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## The North Slope Inupiat Whaling Complex

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## The North Slope Inupiat Whaling Complex

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A general conception of hunting and fishing societies tends to view them as comprised of individual hunters in pursuit of fish and wildlife to fulfill their basic physical needs. Descriptions of hunting and gathering societies generally focus on the techniques and technology utilized by Natives to procure their food, the annual hunting cycle, land-use areas, and resource inventory. More recent studies focus attention on economic systems within a social and cultural context.

Analysis of contemporary hunting and gathering societies has further been compounded by general views which assume a simple lineal progression from a subsistence economy to a cash economy. Subsistence cultures which persist within larger societies are often perceived to be manifestations of economic underdevelopment. The author's evidence indicates that subsistence economies are no longer completely autonomous and are to varying degrees dependent on a market economy. However, the traditional economy continues to function as a viable system.

This paper focuses on the present-day Inupiat whaling complex and describes the economic system within its social milieu. The author identifies the laws which govern the appropriation and ownership of the whale and analyzes the initial distribution patterns among the whaling crews and the secondary distribution among the community members during the annual series of feasts. The paper also reviews the interrelationship between the subsistence and cash economies and the socioeconomic units which initiate the productive activities. [Eskimo, Arctic, Hunting and Fishing, Customary Law, Acculturation]

### INTRODUCTION

The bowhead whaling complex offers an opportunity to examine a form of social and economic organization found among hunting and gathering societies and to analyze the adaptative strategies initiated by an indigenous society in response to the economic and political pressure exerted by the larger society.

The following account attempts to describe and analyze the complexities of the contemporary Inupiat socioeconomic organization, the interrelationships between the

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Data for this report were collected during two years of field research in arctic Alaska between the years of 1975 and 1977 as part of a doctoral program in anthropology at Harvard University.

subsistence and capital economy, and the customary laws which regulate ownership and distribution patterns of the whale. Although significant changes have occurred after 150 years of contact with Western influences, the Inupiat persist as a distinct cultural enclave and their whaling complex provides the basis for their cultural survival.

## INUPIAT WHALING

The Inupiat (northern Eskimos) have survived from the natural resources of the Arctic, a region that historically has been described as barren, desolate, and harsh. The Inupiat in Alaska have inhabited coastal areas along the Chukchi Sea from Tikigaaq (Point Hope) to Utkeavik (Barrow) and Nuvuk (Point Barrow) for thousands of years.<sup>1</sup> Their knowledge of the arctic environment and their efficient organization of labor were key elements in their maximizing the harvest of marine resources off the Chukchi and Beaufort Sea coasts.

The primary resource of the Inupiat has been the bowhead whale (*Balena mysticus*), which measures 30 to 60 feet in length and weighs from a half ton to a ton per foot at maturity. Bowheads migrate annually into the Arctic Ocean, following leads in the receding ice pack in spring. Before the ice reforms in the fall, they leave the region for wintering grounds in warmer waters.

The basic Inupiat hunting pattern of planned interception and organized capture by several crews has been regularly practiced over the millennia during the spring season without significant variation [GIDDINGS 1967; BOCKSTOCE 1976]. In spite of contact with Euro-American culture more than 150 years ago and the dramatic decline of the bowhead population during heavy commercial exploitation during the latter half of the last century, the Inupiat have continued their subsistence harvest of whales. Communal participation in the traditional bowhead whaling complex, which forms the basis of the Inupiat social and cultural system, remains the distinctive characteristic of these people.

Primary Inupiat settlements are located at points where bowhead whales pass on their annual northward spring migration.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in March in the southernmost village of Wales, Inupiat hunters in five coastal communities prepare for the whaling season that will end several months later as the bowheads pass by Kivalina, Point Hope, Wainwright, and Barrow. Kivalina whalers traditionally migrated north in early spring to join Point Hope crews, but in 1964 they established their own. Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, and Utkeavik are the only communities with crews that participate in the fall whaling season, which begins in late August and continues until early October.

<sup>1</sup> Inupiat names and orthography are used throughout this paper. In some cases, spellings may differ from those appearing in other publications.

<sup>2</sup> The Siberian Yupik Eskimos living at Gambell and Savoonga who are linguistically and culturally distinct from the Inupiat also hunt whales as they migrate past St. Lawrence Island in the northern Bering Sea [HUGHES 1960].

