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メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2009-04-28 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Burch, Ernest S. メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	<a href="https://doi.org/10.15021/00003456">https://doi.org/10.15021/00003456</a>

## Traditional Eskimo Societies in Northwest Alaska

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Most recent students of the traditional Eskimos of Northwest Alaska have divided them into two groups, the *Tariurmiut* (coastal people) and *Nunamiut* (inland people). Unfortunately this classification applies only to the northernmost third of the area, and even there it is reasonably accurate only for the period from about 1885 to 1910. For these and other reasons the dichotomy is a distortion of reality. It is a view that has seriously retarded our understanding of the social organization and ecology of the area.

Dorothy Jean Ray [1967, 1975b] has presented a much more sophisticated analysis of early contact social organization and ecology than is manifest in the *Tariurmiut/Nunamiut* distinction. She has depicted the early contact Eskimo as having been organized in terms of relatively cohesive political units which she called "tribes," each with a different adjustment to its surroundings. My own research has confirmed Ray's findings, and has permitted me to extend them analytically, temporally and geographically. This paper is a summary of the results of this research.

During the 1816-1842 period there were 25 Eskimo societies in Northwest Alaska each of which was a socio-territorial network of large, bilaterally extended local families. These societies were segmental in that each local family was relatively self-sufficient with respect to the political, economic, integration, and information processes. The several family segments of a given society were nonetheless sufficiently interdependent to constitute a unified social system. Each such system was socially, territorially, and culturally distinct from its neighbors, although inter-societal relations were extensive and thoroughly structured. The available evidence suggests that, despite periodic (and occasionally extreme) short-term changes at the regional level, both the individual societies and the entire system of societies had developed gradually, *in situ*, over a prolonged period of time. [Eskimos, Societies, Northwest Alaska, Ethnographic Reconstruction]

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I thank Dale Russell, Reid Topping, and especially Thomas C. Correll for assistance in conducting the research on which this paper is based. For comments on an earlier draft, I am grateful to the participants in the symposium itself, and to Albert Heinrich, Clifford G. Hickey, Arthur E. Hippler, Margaret Lantis, Charles and Grace Lucier, Dorothy Jean Ray, and James W. VanStone. Finally, I thank A. S. Budzinski and especially Janet Cosby for their help in preparing the manuscript for publication.

The modern ethnographic record is "wildly skewed and unrepresentative of aboriginal society," according to Elman Service [1971: 152]. The reasons for this state of affairs include a number of developments associated with European contact, including demographic reduction, disruptions of traditional patterns of socio-political organization and warfare, and acculturation [p. 152; SAHLINS 1972: 2 ff.; STEWARD 1969: 292 ff.]. Because the ethnographic record is deemed to be so unrepresentative of the pre-contact situation, there is a small but growing trend among North American anthropologists [e.g., WOBST 1978] to reject or ignore it. But it seems to me that, if the modern ethnographic record is as misleading as Service and Wobst say it is, then the solution does not lie in abandoning it, but in correcting the record through historical and archaeological research.

With that goal in mind, I set out several years ago to reconstruct the general 19th century social and demographic structures of the Inupik-Eskimo-speaking population of Northwest Alaska, i.e., the people who refer to themselves as *Inupiat*. When I began my research I thought that the basic outlines of the social history of the Northwest Alaskan Eskimos were known, and that all I had to do was fill in the details. I soon learned that the exact opposite was the case: there was plenty of information about minutiae, but rather little about the broad outlines. As a consequence, the Northwest Alaskan material had indeed been subject to some of the "skewing" that Service and others have been concerned about. The goal of the present paper, therefore, is to reverse that trend by presenting a comprehensive summary of the general structure of traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo social organization as my research indicates it really was.

The primary source of the information on which this paper is based is a group of 74 individuals whom I interviewed at length on one or more occasions, primarily in 1969-70,<sup>1</sup> but also at various other times between 1960 and 1976. My informants were selected originally for their knowledge of specific regions and/or time periods. Eleven of the 74 proved to have an unusually broad understanding of the social and demographic histories of their people; they were interviewed at greater length and about a wider variety of topics than the others. The field data were supplemented by information extracted from literary and archival sources. This material was analyzed separately for three different time periods, the first being 1816-42,<sup>2</sup> the second being 1848-54,<sup>3</sup> and the third being 1880-1889.<sup>4</sup> The historical sources enabled me to corroborate important aspects of my informants' testimony, and also to place the developments they described in a relatively precise chronological sequence. In addition, I made use of the early 20th century observations of Diamond Jenness (1913-16, 1918) and Vilhjalmur Stefansson [1909, 1913a, 1913b, 1914a, 1914b] in arctic Alaska, and the important research of Dorothy Jean Ray [1964, 1967, 1971, 1975a, 1975b] on the social history of the Seward Peninsula/Bering Strait area.

## PREVIOUS VIEWS

Europeans first visited the Bering Strait sector of Northwest Alaska in the 18th

century. By 1830 they had explored the entire coastal portion of the area. Although the reports of those explorers contain many useful data on the natives of the region, the emphasis is on easily observed phenomena, such as clothing, weapons, houses, modes of transportation, and their own interaction with the people they met. Matters such as socio-territorial organization and religion were generally beyond their purview, so of course they could not describe them; but their main interest was in discovering new lands, not in conducting ethnographic research.

The earliest and most important exception to the above generalization was Alexander Kashevarov [VANSTONE, ed., 1977]. In the summer of 1838 Kashevarov was in charge of a survey of the coast between Kotzebue Sound and Pt. Barrow. Because it was travelling in small boats very close to shore, his party had unusual opportunities to meet the Natives living there. In addition, it included a multi-lingual interpreter from Norton Sound, a person who could put questions to the people of Northwest Alaska, and who could comprehend their responses. Through this interpreter, Kashevarov was able to communicate more effectively with the people he met than any other explorer prior to 1850, and probably prior to the 1880s. His observations are thus of unusual importance from an ethnographic point of view.

Kashevarov reported in his summary account [VANSTONE, ed., 1977: 81] that all the people he encountered in Northwest Alaska "are of the same tribe, [although] they are divided into several families living in friendly or unfriendly relations with each other." In his journal of daily occurrences, however, he repeatedly referred to *each* of these "families" as a "tribe" (e.g., pp. 26-30). The members of each "tribe" occupied several villages within a clearly bounded territory, a territory they were quite willing to defend against intrusion by outsiders. Whatever these entities may have been, they were not "families" as one would ordinarily understand that term. Instead, they were some kind of socio-territorial unit which superseded in scope not only family units but also village units. If one is not too rigorous about the use of technical terms, "tribe" would seem to be an appropriate appellation for them. Unfortunately Kashevarov did not tell us much about these tribes beyond noting the fact of their existence.

The next European observer to comment knowledgeably on population divisions in Northwest Alaska was John Simpson [1875], who spent several years there around mid-century as a member of the Franklin search expeditions of 1848-1854. On a general level, Simpson [1875: 233] referred to the "Western Eskimo," whom he defined as follows:

Everyone living in an area included by a line extended between the mouth of the Colville River and the deepest angle of Norton Sound, and the coast-line from the latter through Behring Straits and the Arctic Sea back to the Colville.

Simpson's "Western Eskimo" were thus equivalent to my "Northwest Alaskan Eskimos," i.e., the Inupik-speaking population of Alaska, or *Inupiat*. He reported that the "Western Eskimo divide themselves into numerous sections, named after the portions of land they inhabit or the rivers flowing through them..." (p. 233).

Unfortunately, Simpson did not list or otherwise describe these "sections," so it is not unambiguously clear that he was referring to socio-territorial units. His remarks imply, however, that these "sections" were territorial in nature; indeed, they look suspiciously like Kashevarov's "tribes."

In the 1880s several European observers commented on sub-divisions of the larger Northwest Alaskan Eskimo population. On the one hand, on the basis of research carried out at Barrow in 1881-83, John Murdoch [1892: 42] stated flatly that he was "unable to discover...the slightest trace of tribal organization or of division into gentes..." a view shared by the expedition leader P. H. Ray [1885: 38]. On the other hand, E. W. Nelson [1899: 24], who spent the period of 1877-81 in the Norton Sound region, asserted that the population of Northwest Alaska was "divided into groups characterized by distinct dialects" (p. 26), and he frequently referred (e.g., pp. 229, 327) to an earlier period during which "inter-tribal" communication and "inter-tribal" warfare were different from the pattern he was able to observe personally. If there had been inter-tribal relations, of course, there had to have been tribes. Unfortunately, like his predecessors, Nelson failed to provide any details about the structure of these tribes.

Views similar to Nelson's were presented in separate accounts by John W. Kelly and Henry D. Woolfe, both of whom lived in various parts of Northwest Alaska during the 1880s. Kelly [WELLS and KELLY 1890: map] named and located 17 tribes, while Woolfe identified 13 tribes in one publication [1893: 130] and 21 in another [1894: 182-183]. Both authors employed the term "tribe" in a socio-territorial sense, and both contrasted the weakened state of those tribes in the 1880s with their former condition.

A generation after the reports of the 1880s had been published, V. Stefansson spent some time in North Alaska. He, too, referred to "tribes" in the area [e.g., 1914b: 9-11], and he mentioned 18 of them as being or as having been situated in the region we now refer to as the "Arctic Slope" of the Brooks Range. Like his predecessors, Stefansson contrasted the then present state of those tribes with their former condition, noting that several of them had become virtually extinct during the previous quarter of a century or so. Also like his predecessors, Stefansson failed to tell us what he meant by the term "tribe," and he did not describe them in enough detail for one to infer what they had been like.

The specific "tribes" named by Kashevarov, Nelson, Kelly, Woolfe, and Stefansson are sometimes the same, sometimes different. The discrepancies among the lists can be reconciled easily with data that are now available, but little is to be gained by effecting such an adjustment here. All that is necessary for present purposes is to note the main conclusions which emerge from their combined accounts. The first is that the Inupik-speaking population of Northwest Alaska had been divided into a number of socio-territorial units (of unspecified nature) during at least the early and middle parts of the 19th century. The second major conclusion is that these units had broken down considerably during the second half of the century.

There was a hiatus of several decades in anthropological reporting on the Native

population of Northwest Alaska after Stefansson left. Finally, in the early 1940s, Froelich Rainey and Helge Larsen carried out research among the Eskimos of Point Hope and Wainwright. On the basis of their investigations they developed the notion of a twofold division of Northwest Alaskan Eskimos [LARSEN and RAINEY 1948: 24 ff.]. On the one hand, there were the *Nunamiut*, or inland people, while on the other, there were the *Tariurmiut*, or coastal people. With the anthropological discovery of the ("Nunamiut") inhabitants of Anaktuvuk Pass near the end of that decade, this dichotomy gained considerable currency in the rapidly expanding literature on the Northwest Alaskan Eskimos [e.g., CAMPBELL 1968, CLARK 1974: 25 ff.; GUBSER 1965; HALL 1970; INGSTAD 1954; LARSEN 1958, 1973; POSPISIL 1964; RAINEY 1947: 240; SPENCER 1959: 14, 22, 209 *et passim*.].

All of the authors just cited agree that the *Nunamiut* lived in the interior, and that the *Tariurmiut* lived along the coast. Beyond that there is significant disagreement among them as to just what sorts of entities were being referred to be those labels. One view, shared by Campbell [1968: 1-5] and Rainey [1947: 240], was that the *Nunamiut* and *Tariurmiut* were "tribes," i.e., some kind of socio-political unit with a territorial base.<sup>5</sup> A contrasting view, developed most fully by Spencer [1959: 22, 209], was that there were no tribes of *any* kind in aboriginal Northwest Alaska; *Nunamiut* and *Tariurmiut* were merely "different ways of life" within a common Eskimo culture. In his view, the traditional Eskimos were technically free to live and travel wherever they wanted. Their distribution and movement were restricted only by limitations on their personal knowledge of how to survive in particular districts, with the critical break coming between coastal and inland regions. The issue was complicated by Gubser [1965], however, whose most comprehensive unit was the "band," but who published (pp. 338-339) a map of "group" territories that looks remarkably similar to the tribal maps Woolfe and Kelly published more than half a century earlier. A final confusing note was introduced by Larsen [1958: 578; 1973: 123; cf. HALL 1970] who divided the *Nunamiut* into two distinct groups, the "Western" and the "Eastern" *Nunamiut*.

Among the investigators most intimately involved in the development of the *Nunamiut* and *Tariurmiut* concepts, i.e., those cited in the preceding paragraphs, there is some variation in analytic viewpoint, which could account for the conflicting analyses. An outsider examining this literature, however, is likely to come to one or the other of two specific conclusions: (1) either the Northwest Alaskan Eskimos were free to go wherever they wanted, but generally chose to live either on the coast or in the interior, or else (2) they belonged to one of two socio-territorial units, the *Nunamiut* or the *Tariurmiut*.

In an important paper published in 1967, Dorothy Jean Ray indicated that both of those conclusions would be wrong. Ray did not attack the *Nunamiut/Tariurmiut* dichotomy directly because she was concerned with an area south of the one where that distinction had been applied [but cf. Larsen 1958: 580-581]. However, she explicitly rejected the notion that the Eskimos had been free to go wherever they wanted [RAY 1967: 373], and she developed at length a general view of Eskimo socio-

territorial organization that is quite incompatible with all of the accounts of *Nunamiut* and *Tariurmiut*. Instead of some kind of vaguely defined tribal entity or life style, Ray claimed [1967; 1975b: 103 ff.] that the Eskimos had been organized into socio-territorial units characterized by quite precisely defined social systems, and also by much more restricted territories, than any author had claimed for either the *Nunamiut* or the *Tariurmiut*.

