

Chronological summary of the collection, publication and exhibition of prehistoric Eskimo art from the Bering Strait

1916 First illustration of objects with early Punuk and Old Bering Sea (OBS) style decoration (shown below is an OBS-II harpoon head collected by Stefansson at Cape Smythe, near Barrow on the Arctic coast of Alaska).

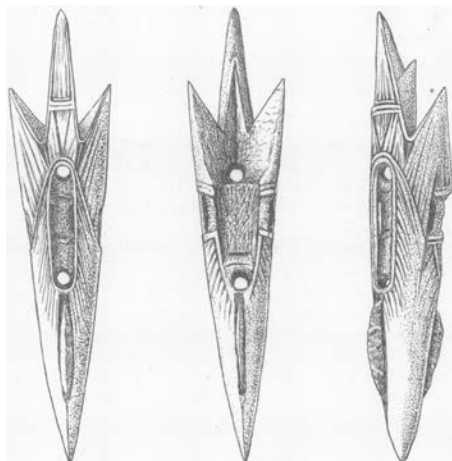


Fig. 9 (60.1-3571). Three views of an exceptional harpoon head, Cape Smythe. Length, 10.3 cm. (Wissler, 1916)

1926 Diamond Jenness published illustrations of a harpoon head and part of a winged object (both Okvik/OBS-I) and an OBS-II socket piece that he excavated in 1926 on Little Diomede Island.

