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## On Sharing of Bowhead Whale Meat and Maktak in an Inupiat Community of Barrow, Alaska, USA

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# On Sharing of Bowhead Whale Meat and *Maktak* in an Inupiat Community of Barrow, Alaska, USA

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米国アラスカ州バローのイヌピアット・コミュニティにおける  
ホッキョククジラの肉とマックタックの分配について

岸 上 伸 啓\*

本論文は、アラスカ州バローのイヌピアット・コミュニティにおけるホッキョククジラの肉やマックタック（脂肪付き皮部）の分配について記述し、論じる。同コミュニティには規則に基づく分配と自主性に基づく分配の2つのシステムが存在しているが、それらにより鯨肉やマックタックはコミュニティ全体へと流通する。これらの分配システムには複数の社会的機能や効果がある。また、分配は文化的に価値の高い食物をコミュニティ全体に提供する効果的な手段であり、捕鯨とともに分配自体がイヌピアットの目的になっている。そして結論として分配の実践はアラスカ州バローのイヌピアット・コミュニティのウェルビーイングに貢献していると主張する。

## Abstract

This paper describes and discusses the sharing of meat and *maktak* (skin parts with blubber) in the Inupiat community of Barrow, Alaska, USA. There are two kinds of sharing systems such as (1) rule governed sharing and (2) voluntary sharing, both of which enable the distribution of whale meat and *maktak* to the whole community. The sharing systems have multiple functions and effects in the community. Also, while the systems are an efficient means of distribution of culturally valued food to the whole community, the sharing of the whale meat and *maktak* itself, as well as whale hunting, seem to be the Inupiat's aims. In conclusion, I argue that the sharing practices contribute to the well-being of the Inupiat community of Barrow, Alaska.

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**Key Words** Sharing, Bowhead Whale, Inupiat, Alaska, Whale Meat  
キーワード 分配、ホッキョククジラ、イヌピアット、アラスカ、鯨肉

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One distinctive characteristic of hunting and gathering societies is the practice of food sharing (KELLEY 1995; KISHIAGMI 2003). Although all societies such as the Inuit, San, etc. have undergone drastic changes for the last hundred years, many of them still maintain their sharing practices despite changes in frequency and forms. Why do they share food? Why do they keep the custom of sharing? How have the sharing practices been changed? These questions are important research topics to be explored in anthropology.

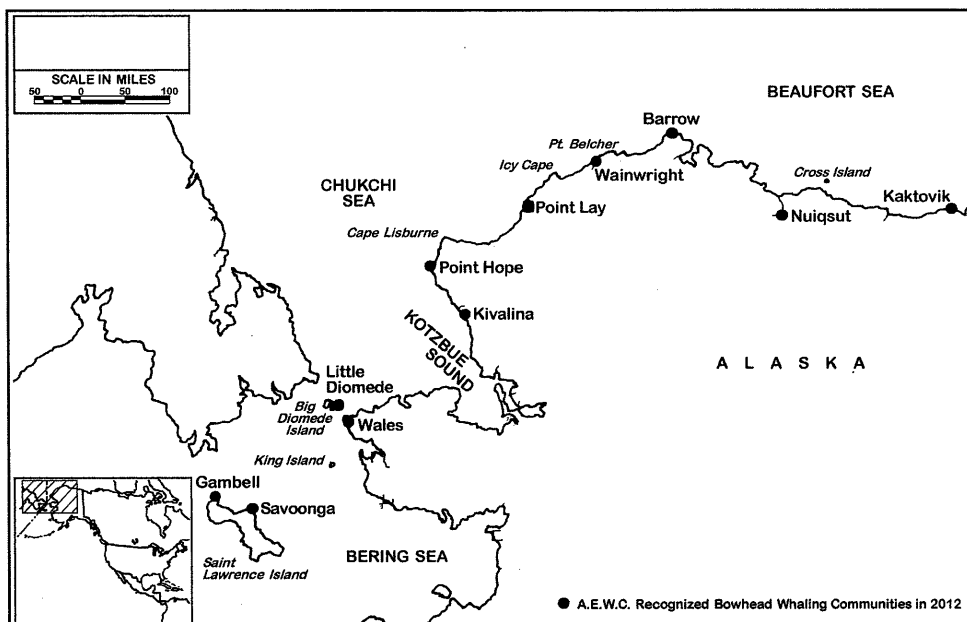
I have studied Inuit food sharing practices as well as food distribution by the Nunavik Hunter Support Program in Akulivik of Northern Quebec, Canada, since 1984. As part of my research, I point out that the central food sharing practices among the Inuit are not exchanges but giving and redistribution and that the practices are closely correlated with several cultural or social elements such as a special relationship between the Inuit and animals, extended family relationships, co-production, locality, hunter's social fame, etc. (KISHIGAMI 2000, 2004, 2007).

