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The Maritime Archaic Indians of Labrador: Investigating Prehistoric Social Organization

BRYAN C. HOOD

INTRODUCTION

RESIDENTS OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR are familiar with the historic Indian peoples of the province: the now extinct Beothuk of Newfoundland (Pastore, this volume) and the Innu, or to use the colonial term, Montagnais-Naskapi of Labrador. The late nineteenth century Innu lived in the Labrador interior, supported by a relatively specialized economy focused on caribou hunting and fishing (Henrickson 1973; Loring 1992; Speck 1935; Turner 1894). For many archaeologists, the Innu became a virtual archetype of Subarctic hunter-gatherers. Their low population density and flexible egalitarian social organization was seen as a typical adaptation to a difficult life constrained by the sparse and unpredictable resources of the interior boreal forest and barren grounds.

This historical archetype of Subarctic life has served as an analogy or model for the interpretion of the prehistoric record of Labrador as well as for the prehistory of other parts of the world where similar environmental conditions prevailed. Yet there is a danger in applying such historical models as convenient templates for interpreting the past (Wobst 1978). First, we risk distorting our understanding of prehistory when we use as our models societies that were altered strongly by European contact. Second, by projecting an historical model into prehistory we create a timeless past, an image of prehistoric First Nations as having been static, unchanging societies for thousands of years. However, archaeological research in North America has shown the dynamism of First Nations' prehistory, charting the development and demise of many complex cultures. One of these dynamic prehistoric cultures is the Maritime Archaic of Labrador.

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The Maritime Archaic Indians dwelt along the Labrador coast from 7500 to 3500 B.P.[1] This culture was marked by a strong emphasis on marine resources, elaborate mortuary ceremonialism, long distance trade networks and unusually large dwelling structures. All these features suggest a remarkable degree of cultural elaboration for a Subarctic Indian society. Clearly, the Maritime Archaic was organized differently than the nineteenth century Innu interior caribou hunters. Archaeological fieldwork over the past ten to fifteen years has provided exciting new data and ideas for interpreting the Maritime Archaic. In this article I will outline the history of research on the Maritime Archaic, describe the nature of the archaeological remains and discuss how these remains might be used to infer aspects of Maritime Archaic social organization. I will close by considering the interrelationship between the last Maritime Archaic peoples and the first Pre-Dorset Palaeoeskimo colonists of northern Labrador. These two cultures overlapped in time and space for perhaps 500 years and their relationship may be crucial to understanding the disappearance of Maritime Archaic culture about 3500 B.P.

History of Research

The first traces of the Labrador Maritime Archaic culture were unearthed in the 1920s in the Hopedale region of the central coast (Figure 1) by William D. Strong (1930). At the time he termed his finds the "old stone culture" and attributed the material to an Indian culture which he believed preceded both Innu and Inuit cultures. Elmer Harp's (1963) work in the Strait of Belle Isle in 1949, 1950 and 1961 produced material which he compared to Strong's finds and then classified as "Boreal Archaic," using then current terminology. Some of the radiocarbon dates from these sites were surprisingly early, 6200 B.P. (Harp and Hughes 1968). But it was not until the late 1960s that the great leap forward occurred, with major research projects in western Newfoundland and central Labrador.

Between 1967 and 1969, James Tuck of Memorial University excavated the prehistoric cemetery of Port au Choix on the west coast of the Northern Peninsula. He recovered the remains of over 100 individuals from graves lined with red ocher (powdered hematite "paint") and containing well preserved grave goods of bone, antler and stone (Tuck 1970; 1971; 1976). The tool forms indicated an emphasis on exploiting maritime resources (harpoons, bone fish spears, ground slate points), as well as woodworking (celts, adzes). The burials also contained grave goods interpreted as hunting charms or amulets (animal teeth and bones, bird bills, a killer whale effigy and unusual stones). Radiocarbon dates placed the period of cemetery use between 4300-3400 B.P.

Tuck named the culture that produced the cemetery the Maritime Archaic Tradition, to designate a total lifestyle oriented towards the sea; not just economically, but also ideologically. Because the Port au Choix graves were similar to red ocher cemeteries found in Maine and New Brunswick, the Maritime Archaic

