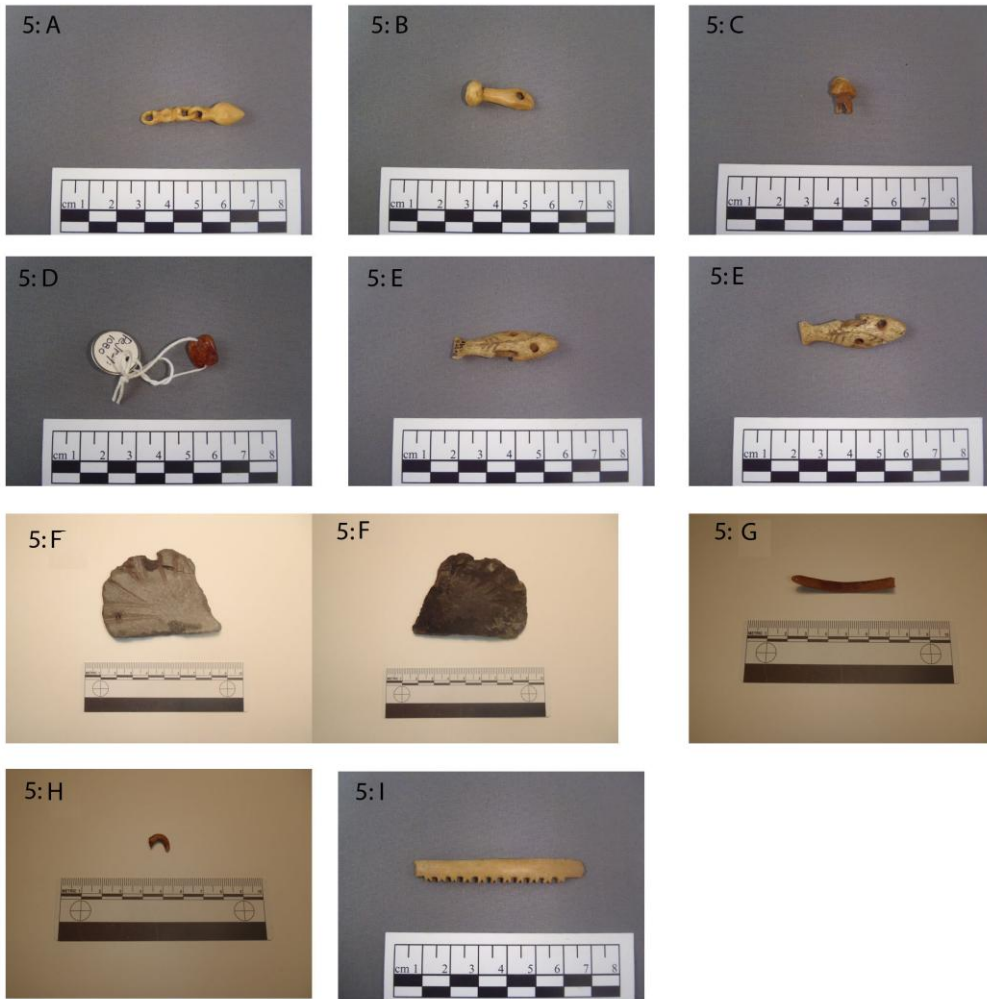


Plate 36: Ornaments, amulets and decorated tools Learmonth PeJr-1

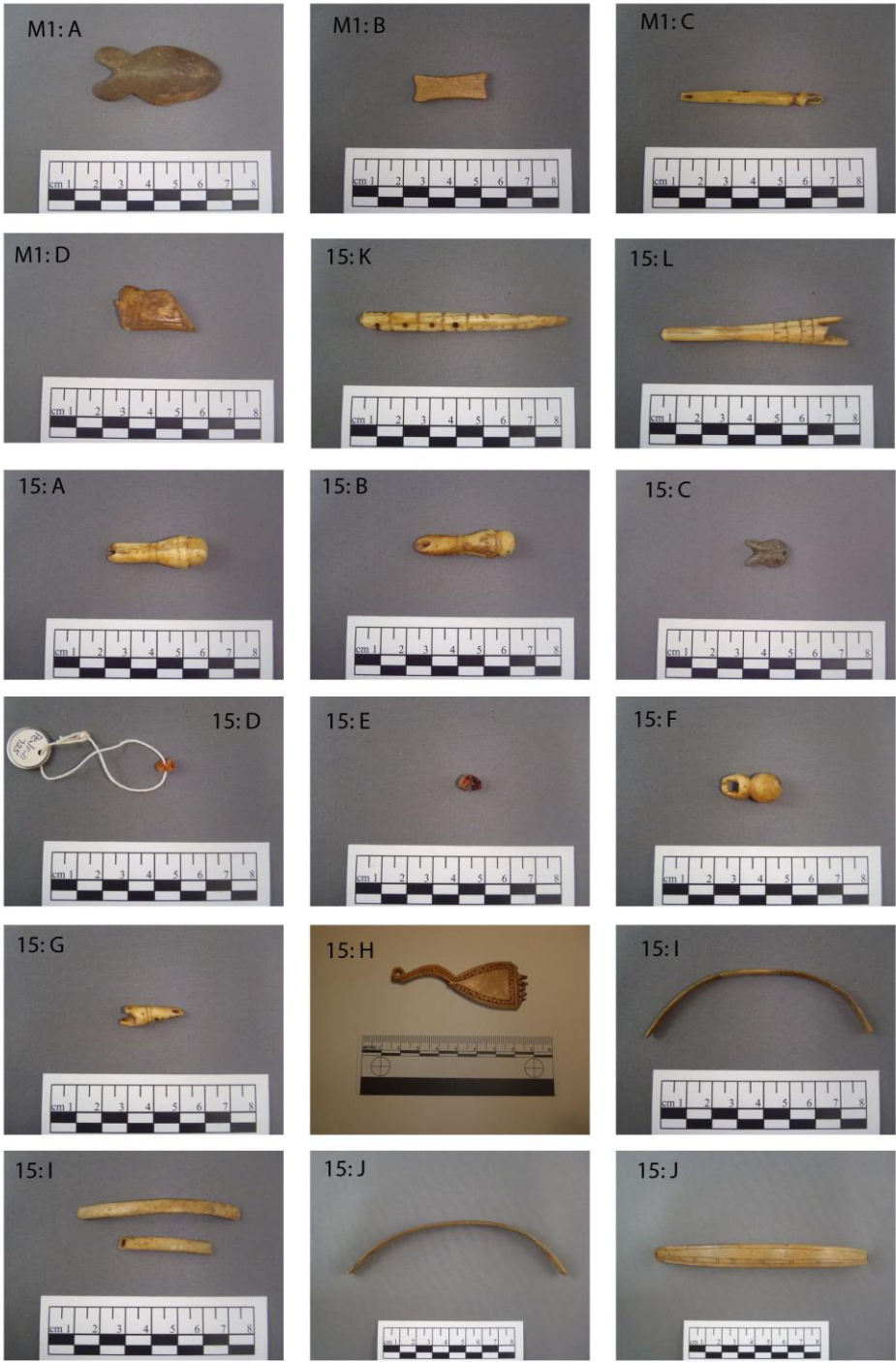


Plate 37: Ornaments, amulets and decorated tools Learmonth Pejr-1

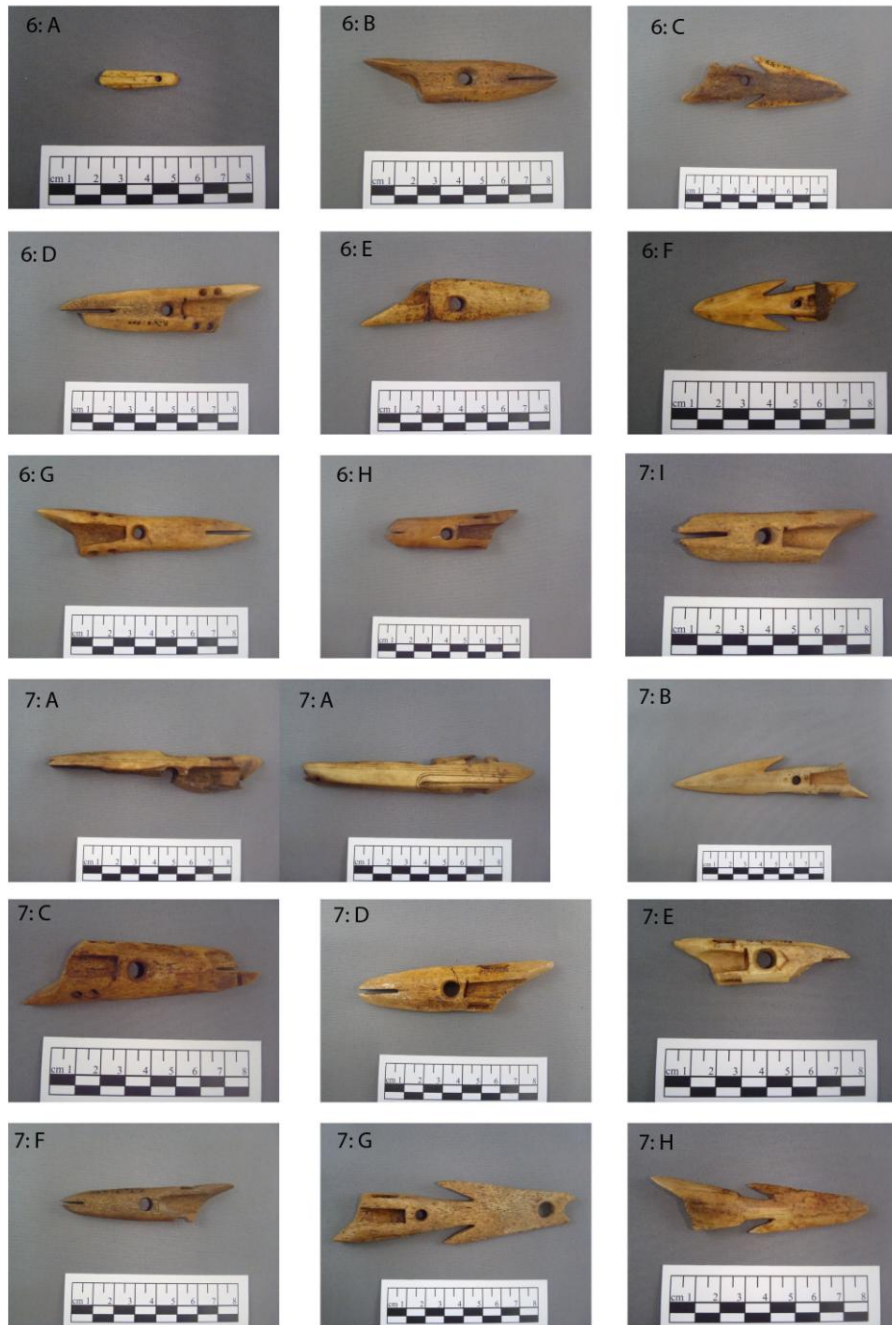


