

PARTNERSHIP AND WIFE-EXCHANGE AMONG THE ESKIMO AND ALEUT OF NORTHERN NORTH AMERICA*

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This article is a comparative study. It examines certain aspects of the social organization of Eskimo and Aleut groups in North America. It focusses its attention upon institutionalized associations contracted between two or more males. The associations are periodically celebrated by the exchange of gifts; wives are the most valuable gifts exchanged.

The first section of the paper is devoted to a description of the associations. The second portion consists of an analysis of the data. Section three stresses the need for further ethnographic investigation of the phenomena.

Description

The following customs have been noted among the Caribou Eskimo. "When a stranger arrives at a camp it is impolite to drive right up to it.

"In time the stranger is invited into a snow house or a tent, where he is a guest during his stay. Sometimes there is a drum dance in the evening in honor of the new arrival and if the stranger and one of the camp are 'song cousins' there is a distribution of presents (Birket-Smith, 1929, p. 267). Birket-Smith was present in person on one such occasion. He observed that "One day at Eskimo Point a man, Tuktuisuq, who was a 'song cousin' to one of the inhabitants of the place, Nanuik, arrived from the south. At the feast of welcome, which was held in the evening in one of the big deer-skin tents, the door was opened by one of the settlement's own inhabitants". The visitor "... was given a rifle as a present. ..." (*Ibid*, p. 160) The next evening the guest, Tuktuisuq, gave his host a gift. Both gifts represented considerable value.

Among the Copper Eskimo visiting between camps was facilitated in the following manner. "Strangers who come and attach themselves to the group try to connect themselves by marriage, or by establishing definite ties with individual members. Even temporary visitors do the same. When Koksuiik, the Pallick Eskimo from Hudson Bay, paid a three day's

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visit to the Dolphin and Union Strait Eskimos, their foremost man Ikpakuak made him his 'dancing-associate', *Numikattia*. In this way a permanent tie was established between the two men, to last till one of them died or a violent quarrel caused their estrangement. "It is by these two methods, then, by wife exchange and by association in dancing that the Copper Eskimo establishes friendships wherever he goes and travels from group to group without danger" (*Ibid*, pp. 86-87).

Stefansson noted that among the Komallik Eskimo "... wives are exchanged but for seldom more than one night at a time, and seldom except upon the two families meeting after a protracted separation. After another separation this may be repeated. This practice seems to be seldom indulged in except by close friends, partners, sort of blood brothers" (Stefansson, 1914, p. 164).

Among the Eskimo around Bering Strait, "It is a common custom for two men living in different villages to agree to become bond-fellows or brothers by adoption. Having made this arrangement, whenever one of the two men goes to the other's village he is received as the bond brother's guest and is given the use of his host's bed with his wife during his stay. When the visit is returned the same favor is extended the other, consequently neither family knows who is the father of the children ... but the children know each other by a special term and the two men also separate out their relationship and mark it with a unique term" (Nelson, 1896-97, p. 292).

Nelson reported also on a ceremony which he called the Asking Festival. In this rite the entire population of an encampment participated. One of the populace was delegated to hold in his hand a wooden wand-like stick. The wand symbolized his exalted station during the proceedings. Each of the other participants in the rite requested the wand-holder to secure for him an object or favor from some person of the opposite sex. The petitioner specified which individual was to provide the gift. When the petitioner specified an unmarried woman, it was customary to ask her to spend the night hours with him. As were all other requests, this one was granted. Whatever was the nature of the favor or present exchanged between the pair, all persons ... "exchanging presents in this way are considered to hold a certain temporary relationship, termed *i-lo-g'uk*. Formerly those once made *i-lo-g'uk* exchanged presents each succeeding year at this festival. ..." (*Ibid*, p. 360) Similar to the Asking Festival of the Bering Straits people was the Sayak ritual exchange among the Chukotsky (Siberia) Eskimo (Hughes, 1959, p. 82).