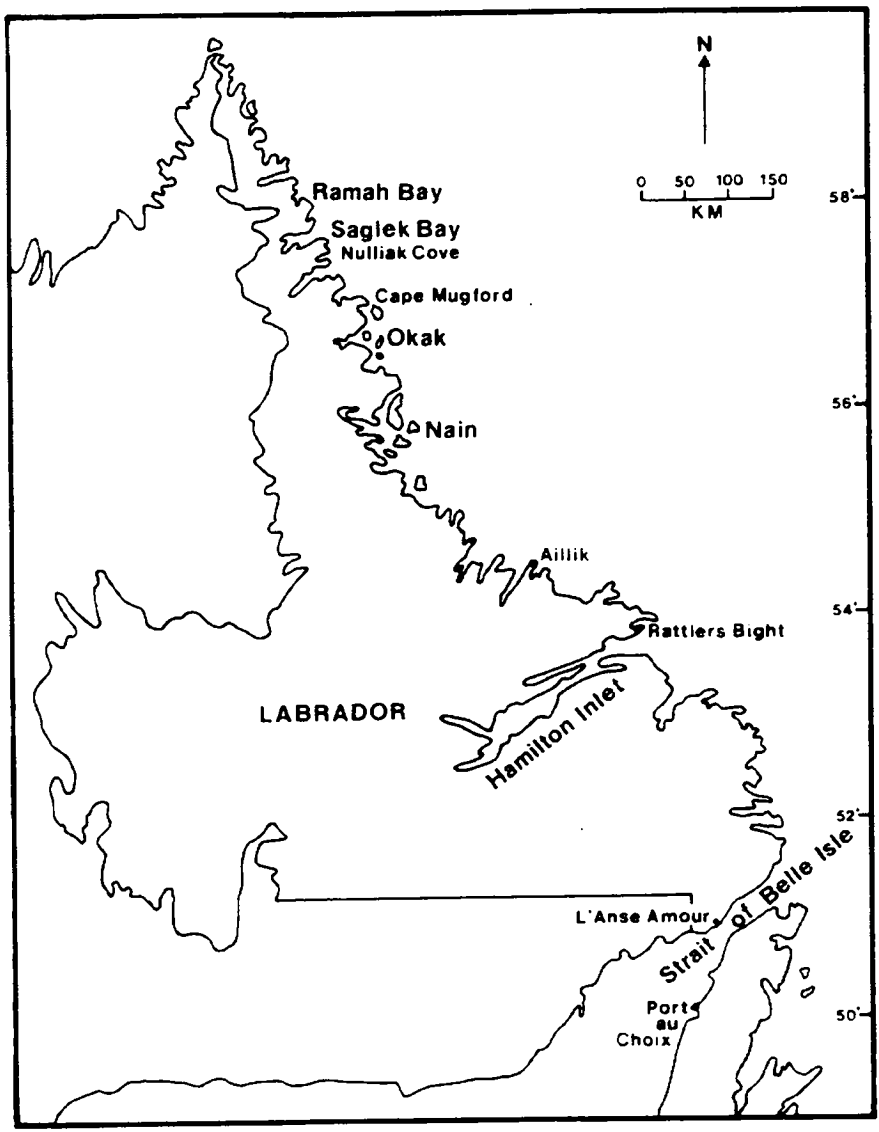

Fig. 1. Locations Mentioned in the Text.

Tradition was seen as a group of linked cultures extending across the Atlantic provinces into northern New England.

At the same time, William Fitzhugh (then of Harvard, later the Smithsonian Institution) was engaged in research at Hamilton Inlet in Labrador. He identified Maritime Archaic material dating as early as 5900 B.P. and conducted the first excavations of Maritime Archaic habitation sites, including one at Rattlers Bight in Groswater Bay, where a small cemetery was also uncovered (Fitzhugh 1972; 1975). An important aspect of this work was the recognition that the Maritime Archaic people of Labrador used a particular stone for their tools: Ramah chert[2]. Some artifacts of this material were even found in burials in Maine. Since the chert originates from a limited area in the vicinity of Ramah Bay in northern Labrador there must have been extensive trade networks for distributing the stone southwards along the coast.

In 1973 and 1974, McGhee and Tuck (1975; Tuck and McGhee 1975) followed up on Harp's work in the Strait of Belle Isle. They discovered Maritime Archaic habitation sites dating to before 7000 B.P., and a Maritime Archaic burial mound at L'Anse Amour, dated 7500-7200 B.P. (Tuck and McGhee 1976). The mound consisted of a pile of rocks laid on top of a red ocher-lined burial pit containing the remains of a 11-13 year old individual and a small number of grave goods. The early date for the L'Anse Amour find implied a long time depth to Maritime Archaic mortuary ritual.

During the 1970s research on Labrador Maritime Archaic moved further north. Tuck (1975) found Maritime Archaic habitation sites dating 4500-3700 B.P. at Saglek Bay in northern Labrador. Fitzhugh and his associates surveyed the central coast and then later the Torngat Mountain region in the far north (Cox 1977; Fitzhugh 1976; 1978; 1980). Fitzhugh (1978) determined that Maritime Archaic people had moved northwards along the Labrador coast, populating the Nain district in northern Labrador by 7000 B.P. Many Maritime Archaic habitation sites, as well as some burial mounds, were found in the Nain and Okak regions. Many of these sites were located on outer coastal islands, indicating an orientation towards marine resources. Both Tuck and Fitzhugh noted the presence of Maritime Archaic habitation sites north of the present day tree limit (Napaktok Bay). These northern occupations were more extensive than was the case for later prehistoric Indian periods, when Indian population distributions were restricted mostly to areas south of the tree line. The ability of the Maritime Archaic to thrive in areas bereft of forest cover is underlined by their early colonization of northern Labrador prior to the immigration of the spruce forest ca. 4500 B.P. (Fitzhugh 1978:92-93).

Research in both northern and southern Labrador led to the realization that there were two regional variants of the Maritime Archaic. The northern variant inhabited the area north of Hamilton Inlet, while the southern variant was established in the Strait of Belle Isle and on the island of Newfoundland. These variants are distinguished by the use of different tool styles and stone raw materials. Most of this discussion will be concerned with the northern Maritime Archaic.

The result of these surveys was that by 1978 we had a picture of the Maritime Archaic that implied they were rather different from historic Subarctic Indian groups. A focus on maritime resources, mortuary ritual, and long distance exchange systems all suggested that Maritime Archaic social organization could not be easily accommodated by the Subarctic Indian analogy. But we still lacked the key to unlock the secret of that organization.

The first clue to the puzzle came in 1977 and 1978 during the Smithsonian-Bryn Mawr Torngat Archaeological Project (Fitzhugh 1980). In 1977 Maritime Archaic dwelling structures were found at Aillik, near Makkovik, although they were not investigated in depth. In 1978 a large Maritime Archaic site was discovered by Smithsonian survey crews at Nulliak Cove north of Hebron. This impressive site had burial mounds and enigmatic rectangular enclosures scores of meters long. In 1980 a Smithsonian crew returned to Aillik where they found a remarkably well defined 28 meter long dwelling as well as smaller structures on several higher beach terraces (Fitzhugh 1981:7-9; 1984:7-8). Later that summer, the large Aillik dwelling provided an excellent template for interpreting the more ambiguous features at Nulliak Cove.