MacLean's [n.d.] geneological investigations at Utkeavik indicate that many of the present-day inhabitants descended from Inupiat who had migrated from other regions, primarily the Colville River, Beachy Point, Utukok, Wainwright, Noatak, and Shishmaref. Many of the Inupiat who migrated to Point Hope and Utkeavik participated in the commercial whaling activities when shore stations were established during the 1880s [BOCKSTOCE 1977]. Utkeavik whalers include some descendants of Inupiat who immigrated from Nuvuk. Duncan Pryde, who studied the Inupiat language from Canada to Alaska, was able to discern two distinct dialects in Barrow, which he believes represented populations from Utkeavik and Nuvuk [personal communication, 1976].

During the early 1970s the Inupiat reversed their trend of moving from smaller to larger population centers and began to reestablish settlements in areas of traditional use and occupation—notably, Atkasook, Nuiqsut, and Point Lay. Whalers from Atkasook and two captains and crew members from Nuiqsut return to Barrow to participate in the spring harvest. Although Nuiqsut, which was established in 1973 by 27 families, is located 20 miles inland from the Beaufort Sea, three crews migrate to the coast to hunt whales in the fall season. Point Lay, which was resettled in 1974 along the Kokolik River, has not had any crews participating in the bowhead hunt since the late 1930s; however, the villagers participate in a spring communal hunt of the beluga whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*).

Although the modern Inupiat live in permanent coastal communities throughout most of the year, they still regularly use temporary and seasonal camps on the ocean ice, along the Chukchi and Beaufort Sea coasts, and in the inland regions. Their territorial range extends from the foothills of the Brooks Range to miles beyond the shoreline. The location of these camps and the duration of their use depends on the activity pursued—hunting, fishing, and gathering of various resources take place at different times of the year.

The inland region is used quite extensively by the Inupiat living along the coast. Hunters on snow machines often traverse more than 100 miles a day. Preliminary North Slope Borough inventories of traditional land use sites document more than 140 sites east of Barrow in the Tasikpak Lake and Nuiqsut areas alone, almost all located along rivers and lakes to take advantage of fishing and caribou hunting opportunities. The present-day maritime Inupiat use inland resources to supplement their primarily coastal economy.

Unlike most other maritime hunting cultures, Inupiat subsistence activities are governed by the presence, absence, or conditions of the sea ice, and most communities along the Chukchi Sea coast are generally located where considerable sea ice movement occurs. The Chukchi Sea is dominated by one-year ice, which is present seven to eight months a year. North and east-flowing currents tend to keep the Chukchi winter ice moving and prevent tight ice occupation of the nearshore environment. Ice movements produce large linear openings in the ice called leads. The presence of abundant marine resources coincides with these open water leads. Year-round utilization of the Beaufort Sea coastal area is limited by the great expanse of relatively

tight shorefast ice in the winter. Without open areas of water and the resulting edge effect, marine mammal populations are at a much lower level during the winter.

Inupiat whalers discern three runs during spring migration. The oldest and largest whales migrate first, usually in leads beyond those nearest shore. According to the Inupiat, the older whales have learned that leads farther off shore are beyond the range of hunters. The second run consists of the younger adult whales. The Inupiat prefer whales that are smaller and rounder in appearance (different morphologies have not been scientifically established), which they classify as *ingutuk*. The last run generally occurs after the ice has begun to deteriorate and the hunters begin to move off the sea ice. It consists primarily of cows and calves.

Ice conditions often determine the level of spring harvest. Nearshore leads must be within the range of hunters, and the shorefast ice must be thick and stable enough to support camps near the leads. Whalers maintain a constant vigil, checking for cracks in the ice caused by high winds and strong currents that can break the camp loose from the shorefast ice. Icebergs also can break the camps away, and winds can close the leads and pile ice over the camps.

Environmental conditions also affect the fall whaling season. Whales are hunted in the open water before the ocean ice forms, when the whales begin their southward migration. Rough seas and high winds may prevent the hunters from going out to pursue the whales. Additionally, changing weather conditions may hamper towing the whales back to camps, which may be located 20 to 30 miles away. Camps are also subject to high winds and seas during this season.

The arrival of the snow birds signals the imminent arrival of whales. The crew transports the skin boat and equipment to the camp which is established on the shorefast ice. The captain lectures his crew while waiting for the whales. He diagrams the whale and outlines the vital areas—the heart and spinal cord. He lectures on reading currents and bubbles made by the whale which reveal its movement and direction. He drills the crew on steering procedures, throwing the floats after a whale has been struck, and sharing policies.

