Analogues at Iqaluktuuq: the social context of archaeological inference in Nunavut, Arctic Canada

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Abstract

This paper presents a case study from the Canadian Arctic, in which the community context of an archaeological project has led to a re-thinking of a fundamental aspect of archaeological interpretation. Archaeologists are constantly confronted with the problem of identifying appropriate analogues for the societies whose material remains they study. In the Arctic, a particularly rich ethnographic record exists relating to recent Inuit lifeways; however, it remains difficult to determine when, if ever, it should be used to interpret the Palaeo-Eskimo archaeological record which pre-dates 1,000 BP. This issue will be explored within the context of the Iqaluktuuq Project, a new program of field research which aims to combine the traditional knowledge of modern Inuit elders with the Palaeo- and Neo-Eskimo archaeological records in the Ekalluk River region of south-eastern Victoria Island, Nunavut. Ultimately, the social engagement of archaeologists with elders has led to a reconsideration of the process of analogical inference, resulting in a more robust use of recent Inuit lifeways as models for Palaeo-Eskimos than would have occurred based on purely 'academic' considerations.

Keywords

Arctic; Inuit; Palaeo-Eskimo; Dorset; analogy; oral history.

Introduction

During the past twenty years, archaeologists have been repeatedly reminded that aspects of their enterprise as basic as choice of issues addressed, selection of methods and nature of interpretations are tightly entwined with the modern society, or societies, in which the archaeologist functions. Of course, this is a two-way street: archaeologists are affected by their social milieu, and in turn the results of their research may have impacts in a variety of contexts. In many cases the archaeologist may be unaware, or at least not fully aware, of these complex relationships. This paper represents an attempt to describe one situation in which the social context of an archaeological project is having a significant impact on

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the way in which archaeological data are interpreted. Specifically, the fact that this archaeological project operates as a co-operative venture between a community-based Inuit cultural organization in Nunavut, northern Canada, and a 'southern', research-intensive university has affected the way in which I think about the use of analogy to interpret the regional archaeological record.

Analogy in arctic archaeology

Worldwide, archaeologists have expended a great deal of effort thinking about how to use ethnographic data in the interpretation of the fragmentary remains they excavate. In some cases, clear continuity between the archaeological and ethnographic records leads to robust use of ethnographic analogues, as evident especially in the 'direct historical approach' (e.g. Willey and Sabloff 1993: 125–7). Alternatively, for studies relating to the remote past, or in cases where discontinuities occur in the archaeological record, analogy with specific ethnographically recorded societies is often considered risky at best, dangerous at worst. In these latter cases, other sources of inference are often used, such as 'contextual' approaches seeking to understand particular archaeological cases on their own terms, or general ethnographic analogies which use cross-cultural patterns for interpretation, rather than individual cultures.

In the brief 4,500 (+/–) year archaeological record of the eastern North American Arctic, both situations apply. The culture history of the eastern Arctic, here defined as the Canadian Arctic east of the Mackenzie Delta, including Labrador and Newfoundland, and Greenland (cf. Maxwell 1985), is usually seen as a radical dichotomy between two major traditions (Table 1). The eastern Arctic was originally peopled around 4,500 years ago by people generally referred to as Palaeo-Eskimos, bearers of the Arctic Small Tool tradition. Their earliest traces are known by the terms Independence I, Pre-Dorset and Saqqaq. Around 2,500 years ago, a new Palaeo-Eskimo cultural configuration known as Dorset developed from Pre-Dorset. Eventually, Dorset culture became widespread throughout the eastern Arctic, and lasted until around 1,000 years ago, and possibly later in some areas.

The second major tradition, known as Neo-Eskimo, represents the direct ancestors of modern Inuit in the eastern Arctic. Some time around 1,000 years ago, Neo-Eskimo people known to archaeologists as 'Thule' Inuit migrated into the eastern Arctic from Alaska. In many areas, the Thule population appears to have achieved relatively high population densities, based in some regions on the hunting of very large bowhead whales,

Table 1 Archaeological cultural units in the eastern Arctic

Neo-Eskimo	Recent Inuit	AD 1500–present
	Thule	AD 1000–1500
	significant cultural break	
	Late Dorset	AD 500–1000/1400
Palaeo-Eskimo	Early, Middle Dorset	500 BC–AD 500
	Independence 1/Pre-Dorset/Saqqaq	2500–500 BC

as well as an elaborate technology which allowed acquisition of a wide range of other resources. Over the past millennium, the initially relatively homogeneous Thule population gradually changed and grew into the regionally distinct Inuit societies which are known in the ethnographic record.