The presence at Aillik of different sized structures on beach terraces of varying elevations above sea level was critical for demonstrating that Maritime Archaic houses became progressively larger over time. During the post-glacial period the previously depressed land rebounded after the weight of ice was removed and this uplift has continued until the present day. During this process the sea cut beach terraces at progressively lower levels such that in today's topography the highest terraces are the oldest and the lowest terraces the most recent. Following the Aillik structures downwards from the highest and oldest beaches we find a chronological sequence of Maritime Archaic dwellings beginning with small single family pit houses ca. 6000 B.P., to 9 meter long three compartment structures ca. 5200 B.P., to a large 28 meter longhouse ca. 4300-3600 B.P. (Fitzhugh 1981:7-9; 1984:7-8; 1986:56).

These house structure remains constitute one of our most important sources of data on Maritime Archaic social organization, since the way people arrange their living space encodes many aspects of social behavior and values. The remainder of this paper will synthesize the current status of research on Maritime Archaic society. I consider archaeological data pertaining to community organization, subsistence and settlement patterns, ritual practices and exchange systems. These data are combined with some interpretive conjectures to suggest some possible ways of viewing Maritime Archaic social life.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

The earliest house structures, found near Nain, Makkovik and in Hamilton Inlet, are dated ca. 6000 B.P. They occur in two different forms. The first type

consists of small circular pit houses, about 3.5 meters in diameter, which are excavated into cobble beaches. These would only be large enough to house one family. At some sites these houses occur in groups of 2 or 3, implying communities of 2-3 coresidential families. The other dwelling form is a surface structure defined by rectangular alignments of rocks about 8 meters long and partitioned into two internal compartments or segments (Fitzhugh 1984; 1985a). The size and internal partitioning of these structures may imply they were shared by two families. The variations in dwelling types may indicate seasonal differences, the pit houses used during the winter and the rectangular structures being skin tent houses used during the warmer months (Fitzhugh 1985a:88-89). However, this remains conjectural since we lack stronger indicators of the season of occupation such as preserved animal bones.

After 6000 B.P. pit houses seem to go out of use and the rectangular dwellings increase in size. Between 6000-4800 B.P., structures at Hamilton Inlet were 12-16 meters long, with 3-4 internal segments (Fitzhugh 1984:13). A 9 meter long structure with three segments at Aillik, near Makkovik, is dated ca. 5200 B.P. (Fitzhugh 1984:10). A 10 meter long structure at Nukasusutok Island near Nain is dated 5600-5300 B.P. (Hood 1981, 1992a). A site at Okak, dated 4900-4700 B.P., exhibits a 30-40 meter long line of hearths (Cox 1977) which has been interpreted as a longhouse (Fitzhugh 1981:18). Similarly, a Maritime Archaic site at Black Island in Hamilton Inlet, dating 4800-4200 B.P. and with tool styles evincing cultural ties to southern Labrador, consisted of about 12 evenly spaced hearths suggestive of a 50 meter long structure with 12-13 segments (Fitzhugh 1975:122-125; 1981:17; 1984:13). Sometimes these early and middle period Maritime Archaic dwellings are associated with external cache pits for storage as well as other enigmatic rock features.

House development reached its peak during the late phase of the Maritime Archaic (4000-3500 B.P.). At Aillik, Smithsonian researchers discovered a well preserved 28 meter long structure with seven internal segments and external cache pits (Figure 2; Fitzhugh 1981:7-9; 1984:7-8). At the Rattlers Bight site in Hamilton Inlet, a linear distribution of hearths and associated cultural debris has been interpreted as a 70 meter longhouse (Fitzhugh 1981:18; 1985a:88-89). The Nulliak Cove site, near Hebron in northern Labrador, contained the traces of 27 longhouses (not all occupied at the same time) ranging in length from 15 to 100 meters (Fitzhugh 1981:11-15; 1984:9-10, 15-18; 1985a:89-98). Presumably, these large structures consisted of a series of interlinked small or large skin tents.

Unfortunately, not all Maritime Archaic houses exhibit the distinct borders and partitions found at the well preserved Aillik structure (Figure 2). Consequently, definition of the dwelling boundaries, their internal organization and the social significance of the configurations, have to be determined by detailed spatial analysis of the distribution of discarded stone tools, tool manufacturing debris (flakes) and the position of hearths. For example, the 5600-5300 B.P. structure at Nukasusutok Island (Hood 1981; 1992a) lacks well defined rock walls and obvious

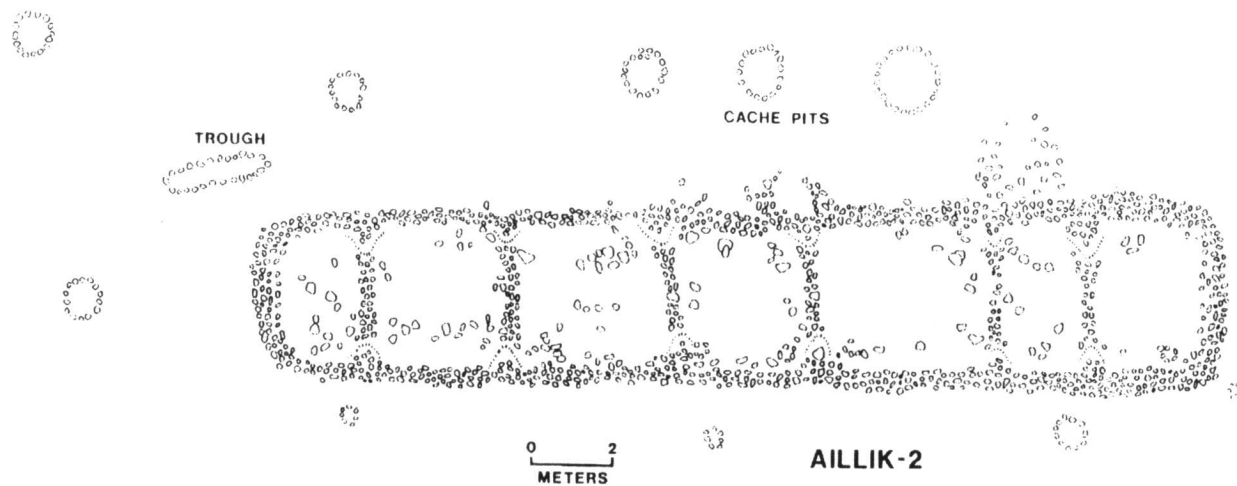

Fig. 2 Maritime Archaic Longhouse at Aillik, Makkovik Region.

