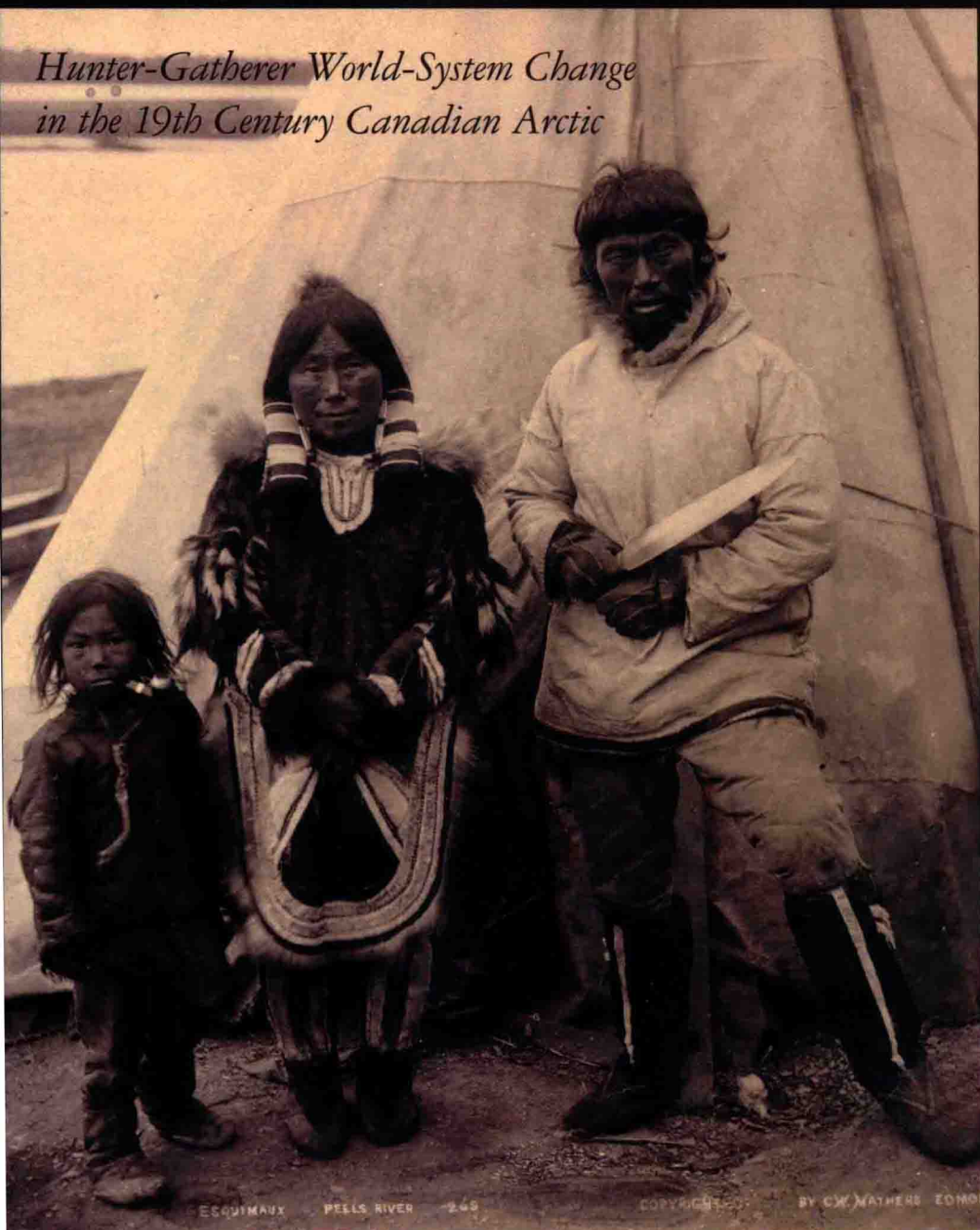


When Worlds Collide

*Hunter-Gatherer World-System Change
in the 19th Century Canadian Arctic*



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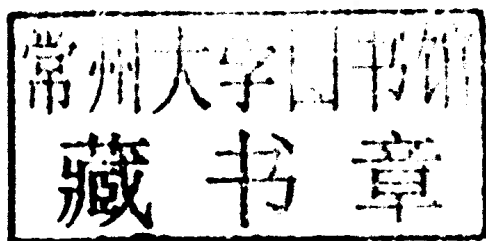
BY C. W. MATHEWS EDMONTON

