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Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Revisited

メタデータ	言語: English 出版者: 公開日: 2013-11-06 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: 浜口, 尚 メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://doi.org/10.15021/00002438

Senri Ethnological Studies 84: 81–99 ©2013
Anthropological Studies of Whaling
Edited by Nobuhiro Kishigami, Hisashi Hamaguchi and James M. Savelle

Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Revisited

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Abstract
What does the term "aboriginal subsistence whaling" mean, and is there a clear definition that encompasses all forms of aboriginal subsistence whaling approved by the International Whaling Commission (IWC)? Similar to the cultural diversity that exists among every ethnic group, wide diversity also occurs among aboriginal subsistence whaling societies. This paper attempts to dispel the misconceptions associated with this type of whaling, and to interpret aboriginal subsistence whaling through an examination of the practice itself. It is proposed that all whaling should be approved on the condition that there exist cultural, nutritional, and economic needs for it, and provided that the species being harvested are not threatened with extinction.

1. Introduction

Most people probably associate the term "aboriginal subsistence whaling" with indigenous people living in remote areas and risking their lives to harvest whales for a livelihood. Although not incorrect, this image fails to address the entire set of circumstances in which the category of whaling occurs. For example, indigenous people

who harvest whales by using cannons to fire harpoon grenades from motorized fishing vessels have also been recognized internationally as aboriginal subsistence whalers.

The objective of this paper is to dispel misconceptions associated with "aboriginal subsistence whaling", and to present an interpretation of it based on an examination of the practice itself. First, the issue of defining aboriginal subsistence whaling is addressed via a chronological examination of amendments to the Schedule to the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), a document that stipulates provisions for aboriginal subsistence whaling, and for which the International Whaling Commission (IWC) is the governing body. The focus then shifts to the regions and ethnic groups involved in "aboriginal subsistence whaling". The current situation and reality of whaling are examined in detail to understand the actual nature of "aboriginal subsistence whaling". Finally, the problems and issues that emerge from a deliberation on the history and current situation regarding the practice are summarized, and suggestions for a more desirable form of whaling are presented.

2. Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling: History

2.1 Aboriginal Whaling at the Time of the Conclusion of the Drafting of the ICRW (1946)

The ICRW comprises a main text of 11 articles and an attached schedule. The main text describes the general framework of this Convention. The Schedule stipulates specific and substantive matters relating to the use and management of cetaceans, and includes, for example, the species it permits to be harvested, protected species, the start and end of the whaling seasons, areas where whaling is permitted and prohibited, size limits, and whaling methods and equipment.

Article I, paragraph 2 of the ICRW specifies the forms of whaling to which the Convention applies: "This Convention applies to factory ships, land stations, and whale catchers under the jurisdiction of the Contracting Governments and to all waters in which whaling is prosecuted by such factory ships, land stations, and whale catchers" (IWC 1950: 10).

This provision shows that the ICRW applies to modern types of whaling. Therefore, pre-modern types like whaling using rowboats or hand harpoons, most of which constitute aboriginal whaling can be interpreted as falling beyond the scope of the ICRW.

When the ICRW was originally concluded, paragraph 2 of the Schedule prohibited the taking and killing of gray whales and right whales, species that were already drastically depleted[1]. However, these species were exempted if whaling was conducted for local consumption of meat and other products by indigenous people. This is explained in paragraph 2 of the Schedule: "It is forbidden to take or kill gray whales or right whales, except when the meat and products of such whales are to be used exclusively for local consumption by the aborigines" (IWC 1950: 15).

According to Article I, paragraph 2 of the ICRW, whaling by indigenous people falls beyond the scope of the ICRW if they are using pre-modern types of whaling equipment. This implies that it is possible for them to harvest gray whales and right whales. Yet, that

paragraph 2 of the Schedule stipulates, "…except when the meat and products of such whales are to be used exclusively for local consumption by the aborigines…" is evidence that all forms of whaling for gray whales and right whales are not necessarily permitted, even if it is conducted by indigenous whalers using pre-modern equipment. Based on this provision, it would be impossible for indigenous whalers to harvest a gray whale or a right whale for either commercial purposes or when the meat or products are to be distributed extensively.

It should be reiterated that where whaling is conducted exclusively for local consumption by indigenous people, paragraph 2 of the Schedule does not exclude the distribution of whale meat and products involving cash within the local community, since it is not practical to exclude completely distribution involving cash among indigenous whalers. However, the significance of extensive distribution for profit, or distribution involving cash, to maintain whaling and cover associated costs is quite different. Were the latter completely excluded, the very existence of aboriginal whaling would be threatened.

2.2 Wavering Conditions for Indigenous Whalers in Alaska

At the 29th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission, in June 1977, records were presented to the Scientific Committee regarding the aboriginal harvesting of bowhead whales in Alaska from 1973 to 1977 (figures for 1977 were provisional). They showed that 37 bowhead whales were landed and 10 struck and lost in 1973, 20 were landed and 28 struck and lost in 1974, 15 were landed and 26 struck and lost in 1975, 48 were landed and 35 struck and lost in 1976, and 26 were landed and 77 struck and lost in 1977 (IWC 1978: 67 Table 24).