Also similar to the Asking Festival was a ceremony observed on the west coast of Hudson Bay. Boas wrote that each time that an *angakok* performed an incantation "... the people must exchange wives. The women must spend the night in the huts of the men to whom they are

assigned" (Boas, 1901, p. 158). Similar to the ceremony which Boas described is the *kaezivae* ceremony on St. Lawrence Island (Hughes, 1960, p. 268) of which more shall be said later.

In an ethnography of the Greenlanders the observer took pains to distinguish between an exchange of wives which recurred between the same two associates and another form of wife-exchange. According to Thalbitzer "Distinction must be drawn between the exchange of wives which took place when the lamps were put out during a cultic festival and lasted for only one night, and that which was the result of an arrangement between two men with a view to the procreation of children, or because of mutual attraction, which continued for a longer period. According to the usual conception of the Ammassalik Eskimo only the latter sort of exchange influenced procreation, while a single copulation was not supposed to bear fruit."

"The child which is procreated after the longer exchange is mentioned by both the men as their 'half-and-half child', no matter which of them it most resembles, and they refer to themselves by an expression which means 'half-cousins' (*awiliareen*) and might also be translated as 'partners', 'fellows who share half-and-half' (*Ibid*, pp. 653-654). Birket-Smith, also, commented that an existential distinction was observed between the two forms of wife-exchange among the Greenlanders (Birket-Smith, 1959, p. 140).

Hawkes, an early observer of the Labrador Eskimo, reported that wife-exchange among this people was institutionalized. He interpreted the custom somewhat differently from most other students of the Eskimo way of life, a point which we shall take up in the next section of the article.

We now turn our attention to the west coast and to its off-shore islands. Shade, who spent a brief period with the Aleut on Unmak Island, provided some evidence that an institutionalized form of partnership existed in the village of Nikolski. He commented that "Another relationship which I never got the meaning of was *ungitkuqing*. This is a verb form which means 'I depend on'. The relationship itself is called *ungitakun*. I do not know what part of speech this is. Afenogin told me that he 'depended on' Fred, in that Fred would always be there to help him in his old age, and that he would always assist Fred when he could. This seems to be some kind of mutual arrangement with special significance. . . ." (Shade, n.d., p. 68 [3]).

The intriguing but isolated bit of information about the Aleutian *ungitakun* relation brings to mind a similar relationship found on the islands of Nunivak and St. Lawrence. Margaret Lantis wrote about Nunivak: "If two men were serious partners . . . then all of their children were partners to each other also, regardless of age and sex differences. Fortunately only the children of the males in these partnerships would

have to continue them [the partnerships], otherwise the number of one's partners would become a burden rather than the aid they were supposed to be. Apparently the relationship arose in the first place by two men agreeing to help each other. . . ." Indeed, when a man visited a village in which lived his partner the former ". . . was given food, physical and moral assistance, the use of implements, the use of a wife if he needed any of these" (Lantis, 1946, p. 243).

Hughes described the ceremony known as *kaezivas*, previously mentioned, by which special associations were inaugurated. "On St. Lawrence Island, in apparent contrast to many other Eskimo groups, this wife-exchange pattern was always formally through a special ceremony which involved various aspects of the religious system. This ceremony, called the *kaezivas*, implicated the closest kinsmen (and their wives) of each *nangsegaek* partner [a man with whom one exchanged wives], and the various sections of the total rite extended over a period of several days. Prominent in it were dancing between the men and the women guests, and in the inner sleeping room where the dances were held, these couples circled a seal-oil lamp. The men of one *ramka* [patrilineage] danced in this fashion with the women of the *nangsaegaek* partner's *ramka*. At some points during the ceremony, every woman exchanged a platter of food or other gifts with the woman who had danced with her husband. On the last day of the ceremony all the men and women who had danced together had sexual relations with each other. With the ending of the ceremony the special relationship between the two main principals was sealed and, unless changed for some reason, held during their lifetimes."