I began a research project of the bowhead whale (*Balaena mysticetus*) hunt and the sharing/distribution of whales in Barrow, Alaska, USA in 2006. Meat and *maktak* (skin parts with blubber) of harvested whales are shared by the Inupiat several times after the butchering and the first formal sharing of a whale. The aim of this paper is to describe the contemporary sharing and distribution of bowhead whales and to consider the features and functions of these practices among the Inupiat in Barrow, Alaska, USA.

There are a few studies related to my research topic. One is BODENHORN's study on the shares and sharing of bowhead whales in Barrow, Alaska and another is DAHL's study on the sharing of beluga whales in Greenland. These studies show that the sharing or distribution of large game is firstly carried out by rules and then voluntarily (BODENHORN 2000: 28, 35-36; DAHL 2000: 175-178). The logic of sharing of a large game animal may be different from that of a small one (cf. HOVELSRUD-BRODA 2000; WENZEL 2000; KISHIGAMI 2000). Also, although there are hypotheses regarding cooperative acquisition and "show-off" distribution to explain the sharing practices of large games, the latter hypothesis is not supported by the research of evolutionary ecology (ALVARD 2002; ALVARD and NOLIN 2002).

## 2. THE BOWHEAD WHALE HUNT OF THE INUPIAT IN BARROW, ALASKA

The contemporary whaling of the Alaskan indigenous peoples is recognized as Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) and the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The Inupiat in nine villages (Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Barrow, Point Lay, Wainwright, Point Hope, Kivalina, Wales, and Little Diomede) and Yupiit in two villages (Savoonga and Gambell) hunt bowhead whales (See Map 1). The IWC 5 year quota allowed them to hunt up to 280 whales for the 5 years from 2008 to 2012. As 15 of 280 whales were transferred to indigenous groups of Russia, the Inupiat and Yupiit might generally catch up to 53 whales per year.



Map 1. Alaska Aboriginal Whaling Villages. (Source: BRAUND and MOOREHEAD 1995:255)

My research site, Barrow, Alaska, USA is located at 71 degrees 29 minutes north latitude and 156 degrees 79 minutes west longitude. Bowhead whales migrate off shore near Barrow in the spring and fall. Thus, the Inupiat hunt them from late April to late May and from the end of September to late-October. An adult bowhead whale may grow up to 18.5 meters in length and weigh up to about 80 tons (KASAMATSU 2000: 15). However, the Inupiat hunters in Barrow prefer to hunt a young whale of about 10 meters in length. A whale of this size will produce about 2200 kilograms of edible meat and

about 1500 kilograms of *maktak* for the community. There are about 45 whaling crews (groups), each of which consists of a whaling captain and 5 to 15 crew members. They are allowed to harvest 22 whales per year or 110 for 5 years under the contemporary quota system (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Number of Whales Caught in Barrow from 2005 to Spring of 2012**

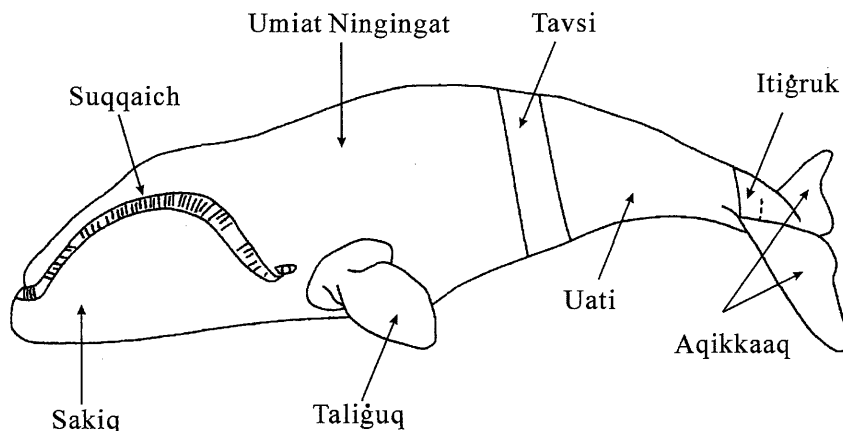
(total number of whales caught in spring and fall hunts in each year)

