about 15 miles per day, which appears to be feasible, possible, and probable. So the speed problem is not presented for Cook in the last stage of the journey that we have for Peary.

Cook asserted that the drift of the Arctic Ocean, north of 88 degrees latitude north, between the 94th and 97th degrees of Longitude West, is southeasterly, and that at the North Pole the drift flows from across the Pole toward Greenland. This has been verified in modern times and the current that flows across the Pole is known today as the Trans-Polar Drift. The Trans-Polar Current flows from the other side of the globe in a general sense toward Greenland, but slightly to the east of Greenland and into the great gulf between Greenland and Spitzbergen. The drift in the Arctic Ocean north of 88 degrees Latitude North and between the 94th and 97th degrees of Longitude West is southeasterly, exactly as Cook reported.

Cook also stated upon his return from the Pole that the current is stronger at the North Pole than it is at two or three degrees south of the Pole between the 94th and 97th degrees of longitude west, and that the pack is somewhat more active at the Pole than some distance south, between those meridians. And Cook has been confirmed again. Modern exploration has determined that the drift at the North Pole and in its immediate vicinity is stronger than two or three degrees south of the Pole between the 94th and 97th degrees of Longitude West, in the area where Cook traveled. This is the effect of the Trans-Polar Current.

It should be noted here as a matter of the greatest importance that when Cook departed from Gloucester, Massachusetts for the Arctic on 3 July, 1907, conditions at the North Pole, and for more than 200 miles south of it, were unknown. Among authorities of that time, there were three schools of thought regarding the physical conditions which might exist there, and each had distinguished adherents:

The first school contended that there was sea at the North Pole covered by the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean, and they deduced from Nansen's exploration that this was the case. The results of Nansen's explorations tended to strengthen their position.

A second school maintained that there was land at or very near the North Pole. The proponents of this theory based their conclusion upon tidal and drift data in the Arctic Ocean which had been brought back from the Arctic by Nansen, the "Duke of the Abruzzi", Peary, and others, and by the flight of birds to the north from the northernmost known lands of the high Arctic.

The third school theorized that there was an open sea at the North Pole, a sea from which the ice had been driven back by centrifugal force at the top of the globe. Cook reported, unequivocally, when he returned, that there was sea at the North Pole, covered by the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean in constant movement with the Trans-Polar Drift and the winds. There was no land. Cook's first report of conditions at the North Pole has been verified again and again by later exploration and the sciences of glaciology and oceanography.

Cook described, also, for the first time, an island of old glacial ice, which he encountered in the Arctic Ocean only 120 miles from the North Pole surrounded by endless fields of sea ice. Such an island of glacial land ice far north in the polar sea was wholly unknown and unanticipated when Cook departed the United States for the North in 1907. Cook was himself, puzzled by it
and he pondered why the phenomenon was in the location where he met it. But it was there and he referred to it as a glacial ice island in the polar sea. He described it in some detail in his book, *My Attainment of the Pole*, stating that it was glacial ice. In his diary, he wrote "it is like glacial ice, wavy; it is not sea ice." In his book he described it as being a glacial ice island of the polar sea. He specified that there were no hummocks on its surface, there were no pressure ridges, that it was old land ice, and that it was large. He traveled on the island for the latter half of one day and the first half of the following day, and he made camp on this ice island. He described this large island of old glacial ice quite clearly in his book and noted its location as 88 degrees North Latitude, 120 miles from the North Pole.

The islands of glacial ice adrift in the Arctic Ocean, in the precise region through which Cook sledged, were rediscovered in the 1940s and 1950s, and their pattern of drift determined. Cook’s discovery of an island of glacial ice at 88 degrees Latitude North was thus confirmed and verified almost forty years after his first report.

It is very likely, in my opinion, that Bradley Land, which Cook sighted in the Arctic Ocean to the west of his position when he was at 84 degrees 49 minutes 56 seconds Latitude North, and 95 degrees, 36 minutes Longitude West was also an island of glacial land ice because the location assigned Bradley Land by Cook lies within the drift pattern of modern ice islands.

Then of course, Cook’s account of the appearance of the sun to the observer at the North Pole, 21 and 22 April, has been verified. The sun circles the horizon throughout the 24-hour period of the day at an altitude of approximately 12 degrees, neither rising nor falling in the least, as far as the naked eye can discern. With a sextant, he was able to detect a slight spiral ascent of the sun, but it was too gradual to be perceived by the unaided eye, which is correct.

On the southward journey, Cook reported that as he returned south to land across the pack, he most unexpectedly encountered a strong southwesterly drift at approximately 83 degrees Latitude North and 100 degrees Longitude West, which drove him off his intended course for Cape Svartevoeg and caused him to come ashore on a small island far south and west of Cape Svartevoeg. The effect of this unanticipated drift almost caused Cook his life, as it made it impossible for him to return to his base camp at Annoatak, in northwestern Greenland, as quickly as he had planned, and compelled him to winter alone, with his two Eskimo companions in the frozen Arctic wilderness. The drifts in the Arctic Ocean which had been reported by Peary had generally been easterly, and it was believed at the time of Cook’s journey to the North Pole, that currents in the region north of Axel Heiberg Island were easterly. Based on Peary’s reports of the currents in the region east of the area in which his own route to the Pole lay, Cook himself expected to encounter easterly currents in the region through which he would sledge. However, contrary to the information available to him when he left the United States for the Arctic in July 1907, he asserted that while traveling in dense fog on the Arctic pack in late May 1908 on his return from the Pole, he became caught in the grip of a strong southwesterly drift in the Arctic Ocean at approximately 83 degrees Latitude North and 100 degrees Longitude West, that the force of this current carried him far off his course for Cape Svartevoeg and resulted in his making landfall far south and west of his intended destination.
Modern exploration in the Arctic and oceanography have verified in recent times, decades after Cook’s return from the North Pole, and his first accounts, that there is, indeed, a strong southwesterly current in the Arctic Ocean precisely where Cook reported that he experienced it. This southwesterly drift is the southeastern segment of what is known today as the Western Arctic Gyre, a circular, clockwise moving current in the Arctic Ocean northwest of the Queen Elizabeth Islands.

Going back to Cook’s jumping off place at Cape Svartevoeg on his journey north, he reported in his log that he left Cape Svartevoeg on the 18th of March, 1908. In his log, he reported that the first day’s travel was on land ice; he used the old term, calling it paleocryctic ice. But he noted that it was land ice, not sea ice. He wrote in his diary on 19 March 1908 that for a day and a half out from Svartevoeg, he traveled over land ice.

His first day’s travel was 20 some odd miles, so this would place land ice out about 35 miles from his jumping off place at Cape Svartevoeg. Then in his diary, for 19 March 1908, he recorded that during the second day out “the ice changes” and he moved onto sea ice; and he described this sea ice as having huge obstructions of ice. He worked his way through this mass of pressure ridges and hummocks and then records several days later that the pack ice becomes “somewhat less troublesome”. But he reported the going still very difficult all the way to the Big Lead. He noted that he reached the Big Lead on the 23rd of March, five days out. The Big Lead he described as being several miles wide, a great channel of water, and he assumed it was an extension to the west of the Big Lead that Peary had encountered earlier from his jumping off place in northern Ellesmere Island.

Cook described the pack from the afternoon of the 19th of March, after he had traveled out about 35 miles, as sea ice, with huge obstructions, with pressure ridges, hummocks, all the way to the Big Lead. He noted that the Big Lead was located 114 geographical miles north of Cape Svartevoeg; that’s a straight line distance, after allowing for detours and so forth. He reached the Big Lead on the 23rd of March. The great channel, several miles wide, of open water had a thin coating of ice, and he crossed the Big Lead to the other side. The pack, generally, continued to be marked by pressure ridges and hummocks for a great distance north of the Big Lead. The going was thus quite difficult but each day was not equally laborious and troublesome, of course.

Then, Cook’s notes reflect that he first began to notice a much smoother surface, much less difficult surface above the 87th parallel, basically. From there to the North Pole, he said, as I have pointed out, that the pack becomes less and less difficult. From about 87.5 degrees North, all the way to the North Pole—fewer pressure ridges, smaller ones, generally, fewer hummocks were encountered. From 87.5 degrees Latitude North to the North Pole, the pack was less uneven and irregular, markedly so, than south of that point.

Now, Cook, I believe, has been confirmed on the condition of the ice out from Cape Svartevoeg for 35 miles or so, that is old land ice, and then from that point there is sea ice to the Big Lead, with pressure ridges of great size and difficulty and many hummocks. That has been confirmed. The Big Lead, according to Vladislav Koryakin, glaciologist in the Russian Academy of Sciences and polar historian, satellite photographs have shown in the 1970s and early 1980s to be, in fact, located precisely where Cook described it as being located in 1908. It is essentially
where Cook said it was, and I believe Canadian government surveys have shown that the continental shelf drops off at that point and the Big Lead is located there.

North of the Big Lead, Cook began attempting to determine whether Peary’s Crocker Land was there. He had no real reason to doubt it. When he went out there, he thought he was going to encounter it. He didn’t see it. He did not see Crocker Land which should have been in the area where the Big Lead was, either just north of it, or just south of it. He did not see Peary’s Crocker Land. Pean, had reported in 1907 that he had seen Crocker Land far out in the Arctic Ocean to the northwest of Axel Heiberg Island in 1906.

Crocker Land, of course, does not exist, and Cook’s first report—his was the first report that Crocker Land does not exist—when he returned in 1909. But again, if you will forgive me for indulging my friendly feelings for Brother Cook, this may seem difficult to believe, but I have a feeling that he was a very, forgiving man, and he was a very compassionate man, and instead of trumpeting to the world, Peary’s Crocker Land is not there, I have discovered the fact he merely said first, “I did not see Crocker Land”. That’s all he said. “I did not see Crocker Land. “ Later, when the attacks upon him began, very shortly, and they were continuous, and went on uninterrupted for weeks, which went into months, which went into years, his approach somewhat changed. But it was most reluctant, because that was not his personality, and that was not his nature. He finally did reply, and when he did begin to reply on Crocker Land, he stated very certainly that Crocker Land is not there. When MacMillan planned the 1913 Crocker Land Expedition to rediscover Crocker Land, his purposes were two. First, this was going to fell Cook. Cook had said, very modestly, that he had not seen Crocker Land. When asked about it, he said, “No, I did not see it.” The implication is that it’s not there. They wanted to prove that Crocker Land was there to show that Cook had been in error when he said that he didn’t see it. Their reasoning being: Cook didn’t go because he would have seen Crocker Land if he had gone.

The second purpose they had was in buttressing Peary’s own reputation. His case was beginning to sag at that point. This was in 1913. They needed something, desperately, to help his case; and, therefore, MacMillan wanted to rediscover Crocker Land and point out that Peary was right. Peary said it was there and I have rediscovered it—it is there. He had a twin purpose: anti-Cook, pro-Peary. And this was made quite clear in the press before he left. Cook, in a public statement, printed in the press in 1913, before the Crocker Land Expedition ever left, stated, “Dr. MacMillan could save himself the time and the money of an expedition to rediscover Crocker Land. It is not there. I traveled within a few miles of its reported location, by Peary, and it does not exist.” But, of course, they went.

Well, to their great chagrin, they discovered Crocker Land does not exist. Their main purpose—the only purpose of the Crocker Land Expedition—was to rediscover Crocker Land, buttress Peary, and damn Cook. What they found was that Crocker Land does not exist, which supported Cook and damned Peary. MacMillan and his allies had to be very careful about what they reported. So when they came back from the Crocker Land Expedition, very little was said about Crocker Land, the verification of which was the purpose of the expedition. A great deal was brought back about Eskimo testimony, given by Etukishook and Ahwelah to MacMillan and others, which supposedly confirmed and buttressed the Peary version of the Eskimo testimony in 1909. But they could not entirely disguise the fact that Crocker Land was not there, that Cook
was right and Peary was not, but they just did not talk about it very much. So, for years after that, it remained an object of expeditions to prove again what the situation was at that location. Is it there or isn’t it. It was finally established, of course, that it is not there.