"There is some indication that a special sibling type of relationship prevailed between the male children of the two *nangsaegaek*, as well as the expectation that they, too, would someday establish such a relationship with each other" (Hughes, 1960, pp. 267-269).

Similar to the *nangsaegaek* relationship found on St. Lawrence Island but lacking its elaborate ceremonial inauguration was the *anutswkatiigiit* association in the Point Barrow area. Men who regularly exchanged wives were *anutswkatiigiit*. The children of such partners were *qatanuutigiit*. Spencer described the very close relationship between wife-exchange, the *qatanuutigiit* relationship, and an economic interdependency between the husbands of the two women. "Between partners, especially those of long standing and proven friendship, there could be wife exchange on a temporary basis. This was also true of 'friends', often as between [*sic*] those who had established a joking relationship. Hospitality might involve wife lending, since such hospitality would be extended in any case only to individuals occupying a special status in relation to a host. Wife exchange on a temporary basis took place only between men who occupied a status of formally defined friendship or partnership. Aside from partners and joking partners, there was no institutionalized friendship. Informal good

relations, however, as between men in a whaling crew, in the same *karigi*, might call wife exchanges into being. Men who exchanged wives were *anutaw kattigiit*. The two men involved agreed to exchange their wives and did not consult the women involved" (Spencer, 1959, pp. 83-84). However, "it would be erroneous to assume that the sexual freedom inherent in the cultures of the area was wholly random and uncontrolled. Sexual relations carried with them a degree of responsibility and served to create a series of reciprocal obligations not only between the principals concerned but also between the kin of those involved. A child was told that when he went to some other place where there were no kin, he should seek out such and such a person who would aid him. 'He is your *qatanun*.' An individual could, in traveling, always seek out the children of his father's partners, assuming that in the partnership wives had been exchanged, and demand of them assistance and support. It was freely given. It is worth mentioning that here was a basis for forming new partnerships and it is in this respect that partnerships tended to follow along family lines, the two families involved retaining the relationship" (*Ibid*, p. 86).

Finally, "As a result of the development of this relationship it became necessary to recall the former sexual partners, to keep the tie with them alive, and to inform one's children of their whereabouts. The result was a quasi-kinship. While the family loyalties came first, it nevertheless followed that one attempted to give assistance to one's *qatanuutigiit* whenever possible. It was an important relationship in other ways, as, for example, in terminating a blood feud. If a sexual arrangement could be worked out between a man and woman in the two feuding factions, the respective children then became *qatanuutigiit* to each other and the new existing cooperative relationship forbade further bloodshed" (*Ibid*, pp. 86-87).

Ethnographers among the North Alaskan and Netsilik Eskimo groups discovered the existence of special associations in which especially permissive behavior was prescribed. The association was characterized by raillery and joking by each of the dyads at the expense of the other. In and around Point Barrow this association formally excluded kin relations. Those who railed at one another also esteemed each other. Of this seeming paradox Spencer assures us. Often, between the associates, wife-exchange occurred which further cemented the tie between the two men in the association. The children of the principals were to one another *qatanun*. *Qatanun* held one another in mutual esteem and were expected to cooperate with each other more so than with others who were not bound in either such a relationship or in one of close kinship. The similarity between the joking relationship institutionalized among the North Alaskan Eskimo and that of the 'song-fellows' among the Netsilik (*supra*, p. 3) is striking.

Before bringing to a close the descriptive portion of this article we wish to report on another form of wife-exchange unique in several particu-

lars. In the first place its distribution seemed to be restricted to Greenland. In the second place it seemed to be unassociated with the exchange of gifts or favors other than that of the sexual gratification of the principals. Lastly, the norms of wife-exchange seemed to be devoid of intimation that more close social relationships were cemented by the exchange of favors. Instead of the latter consequence, the women appeared to go indiscriminately to whomever happened to be present in a settlement at the time the ceremony took place. Birket-Smith has commented that "If a catastrophe is imminent there is a general exchange of wives in the settlement, presumably in the belief that by this means one, so to speak, changes one's identity and thus misleads the evil powers" (Birket-Smith, 1959, p. 140). Unfortunately Birket-Smith did not specify as to where such a haphazard distribution of favors was found to exist and, with the exception of the following report, the present author could find nothing similar.