These figures demonstrate that an increased number of whales were landed in the 1976 whaling season, and the number struck and lost in the 1977 whaling season also increased. The estimated size at that time of the Bering Sea stock of bowhead whales, which was being harvested by the indigenous people of Alaska (Iñupiat, Yupiit), was approximately 600–2,000 (IWC 1978: 67). This was just 6–10% of the initial stock (IWC 1978: 67). Bowhead whales were already designated as a protected species, and the percentage of whales being killed was 5% of the remaining stock and rising (IWC 1978: 67). This information convinced the Scientific Committee of the biological necessity of banning the harvesting of bowhead whales, and therefore it recommended that the Commission amend the Schedule to this effect (IWC 1978: 67).

The Commission accepted the proposal of its Technical Committee on the basis of the recommendation of the Scientific Committee, and amended the Schedule to ban the taking of bowhead whales. This had the effect of prohibiting the harvesting of bowhead whales by the indigenous people of Alaska.

However, in December 1977, only six months after the amendment, a Special Meeting of the IWC was held. One purpose was to reconsider the ban of the harvesting of the Bering Sea stock of bowhead whales by the indigenous people of Alaska (IWC 1979a: 2).

The US government proposed to the Technical Committee of the Special Meeting

that a modest number of bowhead whales be allowed to be taken to fulfill the cultural and subsistence needs of the indigenous people of Alaska (IWC 1979a: 3). A proposal to permit 18 bowhead whales to be struck was passed by a majority vote (IWC 1979a: 3). However, it was voted down at the Plenary Session of the Special Meeting, with six votes in favor, six against, and three abstentions (IWC 1979a: 3). A subsequent US proposal, seconded by Denmark, to permit the landing of 15 whales was also voted down, with five votes in favor, three against, and seven abstentions (IWC 1979a: 3). Finally, a proposal by Norway, seconded by the USSR, to permit 12 whales to be landed or 18 whales to be struck was adopted, with ten votes in favor, three against, and two abstentions (IWC 1979a: 3). Paragraph 11 of the Schedule was finally amended as follows:

> […] the taking of gray whales, and of bowhead whales from the Bering Sea stock, by aborigines or a Contracting Government on behalf of aborigines is permitted, but only when the meat and products of such whales are to be used exclusively for local consumption by the aborigines and further provided, with respect to the Bering Sea stock of bowhead whales that:
> (a) in 1978, hunting shall cease when either 18 have been struck or 12 landed.
> (b) it is forbidden to strike, take or kill calves or any bowhead whale accompanied by a calf (IWC 1979a: 4).

At each annual meeting following this amendment there were repeated deliberations on the adjustment of limits for the landing and striking of bowhead whales by the indigenous people of Alaska. Anti-whaling countries wanted to keep the limit as low as possible, whereas the US government wanted the limit to come as close as possible to meeting the demands of the indigenous people. Arguments that arose as a result of the cultural and subsistence needs of the indigenous people of Alaska ultimately departed from this original intention, and simply ended up being about juggling numbers. It turned out that nobody—not even the US government—was aware of the significance of the whaling culture to the indigenous people of Alaska.

This amendment to the Schedule enabled the indigenous people of Alaska to land up to a maximum of 12 bowhead whales each year. Even the anti-whaling US government had extended strong political support for the resumption of whaling by its own citizens. Perhaps, indigenous people born in politically powerful countries are more fortunate compared with those born in less powerful countries.

However, a supplementary condition was attached to the amendment: "It is forbidden to strike, take or kill calves or any bowhead whale accompanied by a calf." The traditional method of taking bowhead whales using a hand harpoon, shoulder gun or darting gun from a rowboat, as aboriginal whaling is generally understood, had its highest chance of success when calves were targeted. For the Alaskan whalers not being able to harvest calves, the safest method and which also yields the tenderest and most delicious meat, was unfortunate.

2.3 From Aboriginal Whaling to Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling

The term "aboriginal subsistence whaling" initially appeared as "subsistence/aboriginal whaling" and was used for the first time on the agenda of the 30th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in June 1978 (IWC 1979b: 26). Later that year, it appeared as "aboriginal/subsistence whaling" and was used for the first time on the agenda of the Special Meeting of the IWC, in December 1978 (IWC 1980a: 4).

In February 1979, aware of the confusion surrounding the harvesting of bowhead whales in Alaska and the resultant need to define aboriginal whaling, the IWC convened a meeting of experts on wildlife science, nutrition and cultural anthropology. In helping the IWC define aboriginal whaling, the cultural anthropology panel offered the following definition of the "subsistence use of whale products":

> (1) The personal consumption of whale products for food, fuel, shelter, clothing, tools, or transportation by participants in the whale harvest.
> (2) The barter, trade, or sharing of whale products in their harvested form with relatives of the participants in the harvest, with others in the local community or with persons in locations other than the local community with whom local residents share familial, social, cultural, or economic ties. A generalized currency is involved in this barter and trade, but the predominant portion of the products from each whale are ordinarily directly consumed or utilized in their harvested form within the local community.
> (3) The making and selling of handicraft articles from whale products, when the whale is harvested for the purposes defined in (1) and (2) above (IWC 1982: 49).

