

REVIEW

THE ALUTIIT/SUGPIAT: A CATALOG OF THE COLLECTIONS OF THE KUNSTKAMERA

Compiled by Sergei Korsun; translated by Lois Fields and Katherine L. Arndt; 2012. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks. Cloth, 400 pages, photos, drawings, maps. ISBN 978-1-60223-177; \$50.00

Reviewed by Zachary R. Jones

Sealaska Heritage Institute, One Sealaska Plaza, Suite 301, Juneau, AK, 99801; zachary.jones@sealaska.com

Recognized as one of the largest ethnographic museums in the world, the Kunstkamera, often known by its proper name, the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE), Russian Academy of Sciences, is located in Saint Petersburg, Russia. The MAE contains extensive historic Alaska Native collections that have long remained of interest to Alaska Natives, scholars, and those who appreciate Alaska Native material culture. This new and important catalog, edited by Sergei Anatolyevich Korsun, the MAE's specialist on North American collections, showcases the museum's historic Sugpiaq collections. The book is unique because it is solely a catalog of the MAE's pre-1867 Sugpiaq holdings, rather than the commonly produced art history catalog resulting from an exhibit based on holdings from multiple repositories. Because this book focuses specifically on the MAE's Sugpiaq collection, it offers readers a microhistory of a nationally recognized ethnographic museum, insights into historic Russian actions in Sugpiaq country, and striking visual documentation of Sugpiaq material culture. Aesthetically speaking, this catalog ranks among the most beautiful Alaska Native art history catalogs ever published; its vivid photography of the beautiful, technical, purposeful, and sacred works of Sugpiaq people will attract readers from the Sugpiaq community, as well as scholars and those generally interested in Alaska Native material culture.

The catalog is divided into three sections. The first section includes a foreword by the museum's director, an overview of Sugpiaq culture by Korsun, and a provenance

history of the MAE's Sugpiaq collection, also by Korsun. The second section, comprising the bulk of the publication (386 of 400 pages), contains photographic documentation of the collection. The final portion of the book includes a short perspective essay by Sven Haakanson, followed by a list of collectors and historic Russian explorers who came to Alaska, as well as a helpful bibliography.

The foreword of this book sets out the museum's objectives and the context for publishing the volume; since exhibits at the MAE cannot hope to be viewed by all, the MAE "intends to publish complete catalogs of its collections over the course of several years" (p. vi). Prior to this volume's publication in English, it was first published in Russian, and in 2007, the museum published a Russian language volume on its Tlingit holdings (not yet available in English). MAE director Yuri Chistov also makes the argument that "the dissemination of information about cultural heritage, including the publication of a catalog of museums' collections, is today one of the most effective means of preserving the culture of Native peoples" (p. vi). Following Chistov's foreword, Haakanson thanks the MAE for publishing the book and acknowledges many generous Alaskan organizations, including Sugpiaq institutions, which contributed toward the book's English-language release and the Sugpiaq community's study of the collection. Prior to this publication, the Alutiiq Museum and some Sugpiaq community members had previously studied the collection and subsequently encouraged the MAE to publish this volume in English. Korsun concludes this section with a concise overview of Sugpiaq

culture, Russian “discovery” and claim to Alaskan lands prior to 1867, and a narrative on how the MAE obtained its Sugpiaq holdings.

In the second portion of the book, Korsun presents the MAE’s Sugpiaq holdings photographically. Ethnographic objects are presented by geographic region of Sugpiaq habitation and culture, including art of the Katmais (pp. 4–57), the Kodiak Alutiit (pp. 58–225), and the Chugach people (pp. 326–390). Korsun arranged the photographs by use, including hunting items, weaponry, clothing, household, and ceremonial objects. Each of these sub-sections is prefaced by ethnographic content to orient the reader. Provided by Korsun, this material is concise and based primarily on quotes and observations by historic Russian explorers and a few anthropologists. Each object photographed is described in the standard-traditional method for offering art interpretation, including a brief listing of: tribal affiliation, composition materials, dimensions, and the collector’s name and location of collection (if known). Brief explanations assist the reader in understanding the purported context and use of the items. Photography is very well done and often offers multiple views of objects from different angles and distances, which allow the viewer to see the precision and detail of each item.