## THE SOCIOECONOMIC UNIT

The appropriation, distribution, and utilization of bowhead whales and other wildlife resources, and the capital investments associated with the whaling complex are achieved through organized socioeconomic units. The productive demands and maximum efficiency of the bowhead whaling enterprise necessitates that these activities be channeled through established units. Environmental conditions, migratory behavior and size of the bowhead, technological limitations of the industry, and other factors have encouraged alliances and cooperative ventures among the community members. For example, even if an individual hunter were able to strike and kill a whale, retrieval to shore, butchering, and utilization would be monumental tasks. The internal heat generated by the whales requires that the whale be butchered quickly before the meat spoils, and this can best be accomplished by a number of people.

Burch [1975] characterized northwestern Eskimo societies in terms of interrelated domestic and local families which constitute a social network. He described the domestic family as consisting of a single conjugal group, including husband, wife, and offspring. However, he noted that most families were more complex. Local families, according to Burch, were identical in structure and composition to domestic families, but their membership was distributed among two or more households.

The socioeconomic units employed in the whaling enterprise are kin-based groups whose members share a mutual orientation directed towards collective and cooperative economic and social activities. Whaling crews tend to be drawn from the local families as described by Burch. However, it is not uncommon to find crew members from another community who are related, formal partners, or friends of the captain or his wife. Because of the extended kinship system characteristic of the northern Inupiat, crew membership patterns vary and are not rigidly defined. Members of a local family may switch from one crew to another from year to year. Crew members generally include a captain, his wife, their sons, brothers, and brothers-in-law, their wives' children, and their spouses.

Representative examples drawn from one community are as follows:

#### Crew 1

captain  
 captain's wife  
 2 daughters  
 2 sons-in-law  
 2 brothers-in-law  
 1 nephew  
 1 cousin's son  
 2 cousin's grandsons  
 1 wife's partner's son  
 1 friend

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14 crew members from eight different households

#### Crew 2

captain  
 captain's wife  
 1 son  
 3 brothers-in-law  
 1 brother  
 1 cousin  
 5 nephews  
 1 friend (from another community)

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14 crew members from eleven different households

## Crew 3

captain  
 captain's wife  
 2 sons  
 10 cousins  
 2 friends (from local community)  
 2 friends (from another community)

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18 crew members from eleven households

In cases in which the wife inherits and owns the whaling equipment, crew members may be drawn predominantly from her family. This also applies in instances in which the husband originated from another community. In the following case, although the male is recognized as the captain by the community, the wife also claims to be a captain since she owns the equipment:

## Crew 4

captain  
 captain's wife  
 2 brothers-in-law (wife's brothers)  
 1 brother-in-law (wife's sister's husband)  
 2 sisters-in-law (wife's sisters)  
 2 nephews (wife's sister's sons)  
 1 cousin (wife's)

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10 crew members

The total number of crew members ranges from a minimum of 6 to 14 to as high as 25. An increased number is usually associated with rotating membership. Since the hunting and fishing economy is no longer independent and autonomous, individuals may be required to alternate between subsistence and wage employment. The crew membership includes both men and women and young apprentices or boy helpers. In addition to the captains, other specialists include harpooner, navigator, and camp cooks, who tend to be women and apprentices.

Although the whaling crew is the primary socioeconomic unit of the whaling complex, the captain's domestic family assumes a major role in the whaling activities. The captain's family initiates and supports other economic endeavors necessary to support whaling, including both subsistence and cash employment pursuits. In addition, a series of ceremonies throughout the year originates with the captain and his family. The captain may recruit other members of the local family for other hunting activities. Kin members may be called upon by the captain to participate in communal hunts for *oogruk* (bearded seal) or walrus, which are required to provide the skins to cover the boat frame. The captain contracts with several women with the specialized skills to sew the skins for the boats.

The next socioeconomic level includes the entire whaling fleet. The relationships between the crews are formalized through established organizations or regularly scheduled meetings of the crews. In Barrow, the crews are represented by the captains in the Association of Whaling Captains. Two of the six original *qalgi* (men's ceremonial houses) in Point Hope—Qagmaqtuuq and Uḡasiksikaaq—serve as the focal units of interrelated corporate kin groups represented by the crew. Other communities do not have specialized institutions but may operate through their local village council, such as in Kivalina.