Item (2) in particular merits comment. It is possible for whale products to be distributed outside the bounds of the local community, and it is also possible that money is involved in such a distribution. For example, those members of the indigenous people of Greenland (Kalaallit) who reside in Denmark should be permitted to distribute the whale products of Greenland, and the transport costs entailed are likely to involve the exchange of cash. In this case the purpose of the distribution and trade of these whale products is to strengthen and maintain cultural bonds between indigenous people. It is certainly not for commercial purposes. This definition was reaffirmed at the 56th Annual Meeting of the IWC in 2004 (see IWC 2005: 15).

At the 30th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in June 1978, the term "subsistence/aboriginal whaling" was used, but it became "aboriginal/subsistence whaling" at the subsequent Special Meeting of the IWC, in December 1978. However, at the 31st Annual Meeting of the IWC, in June 1979, usage reverted to the term "subsistence/aboriginal whaling" (IWC 1980b: 30). This wavering between names for aboriginal whaling could reveal that "aboriginal subsistence whaling" was not yet an established term within the IWC in 1978 and 1979. It was not until the 32nd Annual Meeting, in 1980, that the term "aboriginal subsistence whaling" came to be used consistently within the IWC documents.

2.4 Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling: Establishment and Tightening of Controls

In July 1981, during the week leading up to the 33rd Annual Meeting of the IWC, the *ad hoc* Working Group of the Technical Committee met to discuss the management principles for aboriginal subsistence whaling. For the first time, the Working Group proposed the following definitions of "aboriginal subsistence whaling" and "local aboriginal consumption":

> Aboriginal subsistence whaling means whaling, for purposes of local aboriginal consumption carried out by or on behalf of aboriginal, indigenous or native peoples who share strong community, familial, social and cultural ties related to a continuing traditional dependence on whaling and on the use of whales (IWC 1981: 3); and
>
> Local aboriginal consumption means the traditional uses of whale products by local aboriginal, indigenous or native communities in meeting their nutritional, subsistence and cultural requirements. The term includes trade in items which are by-products of subsistence catches (IWC 1981: 3).

These definitions reveal that, compared with the definition of the "subsistence use of whale products" put forward by the cultural anthropologists at the 1979 expert panel meeting on aboriginal whaling (see 2.3), the area in which the distribution of whale products is permitted is more restricted. Further, it is evident that the definition does not recognize the distribution of whale products that involve cash, as in aboriginal subsistence whaling.

However, the report proposing the definitions also included the following statements: "In some cases, products are distributed to and used by communities away from the coastal areas where whaling is actually conducted" (IWC 1981: 7); "…in some areas, the practice of trading to meet subsistence need has emerged" (IWC 1981: 7); and "…it is arguable whether there is a difference in principle between the sale of whale products in order to buy essential goods and the direct exchange of whale products for such goods" (IWC 1981: 7). This shows that even the *ad hoc* Working Group's definition did not completely deny for all cases the extensive distribution of whale products or their distribution involving cash.

The *ad hoc* Working Group also considered the difference between aboriginal subsistence whaling and commercial whaling. It was shown that the two forms were contrasted in terms of two aspects: management and catching (IWC 1981: 10). In aboriginal subsistence whaling, the main objective of management was to maintain individual stocks at the highest possible level, and the main purpose of catching whales was to fulfill nutritional and cultural needs (IWC 1981: 19). In contrast, for commercial whaling, the main objective of management was to maximize yields from individual stocks, and the main purpose of catching whales was to sell their products (IWC 1981: 10). These differences indicate that aboriginal subsistence whaling prioritizes quality (the cultural aspect) and commercial whaling prioritizes quantity (the economic aspect).

At the 34th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 1982, it was confirmed that aboriginal subsistence whaling was to be managed on the basis of the Schedule to the ICRW, and

that the cooperation of the affected indigenous people was essential (IWC 1983: 38 Appendix 3). It was also decided to establish a permanent sub-committee under the Technical Committee as an advisory body to examine and manage aboriginal subsistence whaling from the perspective of nutritional, subsistence, and cultural needs (IWC 1983: 38 Appendix 3). Henceforth, aboriginal subsistence whaling would be more tightly controlled within the framework of the Schedule.

This stricter approach to the management of aboriginal subsistence whaling within the IWC, led to the adoption at the 34th Annual Meeting of the proposed amendment to the Schedule to place a moratorium on commercial whaling. This proposed amendment involved prohibiting whaling for commercial purposes as of the 1986 coastal season and the 1985/86 pelagic season (IWC 1983: 21). This was significant because were commercial whaling to be banned, the ICRW, which was established to manage commercial whaling, would no longer have a role to play, and the IWC, the implementing and managing body established under the ICRW, would be deprived of its primary task. Its only remaining task would be to manage aboriginal subsistence whaling. (In fact, after the moratorium on commercial whaling, the IWC began to take on issues such as ecosystems, the environment, and whale watching, topics having at best a tenuous relationship to the ICRW).