The relationship between the Palaeo- and Neo-Eskimo traditions remains controversial. The issue of whether the two actually met, and, if they did, the degree to which they interacted, has become a subject of some debate (e.g. Friesen 2000; Hayes and O'Rourke 2000; McGhee 1997; Park 1993, 2000). For present purposes, though, it is simply important to emphasize that, across the Arctic, the Neo-Eskimo culture horizon is distinctly new and different, and appears to borrow very little from earlier Dorset people, regardless of whether the two came into direct contact.

As a result of this situation, the process of archaeological interpretation, and the use of ethnographic analogy, is fundamentally different for the two traditions. For archaeologists dealing with the more recent Neo-Eskimo tradition, including its earlier Thule components, direct analogy with recent Inuit societies is widely and successfully used. This frequent use is justified, because of the clear continuity between earlier prehistoric Thule societies and recent Inuit and Inupiat peoples of both the eastern and western North American Arctic, seen most clearly in very similar artifact forms. The use of the direct historical approach is also encouraged by the fact that the arctic ethnographic record is of particularly high quality, due to the production of many high-resolution studies by 'professional' anthropologists, and the fact that in many regions elders still survive who remember life 'on the land' before the establishment of permanent modern towns. This ability to use the direct historic approach does not, of course, mean that every aspect of Thule archaeology is immediately interpretable on the basis of the ethnographic record. For example, some aspects of Thule behaviour, such as specific settlement patterns of some whale-hunting societies (e.g. Savelle 1987; Savelle and McCartney 1988), do not have exact counterparts in recent Inuit ethnography. Furthermore, it is often clear that the precise nature of Thule societies in a specific region was not exactly the same as that of recent Inuit in the same region. For example, in the southern Victoria Island region which forms the setting for the case study outlined later in this paper, ethnographically described 'Copper' Inuit of the early twentieth century spent much of the winter in snowhouse villages on the sea ice. As a result, land-based dwellings were largely restricted to skin-covered tents occupied during the warm season. This situation contrasts markedly with the earlier Thule settlement of the area, which is characterized by substantial semi-subterranean dwellings on land (McGhee 1972; Morrison 1983). Clearly, the two settlement patterns, and related aspects of economy and seasonal movements, were significantly different. As a result, many archaeologists dealing with Thule do not use only the ethnographic record of Inuit in the regions in which they work, but rather look at the entire body of Inuit ethnography from across the Arctic as a source of analogues. In practical terms, this often means a particular reliance on the ethnographic record of North Alaskan Inupiat, which may have had a greater degree of stability and continuity from the Thule to the recent period than did most societies in the eastern Arctic.

For arctic archaeologists working with the Palaeo-Eskimo record, a very different situation exists (see Hood 1998: 24–8 for a stimulating discussion of this issue). In the Palaeo-Eskimo context, this same high-resolution Inuit ethnographic record can be seen as both

a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, the particularly fine-grained ethnographies and the presence of modern elders with direct memories of life 'on the land' provide a potentially very rich source of interpretation and understanding of earlier Palaeo-Eskimo hunter-gatherers existing in the same landscape (e.g. Maxwell 1985). On the other hand, the ethnographic record can be a strait-jacket, either consciously or unconsciously restricting those interpretations, and perhaps excluding other possibilities. Put bluntly, once one has read Inuit ethnographies, when one excavates arctic sites of any age, it can be difficult to avoid 'writing' recent Inuit behaviour into the remains uncovered. However, as outlined above, the culture of Palaeo-Eskimos is in fact not directly connected to that of recent Inuit, and the two are separated by at least 3,000 years of independent development.