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Spring	16	3	13	9	4	14	7	14
Fall	13	19	7	12	15	8	11	10
Total	29	22	20	21	19	22	18	24

Source: (SUYDAM *et al.* 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011) and KISHIGAMI's field notes

### 3. BUTCHERING AND SHARING OF A BOWHEAD WHALE AMONG THE INUPIAT IN BARROW

Inupiat whalers butcher and share a hunted whale soon after the hunt according to the sharing rules. The butchering and sharing are slightly different among several whaling crews in Barrow (KISHIGAMI 2012: 154-157) and very different among whaling crews from different villages (cf. GAMO 1964: 16-17; FOOTE 1992; RAINEY 1947; WORL 1980: 317- 320; VANSTONE 1962: 48-52 in Point Hope; BURCH 2006: 160- 165 in Wales; JOLLES 2002: 306-309 in Gambell). In this paper, I discuss the most common practice of distribution of a whale in Barrow, according to Figure 1 (below) provided by the NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT (2002).



**Figure 1. Whale Distribution in Barrow.**(Source: NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 2002)

- (1) *Tavsi*: Meat and *maktak* of 30 cm in width are divided into two. Half goes to the successful crew. This half is divided as a personal share among the crew under the supervision of the whaling captain. Another half is cooked and served to the public at the captain's house the next day after the successful hunt.
- (2) *Uati*: This is kept in the successful captain's ice cellar and is served at feasts such as *Nalukataq*, Christmas and Thanksgiving.
- (3) *Itigruk*: This part is kept in the successful captain's ice cellar and given to visitors at *Nalukataq*.
- (4) *Aqikkaak*: This part is kept in the successful captain's ice cellar and served at the feasts such as *Nalukataq*, Christmas and Thanksgiving.
- (5) *Umiat Ningingat* or *Ningik*: All other whaling crews who help butcher the whale equally share this part. Note that this part is equally shared to all the registered whaling crews in the first spring hunt.
- (6) *Suqqaich*: Half goes to all the crews who help in the towing. The rest goes to the successful crew.
- (7) *Sakiq*: One side goes to the successful whaling captain and another side is divided among the crews who assisted in towing the whale.
- (8) *Taliguq*: One side goes to the harpooner and another side is used as "*taquun*" by all whaling crews on the butchering site.
- (9) *Utchik* (tongue): Half is divided among all the crews on the butchering site. Approximately one quarter is served at the successful captain's feast and the remainder at *Nalukataq*.
- (10) *Uumman* (heart), *Ingaluaq* (intestine) and *Taqtu* (kidney): Half is served at the successful captain's feast. The remainder is served at *Nalukataq*.

When the butchering process is completed, the successful captain makes a "go ahead" sign for anyone to cut and take from portions left around bones for that purpose. This practice is called "*pilaniaq*".

This distribution system shows that the successful crew does not exclusively own most parts of the whale. According to BROWER, JR. and HEPA (1998: 38), 60% of the whale parts goes to *Ningik* use, 10% to *Tavsi* use, and 30% to *Uati* use. The sharing rule results in the majority of the parts (about 90 to 95 %) of the whale being provided to other whaling crews who help in the towing and butchering, and to the whole community.

#### 4. SECONDARY SHARING AND DISTRIBUTION OF A WHALE

After the formal sharing on the butchering site, whale meat, *maktak* and other parts are further distributed to the whole community through the successful captain's feast, feasts of *Apugauti*, *Nalukataq*, Thanksgiving and Christmas, and daily sharing and exchange practices.