internal partitions, but the distribution of stone tool manufacturing debris is very instructive (Figure 3). The stone flakes form a sub-rectangular ring-like distribution 10 meters long, 3.5 meters wide. This ring is centered around a large flat rock that divides the structure into two symmetrical halves. Each half has about the same number of small hearths. The flake ring may represent work areas near the walls of a tent or debris swept towards the tent walls to provide a cleared central "aisle" for living space. The breaks on both long sides of the ring may indicate doorways, as may the indentations on each end. The size and bilateral symmetry of the spatial pattern suggest this dwelling may have housed two families, one at each end of the ring.

If we interpret the internal segments of the longhouses as floorspaces for individual families, a major increase in the size of local groups over time is implied. The early Maritime Archaic pit houses are single family dwellings, while the late Maritime Archaic longhouses may have contained at least 7-15 families, thus group sizes of up to 50-100 individuals.

The duration of occupation of these dwellings is hard to determine. Some of them, such as those at Nulliak Cove, contain relatively little accumulation of cultural material, so they may have been used only for days or weeks (Fitzhugh 1984:18; 1985a:98). Others could have been used for longer periods. In any case, the very large group sizes implied by the longhouses suggest that even if they were merely seasonal aggregations some kind of social mechanisms for organizing large groups (for example, leadership hierarchies) may have been in operation.

More detailed analyses remain to be done on Maritime Archaic houses. Among the questions being addressed is whether spatial differences in tool use might indicate different activity areas within the houses, including those activities possibly related to a division of labor by gender. Additionally, spatial variations in the kinds of stone raw materials might point to differential family access to particular materials, which could potentially be tied to status distinctions (Fitzhugh 1985:98). Furthermore, as I shall discuss later, the spatial configuration of houses may also express symbolically aspects of Maritime Archaic ideology.

SUBSISTENCE AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Archaeological reconstructions of subsistence and settlement patterns are generally based on a combination of evaluating animal bone remains discarded in sites and correlation of site locations with the geographical distribution of animal resources. Unfortunately, the acid soils of Labrador do not favor the preservation of bone. Consequently, except for the recovery of small fragments of burned bone, most of our conclusions about subsistence-settlement have to be inferred from site location, functional variation in tools and seasonal differences in dwelling types.

The distribution of Maritime Archaic sites across several different ecological zones (barren outer coastal islands, inner islands, forested inner bays) suggests that

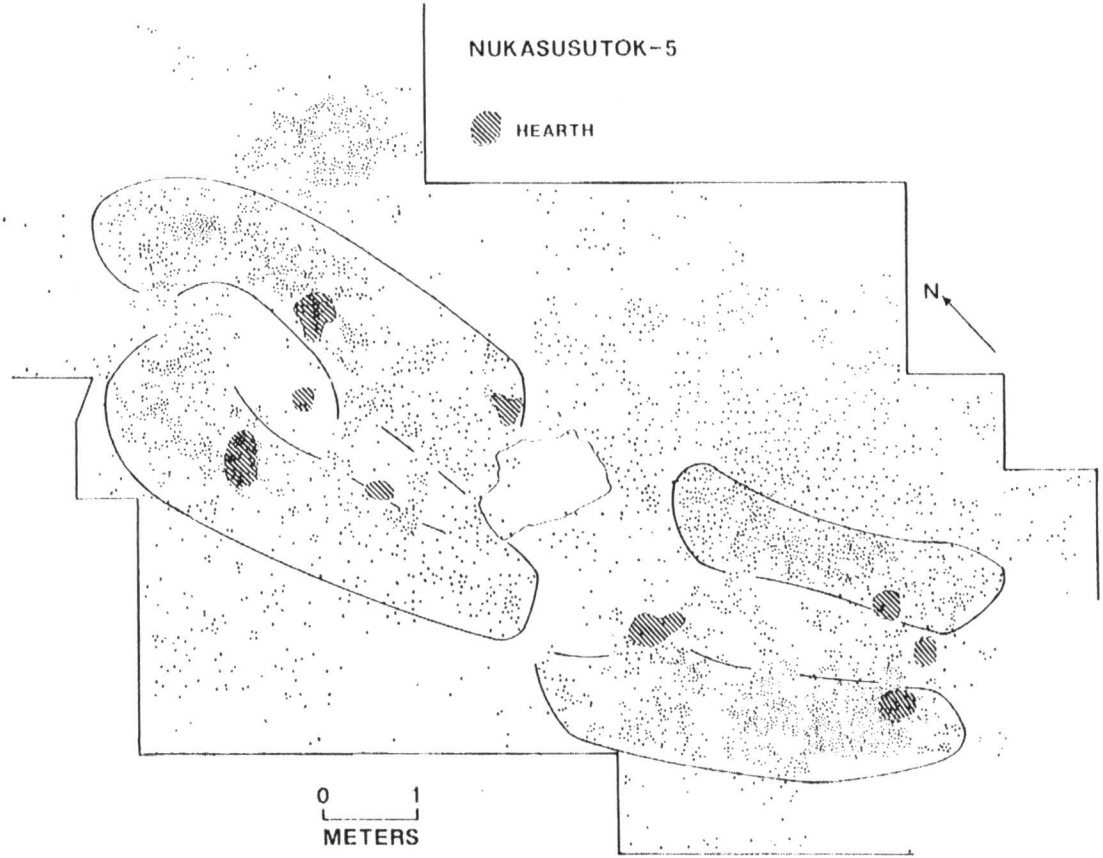

Fig. 3 Stone Flake Distribution Suggestive of a 10 meter Dwelling Structure, Nukasusutok Island, Nain Region.