From Jenness, 1928

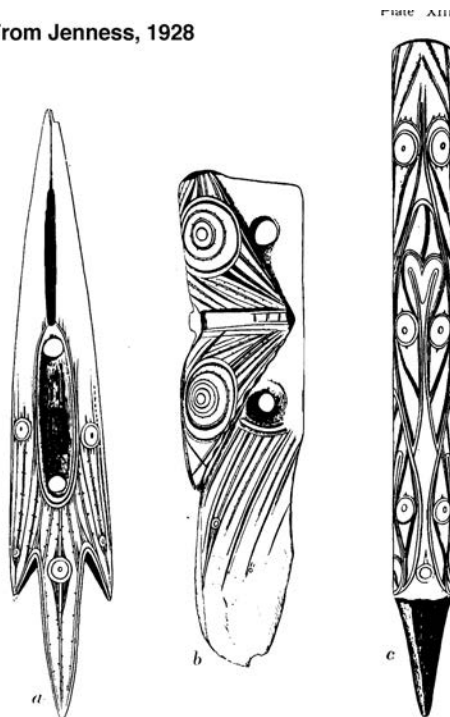
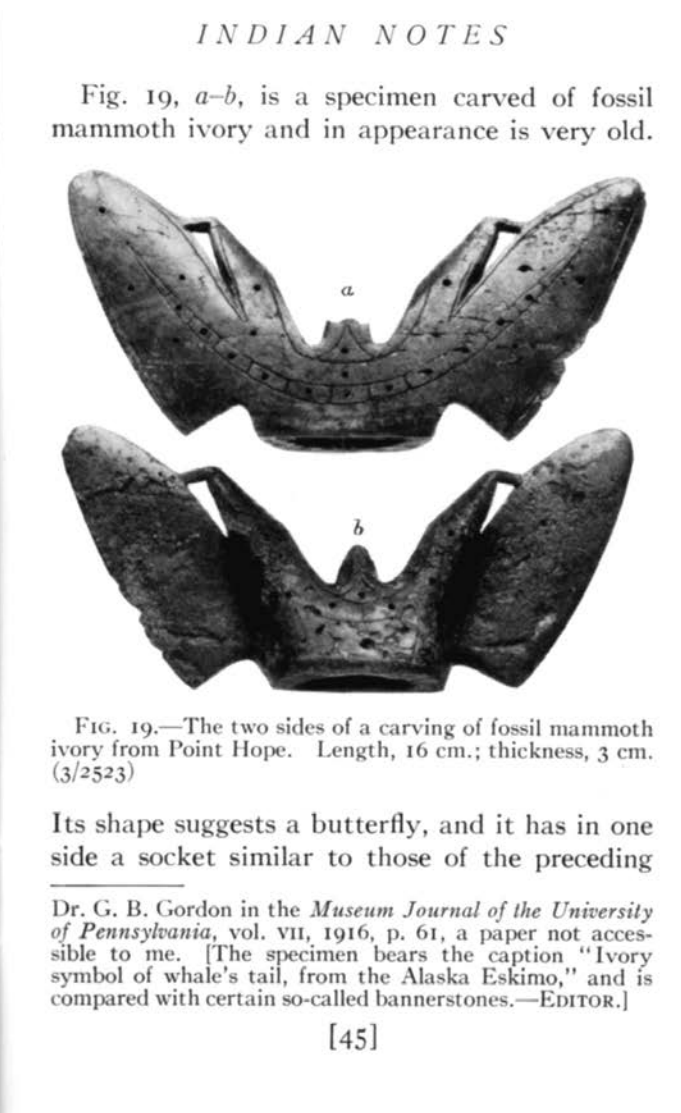
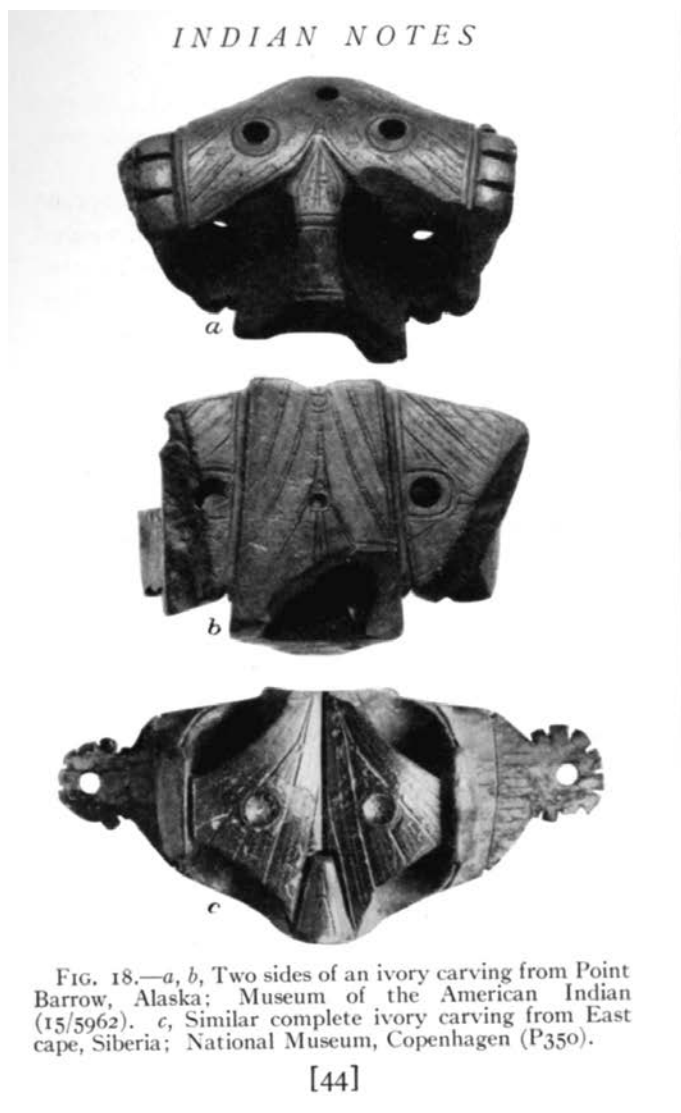


FIGURE XIII
D. F. PRUD' HOMME D.J.

Ivory specimens illustrating the archaic Bering Sea culture and its curvilinear art, from Diomede islands.
A. Harpoon head (Cat. No. IX.F. 6672). B. Implement of unknown use (Cat. No. IX.F. 6676). C. Harpoon foreshaft (Cat. No. IX.F. 6670).

- 1927-1928 First excavations by Otto Geist at Gambell and Kukulik on St. Lawrence Island
- 1928 First excavations by Henry Collins during 8 weeks in the Punuk Islands
- 1929 One month excavation by Collins of the mostly Punuk village at Kialegak
- 1929 Publication of 14 mostly Old Bering Sea period objects (harpoon heads, socket pieces, winged objects, adze handles) in the collections of the Museum of the American Indian (Heye Foundation) and the National Museum of Denmark (Mathiassen, 1929)



- 1929 Henry Collins: *Prehistoric Art of the Alaskan Eskimo* (Smithsonian Institution publication)
- 1930-1931 Excavation by Collins of five OBS, Punuk and modern "type sites" at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island (Collins, 1937; Dumond, 1998)
- 1931/1934 Excavation by Geist in the Punuk Islands midden (Rainey, 1941)

- 1931-1935 Excavations by Geist and Rainey (1934-5) at the large village of Kukulik with OBS, Birnik, Punuk and later artifacts (Geist and Rainey, 1936).
- August 30, 1934 Geist's assistant, Ivar Skarlund, finds the 17 cm "Okvik Madonna" 50 cm below the surface on the Punuk Islands.