T. MAX FRIESEN

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the Nineteenth-Century Canadian Arctic

T. Max Friesen



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When Worlds Collide

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To my parents, James and Lynn Friesen

Preface

ALTHOUGH IT HAS CHANGED A GREAT DEAL, this book originated as my PhD dissertation, which was defended in 1995. Since then, I have contemplated its publication several times but was always pulled in other directions. In the summer of 2009, I finally began an extensive overhaul and updating of the text and the ideas behind it. This was an interesting chance to immerse myself in how I thought, and performed research, fifteen years earlier. What I found was a piece of work that seemed to contain some useful ideas but that was somewhat hindered by, on the one hand, quite a reductionist mindset, and on the other, occasional circularity of logic. In its present form, I have managed to temper these shortcomings significantly, although the reader may take some pleasure in discovering those that remain.

The intervening years have led me in several new research directions, but I am glad I chose the path I did for this book. I firmly believe that there has not been enough study of intersocietal interaction among small-scale societies generally and hunter-gatherers specifically. There is still a need for general studies such as this one, which will continue to be refined, challenged, and reimaged.

The research described in this book could not have been accomplished without the contributions of a great range of individuals and organizations. The members of my PhD committee—Professors James Savelle, George Wenzel, and Michael Bisson—all provided superb advice and guidance through the research process. I am especially indebted to James Savelle for his superlative and insightful supervision of my PhD program. My fellow graduate students at McGill, especially Junko Habu and Peter Whitridge, also played an important role in my graduate career by providing friendship and a stimulating academic environment.

Many other archaeologists have also contributed to this research. Foremost among these are Dr. Charles Arnold of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, who gave me my first field experience in the Arctic; Jeff Hunston of the Yukon Territorial Government, who greased the wheels and was generous with his extensive knowledge of Yukon North Slope archaeology; and Ruth Gotthardt, Yukon Territorial archaeologist, who helped and encouraged this research in innumerable ways. Others who have contributed through conversation, correspondence, and other forms of aid include John Bockstoce, Rachel Brinkman, Cathy Cockney, Tara Grant, Greg Hare, Elisa Hart, Diana

Komejan, Raymond Le Blanc, Allen McCartney, Robert McGhee, David Morrison, Murielle Nagy, Brent Riley, and Liza Rupp. Many thanks are also due to Anne Rick and Leslie Still of the Canadian Museum of Nature, who identified most of the faunal samples. Matthew Walls produced Figures 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7.

In many ways, my greatest debt is owed to the field crews who managed to survive three seasons on Herschel Island; the successes of the project are due to their hard work. The field crews included the following: from Aklavik and Inuvik in the Mackenzie Delta, Dean (Manny) Arey, Danny Gordon Jr., Jerome Gordon, Mervin Joe, Naudia Lennie, Frankie Paul, and Richard Tardiff; from Old Crow and Pelly Crossing in Yukon, Ronald Frost, Eugene Johnny, and Alvie Josie; and from Toronto and Peterborough, Peter Dawson, Nancy Saxberg, and Doris Zibauer. Great thanks are also owed to Herschel Island Park Rangers Victor Allen, Graham Baird, Frank Elanik, Colin Gordon, Lee John Meyook, and Andy Tardiff for their friendship and help with many aspects of the excavations. Other individuals who helped with the fieldwork include Marshall Netherwood of the Joint Secretariat in Inuvik, Brenda Benoit and Sadie Whitebread of the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Association, and Renee Frost of Old Crow.