Maritime Archaic peoples moved seasonally between these zones. Fitzhugh (1972:159-60; 1978:83-84) concludes that the spring-fall period was spent on the coast sealing, fishing and collecting birds, while fall-winter was passed in the inner bays hunting caribou and fishing char. Intensive exploitation of the spring and fall harp seal migrations would have been particularly important. As noted above, during the earlier phases of the Maritime Archaic differences between dwelling types may be correlated with seasonal variation: pit houses with winter occupation, rectangular surface structures with warm weather periods.

Another aspect of Maritime Archaic settlement was their seasonal trips north of the treeline to procure chert from sources in the Ramah Bay region. This was likely undertaken in summer when stone procurement could be combined with coastal caribou hunting. A possible caribou drive system of stone cairns designed for funnelling the animals towards awaiting hunters was found at Nulliak Cove north of Hebron (Fitzhugh 1979). Also at Nulliak were the remains of 27 longhouses indicative of the repeated occupation of the site by large groups (Fitzhugh 1981:11-15; 1984:9-10, 15-18; 1985a:89-98). Fitzhugh (1984:18; 1985a:98) suggests these longhouses were only occupied for a short period (days/weeks) since they do not contain a great deal of cultural debris. Other sites in the Saglek Bay region (Tuck 1975, Thomson 1983, 1984, 1986, 1989) may have had a similar seasonal function.

Fitzhugh (1985b:50) views the large northern sites as staging camps for Ramah chert procurement. According to his"expeditionary" model of chert procurement (see below), central coast groups abandoned their spring-fall settlements and moved north of the treeline for part of the summer. This implies a considerable degree of long distance seasonal mobility.

Other information pertaining to seasonality is ambiguous. Cache pits are present at some sites, providing evidence for storage. In some cases the number of pits is roughly equivalent to the number of longhouse segments, suggesting that each family had its own cache (Fitzhugh 1984:8). These pits might denote the storage of food surplus acquired during the intensive harp seal hunts of the spring or fall. Storage may help minimize subsistence risks during periods of low or unpredictable resource availability (Rowley-Conwy and Zvelebil 1989), but it could also be oriented towards stockpiling food to be used in communal feasting. Anthropologists have observed that in many small scale societies competitive feasting between individuals and groups may be linked to struggles for status or leadership positions (Sahlins 1963; Strathern 1971).

Ritual Activity

The category of ritual covers a wide range of social action. For the Maritime Archaic, mortuary ceremonialism is the most dramatic example of ritual activity, but house configurations and exchange relationships were also marked by ritual

elements. In this section I will discuss the first two of these; exchange will be treated separately below.

Maritime Archaic mortuary ceremonialism has considerable time depth and seems to be underlain by long term ideological structures that orchestrated death ritual. The earliest mortuary data are found along the Strait of Belle Isle in southern Labrador. At L'Anse Amour a rock mound burial containing the remains of a single sub-adult in a red ocher-lined pit was dated to 7500-7200 B.P. at L'Anse Amour. The grave goods included several stone and bone projectiles, an antler harpoon and toggle as well as a bone whistle or flute (McGhee and Tuck 1975:85-92; Tuck and McGhee 1976). Two early burial mounds have been excavated at Ballybrack in the Nain district (Fitzhugh 1978:85-88). One of these was radiocarbon dated to 7000 B.P. Skeletal remains were not preserved under either of these mounds. Mound 1 did not contain any formal tools as grave offerings, while Mound 2 contained a stone knife and scrapers.

No other burial data are available until the last phase of the Maritime Archaic, 4000-3500 B.P. A small cemetery with nine red-ocher pit burials was found at Rattlers Bight in Hamilton Inlet (Fitzhugh 1976:123-125; 1978:85). Poorly preserved human remains were found in only one interment. The graves contained large chunks of Ramah chert, polished slate axes and gouges, finished and unfinished implements of Ramah chert and soapstone, sheets of mica, copper pendants, a walrus skull and walrus tusks. According to Fitzhugh (1978:85), the tendency for certain raw materials to be differentially distributed between the graves and the presence of some copper pendants may indicate status distinctions.

There are at least four rock burial mounds at Nulliak Cove, the northern site with 27 longhouses. Two of these were excavated, but neither had preserved human skeletal remains. Underneath Mound 1 was a red ocher-lined burial pit with about 90 artifacts, including Ramah chert projectile points, slate axes and mica sheets. Mound 2 was less extravagant, containing a Ramah chert projectile, a copper pendant, mica and a walrus tusk (Fitzhugh 1981:12). Fitzhugh (1981:32) believes Mound 1 signifies some degree of status distinction.

I have already mentioned the Port au Choix cemetery on the west coast of Newfoundland, with its rich deposits of bone and antler artifacts associated with the well preserved skeletal remains of over 100 individuals (Tuck 1976). Although it lies outside the geographical boundaries of this paper, its significance for interpreting Maritime Archaic mortuary ritual necessitates an extended consideration.

Tuck's (1976:86-96) analysis of the grave good patterning at Port au Choix was unable to identify distinct patterns indicative of status differences. He suggested a "pattern of male dominance," based on a tendency for male graves to contain more "valuable" goods (Tuck 1976:89). There was also a slight suggestion of a division of labor by gender, with male graves containing more implements for hunting and fishing, such as slate spears and harpoons, and female graves exhibiting a higher frequency of skin working tools such as needles (Tuck 1976:90-91).

Nevertheless, there was a considerable amount of variation in the patterns, with individuals of either biological sex being buried with implements we often, perhaps mistakenly, associate with the opposite social gender (i.e., males with needles, females with harpoons).