The final section of the book contains highly meaningful content by Haakanson about MAE collections and what this volume can offer his community. Haakanson clears the air by acknowledging the complex and painful history between colonial empires and indigenous peoples and how many from Native communities feel when encountering their cultural objects in Euro-American museums today. Although Haakanson acknowledges these issues, he argues that the Alutiiq Museum’s intention in studying the MAE collection and supporting this publication was not to focus on the pains of the past. Rather “this work is about reconciliation, collaboration, and revitalization” (p. 392). Haakanson argues that “we developed this publication to learn from our past, both tragic and triumphant, and to change our future” (p. 392).

The core strength of this volume is its visually striking photography and focus on one indigenous community.

This documentary focus and presentation style makes the book an important aesthetic and educational product. This volume [like Haakanson and Steffian’s *Giinaquq: Like a Face: Sugpiaq Masks of the Kodiak Archipelago* (2009) and Ann Fienup-Riordan’s *Yup’ik Elders at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin: Fieldwork Turned on Its Head* (2005)] demonstrate how museum collections can educate the public and empower Native communities.

The volume could have been strengthened by inclusion of more content from the Sugpiaq community. Books like those mentioned above demonstrate the value of pairing indigenous knowledge with museum collections. Additionally, incorporating research by anthropologists such as Sergei Kan (2008) would have better contextualized and how the MAE exhibited, curated, and collected ethnographic objects.

Overall, however, this book is a major addition to historiography and an aesthetically impressive catalog that provides access to significant Alaska Native collections held by a globally recognized museum. I applaud the staff of the MAE and especially those of the Sugpiaq community for their collaborative efforts to bring this volume to fruition.

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REVIEW

THE BLIND MAN AND THE LOON: THE STORY OF A TALE

Craig Mishler, *University of Nebraska Press*, 2013, hardcover, 288 pages, 14 color & 14 b&w illustrations, maps, chart, 4 appendices; ISBN: 978-0-8032-3982-1; \$50.00

Reviewed by Alisha Drabek

Alutiiq Museum, 215 Mission Road, Kodiak, AK 99615; alisha@alutiiqmuseum.org

Craig Mishler offers a multidisciplinary approach to analyzing folklore, or ethnopoeitics, as a modern form of culturally responsive literary criticism in his exploration of one traditional narrative, “The Blind Man and the Loon.” Mishler’s book is of particular interest to scholars of cultural anthropology and Indigenous literary studies; but it is equally appealing to the lay reader who enjoys learning about the deeper meanings within Indigenous literature.

Mishler is a folklorist and cultural anthropologist affiliated with the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He edited a collection of Gwich’in stories, *Neerhiinjik: We Traveled from Place to Place* (1995) and authored *The Crooked Stovepipe: Athapaskan Fiddle Music and Square Dancing in Northeast Alaska and Northwest Canada* (1993), which is based on his doctoral dissertation.

Mishler’s writing is infused with metaphors relevant to the landscape and animal world from which the story emerged, making comparisons to the anatomy of fish, the evolution of birds, and the migration of caribou. He frequently weaves in scientific analogies for stories and storytelling—building connections to cartography, computer science, genetics, biology and ecology—as he emphasizes the holistic perspective required for a Western audience to appreciate the depth of Indigenous knowledge and storytelling.

His journey to explore the many versions of “The Blind Man and the Loon” is both an academic and a personal one, as he strives to honor the storytellers who informed him and to understand the significance the story holds for

the people who tell it. He tracks the tale through Alaska, Canada, Greenland and the Great Plains, and within both Inuit and Athapaskan, or Na-Dene, traditions. His catalog includes over 140 published and unpublished versions in print, audio, and film, and references over 50 works of art. Throughout the story of his research, Mishler substantiates many important arguments about folklore collection and analysis.

