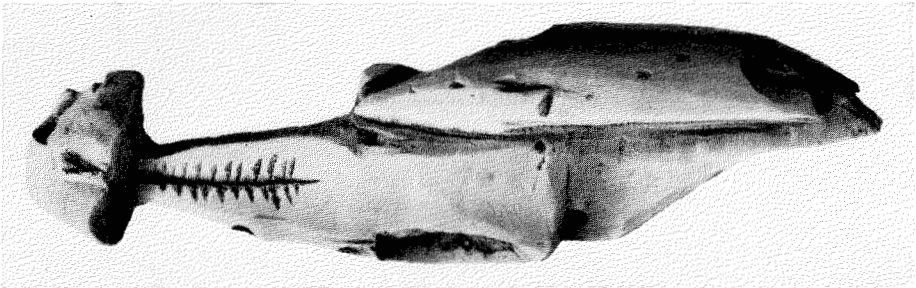
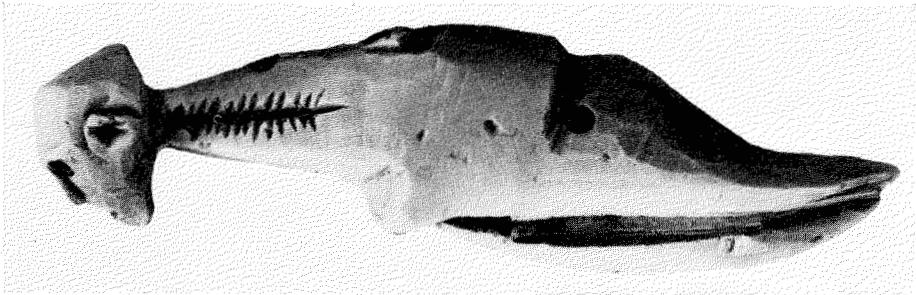


AN UNUSUAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SPECIMEN FROM FOXE BASIN

By **Graham Rówley**

WHILE at Igloolik in August 1949, I was brought a number of archaeological specimens which had been collected by Eskimo from the many old houses in the area. Excavation of this type is, of course, to be deplored and is now discouraged by most of the white residents in the North, especially since the collection of archaeological specimens in the Northwest Territories without a licence has been prohibited. With little or no accompanying data the specimens are usually of negligible interest. It is difficult however to tell the Eskimo to take them away as their small residual value would then be lost. The only course seems to be to accept them, tell the Eskimo that they should not dig them up and give them so insignificant a reward that they will not be encouraged to continue.



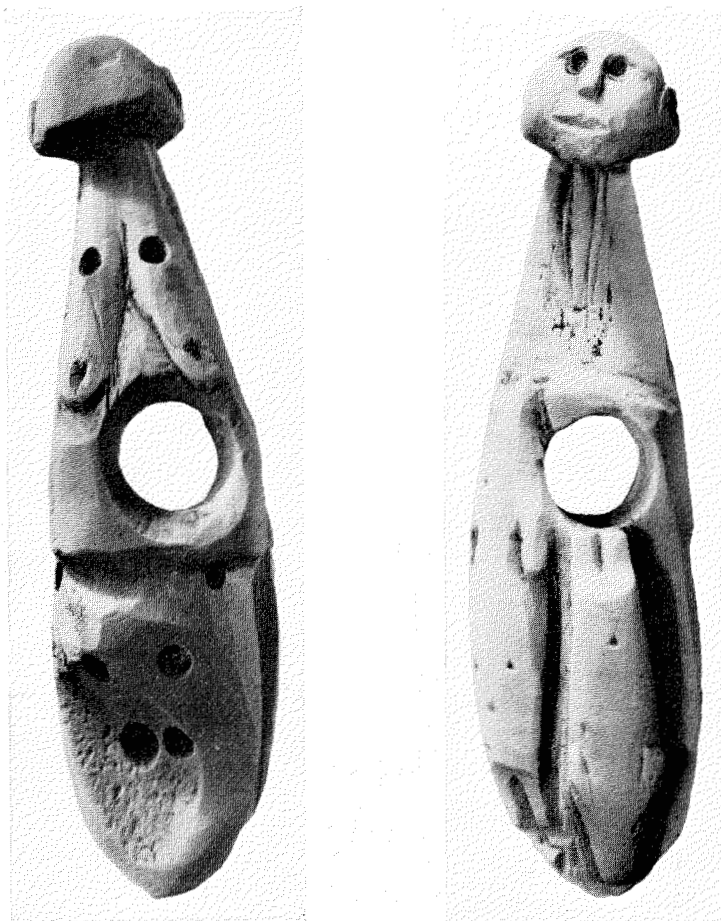
Photos: National Museum of Canada

Side views, showing resemblance to a whale. X 2

Most of the specimens brought to me were said to have come from some old houses at Pingerqalik, on the east coast of Melville Peninsula some twenty-five miles south of Igloolik Island, presumably from the site sketched by Mathiassen.¹ They are mainly of Thule types but there are

¹Mathiassen, Therkel, "Archaeology of the Central Eskimo". Rep. Fifth Thule Exped., 1921-24. Copenhagen, 1927, Vol. IV, Pt. I, p. 119.

a small number which are certainly Dorset. One of the Pingerqalik artifacts is of considerable interest as it has both Thule and Dorset characteristics. It bears a slight, probably fortuitous, resemblance to a toy whale, and is a toggle of some sort, possibly for the end of a piece of skin-line used for dragging seals over the ice, but more likely a fastening for a belt.



Photos: National Museum of Canada

Top and bottom views, showing drilled hole and pits and the two seals. X 2

The specimen is made from a walrus-tooth not tusk. It is highly decorated in undoubted Dorset style. At one end is a human head in front of a fox head. Both these are Dorset, as are two small seals carved in relief on the underside. I have excavated similar seal carvings at the pure Dorset site of Abverdjar, only about thirty miles from Pingerqalik. The line hole right through the specimen is, on the other hand, Thule, or

at least is certainly not Dorset, while a number of small pits are also drilled and therefore cannot be Dorset. There are ten of these small pits, four of which form the eyes of the fox and human heads, while the other six which have no obvious significance are arranged symmetrically in pairs on the upper side.

With two cultures represented on the same artifact it may be possible to determine their relative ages. In this case the patina, which is light orange brown and consistent over the whole specimen, is of no help, except to indicate that the specimen is probably old and has not been reworked in modern times. The line hole does however give clear evidence of having been added later than the Dorset carving. It is drilled slightly to one side, apparently to avoid the carving. It has also just touched one of the seals and has cut away the deep groove at the side of this seal. It could not therefore have been earlier.

The walrus tooth had probably been carved by the Dorset people with no particular purpose in view, and had then been lost or discarded. Later, in Thule times it had been found and considered suitable for making into a toggle. The eyes of the fox and human heads were presumably first gouged in the normal Dorset style. The small drilled pits which now form the eyes and the other drilled pits must represent later touching up, probably at the time when the line hole was drilled.

The importance of this specimen is that it affords additional evidence that the Dorset culture antedates the Thule. It is now in the collection of the National Museum of Canada.



Photo: National Museum of Canada

Human head. X 4