These centralized organizations serve as the governing body for the whaling fleet and community-wide ceremonies associated with the whaling complex. Meetings are held prior to the commencement of the whaling season. Captains review old regulations, some of which have been codified, and adopt new rules as necessary relating to the harvest and distribution of the whale. Property marks identifying each crew are reviewed and new property marks are registered. The captains also organize themselves into working parties to construct trails over the sea ice to the leads. The organized bodies also serve in a judicial capacity when grievances or deviant actions, which are most often associated with infractions of sharing patterns, are discussed. Although individuals may not be openly chastised, captains are subtly reminded that those who do not abide by the laws will not be assisted in securing, towing, and butchering whales.

The largest and most generalized socioeconomic level is the village unit. Once a whale has been taken, most of the community rushes to assist the whaling crews as they pull the whale up onto the ice, butcher it, and prepare for the feasts both on and off the ice. In return for their assistance, they receive a share in the whale. In some communities, such as Wainwright, each household is allocated a designated share of the whale. In addition, all community members generally participate in the series of whaling feasts throughout the year.

Relationships are more defined in the smaller socioeconomic unit and become more broad and diffuse as the unit increases in size. The captain's domestic family serves as the nucleus of the whaling crew. The next level includes the entire whaling fleet, which is organized around associations or ceremonial house, and next is the community. Recently, migration of relatives away from the home community has extended social and cultural ties beyond the community.

## THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

The whaling complex exemplifies the incorporation of various elements of the capital economy into the subsistence economy. While the aboriginal system was independent of the market economy, the present system can best be described as dual or mixed. The economic systems can be held analytically distinct, but the Inupiat experience demonstrates a functioning interrelationship between the two. Economic changes have been successfully adapted to the social and cultural sphere of the whaling complex.

Capital is necessary to purchase equipment and supplies manufactured in the macroeconomy which are used in the procurement of subsistence goods. The Inupiat incorporated different types of commercially manufactured weaponry, including shoulder and darting guns, bombs, and steel-headed harpoons during the commercial whaling era. The weaponry has not been modified since the late 1800s, but it is still classified as modern technology. Although the equipment is archaic, dangerous, and inefficient, the whalers continue to purchase it because the federal government did not allow improvements to be made on the guns and bombs until 1978.

During the late 1960s, other modern technological equipment and supplies were adopted. Radio transmitters replaced the traditional communication system. Prior to the introduction of the new communication devices, signals between crews were made by skin boats moving into the lead away from the edge of the ice where the boat was visible for miles along the lead. The position and movement of the boat conveyed messages about ice and whale movements. Snow machines have replaced dog teams and are preferred, since the dogs' barking frightened the whales. Block and tackles were also adopted to pull the whale onto the ice.

The Inupiat continue to use skin boats, which are well adapted to whale hunting in the sea-ice leads. The skin boats are light and relatively easy to carry over the shorefast ice to the lead and back in the event that an emergency evacuation is necessary. Skin boats have great resiliency should floating ice be struck, and they move quietly through the water. A number of crews attempt to use aluminum boats, but they make considerable noise moving through the water. According to the hunters, whales migrating through the ice are extremely sensitive to sound. That is the reason why outboard motors, recently introduced, are banned until a whale has been harpooned. In the fall season, commercial boats and motors are used since the whales are pursued through the ice-free ocean and they are not as sensitive to sound in the open water.

Following are the major pieces of equipment, supplies, and services required for whaling and their estimated costs:

<i>umiaq</i> (skin boat) frame	\$ 600.00
6 skins at \$ 50.00 each	300.00
skin sewing for <i>umiaq</i>	300.00
2 shoulder guns at \$ 325.00 each	650.00
darting gun	350.00
bombs;	595.00
10 shoulder guns at \$ 32.00 each	
10 darting guns at \$ 27.50 each	
harpoon	50.00
block and tackle	1,000.00
2 skin pokes or plastic floats	
at \$ 58.00 each	116.00
rope (25 fathoms)	150.00

outboard motor (25 horsepower)	960.00
snow machine	2,000.00
sled	250.00
tent frame	200.00
camp equipment	200.00
gas, food, cigarettes	1,500.00
feasts	1,000.00
radio transmitter	140.00
Total	<u>\$ 10,361.00</u>

The list includes the major pieces of equipment and costs, and usually two or three sleds and snow machines are required. Because of ice terrain and heavy sled loads, snow machines may last only one or two seasons. Costs vary between villages, and some equipment is shared. For example, fewer than a half dozen individuals on the North Slope own complete block and tackle sets. Some captains pay a small retainer fee to their crew members. Captains who catch whales must bear the costs of several feasts throughout the year.