Rather than pursue a deconstructionist hunt for the elusive original tale, Mishler advocates the development of a compendium of variants. His methodology ensures a more unified and balanced experience of Indigenous knowledge and storytelling. Along the way, he also successfully debunks the popular “superstition” that writing down an oral narrative will kill it as it is transformed into a static form (p. 155). Instead he explores the story in both its oral and written forms, as he explains how the story itself is “a vehicle for thought and reflection, a meditation on traditional values, beliefs, and behaviors, a tool for processing information, and a rich ethnographic database” (p. 155). He argues that when the written form follows a similar thoughtful approach, the story maintains its vibrancy.

In Mishler’s own words, “part of the power of the story [of “The Blind Man and the Loon”] is that it so vividly teaches the tragic consequences of violating these widespread but unstated norms subsumed in hunting rituals, the incest taboo, child care, respect for the handicapped, and food sharing. When we hear the story or read it or see it, we are connected to that power” (p. 143). Embedded symbolism, gender and kinship tensions, and value lessons

all combine to teach about the right way to live within society and family. As Mishler explains, “When these kinship obligations begin to disintegrate, as the story illustrates so vividly, the result is isolation, starvation, and tragic death” (p. 138). The beauty of a traditional narrative like “The Blind Man and the Loon” is how succinct and profound it can be as it teaches the “importance of sharing food to bond families through kinship; the importance of maintaining subsistence hunting as a sacred way of life in the arctic; the importance of respecting disabled or handicapped persons; and the importance of commemorating the beauty and transformative power of animals as spirit helpers” (p. 109).

Mishler’s holistic approach is evident in his inclusion of a catalog of 54 pieces of artwork that depict the tale. He is careful to explore the story not just in words, but as it appears in visual art and artifacts. He explains how in art, “one part of the story represents the whole. If you know the story, the visualization of one powerful scene or image invokes the entire narrative sequence” (p. 107).

A major pitfall that Mishler scrutinizes as he reviews the many variants of the tale is how frequently the actual speakers and performers of oral traditions are left nameless once a story is written down. Eloquently describing the cost of anonymity, he cites Bringhurst (1999): “The result is that the real human beings who inhabit oral cultures disappear and stereotypes replace them. Native American oral poets have so often been mistreated in this way that their namelessness has come to seem routine.” In response, Mishler dedicates an entire chapter called the “Tale Behind the Tale” where he provides photos and bi-

ographies of the oral poets who contributed their voices and versions to early ethnographers.

Mishler also takes a strong stance against the commercialization of folklore for general consumption. This is a deeply important message for amateur folklorists and literary writers who seek to mine the oral tradition to retell or “cleanse” tales for public consumption. Too frequently, Indigenous oral traditions are processed for Western media production into superficial, cleansed or assimilated versions. These “semi-literary” variants are distilled for moralization, “antiseptically purged of the cruel betrayal and violent revenge motifs that are integral to nearly all of the oral variants” (p. 122). Mishler takes great care to explore what he outlines as “layers of distortion, simplification, and loss: one from the process of linguistic translation (eliminating reporting speech), one from the process of semi-literary redaction (both expansion and abridgement), and still another from the process of editing and censorship” (p. 47). Ironically, he makes an honest point of adding that his book is a sign that mass media can also give story a powerful voice through popularization.

Mishler does more than analyze or reconstruct the context of “The Blind Man and the Loon” for his readers. In essence, he creates a new life for the story through his careful collection and meditations on the many versions of the story, stringing them together like faceted beads. He successfully avoids the dissection and fragmentation that previous generations of ethnographers have perpetrated. Instead, he contributes to the story’s survival—leaving it better than when he found it—a string of beads to explore as we meditate on meaning.