Therefore, a reasonable solution is to make a conscious attempt to avoid using Inuit ethnographies as a direct, or privileged, source of analogues for reconstructing Palaeo-Eskimo lifeways (e.g. McGhee 1996; Odess 1996: 54). Instead, as in other regions, archaeologists interpreting the Palaeo-Eskimo record often rely on other sources of inference, with the three most common being: 1) contextual approaches (e.g. Hodder 1991; cf. Trigger 1989: 348–50), which seek to understand the specifics of particular archaeological manifestations on the basis of relationships between different archaeological data sets (e.g. Appelt and Gulløv 1999; Plumet 1985; Taçon 1983); 2) studies which use cross-cultural generalizations about hunter-gatherer behaviour (as opposed to specific studies of Inuit) as analogues (e.g. Damkjar 1990; Nagy 2000; Renouf et al. 2000); and 3) studies which link the archaeological record to environmental and ecological variables (e.g. Barry et al. 1977; Fitzhugh 1997; Helmer 1992; Murray 1999). In practise, of course, many studies use combinations of several of these data sources, including Inuit ethnography, to interpret the Palaeo-Eskimo archaeological record.

The Iqaluktuuq Project

It is within this intellectual context that the Iqaluktuuq Project was initiated. The Iqaluktuuq Project is a long-term program of fieldwork designed to collect and interpret cultural information relating to 'Iqaluktuuq', a 3-kilometre-long stretch of the Ekalluk River,[1] which flows between Ferguson Lake and Wellington Bay on south-eastern Victoria Island, Nunavut (Fig. 1). This project was initiated by the Kitikmeot Heritage Society (KHS) of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. The KHS began as an informal group devoted to the collection of Inuit traditional knowledge in 1990, and was incorporated in 1995. Currently, the KHS is composed of many local Inuit elders, as well as a number of younger members, both Inuit and Euro-Canadian. Since its inception its central mandate has been to record and preserve oral histories of elders in Cambridge Bay, relating to a large area of western Nunavut and to most of the twentieth century. A central part of its methodology revolves around travel to areas in which elders lived during their younger years, often at some distance from modern towns, where interviews are performed on site. The practise of interviewing elders in the context of the landscapes and specific places experienced in the past has proven to be much more productive of detailed histories than interviews in towns. As a result of this long-term effort, the KHS has been successful in recording many