Cash to support the whaling enterprise is derived in a variety of ways. The hunter may alternate between subsistence and cash employment by working part time, temporarily, or for a short period on the job and then a period off. Other forms involve seasonal cash employment during peak construction periods and subsistence employment during primary subsistence seasons. Another pattern is for family members to alternate among themselves between working for wages and hunting.

The hunter or whaling crew may receive financial support from one or more relatives—spouse, parent, or hunting partner. In many instances, the wife is employed as a wage earner while the husband is involved in subsistence activities. Women are also often financial sponsors for their fathers', brothers', or sons' whaling activities. The sponsor may provide cash directly to the hunter or may furnish the equipment and supplies in exchange for a share in the subsistence harvest. Sponsors may establish reciprocal relations with more than one hunter.

The subsistence economy also generates a limited cash income. The primary income obtained from whaling is from the sale of arts and craft products from whale bone, baleen, and the ear drum. However, income from these sources is extremely limited since only a few craftsmen carve or etch whale bone or baleen. Cleaned and etched baleen may sell for \$50 and intricately etched baleen may bring \$100 or more. Whale bone crafts average \$35 a piece. The eight remaining baleen basket weavers sell their products at prices ranging from \$125 to \$500, depending on the size. A single whale could yield several thousand dollars if all the whale bone and baleen were used for arts and crafts. However, this income is never immediately realized since the whale bone can be worked on only after it has been cleaned of all meat, which by the natural process takes several years. Profits do not accrue to any single crew member since the baleen is shared among two or three crews and their members.

The captain, whaling crew, financial sponsor, and others who assisted in the whaling enterprise receive no financial gain. Although *maktak* (skin with thin layer of blubber) has reportedly been sold among community members, the general exchange is based on sharing practices. One community store reportedly serves as a "protein bank." Villagers sell portions of their share of the whale to the local store when they need cash and purchase the *maktak* back when they can. The price of other subsistence products sold or exchanged among the Inupiat does not include the cost of labor or a profit.

## CUSTOMARY LAWS

The Inupiat whaling complex is governed by customary laws which have evolved over the last millennium and continues to function to integrate the division of socio-economic organization of the Inupiat society. Institutional laws that outline the rights, obligations, and expectations of the individual Inupiat regulate both the production and distribution system. An elaborately structured cooperative hunting system maximizes the productive efficiency of the harvest. Formalized distribution insures that goods and services are shared through the social network, and this in turn insures participation of the labor force in the whaling economy. Variations exist between the villages, but a common general pattern prevails. Customary laws are sacred and hold the same force as Western codified laws.

### Possessory Rights

Hunting and fishing societies have generally been described as lacking the concept of real property. Spencer [1959] characterized Inupiat society as devoid of real property ownership but recognized usufruct rights to hunting and fishing sites. The whaling complex demonstrates a rigidly defined and complex system of possessory rights to animals in nature and suggests a great antiquity for the law. Hunters have exchanged their fishing holes in the ice for rifles, indicating that property rights exist even on sea and lake ice.

As noted previously, use of property marks by captains to indicate ownership appears to be an ancient practice. Murdock [1892] cited references that indicate this practice was well established during the early 1880s. The following is a sample of property marks from the 1976 Whaling Register of Barrow Captains:

	Robert Aiken
 or 	Arnold Brower, Sr.
	David Brower
	Luther Leavitt
	James Matumeak
P.N.	Percy Nusunginya
	Bert Okakok
	Joe Sikvayungak

Perhaps the best illustration of both similarities and contrasts between Inupiat and Western law can be demonstrated by citing one of the most classic Western "law of finders" cases, *Pierson vs. Post*. This case, which was argued before the New York courts in 1805, raised the question of rights of ownership of animals in nature.

Post originally brought a trespass suit against Pierson, charging that his pursuit of a fox gave him title over Pierson, who had intercepted and shot the fox. The court rendered a favorable decision for Post. Pierson appealed the decision to the New York Supreme Court, arguing that property rights in animals in nature were acquired by occupancy alone. The judgment ruled that the lower court had erred and that the decision should be reversed. Pierson was considered to be the owner since he had shot and killed the fox. The decision was clear in establishing that property rights in such animals are acquired by occupancy and that the pursuit alone does not give title.