REVIEW

THE FRANZ BOAS ENIGMA: INUIT, ARCTIC, AND SCIENCES

Ludger Müller-Wille, 2014. Baraka Books, Montreal. Paper, 186 pages, photos, sketches, letters, maps, appendices, index. ISBN: 978-1-77186-001-7; \$24.95.

Reviewed by Stephen J. Langdon

Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska Anchorage, 3211 Providence Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508;
sjlangdon@uaa.alaska.edu

The intellectual significance of Franz Boas to the emergence of anthropology in the United States is well known. Much less understood are his formative years in German universities where he studied in an anti-Semitic atmosphere. He began in the natural sciences, obtaining a doctorate in physics, then went on to pursue another doctorate in geography. In this short book, Ludger Müller-Wille provides an excellent overview of the early stages of Boas' academic life, focusing on his Baffin Island fieldwork and detailing his subsequent struggles and tribulations to attain academic recognition and find a position in which to develop his views. The primary emphasis is on Boas' research in Baffin Land and the subsequent publication of those materials in German and English. Müller-Wille uses the trope of "enigma" to explore how a German Jew, raised in an intellectual climate dominated by notions of white racial superiority and the rights of Europeans to colonial domination, came to the view of human biological equality and cultural relativism.

Müller-Wille is a geographer at McGill University who has published extensively on human-environment relations and changes due to technology, climate and forces of globalization for over forty years. His own early career research was focused in the Canadian North during which he began his exploration of Boas' work and became familiar with the early German publications. This resulted in a second emphasis in his career, the production of a substantial body of research and publication translating Boas' early materials published in German, making them available to English-speaking scholars.

Boas came from an upper-middle-class Jewish family that operated a successful textile business in Minden, Germany. The first part of the book discusses Boas' academic training, exploring the different influences and interests that he experienced along the way. His initial interests were in the hard sciences. He gravitated over time to geography and then to questions of environmental influences on human behavior prompted by his reading of works by Friedrich Ratzel. His interest in the North seems to have derived from his advisor pointing him in the direction of the German Polar Commission's participation in international research in the region in 1882–83. This provided the opportunity for Boas to travel to a research station located on Baffin Island. Müller-Wille asserts that the intellectual substrate which nourished Boas' later views on universal human capacities and cultural relativism derived from the writings of Immanuel Kant, Johann Herder, and Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt (Müller-Wille 2014:142). However, he does not provide any quotes in which Boas acknowledges these influences or cites them directly.

The second part of the book presents a chronology and discussion of Boas' Arctic research. Boas was on Baffin Island in 1883–84 pursuing basic geographic research and recording cultural information provided by his Inuit guides. His accomplishments and contributions were importantly facilitated and made possible by a number of people. One of these was William Weike, his field assistant (termed "servant" by Müller-Wille) during his Baffin Land research. Weike kept his own notebooks which have been

edited and published by Müller-Wille (Müller-Wille and Giesecking 2011). A second important contributor to Boas' work with the Inuit of Baffin Land was linguist Hinrich Rink from whom Boas obtained initial instruction and who reviewed and corrected the linguistic materials Boas obtained. Boas and Rink subsequently co-published the oral traditions collected by Boas as *Eskimo Tales and Songs* (1889). A third important influence was the whaler and trader James Mutch, who had married an Inuit and collected twenty years of linguistic and cultural insights on Baffin Island which were important to both Boas' daily living and subsequent descriptions of Inuit life. Last, and perhaps most influential, was the Inuit Oqaitung, who was Boas' paid assistant and who arranged and guided Boas' treks providing the bulk of the place names recorded. Oqaitung is also credited with saving Weike who nearly lost his life due to frostbite complications.

Boas experienced several trying events during his Baffin Island fieldwork. An epidemic disease swept through the area killing many dogs and Boas was accused by the Inuit of having brought it with him. Next, following the massive die-off of dogs, Boas became a competitor for the reduced supply which caused a great deal of bitterness among Inuit who were in need of them. Finally, Boas attempted to treat several sick Inuit children and women with medications he brought with him but when they died, he was blamed for their deaths.