My own research has confirmed most of Ray's general conclusions about Eskimo social organization, and many of her specific ones as well. My studies also have permitted me to extend her findings, analytically, temporally, and geographically. Interestingly, and I think significantly, the general view we share with one another is fully consistent with the one presented in Kashevarov's journal of 1838.

### TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

The most fundamental conclusion to emerge from the research conducted independently by Ray and myself is that the early 19th century Northwest Alaskan Eskimo population was organized in terms of several autonomous socio-territorial units. Ray [1967; 1975b: 103 ff.] has called these units "tribes," while I refer to them as "societies." In the present section I review the evidence in support of this central thesis. In subsequent sections I supplement this discussion by outlining the major characteristics of the traditional societies, and by summarizing the relationships between and among them.

The primary evidence I have concerning the existence of societies in Northwest Alaska consists of several dozen unequivocal and unambiguous statements from informants to the effect that they did exist in the early and middle parts of the 19th century. Not only did my informants assert the general fact of their existence, but they could define the boundaries of a number of them with considerable precision. Even more important, they could contrast the social relations that existed *within* the units with those that existed *between* them. Ray's similar conclusions [RAY 1964: 65, n. 1; 1967: 393, n. 14; 1975b: 255 ff.] are apparently based on the same kind of evidence. Since all other recent authors have either implicitly or explicitly denied the former existence of such units, the challenge is to corroborate our informants' claims.

The most compelling support for the view that socio-territorial units did exist in early 19th century Northwest Alaska is contained in Kashevarov's 1838 journal [VANSTONE, ed., 1977]. As Kashevarov travelled along the coast he encountered the members of six "tribes" between Pt. Barrow and Kotzebue Sound. Through his interpreter he learned not only that there were definite geographical boundaries to these units, but in several cases he was told exactly where those boundaries were located. For example, on the afternoon of July 17, 1838, the party:

passed Point Belcher, on which is the first settlement to the N. [of the Silalinagmiut tribe], Atanik, occupied by a people belonging to the Kaklignmiut tribe (which begins at this settlement and continues northward)... The inhabitants

of Atanik, taking us for their enemies, the Tykagmiuts [Point Hope tribe], met us with weapons in hand, bows and arrows, but after we had explained our situation through [our interpreter] they made friends with us and each accepted a leaf of tobacco from us [VANSTONE ed., 1977: 28-30].

How is one to explain an encounter like this except as *prima facie* evidence that socio-territorial units of some kind—"societies"—did in fact exist? Since Kashevarov had several encounters similar to the one described in the above quote, a positive conclusion seems inescapable.

Kashevarov's account of four of the six "tribes" agrees exactly with the information presented to me by informants regarding the same area. The exceptions are his Silalinagmiut Tribe, of the Northwest Coast, and his Kakligmiuts, of the Point Barrow area. My information on the location of the boundary between them was imprecise, and I placed it incorrectly in previously published maps [e.g., BURCH 1975a: 11]. But that is the *only* discrepancy between my information and Kashevarov's account, and it involved an error of only a few kilometers on my part. The important point is that Kashevarov in 1838 confirmed the view expressed by my informants in 1970 to the effect that there actually were two societies situated along this section of coast. To my knowledge no other author has identified any such division in this area.<sup>6</sup> In confirming the existence of the specific cases, of course, Kashevarov was also corroborating the existence of the general class.

The above might seem a rather slender basis on which to consider my informants' views to be satisfactorily corroborated, consisting as it does of only one account out of many. It should be recognized in this regard that no author prior to Murdoch [1892] ever *denied* the existence of tribes; the subject simply was not discussed at all. As was noted earlier, John Simpson [1875: 233] observed between 1848 and 1854 that the Northwest Alaskan Eskimo population was divided into "sections." Since he did not tell us what he meant by that term, it cannot be said that his account contradicts those of my informants. In a broad sense, his remark could even be regarded as providing corroboration.

It is also important to recognize that during the first half of the 19th century, only two parties traversed long sections of the coast in a manner whereby they would clearly cross societal boundaries. One was Kashevarov's party of 1838, the other was Elson's detachment from Beechey's [1831, I: 417 ff.] expedition in 1826. Both parties explored the coast between Pt. Barrow and Kotzebue Sound in small boats. Kashevarov reported the existence of "tribes," whereas Elson did not, although in other respects their experiences and observations were remarkably similar. However, Kashevarov's party included an interpreter and Elson's did not, which means that the former had much more effective communication with the Natives than the latter did. Furthermore, Elson's crew was comprised entirely of Englishmen who were travelling in wooden boats. Kashevarov's party was made up of Aleuts and Russian-Aleut creoles who were travelling in skin boats. It was frequently mistaken for a party of Eskimo invaders from another district, and it was treated accordingly. Therefore, we can learn from Kashevarov's experiences how Eskimos from another

district would have been dealt with—and it was not in a friendly manner. None of those conditions obtained in the case of Elson's party, although he, too, was treated with some insolence. Finally, it should be noted that Elson did not *deny* that there were tribes in the area, he simply did not mention them at all.

The evidence provided by my informants and the data collected independently by Ray indicate clearly the existence of "societies" in early 19th century Northwest Alaska. Practically all of the historical literature from the same period either corroborates our informants' views or else does not deal with the subject one way or another. These facts do not establish the conclusion beyond any doubt, but at the very least they put the onus on those who deny the former existence of societies in Northwest Alaska to make their case more rigorously than they have in the past.

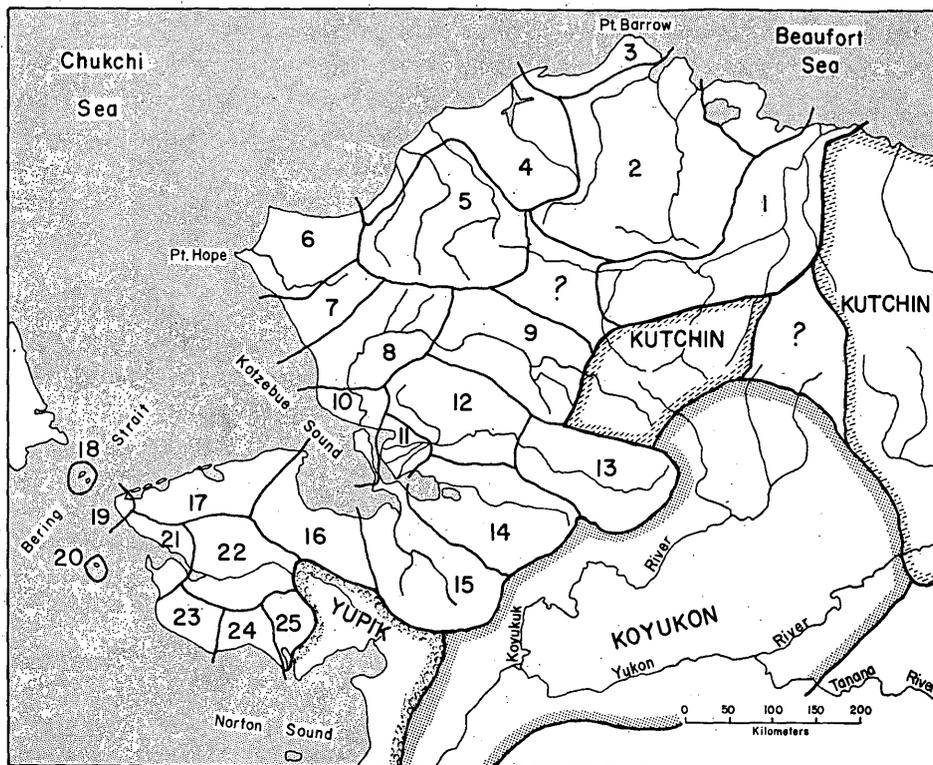
The next problem is to establish precisely which societies were in operation during the early 19th century. This is a simple matter in many cases, but quite difficult in others. Even where the evidence showing that a particular society did exist is relatively good, problems often remain regarding the location of its boundaries, or perhaps in determining the precise time period during which the system was in operation. The presentation and discussion of all the data relevant to these determinations would require hundreds of pages. In lieu of such an account I have included an appendix in which I summarize basic information on each society. In addition, the 25 societies that were in operation during the 1816–1842 period are listed in Table 1, and the locations of their respective territories are shown in Fig. 1.<sup>7</sup> All subsequent references to specific societies will include both the numerical and the lexical designations used in the table and map.

It must be emphasized that the focus throughout this paper is on the 1816–42 period. The number of societies, the size and geographic extent of each one, and various other aspects of the individual units fluctuated to some extent over time,

**Table 1.** Northwest Alaskan Eskimo Societies of the 1816–1842 Period.

Map Ref.*	Designation	Map Ref.	Designation
1	Colville River	14	Selawik
2	Arctic Coastal Plain	15	Buckland
3	Barrow	16	Goodhope Bay
4	Northwest Coast	17	Shishmaref
5	Utukok River	18	Diomed Islands
6	Point Hope	19	Wales
7	Kivalina	20	King Island
8	Lower Noatak	21	Port Clarence
9	Upper Noatak	22	Kuzitrin River
10	Kotzebue	23	Cape Nome
11	Kobuk Delta	24	Solomon
12	Middle Kobuk	25	Fish River
13	Upper Kobuk		

\* See Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Map of North Alaska, showing the locations of Northwest Alaskan Eskimo Societies, and the boundaries of neighboring language groups, ca. 1816–1842. The numbers are keyed to Table 1.

certainly between Cook’s voyage of 1778–79 and the disasters of a century later, but also during much more restricted periods. Most of us think in terms of a “traditional” or a “contact” or an “aboriginal” state of affairs as having been somehow immutable until massive European interference suddenly changed everything. This is a tendency we must resist. Life seems always to have been in a state of flux in Northwest Alaska, particularly at the individual society level. What European interference did initially was heighten the amplitude of the oscillations, and bring the oscillations of the separate units into approximate synchrony. Only later did it result in the termination of the units themselves.

The final matter that needs to be discussed at this point is why I use the term “society” in preference to “tribe” or some other label. The reason is that, although I am focusing on a restricted geographic and cultural area, I am attempting to describe and analyze the data from that area in a way that will make them amenable to broad comparisons with other parts of the world. The notion of “tribe,” given any of its conventional definitions, is of very limited comparative utility, and its application to North American data recently has become controversial [FRIED 1975]. The concept

of "society," on the other hand, is (or can be) universal in application, although it, too, is not free of controversy [NAROLL 1973]. In order to employ such a central concept in a rigorous manner, of course, I should define it first, then present evidence showing that the cases under consideration actually conformed to the requirements of that definition. In fact I do follow that procedure here, but in reverse order. In other words, I first describe the relevant units, and *then* I define the term "society" and indicate how the units described previously conform to the requirements of the definition.

## SOCIETAL CHARACTERISTICS

Traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo societies were autonomous socio-territorial units which were quite similar to one another on a general level, but which differed in detail. The similarities were such as to make it fairly easy to describe at one time how all 25 of them operated. Unfortunately, the similarities were so great that most of the early European explorers failed to notice the regional variations at all. When a 19th century Englishman or Russian had travelled half-way around the world and had encountered radically different types of people on two or three different continents and in various parts of Oceania, the inhabitants of Northwest Alaska naturally appeared to them to be cut from a single cloth. This fact makes it difficult or impossible to corroborate with contemporary historical data even the general condition of regional variation, not to mention the myriad details. Furthermore, none of the early explorers actually stayed right in an Eskimo settlement for any length of time; consequently none could grasp, not to mention report on, the workings of the local social system. For those reasons, the following account is based primarily on information received from my own oral sources. The analysis has been significantly influenced, however, by the important works of Bogojavlensky [1969], Correll [1972], Gubser [1965], Heinrich [1955a, 1955b, 1960, 1963a, 1963b], D. J. Ray [1964, 1967, 1975b: 87 ff.] and Spencer [1959].

### Framework

The basic component of a traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo Society was what I have referred to elsewhere [BURCH 1975a: 235-238] as a "local family." Such a unit was a relatively large family which typically involved several conjugal pairs, one or more aged parents (occasionally grandparents), and offspring. Most local families were extended lineally for three (occasionally four) generations, and collaterally to include married siblings and often married cousins (frequently to the second degree) on either or both male and female sides [see BURCH 1975a: 239 ff.]. Northwest Alaskan Eskimo local families, in short, were large, bilaterally extended families. Most such units involved too many people to live comfortably together in a single house, so they would occupy two or more adjacent dwellings. Each dwelling would house what I have referred to [BURCH 1975a: 235-238] as a "domestic family,"

usually also an extended family, but one which was simpler and smaller than the larger unit.

In population centers such as Wales, Point Hope, and Barrow local families frequently involved as many as 50, and occasionally more than 100, people. In the less productive hinterlands, or in regions where subsistence conditions militated against large concentrations of people, the average size might dwindle to perhaps a dozen. In both settings they had a relatively stable membership over time, although seasonally there tended to be a regular pattern of dispersal and concentration of their domestic and even their conjugal family components.

Many, perhaps most, of the so-called "villages" seen by the early explorers were probably inhabited by the members of a single local family.<sup>8</sup> The larger settlements were occupied by the members of two or more such families whose dwellings were built in separate clusters. The word "family compound" would be appropriate to describe such clusters were it not for the fact that physical walls were not erected around the buildings (including dwellings, caches, store-houses, and usually a *qazgi*) owned by the members of a given family. In Northwest Alaska the walls were strictly social.