##### 4.1 The Successful Captain's Feast after the Hunt

The next day after the hunting and butchering of a whale, a feast is held for the whole community at the successful captain's house. This feast is called "*nigipkai*". Half of the whale meat and *maktak* of the *tavsi* part, one quarter of the tongue, and half of the heart, intestine and kidney are cooked and provided to the community.

The successful whaling captain's crew flag is installed on the roof of his house. All the crew members and their wives come together at the captain's house to prepare for the feast. They cut and boil the meat, *maktak* and other parts. Then the cooked parts are divided into two: one for the feast and another for gift or giving. For the gift, they place each portion of meat, *maktak*, tongue, heart, intestine and kidney, and a piece of bread or Eskimo doughnut<sup>1)</sup> into small plastic bags. Also, they prepare boiled fruits, coffee and tea.

When the feast is ready, the captain, after praying to God announces the opening, via Citizens' Band (CB) radio. Villagers visit the captain's house by twos and threes. The wives of the captain and his crew members present a few bags to each visitor, according to the number in the visitor's household. On the other hand, relatives of the captain and elders enjoy the whale dishes at the captain's house and receive a few bags as a gift after the feast. Also, the captain or his crew members deliver these bags by car to elders and widows unable to visit the feast place.

When the hosts have given all the food bags out to visitors, the captain announces, by radio, the end of the feast and removes his crew's flag from the roof. Through this feast, many residents, especially elders, widows and persons in need can obtain some culturally highly valued food.

##### 4.2 Feasts at *Apugauti*, *Nalukataq*, Thanksgiving, Christmas and *Kivgiq* (Messenger Feast)

After the end of the spring whaling season, *Apugauti* and *Nalukataq* are held by the successful whaling captains in Barrow. When each successful whaling captain lands

his *umiaq* at the end of his whaling season, he and his crew will host and carry out *Apugauti* as a small scale community feast independently from mid-May to early June. On the other hand, one crew, a few crews or several crews together will host and carry out *Nalukataq(s)* as a community-wide whaling festival consisting of feasts, blanket toss and drum dance from mid-June to the end of June. These events accompany the community feasts.

Before the 1980s, whaling captains did not hold *Apugauti* for the whole community but for their own crews. However, each successful whaling captain and crew began to host it for them. The main dishes of this feast are *mikigaq* (fermented meat, blubber and blood of the whale), duck soup and goose soup. Also, pieces of bread or Eskimo doughnut, fruits, coffee and tea are provided to participants. In one occasion of the *Apugauti* held in June, 2009, one whaling crew provided 14 buckets of *mikigaq* (266 liters), 20 pots of goose soup, 20 pots of duck soup, 2000 pieces of bread, 2000 pieces of Eskimo doughnuts, 10 buckets of stewed fruit (190 liters), 53 liters of tea, and 38 liters of coffee for the whole community. This *Apugauti* is rather a large one. Usually, each whaling captain decides the scale of the *Apugauti* and quantity of dishes. While about 100 people participate in a small *Apugauti*, more than 400 people participate in a large one. Each participant can enjoy only one or two meals at *Apugauti*. When the food is gone, it is finished.

In an ordinary year, 2 to 4 *Nalukataqs* are held in Barrow from mid-June to the end of June. It is a whole day festival with three meals. On June 30, 2008, 2 whaling captains held *Nalukataq* together. At noon, their crews provided goose soup, duck soup, bread, tea and coffee for the people of the community. At three o'clock, *mikigaq* was given to them and frozen whale meat, frozen *maktak*, cakes, fruits, tea and coffee were served at six o'clock.

Each captain provides one third of *Uati* and *Aqikkaaq*, whole *Igruk*, half of heart, intestine and kidney, and one quarter of tongue to the feast of *Nalukataq*. In each *Nalukataq*, more than 2000 people in total participate. Each of them receives one meal at noon, 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. In this festival, a blanket toss and traditional Inupiat dances are carried out by the host captain, crews and several other participants after the feast.