Müller-Wille notes several shortcomings in Boas' understanding of Inuit life. One such flaw was his failure to recognize Inuit resilience, their ability to adapt to massive changes while retaining their essential cultural identity. Boas wrote that he expected them to become extinct "imminently." Another problem area was his effort to collect Inuit skeletal remains, a request strongly and repeatedly refused by his Inuit consultants. Müller-Wille attributes this to the fact that despite Boas' profound respect for Inuit capacity and intelligence, he nevertheless held certain attitudes about what values should take precedence in matters of scientific necessity.

Müller-Wille makes clear that one of the important outcomes of Boas' experiences with the Inuit was that it was not possible to apply *a priori* scientific concepts with variables defined by specific measurement standards to the study of human cultural beliefs and activities. Instead Boas adopted an approach which emphasized descriptive accounts that were continuously explored through involution and iteration leading to historical, not evolutionary, characterizations of locally specific patterns of development.

These initial fieldwork experiences can be seen as the basis for Boas' well-recognized caution and resistance to generalization, and by extension, universalization. The issue of whether culture can be studied and explained "scientifically" continues to be a fractious and central topic of interest in contemporary cultural anthropology (Brown 2008).

A key point that Müller-Wille brings out is that Boas did not repudiate or abandon science and scientific approaches to knowledge following his fieldwork experience with the Inuit. He published his geographic observations and findings and continued to work with those who were interested in them. The author's engagement with Boas' research was initially stimulated by his own landscape studies in the mid-1980s with Inuit of Baffin Island. One of the areas of inquiry was place names, which he discovered through his elicitation of names from Inuit elders displayed an enormously high rate of correspondence to the place names and locations recorded by Boas. This experience was evidence to Müller-Wille of Boas' resolute commitment to precision and completeness in the recording of evidence, a strongly held value of scientific method and practice.

Thirty-eight images are included in the volume including photos of Boas' family, research photos of locations, activities, handwritten notes, sketches and hand-drawn maps. The bibliography consists of a complete listing of Boas' publications. This includes 725 known publications and unpublished papers in both English and German. Of these, 12% are based on his Baffin Island research.

This book will provide important information to those interested in the history and development of anthropological concepts, the life and formative experiences of Franz Boas, Boas' contributions to geography and other sciences, and how his seminal work established a foundation for Inuit studies that is relevant to contemporary research. While Müller-Wille does not convincingly establish an explanation for the "enigma" posed, he has nonetheless produced a very useful account.

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REVIEW

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE: HUNTER-GATHERER WORLD-SYSTEM CHANGE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY CANADIAN ARCTIC

T. Max Friesen, 2012. University of Arizona Press, Tucson. The Archaeology of Colonialism in Native North America series. Cloth, xviii + 262 pages, tables, figures, maps, references. ISBN: 978-0-8165-0244-8; \$60.00.

Reviewed by Mark S. Cassell

Territory Heritage Resource Consulting, 200 W. 34th Avenue, #8, Anchorage, AK 99503; mark@territoryheritage.com

In *When Worlds Collide: Hunter-Gatherer World-System Change in the 19th Century Canadian Arctic*, T. Max Friesen of the University of Toronto gathers archaeological and ethnohistoric data from the Mackenzie Delta region of Northwest Canada to develop “a model for how hunter-gatherer world-systems . . . are constructed and why they change,” and applies the model to the “archaeological and ethnographic records of the Inuvialuit inhabitants of the western Canadian Arctic over the past five hundred years” (p. 2). The author’s interest is understanding and explaining variability in the character of archaeological assemblages in the context of interaction between societies through time in the Mackenzie Delta region. His primary archaeological data come from the Pauline Cove and Washout sites on Herschel Island, just west of the delta.