Finally, Tuck (1976:94-95) posits that three clusters of graves in one part of the cemetery may indicate separate family plots, although they could also pertain to different time periods of cemetery use. He suggests that one of the clusters might be considered to contain "richer" deposits of grave goods. Furthermore, the association of a large number of great auk bills with one of the clusters and gull bills and bones with another cluster led him to propose that certain families may have been linked with particular bird species. Such associations are reminiscent of totemism, the use of animal symbols to stand for and differentiate human social groups (Levi-Strauss 1963).

Other researchers who have explored the Port au Choix material (d'Entremont 1978; Rothschild 1983) have failed to identify clear patterns of status differentiation. Nonetheless, Rothschild (1983:178) suggests that five individuals who exhibited higher quantities of grave goods and were interred in graves of non-standard cardinal direction orientation could have been "leaders." In any event, this interesting site is ripe for reanalysis through the lens of contemporary archaeological thinking on gender relations (e.g., Gero and Conkey 1991) and symbolic behavior.

The physical anthropology of the Port au Choix skeletal material has also been used to draw inferences about Maritime Archaic social organization. Kennedy's (1981) analysis of skeletal trait variations led her to posit exogamous marriage (marriage outside the local group) and a virilocal postmarital residence pattern (women move to join the mens' families). Dutch researchers are presently attempting to extract DNA from the bone remains and hope to combine DNA sequencing with the study of dental genetics in order to identify family relationships within the cemetery (J. Jelsma pers. comm.).

It is difficult to assess the social significance of Maritime Archaic mortuary remains from Labrador because of the lack of bone preservation. Some degree of status differentiation seems evident, but the absence of skeletal remains makes it impossible to relate the distinctions to age or gender. The shift in mortuary treatment from the early mound burials of individuals to the later cemeteries at Rattlers Bight and Port au Choix may indicate the consolidation of corporate social units (i.e., lineages or clans) with defined territories (cf. Chapman 1981). Nonetheless, the complex and ambiguous nature of the mortuary data is likely to sustain multiple interpretations from different conceptual perspectives.

House structures may have been another facet of Maritime Archaic ritual life. The linear configuration of longhouses might be explained in practical terms as simply a side-by-side accretion of individual family "modules." But the linear ordering of social units, sometimes involving the demarcation of family segments using raised rock dividers, seems so contrived that it is likely to have significance beyond practical function. Many anthropologists and archaeologists have observed

that the material forms of houses incorporate symbolically elements of the social order and cultural values (Bourdieu 1973; Glassie 1975; Hodder 1990:118-119; Yates 1989). It seems to me that the pronounced linearity of the Maritime Archaic people's construction of domestic space may be a symbolic expression of the social and ideological structures underlying their culture.

We can only guess at what this might be, but I suggest that it encodes a tension between *collective* tendencies (i.e., the emergence of corporate groups such as clans or lineages) and the independence of individual family units. The economic reality of Maritime Archaic existence demanded considerable seasonal mobility, which would favour social flexibility and temporary settlements. But the contrived pattern of a longhouse is one way of symbolically uniting otherwise independent groups into a temporary collective unit and giving that unit a transitory material existence through the organization of domestic space. In other words, the longhouse creates and sustains an ideological fiction of collectivity in a socioeconomic context that is marked by strong pressures for group fragmentation.

Other items of material culture that may bear on this issue are engraved soapstone pendants, plummets and plaques found in late Maritime Archaic longhouses at Nulliak Cove, near Hebron (Fitzhugh 1985a:92-98). These objects are engraved with a variety of geometric designs and are found throughout the longhouses, but generally only one per compartment. Fitzhugh (1985a:98) postulates that given their diversity in form and design and their spatial distribution they were used by different individuals or families in ritual activities. In his view they could signal the "individualism" and "primacy of the nuclear family" that some anthropologists see as attributes of historic Subarctic Indian societies (Fitzhugh 1985a:104-105). An alternative interpretation could see the artifacts in terms of the point raised above concerning dwelling linearity and compartmentalization. Perhaps the rituals in which the soapstone implements were wielded mediated the *tensions* between the emergent collective ties of corporate groups and impulses towards autonomy on the part of individuals and families.

Exchange Systems

"Exchange" is often used interchangeably with "trade," but in anthropological terms the former has a broader meaning than the latter. Exchange implies not just an *economic* transaction, but also a set of social relationships. Maritime Archaic exchange involved transactions of material objects with practical functions, but these exchanges also had social and ideological significance.

The most prominent exchange item was the stone material Ramah chert, which was used for tool manufacturing. This material is available only from a limited area in the region around Ramah Bay in the Torngat Mountains of northern Labrador (Gramly 1978; Lazenby 1980). During the earlier phases of the Maritime Archaic (7000 - 4800 B.P.), Ramah chert is used in conjunction with poorer quality locally

available materials such as vein quartz and quartzite. Ramah chert was used quite extensively in northern Labrador (Nain, Okak), but only sporadic amounts were employed further south in the Hamilton Inlet sites (Fitzhugh 1975:119-122; 1978:69-70; Lazenby 1984). Large scale Ramah chert exchange networks may not have been developed until after ca. 4500 B.P., when it begins to appear in the Strait of Belle Isle in southern Labrador (McGhee and Tuck 1975).

During the late phase of the Maritime Archaic (4000-3500 B.P.) a very different picture emerges. Ramah chert is used almost exclusively for flaked stone tools, even at sites in Hamilton Inlet, 600 km south of the source areas (Fitzhugh 1975:126-129; 1978:70; Lazenby 1984) This implies large scale transport of huge amounts of stone raw materials.