Thus, the moratorium on commercial whaling had a considerable affect on whaling as a whole. Paragraph 13 of the Schedule, that stipulating provisions for aboriginal subsistence whaling, also underwent extensive revision following the amendment to the Schedule as it related to the moratorium.

With this amendment, the theoretical framework for the management of stocks relating to aboriginal subsistence whaling was stipulated in paragraph 13(a) of the Schedule, and individual forms of aboriginal subsistence whaling were provided for collectively under paragraph 13(b). Henceforth, items relating to individual forms of aboriginal subsistence whaling were to be amended and dealt with under paragraph 13(b).

With regard to changes to aboriginal subsistence whaling, the harvesting of bowhead whales in Alaska and gray whales in Chukotka underwent only formal changes; no substantive changes were made to these forms. However, considerable changes were made to whaling in Greenland.

Originally the Schedule had not presented any clear stipulation regarding whalers in Greenland: any resident of the Island of Greenland, whether indigenous or not, was permitted to be involved in whaling. However, this amendment clearly stipulated, at the beginning of paragraph 13(b), that "Catch limits for aboriginal subsistence whaling are as follows…" (IWC 1983: 40). This meant that in Greenland only the indigenous people were permitted to be involved in whaling.

Further, until this point the Schedule had permitted the harvesting of fin and minke whales for commercial purposes, and detailed discussions were lacking on whether the taking of these two stocks in Greenland constituted aboriginal or commercial whaling. However, as a result of the amendment to the Schedule, the harvesting of fin and minke whales in Greenland was permitted only for aboriginal subsistence purposes.

Because the 34th Annual Meeting of the IWC resulted in a moratorium being placed

on the commercial whaling of all 13 species of whales to which the ICRW applied, the only form of whaling permitted under the ICRW was aboriginal subsistence whaling[2]. As a result, aboriginal whaling—traditionally considered a peripheral form of whaling (with almost all forms of whaling involving the cash-based distribution of whale meat and products)—was now referred to as aboriginal subsistence whaling and considered to be a distinct category in direct contrast to commercial whaling. In other words, the establishment of aboriginal whaling as aboriginal subsistence whaling would result in this being treated as a practice devoid of commercial elements, at least in ideological terms. However, it is difficult for an outsider to comprehend the concept of the distribution of whale products involving cash that is not meant for profit-making purposes; it was here that the misfortunes of aboriginal subsistence whaling began.

3. Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling: The Current Situation

The following were the provisions of paragraph 13(b) of the Schedule to the ICRW at the close of the 61st Annual Meeting of the IWC in 2009.

The Paragraph 13 of the Schedule:

(b) Catch limits for aboriginal subsistence whaling are as follows:

(1) The taking of bowhead whales from the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock by aborigines is permitted, but only when the meat and products of such whales are to be used exclusively for local consumption by the aborigines and further provided that:

(i) For the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, the number of bowhead whales landed shall not exceed 280. For each of these years the number of bowhead whales struck shall not exceed 67, except that any unused portion of a strike quota from any year (including 15 unused strikes from the 2003–2007 quota) shall be carried forward and added to the strike quotas of any subsequent years, provided that no more than 15 strikes shall be added to the strike quota for any one year.

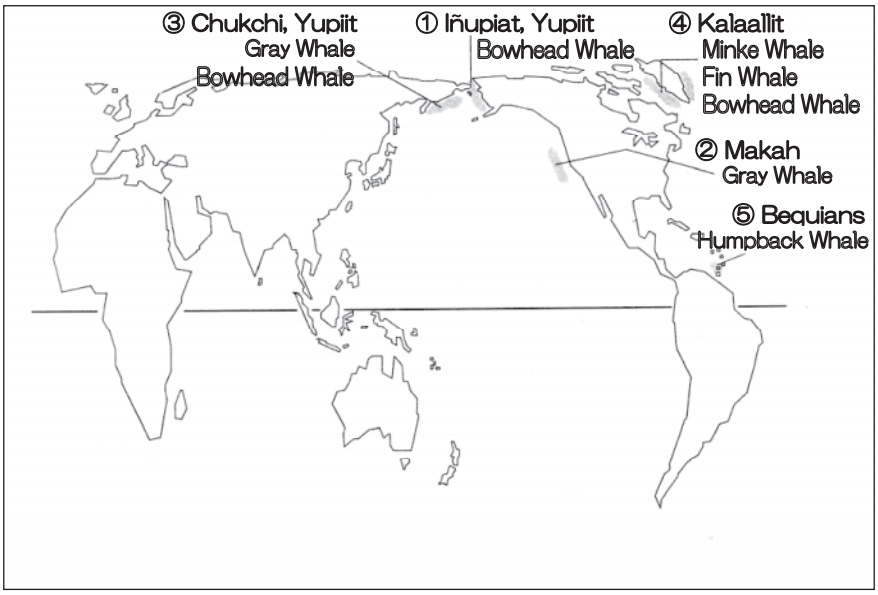
(ii) This provision shall be reviewed annually by the Commission in light of the advice of the Scientific Committee.