On Thanksgiving Day in November and Christmas in December, several churches in Barrow host feasts. The successful captains donate about one third of *Uati* and *Aqikkaaq* to four churches on each occasion. While there are about ten churches of different sects in Barrow, each successful captain provides meat and *maktak* to these four churches



KISHIGAMI On Sharing of Bowhead Whale Meat and *Maktak* in an Inupiat Community of Barrow, Alaska, USA attended by many Inupiat people, such as the *Utiqiagvik* Presbyterian Church, Assembly of God Church, Cornerstone Community Church and New Beginnings Church in the town.

Every two years, *Kivgiq* (messenger feast) is held in Barrow, revived in 1988 after a break of some 70 years (IKUTA 2007). Many people from outside the community are invited to the feast, so whaling captains and their crews provide food including whale meat and *maktak* for the feast.

Several kinds of feasts are held in Barrow about 20 times or more a year. On each occasion, whale dishes are provided to a whole community by successful whaling captains and crews.

#### 4.3 Sharing of Whale Meat and *Maktak* within Barrow

Once whale meat and *maktak* are shared among the captain and his crew members, under the supervision of the captain, the captain also will give some meat and *maktak* as a share from *Tavsi* parts to several people who provided gas, food, cash or equipments for the whale hunt. The meat and *maktak* are further shared or given to other people such as their parents, uncles and aunts, siblings, elders, widows, and persons in economic need<sup>2</sup>). Also, whaling captains will provide some meat and *maktak* to families whose members pass away and which host funeral services.

#### 4.4 Sharing and Exchange of Whale Meat and *Maktak* with People Living outside Barrow

Many siblings, cousins, children, nephews, nieces, friends of the Inupiat in Barrow live in other villages, towns and cities in the USA. The Inupiat in Barrow communicate with them by phone, Facebook, and/or e-mail. If their relatives or friends tell Barrow people they hope to receive whale products, the Barrow people send some meat and *maktak* to these distant persons. For example, following his successful hunt in 2011, a whaling captain sent by air cargo or by mail 30 pounds of meat, *maktak* and tail parts to his wife's aunt in Nuiqsut, 24 pounds to the Alaska Children's Service in Anchorage, 25 pounds to his cousin in Anchorage, and 29 pounds to another cousin in Fairbanks. From my research, it is seen the Barrow people send whale meat and *maktak* by air cargo to people in Nuiqsut, Atqasuq, Point Lay, Point Hope, Nome, Anaktutvuk Pass, Kotzebou, Noorvik, Fairbanks, Anchorage, Montana State, Washington State, Arizona State, California State, Hawaii State, etc. On the other hand, their family, relatives and friends in neighboring communities send smelt or meat/*maktak* of beluga whale to them.

At a village level, Barrow sends whale meat and *maktak* to other communities at their request. In November, 2011, each of eleven successful whaling captains brought 3 boxes of meat and 3 boxes of *maktak* to the North Slope Borough mayor's office at the request of communities such as Anaktuvk Pass, Atqasuk, and Point Hope. Each box weighed about 13.5 kilograms. The mayor's office delivered about 150 kilograms each of meat and *maktak* to each of the communities for the Christmas feast.

Barrow people also exchange local products with people in other communities whom they meet at various indigenous meetings. For example, while an Inupiat man in Barrow sent about 20 kilograms of whale meat and *maktak* to a Yupiit man, the latter sent dried salmon to the former.

In this way, Barrow people often share and exchange local products with people in other places or with other aboriginal people.

#### 4.5 Sale and Exchange of Whale Meat and *Maktak*

The Inupiat do not sell any edible parts of whales but only share or distribute them through rule-governed and voluntary sharing systems in Barrow. The Inupiat people do not aim to make a monetary profit from their whaling activities. Rather, the Inupiat people use their own cash income to run their whaling activities.

There is an exception to the sale of whale products. Baleen can be sold for about \$35 or less per 30 cm in Barrow. However, many captains and hunters often simply give baleen parts to their family members, relatives and/or friends who make artistic pieces from the baleen. Arts and crafts made of baleen or whale bones are sold to tourists.