From the Big Lead north, Cook sledged for a long distance north over difficult surfaces with pressure ridges and hummocks of great size, until he got to about 87.5 degrees when the surface of the pack became less irregular and difficult, smaller, and less of a problem.

So, on his journey north, when he got beyond the Big Lead, which is essentially where Cook said it was, according to modern satellite photographs and according to Canadian surveys, he did not find Crocker Land beyond the Big Lead, and he shouldn’t have, because it isn’t there. The pack north of that point is described correctly by Cook. He had a very difficult time with huge pressure ridges and hummocks over great stretches of his journey between the Big Lead and about 87\(\frac{1}{2}\) degrees Latitude North; then the surface of the pack became better, and the surface improved steadily all the way to the North Pole. That was his experience and that is a correct description of the condition of the pack at the North Pole and north of 88 degrees Latitude North between the 97\textsuperscript{th} and 94\textsuperscript{th} degrees of Longitude West. Crocker Land does not exist; the Big Lead is, in fact, where Cook said it was and pack ice conditions from the Big Lead to the North Pole are precisely as Cook described them.

So we have excellent reason for believing that Dr. Cook left Cape Svarthevog on March 18, 1908 and that he traveled out to the Big Lead, across the Big Lead, beyond the point where Crocker Land was supposed to have been, but is not. His description of the condition of the pack beyond that point is correct, and his description of conditions at the North Pole is correct. The drift is from across the Pole, from the other side, generally toward Greenland, slightly to the east of Greenland and into the Greenland Sea.

The drift is stronger at the North Pole than it is two or three degrees south of the North Pole, between the meridians where Cook traveled. The man could not have divined these things unless he had a pipeline to Almighty God. There is no way he could have known this great array of exact data about physical conditions at the North Pole and in the North Polar Region unless he apprehended it through his own personal experience. And, his own personal experience was gained during the sledge journey which he made from Cape Svarthevog, north across the pack, across the Big Lead, across the remainder of the pack and to the North Pole which he reached on the 21\textsuperscript{st} of April, 1908.

Coming back south, he experienced, in his diary, the same things that he had experienced going North. He had come south from the Pole for about a week and a half and there is in his diary, after he had written about smooth ice, just as he had going north, the notation: “Hummocks again on the horizon—large hummocks. The skyline is becoming as it is further south.” From then on there were more pressure ridges, more hummocks and tougher going. Dr. Cook’s first descriptions of physical conditions at the North Pole and the region of the Arctic in which he traveled have been confirmed and verified by modern exploration and discovery.

Some explorers, of course, have experienced some different conditions from those that he experienced, because conditions are not going to be 100% the same, all the time, every year.
But, basically, he reported correctly the physical conditions which exist from Cape Svartevoeg to the North Pole, between the meridians in which he traveled. All the way to and at the North Pole. So, Dr. Cook’s first descriptions of physical conditions at the North Pole, and in the region of the Arctic through which he traveled, to and from the Pole, descriptions which have been verified by later exploration and science, constitute the strongest evidence for his discovery of the North Pole.

A second body of evidence consists in the first Eskimo testimony. The first Eskimo testimony was given to Knud Rasmussen in late July of 1909. Cook had left Annoatok for South Greenland April of 1909. He had not seen the polar Eskimos for at least two and a half to three months. He had not been in communication with them. The polar Eskimos were at Cape York and North Star Bay. Cook was in Upernavik and had not been back up there. In fact, he never did go back up there. Knud Rasmussen, with a party of Danes, Captain Schoubye, and Professor Steensby, the eminent Danish anthropologist, traveled to Cape York. They had previously talked with Cook in south Greenland and he had told them of his conquest of the North Pole, in a very modest way—but that he had reached the Pole. Steensby said in his writings that when the Danes first heard this from Cook in south Greenland, they were somewhat skeptical.

After hearing Cook’s account in South Greenland, they then went north—Captain Schoubye, Knud Rasmussen, Steensby and some other Danes who were scientists going to make observations in northwest Greenland. They landed beyond Cape York at North Star Bay, and they found a great party of polar Eskimos there. Rasmussen asked the polar Eskimos about Cook’s reported trip. Immediately, he got the most unanimous accounts, detailed accounts, of what Etukishook and Ahwelah, their fellow polar tribesmen, had told them of their great trip with Cook far, far north across the pack ice of the Arctic Ocean, to the Great Nail. Rasmussen listened, of course. Rasmussen was of Eskimo ancestry and understood the north Greenland dialect, and spoke it. His fellow Eskimos had confidence in him and they spread the whole story before him. In a very straightforward way, they told the whole account. Cook, Etukishook and Ahwelah went across Smith Sound, across Ellesmere Land, up Nansen’s Strait to Cape Svartevoeg and then north across the pack ice on a long, long, long journey that lasted for weeks, and they reached the Great Nail. And they described to Captain Schoubye Cook’s elation two days before he reached the North Pole, when with the sextant he determined that he was at 89 degrees 31 minutes north; the Eskimos related that Etukishook and Ahwelah had told them that he danced on the ice and that he grasped both of them and told them that, in effect, we’re almost to the Great Nail, two more marches, and we shall be there. Etukishook and Ahwelah remembered that great day. So the first testimony of the polar Eskimos, which confirmed Cook’s historic sledge journey to the North Pole in an account which was full and replete with detail, was elicited and heard by objective disinterested interlocutors, the chief of whom was Knud Rasmussen, who thoroughly understood and was fluent in their language. They were Danes and constituted a Danish government party.

They had been skeptical of Cook’s claim when they got to North Greenland. The first thing they obtained from the Eskimos, speaking to objective listeners, was a detailed account which had been related to them by Etukishook and Ahwelah that Cook had reached the North Pole and they gave lengthy and involved information concerning their journey with Cook, and the most surprising thing of all was that in every detail it conformed to the account which Cook had given
them several weeks before in South Greenland. It is virtually impossible, I submit to you, that
two accounts given several hundred miles apart by different narrators who had not seen each
other in months could be identical unless both are true. Since the same account of Cook’s march
to the North Pole with Etukishook and Ahwelah was given separately and independently by
Cook in South Greenland and the polar Eskimos at North Star Bay in Northwest Greenland and
there had been no communication between them for more than three months preceding this first
testimony of the polar Eskimos before Rasmussen and other Danes, then the narrative which they
both gave is almost certainly true. The accounts given by Cook and by the polar Eskimo of
Cook’s success verify each other. The first Eskimo testimony adduced by Rasmussen, together
with Captain Schoubye’s account of the same testimony and Professor Steensby’s statement of
the same testimony, strongly supports Cook’s claim to have reached the North Pole.

Harry Whitney was in Annoatok when Cook returned from his great polar journey and received
the news from Cook that Cook had reached the North Pole. Subsequently, after five or six days,
Cook left Annoatok for South Greenland. Whitney was with Etukishook and Ahwelah for the
remainder of the Spring and Summer of 1909, April until late August 1909. He talked with them
about this matter and according to Whitney’s own statements published in New York and
elsewhere after his return to the United States, Etukishook and Ahwelah confirmed to him
Cook’s having made a very long sledge journey over the pack and that he had reached the North
Pole.

So, we have here the first Eskimo testimony to Knud Rasmussen, Schoubye and Steensby, and to
Harry Whitney, all confirming Cook’s great sledge march across the pack ice of the Arctic
Ocean to the North Pole, and the return journey, including the wintering at Cape Sparbo. The
Eskimo testimony confirms Cook’s own account.

I submit to you—I shall not go into the third element—that the evidence is immense in support
of Dr. Cook’s claim to have reached the North Pole. And in the court of historical inquiry, on the
basis of this evidence, he should be recognized for his magnificent achievement.

About the Author

Sheldon Cook-Dorough has degrees in both history and law from Emory University, having done
graduate work in history. He has practiced law in Atlanta since 1955 and became involved with
the Cook story about twenty five years ago. He has served as both president and is now historian
for the Frederick A. Cook Society, which traces its origins as an advocacy group for the explorer,
organized in the summer of 1940, the year of his death. He has contributed to Polar Notes of the
Steffanson Collection, Fram: The Journal of Polar History and Polar Priorities. His work
includes extensive published findings on the First Eskimo Testimony of 1909, the Mt. McKinley
controversy and the value and eventual disposition of the oil lands in Cook’s 1920s Texas
petroleum venture.
SECTION IV

THE INUIT, THE TRAIL, THE EVIDENCE:

RECONSTRUCTING THE NORTH POLE QUESTION
CHAPTER 10

FOLLOWING THE TRACKS OF BOTH COOK AND PEARY: DID THEY REACH THE POLE?

Wally Herbert

Abstract

Old exploration controversies not only do not die, they refuse to fade away. There should be no presumption that a gathering of some of the top scholars and people with field experience in the Arctic will resolve the question of prior polar attainment. Cook and Peary should be recognized for the achievements which they rendered to the world of nations, not only in filling in the blank spots of the northernmost part of the globe, but in acknowledging the contributions of the people of the far North. The Eskimo sought no fame, ambition or immortality, which drove the white man on a trail of northernmost latitudes that spanned four centuries toward that non-Grail of discovery. Yet both must be judged on their reports and claims, and toward this end we can and will make judgments.

FOLLOWING THE TRACKS OF COOK AND PEARY:
SOME REFLECTIONS AND A REVIEW OF FACTS

There will be many of you here today who will recall the vow I made at Annapolis in 1991 never again to cross the Atlantic to take part in a public debate on the polar claims of Robert E. Peary, or his rival Dr. Cook.

I refer of course to that glittering event at the Naval Academy - that symposium on the subject of Peary's navigation (presented by the United States Naval Institute as one of several inspired 'entertainments' which it had been hoped by the organizers would enliven their annual meeting that year). I had, of course, been persuaded to attend by the argument that the proceedings would be of some historical value - that it would offer a forum for various 'experts' publicly to put their case for or against the claim of Peary that he had been first at the Pole. What had transpired, however, (as many of you will remember - some with amusement, others with disgust) was an over-heated slanging match on issues and 'detail' which had so little bearing on the subject in question that the debate was truly a waste of time - except for proving, beyond any doubt, that those who do not want to hear will never ever listen.

So why have I allowed myself to be persuaded once again (and, I might add, by much the same argument), to make a contribution to this never-ending struggle - to this 'waste of time' debate? In a lifetime devoted to polar exploration (a full thirteen years of which I have spent in the wilderness regions of the polar world) I have already 'wasted' far too much of my energy and time retracing the tracks of Peary and Cook, and in researching
and writing *The Noose of Laurels* - my book about their need for fame, and their soul-destroying obsession. And yes, I do mean 'wasted' energy and 'wasted' time. The 'Polar Controversy' is, after all, a subject which thrives on armchair theories - where every writer and speaker is an 'expert', and where actual experience in the polar world of living, travelling, and physically suffering (as did those explorers who are turning in their graves) is almost non-existent. So outraged have I sometimes felt at the ignorance of these so-called 'experts' (and not only their ignorance of the polar world, but also of the courage and vision which drove explorers such as Nansen, Amundsen, Peary and Cook), that I have, at times, quite truly despaired and given up the unequal struggle of trying to present the facts. It is at moments such as this that I ask, does it even matter!

I suspect that the last word in this controversy will not be given in our lifetime. I can only provide you with that which I gave in my book four years ago (*Noose of Laurels*, 1989). It may be difficult to summarize this, but therein are what I feel are still the relevant points regarding Cook, whom I have always considered an exceptional explorer, having described him as such in 1980:

> "Of the two claims, Peary's is the weaker. Cook's claims, on the other hand, are perfectly feasible. Of the two, the more remarkable journey without any doubt, was Cook (Herbert, 1970)."

Now if this should surprise you, let me say that that was more than twenty years ago, 1970's a year of record, and lit explorers and writers and the like, I can claim some knowledge in the interim. And I have changed thoughts on many occasions, and the following should update those thoughts for you:

> *From conversations with Cook's two boys, MacMillan also reports them as saying that they did not travel beyond the point where their two companions had returned to land and that "after sleeping for two nights the party returned to the cache on the shores of Axel Heiberg Island, took everything from the cache and proceeded south, following the western shore." Other explorers were given the same stories by Cook's two boys. Itukusuk had pointed out to Sergeant Stallworthy "the spot where, he said, Dr. Cook took photographs which the latter afterwards claimed to have been taken at the North Pole. This was approximately in latitude 82° North within sight of land." Itukusuk had also lived in Peter Freuchen's servants), and both Itukusuk and Awellah had told Freuchen about their trip with the doctor.

