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John P. Cook

Editor

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THE LATE PREHISTORIC/EARLY HISTORIC ESKIMO OF INTERIOR NORTHERN ALASKA: AN ETHNOARCHEOLOGICAL APPROACH? ¹

by

Edwin S. Hall, Jr.
Ohio State University

Despite considerable research by both ethnographers and archeologists, I feel we still do not fully understand the nature of the late prehistoric/early historic Eskimo occupation of interior northern Alaska. An examination of the data now available discloses a number of discrepancies in previously formulated reconstructions of Eskimo culture in the broad area stretching from the Noatak River Valley in the south to the edge of the Arctic Coastal Plain in the north and the Utukok River in the west to the Itkillik River-Galbraith Lake area in the east. My intention in this paper is to briefly outline some of the current problems in this area based on evidence secured during a still on-going archeological project dealing with the late prehistoric/early historic Eskimo population. It should be kept in mind that I am an archeologist looking at interior northern Alaska from the vantage point of the Noatak Valley-Etivluk River headwaters area where most of my fieldwork has taken place.

As Solecki (1951) has noted, three physiographic provinces are represented in Northern Alaska. The southernmost consists of the Brooks Range, drained in the southeast by southern flowing tributaries of the Koyukuk River and in the southwest by the Noatak River, timbered along its lower reaches, which flows westward and then south to debouch at Hotham Inlet. North of the divide the many tributaries of the Colville River, including the Etivluk, Nigu, Killik, Chandler, Anaktuvuk and Itkillik, flow northward to join

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1. This project has been supported by the National Science Foundation through two grants (GS-1453 and GS-2507) administered by the Ohio State University Research Foundation (RF 2372 and RF 2800). The Institute of Polar Studies, of the Ohio State University, has materially aided my fieldwork.

the east-flowing Colville which then turns north to the sea. The gently rolling foothills which surround the Colville and its tributaries form the Arctic Foothills Province. Finally, the northernmost province, the Arctic Coastal Plain, is flat, relatively featureless and covered with myriad lakes and meandering streams. Thus, the late prehistoric/early historic inhabitants of this area became adjusted to varying physiographic conditions, ranging from the forested southern flanks of the Brooks Range to high mountain valleys to the rolling foothills of the Colville drainage to the Arctic coast.

Ethnographers working in northern Alaska have consistently made a distinction between the coastal population, called the Tareumiut, or people of the sea, and the inland Nunamiut, people of the land. As Spencer (1959) has pointed out, these represent two ecological adjustments, the life of the Nunamiut centering around the caribou and the Tareumiut having a primary orientation toward sea mammal hunting. However, despite ecological differences and, consequently, differences in the material culture utilized to exploit the local environment, there was a high degree of cultural uniformity between the two groups. In terms of non-material aspects of their culture, the Tareumiut and Nunamiut were quite similar and a network of trading ties bound the two ecological systems together.

There is some disagreement among ethnographers as to the specific Eskimo groups that should be subsumed under the rubric "Nunamiut." Spencer (1959:19ff.) apparently includes all the people inhabiting the area delineated above, from the Itkillik River to the Utukok and also the Ikpikpuk and Meade River peoples and the groups that inhabited the Lower Noatak River and the drainages of the Kobuk and Selawik Rivers. However, Gubser (1965:341) notes that the Noatak Eskimos looked west for their kin and traded primarily at Hotham Inlet rather than at the Colville mouth to which the Nunamiut proper traveled each summer. The Kobuk and Selawik peoples differed considerably from the Eskimos farther north, in that the former inhabited a forested riverine environment and depended to a great extent on salmon and other fish for sustenance. According to Gubser (1965:337ff.) there were four main groups of true Nunamiut: 1) the Kangianigmiut who lived along the upper Colville above the mouth of the Killik and along its tributaries and at times moved into the Noatak drainage; 2) the Killikmiut

who lived along the Killik and Chandler Rivers and the drainages between; 3) the Kaymalikmiut who lived in the Anaktuvuk, upper John, upper North Fork and upper Wild Rivers area and 4) the Itkillikmiut who lived on the Itkillik River, in Ulu Pass and on the upper Dietrich River. Gubser (1965:340) continues: "When population was low, each group might be represented by only one band. One region may even have been vacant for awhile. When population was high, such a people as the Kangianigmiut might be represented by four or five bands, each of which could have become a stable band, identifying itself as a particular group of people if population remained high and if the natural resources (especially the caribou) had been adequate. But such a high concentration of bands of normal size (50-150 people) could not exist in such a small area for a very long period without experiencing hunger or starvation . . . any *other* major grouping could be represented by only one or two bands (in which case everyone had all the meat, fat and skins he needed) or, for a short time, by four or five bands (in which case the decimation of caribou resulted ultimately in a reduction of human population.)"

Both Gubser and Spencer move beyond discussions of Nunamiut population dispersal to reconstruct Nunamiut culture before substantial Western contact. For my purposes I would like to focus on three traits which, because they lie in the realm of material culture, should be reasonably easy to accurately reconstruct and describe. These are house type, pottery and the presence in village sites of specialized structures serving as men's houses or *karigi*.

According to Spencer (1959:44-9), the most common Nunamiut house was a portable tent-like structure made from caribou hides stretched over a willow frame and held down by rocks placed along the oval or round base. Sod houses were also utilized, particularly at the more permanent winter villages located in the Selawik, Kobuk and Noatak drainages. Sod houses were erected on a willow branch frame supported by central posts and might have a passageway leading into a single room. Occasionally two houses were set up side by side and joined by a central passageway. A sod house might be semi-subterranean to the extent that the turf was removed before setting the central posts in place. Gubser (1965) corroborates Spencer's house description. Ingstad (1954:158-9), who spent a year at Anaktuvuk Pass, notes further that three

forms of sod houses were possible: a long house with an entrance on the long side, a long house with an entrance on the short side and a more rectangular type about half as large as these.

There is considerable confusion concerning the art of pottery-making among the Nunamiut. Both Gubser (1965:233) and Ingstad (1954:157) credit the bands in the Anaktuvuk Pass area with pottery-making, though Ingstad notes that the more westerly Nunamiut, living close to the clay source in the Noatak valley, manufactured more often than the Anaktuvuk Pass people. According to Gubser, the main Nunamiut clay source was somewhere on the Colville. Parenthetically, the Noatak people claim their pottery came from the Buckland area to the southeast. Spencer (1959:470ff.) denies that the Nunamiut ever made pottery, because he believes their nomadic lifeway prevented them from doing so. However, clay pots were a ceremonial necessity for the primary caribou slaughter in the spring, hence the Nunamiut were forced to secure them from the Pt. Barrow Tareumiut, who made many from a local clay for trading purposes.

Turning finally to the *karigi*, or men's house, we find that, according to Gubser (1965:168), the Nunamiut merely utilized an enlarged willow frame-caribou skin tent for this purpose. Spencer (1959:49) adds that willow beams, sod blocks, ice blocks and caribou skins all could be used in *karigi* construction, but he provides no further specifics on the Nunamiut *karigi*.

So much for the ethnographic reconstruction. As can be seen, there is general agreement on aspects of house and *karigi* construction, though some researchers provide more detail than others. There is little agreement about Nunamiut pottery-making. Now, keeping the ethnographic "facts" firmly in mind, I would like to explore the archeology of the same area. Excavations in late prehistoric/early historic Nunamiut sites have been carried out in the east primarily by Campbell (1962a) and in the west by myself, though others, including Solecki (1950), Irving (1953, 1962), Alexander (1968) and Amsden (Campbell, personal communication) have located and tested Nunamiut sites. The locations of the major known Nunamiut archaeological sites are shown in Fig. 1. I have not included isolated house structures or villages reported by early explorers and not relocated since.

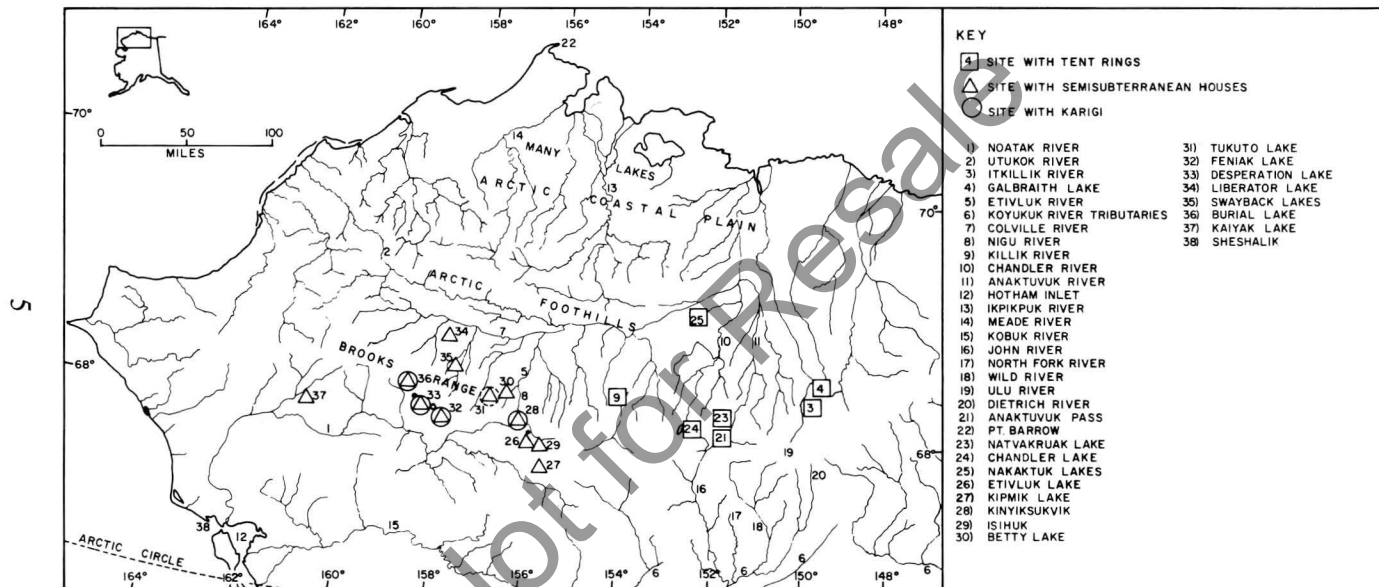


Figure 1.

If we examine these sites in terms of the types of houses present, we find a distinct east-west dichotomy. From the Killik valley east, the only type of house structure reported in the archeological literature is the tent ring, or what remains of a ground level willow frame-caribou skin tent. Clusters of tent rings are found primarily along the shores of large lakes in locations ideal for intercepting caribou. West of the Killik valley, to my knowledge, only two tent rings have been located, both being square in outline and recent in age. The hallmark of the western sites is the relatively deep semi-subterranean house. A wide variety of types are found, often within the same site. For example, at Tukuto Lake, I found at least three: 1) very deep semi-subterranean, spruce-framed structures, oval in outline with a wide bench at the rear and a long-centrally placed entrance passage; 2) “half” houses, shallower than the first with no apparent bench and a short entrance passage at one side; and 3) a shallow oval floor with no evidence of a bench or entrance passage and the remains of willow wall supports. At Etivluk Lake, Irving (1962:77-8) found large, deep rectangular houses with paired lateral benches and a long entrance which ended in a storm shed; shallower small oval or sub-rectangular houses with single raised benches at the rear and no entrance passage and a third type which appears to intergrade between the two.

It also might be noted that, in contrast to the situation in the east, the western sites are fairly complex with many semi-permanent houses, other structures, such as caches, and deep middens, indicating relatively large populations.

Pottery shows an interesting distribution in these sites. Sherds are almost lacking in the east; Campbell (personal communication) found only one or two and Amsden (Campbell, personal communication) apparently recovered several more during the past field season. Pottery is extremely common in the western sites, having been found in most if not all the late-prehistoric/early historic sites tested by Irving and myself. At Tukuto Lake pottery sherds constituted approximately fifty percent of more than 4000 catalogue entries.

The distribution of known *kariyit* (the plural of *karigi*) does not show the same east-west pattern. So far as I know, no remains of the Nunamiut *karigi* described by Gubser – that is, an enlarged tent ring – have been found. Irving (1962:81) first reported probable *kariyit* differing from the ethnographically

described type when he found a large oval *karigi* at Desperation Lake with walls made of boulders up to five feet in diameter and having a bench of smaller stones around the interior. Some of the wall stones had petroglyphs. Another smaller *karigi* of the same general type, was found at Kinyiksukvik in the Nigu Valley (Irving 1962:79-80). In 1967, I found similar *kariyit* at Burial Lake, also with petroglyphs and Feniak Lake, both in the Noatak Valley. A large circular depression lined by at least two boulders, found at Tukuto Lake and to be excavated in the summer of 1970, may also fall in this category.

How do we explain the difference between the archeological record and the ethnographic reconstruction of the Nunamiut? One obvious answer lies in the informants utilized by the Nunamiut ethnographers. Virtually all have been drawn from the population resident in Anaktuvuk Pass. The Nunamiut informant *par excellence* has been Simon Paneak, with reason, for his knowledge and understanding of the past are considerable. However, Paneak was born on the Itkillik River and spent most of his life either on the coast or in the Killik-Chandler-Anaktuvuk valleys. Quite probably an ethnographic reconstruction based on data from Paneak and other Anaktuvuk informants is valid for three eastern bands of Nunamiut but I seriously doubt that we should extend the reconstruction to the Kangianigmiut, the westernmost band of Nunamiut (Oswalt (1967:234) also makes a similar observation) Unfortunately, informants who took part in a relatively aboriginal lifeway probably are no longer available for consultation.

If we can legitimately speak of the Western Nunamiut as opposed to the Eastern Nunamiut, then, what causal factors are involved in the difference? Briefly, I will mention four possibilities:

(1) There is no archeological evidence that the Eastern Nunamiut inhabited their territory prior to white contact (early 1800's); all known archeological sites contain historic material. The same may be true for the western Nunamiut; until dendochronological samples from the bottom of the deep midden at Tukuto Lake are dated, we can not be sure. However, late prehistoric populations occupied the Noatak Valley by A.D. 1400 (Hall, n.d.) and thus were in a position to expand northward. This, of course, poses the problem of the origin of the Western and Eastern Nunamiut. Campbell (1962a:52;

1962b) feels the Anatuvtuk Pass Nunamiut represent an offshoot of the Pt. Barrow-Arctic Coast Tareumiut. This may be the case, or the eastern Nunamiut may have moved inland from the Arctic Coast further east; only further studies will tell. I believe that the Western Nunamiut may be an extension of the Kobuk-Noatak peoples. Early sites along the Kobuk date from A.D. 1200 (Giddings 1952) and along the Noatak (Hall, n.d.) from A.D. 1400, providing a neat progression.

(2) The cultural affinities of the Western Nunamiut appear, on the basis of archeological evidence, to be to the south. Use of pottery and semi-subterranean houses are the norm along the Kobuk and Noatak. We do not know much about the seasonal round of the Kangianigmiut; quite possibly some families of this group descended the Colville River to the Arctic Coast in the spring, as did the Eastern Nunamiut. However, the Noatak peoples, the Utukok peoples and, I believe, some of the Kangianigmiut moved south and west for the summer.

(3) Though I cannot provide quantitative evidence, the subsistence potential of the area occupied by the Western Nunamiut seems greater than in the East. More caribou were available more often. The fish resources of the Western area are superior, particularly in the Noatak basin where salmon are available. The village permanence suggested by many semi-subterranean houses and the presence of *kariyit* may be explained thus; with the exception of Kinyiksukvik and perhaps Tukuto Lake, the sites with *kariyit* are confined to the Noatak valley. However, historically the diet of the upper Noatak peoples was based on caribou and included little fish (cf. Foote 1961).

Finally, point (4), it is tempting to note that the greatest concentration of late prehistoric/early historic Nunamiut, in the upper Noatak valley and across the divide in the Etivluk-Nigu headwaters, lies directly athwart one of the main arctic trade routes. As Stefansson (1914; cf. Oswalt 1967:132-3) and others have noted, Eskimos from Siberia and as far south as Cape Prince of Wales traded each summer at Sheshalik on Hotham Inlet, with the resident coastal population and the people who lived along the Kobuk and Noatak. Exotic goods were then traded up the Noatak, across the divide and down the Colville to another trading center at the Colville delta. From there some trade items went west to Pt. Barrow but most ended up in the Canadian Arctic. While I am not one of those who sees the

entire sweep of late culture history in North America being effected by a traded broom, the strategic position of the Western Nunamiut in a well-documented trading system may be of importance.