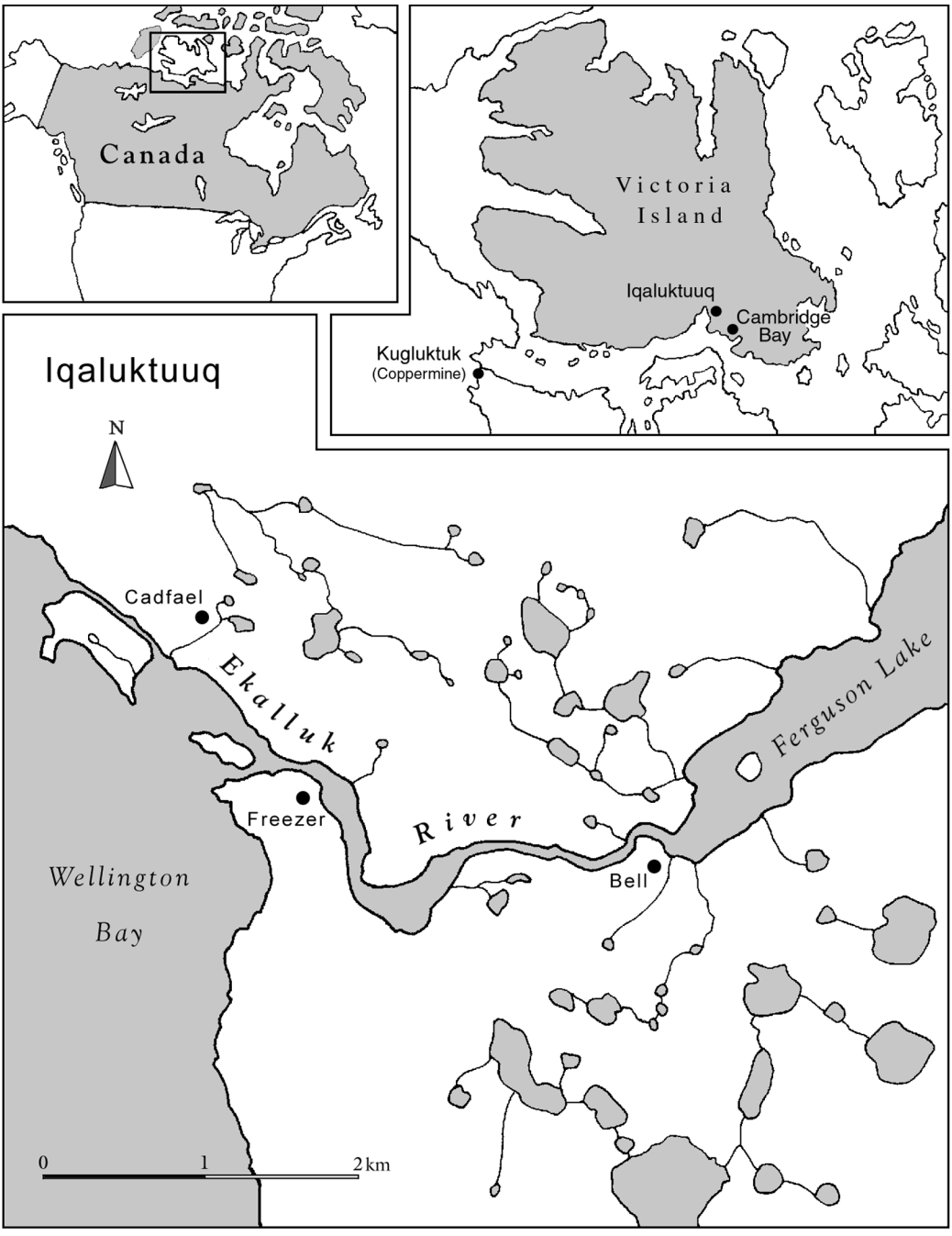

Figure 1 Map showing the location of Iqaluktuuq, which is the region on both sides of the Ekalluk River. The river flows westward from Ferguson Lake into Wellington Bay, and both banks contain dense scatters of archaeological sites. This map indicates the position of the three largest sites which contain evidence of Late Dorset activities.

hundreds of hours of oral histories, and in raising funds for many projects, ranging from its own fieldwork, to the construction of a cultural centre and museum in Cambridge Bay, which opened in May of 2002.

Although the KHS has been successfully recording oral histories in a variety of locations over the past decade, it has always attached a special status to Iqaluktuuq, located approximately 50km northwest of Cambridge Bay, since it was of central importance to Inuit in the early twentieth century (many current elders lived 'on the land' in a mobile lifeway until they settled in Cambridge Bay in the 1950s, or later (Damas 1984)). In 1998, a group of elders briefly visited Iqaluktuuq, which not only convinced them of the need for oral history research there, but also revealed the great density of archaeological sites in the area (see Damkjar 1999). As a result, the KHS contacted the University of Toronto to discuss the possibility of a long-term co-operative research project at this location. In the summer of 1999, I visited Iqaluktuuq with elders and the president of the KHS, leading to a long-term commitment on both of our parts which has resulted in full-scale fieldwork in 2000 and 2001.

The Iqaluktuuq area is a crucially important archaeological locale, because it is the one location containing information relating to the entire archaeological sequence of a large part of the central Arctic centred on Victoria and Banks Islands and the adjacent mainland. As a result, it has become a standard reference point for the region (e.g. Maxwell 1985; McGhee 1996). Its importance was firmly established by the work of William E. Taylor, Jr, who, at the suggestion of anthropologist Diamond Jenness (Taylor 1972: 53), performed extensive fieldwork at the Ekalluk River sites in 1963, 1965, and 1988 (Taylor 1964, 1967, 1972, 1988). Although the area is only about 3×3km, Taylor recorded twenty-eight archaeological sites on the river's banks during these three field seasons, including components dating to all major periods of central arctic prehistory. Not only is this archaeological sequence the most complete in the region, it also includes unusually good organic preservation, and has yielded extensive bone, antler and wood technology, as well as large samples of animal bones useful for determining the diets and seasonal movements of pre-contact peoples in the region. In addition, Taylor and his colleagues recorded a very large caribou drive system on the north shore of the river (Brink 1991; Taylor 1967, 1972), three Late Dorset longhouses (Taylor 1988), and unusual boulder anvil features used for stone-tool production by Late Dorset people (Brink 1992).