The exception to the above generalization is an exclusively Greenland phenomenon. Thalbitzer, who reported extensively on the Greenlanders of Ammassalik, described the ceremony known popularly as "putting out the lamp". Thalbitzer found this ceremony to include "... indiscriminate mating ... which took place regularly once or twice in the winter". He cited the diary of Hanserak, a Greenland catechist, which noted that the exchange of wives during the time of putting out the lamps "took place about the New Year when guests arrived at the hut" (Thalbitzer, 1941, p. 667).

Descriptive accounts by ethnographers have been presented. These have included descriptions of patterns of behavior: institutionalized associations between two males, and the exchange of gifts inclusive of wives. We have demonstrated that with the exception of the Greenlanders the exchange of wives is not indiscriminate. Wives are most generally exchanged in recurrent fashion between two men. Furthermore the evidence indicated that generally speaking the women exchanged did not participate in a decision as to whether or not they will be lent. In some instances, as we have noted, a man will have formed a special relation with more than one other man. Naturally, his wife will then be exchanged for the wives of those men with whom her husband is bound by the institutionalized association (*vide*, Hughes, 1960, p. 267).

Several authors have offered hypotheses in explanation of the custom of the inauguration of formal associations, and the custom of exchanging wives, found among the Eskimo and Aleut groups of Northern North America.

Hawkes, on the basis of material from Labrador, interpreted the custom of wife-exchange differently from most other students of the cultures of northern North America. He felt that the wife-exchange custom functioned to make available to a man a particular technological ability not

possessed by his own wife, but possessed by the wife of another (Hawkes, 1916, p. 116). For example, if one Labrador man wished to pass a season fishing for salmon, and another Eskimo wished to spend the season hunting game, but the wife of the former was more adept at cleaning hides than in the preparation of fish, then the fish specialist would spend the season with the fisherman, and the other woman with the hunter. Hughes, it would seem, was in partial agreement with such an analysis (Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 267). Spencer went to some lengths to dispute such an interpretation. Since he made no reference to the writings of either Hawkes or Hughes we assume that the explanation had wide currency (Spencer, *op. cit.*, p. 84).

Birket-Smith interpreted the generalized exchange of wives as a means by which the individuals sought to mislead the "evil powers" in the face of an imminent catastrophe (Birket-Smith, *op. cit.*). On that very same page Birket-Smith proffered an explanation of the other and more widespread custom whereby wives were regularly exchanged between two individuals. He wrote: "Furthermore, it is everywhere a common custom to exchange wives for a long or short period, and the husbands in these cases are so far from being jealous of one another that the exchange of wives is, on the contrary, considered to be one of the most effective means of emphasizing and strengthening a friendship. The conferring of sexual rights is an important social mechanism to create and cement a co-operative bond" (*Ibid.*).

It was Spencer's contention that wife-exchange was for purposes of cementing an already established trading relationship between two men among the Eskimo of North Alaska. It was *not* for purposes of providing one or both men a temporary helpmate in order that he might meet a specialized technological need. He wrote: "Sexual trading, wife-lending, or wife exchange, was called *simmixuat*. The point that it was a sexual matter and not an economic one should be emphasized. It has been said that such exchange might arise of work specialization which each woman commanded. This does not seem to be the case, since in the co-operative situation of community living, work was freely exchanged without reference to sexual privilege" (Spencer, *op. cit.*). The present author finds Spencer's argument cogent and, for reasons to be discussed below, he is sympathetic with the functional explanation advanced by Birket-Smith.