### 5. THE QUANTITY OF SHARING AND SHARING WITHIN A WHALING GOUP

The Inupiat whalers in Barrow prefer to catch whales averaging 10 meters in length. This is because these smaller whales are easier to catch than larger adults, and the Inupiat claim that the younger whales also taste better. In this section, I examine the sharing of whale parts according to their weight, using the existing data. George and others report for weights of the parts of a male whale of 11 meters in length and weighing 14,797 kilograms (see Table 2; GEORGE, PHILO, CARROLL and ALBERT 1988).

Also, ratios of *Umiat Ningingat*, *Tavsi*, and *Uati* are roughly 60%, 10%, and 30% (BROWER, JR. and HEPA 1998: 38). In this paper, I assume that the edible parts of skin and blubber are 20 % and for a spring hunt catch.

*Umiat Ningingat* for all the crews and people who participate in butchering of a

**Table 2. Names of Parts of a 11 Meter Whale, Their Weight, and Ratio.**

Source: (GEORGE, PHILO, CARROLL and ALBERT 1988)

Name of parts	weight (kg)	ratio
Tongue	893.0	(6%)
Skin and blubber	6,601.9	(44%)*
Muscles	2,428.0	(16%)
Baleen	595.5	(4%)
Tails	217.7	(1.5%)
Flippers	349.2	(2.4%)
Kidneys (both)	97.9	(0.7%)
Heart	95.2	(0.6%)
Intestines	223.8	(1.5%)

\*edible part is one fifth or one fourth

whale can be, in total, about 1440 kilograms of meat and about 792 kilograms of *maktak*. For example, in the case of butchering and sharing of a whale on May 5, 2010, 15 whaling crews (each crew sent a few members to the butchering site) and four independent helpers from the village (regarded as a group for the sharing) participate in the butchering process. Thus, meat and *maktak* were divided into 16 shares. As a result, each whaling crew got one share including about 90 kilograms of meat and about 50 kilograms of *maktak*. The meat and *maktak* were redistributed among the captain and his crew members under each captain's supervision.

*Tavsi* for the captain's feast and the successful whaling captain weigh about 240 kilograms of meat and 132 kilograms of *maktak* in total. Half are cooked and provided for the captain's feast for a whole community, with cooked dishes including about 223 kilograms of tongue, 49 kilograms of kidney, 48 kilograms of heart, and 112 kilograms of intestines.

*Uati* for community feasts such as *Nalukataq*, Thanksgiving, and Christmas provide about 720 kilograms of meat and about 396 kilograms of *maktak*. Although each captain decides how much meat and *maktak* to provide for each feast, he usually provides 50%, 25% and 25% respectively on each of these occasions. About 360 kilograms of meat and about 198 kilograms of *maktak* are given to the *Nalukataq* feast while about 180 kilograms of meat and about 99 kilograms of *maktak* are provided to each of the Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts. In the case of *Nalukataq*, a whaling captain (crew)

provides about 223 kilograms of tongue, about 49 kilograms of kidney, about 48 kilograms of heart and about 112 kilograms of intestines to the feast. If twenty whales averaging 11 meters in length are landed per year, the whole community can consume, at some twenty feasts per year, about 16.8 tons of meat and 9.2 tons of *maktak* in total.

In this way, most parts of a whale are given to other whaling crews and to community feasts rather than the successful crew in Barrow. The successful whaling crew can get about 210 kilograms of meat and about 116 kilograms of *maktak*. Those are redistributed among the captain, his crew members and helpers under the supervision of the captain. In the hunt of May 4, 2010, eight persons shared them equally, including one captain, four crew members, two persons who provided gas for the crew, one person who lent his darting gun to the captain. In this case, there is no difference between the captain and his crew members in terms of the quantity of a share. Each person received about 26 kilograms of meat and 15 kilograms of *maktak*. Also, the successful harpooner was given an additional share, that is, a flipper (about 175 kilograms). As this sharing shows, each of the successful whaling captains and crew members do not receive a lot of meat and *maktak* from their successful hunt.