In conclusion then, on the basis of the archeological evidence, it seems reasonable to distinguish at least two groups of Nunamiut, the Western and the Eastern Nunamiut. The former are characterized by a large population, extensive use of pottery, relatively permanent winter villages with semi-subterranean houses of several types and large, well constructed *kariyit*. The Eastern Nunamiut utilized ground level willow frame-caribou skin tents for housing, a larger version of the same as a *karigi* and, apparently, did not use much pottery. This dichotomy is not clearly reflected in the reconstructions of the Nunamiut culture offered by ethnographers, probably because the informants now available, many years after the fact, represent the eastern bands. Explanations for the distinctiveness of the Western Nunamiut include a different history, both in terms of origin and length of residence in the interior, better subsistence possibilities and the propinquity of the Western group to an important trading route.

Having offered these tentative formulations I find that I am not yet satisfied that our picture of the late prehistoric/early historic inhabitants of interior Northern Alaska is any clearer. For example, perhaps the upper Noatak sites, which have been only tested, represent a way of life as different from that represented by the upper Colville basin sites as the latter differs from that of the Eastern Nunamiut. Only more work combined with an awareness of diversity within an overall cultural system that, despite my statements here, has considerable continuity between the involved groups, will provide firmer answers.

A final point worthy of note is that the dichotomy between the archeological evidence and the ethnographic reconstruction briefly summarized in this paper suggests that Arctic prehistorians must exercise greater caution in the use of ethnographic data. Many of the reconstructions of archeologically known Arctic cultures have been given the firmness of reality by adducing ethnographic parallels for archeological inventories (cf. Larsen and Rainey 1948; Giddings 1952; and my own work, Hall 1966). The dangers of this procedure, particularly when the available ethnographic

reconstructons are just that, reconstructions, should be, but apparently have not been, obvious.

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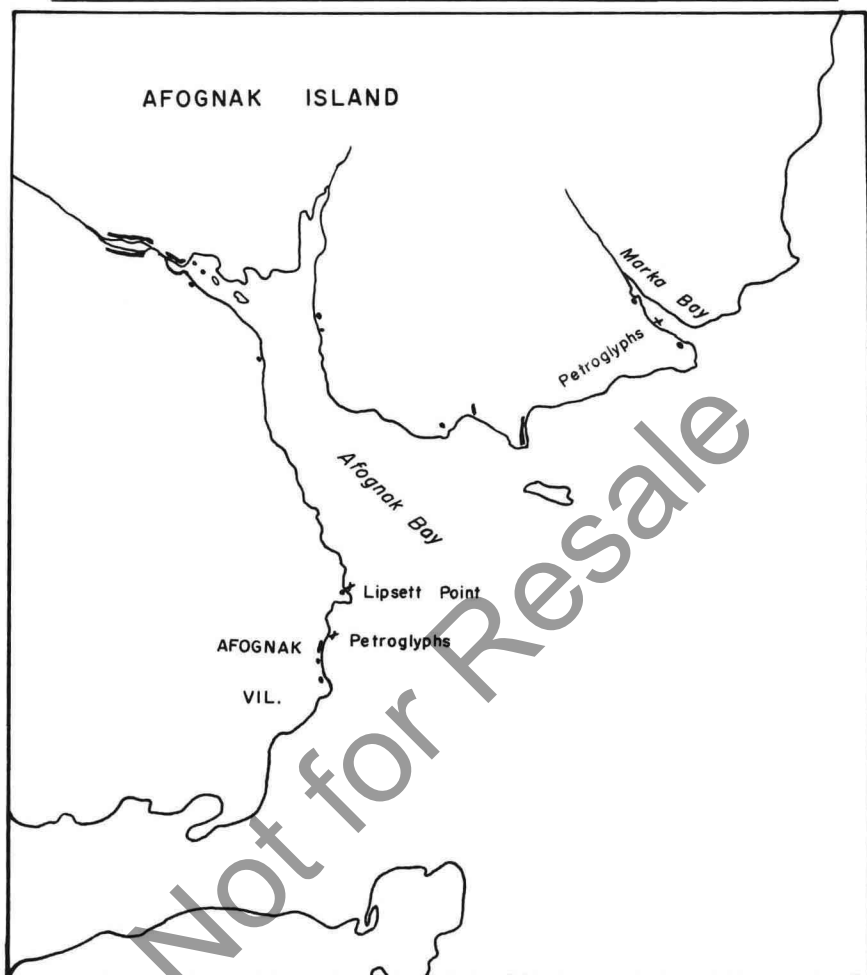


Fig. 1. Map of Afognak Bay showing petroglyph sites and occupation sites. These sites are catalogued elsewhere (Clark n.d.). The scale is approximately 2 miles to the inch.

PETROGLYPHS ON AFOGNAK ISLAND, KODIAK GROUP, ALASKA

by

Donald W. Clark

National Museum of Man

Petroglyphs are infrequently found in the Eskimo area and all occurrences there are of particular interest (cf. d'Anglure 1963, Heizer 1947, Irving 1961:81, and Solecki 1952). Probably the largest locality in Eskimo territory is a Cape Alitak on Kodiak Island (Heizer 1947). It is characterized by a few anthropomorphic figures and geometric and zoomorphic representations, but mainly by stylized faces. A small petroglyph locality in Marka Bay on the south side of Afognak Island (Fig. 1) was examined in 1964, and additional petroglyphs have been observed elsewhere on the island by the writer.*

The figures at Marka Bay are located on seaward facing surfaces of a dike that intrudes rocks of the slate-graywacke group on the southwest shore of the bay. The dike is exposed on a boulder strewn bench or beach that even before subsidence of the region in 1964 was submerged at high tide. For a distance of about 20 yards in the area of the petroglyphs the dike has a vertical outcrop relief of one to one and a half yards. The figures are in an advanced stage of obliteration and the eight figures illustrated (Fig. 2) are all that could be discerned with any degree of accuracy. No accurate estimate was made of the total number of petroglyphs at the site but there appear to have been at least 30 figures. Two habitation sites, at least one of which belongs to the relatively late Koniag phase, are situated within a few hundred yards of the petroglyph group.

* The 1964 survey (Clark n.d.) was undertaken by William B. Workman and the writer supported by National Science Foundation grants to the University of Wisconsin Aleut-Konyag Prehistory and Ecology Project, co-principal investigators Dr. William G. Reeder, zoology, and Dr. William S. Laughlin, anthropology. Several persons in the town of Kodiak and outlying villages were particularly helpful towards implementing the survey. Final preparation of this manuscript has been supported by the National Museums of Canada.

A similar dike outcropping on the beach in front of habitation site at Lipsett Point on Afognak Bay appears to have had a few petroglyphs on the seaward face but these are in the final stage of obliteration and have lost their identity.

Nearby, adjacent to Afognak village and a multicomponent kitchen midden, is a small group of figures on the seaward facing surface of a graywacke ledge (Fig. 3). These were pointed out to the writer by a local boy in 1951, and they have been briefly noted and illustrated in the context of a related art form – incised figurine tablets (Clark 1964:Fig.8 D). Traces of other petroglyphs, possibly zoomorphic, were seen elsewhere about the ledge but they are no longer discernable. This site is now completely submerged at high tide.

In the context of petroglyphs I will mention round-bottomed conical depressions or cups seen on large boulders between two sites at the mouth of the main salmon stream in Perenosa Bay on the north side of Afognak Island. Most of the depressions are about one and one quarter inches in diameter but they range up to two inches. Also, on the beach of the lagoon in front of one site near the end of a stone alignment across the stream is a slate or graywacke boulder about four feet long that bears saw cuts which are one to five inches long, up to about one quarter inch deep, and are V-shaped in cross section.

The Afognak petroglyphs are nearly identical to some of those at Cape Alitak, and may be related also to the rock paintings in Prince William Sound (de Laguna 1956). Seaward orientation and close proximity to the edge of the water are factors common to most localities although the rock paintings, found mostly in caves and overhangs, are excepted, but in that case factors of preservation may be involved. Similarly situated petroglyphs have been reported for southeastern Alaska. Significantly these include cups and cut grooves in addition to figures in a Northwest Coast style (Keithahn 1940:Plate XI c and Fig. 14-la). Although the cuts and pits may not be petroglyphs in the strict sense, their presence on Afognak strengthens Heizer's (1947) hypothesis that the Alitak petroglyphs were derived from the Northwest Coast. A feature seen in the Afognak village group (Fig. 3), the diagonal lines extending down and outward from the eyes, was also seen in an ivory figurine, reportedly from a Koniag phase site on Afognak, shown to us in 1964 by an employee of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at Kitoi Bay. This can be taken as evidence,

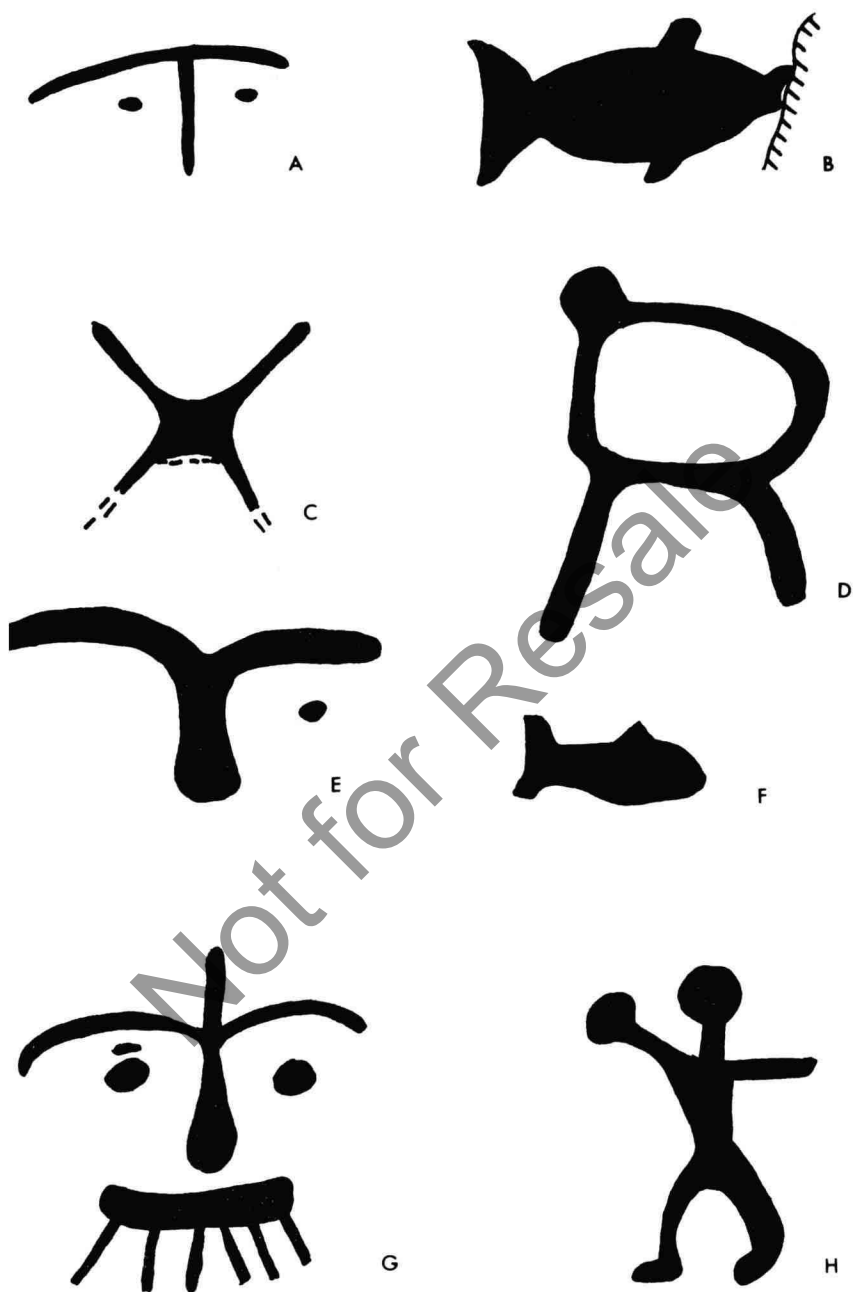


Fig. 2. Petroglyphs at Marka Bay. Not to scale. A is 21 cm wide; B, 19 cm long; C, 19 cm; D, 18 cm high; E, 18 cm wide; F, 10 cm long; G, 31 cm high and 28 cm wide; and H is 16 cm high.

in addition to the evidence provided by incised slate figurines as proposed by Heizer (1947; see also Clark 1964), for assigning the Kodiak petroglyphs to the Koniag phase.

Donald W. Clark,
National Museums of Canada
March 1970.

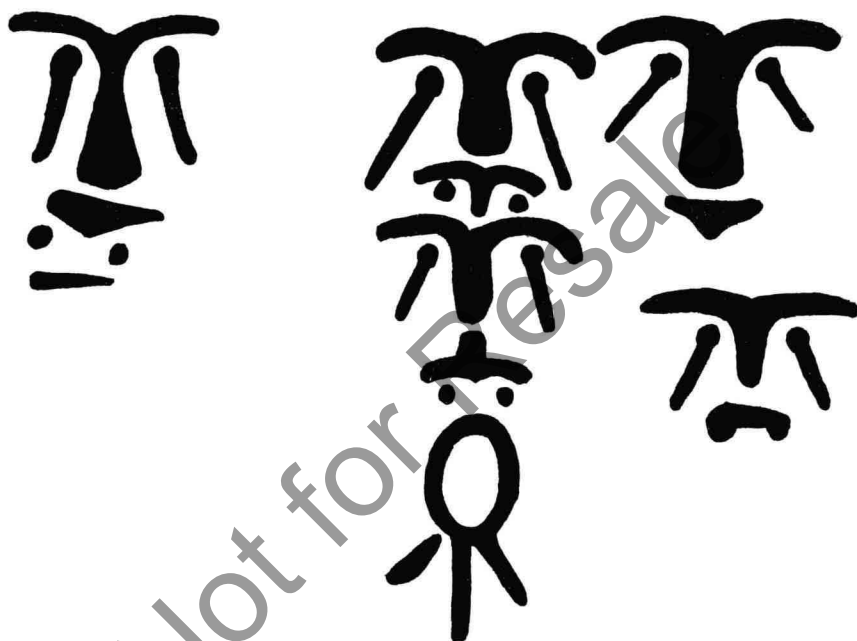


Fig. 3. Petroglyphs near Afognak village. One additional small face to the left is now shown. The group is approximately three feet wide.

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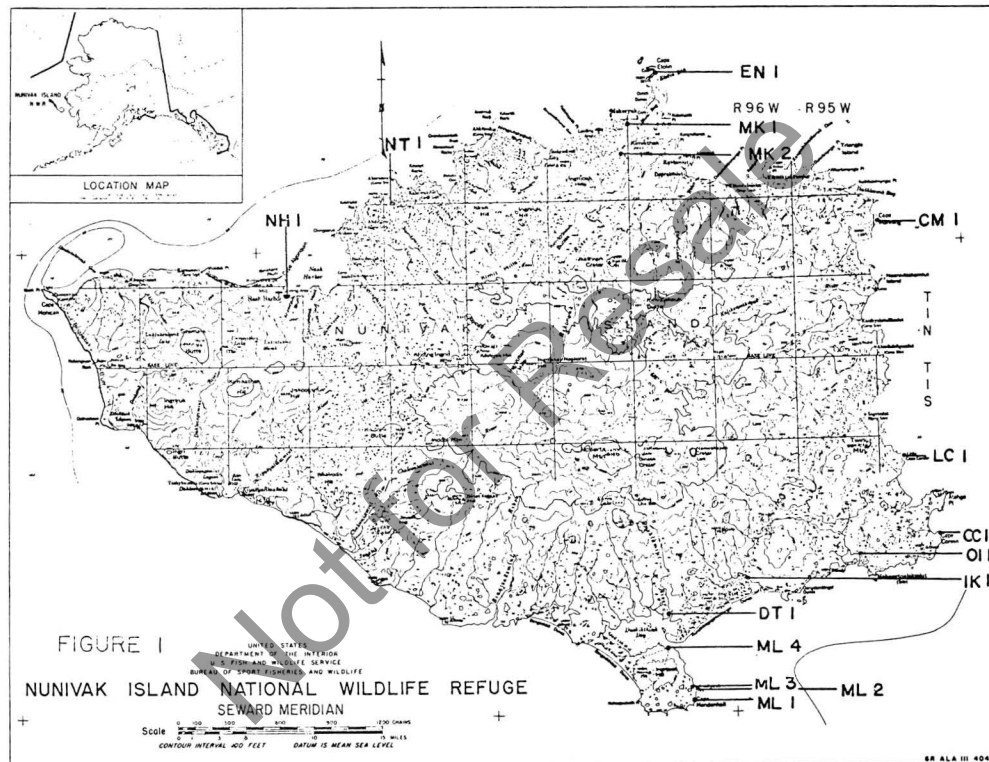


Figure 1.