Inupiat law, like the *Pierson vs. Post* case, holds that pursuit and discovery of the whale alone does not constitute ownership for the pursuing crew. However, in stark contrast to Western law, which recognizes that property rights are acquired by the hunter who kills the animal, Inupiat law does not convey title to the captain and crew which kills a whale if they did not fire the first bomb into the whale. The cardinal law in all the whaling villages gives absolute title to the crew which fired the first bomb and whose property mark is found on the whale, even if the crew was not successful in killing the whale.

If several bombs with more than one property mark are found, as often happens, the whale belongs to the crew which fired the first bomb. The rightful owner can be determined by matching the property marks with the order of the whaling crew camps stationed along the lead. Since the migration of the whales is northward, the southernmost crew can be assumed to have made the first strike.

In a number of instances, whaling crews have killed whales and assumed ownership only to discover the property marks of another captain as they were butchering, and they had to surrender ownership to that captain. Recently, a captain was discovered to be the rightful owner when another crew began butchering a whale. He assumed title and continued to butcher the whale only to find still another captain's marking. He then transferred his claim to the proper owner. Because bombs are inefficient, several are often required to kill a whale, and ownership is transferred successively until the first bomb is discovered in the whale.

Property marks must be found in the whale to claim undisputed ownership. In one instance, a captain was positive that he had fired the first bomb into a whale which was eventually taken by another crew. The second captain concurred and agreed that he would turn the whale over to the first captain once they had located his property marks. While butchering the whale, the captains followed the path of the bomb fired by the first captain through the whale. They found that the bomb had passed through the whale, and since the first captain's property mark could not be found in the whale, title reverted to the second captain.

Whales which have been wounded and retrieved by a second crew are still

considered to be the property of the crew which fired the first bomb into the whale. Abandoning pursuit does not diminish property rights if the markings of the first crew are found in the whale.

The Utkeavik Inupiat allow only one exception to the first bomb ownership law. If the property mark of a captain from another community is found in a whale, the Utkeavik crew which fired the first bomb takes possession of the whale.

Rare incidents have occurred in which captains have been reported to take advantage of the first bomb traditional law. Captains have been known to fire the first bomb into a whale even if it is apparent that they will not be able to mortally wound the whale or shoot the bomb into a vital area. As noted earlier, the captains consider this behavior to be a proper topic of discussion at their annual meetings. Whaling captains will not assist captains who deviate from the law. Amending the first bomb law of ownership to specify legitimate conditions for shooting the first bomb has not been pursued since the whaling captains maintain that firing the first bomb implies that the captain intends to take the whale.

The act of firing the first bomb into the whale establishes the right to legal possession of the whale. The captain's property mark found in the whale validates his claim. The captain's flag raised over the whaling camp or his house proclaims to the other crews and to the community that he has taken possession of a whale.

### **Distribution Laws**

The whale is distributed among the whaling crews and throughout the community according to established customary laws. Formal laws regulate initial distribution among the whaling crews who assist in taking the whale and secondary distribution throughout the annual series of ceremonies. Under Western law, the owner of an animal is at liberty to dispose of it as he sees fit, as evidenced in the *Pierson vs. Post* case. In contrast, Inupiat law dictates the disposition of the sections held in trust by the captain for the community and establishes the vested interest of the crews.

Although each community has its own way of sectioning a whale, the distribution patterns are similar throughout the communities. The captain and crew that shot the whale first get the prime cuts. The section to which a crew is entitled is determined by the order in which it arrived to assist. The best cuts are shared with those who arrived first, and the least favored portions are given to those who arrived last. Opposing sections of the right and left sides are given to the second and third crews, the fourth and fifth crews, and the sixth and seventh crews. The optimum number of crews to tow and share a whale appears to be seven, since the eighth and ninth crews share in the skull, which has the least amount of meat.

Although the possessory law gives title to the captain who fired the first bomb, initial distribution laws also establish that the crew which actually killed or retrieved a lost whale is entitled to receive shares beyond its usual share. The captain who fired the first bomb but abandoned or lost the whale surrenders his right to certain sections of the whale to the crew which killed or retrieved the whale. The crew which

actually killed the whale but did not fire the first bomb has the option of having its bombs replaced or receiving additional shares of *maktak*.

The first whale taken during each season is shared among the entire whaling fleet. This customary rule applies even if all the crews did not assist in taking the whale or even if a crew was not present on the ice but had demonstrated an intent to participate in the harvest. Additionally, captains do not share in the first whale they catch. Although the captain goes through the formality of taking his share, he must immediately distribute his share while he is still on the ice.