(2) The taking of gray whales from the Eastern stock in the North Pacific is permitted, but only by aborigines or a Contracting Government on behalf of aborigines, and then only when the meat and products of such whales are to be used exclusively for local consumption by the aborigines.

(i) For the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, the number of gray whales taken in accordance with this sub-paragraph shall not exceed 620, provided that the number of gray whales taken in any one of the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 shall not exceed 140.

(ii) This provision shall be reviewed annually by the Commission in light of the advice of the Scientific Committee.

(3) The taking by aborigines of minke whales from the West Greenland and Central stocks and fin whales from the West Greenland stock and bowhead whales from the West Greenland feeding aggregation is permitted and then only when the meat and products



(Source: Komatsu (2001: 108) modified)

Map 1 Aboriginal subsistence whaling as of 2009

are to be used exclusively for local consumption.

(i) The number of fin whales struck from the West Greenland stock in accordance with this sub-paragraph shall not exceed 19 in each of the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012.

(ii) The number of minke whales struck from the Central stock in accordance with this sub-paragraph shall not exceed 12 in each of the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, except that any unused portion of the quota for each year shall be carried forward from that year and added to the quota of any subsequent years, provided that no more than 3 shall be added to the quota of any one year.

(iii) The number of minke whales struck from the West Greenland stock shall not exceed 200 in each of the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, except that any unused portion of the quota for each year shall be carried forward from that year and added to the strike quota of any of subsequent years, provided that no more than 15 strikes shall be added to the strike quota for any one year. This provision will be reviewed annually by the Commission, according to the findings and recommendations by the Scientific Committee, which shall be binding.

(iv) The number of bowhead whales struck from off West Greenland in accordance with this sub-paragraph shall not exceed 2 in each of the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, except that any unused portion of the quota for each year shall be carried forward from that year and added to the quota of any subsequent years, provided that

Table 1A Aboriginal subsistence whaling as of 2009 (Part I)

	country / region / ethnic group	indigenousness	species	estimated population	catch limits	catch statictics
①	USA / Alaska / Iñupiat, Yupiit	indigenous people	bowhead whale	11,800 (as of 2004)	51	31 landed, 7 lost
②	USA / Washington State / Makah	indigenous people	gray whale	20,110 (2007)	4	none
③	Russia / Chukotka Chukchi, Yupiit	indigenous people	gray whale	20,110 (2007)	120	115 landed, 1 lost
			bowhead whale	11,800 (2004)	5	2 landed
④	Denmark Greenlad Kalaallit	indigenous people	fin whale	4,700 (2007)	19	8 landed, 2 lost
			minke whale	west: 10,800 (2005)	200	153 landed, 11 lost
				east: no data	12	4 landed
			bowhead whale	6,300 (2008)	2	none
⑤	St. Vincent and the Grenadines Bequia Island Bequians	non-indigenous people	humpback whale	10,750 (1992)	4	1 landed

(source: See Note 3)

Table 1B Aboriginal subsistence whaling as of 2009 (Part II)

	country / region ethnic group	type of whaling boat	motive power of whaling boat	whaling implement	use of whale products	distribution area of whale products	significance of whale products
①	USA / Alaska / Iñupiat, Yupiit	*umiak* wooden boat aluminum boat	rowing outboard engine	hand harpoon shoulder gun darting gun	sharing	local	food cultural
②	USA / Washington State Makah	wooden boat	rowing outboard engine	hand harpoon rifle	sharing	local	cultural
③	Russia / Chukotka Chukchi, Yupiit	wooden boat FRP boat	outboard engine	hand harpoon darting gun, rifle	sharing cash sale	local	food, income cultural
④	Denmark / Greenland Kalaallit	steel boat FRP boat	inboard engine outboard engine	harpoon canon rifle	sharing cash sale	local, regional foreign	food, income cultural
⑤	St. Vincent and the Grenadines Bequia Island Bequians	wooden boat	rowing sail	hand harpoon hand lance shoulder gun darting gun	sharing cash sale	local regional	food income cultural

(source: See Note 3)

no more than 2 shall be added to the quota for any one year. Furthermore, the quota for each year shall only become operative when the Commission has received advice from the Scientific Committee that the strikes are unlikely to endanger the stock.

(4) For the seasons 2008–2012 the number of humpback whales to be taken by the Bequians of St. Vincent and the Grenadines shall not exceed 20. The meat and products of such whale are to be used exclusively for local consumption in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (IWC 2010c: 169–170).

Map 1 and Tables 1A and 1B[3)] present a recapitulation of paragraph 13(b) of the Schedule, taking into account the ethnography of each region.

The IWC manages whales according to their species or stocks. For example, the bowhead whales of ① and ③ in Table 1A are classified as the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock of bowhead whales, while the gray whales of ② and ③ in the Table 1A are classified as the eastern North Pacific stock of gray whales. It should be stressed that the management of whales by the IWC centers mainly on the biology of the whales. In contrast, since the author is a cultural anthropologist, his research concentrates on the relationships between people and whales rather than on whales *per se*.