But, Spencer confined to the North Alaskan Eskimo his explanation of the association between institutionalized forms of partnership between two men and the exchange of their wives. On the other hand Birket-Smith generalized to the entire Eskimo area the need for a firmament between two interdependent males as an independent variable, the exchange of wives a dependent variable. Unlike Spencer, Birket-Smith did not suggest that wife-exchange was particularly important between two males unrelated by kinship. The present author finds himself in dis-

agreement with Birket-Smith's first conclusion. We agree that wife-exchange is, indeed, widely distributed throughout the Eskimo culture area, and we suggest further that it might be extended to some Aleut groups. Next, we seek a reason why wife-exchange should be so widely distributed in the Eskimo region, and why it should so often be found to occur between males unrelated by consanguineal bonds.

After perusal of the ethnographic literature on the Eskimo and Aleut it is our finding that in many Eskimo groups men will depend most often and with most intensity upon members of their close kin groups. This finding, we submit, is generalizable to some of the off-shore Aleut societies (*vide*, Berreman, 1953, pp. 236-253; Shade, *op. cit.*, *et. passim*). We take note that the members of St. Lawrence society channelize their dependencies toward the patrilineal kin groups (Hughes, 1958, 1960, *et passim*). In that regard the St. Lawrence Islanders differ from other Eskimo groups in which aid is most often sought from kindred. Ours is not the intention to discuss the social structural or social organizational differences to be discovered between the villagers of St. Lawrence Island and other Eskimo communities. We contend that the differences do little violence to the generalization that in any Eskimo group men will depend most often and most closely upon members of their close kin groups. Among the St. Lawrence Eskimo the ascribed kin group to whom the individual appeals for aid is simply more confined than are the kin resources of the bilaterally organized groups.

We surmise from Hughes' account of the whale-hunters of St. Lawrence Island that although those Eskimos ideally expect most aid and support to come from persons related to them patrilineally, the fact of the matter is that in many instances the membership of the patriline is unable to supply the required assistance. (Hughes, 1960, pp. 254-256). We presume that just as the patrilineage of the St. Lawrence Eskimo fails to supply all of the aid necessary for an individual to successfully pursue his livelihood, so the kindred of bilaterally organized Eskimo groups will fail to provide the quantity or kinds of assistance needed by an individual at various times in his life. We find support for this contention in Spencer. He found that the stability of life among the North Alaskan Eskimos depended upon the opportunities offered the individual to widen the scale of his social relations so as to include non related individuals (Spencer, *op. cit.*, pp. 442-443). In consideration of the inter-dependency between members of the close kin group among Eskimo and in light of the fact that the kin group provides not enough support or not the kind of specialized assistance called for, the following hypothesis is advanced. Among Eskimo groups the more vital the need for a continuous interdependent relationship between two men, and the less important their consanguineal relationship, the more likely it is that the principals will establish an association which is regularly celebrated by the exchange of gifts, inclusive of wives. If this plausible hypothesis is valid we should expect wife-exchange

to occur between members of different patrilineages (ramka) in the St. Lawrence Island society and between residents of different communities among other Eskimos.

It is no accident that the locus of wife-exchanges among the St. Lawrence Eskimos occurs precisely between members of distinct ramkas (Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-269). Hughes described the parties between whom the *nangsaegaek* relationship was inaugurated. It *never* obtained "... between real brothers or clansmen (recall the avoidance behavior between a man and his brother's wife). It was characteristically a relationship existing between two men of different ramka, and any single individual might have two or more nangsaegaek partners concurrently. Behavior between the two partners, aside from the sexual communism, was modeled after that between brothers, with considerable emphasis on sharing goods and giving unstinted help". Hughes then offered the following explanation for these phenomena. "Such a relationship would seem to be functionally effective in allaying somewhat the deep-rooted antagonisms and conflict between the different ramka which were so easily aroused in the normal course of social life. The nangsaegaek loyalties and bonds of sentiment linking two men of different ramka would tend to dampen, along with the ties an individual might have through his idiosyncratic kindred relationships, what might otherwise be an unchecked ramka solidarity".