There is issue of the credibility of the Cook Eskimos' account to consider. The two had shown some anxiety about going out of sight of land on the Arctic Ocean, and in *My Attainment of the Pole* Cook comments:

> Before leaving us one of the departing Eskimos had pointed out a low-lying cloud to the north of us. "Noona" (land), he said, nodding to the others. The thought occurred to me that, on our trip, I could take advantage of the mirages and low clouds on the horizon and encourage age a belief in a constant nearness to land, thus maintaining their courage and cheer (Cook, 1911)."
But on my last visit to the Thule District I got this reply from Talilanguaq when I asked him if Cook and his two boys had gone a long way out on to the Arctic Ocean:

With only two hunters, two sledges, on the way to the North Pole is to commit suicide. When he (Cook) told The People (the Eskimos) that they could see land clouds - they are not fools! You cannot lie to them, because they have been living here a long time, and they know about the hunting places; they know about nature - the whole nature- that's their life! (Interview)

A partial comment it might be argued, since Talilanguaq is the Eskimo grandson of Admiral Peary, but the fact is, it matters as little to him which white man was first to reach the Pole as it does to any of the other Eskimos in North-West Greenland. He speaks from experience not only as one of the greatest of the present day hunters in the Thule District, but also as the man who was leader of the Eskimos on the successful Monzino expedition to the North Pole in 1971, and one of the supporting Eskimos on the 1978 Japanese North Pole expedition which also reached the Pole. Nor should the folklore of the polar Eskimos be ignored. The stories handed clown state that Cook and his two boys did not go more than a few days' travel onto the Arctic Ocean, and to argue that their own story of what they did is invalid because they were uneducated is as insulting as it is absurd, for unlike the white men who came to their country to seek fame and glory, they, the natives, had no need to lie. (The story told by Itukusuk and Aapilag to their fellow tribesmen about their journey with Dr. Cook can be found in Appendix I Noose of Laurels.)

In 1967, with two companions and three teams of dogs, I retraced Dr. Cook's route from Etah to the northern tip of Axel Heiberg Island, and from there on to Devon Island, passing by the great cliffs of Svartevoeg at which Cook and his men had a camp. From the description of his journey to that point we were able to follow his route, although not without some difficulty because of his style of writing. From that point on, however, we have a choice to make between accepting Cook's word, or that of his two companions.

My own acceptance of the Eskimos' version of the story is, however, not simply a gut feeling that their version is the true one. It is a conviction strongly influenced by the fact that two of the pictures in Cook's book I now know for a certainty were used by Cook to deceive.

Like MacMillan, I had been arrested by the picture captioned "Bradley Land Discovered," facing page 244 in My Attainment of the Pole. In recent years the Cook supporters have become convinced that this picture shows an ice island, a very large piece of drifting ice which has broken away from an ice shelf. The drift tracks of several ice islands have been closely monitored over the last thirty years and this has encouraged the Cook supporters to believe that it was an ice island that Cook claims to have seen to the west of his course on 30th March, 1908, at latitude 84° 50'N, longitude 95°36'W (Wright, 1969).
Anyone, however, who has seen the north-west coast of Axel Heiberg Island, and has also seen ice islands from the surrounding sea ice will know that the picture in Cook’s book is not an ice island, but a picture of land, and since there is no land where Cook claims to have taken this picture, we may take it that what Cook’s two companions told MacMillan was true. It is unlikely that the exact location of the land seen in Cook’s picture will ever be determined for, as can readily be seen by comparing some of the pictures in Cook’s To the Top of the Continent with pictures taken from the same spot by other explorers, Cook took the precaution of waiting until cloud obscured some of the features before taking his photographs, thus making it much harder for later travelers to locate. And he almost certainly took that same precaution with the “Bradley Land” picture.

The search for “Bradley Land” is made even harder since the only picture available is the one in his book, the original plate is missing from the Cook Collection at the Library of Congress, as are also the plates of the two other crucial pictures: those of his “North Pole” camp, and his “summit picture” of Mount McKinley. He also, as we have seen in the case of the “Fake Peak,” made sure that pictures, the location of which he did not want anyone to find, were taken off his stated route and in some cases have been printed the wrong way round to confuse the issue further.

The middle picture on his page 244, captioned “Submerged Island of Polar Sea,” I discovered was a picture of a glacier and not, as Cook claims, a picture of “old ice” between latitudes 87° and 88°N. The original plate, which I found in the Library of Congress collection of Cook’s material, has never been published before. Printed right to the edge of this original plate one can see the land. It will be noticed also that the dog teams are moving towards camera, and yet in the foreground there are the tracks of a third sledge - there were only two sledges on the journey Cook claims to have made.

Cook’s supporters argue that his “discovery of an island of glacial land ice within one hundred and twenty miles of the North Pole, and the verification in modern times of the existence of such a phenomenon in the exact area specified by Cook is very strong evidence of his attainment of the North Pole” (Cook-Dorough, 1987). But on the evidence of this picture it is not, and in any case, old floes such as tile ones described by Cook are occasionally to be found much further south on Cook’s alleged route.

With the certainty that Cook had studied every description of pack ice that could be found in the literature before committing himself to that journey, he would have known from Peary’s description in Nearest the Pole that old floes were to be found far out on the Arctic Ocean “which looked as if they did not move even in summer” (Peary, 1907) and Cook may well have got his idea of including a description of these old floes in his story from this source.

Certainly his research, together with his personal observations of the drift of ice off the northern coast of Axel Heiberg Island would have been more than sufficient information for him to come up with a fairly safe guess as to the conditions of ice and the drift of ice further to the north than he actually went. And so, although in theory Cook could, by
feeding dog to dog, have made a long journey out onto the polar pack ice, the evidence of his Eskimos, combined with the suspicious aroused by his deliberate deception in some of his picture captions points to the conclusion that he fell to the same temperature he had on McKinley. He took the easier route to fame - and at the sound of applause, convinced himself he had earned it.

This said (and it had to be), may I add an observation on the so-called 'conquest' of the North Pole from a different point of view. Writers on this subject (particularly those whose obsession is the controversy over who reached the North Pole first), tend to focus so intensely on the detail that they are unable to see how this period of history fits into the grander scheme of things. And yet from this, shall we say 'higher' perspective, it is 80 very obvious that Peary and Cook (though enemies and rivals as polar explorers) were essentially as much a part of each other as were, say, Shackleton and Scott.

All the way back through polar history, indeed throughout the history of Mankind, you will find examples where rivalry was the principle factor which spurred an explorer to his success, and his so-called 'place in history'. The view from this 'higher' ground also shows that at certain periods in history, the pioneers in any particular field of endeavor tend to crowd onto the scene. In the case of the Poles, as an example, all of the key figures in the so-called 'conquest' were here on Earth at the exactly the same time, their energy and vision producing a 'force' that was greater than the sum of its parts.

My contention therefore is this: there has never been a single pioneer who has been blessed with all the attributes essential to success - that each is merely a contributor to each other and, more importantly, to history as a whole. Seen then in this context, both Peary and Cook played their part, and played it well - and that's all I need to say!

About the Author

Wally Herbert is a Gold Medalist of the Royal Geographical Society and like Peary and Cook can count hundreds of long nights in the darkness of both polar regions. A veteran of several expeditions to both the Arctic and Antarctic, in 1967-68 he followed Cook's route across Ellesmere Land to Axel Heiberg and his departure point at Cape Stallworthy, making the first speculations as to Cook's return journey and landfall in the 1908 expedition based on actual tracking. In 1988 he was asked by the National Geographic Society to evaluate Peary's 1909 Polar Expedition, and made the conclusion in the Society's Magazine that Peary probably missed the Pole by about 60 miles. He has authored several books, that last dealing with Peary and published in 1991 as The Noose of Laurels.

*Note: The quotation in this paper is by permission of my American publisher, Atheneum, New York (The Noose of Laurels, 1989, pp.316-320).
CHAPTER 11

REFLECTIONS ABOUT COOK AND PEARY:
THE INUIT AT THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

Jean Malaurie

Abstract

Cook and Peary represented both the finest in American polar exploration and that least-desirable aspect of expansion of any frontier: the virulent nationalism which reduced the contribution of the northernmost people, the Inuit to the status of expedition inventory. The treatment of the Eskimo culture by the “white” explorers is central to understanding the character and achievements of both Peary and Cook. Three decades of living among these people and an oral history project which has captured their long-neglected accounts will be discussed to reach my conclusions.

THE POLE OF HATRED:
INTRODUCTION

After 84 years, a significant international polar debate is taking place again in the United States, concerning which a great deal of data remains obscure; under various guises, these differences have resulted in impassioned debate and opposite conclusions.

It is surprising that the important North American government organizations have not carried out the in-depth investigation which public opinion was hoping for. This lack of cooperation from official institutions leaves us thinking dark thoughts. I will come back to this, and not without reason. The Byrd Polar Research Center is to be congratulated for having re-opened this historical investigation.

The main thrust of this situation involves passion: but for the rest, everything that does not concern the “technical” problem of conquest of the Pole, has complex motivation: the decisions which were made, in other words, i.e. the arbitrated solutions can be attributed to forces beyond the control of both men. The forces behind these arbitrations overlap to such an extent that it is impossible to unhesitatingly give priority to one factor over another: patriotism, the sponsors’ financial interests, the media, friendships and the influence of environments, lobbies the humiliation of institutions whose prestige was implicated. The Congress, supreme arbiter, did not ask the right questions of Robert Edwin Peary. And during its investigation of the Cook and Peary documentation, essential witnesses like Matt Henson or the Inuit, were not legally examined and cross-examined, as would take place at the present time.

Did Peary and Cook reach the Pole or not? I will rely on the studies and conclusions of my friend, the eminent British explorer. Wally Herbert, who is much more qualified than I am to arbitrate in this situation. However, what I do know from my own experience as an explorer and
geomorphologist using dog sleds in these regions - may I point out that I was the first Frenchman to reach the North geomagnetic pole by dog sled, on May 29, 1951 - is that it Peary and Cook really had reached the Pole, they could not have returned.

I had the honor of presiding over the first international congress on the history of science concerning the North Pole, in the prestigious Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (C.N.R.S.) in Paris. In the Commission presided over by Michael Richey, British President of the International Navigation Institute, those reporting the facts refused to draw any conclusions because of a lack of sufficient scientific data communicated by the Geographic Societies involved and interrogated by the Secretariat of the Congress. But I am addressing this meeting in my capacity as a specialist on the Inuit, and more particularly on the polar Eskimos.

For nearly 40 years, I have been assembling information and reflections concerning these two eminent American polar personalities. In two very detailed chapters, *Ultima Thule* expresses this information and these reflections. During this assembly, I would like to reflect on them by taking up the problem of the contrast between the two men, under a somewhat different and new angle.

Let us examine, one by one, these two American heroes, Robert Edwin Peary and Frederick Albert Cook; first in a favorable light, then in a critical one. In a third part, I shall attempt to situate the debate in a new perspective, by taking into account the history of the Inuit people and finally by attempting to reach personal conclusions.

**I. ROBERT EDWIN PEARY:**

**ENGINEER, LIEUTENANT, COMMANDER, ADMIRAL**

Admiral Robert Edwin Peary's personality dominated Arctic history at the end of the XIXth century. It is indisputable. The United States of America affirms its position following the exploits of Elisha Kent Kane (1853-1855), Isaac Israel Hayes (1860-1861) Charles Francis Hall (1871-1873) and Lieutenant Greely (1881-1884) as a first class polar power.

Peary was personally assisted by President Theodore Roosevelt, whose interest in significant voyages of exploration is well known. Peary had decided to be the first man to discover the North Pole and to plant the star-spangled banner there.