It should also be noted that although the catch limits in Table 1A are provided in annual terms for the sake of convenience, they are calculated on the basis of five-year block quotas in the Schedule. For example, the landed quota for the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock of bowhead whales in the five-year period between 2008 and 2012 is 280 whales (IWC 2008b: 155). This equates to an average of 56 whales per year, of which 5 are allocated to the indigenous people of the Russian Federation (Chukchi, Yupiit) (see IWC 1998: 27–28).

In recent years, the IWC expended much effort on the examination of aboriginal subsistence whaling, but this has focused primary on aboriginal subsistence whaling in Greenland (see ④ in Tables 1A and 1B). At the 37th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 1985, Greenland had its quota of humpback whales (eight whales per year) rescinded (IWC 1986: 18). A reinstatement of an annual quota of ten whales has been requested continually since the 59th Annual Meeting, in 2007. At that meeting, Greenland withdrew its request (IWC 2008a: 22); at the 60th Annual Meeting, in 2008, the request was voted down (IWC 2009: 23); and at the 61st Annual Meeting, in 2009, the chair ruled that the request be postponed (IWC 2010a: 24)[4)]. It seems that anti-whaling countries and organizations adopt a particularly strict stance toward the harvesting of any number of humpback whales—even if it is in the form of aboriginal subsistence whaling—in the same manner as that adopted toward the harvesting of humpback whales off the Island of Bequia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines (see ⑤ in Tables 1A and 1B).

Bequia, a small island where the author has conducted field research, was originally uninhabited, and hence there are no indigenous people on the island. Those currently involved in whaling in this area are mostly descendants of Scottish and French migrants. At the 54th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 2002, and which the author attended, a representative of the government of New Zealand stirred up controversy by stating, “This whaling was... a continuation of whaling from the colonial period” (IWC 2003a: 18). A

representative of the government of the Commonwealth of Dominica refuted this by saying, "St. Vincent and the Grenadines was one of the few islands in the Caribbean where the Caribs, the native (indigenous) people who gave the Caribbean its name, can be found, and the Caribs had hunted whales long before the advent of slavery and colonialism" (IWC 2003b: 71), and demanded an apology from the New Zealand representative. The uproar was over the harvesting of just a few humpback whales.

An examination of the type of whaling boat, source of power of the boat, whaling equipment, use of whale products, distribution area of whale products, significance of whale products, and other specifications presented in Table 1B, can facilitate understanding of the diversity of aboriginal subsistence whaling.

Occasionally, discussions concerning this diverse practice focus on issues such as the distribution of whale products outside the local communities inhabited by whaling populations, or whether a commercial element is involved in the cash-based distribution of whale products. An excellent example is provided by the case of Greenland.

At the 54th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 2002, anti-whaling countries raised doubts about whether or not distributing whale products from Greenland to Denmark contradicted the definition of aboriginal subsistence whaling as that for local consumption of whale products (IWC 2003a: 17). At the 55th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 2003, it was pointed out that government-owned enterprises in Greenland purchased whale meat from hunters, and hence there appeared to be market elements to the whaling there (IWC 2004: 79).

Sending whale products from Greenland to the indigenous people born in Greenland but now living in Denmark is considered the consumption of whale products by the indigenous people; the actual distance from the whaling area does not determine what constitutes "local consumption." It is a question of who catches, who distributes and who consumes. As long as the indigenous people are involved in some of these acts, this constitutes "local consumption."

The same applies to the sale of whale products involving cash. In the present globalized economy, even indigenous people need money to equip themselves with whaling boats, fuel, rifles, ammunition, and other whaling-related components in order to maintain the practice of harvesting and processing of whales. Few sources of monetary income are available to the indigenous people living in Greenland—an island isolated by ice for much of the year. It stands to reason that they will sell whale products and use this income to cover the necessary costs associated with whaling. However, they never sell the whale products for profit.

The Iñupiat of Alaska need at least 30,000 US dollars to harvest bowhead whales during the spring and autumn whaling seasons (Kishigami 2009: 513). However, since the US government does not permit the sale of whale meat or blubber in return for cash, the Iñupiat take up full- or part-time jobs in their villages in order to finance their whaling activities (Kishigami 2009: 509).

Outside the USA, the indigenous people sell for cash whale products produced under the name of aboriginal subsistence whaling. This is one aspect of the present-day aboriginal subsistence whaling. More accurately, in not permitting the Iñupiat to sell their

whale products for cash it is the US government that is anachronistic. The US government is, for the most part, anti-whaling on the international level, and is clinging to a bygone image of indigenous people and an idealized form of aboriginal subsistence whaling in order to limit as far as possible the commercial element in its domestic whaling.

4. Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling: Contemporary Issues

Similar to the cultural diversity existing within every ethnic group, there is also diversity within aboriginal subsistence whaling. Examining the individual examples of aboriginal subsistence whaling from an ethnographic perspective (see Tables 1A and 1B), it is apparent that the definition of aboriginal subsistence whaling is ambiguous. The distinction between commercial whaling and aboriginal subsistence whaling is also arbitrary. This implies that any form of whaling possessing some characteristics of aboriginal subsistence whaling may be recognized as aboriginal subsistence whaling.

It turns out that recognition of a form of whaling as aboriginal subsistence whaling is a political decision based on power relationships within the IWC. More simply put, all that is needed is a three-quarters majority of the votes[5)] (although obtaining this majority is not always easy).

A typical example of the political determination of aboriginal subsistence whaling concerns the harvesting of gray whales by the Makah, who live in the US state of Washington. The Makah stopped harvesting gray whales in the 1920s; however, over 70 years later, in 1997, their whaling was approved as a form of aboriginal subsistence whaling, and therefore it experienced a renaissance. This would probably have been out of the question for non-US indigenous people.

The following is an overview of the history of Makah whaling (see Hamaguchi 2002: 40–44; IWC 1997: 24–28; 1998: 27–30; 2009: 40):

1855: The Neah Bay Treaty concluded[6)]; Article IV of the Treaty guaranteed the Makah the right to harvest whales.

1920s: The Makah stopped whaling.

1973: The US Endangered Species Act established; gray whale listed as an endangered species.

1994: Gray whale removed from the endangered species list.

1995: The Makah began a cultural revival campaign in order to resume whaling.

1996: The US requested the approval of Makah whaling as aboriginal subsistence whaling at the 48th Annual Meeting of the IWC (later withdrawn).

1997: The harvesting of gray whales by the Makah approved as aboriginal subsistence whaling at the 49th Annual Meeting of the IWC.

1999: The Makah harvested one gray whale.

2000: US anti-whaling groups filed a lawsuit to prohibit Makah whaling.

2002: US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Makah, to pursue any treaty rights for whaling, had to comply with the processes prescribed in the US Marine Mammal

Protection Act and National Environmental Policy Act.

2007: The Makah tried to harvest a gray whale without obtaining permission from the US government.

It stands to reason that there should be doubts regarding whether whaling does, in fact, have a cultural significance for people who have made a living for over 70 years without it, or whether they still have nutritional needs for it. This was the argument that fell back on the USA at the 48th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 1996, when it decided to withdraw its request for a whaling quota.

It would take more than one year to dispel the numerous doubts surrounding the resumption of Makah whaling. Anti-whaling countries continually exert unreasonable demands and refuse to permit even legitimate forms of whaling. Clearly, the anti-whaling countries were not going to give the green light to the Makah request, what with its legitimacy racked with doubts. Highly sophisticated tactics were required to get the Makah request passed.

These tactics took the form of a joint proposal between the Russian Federation and the USA (IWC 1998: 29–30). The eastern North Pacific stock of gray whales, from which the Makah wanted a quota assigned to them, was the same stock from which the indigenous people living in Chukotka, Russia harvested gray whales. Since it was approved as aboriginal subsistence whaling, Russia was assigned a quota. If any country were to oppose this joint proposal on the grounds that they were against the Makah request for a quota, then the indigenous people of Chukotka—to whom a quota had been assigned—would also no longer be able to be involved in whaling. This was considered so unreasonable that most of the anti-whaling countries did not oppose this joint proposal.

In addition, the US-Russia joint proposal would also award permission to harvest the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas stock of bowhead whales, which traditionally only the indigenous people of Alaska had been permitted to harvest, to the indigenous people of Chukotka (IWC 1998: 27–28). The USA and Russia managed to acquire new quotas for the indigenous people of both countries by engaging in a mutually beneficial exchange of whaling quotas. This was not based on scientific arguments, but was rather the result of political power being exerted with carefully planned tactics.

This would then suggest that weaker nations are unable to wield political influence within the IWC. Yet, all countries are assigned one vote each. Thus, if they make good use of their single vote, weaker countries can stand up to their stronger counterparts. Let us examine once more the harvesting of humpback whales by the Bequians of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Their harvesting of humpback whales was approved as aboriginal subsistence whaling at the 39th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 1987, whereby a three-year quota of three whales per annum was granted to them (IWC 1988: 21, 31). However, ever since it was awarded aboriginal subsistence whaling status, the whaling method employed—involving the taking of a mother and calf—has come under scrutiny by anti-whaling countries (IWC 1988: 21).

This led to the quota being reduced from three to two whales at the 45th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 1993 (IWC 1994: 17, 39). At the 51st Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 1999, by placing a prohibition on the taking of calves into a statutory form in the Schedule, the three-year quota was renewed to two whales per year (IWC 2000a: 17–18; 2000b: 86).

As long as aboriginal whaling relies on traditional methods of harvesting humpback whales by using hand harpoons and lances from rowing or sailing boats, mothers and calves will be the easiest whales to take (this also means fewer struck and lost whales, which will help protect stock populations). Anti-whaling countries are against introducing the latest whaling techniques to aboriginal subsistence whaling, because these harvesting methods are not considered traditional. However, if the anti-whaling countries are to cling to the tradition of using old-fashioned whaling equipment, they should also accept the tradition of taking a mother and calf.