The project was funded generously by the Northern Oil and Gas Action Plan (a Canadian federal government initiative), the Yukon Territorial Government, the Polar Continental Shelf Project, the Northern Scientific Training Program, and the Inuvik Research Laboratory of the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories (now the Aurora Research Institute). At the latter institution, I thank Gary White and Les Kutny for their help. In addition, I was fortunate to receive a doctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Robert and Mary Stanfield Dissertation Fellowship from McGill University.

For the production of this book, I owe many thanks to series editors Aubrey Cannon and Liam Frink for their advice and encouragement. Allyson Carter at the University of Arizona Press provided efficient and timely support. The manuscript also benefited from comments by two anonymous reviewers.

The research described in this book was performed in cooperation with many organizations and individuals from Inuvialuit and Yukon First Nations communities. Although this book is written for an academic audience, the information from Herschel Island has been returned to these communities through several means, including community meetings and talks as well as publications intended for the public. These include a booklet produced by the Yukon Territorial Government (Friesen 1998, 2007; recipient of the Canadian

Archaeological Association Public Communication Award in 1999), as well as a recent book chapter (Friesen 2012).

Portions of the text in Chapters 4 and 6 were originally published in Canadian Archaeological Association, Occasional Paper No. 2 and *Alaska Journal of Anthropology*, Volume 7. Figure 11 originally appeared in the booklet *Qikiqtaruk: Inuvialuit Archaeology on Herschel Island*, published by the Yukon Government; Figures 12, 15, and 18 appeared in Canadian Archaeological Association, Occasional Paper, No. 2; and Figure 17 originally appeared in *Alaska Journal of Anthropology*, Volume 7. I am grateful to these organizations for granting permission to include this material in the present volume.

Finally, I thank my wife Heather for her love and support, from the initial writing of the dissertation to the present.

When Worlds Collide



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I

Introduction

INTERSOCIETAL INTERACTION IS ONE OF THE MAJOR FORCES driving culture change and is a universal phenomenon. Whether studied in terms of diffusion, acculturation, exchange, warfare, colonialism, transmission of disease, or any of its other facets, this process has helped shape the nature of all societies, past and present. Even in the most extreme instances of isolation, as in the case of remote Polynesian islands, multiple societies tended to develop and interact in trade and conflict (e.g., Kirch 1984; papers in Kirch 1986). However, despite the importance of intersocietal interaction in human history, it has often been neglected by archaeologists, who have tended to emphasize endogenous cultural processes instead (Trigger 1989a:331). As such, there have been repeated calls for increased attention to the nature and effects of intersocietal interaction in the archaeological record (e.g., Adams 1977; Caldwell 1964; Knappett 2011; Kohl 1989; Oka and Kusimba 2008; Shennan 1987; Trigger 1989b; Wolf 1982).

Interaction among hunter-gatherer societies has been studied from many perspectives, including considerations of the frequency and nature of exchange (Carlson 1994; Zvelebil 2006), the role of warfare (Maschner and Reedy-Maschner 1998; Schaepe 2006), the impact of transportation technology (Ames 2002; Arnold 1995), and the consequences of interaction on social organization (Arnold 1992; Gamble 1999; Hickey 1984). However, despite the enormous collective contribution of these studies, interaction remains incompletely understood because of a range of factors, including the low archaeological visibility of many of its facets, as well as the fact that it is so complex, being composed of many interconnected parts that are experienced differently by each individual, group, and society.

This book contributes to the development of a general perspective for the study of intersocietal interaction among hunter-gatherers. The approach developed here is an experimental adaptation and expansion of aspects of world-system theory, with input from a range of previous hunter-gatherer studies

that are themselves influenced by a variety of theoretical paradigms. This approach is used to develop a model for how hunter-gatherer world-systems (intersocietal networks) are structured and why they change.