The several local family units in a given society were linked to one another by a complex web of consanguineal and affinal kinship ties. In most cases these ties had developed over several generations, with the result that all of the members of each society were probably related to one another in several different ways within perhaps four or five degrees of consanguinity. A Northwest Alaskan Eskimo society is thus most easily conceived of as a network in which the nodes were extended families, and the lines between the families were less active or temporarily inactive kinship ties of various kinds [BURCH 1975a: 250]. The outer boundary of the system was defined by a relatively sharp break in this network of relationships. From this point of view, a society was a consanguineally and affinally bounded system.<sup>9</sup>

At this point I must digress briefly to comment on the widely held view that *all* Northwest Alaskan Eskimos are related to each other. Andrews [1939: 53], for example, stated that "an Alaskan Eskimo has relatives or friends in nearly every village from Kotzebue to Barrow." Similarly, with reference to a particular individual named Almond Downey, Giddings [1967: 19] reported that "In our travels together along these coasts, I cannot remember a place where Almond failed to find an uncle, a great aunt, or at least a cousin or two..." Along the same lines, I once wrote [BURCH 1966: 25] as follows:

if one had gone from Barrow to Point Hope...[one] would have found people in each settlement related to people in the next one, and [one] would have undoubtedly found people at both ends of the line who considered themselves to be related to people at the other end. However, the Kivalina data show conclusively that the Point Hope people were closely related to the Kivalina people, and that the Kivalina people, in turn, were closely related to the people on the lower Noatak. But the people on the lower Noatak were closely related to the people on the upper Noatak, as well as to people on the upper Kobuk...

The clear implication of all of these passages, and the explicit claim in the last, is that *all* Northwest Alaskan Eskimos were involved in a single comprehensive system, or "chain," of kinship ties. In other words, there were no significant discontinuities in the kinship network anywhere in Northwest Alaska. This conclusion flatly contradicts the position taken in the preceding paragraph.

The two apparently conflicting views can be reconciled easily if one takes proper account of change over time, something I never did myself prior to 1970. All of the above statements about the wide geographic range of kinship ties are correct, but they apply *only* to the late 19th and 20th century situations. The extensive kinship networks referred to are the result of the widespread population movements which took place in the last half of the 19th century and the first few decades of the 20th. They did *not* exist during the first half of the 19th century. At that time, extensive operating kinship networks were restricted to the single society level. Inter-societal marriage and inter-societal migration did occur, but neither was common enough to erase the abrupt discontinuity in kinship ties that occurred at each society's borders.

### The Political Process

Dorothy Jean Ray [1967: 373] has correctly assailed the widespread view that the Eskimos lived in a state of anarchy. However, she implied a higher level of stability and integration than actually existed at the *society* level in asserting that "a chief and a council played an important role" in maintaining a well-ordered society, and when she suggested that the traditional societies had governments (p. 373). In fact, there was no role of "chief" which could convey authority over the entire membership of a society, nor was there a council or any other comparable organization whose members could wield authority on a society-wide basis. The closest thing to a "chief" and a "council" operated at the local family level. From a political point of view, traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo societies were "segmental" in that they were comprised of similar units that were roughly equal in rank [SERVICE 1975: 70].

The political segments of a society were the local family units referred to previously. Each such family was characterized by a relatively well defined hierarchy at the head of which was an *umialik*, often referred to in English as a "chief" [BURCH 1975a: 223 ff.].<sup>10</sup> When a settlement was occupied by the members of only one extended family, the family head naturally *appeared* to European observers to be some kind of "village chief."<sup>11</sup> Since an effective *umialik* regularly consulted other senior (or otherwise informed) people in his local family, often in the physical setting of the *qazgi*, there also *appeared* to be a kind of village council. But no such organization was institutionalized as a part of a traditional family, not to mention as part of a traditional society.

In a previous publication [BURCH 1975a: 205] I stated that traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo societies were "rank societies" in terms of Morton Fried's classification. Fried defined [1967: 109] such a society as "one in which positions of valued status are somehow limited so that not all those of sufficient talent to occupy such

statuses actually achieve them." I would argue now that the societies were "stratified" [FRIED 1967: 186] rather than rank because societal members of the same sex and equivalent age status did not have equal access to the basic resources that sustain life. To some extent this was true even at the local family level. In large families the *umialik*, his spouse(s), and offspring had more of just about everything than anyone else did, and they had considerable control over the distribution of food and other resources to the rest. At the opposite end of the hierarchy were individuals (usually orphans, and sometimes members of genealogically isolated conjugal families) who were little more than slaves to everyone else.

The local family segments of a society also were not all equal to one another, as is required in Service's definition of "segmental." Each society included a group of relatively large local families that were roughly equal in size and influence to one another, but definitely superior in both respects to many other families. The more powerful families typically had their winter dwellings at the most advantageous locations within the societal territory, while the settlements of the less powerful ones tended to be situated in more marginal settings. The large whaling settlements were occupied by the members of up to half a dozen very large, and relatively powerful and wealthy extended families, plus several much smaller families whose members occupied a comparatively marginal position.

There was a direct relationship between the effectiveness of an *umialik* and the size of the local family he headed. The more effective the *umialik*, the larger his family tended to be, because more people would be tempted to affiliate with a successful organization than with an unsuccessful one. An ambitious *umialik* would be likely to accept additional people into the unit because personal authority and wealth depended to a considerable extent on the number of individuals under one's influence. Conversely, the less effective the *umialik*, the more likely people would be to seek their fortunes elsewhere. In addition, the larger the local family, the greater its ability was to recruit from within its membership a succession of effective leaders. This tendency led to some continuity in local family dominance over time. There was nothing immutable about this, though, and an incompetent *umialik* would be abandoned readily; one who seriously abused his authority eventually would be assassinated.

The upper limit on settlement size and stability was determined by the productivity of the territory exploited by the people who lived there. In most societal territories ecological factors made it impossible for settlement size to exceed the number of individuals involved in a single local family, say, 30 to 60 people. This is why most "villages" were actually nothing more than single local family units.

A few localities in Northwest Alaska were so productive, year in and year out, that more than one large family unit could maintain a permanent base there. Practically all such localities were situated on the coast at points where major sea mammal migration routes were easily intercepted. At such locations there were more local family units, the individual units typically were larger, and there tended to be greater continuity of membership in those units than in other places. In less

productive regions, even when an unusually gifted *umialik* could organize a large family for a time, a resource crisis would force the unit to fission within a year (or season) or two. This happened so often that large local families rarely could be maintained for any length of time in the interior except at a few locations along the Kobuk River.

Political self-sufficiency at the local family level was clearly very high in a traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo society. The relative autonomy of each segment was a major source of instability at the *society* level because there was no organizational framework in terms of which the different *umialiks* could coordinate the activities of their respective family members. To the extent that the constituent families of a society lived in different locations, local family autonomy was usually an advantage. In the large coastal settlements, however, it was a source of considerable stress. Informants have described to me at some length the tensions that used to exist in these villages. When they were particularly severe, it apparently was almost as dangerous to walk into the "compound" of another family as it was to enter the territory of another society.

Given the political self-sufficiency of the local family segments, a question naturally arises as to the level of political integration of a society as a whole. With regard to the short term—a season or perhaps a year, say—there sometimes was very little apparent integration at the societal level if two conditions were met: (1) an abundance of food supplies, and (2) the absence of an active outside threat. Over the long-term, and usually much of the time, neither of these conditions existed. Eskimos who despise each other can work together quite effectively when they feel it is in their best interests to do so, and of course the members of different local families by no means necessarily despised each other. The real or perceived threat of war with another society, or the real or perceived threat of famine, or the regular benefits to be acquired from cooperation in certain types of hunting all tended to offset the effects of inter-family rivalries. Interestingly, the Eskimos had a remarkably rational approach to cooperative ventures by voluntarily conceding overall supervision to the leading expert on that type of activity, regardless of his family membership. The person who filled this role was an *ataniq* (foreman).

In addition to cooperative hunting ventures, which typically linked members of several local families for brief periods at various times during the course of an annual cycle, inter-family political integration was achieved through the connections established by intermarriage. Local families usually were exogamous in practice since they rarely contained enough eligible marriage partners to be otherwise, so affinal links (hence, ultimately, consanguineal ties) were extremely widespread between and among them. Inter-family solidarity was also reinforced and augmented by relationships between namesakes and friends, which closed many of the gaps in the extensive network of kinship ties. That having been said, it must be recognized that political integration at the societal level existed more by default than it did through the operation of any all-encompassing organizational mechanism.

### The Economic Process

The various segments of a traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo society were as self-sufficient economically as they were politically. In other words, the members of each local family produced most of what they needed to survive, and they consumed most of their own production. Inter-family and inter-societal exchanges were always focused on surplus goods. They usually were focused even more specifically on luxury goods; items used not to sustain life, but to raise it above the mere subsistence level.

Fried [1967: 117] claimed that, in a rank society:

the major process of economic integration is redistribution, in which there is a characteristic flow of goods into and out from a finite center. Invariably that center is the pinnacle of the rank hierarchy, or, as complexity mounts, the pinnacle of a smaller component network within a larger structure.

That general hypothesis is confirmed by the Northwest Alaskan societies, which, as noted earlier, were somewhat more complex than rank societies. The specific "smaller component network" within which redistribution occurred was the local family. The "pinnacle" of the hierarchy was occupied by the *umialik* and his primary wife (*nuliaqpak*), who collected all of the surplus and much of the basic production of individual family members, but who later redistributed it among them at some appropriate time.

In smaller families the scale of operations was so limited that most of the redistribution process took place with little overt direction. In large local families, however, it was quite explicit. The *umialik* generally directed the overall subsistence and manufacturing activities of the men, and his (primary) wife did likewise for the women. Most of the family's goods that were not in active use were kept in storerooms supervised by those two individuals, particularly by the *umialik's* wife. They were issued as needed to the other family members.

In the spring of 1885, Charles Brower (n.d.: 160-161) caught a glimpse of how the traditional process worked when he made a brief visit to Kotzebue Sound. At the major village of Qiqqtarzuq, the *umialik*, named Kilagzaq,

had more influence with the Eskimos in the Sound than [the *umialik*] At-tung-ow-rah did at [Point Hope]. The *umialik* at [Point Hope] cast his influence through fear, while the one [at Kotzebue] kept his through the ability to supply his neighbors with things they needed during the winter, extending them credit when they were not in a position to pay.

If Brower had stayed there longer he would have discovered that Kilagzaq's wealth depended ultimately on continuing significant contributions from the members of the local family he headed, and that the "neighbors" were actually close kinsmen participating in a single local-family redistribution system. It is also germane to note that "At-tung-ow-rah," who "cast his influence through fear," was subsequently

assassinated; Kilagzaq, whose authority was based on management skill and generosity, died of natural causes.

The "system of reciprocities" [SAHLINS 1972: 188] that constituted a local-family redistribution network ensured that, when times were hard, everyone would get something of what they needed to get along. When times were normal, or good, and also when they were extraordinarily bad, the network became unbalanced. Under such conditions the *umialik* and his very closest kin generally kept for themselves both more and better of the family's material possessions than the other members did; in a system in which sharing was both strongly institutionalized and highly structured, the *umialik* and his wife typically got more than their share. The benefit to the other family members of this kind of arrangement was that, despite its apparent inequities, they were materially better off under it than they would have been in the absence of the managerial and other skills of the *umialik* and his (primary) spouse. If they did not perceive this to be the case, they could readily withdraw from that particular unit. In normal or very good times they knew that eventually most of the goods they contributed to the *umialik's* supply would eventually flow back again, to be consumed and enjoyed by themselves and the other ordinary family members. In times of severe famine, when the normal sharing pattern was suspended, a local family would have to split up anyway, its various conjugal and small extended-family components fleeing the locality in several different directions.

No redistribution system existed on an inter-family level since there was no superordinate position or organization with the authority to collect, not to mention redistribute, anything.<sup>12</sup> In cooperative hunting enterprises the harvest was divided among the *individual* participants according to a traditional set of rules, sometimes under the immediate supervision of an *ataniq*. Each hunter would then take his returns back to his family, at which point they would enter the family redistribution system.

The economic process at the *societal* level is most accurately conceived of as a network of reciprocal exchanges between different local families. Goods were produced in terms of the separate family units, but they could be exchanged between families on an individual (usually an inter-*umialik*) basis. No market existed for the general exchange of goods *within* a given society. If an exchange involved relatively close kinsmen the return payment might be delayed for a prolonged period of time, and the value of the payment relative to the goods sold might not be calculated with precision. If it did not involve close kin, however, immediate payment in equivalent value would be required.<sup>13</sup> One of the most important skills of an *umialik* was expertise in this continuing series of inter-family exchanges. With close relatives an *umialik* might concede some material benefit in order to maintain a general fund of goodwill. With distant kin or non-kin one would be much more likely to try to strike the most advantageous bargain possible from a narrowly materialistic point of view. Practically all of the old-time *umialiks* are described as having been extremely adept in transactions of this kind.

In sum, a traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo society was "segmental"

economically as well as politically. The economic segments, like the political ones, were large extended ("local") families. *Within* these families the economic process was comprehensive in scope, responsible in goal orientation, and closely articulated with the day-to-day management process. *Between* local families the economic process was more narrowly focused on exchange, it tended to be individualistic in its objectives, and it was conducted on a largely *ad hoc* basis. However, since even the largest and best managed local family was not entirely self-sufficient economically, the several units that comprised a given society were forced to participate in a society-wide network of reciprocities which bound the entire membership into a single economic system.

### The Information Process

A traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo society was what Correll [1972: 87] has called "a contrastive information regime." In other words, it was a system within which facts, ideas, stories, news, and concepts circulated actively among the members, with a sharp reduction in the level of this circulation at the system boundaries.