It was his extraordinary resolve which made it possible for this Naval Engineer, without any influence, to force a reticent U.S. Navy to grant him "an indefinite leave of absence" and, with the help of a network of powerful American businessmen created with his wife and the help of public opinion, in the form of the Peary Arctic Club, to organize eight "private" expeditions to the Pole from 1891 to 1908-1909, using completely new technology, expeditions which were increasingly powerful and fueled by a deep knowledge of the barrier ice and Inuit logistics.

Peary only thought on a grand scale. Although not himself a member of the Establishment, he had the unique talent of rallying the assistance of people in positions of authority. His wife Josephine Diebitch, whose strong personality cannot be denied, played a powerful role in his undertakings in Washington concerning the Pole. As his expeditions took place, he gave the
name of American personalities to capes, islands, mountains, and in this manner obtained considerable financial assistance. But among Peary’s eccentricities, the most remarkable was perhaps ensuring the loyal and friendly alliance of the Inuit, while organizing for very profitable and veritable commerce, the third technical and psychological revolution of that nation, the most decisive since its discovery by Captain John Ross (August, 1818). It is true that two great American explorers had paved the way: Elisha Kent Kane, who reached the first international agreement in 1854 with the polar Eskimos and Dr. Issac Israel Hayes, his competitor; in a 1870 memorandum to the American Geographical Society, Hayes had argued that only close collaboration with the Inuit, based on an American-Inuit economic system, could make it possible to go forward.

A) Peary and Cook: A Close Friendship

During his first expedition in the McCormick Fjord, North of Greenland (1891-1892), Peary’s collaborator was Dr. F.A. Cook. Peary personally chose Cook as doctor-partner for his first 1891-1892 expedition. In his official report, he praised the exceptional medical collaboration of Dr. Cook, as well as his ethnographic work, the first to be conducted in detail since Kane.

To Dr. Cook’s care may be attributed the almost complete exemption of the party from even the mildest indisposition, and personally I owe much to his professional skill and unruffled patience and coolness in an emergency. In addition to his work in his special ethnological field, in which he has obtained a large mass of most valuable material concerning a practically unstudied tribe, he was always helpful and an indefatigable worker.

“The report would be incomplete without an acknowledgment of my obligation to Dr. Cook, patient and skillful surgeon, indefatigable worker, earnest student of the peculiar people among whom we lived; he has obtained, I believe, a record of the tribe unapproachable in ethnological archives”. (Herbert, 1989, 1999)

Following this first expedition, Peary again asked Cook to join him for the second expedition (1893-1895). However Cook, offended because Peary had refused to publish his medical reports, declined this proposal; however he agreed to medically examine each of the members recruited by Peary for this second expedition.

There is further proof of the good relationship between the man who became Commander Peary and Dr. Cook. When Peary was in a medically unstable condition in August 1901. Dr. Cook was sent by the Management Committee for the Peary Expeditions (Peary Arctic Club in New York) to the northern part of Greenland to examine, on board the Erik, the physical condition of the head of the expedition and to perhaps consider bringing him home. It should be remembered that Cook was nine years younger than Peary. In August 1901 in Etah, he found Peary (who was 45 years old) to be an invalid: eight of his toes had been amputated as a result of frostbite and his legs were still showing the effects of severe freezing. He experienced the first attacks of pernicious anemia which caused his death in 1920.

He was above all deeply depressed: “wrecked in ambition, wrecked in physique and wrecked in hope” (Cook). This examination of the man who was to become his most unrelenting adversary
had a profound impression on him and probably displeased Peary - who however allowed himself to be examined. He did not have a choice: this took place on orders of the Peary Arctic Club. From a medical point of view, Cook apparently suggested to Peary that he eat raw meat and liver to cope with this anemia. "I prefer to die" supposedly answered Peary.

In my personal collection of polar personality autographs, I have several letters from Peary and Dr. Cook, including a letter to Mrs. Peary (September 16, 1901), attesting to their satisfactory relationship. Three years before the violent battle which was to pit them against each other at the time Cook announced, in a short and explosive memorandum to the Explorer's Club, his expedition to the North Pole via a new Ellesmere Land route (August 26, 1907, memorandum):

"I have hit upon a new route to the North Pole and will stay to try it. By way of Buchanan Bay and Ellesmere Land and northward through Nansen Strait over the Polar Sea seems to me to be a very good route. There will be game to the 82nd degree, and there are natives and dogs for the task. So here is for the Pole. Mr. Bradley will tell you the rest. Kind regards to all" (Herbert, 1989, 99).

B) Psychological Reports on Peary and Cook

In Peary's complex psychology, Cook will first appear as a competitor to be kept at a distance. Dr. Cook's personality as a doctor, ethnographer and pleasant businessman, obviously asserted itself up front, during the tense winter in Redcliff in 1981-1892. Could this be the reason for the "intellectual" refusal to let Cook publish, under his name as a doctor and an ethnologist, the article which the Brooklyn Medical College requested from him after having heard his brilliant presentation. "Here was the only break I had with Peary", wrote Cook in his autobiography. Cook could not understand the value of a contract which condemned a researcher to hand over to the head of the expedition, and at this person's discretion all documents, private diaries, memoranda, and not to publish anything for one year after returning from the expedition. Cook had the mentality of a loner, an adventurer. He was an unremunerated partner. These financial arrangements and intellectual precautions taken, according to tradition, by the head of the expedition who took all the financial risks, seemed inappropriate to him when the two had shared the same dangers. Let us recall that these dangers were fatal during an expedition with Peary, Astrup, in February 1892. In any case, Cook distanced himself quietly, little by little, and with obvious courtesy, from Peary; and so did Peary.

I will not go into the details of this situation interspersed with multiple facts (the Mount McKinley affair - scandal brewing underground in September-October 1906 - written denunciation to President Roosevelt (July 1908), the taking of Dr. Cook's base and his food supplies at Anoretoq in July 1908, at a time when the latter may have been lost in the Arctic desert in August 1908, the posting of the following inscription on Cook's cabin in Anoretoq - which was absolutely scandalous coming from an explorer and compatriot - "Dr. Cook has been dead for a long time, and his research is useless")

On board the Roosevelt, en route to the Pole in July-August 1908, the only topic of conversation was Dr. Cook's challenge. In fact, it had been the subject of conversation since leaving New York on July 6, 1908 and at each layover in the North of Greenland, the words became more acid. Peary's private secretary, Dr. August Marvin, wrote the following on August 7 from Etah:
“Dr. Cook seems to be the whole topic of conversation here”. A few days later, another letter from Dr. Marvin to his family: “The Dr. Cook affair grows more complicated every day” (August 11). Indirect action was taken in July 1910, with the collaboration of Whitney and Commander Bartlett - people who were linked to Peary for different reasons or linked to the affair - in order to cause Cook’s original documents to disappear, documents which were placed in a secret place in Etah’s caves at the time of Cook’s so-called conquest of the Pole, a hiding place which I searched for in vain in the caves in April, 1951 as a result of rather vague Inuit indications. These attacks were carried to their ultimate point in public statements made by Peary to the press (September 11, 1909) in the New York Times (The Gold Brick) as he returned from his final expedition to the Pole (August 1909). In a statement intended for international consumption, Peary denounced Cook as a liar.

C) Progressive Psychological Capture?

For a leader of an expedition such as Commander Peary, partnership implies absolute loyalty to the head of the expedition. This loyalty results from a point of ethics which all scientists understand, and according to which partners in an expedition agree not to play personalities and not to interfere in the field work of one of their colleagues, for as long as the program lasts.

In a more precise manner, according to Peary, Cook should not have secretly undertaken an expedition to the Pole before or while his former leader, with whom he still more or less maintained contact and who belonged to the same Explorers’ Club as he did, as its President.

Added reasons were that Commander Peary was at that time in a difficult financial situation and, due to his age, this expedition would be his last. “The final arrow”, he declared, on leaving New York on the Roosevelt in July 1908.

One of the keys to conquest of the Pole was the Inuit people, a population of 50 families, incomparable guides and bearers, which Peary organized for his expeditions. Cook, with infinite skill and great cleverness, obtained for his 1907-1908 expedition to the Pole the collaboration of approximately ¼ of the polar Eskimo tribe, thereby dividing the group into two clans for the first time in its history: one massively and loyally pro Peary, the other pro Cook. Peary’s next and final expedition (1908-1909) ran the risk of being handicapped by this intervention within a traditionally interdependent group: for the first time, rumors stirred up some of the Inuit against Peary.

Peary’s eighth expedition to the North Pole, which was to follow Cook’s expedition, was therefore rotten at the top; a nearly mortal hatred took hold of Peary as a result of such actions. This hatred started on August 26, 1907 following a short, seven-line letter from Cook, sent in October to Herbert Bridgman, Secretary of the Peary Arctic Club, already mentioned and which announced his approaches to the Pole via Ellesmere Land.

When he learned from the Inuit, upon his arrival in the North of Greenland in July 1908, that Cook had been somewhere en route to the Pole for the past year with polar Eskimos, Peary felt, like Don Diego in Corneille’s Le Cid, diminished by age, betrayed and calling for vengeance.
Cook's companion, Rudolph Franke, even showed Peary's companion a personal letter from Cook dated March 20, 1908, written at the end of the third day of his journey on the Glacial Ocean; Cook was en route to the Pole with four sleds, then two sleds. The letter testifies to Cook's determination to complete his trip to the Pole.

The great Utaaq, Chief of the Eskimos accompanying Peary to the Pole, became one of my friends during my first winter in 1950-51: he confided in me quite a bit during several meetings. He was the father of Kutskiktsioq, my best friend on the trip. His first observation and he kept repeating the same thing, almost like a leitmotiv: he had no doubt that Peary had reached the Pole and that he was the only one to have made it. It is obvious that Utaaq could not prove his assertions by astronomical means. During our conversations, he also used to add that Peary's heavy sleds would break quite often in the final stages when going over hummocks and that Peary, exhausted, often remained seated on the sled.

I will not say anything more. I repeat that I leave it up to Wally Herbert's last report which was presented to the Congrès de Paris (Paris Congress) (CNRS, 1983) and to his most recent and remarkable authoritative book on the subject: The Noose of Laurels (1989), to my own book Ultima Thule (1990) and to The National Geographic Magazine (1988). After the 87th 47' degree (*), is it possible that Peary understood that following a drift to the West, following his sad parting from Bartlett, he was obviously further from the Pole than his calculations had led him to believe? It is at that time that Utaaq's remark becomes important: "We were terrified not to be able to return to the Coast just like in 1906". And Utaaq described to me Peary's heroism upon their return in April 1906 from this 7th expedition, as he shared what was left of the food with the famished Eskimos. Everything appears to show that if Peary had in fact reached the Pole at the same pace as he had been traveling up to then, he could not have returned due to the cracks in the ice and the absence of portable boats. That is what Dr. Jean-Louis Etienne's solitary exploration proved as a result of his daring solitary march on skis toward the Pole, which he reached on May 11, 1986.

Taking into account the fact that there were no navigators other than Peary himself during these historic days, all hypotheses are possible and Wally Herbert concluded, as is obvious from his notes and astronomical reports and the calendar of his route, that the documents concerning the stages beyond the 87th degree had been falsified. As far as Cook is concerned, the falsification of photographs (McKinley, expedition to the North Pole in 1907-1908) also leaves a devastating and abhorrent impression.

D) The April 1909 Enigma (April 2-27)

As far as I am concerned, I would like to bring out a psychological factor which may have intervened during these crucial days. After the 87th degree, Peary was faced with only himself, without his closest advisers, especially his wife. However, actually he was not alone. His mind was invaded by Cook. Where was Cook? Peary, who was a proud man, was increasingly unable to accept the fact that Cook might arrive at the Pole before him. He had been living with this tear since October 1907 and it was consuming him. He knew that Cook was capable of trickery. He knew Cook. And he knew himself. His last expedition (1905-1906) had given rise to comments in specialized circles. The Farthest North (87° 6') gave rise to criticism.
The McKinley Affair was on everyone’s mind. There were rumors in mountain climbing circles - as there practically always are concerning great expeditions - which accused Cook of not having reached the actual summit. But Peary did not wish to act in a base manner. In 1907, he even refused to take Dr. Cook’s place as head of the Explorers’ Club, a step which had been proposed to him. He did not wish to interfere until the McKinley Affair had been properly explored. His wife, Josephine Diebitch-Peary, insisted that he behave “in a dignified manner”.