In summary form, Hughes advanced a functional explanation as to why the St. Lawrence Eskimos formed the nangsaegaek relationship and why the parties were always of different ramka. The two social customs, i.e., formation of the association and the exchange of wives between the associates, never occurred between real siblings or members of the same patri-clan. Hughes advanced two reasons. Two siblings never formed the nangsaegaek association (which would entail an exchange of their wives) because of the customary avoidance behavior between a man and his brother's wife. The second was of the nature of a final cause explanation. The nangsaegaek relationship and its consequence, the exchange of wives between the principals, was better for the society if it took place between persons in different ramka than if it occurred between members of the same ramka because it widened the scale of sentiments an individual held to the group.

We now address ourselves to the first of Hughes' explanations. Although the latter, did point out the cultural requirements among the St. Lawrence villagers that a man should avoid the wife of his brother, we can find no proscription of the attentions of a man to a woman of his ramka. In fact, "No particular rule of clan endogamy or exogamy prevailed, and a spouse might come from any patriclan" (Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 276)

We refer now to the second of the explanations advanced by Hughes and we offer an alternative. He argued that the reason why nangsaegaek

associations were always established between ramka was because it was better for the society at large. The reasoning on which our alternative rests derives from the comparative study of the circumstances which surround the association and similar kinds of associations found to recur in northern North America.

We submit that the more close the consanguineal bonds between two men, the less likely they will exchange wives. Note that although our alternative parallels the explanation proffered by Hughes it rests upon entirely different reasoning. The latter is of a mind that a man does not exchange wives with a real or clan sibling because those women are to him in an avoidance class of relationship. Consequently men are required to seek extra-marital sexual gratification in other ramkas for, according to Hughes, such gratification is the underlying motivation for the nangsaegaek. We, in our search for a more general explanation of the phenomena, find it difficult to reconcile Hughes' inference with the widespread prevalence of fraternal polyandry in this culture area (*cf.* Birket-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 139). It is our contention that men related by close bonds of kinship tend not to exchange their wives because they feel little need to do so. We submit that a close blood relationship between two men is firmament enough to sustain a dyadic relationship characterized by mutual rights and obligations. We expect that in the absence of such close bonds two mutually interdependent males will establish an association which they will celebrate by the recurrent exchange of gifts, inclusive of wives.

Hughes' explication of the nangsaegaek is plausible. Ours is equally plausible; it has additional advantages. It explains far more about St. Lawrence society. Furthermore, it permits a parsimonious hypothesis to explain a phenomenon found widely distributed in Eskimo and Aleut societies of northern North America.

We refer now to the first of the additional advantages our explication possesses. Why do cross- but not parallel-cousins participate in the *magalook* or *iveiyak* ceremony on St. Lawrence Island? This is a "... relatively nonreligious ceremony ... which also implicates the clansmen of the participants. The *magalook* or *eveyak* ceremony was held between the *ilowaek* [cross] cousins and their clan kinsmen. The major feature involved a ceremonial exchange of gifts which began in a song contest between two principals. One *ilowaek* would sing a song asking his cousin for certain gifts of a valuable nature. The cousin would respond with a song, similarly artistic and creative, in which he would also ask for gifts. Then there occurred a symbolic warfare between the clansmen of the two principals, who performed a ritual dance with lances and simulated the wounding of opponents. After this, the gifts including platters of meat, were exchanged by the wives of the two male *ilowaek*, the principals of the ceremony" (Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 265). Although Hughes elected to emphasize the

hostility (real or simulated) between the cross-cousins and their clansmen, he also took note that the same persons were most important to one another as sources of assistance (*Ibid*, p. 244). In the light of material from other parts of northern North America the present author finds it more illuminating to emphasize the warm and cooperative nature of that relationship. The field data indicate that both antagonism and co-operation are present in the cross-cousin relationship. Hughes has emphasized one aspect of that bond; we chose another.