Plate 38: Harpoon heads Cape Garry PcJq-5



Plate 39: Arrowheads Cape Garry PcJq-5



Plate 40: Arrowheads Cape Garry PcJq-5



Plate 41: Men's knife handles Cape Garry PcJq-5



Plate 42: Men's knife handles Cape Garry PcJq-5



Plate 43: Men's knife handles Cape Garry PcJq-5



Plate 44: Uluit Cape Garry PcJq-5



Plate 45: Uluit Cape Garry PcJq-5

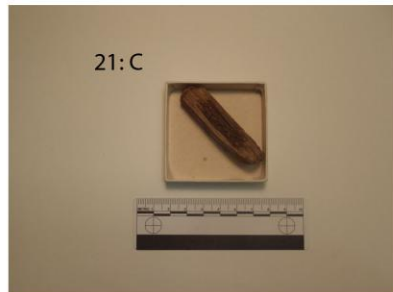
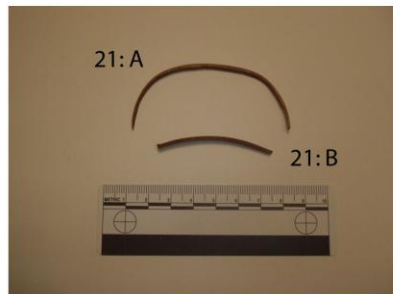
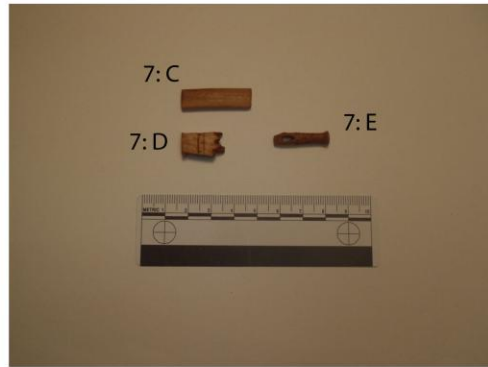
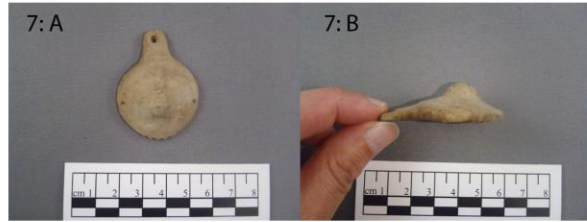


Plate 46: Ornaments, amulets and decorated tools Cape Garry