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE ARCHEOLOGY OF NUNIVAK ISLAND, ALASKA ¹

by

Michael Nowak

Colorado College

A number of recent archeological excavations have led to an increasingly comprehensive knowledge of Eskimo prehistory in southern Bering Sea Alaska. On the northern side of the Alaska Peninsula, extensive research over a five year period has led to the delineation of a fairly continuous 4000 year period of Eskimo prehistory (Cressman and Dumond 1962; Dumond 1963; 1964). One hundred and twenty miles to the northwest, Kowta (1963) has investigated a prehistoric site at Togiak, which spans several hundred years of the second millenium A.D. Larsen (1950) and Ackerman (1964), working in the Platinum area, have recovered materials which cover much of the Christian era. A presumably earlier collection from that area has apparently not yet been securely dated. At Hooper Bay, Oswalt (1952a; 1952b) has recovered and described late prehistoric materials, which appear to date back about 400 years.

Four years of extensive work in the Norton Bay area have led to a detailed knowledge of prehistoric activities dating back 4200 to 5000 years (Giddings 1964:250). Much of the discussion of the Nunivak collection will relate to materials which Giddings first defined and chronologically placed at Norton Sound.

There are still large regions within the area under discussion for which there is little knowledge of prehistory. Nunivak Island is one of these. Forty miles wide, and sixty

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1. This research was made possible through National Science Foundation grant GS-1412. The help and cooperation of a number of people greatly contributed to the success of the 1967 archeological reconnaissance. Foremost among these is Margaret Lantis, who provided much background material and information on Nunivak Island. Don E. Dumond was present on Nunivak at the beginning of the survey, and has provided advice and interpretation help in an evaluation of the significance of the implements recovered. Edward Nygard of the Federal Reindeer Project on Nunivak Island supplied lodging and indoor work space whenever the survey party was at Mekoryuk.

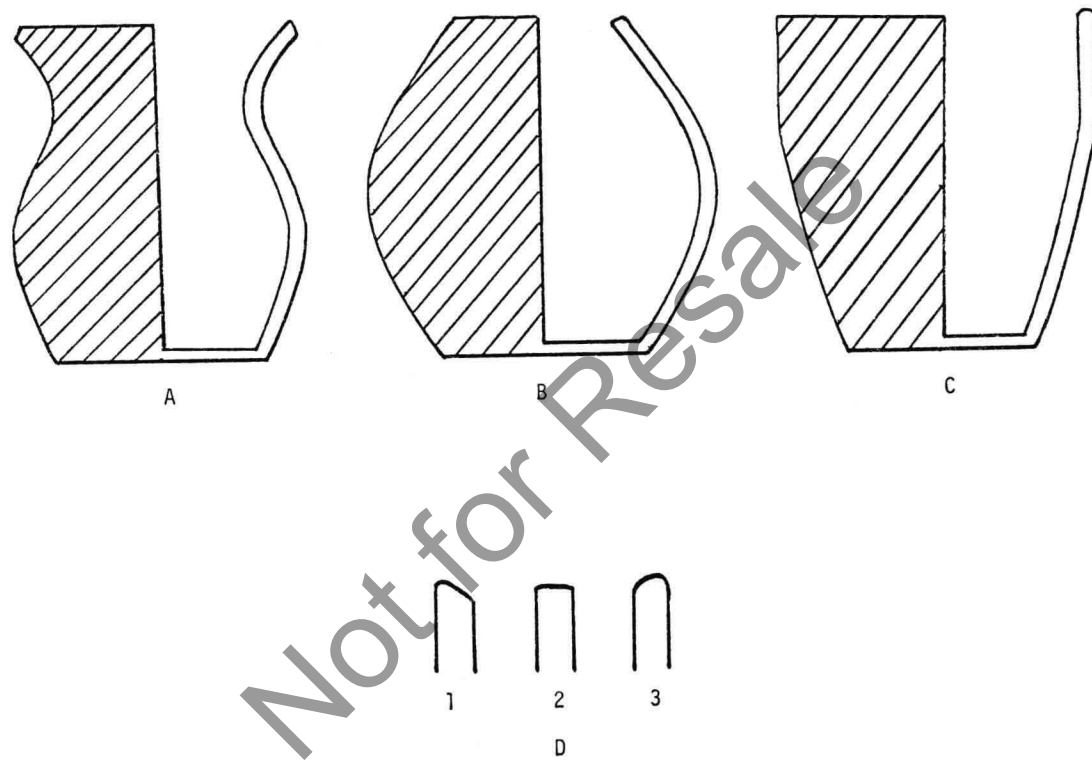


Figure 2. Nunivak Vessel and Rim Forms

Figure 2 Nunivak Vessel and Rim Forms

miles long, it lies about forty miles off the western coast of Alaska at latitude 60 . The Yukon River drains into the Bearing Sea 160 miles north of Nunivak, and the mouth of the Kuskokwim River lies about 120 miles to the southeast.

Despite the fact that Nunivak has been briefly tested archeologically on several occasions, intensive excavation had not been undertaken before the summer of 1969. Collins (1928) was the first archeologist to visit Nunivak Island. In the summer of 1927 he was there long enough to briefly test some ruins on the northeastern side of Nunivak. In 1952 VanStone (1957) spent approximately six weeks in an archeological reconnaissance of the island. Bad weather and lack of transportation confined most of his investigations to the vicinity of the (single presently inhabited) town of Mekoryuk, located on the northern side of Nunivak Island. Neither he nor Collins attributed any great age to the remains recovered on Nunivak, although VanStone admits that this conclusion is based on evidence from a very restricted area on the island (1957:111).

Both Collins (1928:255) and VanStone (1954:188) discuss check stamped pottery recovered from Nunivak, but neither regards this ware as representative of an early time period. Consequently, the presence of check stamped pottery was definitely established, but without any particular temporal reference. This question was one of the principal factors behind the archeological reconnaissance of the summer of 1967. On that eight-week survey, fifteen sites from all but the southwestern part of Nunivak Island were tested (Figure 1). Several of these sites consist of at least two components, and provide the data discussed in this report.

A Norton-like period has been clearly defined as an early component on Nunivak. The 1967 reconnaissance found it present in northern, eastern, and southern sites on the island. Check stamped pottery (Figure 3; u, y) associated with small, flaked bifaces of chalcedony (Figure 3; j-p, v-bb) constitutes the primary definition of the Norton-like assemblage on Nunivak Island. Where stratigraphy is not disturbed, this component is separated by 10-30 cm of sterile soil from a later component characterized by plain pottery (not pictured) and ground slate bifaces (Figure 3; a-f). This later component is usually associated with visible housepit depressions, and appears at many locations where the Norton-like component is not found.

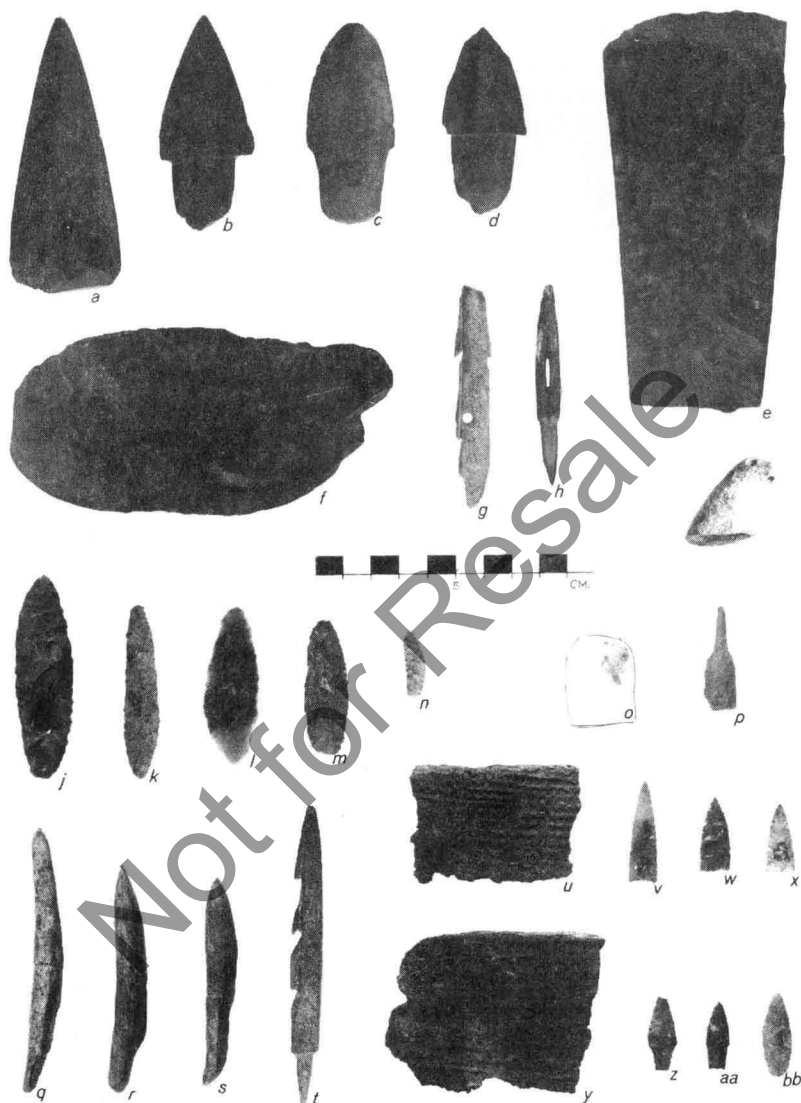


Figure 3.

Artifacts from Nunivak Island, Alaska. Late assemblage: a-d, slate knives or insert blades; e, slate adz; f, ulu; g, harpoon dart head; h, arrowhead; i, finger rest. Early assemblage: j-n, flaked knives or sideblades; o, scraper; p, drill bit; q-s harpoon heads; t, dart head; u, y, check stamped potsherds; v-x, z-bb, flaked points.

No housepit depressions have yet been found where only a Norton-like component is found.

EARLY ASSEMBLAGE

Two sites (DT1 and MK2) provide the bulk of the materials discussed here. Both were excavated more intensively than other sites at which Norton-like implements were found.

Ceramics

Four hundred and sixty check stamped potsherds were recovered from Nunivak Island. Surface decoration on these consists of square to rectangular checks which appear to have been impressed with a paddle rolled against the sides of an unfired pot. Some of the sherds show overlap of the check pattern where a successive band of check stamps was not precisely spaced in relation to the previous band. Checks range in size from 3 mm squares to 5 x 7 mm rectangles. Vessel shape is that of Figure 2-C. Rim diameter appears to have been 24-28 cm. Although sherds ranging in thickness from 6 to 10 mm have been found, the mode is 9 mm.

In contrast to Griffin and Wilmeth (1964:272), and Cressman and Dumond (1962:28), who describe the check stamped pottery found in Norton Sound and Bristol Bay respectively as fiber (generally plant) tempered, all of the check stamped pottery recovered to date on Nunivak Island has been sand tempered. Grains of this sand are predominately less than .25 mm in diameter, and a noticeable amount of it appears to be of igneous origin.

Three different lip forms (Figure 2-D) are represented in the check stamped pottery from Nunivak Island, although the flat or flattened lip is predominant. About 20% of the rimsherds examined have round or rounded lips, and 5% have tapered lips (Figure 2-D1). Texture is coarse and flaky, with sherds often splitting into layers. Mending (or suspension) holes appear in about 2% of the sherds.

Lithic artifacts:

Forty-two small flaked bifaces of chalcedony or, less often, basalt (17%) were found at the sites from which check

stamped pottery came. Often the two were found in direct association. Sideblades, knives, a drill bit, and projectile points (Figure 3; j-p, v-bb) all exhibit fine, sometimes regular flaking. Giddings (1964:Pl.46-50) illustrates a variety of shapes for Norton bifaces from Iyatayet. All those found on Nunivak Island fit into types discussed by him.

Over 100 notched sinker stones have been recovered at sites which contained check stamped pottery. All of them have two notches or indentations, usually near the center of their short sides.

Bone tools:

Only six bone implements were recovered from strata that contained unmixed, Norton-like materials. The tools that did come from these strata break down into four open-socketed harpoon heads (Figure 3, q-s), a unilaterally barbed dart head (Figure 3,t), and a tooth pendant with the face of a seal carved into proximal side (not shown). Once again Giddings (1964:Pl.36,17) describes and pictures a harpoon head from Norton levels at Iyatayet closely resembling the four found in the early component on Nunivak. All of the latter lack a line hole, but have about a 2 cm indented band, beginning just above the socket, for lashing. Larsen and Rainey (1948:83,5) illustrate a similar harpoon head from Ipiutak.

The similarities in ceramic, stone, and bone tools discussed above make it apparent that the early assemblage presently identified on Nunivak Island was part of a widespread Norton tradition which appears in Norton Sound as early as 500 B.C. (Giddings 1964:245), and reaches as far south as Bristol Bay by 200 B.C. (Cressman and Dumond 1962:33; Dumond 1964:35; personal communication, 1969).

LATER ASSEMBLAGE

A second culture stage identified as Western Thule-like on the basis of ceramics, and lithic and bone tools, is present on Nunivak Island by A.D. 1600. Probably by A.D. 900 Western Thule culture is widespread in Bering Sea Alaska (Oswalt 1967), and it appears that Nunivak Island was extensively occupied by people of this culture for perhaps several hundred years before contact.

Although it is likely that future investigations will show that some materials presently grouped with Nunivak's later assemblage may fall into an as yet unidentified intermediate component, neither excavations conducted nor artifacts recovered presently permit such an assignment.

Ceramics:

The pottery included in the Thule-like component of Nunivak Island sites exhibits much more variation than does that of the Norton-like earlier period. Vessels are predominately situla shaped (Figure 2-A), although other forms are also seen. Rims are rounded to slightly flattened, with the majority of rimsherds exhibiting the form illustrated in Figure 2-D2.

Temper varies from sand to fiber and coarse gravel in this later pottery. One of the sites tested (NH1, see Figure 1) consistently yielded fiber and gravel tempered pottery in which much of the gravel is 5 mm and more in diameter. The vegetal fiber (grass) has a diameter between 0.5 mm and 2 mm, and is from 11 to 15 mm long. None of these sherds have any surface decoration. Thickness varies only slightly about a 9 mm mode. At Nash Harbor, vessel shape is predominately that of a flower pot (Figure 2-C).

Other fiber and gravel tempered pottery differs from that found at NH1, in that the gravel has a diameter of only 0.8 mm, while fiber size remains the same. This ware is slightly thinner, with a mean diameter of 8 mm, and has a less irregular, crumbly texture. Pottery containing fiber accounts for nearly half (623 sherds) of the non-check stamped pottery (1192 sherds) recovered.

Pottery tempered only with gravel appears at a number of sites scattered around the northern, eastern, and southern coast of Nunivak Island. This gravel is generally between 0.25 and 3.00 mm in diameter, with a modal size of 1 mm. Sherd thickness ranges from 5 to 14 mm and averages 10 mm. The curvature of the larger rim fragments suggests a 20-28 cm rim diameter. Present evidence suggests that most Nunivak pottery, both early and late, fits into this size range.

Although few sherds large enough to permit an estimate of shape were recovered, the information that is available suggests situla, globular, and flower pot shapes (Figure 2-A, B, C). The situla shape occurs in about 45% of large non-check stamped

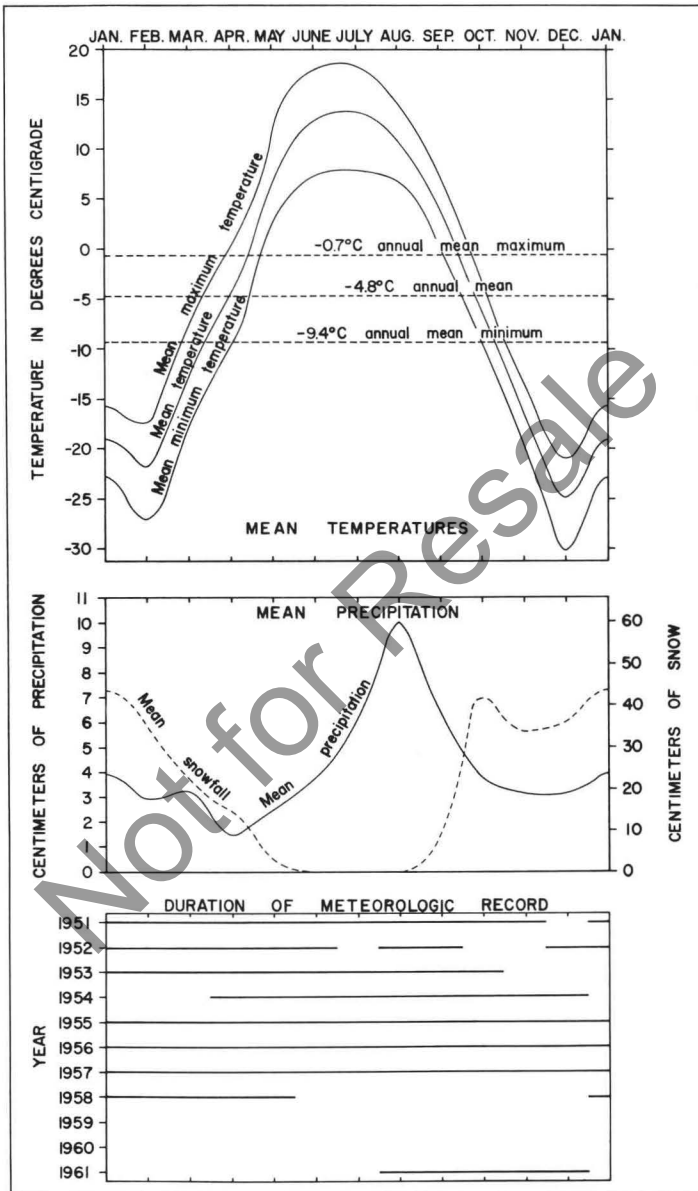


Figure 1. Mean monthly climatic data for Utopia, Alaska. Source is United States Air Force Climatic Center, 1962.

permit a good size and shape assessment, but vessel forms like that of Figure 2-B and 2-C are suggested.