As noted, the captain's share is significantly larger than are the shares of his crew or other crews. Although he asserts rights of ownership to the whale, he may in fact be viewed as a trustee since his share (including approximately the lower half of the whale, flippers, and tail) is governed by formalized rules which dictate the secondary distribution during the annual feast. The baleen is divided in half between the captain and his crew, and the crew members further divide their half among themselves. The captain divides his share of the baleen in half if another crew killed or retrieved the whale. The successful captain is expected to feed and provide shares to the people who assisted in pulling and butchering the whale. A piece of the whale is cut off immediately and fed to everyone on the ice. The captain also selects two persons, usually the two oldest or most faithful crew members and gives them the upper portion of the flippers. Once the men have completed butchering the whale, the captain gives a signal to the women to allow them to *pilaneak*, or cut as much meat off the carcass as they can until they become tired. The captain's wife also distributes either to every household or to the elderly or needy, who are described as those without hunters in the family, sections of the *maktak* and meat which formerly was designated as the shaman's share.

## POINT HOPE'S DISTRIBUTION PATTERNS

Point Hope's initial and secondary distribution pattern represents one of the most complex systems among the Inupiat. With the exception of slight changes in the flippers and minor variations in the ventral mid-strips, the division of whale in Point Hope remains similar to that reported by VanStone [1962: 49 ff]. Additional information on the rules regulating the butchering of the tail section has been obtained.<sup>3</sup>

Point Hope rules require that crews arrive in their *umiaq* at the site where a whale is taken. If crew members leave their *umiaq* and cross the ice to the whale while the lead is open, they receive the last shares. If travel in the lead is not possible and a whale is taken, harpooners from each crew race over the ice to the whale and strike it with their paddle. The order in which they hit the whale determines the section to which they are entitled.

The tail section or *Angirruk* has special significance in the whaling complex. The

<sup>3</sup> Data on the *Angirruk* were provided to me by Ernie Frankson who obtained his information from Herbert Kinneeveauk who learned it from Samaruun.

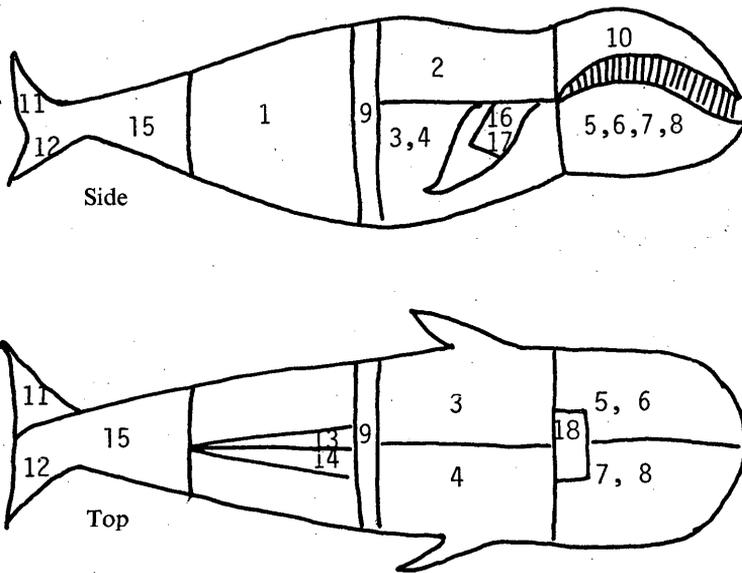


Figure 1. Point Hope Distribution.

- Section*
- 1 Captain's share which is held for distribution to community members during feasts. (If section 18 is not enough to feed the workers on the ice, additional portions are taken from section 1.)
  - 2 Captain's crew divides this section.
  - 3-4 Second and third boats which arrive or shoot a bomb into the whale.
  - 5-6 Fourth and fifth boats. In addition these crews share the tongue and *maktak*.
  - 7-8 Sixth and seventh boats.
  - 9 Eighth crew. The captain measures the width of this section with the foot length of the crew member with the largest feet. If an eighth crew does not come to assist, this section is divided among the captain and his crew.
  - 10 Divided among other crews. The head contains only *maktak*.
  - 11-12 The flukes are distributed in the *qalgi* by the captain and his wife during the second day of spring feast.
  - 13-14 The captain's wife distributes meat and *maktak* from this section to every household. Formerly this section was given to the shaman who used his powers to kill the whale.
  - 15 The tail section is butchered during the Slush Ice Feast in fall or pre-whaling spring feast according to the rules of the *qalgi*.
  - 16-17 The captain gives these sections to his two oldest crew members.
  - 18 This portion is the first cut from the whale before it is marked and butchered. Enough *maktak* is cooked to provide the workers with two meals.
- Baleen* Baleen is divided equally between the captain and the crew. The crew divides their half among themselves. If another crew kills or secures the whale with a float, the captain is expected to divide his half of the baleen with this crew.