It is not difficult to understand why Iqaluktuuq is so central to the lifeways of both modern Inuit and their predecessors. Its importance lies in the fact that this very short stretch of the Ekalluk River served to concentrate two warm-season resources. First, the river sees a huge annual run of arctic char (an anadromous salmonid fish species) which ascends the river predictably each August. This run is large enough to support a modern commercial fishery during the two- to three-week run. Second, due to the position of Iqaluktuuq between Ferguson Lake and Wellington Bay, caribou migrating south through the area, on their way to the mainland, pass through Iqaluktuuq in large numbers in the autumn. Together, these two warm-season resources acted as a magnet for every human group which has occupied the region during the past 3,500 years. Prior to this date, elevated sea levels may have resulted in topography that was not as conducive to the acquisition of char and caribou. Furthermore, because occupations were relatively

intense, at many sites soils built up rapidly enough to preserve organic artifacts and faunal remains particularly well.

Bearing this history and background in mind, and the fact that the current research program is conceived and operated as an equal partnership between the KHS and the University of Toronto, we have established a research model which breaks each field season into two components. During the first five days, a large camp is established which contains the archaeology crew (usually about six individuals including the principal investigator, two or three graduate students and two Inuit students from Cambridge Bay) and the traditional knowledge crew (usually about fifteen individuals including twelve elders, a translator/interpreter, an interviewer and a camp manager). During this period, group and individual interviews are conducted with elders. The KHS is in charge of this portion of the research, applying for the research permit from the Nunavut Research Institute, specifying who will conduct the interviews and being responsible for the storage and dissemination of traditional knowledge data. In practise, the archaeologists have been closely involved in the actual interviews. Subjects covered range from the very general (e.g. 'What do you remember about winter life on the sea ice?') to the very specific (e.g. 'Why is this boulder cache structure rectangular?'). Some interviews occur in camp, and others on local archaeological sites, some of which were occupied by living elders in the middle of the twentieth century, others of which pre-date direct memories. All-terrain vehicles are flown in so that elders who are less mobile can be driven across the tundra to the various interview sites. Thus far, the oral history research has yielded a relatively detailed picture of Inuit life in the region in the early and mid-twentieth century, including very specific information on the nature and location of activities which occurred during several distinct seasons.

The second part of each field season, lasting three to four weeks, is devoted to archaeology. While specific results are for the most part beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting here that the project is envisioned as a relatively long-term one, lasting perhaps six to ten years, and ultimately sampling every site type from each major culture-historical division in the region. Thus far, we have excavated small areas (from 1–8 square metres) at six sites, including Pre-Dorset, Early Dorset, Late Dorset, Thule Inuit and Recent Inuit components. In all cases, sediments are screened through 3mm (1/8″) mesh, in order to retrieve high-resolution artifact and faunal samples. These data are intended to complement the important collections made earlier by Taylor in the 1960s, which generally result from excavation of much larger volumes of sediment, but without the use of screens.

It is important to note that the archaeology does not occur in isolation from the elders involved in the oral history component of the research. Archaeological sites are chosen for excavation not only on the basis of their 'academic' merit, but also in an effort to develop the kinds of information which will be useful in displays installed in the new cultural centre in Cambridge Bay. During the oral history fieldwork, elders and archaeologists visit archaeological sites together, in order to discuss and interpret them (Plate 1). Furthermore, during the most recent field season in 2001, the archaeology crew excavated a test unit in an archaeological site adjacent to the oral history camp, in order to allow the elders to see the process of archaeology in action. The elders were extremely interested, spending a great deal of time at the excavation, observing its painfully slow

Plate 1 Elders Mackie Kaosoni and Mabel Angulalik describing the construction and use of a boulder fox trap south of the Ekalluk River.

progress, and discussing and helping to interpret artifacts and animal bones as they were excavated (Plate 2).

Discussion

Switching now to the first person, I shall outline how my involvement in the Iqaluktuuq Project has affected the way in which I think about archaeological inference. Before 1999, my research occurred almost entirely in the realm of Neo-Eskimo archaeology. In that context, I was comfortable using variants of the direct historical approach, and relied on the arctic ethnographic database as a primary source of information for the interpretation of the archaeological record. My attitude to the Palaeo-Eskimo record was quite different, and in fact prior to becoming involved in the Iqaluktuuq Project, I explicitly questioned the use of recent Inuit as analogues for Palaeo-Eskimos (Friesen 2000: 209), for some of the reasons outlined above. In particular, I believed that my familiarity with the Inuit ethnographic record might unduly influence my interpretation of Palaeo-Eskimo lifeways. In other words, I was concerned that I would 'see' Inuit whenever I looked at Palaeo-Eskimo artifacts and sites, and that this would blind me to alternative explanations. On a