The fact that celebrants are related to one another through cross- but not parallel-cousins, may be understood by the principle which illuminated the exchange of gifts which customarily took place in this as well as other societies of northern North America. The more vital the need for a continuous interdependent relationship between two men, and the less close the bonds of kinship, the more likely such men will establish an association celebrated by the exchange of gifts, inclusive of wives. Our single hypothesis explains why the nangsaegaek relationship occurs only between ramkas, why it never occurs between real brothers or clansmen, and why the participants in the magalook ceremony are related through cross- but not parallel-cousins.

It is the contention of this article that the institutionalized associations found to recur in the Eskimo and Aleut sectors of northern North America are most economically understood as customs whereby an individual expands the scale of his social relations in order to ensure sources of economic and social assistance other than kin. Those associations provide the Eskimo and Aleut a means to achieve a flexibility in the choice of associates that ascribed kinship bonds do not and cannot provide. Such types of bonds are often made more firm by the exchange of a scarce and valuable commodity: sexual gratification.

Future Research Possibilities

In the contemporary world the peoples of northern North America are beset by changes inaugurated by forces beyond their control. Some of the causes of those changes may be attributed to the removal of Eskimo groups from their traditional locations to heterogeneous urban settlements. Oswalt and Van Stone provide a case in point (Oswalt and Van Stone, 1960, pp. 154-177).

Our ethnographic data and its analysis lead us to expect that all other things remaining equal the individual Eskimo of the new urban settlements will seek to adapt to the novel social environment by engagement of his neighbor in a type of association described in the first portion of this paper. Empirical support for such an expectation comes from the recently congregated villagers of Kaktovik, in Alaska. "At Kaktovik, 15 of the 18 households are bound together by kin ties of either a primary or secondary sort.

The Eskimo practice of extending kinship privileges to nonkin by means of formal partnerships has effectively integrated the three other household units as well" (Chance, 1960, p. 1033).

Settlements to which Eskimos have been removed by the Canadian and United States authorities are pluralistic societies composed of Eskimos and whites. In such heterogeneous settlements the value systems of the whites tend to subordinate the value system of the Eskimos. In one such pluralistic society it was noted that "Ethnocentrism is developed strongly in the Eurocanadian group. Here attitudes of cultural superiority are frequently expressed along with strong criticism of native ways" (Honigsmann, 1952, p. 520). More sweeping are Balickci's comments. "The superior cultural and social position of the Euro-Canadians in the global local society is easily discernible and admitted by both groups" (Balickci, 1960-61, p. 171). If that is the case, and we find no reason to dispute the generalization, we should expect the early disappearance of the custom in which wives are exchanged between associates in the new urban settlements of the north. Paradoxically, it has been our contention that the regular exchange of wives and other valuables between mutually dependent males who are not close kin is precisely the firmament of the only association by which Eskimos traditionally expand the scale of their social relations.

Research among the Eskimo and Aleut societies is desperately needed in order to save for anthropology data which will be irretrievably lost within the very near future. The Eskimo and Aleut cultures have already undergone considerable change and they are continuing to disintegrate at a rapid rate. There still remains time to garner ethnographic data on the extant remnants of the ways of life of those groups.

There is a vast literature on the Eskimo and Aleut peoples, with ethnographic coverage of the former particularly good. But while certain aspects of those ways of life have been more than adequately described, e.g., oral literature, other facets of those cultures have been only touched upon. One facet which, regrettably, has been little explored is the sector of social organization which subsumes the two institutions to which this paper has addressed its attention. Now, before it is too late is the time for intensive investigation of the social organization of the Eskimo and Aleut societies. If not embarked upon quickly the opportunity for such studies will be impossible forever.

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