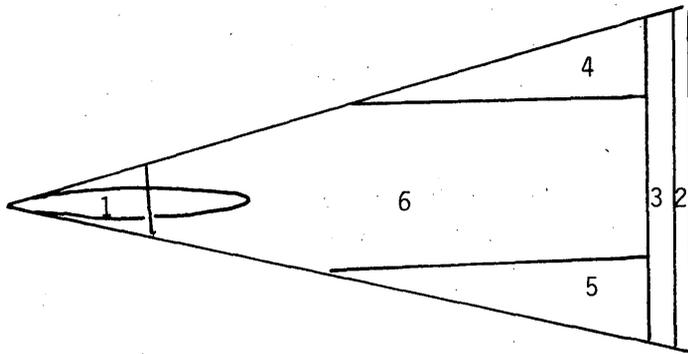


Figure 2. Point Hope *Aggirruk* distribution.

Section	Shares
1	Captain's share; includes approximately one foot of the tip.
2	Captain's share; measures the width of one finger.
3	Captain's crew's share (called <i>Minaq</i> ); measures the width of four fingers.
4-5	Section called <i>Sulugaq</i> . One side is distributed among people attending the feast. The opposing section is saved for individuals who are at their hunting campsites during the feast.
6	Shared among everyone in Point Hope.

initial distribution law provides that the captain who caught the whale serves as the trustee over this section which measures approximately eight feet. The secondary distribution laws adopted by the *qalgi* outline the shares community members receive during the pre-whaling spring feast or the fall Slush Ice Feast.

Point Hope has a series of institutionalized feasts in which secondary distributions of the whale are made. The Spring Feast or pre-whaling season feast is celebrated in the *qalgi* prior to going out onto the ice. If a captain caught more than five whales, the *aggirruk* (tail section) is served at this time. After the crew members have feasted, any remaining *maktak* is left for community members.

The *Qaksrug* feast is held on the first day the skin boats are brought on shore from the ice. At this time, the wives of the captains who caught whales serve *mikigaaq* (sour meat) with *maktak*.

The *Avarrigii*, which is the second day of the feast, begins in one *qalgi* and moves to the other. The captain and his wife cut the flippers into thin slices and distribute them to everyone in the *qalgi*. A *nalukataq* (blanket toss) is held to honor any captain who has caught his first whale and shared it with the entire community.

The Slush Ice Feast is held in the fall when the slush ice begins to form in the ocean. Captains who caught one to four whales will serve the *aggirruk*. Inupiat from Kotzebue, Kivalina and Noatak arrive in Point Hope to wait for the slush ice to form and the following feast.

Point Hope, like other villages, participates in a series of feasts during Thanksgiving and Christmas during which the captains distribute additional shares.<sup>4</sup> Point

<sup>4</sup> Estimates made in Barrow indicate that each family received approximately one hundred pounds of *maktak*, whale meat, and fish during the Thanksgiving feast in 1976.

Hope hosts week-long festivities during the Christmas holidays. They hold a series of eleven old customary dances on December 30, and the following day they participate in the *Uigurak* (sometimes called *Uinurak*), the Inupiat masquerade dance which is held at full moon.

## CONCLUSION

The bowhead whaling complex remains the foundation of Inupiat culture and society. The cooperative hunting activities throughout the year and the communal patterns of sharing the whale integrate the society as a cohesive unit. The Inupiat exemplify a society that has developed strategies to incorporate aspects of the capital economy which are necessary to support the productive effort of the traditional economy.

The Inupiat hunted whales in relative obscurity and continued their ancient pursuit unchallenged until 1977 when the International Whaling Commission (IWC) imposed a moratorium on bowhead whale hunting. The Inupiat joined with the Siberian Yupik whalers of Saint Lawrence Island to organize the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) to persuade the United States to file an objection to the IWC action. After concerted political efforts by the AEWC, the IWC established a quota of 12 whales, which the whalers protested was inadequate. The thousand-year-old whaling complex faces additional external pressure with the planned petroleum development offshore in the Beaufort Sea, which the Inupiat maintain poses additional threats to their cultural survival.

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