Friesen reaches toward Wallerstein’s (1974, 2004) world-system theory as the framework upon which to build his model of indigenous western Canada/Mackenzie Delta region societies and histories before, during, and after sporadic and then sustained interaction with EuroAmericans. He joins other northern anthropologists who have found Wallerstein’s ideas compelling (e.g., Burch 2005; Crowell 1997).

The idea is that “although hunter-gatherer regional groups are relatively autonomous, they are interdependent to the degree that they are not viable in the long term without interaction with neighboring regional groups” (p. 29). The focus is interaction between those regional groups, which Friesen calls “societies,” equivalent to Burch’s “societies” (1980) and then “nations” (1998). For one of his

conceptual guides: “World-systems are intersocietal interaction networks in which culturally different peoples are strongly linked together by trade, political-military engagement and information flows” (Chase-Dunn et al. 2005:92). Friesen illustrates the presence of seven Inuvialuit “regional groups” in the Mackenzie Delta area, with eight Gwich’in groups to the south and west in Northwest Canada. His societal focus is the Qikiqtaryungmiut of Herschel Island and adjacent mainland.

After a less-than-comprehensive review of archaeological approaches to interaction (culminating appropriately, however, in a useful review of world-system approaches to archaeological contexts), Friesen establishes the Inuvialuit-centered world-system core/periphery dichotomy. Although less common in applied use nowadays (e.g., Murray 2006:38), this dichotomy does point up the essential inequality between two places: a core is a central place from which capital and production pour, and a periphery is a place dependent to some degree upon the core.

In the Mackenzie Delta, Friesen invokes periphery and core when he offers a “process of incorporation . . . in which indigenous societies living in previously external regions become increasingly articulated with, and eventually dependent upon, the expanding European world-economy” (p. 18). For indigenous Mackenzie Delta societies, Friesen presents a schema of five stages of incorporation. It begins between 3000 BC and AD 1200, during Paleoeskimo times, when the Mackenzie Delta was an “External Zone,” and societies “engage in no contact with the world economy. They exist as smaller world-systems

completely external to the world-economy” (p. 21). From AD 1200 to 1800, during Western Thule and “precontact” Inuvialuit times, the region was an “Autonomous Zone,” where a “low level of interaction occurs between the indigenous society and the world-economy, usually in the form of exchange through intermediaries. . . . usually ‘preciosities’ . . . and not bulk goods” (p. 22).

From 1800–1889, during “protocontact” Inuvialuit days, the delta was a “Contact Periphery,” where “Increased contact is evident, either in the form of occasional direct interaction with agents of the world economy or through a higher frequency of indirect interaction, with exchange in preciosities still usually predominating. This contact causes significant changes in indigenous societies beyond the mere presence of trade goods” (p. 22). Between 1889 and 1907, the Mackenzie Delta region of the “early contact” Inuvialuit was a “Marginal Periphery,” where “regular and direct interaction between agents of the world-economy and the indigenous society” occurs, and “A degree of dependency begins to develop on the part of the indigenous society, often due to active effort of the agents of the world-economy” (p. 23). After 1907, the Mackenzie Delta becomes a “Dependent Periphery,” representing “the consolidation of the periphery into the capitalist world-economy. There is now a high degree of interaction with a profound dependence of the periphery on the core, and with the periphery having a significant impact on the core” (p. 23). Friesen then appends three corollaries to each stage: “breadth” (the spatial extent of the world-system), “depth” (range and scale of intersocietal interaction, such as intermarriage, warfare, or trade in bulk goods), and “internal differentiation” (the degree to which proximal or interactional societies, or core and periphery, are alike in social organization) (pp. 32–33, 42–46).

Numerous chapters are devoted to describing Friesen’s archaeological and historical rationale for his assessment of stages in this “process of incorporation,” and he provides sets of archaeological expectations as to what an assemblage should look like for each stage and corollary. Friesen’s experience with and knowledge of Mackenzie Delta archaeology are likely exceeded by none, and it is both important and reasonable that the reader closely follow his thinking on these expectations. They were informed by the archaeology of the region and by the proposition that there was/is a dominant world-economy and that approximations of cores and peripheries might be seen in the archaeological record. This is the key component of Friesen’s book and makes it a memorable work.