However, at that time (April 1909), Peary was alone on the banks with four Inuit and his manservant Matt Henson, with whom he entertained a Melvillian relationship which calls to mind Benito Cereno. Henson understands everything; he feels everything and sees everything. And the following question is essential: what can be done if there was a navigation error? The Pole is only four days away. Could the point they had reached - as happens so seldom concerning longitude - indicate a navigation error, due to drifting of the ice toward the East? In that case, it would be too late to reach the Pole.

It seems absolutely certain that if this fear of a successful (or faked) expedition by Cook to the Pole had not preoccupied Peary to the nth degree, he - because Peary was a man of honor - might have given the real clue to these last stages of the assault on the Pole (after April 2) which have given rise to so much controversy. Peary was no longer the same man he was during his seven former expeditions. His actions are fragmented. His proverbial technique is jagged: he has no canoe. His oceanographic probe line is much too short. He fires Bartlett, an essential witness as a navigator who could have placed him above all suspicion. His notes for the final stages (from April 6 to the 9th) were written on loose-leaf sheets, and not, as is the rule, in his notebook with permanently bound sheets. If he was attempting to lie, Peary was not very good at it.

Is it possible that Cook, impressed by the ambiguous exploration of the Farthest North in 1906 (87°06’ latitude, but without any indication of longitude) - this is the second important situation which toppled Cook, as Rawlings reports correctly (p.82) “The Doctor’s determination to fake an attainment of the North Pole probably originated on the spot” - could have pushed Peary down this slippery and perilous slope of testimony uncorroborated by a competent navigator. And he knew it. The Geographic Societies which gave out the medals and authenticated discoveries gave more credence at the time and in their investigations to “taking the explorer’s word” than to actual investigation. It was the age of Gentlemen’s Clubs, but could sponsoring an expedition involve the protagonists in all of the details? Michael Richey, President of the International Navigation Institute, questioned these singular methods at the time of the Congress on the North Pole in Paris in 1983, which the Geographic Societies, noting that the Geographic Societies still did not know how to deal with these singular methods.

All historians can only wonder about Peary’s strange behavior upon his return on board on April 27, 1909. His first statement to his companions who were full of questions was the enigmatic reply of a person who is embarrassed. To Dr. Goodsell, Peary’s expedition doctor, he answer was not that of a conqueror: “I have not been altogether unsuccessful”. Also, in his written replies to MacMillan and Borup: “Northern trip entirely satisfactory”. It was only a few weeks later - upon learning from the whaler Captain Adams, in the Cape York region where he made a mail stop that Cook, having returned from the Pole alive and well, stated publicly in Upernavik
that he had reached the pole on April 21, 1908 - that Peary finally decided to confirm more clearly, on board ship, that he had indeed reached the pole on April 6, 1909.

However, because he felt trouble brewing, Peary delayed returning to the United States, and he delayed making a public statement to the press. The "conqueror" would only release his message after Cook's first statement to the New York Herald (September 5, 1909). The scenario appeared to be that Peary was waiting for Cook to make a statement: as though he, Peary, continued to hesitate, to confirm his conquest of the pole and to enter the tray.

What I think I see in this complex affair - the psychology of which most often escapes us historians, we who have only written notes, memoranda, narrations often re-written by secretaries, and hypotheses - is the psychology of two exceptional men often confronting the same destiny and which may be a result of the father-son, son-father murder syndrome. Could it be that Peary, whose honesty is well known, could not deal with a younger and disloyal man having reached the pole before him? Knowing Cook and the rumors concerning the McKinley affair, and knowing how easy it is to make a mistake (Peary erred twice and erred seriously - the Channel of Peary Land does not exist, nor does Crocker Land), must we consider that, because of public opinion, he took the risk of covering up his own problems during the last stages of his voyage and attacked Cook's honesty, lumping Cook's disloyalty with his supposed dishonesty in his march toward the pole?

If Peary had acknowledged that he had not reached the pole, he would have been obligated as a "constant loser" to attack Cook. Public opinion would have found this difficult to accept from a defeated old man, and that would have placed him in a miserable psychological situation. In this perspective, Peary truthfully was preparing for a difficult destiny: to tell the truth would have been acknowledging the failure of his life. To attack a man whom he considered a liar would have condemned him to a miserable end of his life.

In any event, Peary's strategy, if any, was chaotic. He was consumed by a fury which the behavior of his ex-colleague provoked by daring to become his rival for the conquest of the pole in the same years. It was a fury which blinded him, made him clumsy in his brutality, and caused him to lose confidence in his own personality. Peary behaved as though it was not necessary to scientifically investigate Cook's expedition to the pole. And he acted like a wounded bull. There were suspicious and irresponsible interrogations of Cook's Eskimos in Etah (he was judge and jury) in July 1909, hesitating behavior in Etah with Whitney, an independent witness to the affair: in July of 1909, he only agreed to transport the millionaire hunter on his returning ship if Whitney left behind the scientific and personal documents which Cook had solemnly entrusted to him.

From the time he learned that Cook had organized this expedition to the pole (October 1907), Peary in one year changed progressively into a new man capable of vengeful folly. After these months of tension in the Arctic Ocean upon returning to his family, Peary succumbed to deep depression. It is remarkable that the family hid all this from the public, forbidding an old family friend, the famous Vilhjamur Stefansson, from speaking about it during his entire life. This is not the behavior of a conqueror. Events appear to show that Cook, as though remotely controlling Peary's psyche had pushed Peary into behavior which was unworthy of him. Cook, a secretive
man, perfectly understood the brutal, complete but fragile psychology of Peary; and he lives within Peary’s thoughts as a phantom, a double. Who knows if this phantom did not partially direct Peary’s thoughts during the fatal days of the first weeks of April 1909, beyond the 87th degree?

I will try to show that the pleasant Dr. Cook - about whom one of my colleagues, Poualouna, was my main informant when I set up my first genealogy of the polar Eskimos in 1951, spoke at length without ever bringing up the North Pole, as well as Inima (Sioralupuk), and the son of one of Cook’s colleagues, Oussaqasaqu (son of Aapilaq), and also Inuterssuaq, a remarkable Inuit intellectual authority, who was one of my great friends and informants - knew exactly what he was doing with Peary, whose fragile psychology he understood very well.

“Cook was so pleasant, always smiling and eager to help,” said one of them. And Inima added: “He could have gotten everything he wanted from us by his charm - he also spoke our language very well”. And one of the people I was speaking with showed me one of Cook’s gifts - a tile. Could Dr. Cook’s initial intention in organizing this commando expedition to the pole have been not so much to conquer the pole but to challenge a man whom he had learned secretly to mistrust? During his expedition to the Farthest North (87° 06’) Peary had no proof other than his word. Cook would do the same thing. We can only take Peary’s word if we also take Cook’s word. By allowing himself to be controlled, Cook forced the proud Peary to himself be controlled. But this was not the case. The University of Copenhagen would have accepted Peary’s statement concerning “his conquest of the pole” and the decision which would come from the National Geographic Society, without asking to examine the proof. A detailed investigation of the written decisions of the University of Copenhagen is required. Copenhagen’s behavior was not equitable with regard to Cook and Peary.

And I might add, and it is essential, that although Peary had been a leader for twenty years. Cook was still only in second place, although a very prestigious second place. It is through Peary’s personality that he, Cook, would attempt to assert himself in public opinion, even though both of them might have been ruined as far as their reputation is concerned, if that attempt tailed. They seem to have tied the score.

II. DR. FREDERICK ALBERT COOK

A) Some Traits of his Personality

He was of German descent. He worked very hard when he was young in order to study. He was absolutely courteous. He was indifferent to money, and a pleasant man with extraordinary control in the face of danger, with an impressive inventive spirit; these are qualities of a remarkable explorer. And he was extremely secretive.

When he met Peary in 1891, he was 26 years old and Peary was 35. Peary had been married for three years; Cook was not married. Cook had been a practicing physician for only one year with a practice that was no reason to keep him in Brooklyn. Cook’s passion was exploration. He read, read even more …..he dreamed …..of being the first. By the time of Peary’s second expedition, he
had already become a personality. Cook had not yet participated in an actual exploration. In other words, the fact that Cook went to Peary is testimony of a gracious gesture toward a personality he admired for the purpose of participating in a great adventure with him.

During the expedition, Cook was recognized as an excellent physician: he looked after Peary exceptionally well when the latter broke his leg. He was perfectly loyal to Peary. There is not one line in Peary's writings which does not testify to the respect he had for his colleague, and Cook's ethnographic work was praised very highly by Peary in a note mentioned above. As far as Cook is concerned, he found the Peary's to be a very cynical couple, because they lived as man and wife in their Redcliff winter base even though all the others were unaccompanied by their spouses. He also had to combat the depression of one of the members of the expedition, John Verhoeft, a young mineralogist and meteorologist, who in large part subsidized the expedition. Problems became so serious with "the Pearys" and especially with Josephine Peary, that when Verhoeft died a tragic death on the last day of the expedition, lost somewhere on the back side of the McCormick Fjord, suicide was considered a possible cause of death. Cook observed Peary: he noted how very dependent he was on certain persons close to him. He knew how close Peary was to his mother (she accompanied her son on his honeymoon) and to his wife, his only advisor, and his black servant, Matt Henson, whose complex "servant" relationship has never been thoroughly analyzed (*).

Taking these observations into account, it should be noted that at the pole itself, or at what was taking its place, a very serious psychological event took place. Did Peary not forgive Henson, a black man - America was racist at the time - for preceding him to the pole and for being the first conqueror of the pole, or for a sarcastic remark such as:

(*) Matt Henson followed Peary all through his polar life. Peary's remark to McMillan shortly before his departure for the "Pole" should be remembered: "I can't get along without him". Matt Henson spoke perfect Eskimo, Peary did not, and he was ten years younger than Peary. He very definitely drove the group by his dynamism and his black charm; he used to soften the edges since Peary's relations with the Inuit were not always easy. This is the least one can say, as during a preceding expedition there had been massive defections. Henson was also very popular with the Inuit; a well-built man, he was always in a good mood, according to testimony by the Inuit recorded in 1950. He married and had a family. Therefore, he was related to the Inuit. In 1951, all the Inuit told me of the affection they had for Mattipaluk: "paluk" is a term of affections, "our dear Matt", Kunupaluk "the dear Knud", Suvfiapaluk "the nice Sofia", Palasipaluk "the good minister". P. 290 Schultz-Lorentzen. Dictionary of the West Greenland Eskimo Language. M.O.G. 1927. Copenhagen.

"Commander, we are at the Pole!" "Wherever we are, here or there," or had he discovered a tragic navigation error which he could not reveal to this black man, this "nigger", his servant for twenty years. We cannot speculate, and we have no record of this, but the fact is that Peary refused to speak to Matt Henson from that moment on, and that Peary never found a job for him in the American government, leaving him to vegetate in subservient jobs. Henson never revealed his innermost thoughts on the matter, and took his secrets with him to the grave.
But let us go back to Cook. He was astounded to find that after having orally presented to a Brooklyn College of Medicine his extremely interesting results concerning Eskimo physiology, in particular amenorrhea of this unique, northermost country in the world, Peary prohibited him from publishing these results (1892), citing the contract as a reason.

We still do not know where this report is, and it is fundamental for us historians, ethnologists of the Eskimo people. We do not know either why, a year later as specified by the contract, Cook did not publish it. But we also can find no trace of one of Cook’s notes requesting these documents from Peary. (Perhaps the discussions at the convention will shed some light on this subject.)

As for me, I feel that the beginning of a profound break between the two men started at this specific point in time. In fact, Peary was beginning to see in Cook a person not only capable as an explorer, but also brilliant on the intellectual level and likely to outshine him some day. And was Cook unaware that Peary’s apparent friendship could never resist his unrelenting ambition? Peary was not a very sensitive person. His books - the last of which was “The Conquest of the Pole”, were written by secretaries and re-written - are very mediocre on a literary level. Cook, on the other hand, was very sensitive and wrote well. Was he beginning to judge Peary and to despise him in this regard? All this is speculation.