Plate 2 Elders and archaeologists at the Bell Site, discussing the progress of a test excavation in the Late Dorset midden. In the background, elders Mabel Angulalik, David Kaomayok and Frank Analok discuss the archaeology with Max Friesen. In the foreground, graduate students Susan Lofthouse and Marit Zimmermann excavate the midden, while Gwen Ohokak interprets the conversation.

more purely 'academic' level, I believed that there was no justification for this, because Palaeo-Eskimos and Neo-Eskimos represented separate populations, with separate cultures, who had developed in relative isolation from each other for thousands of years. Given this situation, I had decided that I should avoid over-using Inuit ethnography to interpret Palaeo-Eskimo lifeways, and instead use alternative sources of inference, as discussed previously.

However, as I became immersed in the Iqaluktuuq Project, I quickly grew unhappy with the idea of excluding Inuit ethnography as a principal data source, for two primary reasons. The first relates to the modern social context of archaeology. As in other regions, archaeological research in Nunavut does not occur in a social vacuum. Rather, it takes place within a rich and complex network of relationships among academics, Inuit elders, other community members and many other stakeholders. The Iqaluktuuq Project exists *because of* the enthusiastic efforts of a group of elders, who want to be involved in the research process. Therefore, I feel an obligation to reflect their efforts, ideas and intellectual authority as much as possible. This is most effectively done by directly linking their traditional knowledge to the interpretation of the archaeological record. Importantly, though, while elders wish to be involved in the research program, they have made no

specific requests to be incorporated into the interpretative process as outlined here. In fact, modern Inuit elders consider themselves to be very different from the 'Tunit', the local name given to earlier people, which many archaeologists consider to refer to Dorset (e.g. McGhee 1996; cf. Kleivan 1996). Rather, elders are interested in the archaeology because it can provide a tangible linkage of modern Inuit with their past, and perhaps play at least a small role in the elders' efforts to preserve and publicize that past for younger generations of Inuit who have not experienced the same degree of living 'on the land'.

Second, is what might be described as a subjective 'gut feeling' that the interests of academic archaeology are *not* well served by ignoring the incomparably rich data set afforded by recent Inuit lifeways. While recent Inuit lifeways are not directly linked to Palaeo-Eskimos via a strong historical continuum, they do represent economic, technological, social and ideological structures closely linked to the landscapes and environments which were also experienced by Palaeo-Eskimos. While the major differences between Palaeo- and Neo-Eskimos clearly indicate that the environment did not *determine* their respective lifeways, it is also obvious that environmental variables did establish profound constraints. Thus, understanding recent Inuit lifeways gives us the potential for a fine-grained understanding of *one* of many possible ways of life in this landscape, which can then be transposed and filtered in a consideration of Palaeo-Eskimos.

Turning to the question of *how* to employ recent Inuit lifeways in this context, my approach will borrow heavily from two aspects of Wylie's (1985; cf. Hodder 1999) wide-ranging discussion of analogy. First, Wylie argued that in order to apply analogical reasoning properly, one must seek out both similarities *and* differences between the source (in this case, recent Inuit lifeways as recorded in ethnographies and as remembered by modern Cambridge Bay elders) and the subject (in this case the Palaeo-Eskimo archaeological record). Through conscious awareness of the *degree* of similarity, as opposed to an unrealistic quest for a 'perfect' analogue, one can hope to use the analogical process creatively, working back and forth between source and subject, attempting to be sensitive to areas of both similarity and difference. Second, Wylie argued that, in order to increase the reliability and explanatory power of analogical inference, one must fully develop relationships among variables on *both* the source-side *and* the subject-side. In other words, in the present case the inferential power of the analogy will be greatly reduced if either the ethnographic *or* archaeological record is neglected. Furthermore, 'relational' analogies will be developed wherever possible, in which causal relationships are observed between variables in the Inuit ethnographic record, which allow the interpretation of similar sets of variables in the archaeological record.