The medium through which information flowed was conversation [see CORRELL 1972: 168 ff.]. The primary conversational foci, in turn, were the set of male and female members, respectively, of an extended family. Men and boys spent most of their time either out hunting or else working and/or visiting together in the family *qazgi*. The females, on the other hand, tended to gather in one or another of the family's dwellings, where they would work on their individual projects in one another's company. Since children were not segregated from adults in either context, the exchange of information among the latter and much of the general education of the former occurred simultaneously. Practically everyone's working hours were spent in this way. Privacy was virtually nonexistent, with the result that information flowed simply because people were together all of the time.

Between the sexes information was exchanged primarily in the evenings, when the entire local family memberships would gather in the *qazgi* for stories, dances, or games, or else when the separate household (domestic family) members would visit together in their own dwelling. In settlements of more than a few week's duration snow or sod tunnels often would be erected between the several dwellings of a given local family, so that even the severest weather could not halt the flow of people, hence of information, from one building to another.

The volume of information flow among the several local family segments of a given society was largely a function of their physical distance from one another. Where two or more local families occupied a single settlement the volume was relatively high. Where local families were many kilometers apart—as they were in most societies most of the time, and in all societies some of the time—there ordinarily was a major break in the daily flow of information at each *family's* borders. There was no messenger service or other mechanism whereby messages could be circulated systematically among the several local family segments of a society. This deficiency

was offset to some extent by visiting back and forth between settlements. When food supplies were good, trips would be undertaken specifically for social purposes. When supplies were low, people would encounter one another accidentally as they moved about in search of better hunting districts. As it happened, the societies in which the various local family units tended to be the most widely dispersed were also those where the ecological pressure to move around was greatest, and *vice versa*.

Physical isolation obviously was no barrier to information flow in large settlements occupied by members of two or more local families. There were a number of social barriers to this flow, but, except in a time of serious feuding, these barriers could be rather easily surmounted. In the first place, the members of each local family were always curious about what was happening elsewhere, and they were willing to expend some effort trying to find out. Secondly, the larger villages normally had an area of open ground—a kind of village park or playground (*manigzaq*)—where members of different local families could come together to visit or play games, such as soccer. Finally, there was a set of kin relationships that invariably linked different local family units, and in terms of which information could flow freely, namely, the relationship of cousins of the same sex and approximate age. Practically everyone beyond the toddler stage participated actively in the inter-family communication network through this medium, if not through any others.

During the course of a single annual cycle of movement virtually all of the members of a given society managed to see one another. Those societies in which the segments typically were widely dispersed in winter (e.g., Upper Noatak, no. 9) tended to be highly concentrated in summer; those in which the families were highly concentrated in winter (e.g., King Island, no. 20) were widely dispersed in summer. In Selawik (no. 14) Society, and Upper (no. 13) and Middle (no. 12) Kobuk Societies, where there were relatively minor changes in population distribution from one season to another, the pattern of conscious inter-settlement visiting seems to have been the most fully developed.

The various means of inter-family communication noted above were supplemented by the practice in most societies of having a generalized gathering of the membership (*qatizut*) once (occasionally twice) each year. In societies having important whaling centers this usually occurred in the form of the whaling feast, in June. In other areas it tended to be held either right after the departure of the ice, in early to mid-July, or else in late August or September. Occasionally an *ad hoc* gathering of the general membership would be held in winter when an extraordinary game harvest made such an undertaking feasible. Regular aggregations of this kind, despite their apparent infrequency, were an important factor in maintaining a comparatively high level of information flow among the members of a society.

### **The Integration Process**

The integration process, whereby the members of a society manage to cope with the vicissitudes of life, operated primarily at the local family level in early 19th century Northwest Alaska. The overwhelming majority of the myriad story-telling sessions,

dances, song-fests, games, rituals, and ceremonies that each person participated in or observed during the course of the ordinary annual cycle involved the members of one's own local family, and they usually took place in the context of the local family *qazgi*.

It is necessary to digress a bit to discuss the concept of *qazgi* (frequently rendered *karigi*, *qashgi*, or *kalgi*), which has been referred to previously without explication. The term is variously glossed in English as "ceremonial house," "dance house," and "men's house." The initial terms of these glosses imply some, but by no means all, of the functions of a *qazgi*, and the second terms are used despite the fact that a *qazgi* could be a place in the open air rather than a building. The conventional anthropological view of a *qazgi*—based to a significant extent on the work of Robert Spencer [1959]—is that "there was no established sense of ownership" of a *qazgi*, and that "a person was associated with it through his membership in a crew and his tie with the *umialik* who led his crew" [1959: 185]. The clear implication, which is developed throughout Spencer's monograph, is that a whaling crew was recruited from the membership of several different local families, hence so would the membership of a *qazgi*. My own information indicates that such a view is incorrect.

According to my informants [cf. BURCH 1975a: 22–24] both hunting crews and *qazgis* were basically local family operations, particularly during the early and middle parts of the 19th century. In relatively small settlements there would be only one local family and one *qazgi*. In relatively large settlements, occupied by the members of two or more local families, the number of *qazgis* would correspond to the number of large and well-managed local families, each of which would own and operate one [cf. BROWER n.d.: 244; SIMPSON 1875: 259–260]. The people who participated in the affairs of a given *qazgi* would consist primarily of the members of the family who owned it [see BOGOJAVLENSKY 1969: 109–125, 154–155; 172 ff.; HEINRICH 1963a: 388 ff.]. Regular participants might also include members of small families which occupied marginal positions in the settlement as a whole, and who definitely occupied a subordinate place in the operation of the *qazgi*. Even where this occurred it was a matter of the members of a dominant local family condescending to permit poor people to partake of some of the wealth. They would allow it only as long as the latter comported themselves in a manner appropriate to their marginal status.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, it must be observed that the appellation "men's house" is misleading because it implies that women and children could not participate in *qazgi* affairs. It is true that during the day a *qazgi* was ordinarily a place for men and boys only, a place where they worked, visited, and ate. But most evenings, during feasts and dances, and on the great majority of ceremonial occasions, *all* the members of the local family were ordinarily welcome [cf. CORRELL 1972: 205 ff.]. A *qazgi*, in short, was the physical focus of the entire integration process.

The integration process at the local family level was augmented in various respects by activities carried out at the inter-family and occasionally the societal levels. Perhaps the most common procedure here was for the members of one local family to invite the members of another to a "feast," which in practice included dancing, story-

telling, games, and demonstrations of magical skill in addition to eating. These gatherings were important events, ones that required considerable preparation, not only of the food, but also of the details of the entertainment. When the families involved lived in the same settlement such events would be limited to a single evening (or perhaps all night if it was successful). When they lived in different settlements, however, the visit would last for several days. The most elaborate version of this type of undertaking was the annual gathering of the whole society, the *qatizut*, which would last a week or more.

The other major means whereby the integration process operated at the inter-family level involved the role of *angatquq*, or shaman. Magical skills, like other kinds of skill, were manifested at varying levels of competence and in different types of expertise from one individual to another. Although practically every local family included one or more members with some magical ability, few if any of them included a shaman who commanded the entire range of skills needed for the family's survival. From time to time, therefore, the members of one local family would have to hire an *angatquq* from another to diagnose a problem, prescribe a remedy, or perform some other important service. Over time this interchange of shamans involved all of the families in a given society. Among other things, it resulted in a complex pattern of taboos which was specific to each society. Thus even in the realm of magic, each society constituted an entity whose constituent parts were integrated with one another, but more or less clearly demarcated from all of its neighbors.

## INTER-SOCIETAL RELATIONS

The persistence of a society requires it to have procedures for dealing effectively with neighboring peoples. In some hunting-gathering populations inter-societal relations seem to have been conducted on a largely *ad hoc* basis, but that was not the case in early 19th century Northwest Alaska. Instead, intersocietal relations there were conducted according to a well-developed pattern, one that included both friendly and hostile activities [BURCH 1970, 1974, 1975b, 1976b; in press; BURCH & CORRELL 1972].

At one extreme, inter-societal relations consisted of open armed conflict. Despite the conventional image of Eskimos as being peaceable, friendly people, the traditional *Inupiat* of Northwest Alaska were aggressive fighters who had developed a relatively elaborate pattern of conducting warfare [BURCH 1974; NELSON 1899: 327-330]. According to my informants, and except under certain circumstances which are described below, the members of most societies considered themselves to be under constant threat of attack from their neighbors. The experiences of some of the early explorers [e.g., BEECHY 1831, II: 285 ff.; SIMPSON 1875: 248; VANSTONE ed. 1977: 26, 27, 30, 54, 57] strongly support my informants' statements on this point.

The most important characteristic of inter-personal violence for purposes of the present analysis is that it followed one pattern within a society, and a different one between societies. *Intra*-societal hostilities, or feuds, while they might theoretically

affect large numbers of people, rarely involved more than one or two active participants at any given point in time. *Inter*-societal hostilities, or wars, on the other hand, were conducted by relatively large parties of armed men, who usually did everything they could to augment their numbers. The assassination of a member of one's own society had to be accompanied by a variety of ritual acts if the murderer was to protect himself against the revenge inevitably to be sought by the victim's soul. But the killing of a person from another society evoked no particular danger from the spirit world, hence required no defensive ritual protection; any danger in this context was thought to derive from human sources alone. Finally, while inter-local family feuding seems to have been practically ubiquitous in a traditional society, and although feud-related violence seems to have been common, it was generally considered to be shameful, something to be hidden from public view. Warfare, by contrast, was a public concern; it was elaborated in story, perpetuated in legend, and it conferred honor upon its more successful practitioners.

The effects of armed conflict were counter-balanced by inter-societal alliances. In most cases these took one of two forms: either (1) the so-called "trading partnership" (*niuviriik*) [BURCH 1970; SPENCER 1959: 166 ff.], or else (2) the co-marriage (*nuliaqatigiit*), sometimes referred to as "exchange marriage" or "spouse exchange" [BURCH 1975a: 106 ff.; BURCH and CORRELL 1972: 26].<sup>15</sup> Both types of arrangement served in the first instance to connect single individuals in each of two societies. Over time they were typically broadened to include the other members of the immediate families of the principals, and frequently even the other members of the relevant local families. Both partnerships and co-marriages were highly institutionalized relationships which were designed to persist throughout the lifetimes of the participants. In time of peace they were the primary mechanism through which intersocietal trade was conducted, and they were the ultimate recourse when famine struck a region and its inhabitants fled to neighboring territories. In time of war they served to reduce the level of bloodshed. Even though partners and co-spouses might find themselves on opposite sides in an armed conflict, they ordinarily would try to avoid direct confrontation, and, given the intimate nature of (small-scale) Eskimo warfare, this was no insignificant matter. Alliances, in short, helped improve the quality of life in good times, and helped increase the survival rate in bad.

Inter-societal diplomacy in traditional Northwest Alaska generally was conducted primarily at the personal and family levels. In the western Seward Peninsula-Bering Strait region, however, inter-societal alliances seem to have been more comprehensive, sometimes including the entire memberships of two or more societies within their scope [RAY 1967: 384 ff.; 1975b: 108-109]. Detailed information on the origins and operation of these alliances is lacking, but they appear to have been the cumulative outcome of many personal and family alliances being created over many generations rather than something altogether unique. The effect was different, though, because a general alliance permitted much greater freedom of inter-regional movement in the Bering Strait area than could be undertaken safely anywhere else in Northwest Alaska.

There was an interesting pattern of seasonal variation in the state of inter-societal

relations. Between freshwater breakup (in late May or June) and the return of significant amounts of night-time darkness (late August) a general truce prevailed. This permitted large groups from several different societies to gather together at certain locations to participate in the so-called "trade fairs" (*qatngut*). During the period of concern here, such fairs were held annually at Nirliq (in the Colville River delta), at Sheshalik (on Kotzebue Sound), and at Point Spencer (on Port Clarence) in Northwest Alaska proper, and also at Unalakleet and Barter Island, just south and east, respectively, of the study area. The largest of these events, the fair at Sheshalik, regularly drew two thousand or more people from perhaps a dozen or more societies, while the others lured at least several hundred people annually. Many of the individuals who gathered together peacefully at the fairs had been engaged in mortal combat early the previous winter. While nothing had been forgotten, and although the fairs were usually characterized by a high level of tension, they were contexts in which partner and co-spouse relationships dominated the scene. Enemies generally tried (or were forced by their countrymen) to suspend active hostilities temporarily.

Warfare took place primarily in late fall or winter, and was conducted by armed parties travelling on foot. As early as late August strangers were assumed to be spies or warriors from another society, and they were treated accordingly unless they could quickly demonstrate otherwise. It was theoretically possible to show that one was on a peaceful mission outside the summer truce season because there were two contexts in which intersocietal travel could be legitimately undertaken during the long intervening period. One involved movement to or from a messenger feast, which was basically just a one or two week gathering of two local families from different societies whose heads were associated on a partnership or co-marital basis; participation was by invitation only [SPENCER 1959: 210 ff.]. The other context in which peaceful intersocietal travel could be undertaken was when a region had been struck by famine. In that case people would flee the territory in small family groups to take up temporary (seasonal) residence with allies in neighboring societies. Even in these emergency situations, there was still considerable urgency in making contact with one's partner or co-spouse, since failure to do so was likely to be interpreted as a sign of evil intentions.

For present purposes there are two important conclusions to emerge from the foregoing discussion. The first is that both intra- and inter-societal relations were highly structured in early 19th century Northwest Alaska. The chaotic existence frequently ascribed to Eskimo societies [e.g. by HOEBEL 1961: 99] is a myth. The second conclusion is that the structured relations that operated within societies contrasted with those that operated between them. This contrast, perhaps more than any other single phenomenon, demonstrates the social distinctiveness of each of the 25 socio-territorial units that operated in early 19th century Northwest Alaska.

## ECOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

One of the most hallowed notions in anthropology is that hunting-gathering populations have an especially intimate relationship with their nonhuman environ-

ment. This is true in particular of most of the historically recent hunting-gathering populations, such as Eskimos practically all of whom have had to survive in relatively harsh settings. However, commonplace this notion may be, it focuses attention on an important problem: whereas in industrial societies only specialists need concern themselves with monitoring and adjusting the relationship between humans and their environment, in hunting-gathering societies virtually everyone must be actively involved in that type of activity. Furthermore, lacking the influence over the environment that even relatively simple farmers and pastoralists can exercise, hunting-gathering peoples must adapt their activities to its demands to an extraordinary degree. Given these considerations, ecological problems need to be discussed even in such a broad summary as this one.

The first matter that needs to be dealt with is the subsistence base of the early 19th century Northwest Alaskan Eskimos. A number of very general points can be made concerning this topic. First, the Northwest Alaskan Eskimos seem to have exploited virtually every animal and vegetable resource that was available to them. They may have missed something, but most apparent omissions turn out on investigation to be the result of ignorance on the part of the researcher. A second point is that *all* of the major faunal resource species that occur in Northwest Alaska—mammals, fish, birds—are seasonally nomadic. This condition poses a critical problem for the humans who subsist on them: either they must move about too, or else they must over-harvest during periods of abundance and store the surplus for leaner seasons, or both. The universal pattern in early 19th century Northwest Alaska was to do both.

A second ecological issue is regional and temporal variation. Here I must challenge the general anthropological characterization of the situation in Northwest Alaska, which is grossly over-simplified. In spatial terms the common view is that there were two ecological zones, one inland and the other coastal. While that may have been true in some very abstract way, it is more accurate to say that, with the possible exception of Middle (no. 12) and Upper Kobuk (no. 13) Societies, no two societal territories in early 19th century Northwest Alaska had precisely the same resource base. Variables included the presence or absence of resource species, the relative abundance of resource species, the precise timing of the movements of faunal resource species, and finally, access to resource species (which was affected by wind, current, snow, ice, rain, and topographic conditions). Instead of two ecological zones, therefore, there were 25 of them.

Regional variation in resources resulted in societal variation in subsistence base. Accordingly, each society—again, with the possible exception of Middle and Upper Kobuk Societies—was characterized by a distinct annual cycle of movement. The specific cycles of the 25 societies are outlined in the Appendix, hence need not be described here. However, two characteristics of the overall pattern of annual cycles are worthy of note. One is that in only one case, Kotzebue (no. 10), did all of the members of a society typically remain in their own territory all year round. In all of the others, the men, and often many (or even all) of the families visited one or more

other territories during at least some portion of every summer. With the possible exception of Kotzebue Society, therefore, the (geographic) subsistence region of each society exceeded in area the territory under that society's (political) control.

Another general characteristic of the system of annual cycles relates to the first: the summer movements of the members of different societies into and out of one another's territories were so precisely articulated that almost no conflict resulted from them. The members of one society entered another territory either after it had been vacated by its owners, or else under the long-established truce conditions which existed at certain times of the year. Comparable movements at other times of year would have resulted in considerable bloodshed.

Turning now to variation in resources over time, it can be said that the conventional anthropological view is again over-simplified. The usual conception is that Northwest Alaska was uniformly rich in game until Europeans began exterminating the whale, walrus, and caribou stocks in 1848. I would be the last to underrate the negative impact of Europeans on the resources of Northwest Alaska, but it is important to realize that conditions were not always optimal even before 1848. Many important faunal resources—caribou, salmon, and ptarmigan (a critical late winter resource in many areas)—vary radically in abundance, either seasonally, or from one year to the next, or both. Other major resources—sea mammals, whitefish, char—while themselves fairly regular in abundance and migration pattern, vary considerably in their accessibility from year to year because of climatic conditions. The result of these factors was intermittent famine, which sooner or later struck every Northwest Alaskan Eskimo society. Because of this fundamental ecological fact, the persistence of the population of any given society over the long term required that a substantial proportion of its members have allies in neighboring groups, people upon whom they could depend when their own resources failed.

A final ecological issue concerns the role that environmental factors played in determining either the general existence of or the specific location of societal boundaries. Part of the answer is that environmental factors obviously were important in determining the locations of population *centers*, since more people lived in places where resources were more abundant than elsewhere. Societal boundaries tended to be located in zones of relatively low productivity. But why did the boundaries between Northwest Coast (no. 4) and Barrow (no. 3) Societies, or between Barrow and Arctic Coastal Plain (no. 2) Societies fall where they did? Why, indeed, were there any boundaries in this area at all? Similarly, while one can observe that the boundary between Lower (no. 9) and Upper (no. 10) Noatak Societies fell precisely along the tree-line, it is not at all clear why a boundary had to come there, or indeed anywhere else in the Noatak Valley. In short, it seems that while environmental factors had some bearing on the existence and location of societal boundaries—primarily by influencing the location of population centers—social factors of some kind must also have been at work. Just what those factors were, however, I cannot say.

## ETHNICITY

The operation of the societies described in this paper had resulted by the early 19th century in the emergence of a set of regional differences that appropriately can be called "ethnic." Such differences were often subtle enough to be overlooked by early explorers, but were so obvious to the Natives themselves that they constituted practically a sign-post of societal affiliation.

Societal ethnicity had a geographical basis stemming from the association of each society with a particular territory. Indeed, the generic Eskimo term for "society" was *nunaqatigiit*, which literally means "the people related to one another through their common possession of territory." Each region had a name or other identifying label, and the geographical designation served as the root for the societal name. For example, the term *utuqaq* ("old") referred to a specific place on the Northwest Coast. The major river that enters the sea opposite *utuqaq* was called *utuqam kuunga*, or "Utuqaq's River." The members of the society (no. 5) through whose territory that river flows were the *Utuqarmiut*, or the "People of Utuqaq."

With reference to societal names, I wish to take this opportunity to repudiate a position I maintained quite forcefully in earlier publications [e.g., BURCH 1975a: 13; 1976a: 56-59]. In those publications I stated unequivocally that North Alaskan societies did *not* have names. I held that view for an extensive and complex set of reasons, but I have been forced to alter it for an equally large and complicated set of reasons. There is insufficient space here to list them, not to mention discuss them, but it is appropriate to note that flaws in my earlier thinking resulted from my failure to analyze the relevant data from a sufficiently dynamic temporal perspective. Contrary to my earlier statements, Northwest Alaskan societies *did* have names.

The personal identity conveyed by societal names was reinforced by another important distinguishing characteristic of the members of each society, namely, dialect. In other words, the speech of the members of each society was marked by some peculiarity which served to differentiate them, as a group, from the members of all the other societies in the area.

There seem to have been at least three levels of linguistic variation in early and mid-19th century Northwest Alaska. At the most general level was the distinction between the Yupik-Eskimo language of Norton Bay (and to the south) and the Inupik-Eskimo language of the area under consideration here. Within the Inupik area, there evidently were a number of broad dialect zones which transcended the boundaries of individual societies.<sup>16</sup> There were a number of regular lexical and phonological differences at this level, ones that were apparent enough to be noted even by naive listeners [e.g., BEECHY 1831, I: 402].

At a still lower level, and at the important one in the present analysis, were dialects associated with individual societies.<sup>17</sup> Variation at this level was less significant linguistically, but much more important to the Natives. There were some lexical and phonological differences, but most of the contrasts seem to have been strictly phonetic in nature, such as in rhythm or intonation. Despite the superficial nature of these differences, as Stefansson [1933: 314] observed, if an Upper Noatak (no. 9) man and

a Middle Kobuk (no. 12) man were talking, "a Killirk native would tell you decisively after hearing a few words, 'this man is from Noatak, that one from Kuwuk'."

Another type of ethnic characteristic that served to differentiate the members of one society from those of another was personal appearance, including under that heading both (biological) physical type and style of clothing and other adornment. In physical type, at least, there were again certain broad zonal differences above the societal level. For example, around Kotzebue Sound inlanders generally were significantly taller than coastal dwellers. When other features were taken into consideration—build, face shape, nose shape, and what can only be called "facial expression"—it was apparently possible for a Native to identify someone's specific societal background on the basis of physical type alone.<sup>18</sup>

Identification problems not resolvable on the basis of physical type could be settled on the basis of clothing and adornment styles. All the Northwest Alaskan Eskimos wore pretty much the same general kind of clothing, both in materials and in construction, but variation along societal lines was nonetheless quite apparent to the informed eye. Of particular significance were the details of trim, the style of winter footgear, and the type of belt, all of which differed systematically from one society to another.

The visible ethnic differences listed above were supplemented by the less apparent but evidently ubiquitous intellectual concomitant of ethnicity, namely, prejudice. The members of each society thought of their country as being better than that of their neighbors, and of themselves as being more intelligent, stronger, faster, and better looking, and as superior providers, dancers, story tellers, and lovers. Despite the fact that most individuals had allies of whom they were very fond, they seem to have regarded the members of other societies generally with contempt. Countless evenings of hearing about treachery and warfare, or hilarious renderings of other speech style could only reinforce such attitudes, serving to differentiate further the members of one's own society from all other human beings.

## TEMPORAL ASPECTS

There is a potential danger in the analysis of societies "in the ethnographic present" to treat them as if they somehow existed in space but not in time. This potential has been realized repeatedly in Eskimo ethnography, partly because of the non- (often anti-) historical bias of many investigators, partly because of profound gaps in our knowledge of the details of Arctic prehistory. Fortunately both the bias and the ignorance are being rapidly dispelled, although a great deal remains to be learned, particularly at the level of the individual society. What follows is a first attempt at dealing with some of the relevant issues with regard to Northwest Alaska.

### Societal Origins

The origins of the particular societies that were operating in early 19th century Northwest Alaska are lost in the depths of prehistory. However, there are several

kinds of evidence which permit one to make educated guesses as to how they must have come into being.

First, there is little doubt that the 19th century inhabitants of Northwest Alaska were the direct cultural (and probably biological) descendents of a series of prehistoric populations which had occupied the same *general* area since at least the 9th century A. D., and probably much longer [BOCKSTOCE 1973; FORD 1959; GIDDINGS 1952; GIDDINGS and ANDERSON, in press; STANFORD 1976]. Thus, they had had at least a thousand years in which to develop their means of coping with both their environment and with one another. The archaeological record [e.g., BOCKSTOCE 1973: 240, 271, 300; GIDDINGS 1952: 112] shows that this long period was indeed characterized by progressive regional specialization from a more generalized cultural base.

The archaeological evidence that the Northwest Alaskan Eskimos had occupied Northwest Alaska for a considerable period of time before the 19th century is consistent with synchronic data on the ethnic variation that existed during the study period. Previously in this paper I have emphasized the fact that the members of each society spoke a distinctive dialect, exhibited a unique physical appearance, and also manifested various other cultural differences, always as a regional variant of a more widespread Northwest Alaskan Eskimo cultural pattern. However, there was also an intermediate level of cultural differentiation, one that distinguished *groups* of societies from one another. For example, there were four broad dialect zones in Northwest Alaska: one that included the several societies on the North Slope, plus Point Hope and (apparently) Kivalina; a second that included the several societies whose territories were situated in the Kotzebue Sound drainage; a third that included the societies on the western portion of the Seward Peninsula and the islands in Bering Strait, and a fourth that included the societies in the central and southern sectors of the Seward Peninsula. As it happened, there also were four broad zones of different physical appearance (including both physical type and clothing), zones which apparently corresponded with the four intermediate-level dialect areas. The systematic zonal and regional co-variation of dialect and physical type indicates that there must have been a prolonged *in situ* development of the societies discussed in this paper.

Evidence of long-term stability at the general level does not necessarily imply the same condition at the individual society level. As a minimum, famine must have caused the periodic abandonment of specific regions throughout prehistory, just as it did during the early part of the historic period. The famine that wiped out the population of Arctic Coastal Plain Society (no. 2) for example, took place sometime between 1838 and 1848, and cannot be attributed to European influence. The Great Famine of 1882-84, which effectively terminated the existence of a whole group of societies on and just north and east of Kotzebue Sound, likewise cannot be connected in any way to the activities of Europeans. Indirect evidence (which cannot properly be summarized here) suggests that Goodhope Bay Society (no. 16) probably experienced some kind of catastrophe early in or just prior to the study period, as did

Fish River Society (no. 25) during the 1830s. Surely disasters of similar magnitude must have happened from time to time previously.

Famine, or some other natural disaster such as a tidal wave, served to eliminate part of a society's membership directly, and to drive any survivors from their societal territory. If they were able to make contact with allies in neighboring regions, these refugees would survive the crisis. Data from the 19th century show that after a famine, survivors would return to their homeland the next summer and try to resume a normal existence. If the first famine was followed by another the following year, as sometimes happened, then the survivors tended to stay away from their homeland during the third, leaving it devoid of human inhabitants. Depending on their analysis of what had caused the disaster, some people might begin to trickle back the fourth year, while others—particularly those who had managed reasonably well under their allies' protection—might decide never to return.