For example, he lists the expected attributes of an archaeological assemblage from the Autonomous Zone to the Contact Periphery periods in the Mackenzie Delta:

Autonomous Zone

Breadth should be relatively low

- Trade goods from few regions.
- Aggregation sites rare.
- Intergroup boundaries maintained.

Depth should be relatively low

- Trade goods rare.
- Trade goods in few functional classes.
- Trade goods do not replace local technologies.
- Trade in bulk goods rare.
- Subsistence based on local resources.
- Limited acquisition of products for export.
- Evidence for conflict present.

Contact Periphery

Breadth should increase

- Trade goods from greater number of regions.
- Aggregation sites increase in number.
- Boundary maintenance decreased, as indicated in style.

Depth should increase

- Trade goods more frequent.
- Trade goods in more functional classes.
- Trade goods replace some local technologies.
- Proportion of bulk goods increases.
- Increased mobility.
- Winter dwellings less substantial.
- Less emphasis on stored food.
- Increased acquisition of products for export.
- Evidence for reduced conflict.

Using existing archaeological data, Friesen then goes on to determine whether or not the data match his expectations. Often they do match, but sometimes they do not, but that is of little matter. The important part is that he formulated and asked the questions.

There do exist some content concerns appropriate for critical comment. I admire Friesen’s (2009) prior foray into Braudel and this exploration of Wallerstein’s grown child, for not many northern archaeologists consider the *Annales* school of historical thought in the course their work. I do think, however, that the too-long conceptual discourses on the nature of world-systems theory can show the recency of acquisition more than the fluency of understanding.

I do not recommend use of “contact” and “precontact” in this situation, because it subtly but truly denies the reality of initial interaction between and among Mackenzie

Delta and other western Canada societies well before EuroAmericans arrived. And the “you know what I mean” gloss doesn’t work all that well. When in reference to EuroAmerican arrival, use of “contact” and “precontact” actually defeats the purpose of world-systems theory in what could be an emic approach. This is not a new anthropological problem. Ortner (1984:113) called it a “capitalism-centered worldview,” and wrote that “History is often treated as something that arrives, like a ship, from outside the society in question. Thus, we do not get a history of that society, but the impact of (our) history on that society...”

The material culture data gathered for this book are overwhelmingly archaeological; there is no real use of extant historical documents from which to reference material culture. While this needs to be the case for a more Distant Past, locating the story substantively in times more recent than not (1889 forward) should have provided a wealth of material culture information from whaling logs and journals, Royal NorthWest Mounted Police records, and Anglican mission files. For example, data gathered from whaling logs and journals about material culture and indigenous people associated with the entire 1889–1910 Beaufort Sea commercial whale fishery may have influenced expectations for the Marginal Periphery stage (Cassell 1988).

Numerous archaeological and historical studies exist which deal with adjacent North Alaska in the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth centuries, and with social relations and material culture before, during, and after the arrival of missionaries, traders, and the commercial whaling industry to those Chukchi and Beaufort sea shores. For example, it may have proved useful for Friesen to compare Mackenzie Delta indigenous–EuroAmerican intersocietal relations with interactive material culture relations in the Barrow area between Inupiat and the British Navy in 1852–1854 or with commercial shore whalers after 1885 (e.g., Cassell 2000, 2005). He might have offered competing discussion, but awareness of that relevant literature would have been known.

While the above criticisms are by no means minor, neither do they override what is broadly a good exercise in applying concept to archaeological questions. This is a book filled with archaeological data and substantive interpretive potential, and Friesen’s accomplishment is leaving us a series of testable possibilities, and a means for emulating his efforts for the specific historical circumstances of the places holding the assemblages we have unearthed. I recommend that you find and read and use Max Friesen’s book and big picture ideas.

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