Photo: University of Alaska Museum, Fairbanks

- 1937 Excavations by Froelich Rainey at Kukulik, St. Lawrence Island
- 1939 Louis Giddings excavated one house each at sites in Gambell (Hillside), Kukulik, and Ketgnipaluk on St. Lawrence Island.
- 1945 Coastal survey of Chukotka and collection of surface material by Sergei Rudenko (Rudenko, 1947/1981).
- 1947 4,000 artifacts from St. Lawrence Island were sold for \$2,000 to Frederick Douglas at the Denver Art Museum by Norman Potosky, who had spent 3 years on St. Lawrence Island working for the Civil Aeronautics Administration. Some of these were later exchanged with other museums (e.g., Brooklyn), or traded to Altman Antiques in Los Angeles and thence to other dealers and collectors (e.g., Julius Carlebach, John Hewett, Nelson Rockefeller, Robert and Lisa Sainsbury). (Information in this chronology concerning museum purchases of Alaskan artifacts is from Hollowell, 2004.)
- 1955 Accidental discovery of the Uelen cemetery by Dorian Sergeev
- 1956, 1958, 1963 Coastal surveys of Chukotka by Nikolai Dikov

- 1957-1960 Uelen excavations by Maxim Levin, Sergei Arutiunov and Dorian Sergeev (all objects illustrated in Arutiunov and Sergeev, 1969).
- 1960 Museum of Primitive Art (New York) exhibition of objects from the Wielgus Collection
- 1960 Discovery of the Chini (Sinin) cemetery by Dorian Sergeev
- 1961-1962 Discovery of the Ekven cemetery by Dorian Sergeev and excavations begun by Sergeev, Levin and Arutiunov
- 1963 Dikov excavated at Uelen, and at Enmynytyn and Chini (1963 and 1965, yielding 102 objects). He wrote that he noticed the Chini cemetery from the sea in 1958, but was not able to carry out excavations until he returned in 1963, when he discovered that a burial in the main cemetery had already been excavated by someone (Dikov, 1974, Fig. 1, p. 6).
- 1963-1967 After the death of Levin in 1963, Ekven excavations were continued by Sergeev and Arutiunov until 1967, by which time they had reached burial 189 (Arutiunov and Sergeev, 1975, illustrating <10% of the objects).
- 1963 Museum of Primitive Art exhibition of objects from the Sainsbury Collection
- 1970 Due to poor weather (rain, dense fog, gales), planned 1 month Ekven excavations had to be reduced to only 7 days (July 7-14). During that period, burials 190-193 were excavated (Arutiunov and Sergeev, 1983).
- January, 1971 The University of Alaska Museum (Fairbanks) purchased a 17 cm Okvik female figure (*The Far North*, Collins et al., 1973, No. 4) from Brian Rookok for his \$250 asking price (which he refused from a trader, since he preferred to sell it to a museum).



Photo: University of Alaska Museum, Fairbanks

- 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (under the terms of which St. Lawrence Island Natives acquired "ownership" of the island and the right to legally excavate and sell any artifacts found there).
- February, 1972 The Alaska State Museum (Juneau) purchased an "Ivory Madonna figure" from Carl Pelawook for \$200 (+ a "bust, \$40, a torso, \$10, and other artifacts "recovered from an old village site on Punuk Island", for a total of \$420).
- August, 1972 The Alaska State Museum purchased ten OBS and Okvik artifacts from Carl Pelawook for \$3,000.
- October, 1972 The Alaska State Museum purchased other artifacts from Carl Pelawook for \$4,100, including \$1,500 and \$1,200 for two ivory figures.
- January, 1973 The Alaska State Museum replied to Melvin Seppilu of Savoonga (St. Lawrence Island) that his asking price of \$1,750 for two Eskimo dolls and other artifacts from the Punuk Islands was "unrealistic - much too high". These objects included a 20 cm Okvik female figure (Wardwell, 1986, No. 39).