In the meantime, a few marginal members of other societies, aware of what was happening in the afflicted region, would also start to move into it after a year or two. Presumably they hoped to find a better life there than they were leading where they were. They also must have been encouraged by the knowledge that any survivors of such a badly stricken population would not be powerful enough to stop them. The newcomers would help the territorial population return to former levels faster than otherwise would have been possible. The survivors of the original population, who knew the country best, would show the newcomers the best ways of getting along in the region. (It is worth recalling in this connection that "getting along" required knowledge, not only of where the best fishing and hunting places were, but also of the whereabouts and behavior of all of the supernatural entities that inhabited every traditional Northwest Alaskan Eskimo territory.) In effect, the survivors of the original population would help integrate the immigrants from several different neighboring districts into a reconstituted society. Through this process, long-term cultural continuity could be maintained at the regional level despite extreme short-term social and demographic fluctuations.

Two other specific cases from the 19th century need to be discussed in the context of societal origins. One case is a society which did not come into existence until the second half of the century. The other is a society whose members abandoned their territory and moved *en masse* to another.

The new society that did not emerge until well after the end of the period of present concern is one that I call Endicott Mountain Society. Summarizing a diverse body of information in very brief fashion, what happened was this. At the beginning of the 19th century the south-central portion of the Brooks Range was occupied by the Dihai Kutchin. These people apparently belonged to a society whose members were driven out of their homeland early in the century by other Kutchin groups, then were harassed and driven progressively west, north, and east by the Koyukon, the Upper Kobuk Eskimos, and the Upper Noatak Eskimos, in turn. The reduced population finally was defeated and driven out of the Endicott Mts. altogether

by the members of Colville River Society, apparently around mid-century. Their departure left the central portion of the range essentially uninhabited.

Shortly after the demise of the Dihai Kutchin, a number of major changes in the size, distribution and movements of the Western Brooks caribou herd began to occur. One effect of these changes was the rapid decline in the size of the caribou population on the southwestern sector of the Northwest Alaskan area. But for several decades after that the caribou population of the Endicott Mts. stayed at relatively high levels. In an effort to cope with the deteriorating situation on the southwest, a few (probably marginal) families from many of the affected societies began to move into the mountains. By the 1870s the number of these refugee families had become substantial, and they had joined forces to such an extent that they had created the foundations of a whole new system of the type described earlier in this paper [CAMPBELL 1968]. However, it was one which lacked a cultural heritage from any single previously existing society.

The other example is Upper Noatak Society (no. 9). By 1880 the members of this society, too, were beginning to be affected by the changes in the caribou population. The implications of a caribou decline were especially serious for them, because they were more dependent on that species than almost any other population (except the Utukok and newly emergent Endicott Mt. people) in Northwest Alaska. They were aware of the deteriorating situation to the south, they could recognize its growing effect on themselves, and they decided to do something about it. An exploration party spent a winter reconnoitering the Arctic Slope of the eastern Brooks Range which, at the time, was inhabited by other groups only on a summer transient basis. They found abundant supplies of game there, so the next year a number of the leading families decided to abandon their homeland and move to this new country. They made the move as a group, apparently in the spring of 1886. The Upper Noatakers thus kept their society intact, but effected a complete change in territory.

The historical evidence, when combined with the findings of archaeological research, suggest the following general model for the origins of 19th century Northwest Alaskan Eskimo societies. For at least a thousand years Northwest Alaska can be thought of as an irregularly shaped checkerboard in which each square is a particular geographic district. At any given point in time, each district was either (1) owned and occupied by the members of a specific Eskimo society, or (2) owned by the members of a specific Koyukon or Kutchin (Athapaskan) society, or (3) occupied seasonally by Eskimo, Koyukon and/or Kutchin transients, or (4) not regularly occupied by any human population at all. The specific locations and number of territories occupied by the members of Eskimo societies were kept in flux by a combination of changing climatic conditions; fluctuations in the distribution, size and movements of the major faunal populations; warfare; and intermittent natural disasters of various kinds. Over time empty territories became reinhabited, and occupied territories were abandoned through one or another of the types of process described earlier. A thousand years ago there may have been fewer Eskimo territories than there were in the early 19th century, but they may have been larger

and even more sparsely populated than they were later. As people perfected their methods of dealing with both their non-human environment and with one another, the territories might have become gradually smaller, but also more numerous and more densely populated. Despite the inevitable short-term fluctuations, however, the archaeological and historical evidence of occupational continuity suggest that the societies that emerged from the mists of prehistory into the relative light of the 19th century had their origins rooted in the relatively remote past.

### **Duration**

Since the precise dates of origin of the early 19th century societies are not known, the length of time over which such a system was capable of persisting cannot be determined. Eventually, as more archaeological data accumulate for the late prehistoric period, it should be possible to deal systematically with this question. In the meantime, there is little evidence on which to even speculate. They were capable of persisting for several generations but how much beyond that is an unanswerable question at this point.

### **Termination**

In contrast to the origins of Northwest Alaskan Eskimo societies, the facts concerning their demise are known in some detail. The relevant information for each society is summarized in the Appendix. In general, it can be said that two basic processes were at work, sometimes separately, usually in combination. One was the biological extinction and dispersion of societal memberships through a complex combination of imported disease, famine, and flight as refugees from one of these disasters.

When this process was completed some of the traditional territories had been abandoned, others had been newly re-occupied, and survivors from specific societies were separated from one another and intermingled with survivors from many other units. The second process was a gradual loss of self-sufficiency as representatives of Russia, and later the United States, took control of various aspects of Native life. This trend began in the late 1830s, and concluded around the end of the 19th century. In some cases societal termination was a gradual process which required several decades to complete. In others it was a convulsive event which lasted only a few months. In any case, by 1910, although Northwest Alaskan Eskimos still survived as human beings, Northwest Alaskan Eskimo *societies* had passed forever out of existence.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Only one issue needs to be dealt with by way of conclusion, and that is the question of whether or not the Northwest Alaskan Eskimo "societies" I have described in this paper were in fact societies. The issue is technical but not trivial, since the outcome will determine the level of generalization at which the socio-

territorial systems in Northwest Alaska can be compared with such systems in other parts of the world. Twentieth century United States society, Tokugawa Japanese society, and early 19th century King Island society can be compared systematically to one another despite their obvious differences *if* it can be shown that all three were societies under some general definition of that term. To attempt to make a case for each of the 25 examples would require a lengthy book; therefore, I am going to argue that the general *type* of system I have described in this paper would meet the requirements of the definition.

Following Levy [1966: 20, n. 1] I define "society" as follows:

A society is a system of social action: (1) that involves a plurality of interacting individuals whose actions are in terms of the system concerned and who are recruited at least in part by the sexual reproduction of other members, (2) that constitutes a set of social structures such that action in terms of them is at least in theory capable of self-sufficiency for the maintenance of the plurality involved, and (3) that is capable of existing long enough for the production of stable adult members of the system of action from the infants of the members.

For present purposes the requirements of this definition are usefully divided into several different issues, which are discussed separately below. I proceed on the assumption that certain elements in the definition so obviously apply in the present context as to eliminate the need for explicit treatment. These are the following: (1) "plurality of interacting individuals," which means a group of members; (2) "actions in terms of the system concerned," which means that Point Hoppers, for example, would act like Point Hoppers and not like Selawik people; and (3) members were recruited at least in part through the sexual reproduction of other members.

The first issue is whether or not the entities I have described were in fact *systems*, a system being any patterned collection of elements [LEVY 1952: 19-20]. The basic elements in *any* social system are roles. Roles are combined in various ways to form relationships which, in turn, are (or may be) combined to form progressively more comprehensive types of organization. Elsewhere [BURCH 1975a] I have described in detail most of the basic roles and relationships that constituted the basic framework of a North Alaskan society; the emphasis here has been on more comprehensive entities. Patterning occurred at all levels, so there is no question but that the several relationships, the various types of family, the network of families that comprised each of the 25 regional units, and indeed the entire set of societies all constituted systems. The question is, where were the boundaries of society-type systems specifically? The answer, of course, is at the borders of each regional unit.

The boundary of any system is marked not by the absence of phenomena external to it, but by a "singular discontinuity" [SIM and SMALLEN 1972: 2] in the pattern of relationships internal to the system and the pattern of relationships external to it. In Northwest Alaska such a discontinuity occurred at the borders of the units I have been calling "societies."<sup>19</sup> Within those systems interaction was carried out primarily in terms of a large, but clearly delimited, set of kin relationships. Between

them it was conducted almost exclusively in terms of a combination of non-kin relationships (i.e., partnerships), a different sort of kin relationship (resulting from co-marriage) than ordinarily operated inside societal boundaries, and collective armed confrontation. The break was not absolute—a few partnerships and co-marriages existed within societies, and other kinds of kinship ties existed between societies—but the difference in frequency was so great as to constitute a “singular discontinuity,” hence a boundary, around the regional unit.

A second matter that needs to be discussed is the provision that in order to be a society an organization must be capable of existing long enough for the production of “stable adults.” Some people are concerned about the term “stable” since it seems to imply some kind of optimum psychological state. In fact, all it means in the present context is that the system must be capable of existing long enough for the socialization of offspring to reach a point at which they, in their turn, are capable of filling adult roles sufficiently well to perpetuate the system (in the absence of their parents or other socializers). With regard to Northwest Alaskan Eskimo societies this might have required less than 20 years in most cases, but perhaps a bit more than that in districts where young men had to pass through a lengthy training period in the techniques of sea-ice hunting. Since most of the specific units in question are known to have existed for more than 25 years in fact, we need not worry here about the elements of indeterminacy contained in the phrase “capable of existing.”

The final issue concerns the self-sufficiency requirement. It must be understood that this provision does not demand material self-sufficiency in the narrow sense, but *social* self-sufficiency in the broad sense, i.e., including the political, economic, integration, and information processes under that heading. For example, the Principality of Monaco is not socially self-sufficient because, as a minimum, its foreign relations are determined and largely conducted by the Government of France. In contrast, Canada is a society (at least from this specific point of view) because, however dependent it may be on other societies for a variety of goods and services, it contains within its own structure the organizations (e.g., the Department of External Affairs) and processes (e.g., an import licensing system, foreign currency exchange) needed to make the arrangements required to obtain those goods and services.

The self-sufficiency issue in Northwest Alaska is twofold, one internal, the other external. The internal issue arises from the fact that the local family segments were themselves self-sufficient to a high degree. As I have argued elsewhere [BURCH 1975a: 248], their self-sufficiency was never great enough for them to exist more or less indefinitely on their own, and certainly not long enough to meet the time requirement discussed above. Externally, the question is whether or not the regional systems had the ability to cope with their respective environments. The general answer is that they did at least until mid-19th century. Each one included a variety of mechanisms for dealing with the nonhuman environment, and in addition, adequate procedures for self-defense and for the establishment of external alliances. In view of these considerations, one must conclude that the type of socio-territorial entity I have been describing was a society in the early 19th century.

The conclusion that each of the 25 socio-territorial units in Northwest Alaska was a society has several implications. First, it means that the most comprehensive type of social system in Northwest Alaska was *one* of these systems, not some set of two or more of them, and not some construct that cuts haphazardly across portions of several of them. Second, it means that if one is interested in dealing with groups of Northwest Alaskan Eskimo societies, one can draw a controlled sample from the 25 in the universe, rather than dealing with flexible geographic reference terms such as Tariurmiut and Nunamiut. Third, it means that if any Northwest Alaskan social entity is to be compared with one or several of the units typically studied in "cross-cultural analysis" [cf. MURDOCK and WHITE 1969], it is *one* of these 25 that should be used if proper control over the level of analysis is to be maintained. Finally, the conclusion that each of the 25 socio-territorial entities was a society means that the units of anthropological analysis can now correspond to the units of social reality in early contact Northwest Alaska.

## APPENDIX

### NORTHWEST ALASKAN ESKIMO SOCIETIES, CA. 1816-1842

NOTE: Basic information on each of the early 19th century Northwest Alaskan Eskimo societies is summarized below. The societies are listed in alphabetical order according to their English language *designations*. In most cases the designation is a simple gloss of the Eskimo language *name* for the society concerned, although information on names is not available in a few cases. All "map reference" numbers are to Figure 1, which is included in the body of the paper.

#### Arctic Coastal Plain Society

*Name:* Not known    *Map Reference:* No. 2

*Location:* Arctic Coastal Plain, west of the Colville drainage and east of the Northwest Coast drainage.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 300

*European Contact:* None. Extinct prior to contact.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the members of this society were distributed in small to medium-sized settlements along the middle and lower Meade and Ikpikpuk Rivers. They subsisted primarily on caribou and whitefish, and on sea mammal supplies they had saved from the summer. Before breakup they moved by sled, later by boat, to the mouth of the Colville for the Nirliq fair. After the fair was over some of them may have gone to trade at Barter Island, but most spread out along the Beaufort Sea coast to hunt seals and fish. In August they ascended to the upper reaches of the Ikpikpuk and Meade Rivers to hunt caribou. They descended to their fall-winter settlements before freezeup to harvest whitefish.

*Termination:* By famine, apparently during the 1840s; at any rate, after Kashevarov's expedition of 1838 and before Maguire visited the area in 1853. The survivors moved to Barrow (no. 3) and to the Colville River (no. 1), and possibly also to the Northwest Coast (no. 4).

**Barrow Society**

*Name:* Kakligmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 3

*Location:* Arctic Coast, from Point Belcher to about Christie Point, and inland for perhaps 50 km.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 600

*European Contact:* Franklin, along coast east of Colville; Elson, at Barrow, both in 1826.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the members of this society were at their winter settlements, the most important of which were, in ascending order, Atanik, Utqirvik and Nuvuk. They subsisted throughout the winter on seals, the occasional caribou, and whales saved from the spring and fall hunts. After the spring whaling season, which ended in June, most of them went east to the Nirliq fair; a few continued on to Barter Island. After trading they gradually headed back to Barrow, hunting seals and fishing on the way. In September and October there was usually a second whaling season.