Eleven clay lamp fragments were found in the late component. Size estimates based on the sections recovered suggest that the lamps are from 2-3 cm high, and 15-25 cm in diameter. Thickness varies from 11-28 mm. All of the fragments appear to be parts of oval or round lamps.

Lithic implements:

Sixteen projectile tips, predominately of a dark gray (N2-N3 on Geological Society of America Rock Color Chart) slate were found in strata bearing plain or Yukon Lined pottery. All have a diamond shaped cross-section, even though additional grinding to reduce the basal thickness of the implement has flattened many of the facets made in creating the edges. Length ranges from 3 to 9 cm, with thickness generally less than 7 mm.

Nine points have shoulder angles of 90°, four have rounded shoulders with a 120° shoulder angle, and two have 45° shoulders and stems that widen basally. Stemless points generally have a slightly rounded base, although one specimen has a concave base.

All of the 33 slate knives found on Nunivak Island show bifacial grinding. Of the four reasonably complete specimens, two are roughly rectangular with rounded corners and a short basal stem (Figure 3, f). One is a long, thin blade with an edge on one side. Another is a rounder corner, half-moon shaped ulu. Greenish grey (5GY611, G.S.A. Rock Color Chart) as well as black (N3) slate was used in the manufacture of knives.

Adz blades from Nunivak are generally rectangular in shape with a bifacially ground edge on the distal long axis (Figure 3, e). Not much variation in size is seen in the four specimens recovered.

Whetstones (27 specimens) are predominately composed of micaceous siltstone of a greenish color (5Y611). One or more facets exhibit smoothing by rubbing. Pumice abraders (8 specimens) have wear facets much like those of whetstones, but are softer and coarser.

Bone implements:

Slightly over 100 bone tools were found in the upper, Thule-like stratum on Nunivak Island. Eighteen of these are

in the late component of most sites on Nunivak Island, it is unlikely that the bulk of the artifacts now assigned to the late assemblage are more than 400-500 years old, although it is presumed that the charcoal dated from site DT1, mentioned above, should date some materials of that assemblage.

Cutting and thrusting implements of ground slate support such a dating. Giddings places Nukleet materials recovered at Cape Denbigh into a 1250 A.D.-1700 A.D. time span (1964:244). Many Nukleet artifacts, particularly of ground slate and bone, resemble those of the late component from Nunivak Island.

Final support comes from a second charcoal sample which was obtained at NH1, a site which consisted of only late component materials. The radiocarbon date from this charcoal is 350±95 B.P. (I-3132). Such a date (1600 A.D.) is consistent with other datings of Western Thule-like culture in Southwestern Alaska.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The 1967 archeological reconnaissance of Nunivak Island definitely established that a Norton-like people were living over much of the island, probably by the beginning of the Christian era. It also showed that a Western Thule-like culture was widespread on Nunivak Island during the second millennium A.D.

A gap of as much as 1000 years exists for which there is presently no record of human activity on Nunivak. It is unlikely that people were gone from the island during this time. Rather, a combination of factors seems to be responsible for this gap in Nunivak prehistory. The nature of the reconnaissance was such that extensiveness was emphasized rather than intensity. As a result, 15 sites were tested, but none longer than for a 10-day period. Only one site (DT1) was tested even that long, and only a small part of that site was excavated. Under such circumstances, chance appears as a likely factor in accounting for the fact that only Norton-like and Western Thule-like materials came from DT1.

The presence of rimsherds indicating globular vessel shape at some sites on Nunivak does suggest that further work will fill in the "missing" intermediate period between Norton and Western Thule times. Relatively dramatic changes in stone and

ceramic techniques make it relatively easy to separate Norton from Western Thule culture. Giddings (1964:268) describes Nukleet, the stratum that follows Norton at Cape Denbigh, as one that contains elements of both Punuk and Thule culture, suggesting that definition of the Nukleet culture involves more than a few highly diagnostic artifacts. In many instances such a definition rests on considerable patient field work, and use of statistical techniques later in the laboratory.

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VARIATIONS IN CHECKED POTTERY FROM AN ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE NEAR UNALAKLEET, ALASKA¹

by
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The pottery described in this article was excavated during the summers of 1968 and 1969 from a series of semi-subterranean houses on the coast of Norton Sound. This site, near the present village of Unalakleet, occupies an old beach spit that is now about one-quarter mile from the coastline. Five of the excavated houses may be considered to belong to the Norton culture. Two of these, on which radiocarbon analyses have been completed, have dates of 86 ± 52 B.C. (P-1531) and 204 ± 52 B.C. (P-1532). The sixth house, which for the purposes of this article I will call "evolved Norton", has a date of 347 ± 49 A.D. (P-1530). All dates are based on a half-life of 5,730 years.

The manner of occupation of the site was such that all of the houses had a great deal of overburden on them. This overburden, ranging in thickness from one foot to as much as six or seven feet, was composed of natural storm-washed gravel as well as cultural deposits. The houses are, in general, so close to one another that after the collapse of one house, debris was thrown into the depression from surrounding houses. Pottery was found in the cultural overburden as well as on the house floors. There can be little doubt that the overburden was deposited soon after the collapse of the houses, since the

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1. Grants for the 1968 and 1969 excavations at Unalakleet were provided by the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania. I would like to thank Mr. Stanley Bussey (Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of North Dakota) and Mr. John Witthoft (Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania) for their help with analysis of the pottery. I would also like to thank Dr. Franklin Karner (Department of Geology, University of North Dakota) for the X-ray diffraction analysis. I would especially like to thank Mr. Robert Gal and Mr. James Hahn, my field assistants for the 1969 season, without whose help an adequate sample would probably not have been obtained.

Location	Rims Type:	1	2	3	Bases Type:	1	2	3	Body sherds
House 119									
Fill		<u>4,3</u>		<u>1,2</u>					<u>2,3,1</u>
Floor		1							3
Evolved Norton house									
Fill		1							
Floor		3							1
House 118									
Fill									1
Floor									<u>3,2,1</u>
House 3									
Fill						<u>2</u>		1	
Floor		<u>1,3</u>				3			<u>3</u>
House 2									
Fill						1			4
Floor		2							1
House 120									
Fill		<u>8</u>	<u>1,2</u>	<u>1,2</u>		<u>2,3</u>	<u>2</u>		<u>8,3,2,4,9,22,5,11</u>
Floor		<u>2,2</u>				1	<u>5</u>		1

Figure 1. Distribution of sherds

Underlined numbers refer to the number of sherds believed to belong to a single vessel.

Location	Rims Type:	1	2	3	Bases Type:	1	2	3	Body sherds
House 119									
Fill		4, <u>3</u>		1, <u>2</u>					<u>2,3</u> ,1
Floor		<u>1</u>							<u>3</u>
Evolved Norton house									
Fill		1							
Floor		3							1
House 118									
Fill									1
Floor									<u>3,2</u> ,1
House 3									
Fill						<u>2</u>		1	
Floor		1, <u>3</u>				<u>3</u>			<u>3</u>
House 2									
Fill						1			4
Floor		2							1
House 120									
Fill		<u>8</u>	1, <u>2</u>	1, <u>2</u>		<u>2,3</u>	<u>2</u>		<u>8,3,2,4,9,22,5,11</u>
Floor		<u>2,2</u>				<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>		<u>1</u>

Figure 1. Distribution of sherds

Underlined numbers refer to the number of sherds believed to belong to a single vessel.

pottery and other artifacts are similar. Therefore, the pottery from the house floors and from the overburden will be described as a unit, except in those rare, and probably fortuitous, cases in which significant variations were found only in either the overburden or the house floor. Figure 1 gives the distribution of sherds according to excavation unit.

SOURCE OF CLAY

Large outcroppings of clay occur about 15 miles down the coast from the site. The source is known to the present natives of Unalakleet and the clay from it was used by them to line their ovens. X-ray diffraction analysis of a pottery sample from a Norton house and the clay samples from this source shows them to have a very similar mineralogical content, thus making it probable that the same clay source was used by the Norton inhabitants of the archaeological site as by the present natives of Unalakleet.

METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION

In all cases, it appears that the clay was pressed into shape by hand. Slight depressions on the inner walls of the pottery were probably made by the potter's fingers during construction. The same tendency to break or flake off in layers that was noted by Oswalt at various sites along the coast of Alaska (1955:34) was observed on the pottery from Unalakleet. This is probably the result of intensive paddling which aligns the clay particles in parallel planes.

Another method of construction, although used rarely by the Norton inhabitants at the Unalakleet site, is the firing of pots in baskets. The few examples of this method of construction were found in the house floors and not in the overburden. Larsen (1950) describes and pictures baskets excavated from the Platinum Village site and some of the patterns are similar to those found on the pottery from Unalakleet.

In all cases, the temper appears to have been plant fiber. Neither the sand grains, nor the minute sparkling particles mentioned by (Griffin 1964), are present. These differences are probably the result of the different clay sources that were used by the Norton people of Iyatayet and those used by the Norton people of Unalakleet.

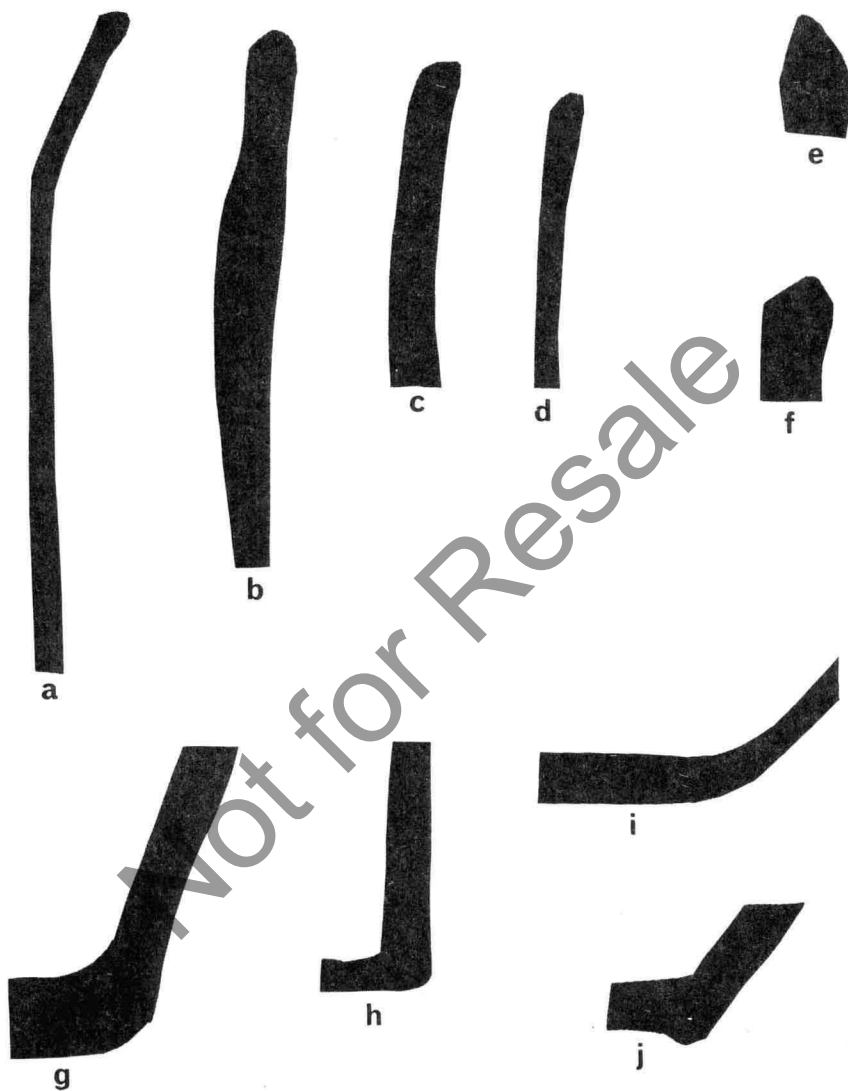


Figure 2.

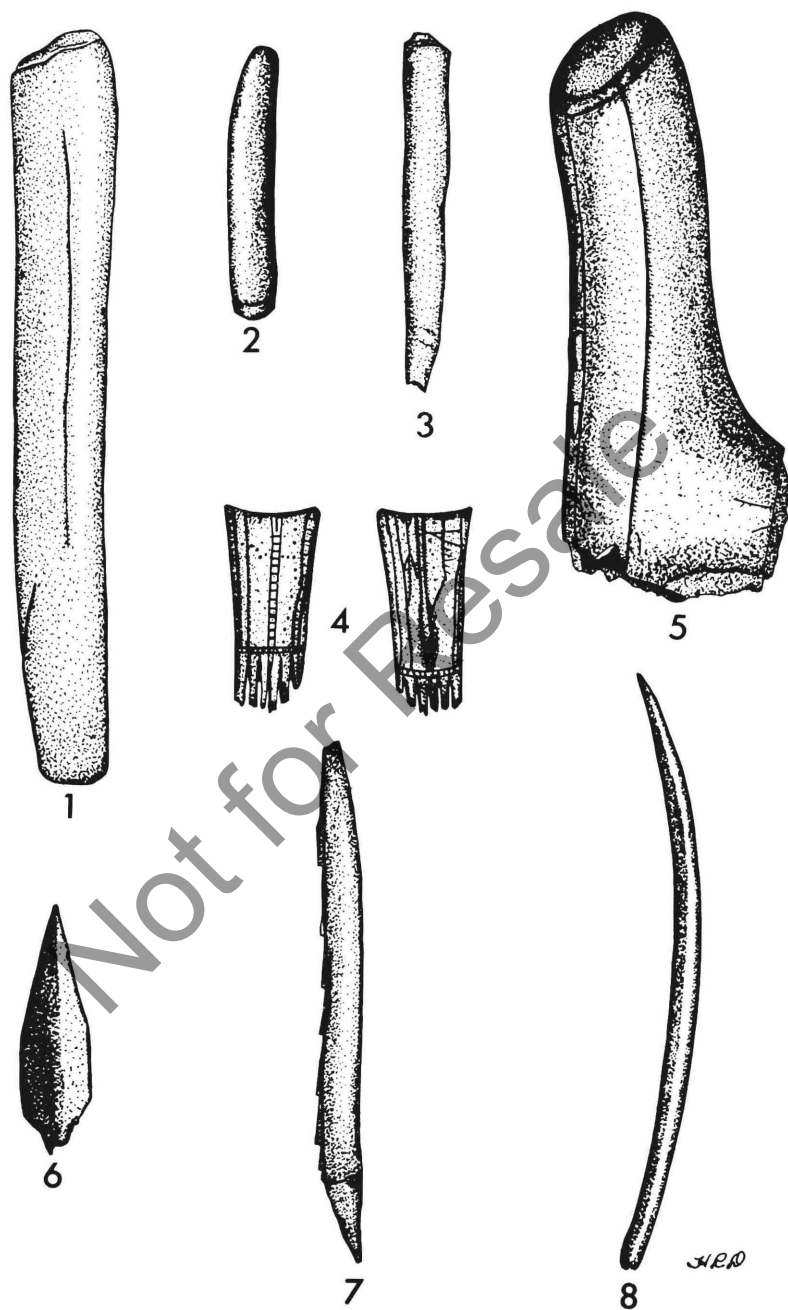


Plate II. Kavik antler artifacts. 1, sharp wedge, dorsal view; 2, sinew twister; 3, fid, probably; 4, comb; 5, decorated beam section; 6, arrowhead point fragment; 7, leister prong; 8, fish spear center prong. To scale, length of 1, 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

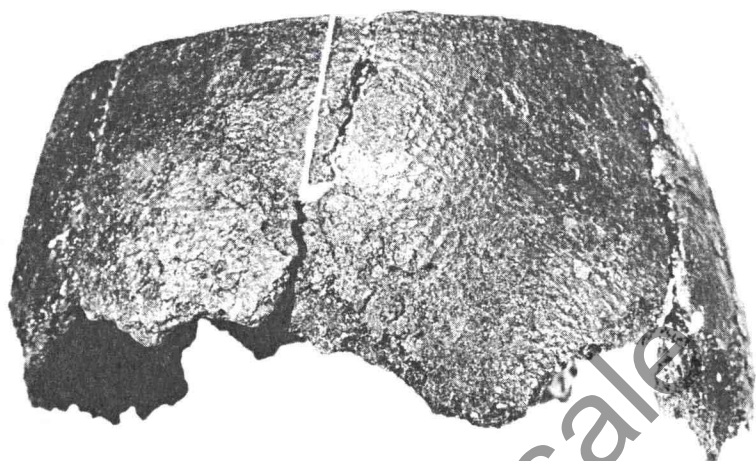


Figure 3.