However, if the crew sent a few of its members to help other successful crews to butcher their whale, the crew can obtain about 90 kilograms of meat and about 50 kilograms of *maktak* each time. If a crew helps the other 10 successful whaling crews, the crew can receive about 900 kilograms of meat and about 500 kilograms of *maktak*. If these are divided equally among the eight persons, each of them can acquire about 113 kilograms of meat and about 63 kilograms of *maktak*. Thus, each obtains about 140 kilograms of meat and 78 kilograms of *maktak* in total per year. Each person can consume this meat in his household and/or freely give the meat to other persons.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Whale products such as meat and *maktak*, except baleen, are not sold but shared and exchanged by the Inupiat in Barrow. The first sharing soon after the butchering of a whale and secondary sharing through several community feasts such as the successful whaling captain's feast, *Apugauti*, *Nalukataq*, Thanksgiving, Christmas, *Kivgiq* (messenger feast) are a kind of rule-governed sharing or sharing by rule. Also, there are voluntary sharing, gifting and/or exchange by whaling captains and hunters (BODENHORN 2000).

In this section, I discuss the characteristics, reasons, and functions of sharing and

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gifting by the Inupiat.

### 6.1 Characteristics of Sharing Systems of Whale Meat and Other Edible Parts

First, there are two kinds of sharing systems of whale meat and other edible parts: sharing by rule and voluntary sharing. The former sharing includes that of formal sharing soon after butchering of a whale and that through several community feasts. In this case, how to and how much to share the parts of the whale is defined, to a considerable degree, by rules. On the other hand, the voluntary sharing is carried out according to individual decisions and discretions of daily life.

Second, the two kinds of sharing systems promote distribution of whale meat and *maktak* into all of the households in the whole community. Specifically, while the rule governed sharing soon after the butchering of a whale permits a particular successful captain and his crew members to get a certain amount ( 5 to 10 %) of meat and *maktak*, it gives most (90 to 95 %) of the whale products to other whaling crews who help with the towing and butchering and to the community-wide feasts. Then, voluntary sharing allows the whale products to be distributed to many Inupiat in and out of Barrow.

### 6.2 A Reason to Share a Whale by Rule

In this section, I discuss the rule governed sharing system. There are two very interesting studies concerning this topic such as one by BODENHORN (2000) and another by DAHL (2000). BODENHORN argues that we clearly should distinguish between shares and sharing in the case of the Inupiat's sharing of a whale (BODENHORN 2000: 28-29). She refers to "shares" as something one can earn as an individual within the Inupiat organization (BODENHORN 2000: 29). On the other hand, people are expected to share, but decide for themselves how much they will give, to whom and in what context (BODENHORN 2000: 39). She points out that a person can earn his/her share by providing the means of production or by participation in the whale hunt.

DAHL who has conducted his field research in Saqqaq in Northwestern Greenland distinguishes between sharing and the giving of a meat gift. DALH describes this distinction as follows.

I prefer to use the term 'sharing' to denote an integrated part of the system of relations of production, and thus distinguish sharing from exchange, in which distribution of meat gifts is the most important component. In this sense, sharing follows from a right that some persons have to specified parts of an animal or to a

specified amount of meat and *mattak*, in contrast to a moral and social obligation to give away meat or lend things to others. ‘The meat gift is, as mentioned, a voluntary distribution not demanding any payment according to value or need’ (DAHL 2000: 177-178).

Although BODENHORN and DAHL ascribe to “sharing” different meanings, they share a similar view that a rule-governed sharing of a whale or a beluga is associated with relations of production and/or co-production. This interpretation applies to my research cases of whale meat and *maktak* sharing in Barrow.

Although a whaling crew can kill a bowhead whale, it may have a lot of difficulties in the towing, pulling up on the ice, and butchering by one crew’s labor only. Two or more whaling crews always have to participate in the butchering process. Taking these matters into account, I would argue that a reason to share a whale by rule ensures that co-workers or providers of tools can always get a certain portion of the whale products. I suggest that this case supports the cooperative acquisition hypothesis on sharing behaviors. Furthermore, the sharing by rule soon after the butchering of the whale prevents a successful crew from exclusively owning it and contributes to making sure that other whaling crews, helpers and a whole community can get shares from the successful whale hunt. Thus, I argue that the formal sharing by rule is a device by which whale products are to be distributed to benefit the whole community.

### 6.3 Social Effects of Sharing by Rule and Voluntary Sharing

The successful captain and his crew members do not earn a lot of material benefits from their successful hunt. Why do they continue hunting and sharing whales? I consider that the reason comes from the multi-dimensional functions and effects of sharing practices.