The model is then applied to the archaeological and ethnographic records of the Inuvialuit¹ inhabitants of the western Canadian Arctic over the past five hundred years. This period, which saw the transition of indigenous people from their relatively autonomous precontact² pattern to one in which they were fully integrated into the European world-economy, will be used to evaluate the model for three main reasons. First, the period of indigenous-European contact across the globe provides a powerful contextualized database for the study of culture change. A substantial documentary record exists for most cases of colonial contact, and it can supply data sets that are complementary to data available in the archaeological record (Moreland 2001; Spores 1980). However, archaeological data are necessary for a complete understanding of this period, because the documentary record is often incomplete or distorted by the perspective of the recorder (Kilmarx 1986; Reff 1991; Wobst 1978), and because only archaeology allows analysis of interaction during the precontact period, before indigenous groups were strongly affected by the expanding world-economy and associated epidemic diseases (Dobyns 1983; Keenleyside 1990; McGhee 1994; Ramenofsky 1987).

The second reason for using this period to evaluate the model of interaction is that, as in most cases of colonial interaction, the nature and scale of the societies in contact were remarkably different (cf. Trigger 1986:255). Additionally, in colonial contexts interaction often occurred in a situation where unequal power was manifested in technological, military, and ideological differences between societies (Bartel 1985; Horvath 1972; Silliman 2005). Interaction between two very different cultures created the potential for dramatic conflict and for the pace and scale of change to increase. Change was often so rapid that it was clearly evident to members of the interacting societies; for example, Mi'kmaq sites are rarely found to contain both stone and metal cutting tools, indicating significant technological change within a generation (Burley 1981:212). Therefore, the results of colonial-period interaction will often be exaggerated and should produce distinct archaeological patterns that can be used to understand general processes and evaluate interaction models.

The third reason for this book's chronological focus is that the colonial period is currently undergoing dynamic reappraisal, with archaeology playing a central role in this process (e.g., Gosden 2004; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002). In particular, indigenous peoples' roles in the colonial process, previously explicitly or implicitly characterized as passive and uncomplicated, are being re-framed as active, dynamic, variable, and of key importance in understanding

how the modern world came to be (Rubertone 2000; Silliman 2005; Stein 2002). Related to this are trends away from rigid dichotomization of “prehistoric” and “historic” periods, replaced by emphasis on continuities and common themes in indigenous cultural development across time (Ferris 2009; Mitchell and Scheiber 2010; Silliman 2010). The case study developed in this book is tightly linked to this reappraisal of colonial-period archaeology, because it is centered on the long-term development of the Inuvialuit world-system—that is, the spatially extensive network of interacting indigenous regional groups. This world-system developed and changed over time because of a host of factors, including social structures internal to Inuvialuit society, regional environmental variability, and external impacts originating in the expansion of the European world-economy. By framing the analysis in this fashion, the Inuvialuit and European world-systems are placed on an equal theoretical footing despite their obvious difference in scale, and the central role of Inuvialuit society in shaping the nature of interaction and of cultural change is emphasized.

2

The World-System Approach to Intersocietal Interaction

THIS BOOK USES, and builds on, a framework derived from world-system theory in order to understand the nature of intersocietal interaction in the past. However, the study of interaction is an enormous and diverse realm of research, with many approaches employed depending on the researchers' backgrounds, primary data sets analyzed, desired research outcomes, and intellectual fashions of the day. Therefore, before presenting a more detailed description of world-system theory, I will summarize several bodies of thought relating to the archaeology of intersocietal interaction. This summary is not exhaustive; rather, it is intended to provide some sense of the rich intellectual context within which studies of past interaction are situated.

Archaeological Approaches to Interaction

Acculturation

"Acculturation," the general term used in many past archaeological studies of intersocietal interaction, can be defined as change in any society that results from contact with another society. The archaeological study of acculturation is ultimately derived from anthropological studies that arose in the 1930s and 1940s in response to increased interest in the effects of colonial dominance on non-Euroamerican societies (Slofstra 1983:71; Trigger 1985:165). The most frequently cited definition is that of Broom et al. (1954:974), who defined acculturation as

culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of