In any event, Cook organized his polar adventuring in quite a different manner, and as a result of his expedition with Amundsen in Antarctica on the Belgica, he became the first and only American to have spent the winter both in the Arctic and Antarctica. Following Lieutenant Greely, Cook was the second President of the Explorers’ Club. He also undeniably became an outstanding polar personality.

Sixteen years went by. A near perfect exploration record. However, Cook may have been a polar personality, but he had not organized anything decisive. He was possessed by the will to transform his life into destiny. It was an age when America was beginning to think ironically about Peary’s very expensive expeditions which were never successful. Peary had aged and Cook knew it better than anyone; the reason for failure was Peary himself.

**B) Spring 1907: Cook’s Fatal Decision**

Was Cook thinking that Peary’s “military” and increasingly cumbersome logistics were too expensive, inadequate and that, in any case, it might be impossible to conquer the Pole. He knew that the Peary of 1909 did not physically or mentally resemble the audacious Peary of the 1892 exceptional expedition. Moreover, he believed that Peary was beginning to experience a serious shortage of money. When he met John R. Bradleys the billionaire sponsor, Cook decided in April 1907 to secretly organize an expedition to the pole. On July 3, 1907, the 111-ton *John R. Bradley* schooner left the United States. Why the Pole? Antarctica would have allowed him to beat out all the rest of the American competition. Why? Most probably because he wanted to succeed where Peary had always failed, and especially to prove to Peary that he had a talent equal to his, or even greater, a talent which Peary, through fear, might have underestimated. Therefore Cook, a deeply secretive man - the preparation of his expedition proves it - decided to organize this expedition to the Pole, without a navigator who would have been the irrefutable witness to this spectacular
action of his life. If he took the risk of being alone, it was obviously because he had an ulterior motive for such a daring operation.

As for myself, I tend to believe that the decisive second stage of the Peary-Cook relationship began at the time this expedition was organized in the spring of 1907. According to the most elementary psychoanalysis, the son wants to be the equal of, to surpass and even to kill the father at all costs, and on the first try, which explains why he does not want any witnesses. The resentment, the humiliation, the importance of recognition, suddenly comes together. But, as in Western movies, Cook wants to act alone, an anonymous hero, difficult to understand, disinterested, only interested in the exploit and in returning to anonymity after its performance. What followed was extraordinary; Cook, from a distance and psychologically, dictated his method - solitary exploration - to Peary who on April 2, 1909 for incomprehensible reasons parted company with his obvious best witness. Robert Bartlett the navigator, four days from the pole. Oh, there are all sorts of explanations: Peary was proud; he wanted to be the only conqueror of the pole. Another explanation: because of his Canadian origins, Bartlett was British; perhaps public opinion would not have been pleased that during an American expedition, an Englishman, along with an American, conquered the pole. Perhaps Peary preferred to be alone with a black man; it was thought that, even long after the Civil War, a black man was not the equal of a white man. The simplest explanation, to my mind, is that he wanted to be alone, as in 1906, to present the navigation data he considered favorable at his own discretion, as circumstances dictated.

C) The Expedition: Technical Aspects

Knud Rasmussen went to see Cook during the winter of 1907-1908, when he was spending the winter with the polar Eskimos. Rasmussen’s written testimony is that he had never seen such remarkable preparations for an expedition. Cook unquestionably had a certain genius for exploration: light 22.5 kg sleds, built from beechwood on site in Anoretoq during the fall and winter of 1907, a prefabricated house, a portable twelve-foot boat, whose sail could be used as a carpet, and the frame of which could be used as braces for the sled. Harnesses were made of canvas and therefore not edible, even by the famished dogs. He had pemmican; we don’t know whether there was enough to carry out this 80-day expedition which he intended to perform in the Arctic Ocean to the Pole.

Could it be that Cook was trying to astonish everyone, through the originality of his technical inventions all aimed at reducing the weight of the sleds and loads and the use of strong and interchangeable tools? His way of life in the territory (hunting musk ox and bears on Ellesmere Land) established a rapport with Eskimo life to a much greater extent than did Peary’s way. Another Cook innovation: using ocean currents to facilitate his march to the pole - drew the admiration of Norwegian oceanographers (particularly Sverdrup). Cook was showing Peary that he was no longer only a doctor but one of the great polar explorers.

It is a tacit that this expedition, as far as its itinerary on the Arctic Ocean is concerned, will remain a mystery because no professional navigators authenticated its progress. Even though the German who wintered with him, Rudolph Franke, had accompanied him on the Arctic Ocean, this would not be sufficient since a navigator was absolutely required. Did Cook, like the hero of a Western movie, think initially of the brilliant success of his expedition rather than its
authentication? It is reasonable to ask the question. What is known, and this is certain, about his return itinerary around Ellesmere Land, in the straits West of Ellesmere Island and his wintering at Cape Sparbo, is astounding for its audacity under uniquely precarious conditions. Wally Herbert, who followed the same itinerary, authenticated this polar exploit. But the problem does not lie there: Cook states that he reached the pole. Where is the authentication problem initially? Let us quickly review the facts:

- **First his project:** it was announced in a letter to the Peary Arctic Club on August 26, 1907 and sent from Etah via John Bradley.
- **His resources?** Plentiful: according to him, and this was corroborated by Franke, he left Anoretoq on February 19, 1908 with eleven sleds, a 4000 pound load, eleven men (of whom nine were Eskimos) and one hundred and three dogs.
- **His journal?** On: first examination, it is detailed and coherent. But the astronomical report documentation is missing.

Was he competent as a navigator? In July of 1909, Vice-Chancellor Thorpe of the University of Copenhagen met with him to evaluate his knowledge as a navigator. This meeting took place on September 6 at the American Embassy in Copenhagen. On the same date, an official document was published following this meeting, and it was also published in the press:

Professor Thorp said:

> "As there were certain questions of a special astronomical nature with which I myself was not sufficiently acquainted, I called in our greatest astronomical scientist, Professor Stromgren, who put an exhaustive series of mathematical, technical and natural scientific questions to Dr. Cook, based particularly on those of his contentions on which some doubt had been cast. "Dr. Cook answered all to our full satisfaction. He showed no nervousness or excitement at any time. I dare say, therefore, that there is no justification for anybody to throw the slightest doubt on his claim to have reached the Pole and the means by which he did it. Professor Stromgren and I are entirely satisfied with the evidence." (Cook 1913, 550).

Cook the man: according to his expedition companion, Amundsen, on board the Belgica in 1897. Cook was “loved and respected by all, a man of unfailing courage, unfailing hope, endless cheerfulness, unwearied kindness”. Rudolph Franke, whose intimate friendship with Cook during the winter of 1907-1908 has not been sufficiently analyzed - it is as though nearly no one had read his book because it is in German and is very rarely quoted - always remained friendly to Cook and this friendship endured until Cook’s death, no matter what problems they muddled through. As concerns the McKinley affair, which I am not in a position to make any judgments concerning its truthfulness as far as the climb goes, I was struck in 1903 by the fact that the Alaska mountain climbers considered extraordinary the first attempts at climbing in the primitive areas around Mount McKinley. In 1900, Cook received an exceptional citation from the King of the Belgians for his activity during the Antarctic expedition.
The title of Honorary Doctor of Science from the University of Copenhagen and the Gold Medal of the Geographic Society were awarded to Dr. Cook. These were never taken away from him. Some of the greatest explorers finally recognized the conquest of the pole by Dr. Cook.

Dr. Cook is the discoverer of the North Pole - General A.W. Greely.

It has always been my pleasure to support Dr. Cook. I can see no reason for doubting his success. Who are his accusers; surely not Arctic Explorers?

- CAPTAIN OTTO SVERDRUP.

Dear Dr. Cook:
I would assure you that I have never varied in the belief that you reached the Pole. After reading the published accounts, daily and critically, of both claimants, I was forced to the conclusion from their striking similarity that each of you was the eyewitness of the other's success. Without collusion it would have been impossible to have written accounts so similar, and yet in view of the ungracious controversy that has occurred since that view (collusion) would be impossible to imagine. While I have never believed that either of you got within a pin-point of the Pole, I have steadfastly held that both got as near the goal as was possible to ascertain considering the imperfections of the instruments used and the personal errors of individuals under circumstances as adverse to absolute accuracy. Again I have been broad enough in my views to believe that there was room enough at the Pole for two: and never narrow enough to believe that only one man got there. I believe that both are entitled to the honor of the achievement. Very truly yours, (Signed) W.S. Schley.

(Cook 1953a, 584)

By Captain Thomas F. Hall of Omaha, Neb.

DR. COOK'S VALID CLAIM
Cook’s narrative has been before the public nearly two years. It has been subject to the most minute scrutiny that invention, talent and money could give. It is today absolutely unscathed. Not one item in it from beginning to end has been truthfully discredited. It stands unimpeached. Mud enough has been thrown. Bribery and conspiracy have done their worst. A campaign of infamy has been waged, and spent its force: but not one solitary sentence has been proven wrong. Musk ox fakes, starved dogs, fictitious astronomical or other calculations may have some effect on popular opinion; but they have none on the actual facts. They do not budge the truth a hair’s breadth and they do not make history. Cook’s claim to the Discovery of the North Pole is as sound and as valid as the other claims of discovery, or the achievement of any one preceding him in the Arctic or the Antarctic.

(Cook 1954b, 583)

D) The Writer
I have reread Return from the Pole; there are some admirably written passages here. When he first hears a bird’s cry upon returning from the Arctic Ocean when he reached the Coast, or his battle against the Cape Sparbo bears, he was living in a paleolithic age with his two companions.
There is the sound of truth in this work. This book is fascinating and is one of the polar books which should be read, no matter what one may think of Cook, whether he conquered the pole or not. It really is time we were able to read his autobiography which, for reasons I do not know, remains unpublished. As far as the project, the resources, diary, navigation, international recognition are concerned, Cook seems to meet the general criteria, but essentially what good is any exploration, if it is done alone? It is only as good as the explorer’s word, and the slightest falsification absolutely destroys the credibility of the explorer in question.

Whether he reached the North Pole or not, I leave that up to Wally Herbert. One of the interpretations given—and even Peary following the great controversy thought so—is that: 1) Cook may have convinced himself that he went to the pole; 2) However none of his astronomical documentation, which was submitted to the very competent Danish authorities, makes it possible to establish this point. This documentation should be published. The Danish judgment which is definitive is biased by the fact that the awards given in 1909 (the Geographic Society’s gold medal and the honorary title of Doctor) were not taken away from him, as I have stated earlier. 3) For Peary, the Danish authorities accepted Cook’s word and the opinion of American geographic authorities. Finally, if Cook cheated, he was an extraordinary cheat in the history of exploration, and he took some inconceivable risks with his honor.

However, in polar history, because of what he accomplished in all certainty, Cook remains an explorer of exceptional dimension. Did he perhaps believe he reached the Pole? Following their joint expedition in Antarctica on board the Belgica, Amundsen thought that Cook was one of the most remarkable men he ever met. In this regard, let us mention that less is said about his expedition on returning from Anoretoq to Upernavik during the third week of April 1909, although only a few days before he had arrived at his Anoretoq base, famished and exhausted. Cook had extraordinary powers of recuperation and improvisation. Whitney, the American millionaire hunter who welcomed him on his return, could testify to that. The expedition covered 700 miles (i.e., as long as the expedition to the pole) and it took place with several Inuit, including his trusted companion, Kulutunguaq, and they had been joined, in Umanak and Cape York, by hunters hostile to Peary. Cook reached Tasiussaq (North of Upernavik) mid-May, and he reached Upernavik alone by sled and umiak on May 20. Cook spoke very modestly of this itinerary.

Cook was obsessed by a theatrical will to astonish. Astonish who? Robert Peary of course, a young Peary who in the spring of 1892 accompanied by the Norwegian Astrup, crossed the North of the Greenland Glacier, like Bonaparte, and with extraordinary audacity. But Cook went too far...His demon? The Pole. Because he confided in John R. Bradley the millionaire who sponsored his 1907 expedition, we know that his secret intention—the Pole—had been with him for a long time:

“You and I could make it, John— with two Eskimos,” Cook said.
“Make what?” Bradley asked.
“The Pole. Why not try for the Pole?”
Bradley shook his head.