Two mechanisms may have been responsible for the extensive distribution of Ramah chert. The first scenario has Ramah chert being exchanged in trade transactions along the coast from the northern sources towards the south. Given near exclusive reliance on the material during the late Maritime Archaic, such high volume exchange would imply well organized transactions along a stable social network. Particular individuals or families may have been able to control distribution of the chert, apportioning the material to other group members as they saw fit. Thus some persons may have become dependent on others for their stone raw material supply. This could generate an unequal status system or reinforce status differentials derived from other socio-economic spheres. Variations in the amount of Ramah chert found in burials and concentrations of tools and manufacturing debris in some parts of longhouses (Fitzhugh 1985a:98) might support such an hypothesis.

The second scenario posits a very different mechanism for the distribution of Ramah chert: direct procurement. Fitzhugh (1985b:49-50) suggests that rather than using long distance exchange links, entire groups from the central coast made expeditions to northern Labrador to procure Ramah chert directly from the sources. Large sites with many longhouses such as Nulliak Cove may have been staging camps for such expeditions. One way of looking at this is that despite the high travel costs, direct procurement might be a social strategy to *resist* the dependency relations that might develop in a large scale exchange system.

In my view, a combination of exchange and direct procurement is most likely, with the emphasis shifting periodically in relation to changes in subsistence regimes and social strategies. In any event, the high degree of social dependence on Ramah chert in the late Maritime Archaic, the transport of Ramah chert outside the Labrador-Newfoundland region and the prominence of the material in Labrador mortuary contexts (with the interesting exception of Port au Choix, where it is absent), suggest Ramah chert had major significance in social transactions and ritual life.

Additional stone materials were exchanged along the Labrador coast: various chert types, slate and soapstone (Fitzhugh 1978:84). The copper pendants appearing in burials must have originated from distant source areas, the Labrador interior

(cf. Mann 1959:208; Ryan 1984), Newfoundland, or even further afield. The mica sheets in burials were likely exchange items. The presence of birch bark lining in burial pits at Nulliak Cove, north of the present tree line, suggests that wood products were moved north along the coast (Fitzhugh 1978:84; 1981:16). Given the hints of status differentiation in the graves, it is clear that exchange objects were important for defining these social distinctions.

MARITIME ARCHAIC AND PRE-DORSET INTERRELATIONSHIPS

About 4000 B.P., a new cultural tradition arrived in northern Labrador: the Pre-Dorset Palaeoeskimos. These people entered Labrador from elsewhere in the eastern Arctic and moved south along the coast to just beyond the Nain region. In the process, they colonized areas already occupied by the Maritime Archaic Indians. The Pre-Dorset people spoke a different language, used different technology and stone raw materials and had different dwelling structures and social organization than the Maritime Archaic. When they met it must have been an astonishing experience for both sides, since it would have been the first time each culture had encountered a new people with radically different lifeways. The two cultures overlapped in time and space for over 500 years (4000-3500 B.P.), so the question of how they maintained cultural boundaries is paramount, as is the question of what effect the Pre-Dorset presence may have had on the disappearance of the Maritime Archaic after 3500 B.P.

The Pre-Dorset people probably had a subsistence-settlement pattern similar to the Maritime Archaic. Their sites cluster in the outer coast region where spring-summer settlement oriented towards marine resources would be anticipated, but there are also a few sites in the inner bay areas of Nain and Okak that may indicate fall-winter caribou hunting locales (Cox 1978:102). This similarity in subsistence-settlement implies that the two cultures were potentially in direct competition for food resources.

The Pre-Dorset stone tool technology differed sharply from the Maritime Archaic in style as well as raw materials. Whereas the late Maritime Archaic people made near exclusive use of Ramah chert, the Pre-Dorsets used primarily chert from the Cape Mugford region north of Okak (Cox 1978:98; Fitzhugh 1984:22; Gramly 1978, Lazenby 1980). Stone raw materials may therefore have been an important symbolic marker of cultural difference.

Pre-Dorset settlements are generally small, consisting of distinctive hearth constructions centered within or bisecting a small tent ring, or composed of ill-defined rock structures associated with a sparse scatter of stone tools. These characteristics suggest that Pre-Dorset camps rarely consisted of more than 1-3 families and that the duration of occupation was fairly short. The Pre-Dorsets did not exhibit the ability or the inclination to organize large coresidential groups like those found in the Maritime Archaic (Fitzhugh 1984:21).

Despite the temporal and geographical overlap between the cultures, their artifacts do not give any indication that they had much influence on each other. Tuck (1975:195-196) once suggested that toggling harpoons were transferred from the Maritime Archaic to the Pre-Dorset and the bow and arrow from Pre-Dorset to the Maritime Archaic. This proposition now seems rather questionable. Fitzhugh (1978:91; 1984:22) mentions a Maritime Archaic copy of a Pre-Dorset burin from the Rattlers Bight site in Hamilton Inlet, but this claim has its doubters. Consequently, the evidence implies that the two cultures maintained distinct social boundaries. The question is, how were these boundaries managed?

Fitzhugh (1984:22-23) proposed that the two cultures maintained separate geographical enclaves. This "enclave" model postulated a Pre-Dorset "core area" extending from the Torngat Mountains in the north to as far south as Nain. The core area included the Pre-Dorset chert sources at Cape Mugford as well as the Ramah chert sources. The Maritime Archaic "core area" was the central coast south of Nain, but they maintained a northern "outlier" in the Hebron-Saglek region as their staging area for acquiring Ramah chert from the quarries to the north. Some of the elaborate developments during the late phase of the Maritime Archaic could then be seen as linked to cultural stress generated by the presence of Pre-Dorset. In particular, because of the significance of Ramah chert in Maritime Archaic social life, ideology and technology, they needed to maintain Ramah chert procurement from the quarry areas within the Pre-Dorset "enclave." This was accomplished by setting up a staging camp at Nulliak Cove near Hebron, and probably others in Saglek Bay (Tuck 1975; Thomson 1983, 1984, 1986, 1989), to facilitate "leap-frogging" through Pre-Dorset areas.