A preliminary example: interpretation of Late Dorset fishing

It is difficult to predict fully the specific ways in which the issues raised here will affect the interpretation of the Palaeo-Eskimo archaeological record at Iqaluktuuq. The archaeological fieldwork is still at an early stage, with data collection dominating, and analysis and interpretation have barely begun. At the most general level, though, the recent Inuit pattern, as currently being reconstructed through elders' testimony, can stand as a sort of 'null hypothesis' of *one* way to incorporate the Iqaluktuuq region into the economic, social and ideological annual cycle of a hunter-gatherer group. The lifeway of recent Inuit

cannot be considered the 'best' way or the 'only' way to live in this region, but it does allow a contextualized, detailed picture of one successful way to do so. Earlier Palaeo-Eskimo groups, which had access to a similar range of resources, and lived in a similar landscape, may or may not have reacted to or dealt with these same variables in the same way.

A preliminary illustration of how this process might unfold can be seen in the interpretation of Late Dorset (AD 500–1000) fishing at Iqaluktuuq. Interviews with Inuit elder Frank Analok, who spent part of his childhood at Iqaluktuuq in the 1920s, reveal that Arctic char were fished by individual men dispersed along both sides of the banks of the river, using *kakivak* (three-pronged fish spears also known as 'leisters'). Women processed the fish as they were removed from the water, and they were then stored in distinctive rectangular boulder caches. When not fishing, people lived in a few camps at either end of the river. This contrasts with fishing methods employed by recent Inuit on many smaller rivers in the region, where fish were obtained through co-operative construction and use of stone weirs (e.g. Balikci 1970; Jenness 1922; Stefansson 1919). Despite the clear importance of fishing to recent Inuit, as indicated in many interviews, the archaeological record of Inuit fishing is very sparse at Iqaluktuuq. On both sides of the river, occasional fish caches are present, identified by elders on site based on the rectangular shape of their central compartments. However, very few artifacts or animal bones have been preserved, except at the few dwelling sites at either end of the river. At these dwelling sites, tent rings are scattered in low density, and there is virtually no accumulation of remains in recognizable middens.

The evidence for Late Dorset fishing at Iqaluktuuq is quite different. Thus far, three Late Dorset sites originally identified by Taylor (1967, 1972) have been re-excavated within the context of the Iqaluktuuq Project (see Fig. 1). The Bell site, located on the south bank at the east end of the Ekalluk River contains a minimum of eleven Dorset semi-subterranean houses. Excavation of a single 1×1 metre test pit in a Dorset midden yielded a very large, caribou-dominated faunal assemblage, with relatively low frequencies of fish, seals and other taxa. The Freezer site, located on the south bank at the mouth of the Ekalluk River where it empties into Wellington Bay, yielded a very rich Late Dorset midden. A 1×1 metre test pit within this midden, excavated to an average depth of about 40 centimetres, yielded over 15,000 faunal specimens. By class, mammals contributed 22 per cent of the bones, birds, 11 per cent and fish a very robust 67 per cent, with over 9,000 specimens, a vast majority of which are arctic char. The third site is the Cadfael site, located approximately 1km north of the Ekalluk River mouth on the shore of Wellington Bay. Cadfael contains three large Late Dorset 'longhouses', spectacular boulder enclosures measuring 6 metres in width, and 19, 38 and 43 metres in length respectively, as well as a host of other features. Test excavations adjacent to the longhouses in 2001 yielded faunal samples with high frequencies of seals and waterfowl and lower frequencies of caribou and fish.

The complete interpretation of the Late Dorset pattern is far too broad a topic for full treatment here, so for present purposes I shall concentrate on the use of recent Inuit lifeways as analogues for the role of fishing in Late Dorset society. Briefly, it seems extremely likely that Late Dorset people would have fished intensively for char. By this period (approximately AD 500–1,000), the Ekalluk River had become established in its current

course, and a large char run almost certainly existed. However, there is a lack of clear evidence for this practise, with the exception of the Freezer site, which contains a deep, fish-bone-filled midden. The Bell site appears to be a specialized caribou harvesting site, probably occupied during the fall caribou migration and for some as-yet-undetermined portion of the winter, based on the presence of semi-subterranean houses. The Cadfael site apparently represents a late spring/summer regional aggregation site occupied before the char run of August.