The second vessel was in extremely poor condition when found on the floor of a Norton house. It is now being conserved in the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania; therefore measurements cannot be given. The general shape is that of a deep bowl with vertical sides and a rounded base. This would appear to be an uncommon type, as none of the base sherds in this, or any other, house would lead one to propose such a shape.

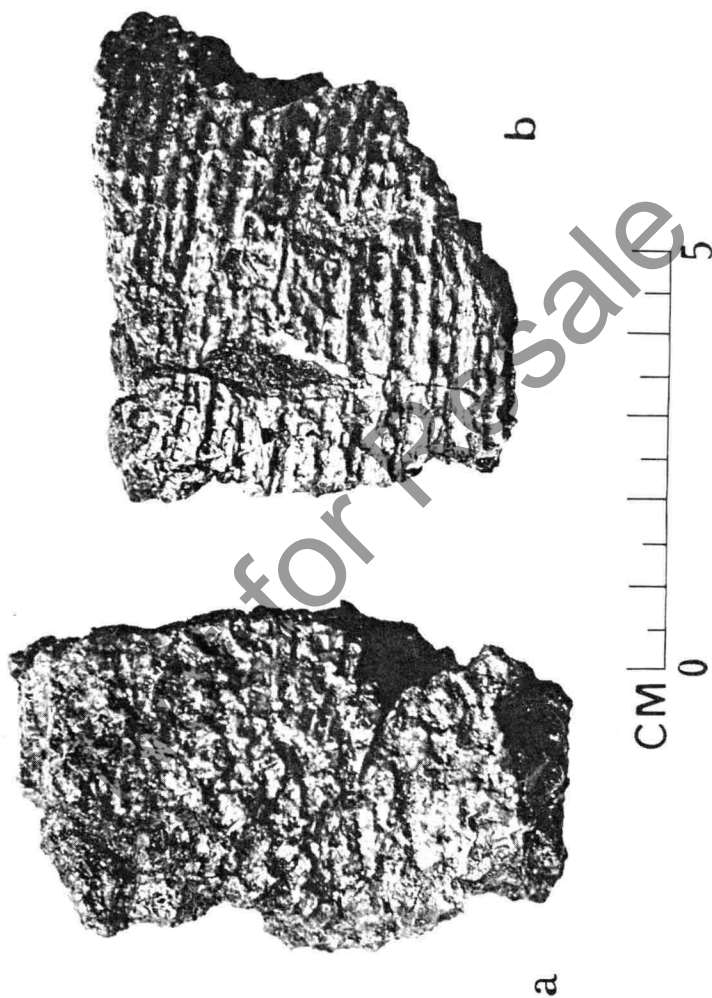
DECORATION

Unlike the Iyatayet site, none of the pottery at Unalakleet could definitely be assigned to the categories of Norton Plain or Norton Linear Stamped (Griffin 1964: 273-4). These types are sometimes approximated by erosion patterns and it is not always possible to distinguish erosion from decoration. Few sherds of these varieties, however (whether erosion, Norton Linear Stamped or Norton Plain), were found at Unalakleet.

On the floor of the house dated 204 ± 52 B.C. and in the “evolved Norton” house, a base and several body sherds were found which do not appear to have been check-stamped in the usual manner (fig. 4; a). Instead of the sharp outline of each of the checks usually found on pottery, the indentations on these sherds have a rounded outline. Nor are the indentations found in precise rows, as is usual in check-stamped pottery. Larsen (1950: fig. 57; 1, 2) found at the Platinum Village site coiled basketry which resembles the impressions on these sherds.

Except for the few sherds described above, all of the pottery excavated has checked decoration. The length of the checks varies from 1 mm to 4 mm, with a mean of somewhat over 2.5 mm. The most common length measurements are from 2 mm to 3 mm. The width of the checks varies from 1 mm to 3 mm, with a mean of slightly over 2 mm. The most common width measurements are from 1 mm to 2 mm. The length/width ratios of the checks vary from 1 (square checks) to as much as 4 (very rectangular checks), with a mean length/width ratio of 1.4.

The size of the checks of the pottery from the “evolved Norton” house has a mean length of over 3 mm, and a mean width of almost 2.5 mm. Both of these averages are slightly above those of the earlier houses. However, in no case did the length or width of the checks fall outside the range observed in



the other houses. There is no observable difference in the size of the checks between house overburden and house fill in any of the houses. Both the overburden and floors contained large and small checked pottery.

All of the sherds which were not eroded show a check design. This includes the bottom of the base sherds. However, in no case did the interior of the vessel have checks. Small sherds give the impression of neat parallel rows of checks, but many of the larger sherds destroy this impression. Instead, the rows of checks meet one another at various angles. Some of the rows are curved, making it appear that the stamp was rolled across the surface of the pot. Generally, rim sherds have rows of checks parallel to the lip, but this is not always the case, for some rim sherds have rows which meet the lip at sharp angles. When viewed as a whole, it seems that the primary aim was simply to decorate the entire exterior of the vessel.

Two sets of sherds from the overburden of one house, and a set of sherds from the floor of another, show treatment of the surface prior to the application of the checks (fig 4: b). This treatment takes the form of inscribed parallel grooves on the vessel exterior into which the checks were impressed. In addition, the sherds from the house floor have a layer of clay 2 mm thick applied before the grooving and checking process was begun (fig. 4; b). Both the exterior surface of the pot proper and the interior surface of the 2 mm thick layer of clay, or stucco (I hesitate, because of its thickness, to call it a slip), have marks made either by a fine comb or by some fine vegetable matter. Since both the interior surface of the stucco and the exterior surface of the pot proper have these marks, it is assumed that the pot was dried before the stucco was applied, thus making the marks permanent.

Both Griffin and Oswalt state that checks were applied with a paddle and Oswalt further mentions that an appropriately checked paddle was found, out of context, at Jabbertown. This is undoubtedly one technique of applying the checks, but in the overburden of one of the Norton houses excavated near Unalakleet was a dentate tool which could have been used to check the pottery equally well (fig. 5; a). The wide end of this tool measures 12 mm in length, and the narrow end, of which a small piece has been broken, measures 14 mm. The four teeth on the wide end vary in length from one to four millimeters. The four teeth of the narrow end measure from one

to two millimeters. The thickness of the artifact, and hence the thickness of all the teeth, measures 2 mm.

It is interesting to note that the sides measure 36 mm, or almost twice the width of the wide end of the artifact. Each side is divided in half by a notch 2 mm wide. If a side were pressed into clay, two lines, each 17 mm long, would appear. It therefore seems possible that the sides were used as a gauge in order to lay out the rows of checks on the pottery.

I have performed various experiments with this tool and two of these will be described here. The first (fig. 5; b) was done with the wide end of the dentate stamp using the small (1 mm) check as a guide. It was found that vertical rows could be made in a straight line quite quickly by positioning this small check over the impression made by it on the previous stroke. The clay tablet contains three vertical rows of four checks each. It should be noted that some of the Norton sherds also contained these very small checks interspersed between larger checks. When the small end of the tool was used to check a tablet, it was harder to keep the rows straight because this end lacked a small check.

The second experiment was done using the sides of the dentate tool as a gauge (the grooves were deeply impressed in order to make them stand out) along the bottom and along one side of the tablet (fig. 5; c). The bottom tooth was placed in the bottom groove and the tool was pressed into the clay. The tool was then moved to the left, thus making a horizontal row of four checks. The second horizontal row was made by aligning the tool with the upper vertical groove (this groove was made at the same time as the lower vertical groove and is separated from the lower groove because the 2 mm wide notch on the side of the tool leaves no impression) and repeating the process used in making the lower row. Thus, this tablet contains two rows of four checks each. No grooves corresponding to those that I have described are to be found on Norton pottery. However, it is possible that they are lightly inscribed and therefore obliterated in the process of checking the vessel.

A third method of using this tool is suggested by some of the Norton sherds. These have some checks that overlap other checks. Apparently, after making one row of checks, the new row is aligned by impressing the first tooth of the dentate stamp in the last tooth mark of the first row.

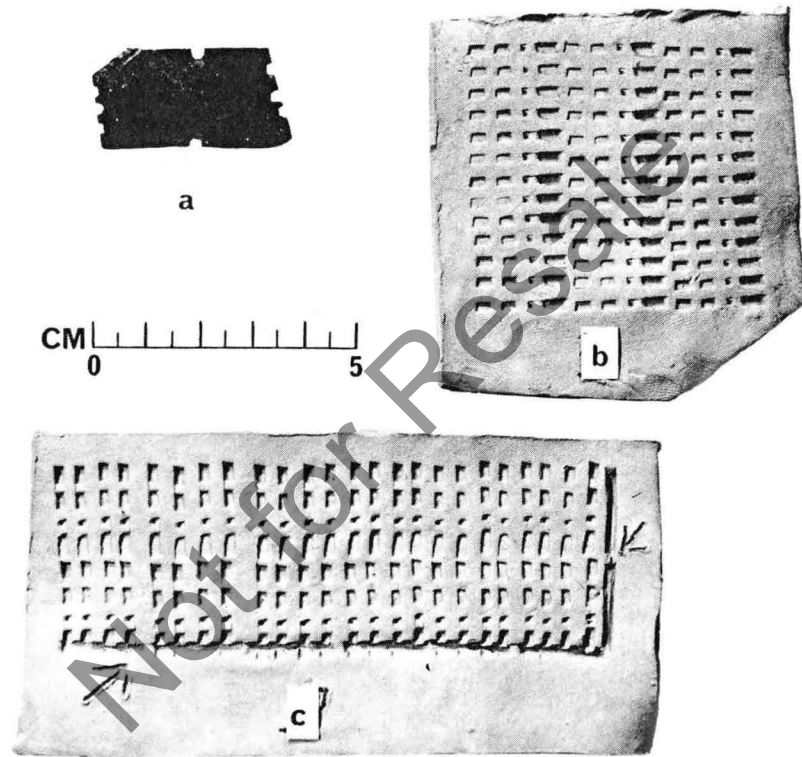


Figure 5.

I am not suggesting that all of the methods described above were used. The gauge method appears to be the most doubtful, because no traces of it were found on the pottery from Unalakleet. Nor am I suggesting that the dentate tool was used to the exclusion of the check-stamp paddle. What I am suggesting is that more than one method of applying checks was used by the Norton people. This tool was also quite possibly employed at Engigstciak (MacNeish 1956) and at Iyatayet (Griffin 1964), where dentate sherds were found.

A final possible decoration technique must be mentioned. This is the smoothing of the vessel after the checks have been applied. This partially obliterates the checks and may be caused by accidents in the handling of the pot preceding firing. It never appears to cover large areas of the pottery, reinforcing the opinion that it was accidental.

PERFORATIONS

Three sherds are perforated; two are from the overburden of one Norton house and the third is from the overburden of another Norton house. All three sherds are perforated from the exterior surface only. The sherd from the one house has a round conical perforation with a diameter of 5 mm on the exterior of the vessel (fig. 6; a). This narrows to 4 mm on the present inner surface of the sherd, which is split and only retains about one-half of its original thickness.

The perforations in the two sherds of the other Norton house are oblong. One of these perforations is on a body sherd. It is 7 mm long and 4 mm wide on the exterior of the vessel. This narrows to 4 mm by 2 mm respectively on the interior surface.

The second perforation from this house is in a type 3 rim sherd (fig. 6; b). Measurements on the exterior of the sherd are 8 mm by 4 mm. On the interior of the sherd the measurements are 6 mm by 2 mm. The long axis of the perforation is perpendicular to the plane of the rim and is 4.5 cm below the lip.

Both of the oblong holes appear to be punched rather than drilled. The inner wall of the perforation in the body sherd has striations which go from the exterior surface of the sherd to the interior surface. It seems unlikely that these striations would have run in this direction if the perforation were drilled. The

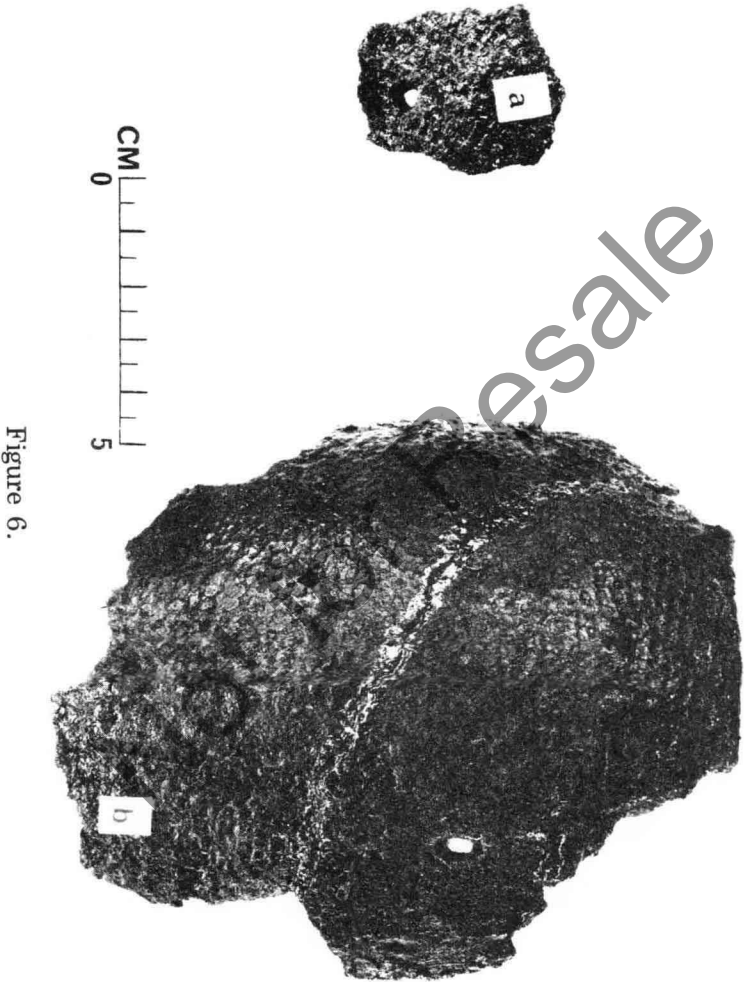


Figure 6.

perforation in the rim sherd is rounded where it meets the exterior surface of the pot. This would occur only if the clay around the perforation were smoothed after the perforation had been made. In other words, it appears that these two perforations were made before the clay was fired. If they were repair holes, they would have been made after the clay was fired. They were probably then made in order to attach something to the vessel, and the position of the oblong hole in the rim sherd suggests that they were made to attach a handle.

IMPLICATIONS

The pottery from Unalakleet appears, in many respects, to be similar to pottery from other Norton sites. There are, however, some differences which have no completely satisfactory explanation at the present time. Why, for instance, should there be no Norton Linear Stamped pottery at Unalakleet when it was found less than seventy-five miles away at Cape Denbigh? Two possible answers suggest themselves. First, the difference in time was long enough so that Norton Linear Stamped pottery was no longer in use. Giddings (1964: 245) suggests an average date of 403 B. C. at Cape Denbigh. This is at least two centuries earlier than the earliest C14 date from Unalakleet. Second, the degree of communication between the peoples of the two sites, for whatever reasons, was tenuous enough so that some decoration techniques known at Cape Denbigh did not find their way to Unalakleet.

Other unanswered questions are concerned with the amount of variation found within the pottery from Unalakleet. For example, why should there be only one vessel which is "stuccoed", grooved, and then checked? Again, there are a number of possible explanations. One is that the actual potters were being "imported" from other areas where different pottery techniques were used. If this were actually the case, it does not seem that they came from the north, since no variation comparable to the above exists in the northern sites. This variation, and others, might have had their origin in groups from the interior and only more archeological work in this area will prove or disprove this theory.

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THE ESKIMO TRADING PARTNERSHIP IN NORTH ALASKA:

A STUDY IN "BALANCED RECIPROCITY" ¹

by

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The notion of "reciprocity," while not necessarily the oldest or best established concept in the social sciences, is one which has been around for quite awhile, and it is one which has received the attention of a number of noted scholars. Among the names associated with the subject are Becker (1956), Blau (1964), Gouldner (1960), Homans (1958), Levi-Strauss (1949), Malinowski (1922, 1926), Mauss (1966), and Polanyi (1944, 1959). It is a topic which is attracting increasingly widespread interest among both sociologists and anthropologists.

