

Expedition Relics from High Arctic Greenland eight decades of exploration history told through 102 objects. Peter R. Dawes. With artefact photography by Roberto Fortuna. 2023. Museum Tusulanum Press/Copenhagen: Denmark. 500 p, illustrated, hardcover. ISBN 9788763546867. \$102 (US).

The evolving discipline of historical archaeology and the study and interpretation of material culture offer specific and unique entry points into our understanding of polar history. Connelly and Warrior (2019) point out: “The notion of ‘biographies of things’ has proven to be a valuable framework for tracing historical trajectories and illuminating the multiplicity of contexts through which objects move.” This book poses the question: how does the study of material objects contribute to our knowledge of the exploration of northern Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland during the mid-nineteenth-early twentieth century period? Following in the path of earlier volumes including, most recently, de Pomereau and McGahey’s fine *Antarctica in 100 Objects* (2022), *Expedition Relics from High Arctic Greenland* by Peter R. Dawes provides the reader with an intimate, in-depth perspective into explorer’s lives, the interactions between Indigenous and Western cultures, and the perilous expeditions in this region that loom large in exploration history.


Author Peter R. Dawes is an emeritus scientist with the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland and despite the fact that he has only published a few scholarly papers on related topics (including Dawes, 1967), he has done an admirable job here. The objectives of the book are clearly defined: a) to document and illustrate the 102 diverse artefacts from the 1850–1925 period collected in the High Arctic region of Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland and b) to convey the story of the expeditions associated with these items. The book is well organised, and the text is straightforward and accessible. It’s an oversized and hefty volume, so most readers will likely choose to dip in and out rather than read it all the way through. And that’s perfectly fine because it’s a book to be savoured and referred to again and again. There are four chapters. Chapter One places the expeditions and the artefact collections in context with a fascinating if much too truncated description about who was doing the collecting and how each item was chosen and labelled, and it reveals the author’s own connection to this field of study. Noticeably lacking is a robust discussion of the ethics of collecting Indigenous and/or Western artefacts from the polar landscape. Perspectives and protocols regarding the tampering with or removal of such precious objects have shifted dramatically over time, and a frank assessment of this sensitive and complex issue should have been included. This is now of critical importance due to ongoing climate change and the fact that increasingly greater numbers of cruise ship tourists have access to the High Arctic of Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland. Chapter Two discusses the preservation and classification of a fascinating range of artefacts including a mysterious copper Inuit *qulleq* located at Dragon Point and the Dunlop steel wheel found at Hatherton Bugt. Dawes attempts to determine the exact origins of each object and offers a glimpse into the life of the archaeologist and curator. The cairns, expedition stations, graves and historic sites where most of the items were discovered are also presented in these pages and include a discussion of the ancient stone structures built of white sandstone slabs on Hakluyt Ø and the “boat-part hut” constructed by the party of Isaac Hayes at Booth Sund. Chapter Three introduces the 19 American, Danish and British expeditions featured in these pages ranging from the earliest, the *Second Grinnell Expedition* (1853–1855) led by Elisha Kent Kane in search of Sir John Franklin, to the latest, the *Oxford University Ellesmere Land Expedition* (1934–1935), led by G. Noel Humphreys. The author states that Chapter Four pays tribute to the intrepid and resourceful Inuit who participated in Western exploration. However, a separate chapter (much shorter and oddly combined with a discussion of Inuit sled dogs) seems redundant as Indigenous explorers and Indigenous artefacts are featured throughout all chapters of the book. The author has chosen to include Inuit contributions in all chapters *and* devote one abbreviated chapter to this. Surely it makes more sense to do one or the other and not both.

The author’s focus on inclusivity in which Indigenous and Western cultures are featured, which remains one of the book’s greatest strengths. Many of the featured objects are Inuit in origin or “hybrid”, that is, Inuit objects created with Western materials or Western objects created with Inuit materials. Additionally, the photographs of Inuit explorer throughout the book name the individuals and an endpiece lists the images of over 25 Inuit explorers and provides

basic details about them. Dawes tips his hat to female explorers such as Tookoolito from Cumberland Sound, Nunavut, Canada who travelled with Charles Francis Hall on the *Polaris Expedition* in 1871. When disaster struck, Tookoolito assumed a major role in an epic 6-month journey south on a series of ice floes. American Josephine Diebitsch-Peary over-wintered with her husband Robert Peary during 1891–1892 and 1893–1894 and was beset in ice on the *Windward* in 1900–1901. It's important that these women and others are given full credit for their contributions rather than being defined by their “domestic duties” or, worse, erased from the public record altogether. As Dawes himself states, it's a starting point but even greater emphasis on the role of Indigenous explorers, the inclusion and discussion of more Inuit artefacts and more detailed information about female explorers who lived and worked in this region would have strengthened the book further. Additionally, to be truly inclusive, surely Dawes could have worked closely with Greenlandic Inuit colleagues and communities while researching and writing this book. Dawes admits that his collection of artefacts is “random.” Undoubtedly, the inclusion and indeed prioritisation of Inuit perspectives regarding which objects should be included, how each expedition history was interpreted and written and in which language(s) the book would be published would have resulted in a book reflecting the Greenlandic Inuit people and this region in a vastly different but more authentic manner.

The high quality of this publication is impressive. Quite simply, it's a beautiful book. The 102 objects illustrated here are made of cloth, leather, and paper and range from clothing and practical implements used by Inuit as well as fragments of documents, discarded scientific equipment, items related to transportation and a variety of objects used by Indigenous and Western explorers in their daily lives while setting up and maintaining their camps. Information on when and where the objects were collected as well as the measurements and condition details are provided. Photographs of the remote locations where these objects were collected augment this material and

help to further inform the reader. The 35 mostly full colour historic and contemporary maps highlight the routes taken by these expeditions. Maps are to be expected in a book of this kind, but recent, detailed and accurate maps of the High Arctic of Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland are not always easy to locate. For this reason, these maps are appreciated by the reader. The endpapers are extensive with a detailed list of the collectors, the featured objects and their respective repositories, and a bibliography. However, one questions the need for three separate indices for place names, personal names and subjects. One index containing all of this information would have been sufficient.

Expedition Relics from High Arctic Greenland will benefit scholars and students from diverse disciplines, including polar history, archaeology and anthropology, Indigenous studies, northern studies, and Scandinavian history. It will also appeal to museum curators and students and staff of heritage conservation worldwide. Most importantly, this book will be of value to the residents of Greenlandic communities, and it is hoped that the author and publisher ensure that complementary copies are distributed throughout the country. (Joanna Kafarowski  Independent scholar, Canada (joannakafarowski@gmail.com))

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