*Termination:* The Native Barrow population steadily declined during the second half of the 19th century, but the number of people in the area remained relatively constant because of immigration from the south. As local affairs came to be controlled by Whites, beginning in the late 1880s, the autonomy of the unit was lost.

**Buckland Society**

*Name:* Kangigmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 5

*Location:* Buckland River drainage, Kiwalik River drainage, and coastline between them (especially Eschscholtz Bay).

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 300

*European Contact:* Vasiliev and Shishmarev, at Elephant Point, 1820.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Buckland people were distributed along the rivers of their territory, primarily the Buckland; emphasis was on trapping fish, especially whitefish. During the winter they moved about their territory as necessary, subsisting on caribou and small game. In spring they began to fish through the river ice, and by May had added muskrats to their small game diet. After breakup they harvested the smelt run, then moved to Eschscholtz Bay for the beluga hunt. In August most of them attended the Sisualik fair, then returned to their homeland to fish, and especially to hunt caribou in the interior portions of their territory.

*Termination:* By emigration and related fragmentation, beginning in the 1840s. Most of the "Malimiut" on Norton Sound were from Buckland.

**Cape Nome Society**

*Name:* Not known      *Map Reference:* No. 23

*Location:* Southwestern portion of Seward Peninsula, including Sledge Island, the coast from midway between Capes Woolley and Douglas to (and including) Cape Nome, and the rivers reaching the sea between those points.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 325

*European Contact:* Cook's expedition; near Cape Nome, in 1778.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Cape Nome people were distributed among several settlements, one relatively large one just west of Cape Nome, the others mostly of medium size, situated at or near river mouths; there was also at least one

settlement on Sledge Island. Fall and winter subsistence activities focused on fish and small game, with some caribou and seal hunting; seal hunting was important all winter on Sledge Island. In spring the emphasis shifted to seals, with some whaling and walrus hunting being done at Cape Nome and Sledge Island. After breakup some families left on trading expeditions to Port Clarence or Norton Sound, but most stayed in the territory to fish, collect vegetable products, and hunt caribou, until freezeup.

*Termination:* As the caribou population declined during the 1860s many of the Cape Nome people moved to Norton Sound, where they became intermingled with the migrants from Kuzitrin River. Those who stayed behind merged with the Solomon people.

### Colville River Society

*Name:* Kukpigmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 1

*Location:* Lower and middle Colville River drainage.

*Estimated population, ca. 1840:* 500

*European Contact:* Some of them probably met whalers at Barrow after 1870, but the first attested contact was by Howard, in 1886—after substantial change had taken place.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Colville River people were distributed among small settlements situated at good fishing spots along the Colville; the men hunted caribou, the women fished. Subsistence in winter was on caribou, fish, and small game; families moved about as necessary in search of game. After breakup they descended to the delta for the Nirliq fair. With the fair completed a few families hunted seals on the coast or fished in the delta, but by late August all had ascended the river—often to its upper reaches—to hunt caribou. They returned to their chosen fall settlements by freezeup.

*Termination:* After the defeat and subsequent flight of the Dihai Kutchin (ca. 1850), Colville River people began to move farther up river and (especially) south into the mountains. As the caribou population declined, their numbers were augmented by refugees from the southwest. Beginning in the 1880s they started to emigrate to Barrow, and few remained by 1900.

### Diomed Islands Society

*Name:* Imaaqliit      *Map Reference:* No. 18

*Location:* Big and Little Diomed Islands, Bering Strait.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 350

*European Contact:* Probably Semen Dezhnev, on the Chukchi Peninsula, in 1648.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Diomed Islanders were distributed among four settlements, three on Big Diomed, one on Little Diomed. During the winter they subsisted largely on seals. In April and May they were engaged in hunting whales and particularly walrus. After navigation opened they dispersed, some going to Siberia, but most to various points on the Alaskan coast. They spent the summer engaged in trading, hunting caribou, fishing, and collecting berries and greens. They tried to return home before the rough weather of September.

*Termination:* The Diomedes may have been the last viable society in Northwest Alaska, gradually succumbing to emigration, disease, and U.S. Government influence early in the 20th century.

**Fish River Society**

*Name:* Kaulaqmiut (?)      *Map Reference:* No. 25

*Location:* Fish River drainage, south central Seward Peninsula.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 150

*European Contact:* Probably Khromchenko, at Golovnin Bay, 1822.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Fish River people were scattered in small camps along the river concluding a lengthy, and ordinarily productive fishing season. They must have done some caribou hunting as well. Evidently they subsisted throughout the winter on the surplus supplemented by caribou and small game. In the spring they moved to the coast along the west side of Golovnin Bay to hunt seals, and later beluga. By mid-July they were beginning to fish again, an activity that gradually took them back up the river.

*Termination:* Not known, but evidently very early, possibly during or even before the study period. Although the Fish River-Golovnin Bay area was extremely productive before the demise of the caribou, some disaster—possibly the tidal wave of ca. 1830, possibly a famine—seems to have significantly reduced its population early in the 19th century.

**Goodhope Bay Society**

*Name:* Pitarmiut (?)      *Map Reference:* No. 16

*Location:* North Central Seward Peninsula, on the rivers flowing north and northeast into Goodhope Bay, and the coast from Cape Espenberg to Motherwood Point.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 300

*European Contact:* Kotzebue, 1816.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Goodhope Bay people were distributed among medium-sized villages along the larger rivers: Kugruk, Imnatsiaq, and Goodhope. During the winter they subsisted on fish, caribou and small game. In spring they all moved to Cape Espenberg to hunt seals. When the ice left in July a few families went to the Sisualik fair, but most returned to the rivers to fish. Later they moved inland to hunt caribou, returning to the coast in time to net seals for a week or two before moving to their winter settlements.

*Termination:* Uncertain, but apparently prior to 1850.

**King Island Society**

*Name:* Ukiuvungmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 20

*Location:* King Island, Bering Strait.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 225

*European Contact:* Gvozdev, at King Island, in 1732.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the entire King Island population was concentrated in a single village. They remained there all winter, subsisting on seals. In spring they continued seal hunting, gradually shifting the emphasis to walrus and birds as the season progressed. After the ice left in June they spread out, some going to Siberia and some to Norton Sound; most went to the Port Clarence area, where they fished and traded. Evidently their alliance with the Seward Peninsula people enabled them to move some distance up the Kuzitrin River to hunt caribou and collect vegetable products. They tried to be back on their island by mid-September.

*Termination:* The King Islanders managed to retain substantial autonomy until the end of the 19th century. The system may have remained viable even longer than that of the Diomeders.

#### **Kivalina Society**

*Name:* Kivalinirmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 7

*Location:* North shore of Kotzebue Sound, between the Mulgrave Hills and Cape Thompson, and inland along the Wulik and Kivalina Rivers.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 300

*European Contact:* Possibly Shishmarev in 1821; otherwise Kashevarov in 1838, on Kivalina coast.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Kivalina people were distributed in small settlements located at good fishing places along the Wulik, Kivalina and upper Kukpuk Rivers. They subsisted on char and other fish, caribou, and small game throughout the winter, moving about as necessary. In early spring they moved onto the sea ice to hunt seals, returning to shore before breakup; they also did some whaling. After the ice left the coast many families went to the Sisualik fair, while the others walked inland, to the northeast, to hunt caribou. They all tried to be back in the general area of their fall settlement by mid-September, to fish and hunt caribou.

*Termination:* The population was nearly exterminated by the famine of 1882-84; the survivors fled to other regions, and only a few returned.

#### **Kobuk Delta Society**

*Name:* Kuungmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 11

*Location:* Territory was coterminous with the delta of the Kobuk River.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 260

*European Contact:* John Simpson, on the southern margin of the delta, in May, 1850.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the delta people were distributed among one large and several small settlements located near the mouths of the different river channels. During the winter they lived primarily on fish, plus supplies gathered during the previous summer. In spring they moved onto Hotham Inlet to fish, then returned home before breakup to harvest a caribou migration. A few families went to the Sisualik fair, but most stayed home and fished, hunted birds and small game, and collected vegetable products. In late summer some of the men walked north to the Baird Mts. to hunt caribou, but most remained at home to harvest seals, and later caribou. Much of the population seems to have made only short moves during the course of an ordinary year.

*Termination:* Wiped out by the famine of 1882-84, the few survivors moving to the Middle Kobuk.

#### **Kotzebue Society**

*Name:* Qiqqtarzurmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 10

*Location:* Northern two thirds of Baldwin Peninsula, the lowermost section of the Noatak River, and the northern shore of Kotzebue Sound.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 375

*European Contact:* Beechey, on Kotzebue Sound and the entrance to Hotham Inlet, in 1826.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Kotzebue people were distributed among one large settlement (near modern Kotzebue) and several smaller ones located at various points in their territory. They spent the fall and winter fishing, and hunting caribou and small game. In spring they moved onto the sea ice on the outer sound and hunted seals, continuing their hunt from camps on shore after the ice deteriorated. After breakup they moved to Sisualik for the beluga hunt and remained for the fair. After the fair they returned home for the fishing season, followed by caribou hunting in the western Baird Mts. and seal hunting on Baldwin Peninsula and Hotham Inlet.

*Termination:* All but exterminated during the famine of 1882-84; as many as a third of the population apparently had drowned earlier in freak accident at Kotzebue when the ice gave way during a soccer game.

### **Kuzitrin River Society**

*Name:* Qauviararmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 22

*Location:* Kuzitrin River drainage, central Seward Peninsula.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 250

*European Contact:* Kobelev at King Island, in 1791.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Kuzitrin River people were distributed among several small to medium-sized settlements located along the Kuzitrin and Noxapaga Rivers. Fall subsistence activities included caribou hunting and fishing, with the latter emphasis being replaced by small game hunting in early winter. The people moved around as necessary, during the winter months, then concentrated along the shores of Tuksuk Channel, in April, to fish. In mid-summer they remained near Grantly Harbor hunting seals and beluga, and later fishing. They returned to their fall-winter settlements to fish and hunt caribou prior to freezeup.

*Termination:* The Kuzitrin River area was the first to be severely affected by the caribou decline, beginning in the later 1850s. During the following decade a substantial portion of the surviving population emigrated to the Norton Sound coast, where it lost its cohesiveness as a social unit.

### **Lower Noatak Society**

*Name:* Napaqturmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 8

*Location:* Lower Noatak River, from the tree-line to the lower portion of the "flat," and westward to the coast between Kotlik and "Ipiavik" lagoons.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 225

*European Contact:* Probably Beechey, near Sisualik, in 1826.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Lower Noatak people were distributed among several small to medium-sized settlements located at good fishing places along the margin of the "flat." During the fall and winter the men hunted caribou and the women fished and hunted small mammals. In late March they moved to the coast to hunt seals. After the ice left they travelled by boat to Sisualik, where they participated in the latter part of the beluga hunt, and later the fair. Then they returned to the river to fish for salmon near their fall-winter settlements, and many of the men went up river to hunt caribou in the DeLong Mts.

*Termination:* Severely affected by the famine of 1882-84. A few survivors remained, but most fled to the Arctic coast, where they became widely dispersed.

**Middle Kobuk Society**

*Name:* Akunirmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 12

*Location:* Kobuk River drainage between the head of the delta and a point just above the mouth of Hunt River.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 375

*European Contact:* Must have occurred at Sisualik fair during 1860s or 1870s.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Middle Kobuk people were distributed among several medium-sized settlements located at or near the major tributaries of the Kobuk. They trapped fish as long as possible, then hunted caribou and small game and lived on their fish supplies during the winter. In late spring they would move to their fish camp locations. In summer the men would hunt caribou and mountain sheep in the mountains, while the women would fish along the Kobuk. Late in the summer the men would return, and the move to the winter settlement then would be made by boat.

*Termination:* As the caribou population declined during the 1870s and 1880s, the Middle Kobuk people gradually emigrated to the Endicott Mts. and the Arctic coast. The survivors of the three Kobuk River societies gradually merged, then lost most of their remaining autonomy after the Gold Rush of 1898-99.

**Northwest Coast Society**

*Name:* Silalinarmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 4

*Location:* Northwest coast, from Cape Beaufort to Point Belcher, the lower rivers entering the sea between Cape Beaufort and Icy Cape, and the entire watershed of the coast from Icy Cape to the north.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 425

*European Contact:* Elson, from Beechey's Expedition, in 1826.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Northwest coast people were distributed among several settlements that ranged in size from a single dwelling to the very large one at Icy Cape. They did some caribou hunting and fishing during the fall, the latter being especially important in Wainwright Inlet. During the winter the emphasis shifted to seals. In April most of the population gathered at Icy Cape for the whale hunt. After the whaling season the population spread out along the coast and lagoons to hunt walrus and spotted seals. In late August and September many families travelled inland to hunt caribou, returning to their fall settlements by freezeup.

*Termination:* In the winter of 1876-77 many people died from drinking medicine found in wrecked whaling ships. As the caribou declined during the 1870s and 1880s, at least some families emigrated to the Utukok and upper Colville River areas, others moved to Barrow. The Barrow and Northwest coast populations became intermingled with each other, and also with immigrants from farther south, after about 1885.

**Point Hope Society**

*Name:* Tikrarmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 6

*Location:* West coast from Cape Thompson to Cape Beaufort, and most of the peninsula between those two points.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 900

*European Contact:* Shishmarev and Vasiliev, in 1821, at Point Hope.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Point Hope people were distributed among several settlements situated along the coast, and on the lower and middle Kukpuk River. The largest settlement, by a considerable margin, was at Point Hope proper. The inlanders subsisted mostly on fish and caribou throughout the fall and winter, while those on the coast subsisted on seals. In spring practically the entire membership gathered at the point for the whaling season, although a few families usually hunted whales near Cape Lisburne. After the season was over they spread out along the coast to hunt seals and walrus. When the ice left so did the people, many going to the Sisualik fair, others moving inland to hunt caribou. All tried to be back at their fall settlements by freezeup.