First, the formal sharing of a whale by rule soon after butchering provides culturally high-valued food such as whale meat, *maktak*, etc. to a whole community through several community feasts. Whaling captains and hunters stress that they carry out whale hunts in order to feed the whole community. As I pointed out, 90 to 95% of edible parts of a whale are given to other whaling crews who help the successful crew for towing and butchering of a whale (55 to 60%) or community feasts (35%). Thus, successful whale hunts and sharing of the whales bring meat and *maktak* not only to whaling crews through the formal sharing by rule but also to a community at large through several community feasts hosted by successful whaling captains.

Second, participation in whale hunts and community feasts provides occasions for the Inupiat to reconfirm their ethnic and community identities. The Inupiat participants can gain a “we-feeling” through hunting, sharing, and eating whales together.

Third, two kinds of sharing systems are observed for the particular social relationships of the Inupiat. Through the sharing practices, social relationships between whales and the Inupiat, those between whaling crews and the whole community, those within and between extended families, those between households, those within each whaling crew, etc. will be maintained or reproduced. The voluntary sharing practices reconfirm and maintain familial relationships, kin relationships and friend relationships.

Fourth, a series of practices of the two kinds of sharing systems result in leveling the amount of consumption and possession of whale products among households, extended families or whaling crews within the community.

Fifth, as the voluntary sharing practices have a social security function since they help widows, elders, disabled persons, persons in economic need, etc., the practices contribute to community well-being.

Sixth, as sharing practices of the two kinds are based on a worldview of a reciprocal or cyclical relationship among whales<sup>3)</sup>, the God and the Inupiat, the worldview is reproduced through these practices. According to the Inupiat’s world view, the whale gives itself to Inupiat whalers and thus they should treat it respectfully and share it with other Inupiat people. If it is satisfied with the whalers’ attitudes and treatments toward it, the whales will come back to them to be harvested again. In order for this reciprocal flow between a whale and whalers, Inupiat whalers should share their whale products with other Inupiat people.

Seventh, both sharing by rule and voluntary sharing have the social effect of bestowing a good reputation or high prestige upon the successful whaling captains and hunters. A whaling captain, his wife, and his crew members who successively catch whales and host community feasts, as well as helping other Inupiat through voluntary sharing can obtain social fame and are regarded as a real or respectful Inupiat person by other Inupiat villagers. This case may support the “show-off” hypothesis of sharing behavior. However, further investigation is needed to prove the hypothesis.

Thus, I argue that the Inupiat continue whaling and sharing their products because these multi-dimensional functions and effects of sharing contribute both to community well-being and satisfying the whalers culturally and socially.

## 7. CONCLUSION

There are two kinds of sharing systems, a formal sharing by rule and voluntary sharing among the Inupiat whalers. Both of the sharing practices are the devices by which the culturally high-valued food such as whale meat and *maktak* are to be distributed to the whole community. Furthermore, these sharing practices have multi-dimensional functions and effects including the efficient distribution of culturally valued food to a whole community, the contribution to community well-being, and leveling the amount of consumption and possession of whale products within a community. In addition, these practices reproduce the worldview, individuals' identities at several levels and the social relationships of the Inupiat. Also, whaling captains and their crew members earn social prestige or standing through these practices.

Finally, I argue that hunting and sharing of a whale is for the whole Inupiat community the means to seek and share the culturally highly valued products of the whales. Thus, whaling and sharing of the products themselves seem to be their aims (cf. BODENHORN 2005; FIENUP-RIORDAN 1983) while the results contribute to community well-being (WENZEL 1991: 100) and their continued social and cultural identity. Also, although further research is needed, this Alaskan whaling case may support the cooperative acquisition and "show-off" hypotheses of sharing behaviors.

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## NOTES

- 1) An Eskimo Doughnut is a deep-fried dough with a hole or holes poked in it.
- 2) As to daily food sharing in Barrow, see BODENHORN (2000).
- 3) As to the Inupiat's world view on social relationships between whales and Inupiat, see



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BODENHORN (1990), BREWSTER (ed.) (2004), JOLLES (2002), TURNER (1990), and VICTOR (1987).

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