“Not I,” he said. “Would you like to try for it?”
Cook looked at him for a moment, his eyes glistening!
"There is nothing I would rather do," he said. "It is the ambition of my life." (Wright, 1970, 114)

WHY THIS GROWING HATRED FOR PEARY?

As I said above, as a result of alienation because Peary forbade the publication of his medical work (1892), which Cook nevertheless had to accept, since he had a signed a contract to this effect. Alienation which fed on multiple grievances: cynicism, Peary's harshness towards the Inuit during the Minik affair which came to light in January 1907, a scandalous situation for Peary, and remarkably narrated by Kenn Harper; and the unspeakable sale of Eskimo skeletons to the American Museum of Natural History in 5 large barrels after the 1901 epidemic. During these sixteen years, this increasing hatred was masked by great friendliness, if not a friend, Cook at least kept up friendly relations with Peary.

With cold ambition, Cook noticed that Peary had aged. As a doctor, he was able to verify Peary's relative disability due to the amputation of 8 toes, his psychological relative and the fact that the Peary of 1909 was no longer the daring young Peary of 1892. The appropriation of the meteorites, without compensation to the Inuit, and the very active trade of the Peary Arctic Club within the population at shameful rates of exchange, may have been additional factors of hate. This is only speculation, because it will be observed that in no text, before his expedition, did Cook denounce Peary. Cook was a secretive man and proceeded before this 1907-1908 expedition as though he remained a companion of the great Peary.

III. TWO POKER PLAYERS ON THE ICE-BANK

We are now entering the third chapter of the Peary-Cook relations, when one, then the other, claimed to have reached the Pole. Cook stated it clearly to Whitney on his arrival in Anoretoq in April 1909; Peary announced it to Bartlett, then ambiguously to Dr. Goodsell, to MacMillan and to Borup upon his arrival at the Roosevelt in April 1909. Was this a case of false statements by both men?

Both of them must have known that without a navigator accompanying them to the North Pole, absolute proof of their conquest of the Pole could not be presented. During his expedition to the South Pole in January 1909, Shackleton had the location recorded by the tour partners in the expedition. Then how can we explain the fact that two men of such great reputations made such unverifiable statements? It is common knowledge that it is very easy, at high latitudes and on this shifting bank, to make mistakes in recording latitude and longitude. Even with the most modern techniques, Herbert and Monzino made mistakes in their first recordings.

As a result of frequent fog, constant and opposite shifting of the ice, precise marking by plane is necessary and must even be frequently done around the Pole. Herbert (British Transarctic Expedition 1968-1969) and Monzino (Italian expedition to the Pole, 1971), had a great deal of trouble, during their sled exploration to the Pole, finding their location without using a plane or the radio; in both cases, their first point was an error of 11
kilometers for one of them, and ten or so kilometers for the other. Estimating a point, with interpolation, is misleading: the ice shifts in the opposite direction, and the sun does not shine very often. If, in the second half of the 20th century, navigators make mistakes despite all the radio means at their disposal, what was it like for Peary or Cook in 1908 or 1909? Peary’s locating by longitude was also particularly inexact and his recordings were few and far between.

(Malaurie 1989, 292)

Is it possible that Cook, having initially wanted to show his superiority over Peary, could not have admitted “to himself” the announcement of a fiasco? This also took place in an area of shifting ice where falsification of routes is a great temptation. Hayes probably falsified his May 18, 1861, route to Cape Lieber. Kane, who declared his discovery of open water in the North, on evidence from his seaman Morton and the Eskimo Hendrick (who had warned him), concluded imprudently that it was the polar sea in June 1854 (Cape Constitution). Peary himself declared having seen a passage separating what was to be Peary’s Land from Greenland Island, but it turned out to be only in his imagination; the same was true for the phantom Land of Crocker.

However, the history of science is such that it contains many errors, and the ethnologist knows full well that the person who will come after him sometimes needs to criticize some of the results by inferring that there are mistakes in translation, poor knowledge of the language or misunderstandings. However, when it is a case of an exploration to the Pole, truth must be absolute. What creates truth in the history of exploration is the coherence of the expedition’s journals, sustained by the perfect honesty of the explorer, especially if he is alone.

As far as I am concerned, this non confession of both men concerning the real problems they encountered during their last stages can first be explained by the complex psychological relationship which I have already stated: the father-son, son-father relationship. The reciprocal fear that the competitor could be successful (or might be thought to be successful) drives the other to up the ante, as in a poker game. Because how else can you explain that two honorable men would accept, in the eyes of the world, the risk of being branded liars in an undertaking as spectacular as the conquest of the Pole?

Upon reading the defamation campaign engineered against Cook at the time of the Mount McKinley affair, more or less a case of witness intimidation, an interview manipulated by Hampton and which is a disgrace for a newspaperman, and which attributes to Cook the opposite of what he was expressing, (obliteration of favorable factors and opinions), we can only take off our hats to the mastery of the Peary clan and the financial establishment in strategically using the media to destroy a man. By having recourse to what is sociologically called a “rumor” and by repeating lies which then became the truth, the anti-Cook campaign was one of the great manipulations of the media, like those used so many times in political campaigns. Faced with these defamatory attacks and this mud slinging campaign, Cook increased his prestige; his response was to remain above it all. Then he revealed his concealed and violent hatred in a letter denouncing Robert Peary and sent to the President of the United States, in My Attainment of the Pole (p. 1910. Copy of a telegram sent to former President Taft, p. 601, An Appeal to President Wilson (pp. 602-603).
IV. AND WHAT ABOUT THE INUIT?

The first to witness this shadow play was American and international public opinion. It is surprising that the investigation commissions from the Congress and the University of Copenhagen never legally interrogated, under oath, after open discussion, in other words completely independently, the Inuit and essential witnesses such as Matt Henson, Rudolph Franke and Harry Whitney.

Whitney’s behavior was very difficult to understand in July 1909 and in the summer of 1910, and deserves in-depth examination. In September 1909, Cook had with insistence, but in vain, asked the Danish authorities to bring the Inuit in question to Copenhagen in order to officially interrogate them or to send an official investigator to Greenland for that purpose. The only testimony transmitted to us is that of Knud Rasmussen. Mrs. Knud Rasmussen personally confirmed that this was in fact her husband’s opinion at that time. She also declared that tact to the newspaper Le Matin in Paris. Even though Knud Rasmussen later changed his statements, under the influence of his friend Peter Freuchen, who was an enemy of Cook, the tact remains that the Inuits testimony given to Knud Rasmussen in June-July 1909, cannot be retracted. This testimony is of the greatest importance although it was never taken seriously in the very confused debate in the United States concerning the Cook affair, which was not held in any official environment. Knud Rasmussen’s retraction cannot weaken the testimony he had already given.

Rasmussen states in Politiken:
“I have not met the companions of Dr. Cook, but I am informed by trustworthy members of the same tribe that their journey across the ice fields away from land was so long that the sun appeared, reached a high point in the sky and at last did not set at all, and it was almost summer before they reached land again. The Eskimos stated decisively that they were very much astonished when Cook told them they had now reached their goal, because the place was not at he other ice over which they had traveled. For several days they had asked Cook to return, but this was because they had an impression that they were so far from land that they never could get back home. So it is sure that the travelers were not compelled to turn back because of ice hindrances, but only because they believed the goal was reached.” (Emphasis added.)

(Wright 1970, 216)

He (Rasmussen) wrote to Cook:
“My most hearty congratulations to you on your successful voyage to the North Pole. You have won the victory, and this victory, the greatest in Arctic history will in spite of all the honors which will overwhelm you from the whole world be the greatest remuneration in itself.”

(Wright 1970, 236)

As for me, since I am the first independent scientist after Knud Rasmussen and Peter Freuchen to have interrogated the Eskimos on this subject in 1950-51, I can state what follows. I would like to express my thoughts on a subject about which I have reeled greatly and heard a lot. It is a subject on which we must be careful not to judge by appearances or to make sweeping generalizations.
First Question: What are the causes of Knud Rasmussen’s radical retraction of his earlier statements, and what written scientific evidence is there to contradict the initial oral testimony which led the Copenhagen University Commission, made up of eminent personalities - however I was not able to verify if Chancellor Thorp and Professor Stomgren were members of it - to witness this spectacular reversal? Where is the written report of this Commission and Dr. Cook’s written report, and what the Commission hoped to obtain other than what was published in Cook’s progress journal, in My Attainment of the Pole? If there were astronomical or other data concerning navigation, were they published?

The fact that in 1907-1908, there existed an Inuit clan which was pro-Cook is obvious. Without this clan, his expedition would not have taken place. It was easy for Cook when he visited the Eskimos, a very proud people who were not unanimously pro-Peary, to set one against the other. Peary had enemies, as everyone does. Let us listen to Cook tell of his return in April 1909:

“We now started for Cape York. My-ah. Ang-ad-loo and I-o-ko-ti were accepted as permanent members of my party. All of this party was, curiously enough, hostile to Mr. Peary, and the general trend of conversation was a bitter criticism of the way the people had been fleeced of furs and ivory; how a party had been left to die of cold and hunger at Fort Conger; how, at Cape Sabine, many died of a sickness which had been brought among them, and how Dr. Dedrick was not allowed to save their lives; how a number had been torn from their homes and taken to New York, where they had died of barbarous ill-treatment; how their “Iron Stone”, their only source of iron for centuries, the much-prized heritage of their nation, had been stolen from the point we were now nearing: and so on, throughout a long line of other abuses.” (Cook 1913, 454)

When I was interrogating the Inuit in 1950-51, they manifested great prudence in judgment concerning the white man in this affair. I immediately understood that the Eskimos whose fabulous expeditions, ignored by history, are part of daily hunts, always make common cause together and could only with difficulty conceive that there could be such disputes between two white men who were companions on an expedition. These disputes between white men which they witnessed with their own eyes or which their ancestors told them about (mutiny by Kane’s companions, tension within Hayes’ expedition, violence within the Polaris expedition, problems within the Greely expedition’s emergency naval operations) astounded them and obliged them to maintain a distant attitude toward us. When I arrived in 1950-51, the Peary-Cook affair was still very much alive in their memories. Some Eskimos who had been the companions of one or the other in the two decisive expeditions were still living.

My incomparable companion, Kutsikitsoq, hero of The Last Kings of Thule, is the son of Utaaq, the chief of Peary’s expeditions. As MacMillan declared: at times Kutsikutsoq was hard to get along with as far as Peary was concerned; however he always remained completely loyal to the Commander.

Poualouna, my daily informant in Siorapaluk, was Utaaq’s brother: he was one of Cook’s principal companions. He also spoke with me at great length. Everyone had his own thoughts concerning this affair. But all of them at that time expressed themselves without acrimony;
without any definitive assertion by Poualouna concerning Cook’s conquest of the North Pole. On the other hand, Utaaq, Peary’s loyal companion, told me the following:

“Peary is the only one to have gone there” (The Last Kings of Thule). I went back to Thule five times, in 1967, 1969, 1971, 1982, 1991. As time passed, this statement by Utaaq became the general opinion, as Utaq’s son stated publicly, in the Inuksuit language, at the Paris Congress. His deposition, in Paris in 1983, was published in the Minutes of this Congress on the North Pole (North Pole 1983, 1987, p. 203):

My name is Iggianguaq Utaaq. I am 63 years old, I am a hunter and I live in Qranq (Thule).

I wish to thank the scientists who invited me, particularly Malaurie, and who have made it possible for me to be here today.

My father is Utaaq: Utaaq was the Chief of the Eskimos who were the partners of Piulissuaq, i.e., Peary, during his expeditions to the Pole. Utaaq was the Chief of the Eskimos for many years. He went to the North Pole with Peary and four other persons in the spring.

My father, Utaaq, said that he had planted the flag at the North Pole and that Peary was the chief of this expedition; and all the Inuit\(^{(1)}\) agreed. My father, Utaaq, and all the Inuit also say that Tatsekuk -that was Dr. Cook’s Eskimo name - did not go to the Pole. He did not speak the truth.