In a recent paper, Marshall Sahlins (1965) attempted to reformulate the whole study of "reciprocity." He points out (1965:144) that there is a "popular tendency to view reciprocity as balance, as unconditional one-for-one

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1. The material obtained in 1960-61 was collected while I was a Research Assistant in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Alaska in conjunction with Human Ecological Investigations at Kivalina (U. S. Atomic Energy Commission, Project Chariot). The work in 1964 and 1965 was supported in part by the Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago. The 1967 research was carried out while returning from the Working Party Conference on Human Adaptability Studies of Eskimos at Barrow, Alaska. Travel funds for that conference were provided by the National Research Council of Canada. Additional transportation was generously provided by Dr. Max Brewer, Director, Naval Arctic Research Laboratory, Barrow, Alaska. The Northern Studies Committee and the Research Board of the University of Manitoba provided funds to assist in the preparation of this material for publication.

An early draft of this paper was read by David Damas, Marshal Sahlins, and Robert Spencer, and their comments were most useful. They are in no way responsible for the positions presented here.

The support and assistance of the above individuals and organizations is gratefully acknowledged.

exchange.” Following Blau (1964) and Gouldner (1960), Sahlins (*Ibid.*) argues that “considered as material transfer, reciprocity is often not that at all.” Reciprocity may be *in* or *out* of balance; it is a “whole class of exchanges, a continuum of forms.” This conception, he says (1965:139), “developed out of a dialogue with ethnographic materials,” and he offers his conclusions “as a plea to ethnography rather than a contribution to theory, if those are not . . . the same things.”

The purpose of the present study is to respond to Sahlins’ plea by examining in detail a particular relationship which is especially appropriate for consideration under the heading of “reciprocity” because of its predominant “exchange” orientation. It is also one of the examples that Sahlins (1965:190) mentions in the appendix to his paper. The analysis is intended primarily as a contribution to ethnography. Indeed, I fear that it may contribute to a theoretical regression since the relationship I am about to describe is a nearly stereotypical case of “reciprocity” in the most classic sense of that term.²

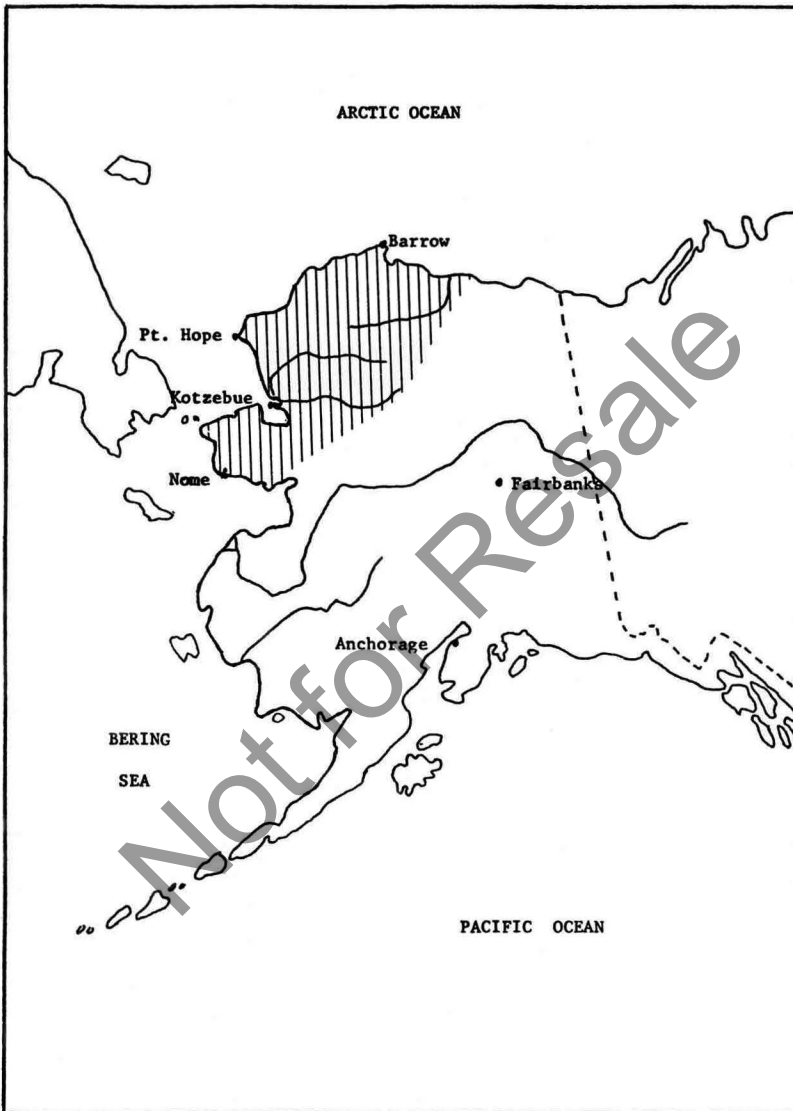
THE TRADING PARTNERSHIP

The relationship under consideration is generally known in English as “trading partnership” of the North Alaskan Eskimos. In the native language, it is referred to as the association of *niuviriik* (dual). It is a relationship voluntarily established between two individuals who are not related on a kinship basis and in terms of which action is primarily oriented to the exchange of goods and/or services. It was not the only nonkin relationship in the traditional society, nor was it one of only two such relationships, as R. F. Spencer (1959:83) suggests. It was, however, one of only a very small number of nonkin bonds that were distinguished in North Alaska in traditional times, and it was almost surely the one with the greatest strength.

The present analysis focuses on the trading partnership as it is and was manifested among the North Alaskan Eskimos. In traditional times, the people covered by this label lived in

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2. The approach employed in this paper has been adapted from the work of M. J. Levy, Jr. (1952: Chapters VI and VII; 1966: 133-174, 220-230). Explicit definitions of the technical terms included in this paper can be found in the works cited.

ALASKA



Hatching indicates territorial focus of paper

northwestern Alaska between (roughly) the mouth of the Colville River, on the northeast, and the southern coast of the Seward Peninsula on the southwest.³ Between those two points, the Eskimos operated in terms of the same general social system, in both inland and coastal areas. Whether or not the trading partnership, or something like it, occurred elsewhere in the Eskimo world is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that I have not seen or heard of it occurring anywhere in Canada or Greenland, although in former times it, or something like it, may have been common in southwestern Alaska (Correll 1968).

In view of the extensive literature on North Alaska, it is surprising how little has been written about the trading partnership. To my knowledge, the first publication to even mention it by name was Spencer's (1959) monograph on the region. His study contains its first description, as well as a relatively thorough analysis of its place in the larger social setting of at least part of what I am calling "North Alaskan Eskimo Society." Beyond that, Gubser's (1965) volume on the people of Anaktuvuk Pass is the only one that devotes more than a few lines to the subject. Giddings (1961) mentions it in passing, as does VanStone (1962). Unfortunately, the latter author confused it with the "exchange sibling" (*qatangun*) relationship, from which it is quite distinct in the Eskimo scheme of things. Beyond that, only Pospisil (1964) seems to have been more aware of partnerships. Although he comments on its general importance in the society, he doesn't do more than that.

The present account is based on a combination of my own research in North Alaska and on the literary sources

3. This is a much broader definition of the notion of "North Alaskan Eskimo" than that used by R. F. Spencer in his (1959) monograph bearing that title. He restricts the label to the people living only in the northern half of the area, considered here (i.e., north of the Continental Divide in the Brooks Range).

cited above.⁴ Of the latter, Spencer's (1959) account was by far the most useful. In many respects, the present study can be regarded as an elaboration on and extension of his work on the same subject. Primary reliance in writing this article, however, was placed on my own material.⁵ The data was obtained in 1960-61, 1964, 1965, and 1967, primarily in Kivalina, but to a limited extent also in Barrow, Point Hope, Noatak and Kotzebue. Information was acquired through a combination of formal and informal interviews, observation of partnerships in operation, and personal participation in one such relationship. My wife also has a "trading partner" in the area.

NORTH ALASKAN ESKIMO SOCIETY

Compared with Eskimo societies in Canada and Greenland, North Alaskan Eskimo society was both relatively large (at least 15,000 members), and complex, although it may have ranked lower in both respects than the Eskimo societies in southwestern Alaska. Within the area there was considerable regional variation in many aspects of life. In general, three major patterns of yearly cycle were involved (cf. Oswalt 1967: 118ff., and Spencer 1959: 126ff.). Most numerous were the people who spent virtually the entire year at or near the coast, living in permanent villages which

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4. In an effort to keep separate the sources of the material presented in this paper, I have included "see" references where my own data are supplemented by those of the author cited. Other references follow conventional procedure. They indicate either that the author cited was the sole source of my information, or that my information conflicts with that of the author involved. It should be noted that the literary sources disagree with one another on various points, and that the present account will differ to a certain extent from all those published so far. Areas of disagreement vary from matters of little significance to those of some importance. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these, it is only fair to warn the reader of their existence. It is worth mentioning in this research among full-time coast dwellers, Gubser (1965) lived among the full-time inlanders, and I worked primarily among a group that, traditionally, was intermediate between the two extremes. No doubt many of the discrepancies between our accounts can be explained on this basis.
 5. Although this paper is intended as a contribution to ethnography, it does not consist of a recitation of raw data. Rather, the analysis is a descriptive summary of the information in my field notes and in the references cited.

sometimes had several hundred inhabitants. These year-round coast dwellers lived primarily on sea mammal products, fish, and caribou, with distinct seasonal and regional emphasis on one or the other. The third pattern involved those individuals, relatively few in number, who lived in small camps far inland. They subsisted primarily on caribou products, with some regional emphasis on trout and/or salmon. These “true inlanders,” if they got to the coast at all, did so only for a few weeks in summer when they attended the summer “trade fairs.”

The trade fairs, which were centralized annual markets, brought together a substantial proportion of the entire society at one of two major locations each summer. One was held at the mouth of the Colville River, and the other, a much larger one, was held on Kotzebue Sound. Representatives of all areas of North Alaska met at these events. The Kotzebue fair also drew people from Siberia and Southwest Alaska, and the Colville River fair sometimes attracted people from the MacKenzie delta region in Canada. In addition to being one of the very few contexts in which complete strangers could associate with one another peacefully in the traditional society, the fairs provided the primary opportunity for trading partners who lived in different regions within the general North Alaskan area to come together. Often, this was the only time that they could meet during the year.⁶ Consequently, it was only at the fairs that many partners could effect the exchanges appropriate to the relationship. Much of the interchange of goods that went on at the fairs, if not most of it, was carried out in terms of partner relationships.

North Alaskan Eskimo society is no longer in existence, having been subsumed some seventy or eighty years ago by the United States. The trading partnership has continued to

6. It is probably for this reason that the concept of the trading partnership has been so intimately associated with the annual fairs by the few who have written about it. My own data suggest that those partnerships which were activated only at the fairs represented an end point in a continuum whose other terminus involved partners who were in almost daily contact throughout much of the year. It is true, however, that partnerships were most numerous at the former end of the line, probably by a substantial margin.

persist in essentially its traditional form, however, at least on a general level,⁷ but its place in the overall social system has changed drastically. No longer one of the requisite structures of the society, it is now little more than part of the traditional frosting on what is a rapidly modernizing cake. Nonetheless, most adult Eskimos in North Alaska are members of at least one trading partnership, and many are involved in several. New partnerships continue to be established, although probably not at the rate that members of old ones are passing away.

MEMBERSHIP

The "membership" of any relationship is the "who" of that relationship. Given a particular relationship, who may belong to it, and who may not? These factors are never random, but are structured along with the other characteristics of the relationship concerned. The analysis of the membership of Eskimo trading partnerships in North Alaska will thus include the following areas of consideration: membership criteria, recruitment procedures, and termination procedures.

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

The underlying concern in the establishment of most partnerships, especially in traditional times, but often still today, is that of *need* as perceived by the individuals involved. When one has need of particular goods and/or services, and for some reason he cannot obtain them through the operation of the kinship units of which he is a member, he seeks to institute a partnership with someone from whom he can. When one is seeking a partner, therefore, he must always demonstrate two things: first, that he has a need which the other person can satisfy, and second, that the other person has a need which the first can resolve, both on a continuing

7. For this reason, most of the account which forms the body of the paper will be placed in the present. Except where indicated otherwise, this should be taken to mean that the same general patterns pertain to both the traditional and the contemporary periods in North Alaska. Where there is a difference between the two, it will be specified.

basis. To the extent that these conditions are not met, either partnerships are not likely to be established in the first place, or they are likely to be unstable if they are.

The majority of an Eskimo's material needs are likely to be met through the operation of kinship units. But given the normally limited geographic scope of effectively operating kinship units, and given the diversity of various regions in North Alaska, it is more or less inevitable that some "needs" have less chance than others of being fulfilled by kin organizations. These unfulfilled requirements, in turn, form the basis of the predominant type of partnership, which involve full-time coast dwellers, on the one hand, and full-time inlanders on the other (see Gubser 1965: 1331, 160, 179; Pospisil 1964: 408; Spencer 1959: 146, 168, 170, 194, 450). The former have the smallest supply of caribou skins, and the latter are capable of meeting the resulting demand. The inlanders, however, have the smallest supply of seal oil and skins, and the coast dwellers have the greatest ability to provide them. Since in traditional times both types of goods were considered basic necessities by the Eskimos, their absence constituted a definite need. Furthermore, it was one which was normally not resolved through the operation of kinship units. It was *readily* alleviated through partnerships involving individuals from different ecological zones. The third category of people, i.e., those who spend half the year inland and the other half on the coast, were able to look after themselves reasonably well with respect to both caribou and sea mammal products. At the same time, they did not generally have sufficient surpluses of either to serve as the basis for effective partnerships. The search for partners living in ecological zones different from one's own was a widespread practice in traditional times.⁸ It still is today, although the matter of "need" is more for luxuries (e.g., muskrat skins for fancy parkas in return for whitened sealskins for fancy mukluks) than for basic necessities. Any perceived need can serve as the basis for an effective partnership, however, and those mentioned above are simply the most common. They were especially so in traditional times.

8. Similar situations seem to occur in many regions where there is a significant volume of interaction between inhabitants of different ecological zones. See Malinowski (1926:23) on the Trobrianders and Eidheim (1966) on the Lapps for purposes of comparison.

The categories of kinsmen (*ilagiit*) and trading partners (*niuviriik*) were and are considered mutually exclusive (see Pospisil 1964: 408; Spencer 1959: 85, 167, 179, 172, but cf. Spencer 1965: 144). When informants were confronted with the hypothetical possibility of relatives becoming partners, they pointed out that such a situation would be ridiculous: why "make partners" with a kinsman when, by virtue of the kinship tie, one has stronger claims on a wider variety of goods and services than is remotely conceivable in terms of *any* sort of nonkin bond? Nevertheless, it sometimes happens that individuals known to be relatives establish a partnership. Such an occurrence is a sure sign that the particular kinship tie which connected them in the first place was so insignificant to the people concerned as to be virtually nonexistent for all practical purposes (see Spencer 1959: 170). Cases of this sort were regarded by informants as a bit odd, though, since a better way to achieve the same objective would be to replace a weak kinship connection with a stronger one, a relatively easy thing for Eskimos to do (Burch 1966: 90ff.).

Theoretically, sex is irrelevant in the choice of a partner. Partnerships can be established between two men, two women, or between a man and a woman. Numerous instances of all three possibilities have been attested in both the traditional and contemporary periods in North Alaska (see Gubser 1965: 160; Spencer 1969: 177). As a result of the extreme division of labor along sex lines in the traditional society, however, sex was usually a germane consideration in the choice of a partner. If a man wanted a new pair of boots, for example, he could get them from his wife; he did not need a partner. But, his wife would need raw skins from which to make the boots, and it was her husband's responsibility to get them for her. Therefore, if a man lived in a locality where seals could not be obtained, it behooved him to have as a partner someone who could provide them. Such an individual was most likely to be another hunter, i.e., another man. Since lack of raw materials constitutes the "need" element in most partnerships, and given the fact that the direct exploitation of natural resources is primarily the responsibility of men, the chances of men requiring partnership connections with other men are and were much greater than those of the other two sexual combinations. The

Eskimos are fully aware of these and other related factors, and they seek partners accordingly. The result of the various possibilities is that partnerships involving two men are (and were) the most common, those involving two women are (and were) next in frequency, and those involving a man and a woman were (and are) least common.

Age characteristics too are theoretically irrelevant in the choice of a partner, but there are certain obvious practical limitations. Infants, for example, are physically incapable of entering into an effective partnership with anybody, as are the very aged, although neither category is ideally excluded from partnership associations. Within those practical limits, virtually all possible combinations occur: youngsters become partners with other youngsters, adults become partners with other adults, and youngsters become partners with adults.