*Termination:* The population was reduced in size through famine, disease, and emigration during the 1870s and 1880s. Toward the end of the 1880s the survivors began to have their autonomy whittled away by White whalers, missionaries, and government representatives.

#### **Port Clarence Society**

*Name:* Sinrakmiut (?)      *Map Reference:* No. 21

*Location:* Coastline and watershed of Port Clarence, western end of the Seward Peninsula.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 400

*European Contact:* Beechey, at Port Clarence, in 1827.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Port Clarence people were living in a small number of relatively large villages situated along the shore of Port Clarence. During the fall, and for much of the winter, they lived on a mixed diet of caribou, fish, and small game, moving in and out of their settlements, as necessary, to hunt. In spring they spread out along the coast to hunt seals. After the ice left they gathered at Pt. Spencer to trade with people from the Bering Strait islands, Wales, and Kuzitrin River. Later they moved to the interior of the harbor to fish. They remained at the fishing camps until just before freezeup, at which point they returned to their fall settlements.

*Termination:* The Port Clarence people were affected by the caribou decline of the 1860s and 1870s. Many died, and many left. The few who remained became intermingled with immigrants from other areas during the 1880s, and lost their remaining autonomy when missionaries and the reindeer industry arrived a few years later.

#### **Selawik Society**

*Name:* Siilvingmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 14

*Location:* Watershed of the Selawik River, southeast of Kotzebue Sound.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 775

*European Contact:* John Simpson, near Selawik Lake, in May 1850.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Selawik people were distributed among a large number of small settlements located at good fishing places. Ordinarily they stayed there all winter, fishing, hunting small game and the occasional caribou. In spring many of them moved onto Selawik Lake to fish. As the season advanced they would move to summer settlements, often located near the winter camps, to hunt muskrats and later to fish. Fishing engaged much of their attention during

the summer, too, although a few families went to Sisualik, and most men would go south to the Nulato Hills in August to hunt caribou.

*Termination:* The demise of the caribou population created a clothing crisis in the Selawik area. The death rate apparently went up as a consequence, and many families moved to the north, particularly to the Endicott Mts. The survivors managed to hold out, but lost their autonomy in the 1890s and in the early years of the 20th century.

### Shishmaref Society

*Name:* Tapqarmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 17

*Location:* The northwest shore of the Seward Peninsula, from a point just east of Wales to a point just west of Cape Espenberg.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 375

*European Contact:* Kotzebue, in 1816, near Cape Espenberg.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Shishmaref people were distributed among one large and several medium-sized villages along the outer coast of their territory. During the fall and winter they hunted seals, fished, and occasionally hunted caribou in the mountains to the south. In spring the people moved right onto the ice to hunt seals, which they continued after breakup from small camps on shore. After the ice left a few families went to the Sisualik fair, but most of them moved across the lagoons to fish, hunt waterfowl, and pursue caribou and small game in the mountains. They continued these activities until the approach of freezeup, when they returned to their fall-winter settlements.

*Termination:* During the 1870s and early 1880s many people migrated from the Shishmaref area to Wales and Port Clarence. At these locations they were hired by White whalers and moved to Jabbertown (near Pt. Hope); subsequently many of them moved to the Kivalina region. By 1905 they were dispersed all along the Northwest Alaskan coast.

### Solomon Society

*Name:* Not known      *Map Reference:* No. 24

*Location:* South-central Seward Peninsula, including the coast east from Cape Nome to the point just southeast of Chiukak, and the rivers draining into that section of coast.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 275

*European Contact:* Probably Cook, along the coast, in 1778.

*Annual Cycle:* Paralleled in all respects the Cape Nome annual cycle.

*Termination:* The Solomon region was affected by the caribou decline at the same time as, and in the same respects that, the Cape Nome region was. The consequences were the same as well. By the 1870s the survivors of the two societies had become intermingled.

### Upper Kobuk Society

*Name:* Kuvaum Kangianirmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 13

*Location:* Kobuk River drainage above the mouth of Hunt River.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 500

*European Contact:* Must have occurred at the Sisualik fair during the 1860s or 1870s.

*Annual Cycle:* Similar in all respects to the annual cycle of the Middle Kobuk people,

but with slight variations in timing and, of course, location. Thus the same movements of fish populations occurred in both regions, but the fish arrived somewhat later and left earlier on the Upper Kobuk than on the Middle. Upper Kobuk men also hunted in summer in the mountains to the north, but under normal conditions stayed to the east of their Middle Kobuk counterparts.

*Termination:* As the caribou population declined during the 1870s and 1880s, the Upper Kobuk people began to emigrate to the Noatak headwaters and the Endicott Mts. The remnant population merged with surviving Middle Kobuk and Kobuk Delta people, losing most of its remaining autonomy during the gold rush of 1898-99.

### Upper Noatak Society

*Name:* Nuatarmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 9

*Location:* Noatak River basin, from the lower and of the canyon to Aniuk River.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 550

*European Contact:* Probably Beechey, near Sisualik, 1826.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Upper Noatak people were distributed among many small to medium-sized settlements located at good fishing places along the river, and on the shores of the larger lakes in their territory. The women fished and hunted small game and birds, while the men hunted caribou; the same general pattern continued throughout the fall, winter, and spring. When the river broke up a few families remained in the DeLong Mountains to hunt caribou. Most of the people descended the river to Kotzebue Sound, where they participated in the beluga hunt and later the fair. As soon as the fair was over in August they ascended the river, an enterprise that could take a month or more. As soon as they arrived at their chosen fall location they resumed caribou hunting and fishing.

*Termination:* During the early 1880s the Upper Noatak people were severely affected by the caribou decline. In 1886, they abandoned their territory *en masse*. Some descended to Kotzebue Sound, but most moved to the Arctic coast, where they gradually dispersed.

### Utukok River Society

*Name:* Utuqarmiut      *Map Reference:* No. 5

*Location:* Northwestern interior, along the Utukok River drainage, and the middle and upper portions of the Kokolik and Kukpowruk Rivers.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 250

*European Contact:* Kashevarov, at their summer camp, in 1838.

*Annual Cycle:* At freezeup the Utukok River people were distributed among medium-sized settlements most of which were distributed along the middle Utukok River. Their subsistence focus was on caribou, with some fishing and some hunting of small game. The focus remained on caribou all winter, the pursuit of which gradually caused them to disperse as the season progressed. Just prior to breakup they moved back to the Utukok, which they descended to the coast when navigation opened. They spent the summer on the coast hunting sea mammals and waterfowl until it was time to ascend to their fall settlements in August.

*Termination:* As the caribou crisis developed during the 1870s and 1880s, the Utukok region received immigrants from the south. When the caribou failed altogether in

the western DeLong Mountains, in the 1890s, the survivors fled to the coast, dispersing from Icy Cape to Barter Islands.

### Wales Society

*Name:* Kingingmiut      *Map Reference:* No.19

*Location:* Cape Prince of Wales, and immediately adjacent territory, at the extreme western tip of the Seward Peninsula.

*Estimated Population, ca. 1840:* 650

*European Contact:* Beechey, apparently at Port Clarence, in 1826. Earlier explorers seem to have failed to make contact.

*Annual Cycle:* At freshwater freezeup the Wales people were in their large villages, near the Cape, and in a few smaller ones scattered to the north and south along the coast. They remained there all winter, with the major subsistence emphasis being on seals. In spring the focus shifted to whales, at the Cape, and later, to walrus. After the ice left the coast the Wales people dispersed along the coast to trade. A few returned in time to hunt caribou in the hills in August, but most returned in September.

*Termination:* Wales remained a reasonably viable system until the early 1890s, when missionaries and government personnel began to wrest autonomy from the people. Disastrous epidemics in the first two decades of the present century decimated the population.

### NOTES

1. Field work was carried out by Thomas C. Correll [1972] at Unalakleet, and by myself in several Northwest Alaskan villages on a number of different occasions. Field work in 1960–61 was sponsored by the University of Alaska; in 1964–65 it was supported in part by the University of Chicago; and in 1969–70, when most of my historically-oriented work was carried out, it was supported by the Canada Council.
2. Literature consulted concerning the 1816–42 period: Beechey [1831], Bockstoe [1977], Franklin [1828], Gough [1973], Kotzebue [1821], Michael [1967], T. Simpson [1843], and VanStone, ed. [1973; 1977]. Also relevant were the studies of Foote [1965: 33–135] and D. J. Ray [1975a; 1975b: 56 ff.].
3. Literature consulted concerning the 1848–54 period: Collinson [1889], Frederick [1854], Hobson [1855], W. H. Hooper [1853], Kellett [1849, 1850], Maguire [1854; 1855; 1865], Moore [1851; 1852], Osborn [1865], Seeman [1853], J. Simpson [1852; 1875] and Trollope [1854, 1855]. I also relied, once again, on Foote [1965: 143 ff.] and D. J. Ray [1975b: 140 ff.].
4. Sources consulted concerning the 1880s: Brower (n.d.), Cantwell [1887; 1889a; 1889b], Healy [1887; 1889], C. L. Hooper [1881; 1884], Jacobsen [1884], McLenegan [1887; 1889], Murdoch [1892], Nelson [1899], P. H. Ray [1885], Rosse [1883], Stoney [1900], Wells & Kelly [1890], and Woolfe [1893; 1894].
5. Larsen and Rainey [1948: 25] confused the issue further by claiming that a *subgroup* of the *Tariurmiut*—the “Tikerarmiut” of Point Hope—constituted a “distinct tribe with a local dialect, a definite territory, and a sense of social solidarity...” My own research has shown that it is *this* statement, not their comments about *Nunamiut* and *Tariurmiut* “tribes,” that is correct.
6. Charles Brower’s (n.d. 143–149) experiences and observations along the same section

- of coast in late 1884 certainly do imply the existence of an important social boundary there. His remarks are less definitive than Kashevarov's about the location of that boundary and about the specific social units involved, but they usefully supplement Kashevarov's observations in other respects.
7. This list of societies and the boundary locations of some of them differ from earlier versions I have published [e.g., BURCH 1975a: 11-12; BURCH and CORRELL 1972: 22-23]. As new information has been acquired, and as I have reviewed old information in the light of the new, I have had to alter earlier opinions.
  8. The isolated conjugal family units frequently seen by explorers in midsummer and late winter are sometimes thought to be *the* basic type of Eskimo family [e.g., by SPENCER 1959: 448]. Most such units probably were temporary detachments from larger, more permanent family units whose constituent parts were temporarily dispersed.
  9. By "consanguineally and affinally bounded" system I am referring to social, not biological kinship. Given the time depth it is impossible to ascertain the precise level of (social) endogamy of the traditional societies. Judging from informant reports, the societies appear to have been what Adams and Kasakoff [1975: 151] have called "80-percent groups," i.e. 80% of the *residential* marriages involved spouses from the same society. In the Arctic Slope portion of Northwest Alaska the level was probably as high as 90%, whereas in Bering Strait it may have been as low as 70%. Periodic inter-regional migration, casual liaisons at the fairs and the inter-societal sex involved in co-marriage probably operated to keep inter-societal gene flow at much higher levels than the pattern of residential marriage would seem to imply. In other words a society was a more narrowly bounded system socially than it was biologically.
  10. Etymologically *umialik* means "boat builder." The etymology notwithstanding, the term actually meant "rich man," "boss," or "underwriter," depending on the context in which it was used.
  11. For references to "chiefs" see the following: Aldrich [1889: 31], Beechey [1831, I: 458], Hillsen, quoted by D. J. Ray [1975a: 4], Hooper [1884: 107], Kotzebue [1821, I: 208, 235], Seeman [1853: 59-60, 135], J. Simpson [1875: 273: cf. 272], VanStone, ed. [1977: 91].
  12. It is worth noting that "redistribution" is used here in the technical anthropological sense of goods moving into and out from a central point under the supervision of a particular person or group. It is *not* used in the broader sense of goods moving from any person or place to any other.
  13. Equivalencies varied radically from season to season, from year to year, and from region to region, depending on current local supply and demand. As many of the early explorers observed, the Eskimos thoroughly enjoyed the gamesmanship involved in this type of trade.
  14. In order to be permitted to even observe *qazgi* events members of these marginal families would have to perform much of the dirty work of building maintenance, and they would have to run errands and perform other chores for the members of the dominant family.
  15. As the traditional societies began to break down, particularly in the fourth quarter of the 19th century, these relationships gradually came to involve people at a wide variety of geographic levels, ranging from inter-regional at one extreme to intra-settlement at the other.
  16. Evidence regarding these broad dialect groups consists partly of vocabularies I collected in different regions, and partly of information contained in Murdoch [1892, pl. II], Nelson [1899: 26], and Wells and Kelly [1890: 14]. See also D. J. Ray [1964: 61; 1967: 376; 1971: 7-8], and Krauss [1974].

17. Regarding dialects at the societal level, the following sources were helpful: Hooper [1884: 112], Jenness [1928: 3], Oquilluk [1973: 219], and VanStone [1977: 20, 25, 26, 30, 58, 59, 62].
18. Regarding regional differences in physical type, see McLenegan [1887: 75], Nelson [1899: 27-28], Wells and Kelly [1890: 15], and Woolfe [1893: 15].
19. Where the discontinuity was unclear, as it was in the Goodhope Bay area, it seems to have been the result of some kind of catastrophe which recently had wiped out most of the inhabitants of the district.

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