Although it was because of this tradition of taking a mother and calf that the arguments surrounding the harvesting of humpback whales by the Bequians became complicated each time the quota was due for renewal, things began to change at the 54th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 2002. This meeting was set to address the renewal of the quota for bowhead whales harvested by the indigenous people of Alaska as well as the quota for humpback whales harvested by the Bequians. It was with regard to the simultaneous renewal of these two quotas that there was a head-on clash between Japan and the USA.

As a whaling country, it was natural for Japan to lend its support to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. However, Japan opposed the renewal of the US aboriginal subsistence whaling quota because the USA was against the resumption of small-type coastal whaling of minke whales in Japan (see Hamaguchi 2003: 411–413). Therefore, if the USA was to succeed in renewing the quota for the indigenous people of Alaska, it had no choice but to offer its support to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. As a result, the Bequians were granted a five-year quota to harvest twenty humpback whales (an annual average of four whales) (IWC 2003a: 23–24; 2003c: 140). The whaling period was extended from three years to five, and the annual quota was doubled from two to four. This result could never have been imagined, considering the course of the earlier arguments and discussions.

The catch quota of humpback whales for the Bequians was to be renewed at the 59th Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 2007. However, it was renewed without argument for another five years and for another twenty humpback whales (IWC 2008a: 23; 2008b: 115–116). This was because the catch quota of bowhead whales for the indigenous people of Alaska was also to be renewed at this meeting. If the USA, as a member of the anti-whaling camp, were to adopt a rigid stance toward the harvesting of humpback whales by the Bequians, the harvesting of bowhead whales by the indigenous people of Alaska would receive the same treatment in return. Clearly, if their tactics are sufficiently ingenious, weaker countries can also compete with the stronger ones. This episode clearly demonstrates that discussions within the IWC are rooted in politics rather than science.

5. Concluding Remarks

As this paper has demonstrated, it is impossible to identify a definition that encompasses all forms of aboriginal subsistence whaling approved by the Schedule to the ICRW. This means that by gaining a three-quarters majority in its favor in the IWC, any form of whaling that possesses some elements of aboriginal subsistence whaling can be considered politically as being aboriginal subsistence whaling. The existence of even substantial elements of aboriginal subsistence whaling, on the other hand, is not sufficient for the approval of a form of whaling designated as aboriginal subsistence whaling if one quarter or more Contracting Governments vote against it. It is unfortunate that the indigenous people become entangled in the net of pro- and anti-whaling political feuds.

This paper concludes by presenting the following condition that is suitable for any form of whaling including aboriginal subsistence whaling: all whaling should be approved on the condition that there is a cultural, nutritional, and economic need for it and that the whales being harvested are not threatened with extinction.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Symposium of the National Institute for the Humanities, “Whaling Cultures of the World: Past, Present and the Future” (March 11–13, 2011, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan). The author would like to express gratitude to the chief organizer of this symposium, Professor Nobuhiro Kishigami of the National Museum of Ethnology, and to the participants for their helpful comments.

Notes

1) The harvesting of right whales in the Arctic started at the beginning of the 17th century. By the beginning of the 20th century, the population had been drastically reduced (Yamashita 2004: 92–108). Over 7,000 California gray whales were harvested by the whalers between 1845/1846 and 1873/1874 (Henderson 1984: 174).
2) The harvesting of whales for purposes of scientific research stipulated in Article VIII, paragraph 1 of the ICRW is treated as an exception and, thus is exempt.
3) Tables 1A and 1B are based on the *Annual Report of the International Whaling Commission* and *Report of the International Whaling Commission*, as well as Caulfield (1998), Hamaguchi (2002, 2003), Ikeya (2006, 2008), Kishigami (2007, 2009), and Ugarte (2007).
4) Greenland’s request for the harvesting of humpback whales was finally approved at the 62nd Annual Meeting of the IWC, in 2010, and a quota of nine humpback whales per year was granted (IWC, Press Release, Day 5, 25 June 2010. Web. 20 September 2010 <http: //www.iwcoffice.org/meetings/meeting2010.htm>).
5) The requirement of a three-quarters majority among Contracting Governments to pass an amendment to the Schedule is specified in Article III, paragraph 2 of the ICRW (IWC 2010b: 157).
6) The Neah Bay Treaty comprises fourteen articles. It stipulates predominantly disadvantageous

conditions for the Makah, one of them being that the Makah waive any rights to the area they inhabit and that this territory is ceded to the US government (Article I). It also demarcates the Makah resettlement area, as designated by the US government (Article II), and represents their consent to move to the resettlement area (Article III). It does, however, guarantee the Makah the right to fish and to harvest whales and seals in the area that they have used customarily (Article IV). It was on the basis of Article IV of this Treaty that the Makah initiated their campaign to resume whaling. See Treaty with the Makah, 1855 <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/ea/tribal/treaties/MAKAH_1855.pdf>.

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