Most frequently, partnerships are established between adults of more or less the same age. Adults are capable of fulfilling the obligations of partnership more satisfactorily than either youngsters or the aged, and they also have a greater "need" for partners. Furthermore the choice of a partner of approximately the same age avoids a number of potential pitfalls which would almost certainly arise between individuals of clearly disparate ages. For example, the partnership is institutionalized as being an egalitarian one. In most areas of North Alaskan Eskimo life there is a pronounced differential allocation of authority on the basis of both absolute and relative age. The rule of "older over younger" permeates virtually all areas of an Eskimo's existence. The pattern is so pervasive, and so strongly institutionalized, that it is quite difficult for individuals of significantly different ages to act as equals even on those rare occasions when they wish to do so. The Eskimos are fully aware of this, and avoiding such situations is obviously a germane consideration when looking for a partner. The few exceptions that have come to my attention are all characterized by very limited content, and are usually very weak.

The selection of a partner is further limited by the problem of how much one can give in return for the goods and services provided by the partner. Although the partnership is institutionalized as being highly altruistic in nature, the giving is supposed to be mutually beneficial, not

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One is for the children of partners to become partners in their own right (see Spencer 1959: 169). This is not regarded as inheritance. Such cases are the result of a desire on the part of the children to maintain a tradition which has proven satisfactory. It frequently happens too that individuals become partners of their spouse's partner's spouse. For example, two women might establish a partnership with each other simply because their husbands are partners, the motives again being the desire to maintain or strengthen already existing connections. A third situation occurs when two friends (*tuaqatigiik*) decide to "make partners." By doing so, they make it possible to operate in terms of a relationship which is distinctly stronger than the original, hence it is one that received substantially more institutional support. It is my impression that, in recent years, the majority of partnerships established in Northwest Alaska are of this last type; in traditional times, they seem to have been uncommon.

A final matter to be discussed under the heading of "membership criteria" is the number of partners that any individual might have. There are no theoretical limits, but there certainly are practical ones. In traditional times, when the relationship was quite a demanding one, one or two partners seem to have been all that the average person could cope with. While most individuals could not afford to be without partners, they could not afford to have too many of them either. An *umialiq*, on the other hand, might have as many as five or six partners (see Gubser 1965: 133, 160, 179; Pospisil 1964: 408; Spencer 1959: 169-170). In recent years, as the content of partnerships has decreased, the number of partnerships that any one individual can belong to has increased. The average still seems to be one or two partners, but the range is from zero to as many as a dozen or more. As the number of one's partners increases, the volume of activities involved in the relationships must decrease. Individuals with more than three or four partners seldom do more than send them small gifts every few years. Such relationships exist in theory, but are characterized by minimal content and strength.

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

Given the appropriate membership criteria, a partnership is a relatively easy matter to institute. Stripped to the bare

essentials, a partnership is established once two procedural requirements are executed. The first of these is the offer of a gift on the part of one individual and its acceptance by another. The initial gift does not have to be returned immediately, although the relationship is not considered fully established until it is. The second requirement is that the individuals concerned call each other *niuviriga* ("my trading partner").⁹ If this requirement is not met, no amount of gift giving suffices to establish a partnership. On the other hand, even a very small gift, plus the use of the term *niuviriga* is enough to establish a partnership that can last a lifetime.

In traditional times, when a partnership was a much more serious matter than it is today, the "bare essentials" outlined above were usually supplemented in various ways. In those days, a partnership was rarely entered into without at least some advance planning on the part of the individuals involved. For example, two people who had met several times, more or less by accident, at the summer trade fairs, and who perceived possibilities for a partnership, might agree to establish a partnership one year, but not actually set it into operation until the following one (Spencer 1959: 168, 169). Under such circumstances, it was customary for the potential partners to bring large quantities of goods with them to the meeting so as to get the relationship started on the right footing. The initial giving would be reciprocal, and possibly conducted in a relatively formal manner. Regardless of the details, it seems that in traditional times, an agreement to "make partners" was almost always reached some time before any goods changed hands.

In recent years the establishment of a partnership has become markedly more casual. In one case that came to my attention, for example, the members have never even seen each other, in spite of the fact that they have been partners for several years. The initial contact was made by mail, at the suggestion of a mutual acquaintance, and the relationship has been maintained ever since through postal and air freight services.

9. The active use of the label for a relationship is a critical factor in its establishment as a representative of an institutionalized pattern. The procedure is involved in all areas of Eskimo life, and is not unique here.

TERMINATION PROCEDURES

Ideally, once a partnership is established, it is expected to last throughout the lifetimes of its members (see Gubser 1965: 160, 161; Spencer 1959: 172). In Eskimo theory, only death can terminate a partnership. In actual fact, a number of circumstances can produce this result.

One possibility is for partners to become kinsmen. This situation can come about in any one of three possible ways. If partners are male and female, they can get married. In such a case, the partner relationship is replaced by the husband-wife bond. Although this sort of thing is apparently uncommon, I know of at least one specific case where it occurred. A second possibility is that the *relatives* of two partners might marry, with the result that the partners automatically become “in-laws” of one sort or another. Whether or not such a situation actually results in a change depends on a number of contextual and personal factors. The third possibility is for partners to become involved in a co-marriage, or “exchange marriage” situation (Burch 1966: 81ff., 154ff.).

Both Gubser (1965: 133) and Spencer (1959: 83, 130, 172, 450; 1965: 144) claim that partnerships were “reinforced” by an exchange of spouses, and Spencer especially emphasizes this point. My own data disagrees. My informants emphatically denied any connection between partnerships, on the one hand, and exchange marriages on the other. According to them, while it is true that partners *could* become involved in an exchange marriage, such an affair would not strengthen the partnership, it would terminate it. It would strengthen the relationship between the *individuals* involved, but it would do so by replacing the partnership bond with one or another of the co-marriage relationships. All of the above possibilities are normally regarded by the Eskimos as improvements of already satisfactory situations, although they do result in the termination of partnerships.

Most often, though, partnerships are terminated through the operation of chance or personality conflicts, or as the result of a more or less rational assessment of the state of affairs of the relationship by one or both members. Chance can operate to eliminate a partner through death, or, especially in traditional times, it could find partners so far removed from one another physically that they could not meet even on an annual

basis. The latter problem has been removed in recent years as a result of United States mail services in the area. The possibilities of personality conflict are sufficiently obvious as to eliminate the need for elaboration. The matter of rational assessment needs some discussion, however.

If one's partner consistently fails to live up to the obligations of the relationship, there is considerable motivation for putting an end to it, in spite of ideal prescriptions to the contrary. An important consideration here is whether the partner concerned is simply *incapable* of being a good partner, as opposed to being *unwilling* to be one. Eskimos are quite aware of the problems of poverty, and when one's partner falls on hard times, his failure to live up to the requirements of the relationship is not usually regarded as offensive, at least for awhile. Under such circumstances, the member who is better off is under some obligation to help out his less fortunate partner. In a sense, that is what partnership is supposed to be all about. Inevitably, there is a point of diminishing returns.

What really leads to difficulties is when a person who has the means refuses outright to live up to his obligations. The refusal to act like a partner when one has the capability constitutes in and of itself the *coup de grace* to the association. Generally, partners go to considerable lengths to avoid even the merest semblance of stinginess of this sort. For example, if one's partner asks for some seal oil and none is available, it is customary to offer anything else he wants instead. This is done with the explanation, and usually the demonstration, that the initial request is literally impossible to meet. Under such circumstances, a "good" partner will ordinarily not take anything at all, preferring to let his counterpart recover financially first. If, instead, he does take something else, especially if it is a particularly valued item, the "donor" will probably let it go, but may then regard the relationship as finished. A similar result will occur if one continually makes unreasonable requests of his partner. Greed in asking is as effective in breaking the bond of partnership as is stinginess in giving. Blau's (1964: 111) observation that "overwhelming others with benefactions serves to achieve superiority over them" is also pertinent here. An imbalance through over-generosity disrupts the relationship just as much as one resulting from stinginess.

(32) *Vol. 9, no. 322, folio 487, July 10, 1832 — to the manager of Aleksandrovskii Redoubt, Kolmakov.*

The general manager cancels the debts of those Aglegmiut who formerly worked for the company but have been discharged or have died.

(33) *Vol. 9, no. 388, folios 281-83, September 16, 1832 — to the Kodiak Office.*

Wrangell reports his arrangements with Kolmakov for a trip to the Kuskokwim River basin beginning in the fall of 1832.

(34) *Vol. 9, no. 460, folios 345-51, October 31, 1832 — to the main office.*

Wrangell reports the condition of Aleksandrovskii Redoubt at the time of his visit there during the summer of 1832. He recommends the sending of a hunting detachment into the interior (see nos. 26, 30, 33) in order to increase the trade for beaver pelts. The report also contains an evaluation of the usefulness of the Aglegmiut living near the redoubt to the company and a favorable appraisal of the influence of Father Veniaminov's preaching at Aleksandrovskii. Veniaminov, who accompanied Wrangell, was making his second visit to the redoubt.

(35) *Vol. 9, no. 555, folio 444, November 16, 1832 — to the main office.*

On August 29 Kolmakov began his journey to the Kuskokwim drainage.

(36) *Vol. 10, no. 184, folios 102-103, May 9, 1833 — to the captain of the vessel going to Nushagak.*

Instructions are given concerning the channel of Nushagak Bay and the necessity of obtaining an Aglegmiut guide at the village of Ekuk. A map of the bay was apparently included with this communication but is now missing.

(37) *Vol. 10, no. 185, folio 104, May 9, 1833 — to the manager of Aleksandrovskii Redoubt, Kolmakov.*

The general manager requests Kolmakov to report in detail about his trip to the Kuskokwim River in 1832-1833 and include an account of the pelts bartered.

(38) *Vol. 11, no. 27, folios 18-19, March 11, 1834 – to the Kodiak office.*

Wrangell lists the prize money awarded to Kolmakov and the members of his expedition to the Kuskokwim River and refers to a second expedition which Kolmakov led to the same area in 1833-1834.

(39) *Vol. 11, no. 58, folios 35-43, April 10, 1834 – to the main office.*

Wrangell defends his decision to send Kolmakov on two trips to the Kuskokwim River basin and points out that these expeditions were more useful to the company than those of Vasiliev.

(40) *Vol. 11, no. 72, folios 92-95, April 10, 1834 – to the main office.*

Wrangell reports concerning Kolmakov's journeys to the Kuskokwim in 1832-1834, gives an account of the furs bartered, assesses the value of future expeditions to the area, and discusses the advisability of establishing an *odinochka* on the Kuskokwim.

(41) *Vol. 11, no. 73, folios 95-97, April 10, 1834 – to the main office.*

A fairly detailed account of Kolmakov's second expedition to the Kuskokwim River basin in 1833-1834, including a report of furs bartered and a reference to a bad flood at Aleksandrovskii Redoubt in October, 1833.

(42) *Vol. 11, no. 74, folios 97-98, April 10, 1834 – to the main office.*

Wrangell recommends that wolf and wolverine pelts be sent to Aleksandrovskii Redoubt because Kolmakov reports that they are of value for bartering with Kuskokwim River people for beavers.

(43) *Vol. 11, no. 272, folios 251-54, May 9, 1834 – to the manager of Aleksandrovskii Redoubt, Kolmakov.*

The general manager congratulates Kolmakov on the success of his first expedition to the Holitna and Kuskokwim rivers and informs him of the prize money he, Lukin, and other members of the party have been awarded.

(44) *Vol. 11, no. 273, folios 254-57, May 9, 1834 — to the manager of Aleksandrovskii Redoubt, Kolmakov.*

Wrangell writes to Kolmakov about the possibility of shipping furs from the upper Kuskokwim River to Aleksandrovskii Redoubt by way of the mouth of the river and discusses the possibility of establishing an *odinochka* at Goodnews Bay. Meanwhile, Kolmakov is urged to proceed with plans for staffing the *odinochka* near the mouth of the Holitna River and urge more Aglegmiut to work for the company.

(45) *Vol. 12, no. 188, folios 177-79, April 30, 1835 — to the main office.*

Wrangell notes that Kolmakov has sent his assistant to the Kuskokwim and is himself staying at the redoubt.

(46) *Vol. 12, no. 256, folios 151-53, April 30, 1835 — to the main office.*

Wrangell doubts the usefulness of trips into the interior from Aleksandrovskii Redoubt, since this results in fewer pelts traded at the post itself. The number of beaver pelts taken between 1827 and 1830 are given and it is noted that an *odinochka* has been established on the Nushagak near the mouth of the Nuyakuk and on the Kuskokwim at the village of Kwigmpainagmiut.

(47) *Vol. 12, no. 266, folios 249-50, May 11, 1835 — to the manager of Aleksandrovskii Redoubt, Kolmakov.*

The general manager complains that the most recent trip to the Kuskokwim River was not as profitable to the company as it should have been, but that the same amounts of prize money as before is being awarded. Kolmakov is urged on to greater efforts.

(48) *Vol. 12, no. 267, folios 250-52, May 11, 1835 — to the manager of Aleksandrovskii Redoubt, Kolmakov.*

Having received Kolmakov's reports of September, 1834 and February, 1835, the general manager congratulates him on the success of his hunting expeditions and his diligent work at the redoubt. Kolmakov is further informed of the decision not to establish an *odinochka* at Goodnews Bay and to allow the "iliamnins" (Tanaina Indians of Iliamna Lake) to hunt in the Nushagak area.

institutionalized as being a highly responsible one, aid should be offered whenever possible. The service feature, especially the timing element, is extremely important in determining how good a partner one has. The North Alaskan Eskimos have (and had) a sophisticated and sensitive conception of the law of supply and demand. In addition, especially in traditional times but to some extent still today, they exist under conditions in which the supply of a given commodity can vary widely from season to season and from year to year. The demand undergoes variations accordingly. In a lean year a poke of seal blubber for example, might be worth fifty or even a hundred times its value in caribou skins in a year of abundance. In traditional times the absence or presence of a supply of blubber could mean the difference between abject poverty and relative comfort, and the Eskimos judged its worth on those grounds. Likewise, in recent times, when one has just returned from the cannery with two thousand dollars in his pocket, a five-dollar bill is worth next to nothing. But seven months later, when all the money is gone and a favorite child's birthday is approaching, a five-dollar bill is worth a great deal. The "very best" partners are those who consistently come through with help just at the time it is most needed, regardless of the value of the item involved at any other time. Even today, although survival itself is no longer a factor in such matters, the grateful response "Just when I needed it!" symbolizes the fact that however large or small the gift, the timing and the appropriateness are what really matters.

For a partnership to remain stable through time, it is essential that the goods and/or services produced by both members be equal in value, at least over the long run.¹⁰ By "equal in value" I mean that the principals must consider them as such. In traditional times, when the Eskimos had no highly generalized medium of exchange, there was no objective indicator of the relative worth of any and all goods and services. Consequently, what was "equal in value" to something else involved a considerable subjective assessment of the situation. It would take into account not only the intrinsic worth of the goods but also the various considerations discussed in the preceeding paragraph. Nowadays, the Eskimos think of value in

10. Gouldner (1960: 171, 172, 175, 177, 178) makes a number of pertinent points about the matter of equivalence. See especially his footnote (no. 42) on page 172.

terms of United States dollars. Still, partners do not keep records of gifts given or services rendered (or received), and an impressionistic reckoning over the years remains the basis for evaluation.

Closely related to equality in the allocation of goods and services is equality in the allocation of power and responsibility. One of the features which makes the trading partnership so satisfying an association to an Eskimo is the fact that the relationship is institutionalized as being strictly egalitarian (see Giddings 1961: 149; VanStone 1962: 93). The only power that one member has over the other results from the voluntary submission of the latter to the former, or else from the threat of withholding certain goods or services that one's partner has come to count on. The latter procedure is directly opposed to the ideals of partnership, and, although it might be effective for a brief period, it is almost certain to lead to the eventual dissolution of the relationship if maintained for long. Given the possibility of unilateral termination of the relationship, there are very narrow limits to which this sort of thing can go before one or the other partner decides to put an end to the association.

SENTIMENT

The trading partnership is institutionalized as one involving positive affect of relatively high intensity. Partners are supposed to be good friends in the sense understood by most twentieth century North Americans. In general, a partnership begins on a more or less neutral basis, with the intensity building up gradually over time. It is inevitable that the sentiment involved be of a positive nature, since due to the lack of structural reinforcement, as soon as it veers toward the negative pole, the relationship is likely to be terminated. The only exceptions to this rule seem to come in circumstances where one has a clear-cut, and otherwise insoluble, need for the services of a particular partner. Such a relationship has a highly individualistic orientation, however, and is likely to be terminated anyway as soon as the immediate crisis is past, or as soon as another source of supply presents itself. Situations of this sort are virtually nonexistent today, since the "needs" are no longer as crucial as they once were. They appear to have been uncommon in the traditional period as well, although they did occur from time to time.