From Wardwell, 1986, No 36

- 1971/1972 The Anchorage Museum of History and Art purchased artifacts from Savoonga diggers, and an OBS winged object from the Kialegak site for \$650 from Dennis Corrington of Nome's Arctic Trading Post.
- 1973 National Gallery of Art exhibition, Washington DC (*The Far North: 2000 Years of American Eskimo and Indian Art*; Collins et al., 1973)
- 1974 From June 30 to July 22, 17 Ekven burials (194-210) were opened, working on both hills that had been substantially excavated during the 1961-1970 seasons (Arutiunov and Sergeev, 1983). From 1976 until his death in 1984, ill health prevented Sergeev from going into the field, and Ekven excavations ceased for almost 15 years after 1974.
- 1974 Following his viewing of the 1973 *Far North* exhibition, the New York art dealer Paul Steinhacker made his first visit to St. Lawrence Island. He immediately sold 50 pieces to Edmund Carpenter (on behalf of the Menil Foundation) and then went back in the autumn for more.
- 1974 First visit of the novice New Mexico art "scout" Kenneth Pushkin (b. 1952) to St. Lawrence Island, and sale of purchased artifacts to Jonathan and Philip Holstein, art dealers in New York and Aspen, Colorado.
- 1977 *Native American Heritage* (Art Institute of Chicago; Evan Maurer) and *Sacred Circles* (Ted Coe) exhibitions
- 1978 First visit to St. Lawrence Island of Jeffrey Myers, New York dealer in Eskimo and North West Coast Indian art.
- 1984 *La Rime et la Raison* exhibition of the Menil Collection in Paris (Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 1984).
- 1986 American Federation of Arts exhibition (New York and Anchorage) of *Ancient Eskimo Ivories from the Bering Strait* (Wardwell, 1986)
- 1987 Arutiunov returned to Ekven for a single season with Mikhail Bronshtein as part of the first State Museum of Oriental Art (Moscow) expedition, and burial excavations led by Bronshtein were resumed during the period of 1989-1995.
- 1988 *Crossroads of Continents* exhibition included Uelen and Ekven artifacts (Fitzhugh et al., 1988).
- May, 1992 Exhibition of *Prehistoric Eskimo Ivories* at Deadalus Ancient Art (Fred Schultz), New York (Wardwell, 1992)
- 1993-1994 Exhibition of artifacts recovered at Ekven after excavations resumed in 1987 (*Arktische Waljäger vor 3000 Jahren - unbekannte sibirische Kunst*, Tübingen/Munich/Moscow; Leskov and Müller-Beck, 1993)
- 1995-2002 At Ekven, graves were no longer excavated but rather subterranean house ruins along the eroding shoreline (house H-18 was completely excavated). 1995-1998 was a period of extensive international collaboration on

excavations (Russian-Canadian-Swiss-German-Danish; Yvon Csonka, Reto Blumer, Hansjürgen Müller-Beck, Patrick Plumet, etc.).

- 1997 Jonathan and Philip Holstein collection of 324 Alaskan Eskimo objects (most of the prehistoric artifacts were collected by Kenneth Pushkin and Paul Steinhacker) was acquired by the Princeton University Art Museum with funds donated by Lloyd Cotsen
- 1998 John B. Elliot bequest to the Princeton University Art Museum of 31 Alaskan prehistoric and later objects, many of which were originally lent to the Museum in 1982, 1984, 1989 and 1990.
- 2002-2012 Kirill Dneprovsky excavates late Birnik and early Punuk house ruins at Paipelghak, ~80 km NW of Uelen. (As compared to the mostly shallow Uelen and Ekven burials, house ruin excavations were more difficult and expensive due to permafrost that starts at ~40 cm below the ground surface, with only 5-10 cm of thawing on a favorably warm day; see Dneprovsky and Lopatin, 2012). Dneprovsky and his team visited Ekven annually on the way to Paipelghak but only to collect surface material and samples for radiocarbon analysis.
- December, 2007 Extensive exhibition of objects from the post-1987 Ekven excavations, *World of Arctic Maritime Hunters: Steps into the Unknown*, held at the State Museum of Oriental Art (Moscow) in collaboration with the Department of Culture of the Chukotka Autonomous Region, Anadyr (Bronshstein et al., 2007)
- October, 2008 *Upside Down* - exhibition of prehistoric Eskimo ivory carvings from Chukotka, Alaska and Canada at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris (Musée du Quai Branly, 2008).
- October, 2009 Exhibition of *Gifts from the Ancestors: Ancient Ivories of the Bering Strait* at the Princeton University Art Museum (Fitzhugh et al., 2009).

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