In the context of the present paper, how does the use of recent Inuit lifeways as analogues affect the interpretation of Late Dorset fishing? Initially, it is important to emphasize that in the *absence* of information on recent Inuit lifeways, many aspects of the Late Dorset record could be approached through the use of other sources of inference. For example, faunal data can be used to infer seasonality, and to interpret the reasons for site locations. However, I would suggest that, even in the restricted context of interpretation of fishing, the addition of the Inuit data as a source of analogues leads to two potentially productive avenues of interpretation. First, comparison with Inuit lifeways opens the possibility that Dorset may have fished in the dispersed manner of recent Inuit. As outlined previously, most Inuit fishing at Iqaluktuuq, practiced by individual Inuit spread along the river's banks, leaves very little evidence, with the exception of occasional rectangular caches. Given that these caches are essentially undatable, since they generally contain no artifacts or bones, if Late Dorset people fished in this manner it would leave virtually no evidence. Thus, it is possible that some of the caches along the river are Dorset in age, although this is a more or less untestable proposition. In this case, then, the use of Inuit as a source of analogues can provide suggestions regarding Late Dorset activities which would probably never be recoverable solely from the archaeological record.

Second, a close look at the Freezer site reveals a set of attributes which together are very different from any aspect of the recent Inuit archaeological record. A deep, concentrated midden implies an intensive and repeated occupation of a restricted location, and the high frequency of arctic char bones indicates intensive acquisition and consumption of fish, and probably intensive processing and storage as well. Inuit, on the other hand, left much more ephemeral camp sites and middens – processing fish by the river, storing it in caches and then consuming the fish at a number of different locations which left very little trace. The implication is that Late Dorset people were different from recent Inuit in a number of ways, including probably being more sedentary, an interpretation reinforced by the presence of semi-subterranean houses at the Bell site. This may have further implications for activities carried out by Late Dorset people during other seasons – while 'Copper' Inuit of this region famously lived in snow houses on the sea ice for most of the winter, hunting ringed and bearded seals at their breathing holes (e.g. Jenness 1922), it is by no means clear what Late Dorset people were doing in the winter. Did they live in snow houses or occupy semi-subterranean houses for the entire winter? Had they perfected breathing-hole sealing? While these important questions cannot be resolved here, the archaeological records are different enough to imply that Late Dorset people spent less time on the sea ice than Inuit, at least in this region.

Thus, in this instance the use of Inuit as analogues for Palaeo-Eskimos, while still in a preliminary stage, is already proving useful in the interpretation of Late Dorset fishing in two very different ways. In both cases, Inuit lifeways provide a detailed, contextualized

pattern to which the Late Dorset record can be compared and contrasted. Further progress will be dependent on continued collection and interpretation of information relating to both the Inuit use of the area (source) and the Late Dorset archaeological record (subject).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I shall emphasize that this article is *not* directed at arctic archaeologists as a blueprint for how archaeological inference ought to be carried out in the Arctic, nor is it presented as a radically new approach to such inference. As outlined previously, many arctic archaeologists are aware of the issues raised here, and some have directly acknowledged their importance to the process of interpretation. There is no single 'right way' to interpret archaeological data; rather, each project is subject to its own particularities of data and context, and each archaeologist is subject to his or her own educational and social history, and current socio-political context. Instead, in the spirit of this volume's theme, this paper is offered as a genuine example of a situation in which the community context of an archaeological project led to a re-thinking of a central part of the analytical process for one archaeologist.

This new program of archaeological fieldwork at the Ekalluk River is intended to operate within a framework recognizing archaeological research as a constant re-negotiation among data, ideas and their modern social milieu. As a result, during the process of interpretation I shall attempt to 'push' the recent Inuit record as far as possible as a source of analogues, broadly speaking, for interpretation of the Palaeo-Eskimo record. Of course, the comparison of source and subject must be performed critically, and with an eye to the fact that the expected differences between the two might be as illuminating as any observed similarities (cf. Gould 1980). Ultimately, I hope that this will lead not only to the greatest possible role for Inuit elders in the interpretation of regional archaeology, but also to a better understanding of Palaeo-Eskimos in this important micro-region.

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Note

1 'Iqaluktuuq' and 'Ekalluk' have the same origin: the word 'iqaluk', meaning the economically important arctic char, a species of anadromous salmonid fish. 'Ekalluk' is the anglicized version of this word, and appears on maps as the name of the large river which flows through south-eastern Victoria Island, passes through Ferguson Lake and eventually empties into Wellington Bay. 'Iqaluktuuq', meaning 'place of many arctic char', refers to the land on either side of the final 3-kilometre stretch of this river between Ferguson Lake and Wellington Bay. In the context of this paper, 'Ekalluk' refers to the river and 'Iqaluktuuq' refers to the place.

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