As I noted previously, a partnership of some duration is likely to be an extremely satisfying association, for a number of reasons. In the first place, a good partner can make a major contribution toward reducing the insecurity of marginal subsistence. When times get hard, one can count on the help of his partner. Second, and more significant, a partnership provides one of the very few opportunities that an Eskimo has to associate with one whom he can treat as an equal. The overwhelming majority of his relatives have to be dealt with as either superiors or inferiors (Burch 1966: 289ff.), and, among the Eskimos, one has relatively little to do with nonrelatives. This situation was much more pronounced in traditional times than it is now. Third, a partnership is likely to be satisfying because it involves individuals who associate with one another because they *want* to, not because they are forced to. Again, since the partner relationship contrasts in this respect with most kin relationships (*Ibid.*), these conditions are relatively uncommon for an Eskimo. A fourth and final element in the sentiments of partnership is the feeling of gratitude for the assistance given by one's partner. I have never observed or heard about a partnership of any duration in which each member is not obviously grateful for things that his counterpart has done for him.

The sentiment involved in partnership is expressed in various ways. Perhaps the most effective way to indicate high regard for a partner is through a strong effort to live up to the ideals of the relationship. Good partners of long standing usually make a point of giving each other presents in addition to any standard ones that might be involved in their relationship. But it is important never to give too much, and the giving of "supplemental" gifts is something that gradually develops, in small increments, over the course of several years. It is also good form to make requests of a partner — at least if they are requests that he is capable of filling. The relationship is institutionalized as being of such a highly responsible nature that one can make one's partner happy by giving him the opportunity to help in some way. The simplest way of doing this is by asking for something that one *knows* the partner can give.

In addition to the above means, partners convey their feelings for one another by a lack of restraint in one another's presence that is unusual in Eskimo relationships. Contrary to

common opinion, the North Alaskan Eskimos are not the “happy, smiling people” that they are generally pictured to be. They often are with non-Eskimos, but not among themselves. In traditional times, when they were outside their own house, the men especially tried to be restrained, if not altogether forbidding in their demeanor. But with partners, they could be — and were expected to be — quite demonstrative, smiling, laughing, and talking in a loud voice (see Gubser 1965: 160, 161). Mild joking, too, was permissible between partners, although they were not supposed to carry it to the point of a true “joking relationship” as that term is generally understood by anthropologists.

Partnerships in which the giving is one-sided, non-existent, infrequent, and/or limited to relatively useless goods or services invite emotions that are at best neutral or ambivalent, and at worst strongly negative. Partnerships in which the giving is mutual, frequent, and helpful are the source of considerable pride and pleasure to the individuals who participate in them. Although it is nearly impossible to demonstrate such things definitively, I am becoming increasingly convinced that it is the quality of the sentiment with which partnerships are often imbued that enables them to withstand the formidable set of forces which operate to dissolve them.

STRENGTH

The strength of any relationship is the relative precedence, or lack of precedence, taken by a relationship over others of its general sort and over other obligations and commitments in the larger social sphere (Levy 1952: 350). Although it is difficult to measure such variables precisely, it appears as though in traditional times, the trading partnership was institutionalized as the strongest nonkin relationship in North Alaskan Eskimo society (see Spencer 1959: 248, 450). The relationship was weaker than every possible kinship tie, at least ideally. If the difficulties associated with maintaining an egalitarian relationship were one of the primary sources of internal trouble in partner relationships, it is this general weakness compared to kinship ties that constituted the primary source of complications from outside. Theoretically, one's obligations to *any* kinsman had to take precedence over those to a partner.

Fortunately for partners, it is (and was) uncommon for kinship and partnership obligations to conflict. It is to one's advantage not only to have good partners oneself, but to have relatives with good partners. This is the case, because within kinship circles everyone gets to share in the wealth to at least some degree. Partners are a primary source of supply of especially scarce goods; in a purely economic sense, "that is what partners are for." Consequently, one usually does anything he can to support the satisfactory partnership of a relative, from treating the relative's partner with the utmost courtesy to helping the relative keep his partner supplied with the required goods. When someone comes to town and his partner, for some reason, is away, the relatives will normally take over and treat the visitor like a king.

When conflicts arise, it is usually when the relative has an unsatisfactory partner. Relatives generally view partner relationships in a much more individualistic light than do the members themselves. They sometimes put pressure on a kinsman to breakoff a partnership which is costly but unproductive from their point of view. Due to the relative strength of the two types of relationships, it is difficult for one to resist this sort of pressure if it becomes heavy.

Rarely, a specific partner relationship will take precedence over particular kin relationships. Cases of this kind develop where the kin tie concerned is a relatively distant one genealogically, or else is an affinal one. In traditional times, opting in favor of a partner over a consanguineal kinsman was a very risky business since it could result in rejection by one's own relatives. Before the turn of the century, this usually meant disaster for the person involved. Nowadays it is not nearly so serious, but at least in the smaller villages, it could still cause a lot of trouble for anyone who tried it.

Of the relative precedence of all kin relationships, on the one hand, and the trading partnership on the other, there can be no doubt, at least as far as traditional ideals are concerned. The strength of the partnership compared to other non-kin relationships is not so clear-cut. I consider it second only to kin relationships primarily for the subjective reason that the present-day Eskimos talk about partnership associations much more frequently, and in much more emphatic terms than about any other native Eskimo relationship in the nonkin category. However, my research was carried out some sixty years or more

after the end of the traditional society as an operational system, and many of the formerly differentiated nonkin relationships are no longer in existence. Furthermore, the traditional nonkin relationships have been very poorly studied. I am beginning to suspect that there were more of them than is generally considered to have been the case. Consequently, my remarks about the strength of the trading partnership in traditional times should be regarded as more conjectural than most of the generalizations presented in this paper.

The same overall position of the trading partnership that was postulated above for the traditional period seems to obtain today — at least as far as native Eskimo relationships are concerned. However, there has been a significant weakening of kin relationships in general since traditional times, in addition to the weakening of the trading partnership. This change has been brought about primarily through the introduction and establishment of a number of nonkin, and also non-Eskimo obligations and commitments during the course of the past century. Chief among these, perhaps, are those to the State of Alaska and the Federal Government of the United States. Less obvious, but increasingly significant, are the obligations to village councils, employers and the like. It may be expected that as the Eskimos become increasingly dependent on store goods and cash incomes (either through welfare or employment or both), the position of the trading partnership in the general social system will continue to deteriorate. In terms of day-to-day activities, however, especially in the smaller villages, the trading partnership may retain much of its traditional position for some time to come.

DISCUSSION

Although this paper is presumably devoted to the phenomenon of reciprocity, the term “reciprocity” itself does not appear in the analysis. In order to properly conclude this installment in the “dialogue with ethnography” that Marshall Sahlins began, I must now return to the original concept.

Perhaps the most elementary matter that must be dealt with in the definition of concepts to be used in social analysis is whether reference is made to an organization (“membership unit” or “concrete structure”) or to an attribute (“analytic aspect” or “analytic structure”) of an organization, or to

something else altogether. When dealing with a topic as commonplace as the one under consideration here, the usual procedure is to determine the conventional definition of the central concept(s); in this case, "reciprocity." In the survey of the literature that formed part of the research for this paper, I found this fundamental issue consistently avoided.

Marshall Sahlins (1965), without defining the term anywhere in a ninety-seven page article on the subject, uses it primarily in the sense of "attribute." For example, he says (p. 149) that "reciprocity is inclined toward the generalized pole by close kinship, toward the negative extreme in proportion to kinship distance." However, he also uses the term in the sense of "organization," such as when he says (p. 145) that "a purely formal typology of reciprocities is possible . . ." On occasion, he combines the two meanings in a single sentence; thus (p. 144) "reciprocity . . . is a continuum of forms." Finally, Sahlins uses the term "reciprocity" to refer to specific events, as when he makes the following statement (p. 147): "generalized reciprocity refers to transactions that are putatively altruistic." Professor Sahlins is by no means unique in using this particular concept in importantly different ways. Confusion on this matter has vitiated the impact of a number of theoretical works on the subject, including most of those listed in the bibliography.

The problem remains. If "reciprocity" refers to an organization, then to what type of organization, and what are the attributes thereof? If "reciprocity" refers to an attribute, of what organization(s) is it characteristic? One common thread that runs through all writings on the subject is the notion of what might be called "two-wayness." But we already have a useful term to refer to a "two-way" organization, namely, "relationship structure." As defined by Levy (1952: 238), a relationship structure is "any social structure (or set of structures) that defines the actions, ideally and/or actually, that interrelate two or more individual actors." By default, then, it seems appropriate that "reciprocity" should refer to an aspect of an organization rather than to an organization itself. It seems to me that the greatest frequency of usage of "reciprocity" is, in fact, in precisely this sense.

Of what type of organization is reciprocity an attribute? If one holds to the notion of "two-wayness," then clearly it is an attribute of relationship structures. But of what significance is it

to say about a relationship structure that it is “reciprocal?” Given the above definition of relationship structure, and without qualification, such a remark would be a truism since “two-wayness” is the *defining* characteristic of this particular type of organization. If “reciprocity” is to mean anything at all, it must mean something more than mere “two-wayness,” it must tell us something about the *nature* of the “two-wayness.” I cannot help but feel that this is the basic point that Sahlins was trying to make.¹¹ To say that a relationship is reciprocal is to say nothing at all. To say that a relationship is highly responsible from the viewpoint of one member and highly individualistic from the viewpoint of the other may be to say a great deal.

So that distinctions could be made about the *nature* of the interaction between the members of a relationship, Sahlins (1965: 145 ff.) developed a so-called “scheme of reciprocities” in which he differentiates among “generalized,” “balanced,” and “negative” reciprocity. The first “type” consists of “transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given, and, if possible and necessary, assistance returned” (p. 147). In this “variety” of reciprocity, “the expectation of a direct material return is unseemly. At best it is “implicit” (*Ibid.*). “Balanced reciprocity,” on the other hand, “refers to direct exchange. In precise balance, the reciprocation is the customary equivalent of the thing received and is without delay” (p. 147-148). Whereas the “pragmatic indication of generalized reciprocity is a sustained one-way flow,” that of balanced reciprocity is “an inability to tolerate one-way flows” (*Ibid.*). Sahlins’ third and final type, termed “negative reciprocity,” is the “attempt to get something for nothing with impunity” (p. 148). It “ranges through various degrees of cunning, guile, stealth, and violence to the finesse of a well conducted horse raid” (p. 149).

How would one characterize the North Alaskan Eskimo trading partnership in terms of this scheme? Clearly it is not characterized by “negative reciprocity,” because it is a highly responsible relationship. The attempt to get “something for nothing” would be totally contrary to the ideals of partnership. Less obviously, it does not seem to be characterized by

11. Gouldner (1960: 164) preceded Sahlins when he suggested that reciprocity is “quantitatively variable.” See also Blau (1964: 26).

"generalized reciprocity" either, because one-way flow, at least if sustained, definitely introduces elements of instability into it. This leaves only one other possibility, which, as it turns out, is a reasonable one. Although returns do not have to be made immediately in a partnership, there are limits on how much time can elapse before they are made, at least if the relationship is to remain stable. Furthermore, the exchanges made in terms of a partnership are expected to be of equal value, and that is the decisive issue. In sum, the North Alaskan Eskimo trading partnership is an organization characterized by "balanced reciprocity" in Sahlin's terms; for most writers, it is characterized by "reciprocity" pure and simple.

But what does it mean to say that a relationship is characterized by "balanced reciprocity?" Viewed in the context of relationship analysis, "balanced reciprocity" means merely that the relationship is the same from the viewpoints of both members, or in Sahlin's (p. 142) terms, of both "sides" of the relationship. For example, if the goods and/or services produced by one member are equal in value to those produced by the other, then the relationship is balanced; if they are not, it is unbalanced. From this perspective, it may be less confusing to talk about a "balanced relationship" rather than a relationship characterized by "balanced reciprocity."

But there is more to any relationship than the allocation of goods and services. What about political allocation, for example? Some allocation of power and responsibility characterizes every relationship just as surely as does an allocation of goods and services. Or, what about sentiment? Given the likelihood that no relationship is totally devoid of emotional considerations (Levy 1966: 145), sentiment too is involved in every relationship. In the case of the Eskimo trading partnership, although economic and political considerations do cover much of what is important, any analysis that ignores sentiment cannot account for the activities carried out in terms of partnerships of more than a few years' duration. And, if these additional attributes, just to name a few of the possibilities, characterize *every* relationship just as surely as does economic allocation, then presumably they too may be in or out of balance in the sense of that term suggested above. To say that a relationship is characterized by "balanced reciprocity" is to make a summary statement about a large

number of its other attributes. If that is the case, then the end of an antanalysis is the only correct place to talk about it.

The foregoing considerations suggest three conclusions. First, they indicate that the primary issue confronting the analysis of “reciprocity” is not whether it is “generalized,” “balanced,” or “negative,” but whether it is balanced or unbalanced — for whatever reason, and in whatever respects. Given this revision of Sahlins’ scheme, his “generalized” and “negative” categories become sub-classes of “unbalanced reciprocity” as determined on the basis of goal orientation. I am sure that at least part of my own interest in the North Alaskan Eskimo trading partnership was stimulated by the striking “balance of flow” which characterized every example of a stable partnership that came to my attention. I strongly suspect that similar motives have led to much of the fascination that “reciprocity” in its traditional sense (i.e., “balanced” only) has had for many anthropological theorists (e.g., Malinowski 1926: 25, 26).

The second conclusion suggested by the above considerations is that a major question concerns the extent to which a relationship can be balanced in terms of one characteristic but unbalanced in terms of another. For example, can a relationship be balanced economically but not politically and still be viable? Theoretical considerations (Levy 1952: 490 ff.) suggest that it cannot, and the empirical case of the trading partnership supports this conclusion. It is almost impossible for one to increase his power over a partner without withholding some particularly scarce good; yet the withholding itself introduces an economic imbalance which radically alters the nature of the relationship.

These considerations indicate that a whole series of further questions could be — and should be — posed regarding the nature and limits of co-variation in the analytic attributes of relationship structures. This, it seems to me, is the basic theoretical question posed by Sahlins’ restatement of what is interesting about “reciprocity.” For example, can a relationship continue to persist if it involves equal power and responsibility on the part of both members (political balance), but is responsible from the viewpoint of one member and individualistic from the viewpoint of another (goal orientation imbalance). I doubt it, for the individualistic orientation of the one would surely lead him to seek to increase his power over

the other so as to attain the desired objectives. Or, can a relationship take equal precedence from the viewpoints of both members (balance of strength) yet be imbued with intense negative affect by one member and intense positive affect by the other (imbalance of sentiment)? Again, it seems unlikely, for the emotional imbalance would almost surely destroy the strength of the relationship, at least from the viewpoint of the member who regarded it with negative emotions.

To answer questions like those just mentioned in any definitive sense is beyond the scope of this paper; to pose them is to make my own plea to ethnography and to theory to pursue them further. The empirical case of the North Alaskan Eskimo trading partnership suggests the tentative answer that, in the sense of "balance" being used here, a relationship cannot, in fact, be balanced in terms of *any one* attribute and be unbalanced in terms of any of the others. If this is true, then relationships characterized by balanced reciprocity must be very fragile affairs. All factors must be lined up precisely all of the time if the relationship is to retain its balance. With respect to the trading partnership, the North Alaskan Eskimos seem to be quite aware of this. They make every effort to create partnerships that are balanced at the outset, and they work hard to make sure that they stay that way. If they become unbalanced in any respect at any time, they are usually terminated in short order. I suspect that in these respects, the trading partnership is representative of all relationships characterized by this particular attribute. Cases of balance which last for any length of time must be uncommon in human affairs.

The third and final conclusion is that the economic aspect of a relationship, so often the heart and soul of discussions of reciprocity, is only one of several attributes that should be dealt with under the heading of "reciprocity." It is time that anthropologists cease thinking about reciprocity in primarily economic terms. In a sense, this is the conclusion reached by Sahlins (1965: 225, n.3) on this point, but he did not go nearly far enough. He raised the issue in a paper on economics, and he focused his attention on the economic aspect of relationships to such an extent that all the other characteristics of the very same relationships ended up being "exogenous factors." Students of the subject seem to be fascinated by "exchanges" and "transactions" to a point that frequently verges on economic

determinism.¹² Even when dealing with a relatively specialized, primarily economically oriented relationship such as the North Alaskan Eskimo trading partnership, economic considerations must be supplemented by others in the analysis if the relevant behavior is to be understood. With respect to unspecialized relationships, for the analyst to focus attention on economic factors at the expense of all others means leaving out the most interesting part of the story.

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12. Homans (1958: 606) goes so far as to state that "social behavior is an exchange of goods . . ." (italics mine).

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