Fitzhugh's model was based partly on the lack of major late Maritime Archaic sites in the Nain-Okak region, which gave the impression of Pre-Dorset control. But more recent finds in the Nain region tear a hole in the fabric of the "enclave model" and raise interesting questions regarding the nature of Maritime Archaic and Pre-Dorset territorial organization. Perhaps a "local mosaic" metaphor should replace the "regional enclave" hypothesis.

No major late Maritime Archaic sites have yet been found in the outer islands of the Nain region. However, in 1985 Fitzhugh (1986:57) discovered a substantial late Maritime Archaic site, Attu's Bight, in the inner bay area north of Nain. This site was badly deflated by wind erosion, but it contained several linear distributions of Ramah chert suggestive of longhouses. What made this locale particularly interesting was that it is the only major Maritime Archaic site in an inner bay environment and the nearby inside passage of Port Manvers Run contained a relatively large number of early Pre-Dorset sites. Here was a significant late Maritime Archaic site in the midst of a Pre-Dorset enclave.

Subsequent work in this region (Hood 1992b, 1993) has provided more interesting data. Attu's Bight was radiocarbon dated at 4000 B.P., and it probably continued to be occupied after this time. About 1.5 km to the west, a Pre-Dorset site with several tent structures was found. Although not yet radiocarbon dated, the

tool types suggest it could date 4000-3500 B.P., in all likelihood overlapping with the nearby Maritime Archaic site. About 1.5 km east of Attu's Bight was a small Pre-Dorset camp radiocarbon dated at 3600-3300 B.P. All three site locations are probably best suited for seal or caribou hunting in the spring or fall.

The question is, did the two cultures avoid each other by scheduling their use of the inner bay region for different seasons or were they in the area at the same time? An interesting hint comes from the find of a Maritime Archaic projectile point on the larger Pre-Dorset site along with a greater amount of Ramah chert than is found in other Pre-Dorset sites along Port Manvers Run. One possibility is that the two cultures interacted here and the Pre-Dorsets acquired some Ramah chert from the Maritime Archaic. If true, this implies that the regional enclave model should be modified to include a local mosaic of Maritime Archaic and Pre-Dorset groups within the inner bays of the Nain region and at least a minimal degree of social interaction.

On the other hand, the Maritime Archaic projectile point on the Pre-Dorset site could indicate an Indian occupation *prior* to the Pre-Dorset use of the site. Alternatively, the Indian projectile point and the Ramah chert used by the Pre-Dorset could have been scavenged by the Palaeoeskimos from the abandoned Attu's Bight Maritime Archaic locality, or the chert could have been acquired by the Pre-Dorset from the geological sources near Ramah Bay. Furthermore, better radiocarbon dating of both the Maritime Archaic and Pre-Dorset sites may eventually indicate that Pre-Dorset activity in the inner bay area post-dates the abandonment of the region by the Maritime Archaic. This would tend to reinforce the territorial exclusivity model.

The final issue is how the relationship between the two cultures might have contributed to the disappearance of the Maritime Archaic. It is hard to imagine how the small fluid Pre-Dorset bands could out-compete the highly organized elaborate culture of the Maritime Archaic. Nevertheless, this may have happened, since the Maritime Archaic disappeared as a recognizable archaeological entity at 3500 B.P. while Pre-Dorset persisted for several more centuries.

One possible explanation is that climate change caused shifts in the resource base to which the Maritime Archaic could not adapt. However, reassessment of the paleoenvironmental data (Fitzhugh and Lamb 1985:366, 367) suggests that there were no significant changes in the terrestrial or marine environments at this time. Instead, it appears that the cultural dynamics of Maritime Archaic/Pre-Dorset interaction are the key causal element. Perhaps the Maritime Archaic simply collapsed as a result of organizational overextension when faced with a competitive situation in which they had to develop a carefully managed delivery system for transporting Ramah chert across Pre-Dorset territory. Or perhaps the Maritime Archaic social and ideological structures, which had developed over several thousand years, simply became too rigid to permit the flexible behavioral response needed in the competitive situation.

Whatever the cause, what happened to the Maritime Archaic? Did they disappear, to be replaced by a new group of Indian people, as suggested by Fitzhugh (1972:195)? Or did they reorganize themselves in the inner bay regions or southern Labrador, relinquishing their elaborate social and ideological systems, becoming less maritime-oriented and more like historically known Subarctic Indians, thus gradually evolving into the modern Innu (Madden 1976; Tuck 1976:59-60)? We cannot as yet answer that question, and it remains one of the vexing unresolved issues of Newfoundland-Labrador prehistory.

CONCLUSION

A considerable amount of research remains to be done on the Labrador Maritime Archaic. This research has importance above and beyond excavating beautiful artifacts for museum displays or providing archaeologists with exciting summer vacations. The Maritime Archaic data provide us an opportunity to study the social organization of a past society in a way that is not yet possible for other periods of Newfoundland and Labrador Indian prehistory. Investigations of Maritime Archaic social organization can also make a major contribution to current anthropological theorizing on how hunter-gatherers become socially complex (Price and Brown 1985).

But beyond the elite confines of academic theory, the Maritime Archaic also have relevance for the contemporary world. Their prehistoric record is an excellent demonstration of the cultural dynamism that existed in North America prior to the European conquest and dispossession of Native lands. Their archaeological traces put the lie to Eurocentric notions that Subarctic Native societies were static and primitive. And not the least, the Maritime Archaic are an important component of the heritage of the Innu people. Although archaeologists may be reluctant to draw direct historical links between the Innu and the Maritime Archaic given the vagaries of existing data, the Innu themselves believe that their cultural tradition may be traced back to Maritime Archaic ancestry. Consequently, Maritime Archaic archaeology can serve as a tangible link between the Innu past and their present, a difficult present which may find some small inspiration from its prehistoric heritage.

Notes

[1]The dates in this article were established using the radiocarbon method and are expressed as radiocarbon years before present (B.P.).

[2]Chert is a fine-grained flint-like rock.

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