Dr. Cook did not speak the truth. He was accompanied by two young men, Aapilaq and Itukusuk. I heard Aapilaq and Itukusuk say that Tatsekuk did not exactly speak the truth concerning the North Pole.

Tatsekuk left from Anoretoq \(^{(2)}\) during the winter toward Canada; apparently he stayed in Canada during the summer, tall and winter, in the winter he returned to Anoretoq.

This is the declaration of Iggianguaq Utaaq.

\(^{(1)}\) This is what the Eskimos call themselves.

\(^{(2)}\) Inuit village North of Etah (West coast of Greenland).

My old friend Inuterssuq from Siorapaluk, who is now dead, published an excellent book - the first written by polar Eskimos - a balanced report of what the Eskimos think.

As I see it, Peary is affirmed to be the only great man. Why?
1) The Eskimos hate being divided among themselves,

2) Because it is recognized by Americans and by the whole world, in encyclopedias, that
Peary is the conqueror of the North Pole and that the Inuit who admire America’s strength, which was massively expressed by the creation of the Thule Base in June 1951, have aligned themselves with this American idea.

3) Peary took an Inuit wife, as did his black companion, and this union resulted in descendants.

Peary had two Inuit sons: Anaugkaq born in May of 1900 and Kale, born in May 1906. Matt Henson had one son: Anaugkaq, born in 1902. The psychological consequences are considerable. For the Inuit, lineage through procreation and name is decisive. By taking a wife and having two sons by Aleqasina, Peary became an integral part of the group: he became their hero. This was not the case for Cook who, according to rumor, had no liaisons and in any event no descendants.

My thoughts, like those of many historians concerning this question, have undergone some evolution. North Pole or no North Pole, the question has changed appreciably. Which claim should we believe? The energy and steadfastness of the one or the boldness and resistance to attacks of the other. In this seesaw of ideas and arguments, I was led little by little to examine the problem otherwise, first by examining the problem from the Inuit angle; then by placing myself strictly on the level of ethics. During my last voyage to Qaanaaq in September 1991, at the time when Kalipaluk. Peary’s Eskimo son who was 86 years old, was returning from the United States, he insisted on speaking with me. I had just been involved in a report published by UNESCO⁴, officially deploring the fact that Peary’s Eskimo children and Henson’s children had not been officially recognized by their American family. As far as Henson is concerned, I met Anaugkaq in 1951 and in 1982. In a private conversation and with some reservation, he told me how much he regretted never having seen his father and how much he would have liked to defend him, to help him, because he felt that his life was materially difficult. He even wrote me about his point of view.

In September 1992, Kalipaluk told me he had been hurt by my involvement: “Peary is my father, I admire him; he is our hero and everything he has done was well done”. Data must always be placed back in its context: 1906 is not 1993. It is necessary to situate oneself outside colonial ideas or western moral judgments. As concerns the Inuit, my thoughts are in keeping with the Inuit thought. The idea that a man of such stature and who was the author of such an absolutely essential technical and psychological revolution for the Inuit had become allied with the Inuit has enormous consequences.

I daresay that this alliance was received as an honor by the Inuit. In the context of Inuit ethics, the notion of lineage is dignified. When Peary’s son went with Anaugkaq to Arlington Cemetery, where Peary and Henson are buried, he placed a flower from Greenland on the grave⁵. Should it be considered that this flower from Greenland should finally finish the fratricidal debate between two American heroes?

**Scientific Truth**

What is the scientific truth? Wally Herbert had the answer. Neither one nor the other. Unfortunately, no scientific investigation took place, at the time, according to the rules involving all the parties concerned. It would have taken a veritable Inspector Columbo in 1909. In 1993, this investigation can only be concluded with difficulty concerning these vanished ice floes; too
much of the data is incomplete, hidden or biased regarding both Peary and Cook. The initial detailed investigation, always decisive in this type of affair, is missing. When all is said and done yes, each one of them deserved to conquer the Pole. But the Pole is not an approach to land it is a precise point, the 90th.

It is good that Peary is recognized as the conqueror of the approaches to the Pole, but it is also clear that Dr. Cook must also be considered as an extraordinary personality in polar history, which he is obviously, if only as a result of the scandal which affects both of them for all eternity.

V. LET US RETURN TO DR. COOK - HIS IMAGE IN HISTORY

I have never hidden my sympathy for Dr. Cook’s exceptional personality: physician, ethnographer, writer and polar explorer. I also regret that he did not complete the detailed scientific report on the polar Eskimos which he was in a position to carry out in 1891-1892 as a doctor, and which he intended to continue in more depth in 1907. Where are his ethnographic notes?

First, then second, then nth indication: the man is extremely complex. I am convinced that we are faced with men of great stature. Christopher Columbus was not a simple man, either.

Yes, Cook was a very secretive man. In 1907, his expedition had been in preparation for a long time and the roots of his hatred were so hidden that one can feel, on reading the testimony, that this affair started as if by spontaneous generation. Although he had remained a friend of the family, Cook, Peary’s doctor-expert in August 1901, had long experienced a devastating envy of Peary. And Peary never offended him until the spring of 1907; everything seemed as if he were trying to avoid any conflict.

In the spring of 1907, Cook met with John R. Bradley, his sponsor. A ship was bought. It left on July 3, 1907 at a time when Peary was having the Roosevelt repaired for his last attempt at the North Pole and was trying to obtain additional credit with a great deal of difficulty.

There is an ethic in exploration, as in research and as in life: the terrain, the research area of a colleague is respected. We do not kill an old man. Like in a Western, challenges are only fair if each side is armed equally.

In 1907, Cook had never broken off publicly with Peary, had never publicly criticized his methods, his personality, and therefore the accusation he hurled at the former head of his expedition in August 1907 placed their relations on a difficult path which would make the relations between these two expeditions horrible. Obviously, Peary was crestfallen upon learning, in October 1907, as a result of Cook’s note which I mentioned above, the intentions of his former companion. Who is to say that Peary could not have been more successful in his expedition to the Pole if he had not been somewhat broken? Who is to say, and this is likely, that having tailed on this final expedition to the Pole beyond the 87th degree, he might not have very naturally, as he had done up till then, owned up to this failure, had Cook not presented a threat?
America was out to settle the accounts, an implacable rivalry which translates into a boomerang as a result of Peary's ruthless reaction. One remembers here the famous lines of Corneille's Le Cid: Don Diego, an old, insulted and mistrusted man:

**Act I. Scene 4**

"O fury! O despair! O hostile age!
Have I lived so long for this?
Have I grown grey in war like feats to see
My laurels faded in a single day?

_O cruel memory of my past renown!
So many days in one day blotted out!
New honour fatal to my happiness!
_O lofty heights from which my honour falls
Must the count's triumph dim my Glory's ray
Must I die unavenged or die in shame?"

**Act I. Scene 5**

"Of a cruel, harsh affront
Which seals our honours both a mortal blow,
A slap! It should have cost the man his life
But age betrayed my noble-hearted urge!
And this my sword I can no longer wield
I give to you to punish and revenge.
Assay your courage on base arrogance.
_Such crimes can be effaced by blood alone,
Kill or be killed. But do not be deceived
The toe assigned you is a tearful one".

(Translated by John Cairn Cross)

Being a physician, Cook did not hesitate to profit from Peary's weaknesses; all scientists would surely protest against this lack of ethics, this lack of respect for the work of a man still living. The situation would have been completely different if Cook had not been Peary's colleague or if he had undertaken his exploration after Peary's last expedition, i.e., in the spring of 1910.

What are the reasons for this cynicism? I believe that they can be found in Cook in a very deep-rooted jealousy. In this affair, Peary is made to act against what is morally correct for him, in spite of his code of honor. He will be filled with horror; to see his colleague, nine years younger than he, attempt to declare himself conqueror of the Pole and he, Peary, to be seen as a feeble old man who tails in the final undertaking of his life. No, No, he would not be able to withstand this and this could explain his false statement of April 6, 1909.

By mobilizing, with scientific precision, an action to destroy Cook, Peary revealed that he remained a force to be reckoned with. Here and there, there is some "Watergate" in these operations. The same hatred on both sides. This is an American Western movie, spurs and all. In a certain manner, Peary increased his stature in his last battle to save his personality and his
honor. I daresay that in this obscure battle of press releases, the United States, in its heart of hearts, was aware of the problems involved in "scientifically" establishing that Peary was the conqueror of the North Pole. It the very end, in this hateful climate, the Establishment was on his side, and awarded him the title of conqueror of the North Pole, in keeping with what he deserved: 90°, within one or two degrees, no one can verify; and especially not Copenhagen whose patience had already been overtaxed.

VI. THE EVIL INFLUENCE OF SPONSORING

It is like gladiatorial combat. What must be denounced is the system of sponsoring which reduced these men to being actors in cheap theater. For strictly financial reasons, the sponsoring system drove these men to cheat.

What's more, it is pathetic to see these great figures of history, Peary and Cook, miss out on scientific research that could have followed this great conquest. Peary's ethnographic and geographic work is mediocre. The millions of dollars invested resulted in second class work, at a decisive moment in the history of these people, the Inuit. Sponsoring at that time was such that, to make any progress, Peary who had an imperial will in keeping with his character forbade anyone else from encroaching on his territory. His poor relations with the Norwegians are well known. We have discussed his relations with Cook.

With regard to Cook, who also had considerable financial backing, it should be noted that his ethnographic work is very mediocre, as is his geographical work. And both remained indifferent to the archaic and difficult conditions of this 200 polar Eskimo people, their loyal allies. No Peary or Cook foundation was ever set up to help these people.

We should also reflect on the corrosive, devastating power of money. Have we forgotten the time when scientific expeditions were carried out with rules and an ethic which first implied the research and publication of documentation? We should remember the famous Captain James Cook, Admiral Jules Dumont d'Urville, the work of the two International Polar Years, the great polar expeditions of the Geophysical Year, and all the predecessors in Northwest Greenland, John Ross, the Scottish Captain, Kane, Hayes, Hall, Captain Nares, Lieutenant Greely; despite the ups and downs and the drama, scientific work was important and uncontested. This shift in exploration, in the context of private expeditions supported by powerful sponsors, transformed these great adventures into a spectacle which corresponds to a passion for polar conquest as imagined by public opinion. The results are apparent in these media times in which we live.

The Pole of hatred: these two American giants, whose destiny is linked in history, are without a doubt pitiful victims of a system.

Since sponsoring is increasingly essential to research, the guarantors of scientific accuracy must be increasingly vigilant. This is the moral of this human drama. (*)

(*) Resolution
One of the resolutions of the Congress should be to recommend or ensure the publication of all documents having a direct link to Dr. Frederick A. Cook and
Robert E. Peary, and obviously, all of the handwritten notes of the two protagonists.

Endnotes

3. For details, refer to *The Last Kings of Thule,* 1955 and to *Ultima Thule,* 1990.
5. On this occasion, I congratulate President Ronald Reagan for his decision to have Matt Henson’s body transported to Arlington Cemetery next to Peary. Matt Henson was considered as a conqueror of the Pole equally with Peary by the American Administration. The time for racism is passed, what was conquered by a White Man was also conquered by a Black Man. They are equal for history. The United States of America, in their minds and their hearts, continues the work of the great President Lincoln.

About the Author

Jean Malaurie was trained as a geomorphologist, but has for the past three decades been involved in research, exploration, writing and publishing. In 1967 he recorded on the film the disintegrating culture of Thule and later spent three years producing a multi-part film documentary of all of the world’s Eskimos. He is director of the French Center for Arctic Studies and founder of the publishing imprint Terre Humaine, whose authors include Margaret Mead and Claude Levi-Strauss. His awards include that from the Academie Francise and the French Academy of Sciences. He is coordinator of the Russian-French Polar Project and is also a consultant to the Greenlandic, Canadian and United States governments on Eskimo matters. While his magnum opus may have been *The Last Kings of Thule,* his latest volume has become a collector’s item among polar bibliophiles, the well-received *Ultima Thule,* which was published in 1990.