

42. Aboriginal Whaling and Identity in the Twenty-First Century

16286 - The Visual narratives and the depiction of whaling in north European prehistory over the long dure

Presentation type: Oral presentation

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The tradition of whaling can be traced far back into the ancient history of early societies in northern Europe, even though most of the communities involved in whaling are long disappeared. The heritage of these societies, however, is not forgotten and can be seen in the images carved into rock surfaces thousands of years ago. This presentation introduces some exceptional examples of this rock art featuring whaling from the estuary of the River Vig, which flows into the White Sea in northern Russia.

These carvings were made between about 5,500 and 3,000 years ago. This rock art has been the focus of a major international research project over the past decade, lead by the University of Cambridge. Our research has examined how the visual narratives of whaling changed over time, and raises questions about techniques of whaling, who participated in the act of whale hunting, and the nature of the stories being told, pecked into the rock surfaces by prehistoric carvers. The paper presents an analysis of a series of individual compositions that demonstrate the form of communication between the carver and the viewer, a form of communication which we can understand as a series of as intentional acts that can still be deciphered today, and that give us a glimpse into the ancient past.

16164 - A Life Bound Up with Whales

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Sheehan, Glenn (Independent Scholar, Barrow, AK, USA)*

Subsistence extremes of hunting-gathering societies include some gatherers who do not hunt or fish. Bowhead whaling groups are on the other extreme. Their subsistence activities rely almost completely on hunted animals, including almost any creature in the Arctic that moves.

Extreme northern groups sometimes eat clams, but only if a storm moves the clams to the beach and shucks them along the way. Folks eat berries if they travel far enough south or if someone brings some to them, and they might eat the greens in the stomach of a caribou. When a bowhead whale gives itself to hunters, allowing them to successfully harpoon and harvest it, they have an animal that, when mature, weighs in at a ton per linear foot.

Hunted creatures also have provided most of the materiel needed for a successful life. Fishing nets made from bowhead whale baleen could freeze immediately upon being drawn up, but a simple shake was enough to clear them of ice. Bones from whales were construction materials for houses and ceremonial centers. Caribou skins yielded clothing and bedding, antlers provided tools, sinew provided thread. Bird bones protected ivory needles and arrows were fletched with feathers. Walrus and bearded sealskins were made into boat covers.

Whales, when combined with the food value of all other hunted creatures, provided a stable, high value subsistence base for over a millenium. For most of that time, whalers were isolated from direct contact with any radically different groups. Indians they traded with shared many of their material cultural traits. Seemingly minor technological changes (drag floats, toggling harpoon heads) led to a predictable whale harvest.

Predictability led to a changed social organization. No one whaling crew could dependably bring in a whale every season, but the more crews hunting, the greater the chance that one or more would be successful, and that a whale originally struck by a different crew would still be caught by a crew further along the migratory path.

Predictability was an impetus for reorganizing annual rounds. Readyng hunting gear and getting crews in place for the migration limited other hunting options, as did the pull of the cached harvest itself.

Growing village populations near points of land further concentrated people. Close living for extended periods, and the need to successfully trade with other groups after a poor harvest strengthened social organization. The older seasonal hunt leader position extended to the community at large. Shamanistic rituals were elaborated and taken on by hunt leaders. The cultural focus on whaling became central, still seen in northern Alaska today.

This paper reviews prehistoric and recent evidence for continuity in social structure, division of labor, obligations to others, especially to share food, trade, warfare (that's politics today), and representation of links to the bowhead whale, from ancient structures to modern art.

16104 - Was Nuu-chah-nulth Whaling on Canada's West Coast Optimal Foraging, Costly Signaling or Both?

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Monks, Gregory (University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada / Kanada)*

Aboriginal whaling by the Nuu-chah-nulth (formerly known as the Nootka) of Canada's west coast has been described as a chiefly activity practiced mainly for the attainment and maintenance of prestige. Whaling appears to have been practiced for about 2,500 years or longer, and it is ethnographically documented to have existed within a social and cultural context of hereditary rights and privileges. This paper examines Nuu-chah-nulth whaling using two conceptual frameworks within human behavioural ecology, optimal foraging theory (OFT) and costly signaling theory (CST). While it may seem that the application of one approach necessarily precludes the application of the other, this paper shows that each is applicable to different domains within pre-contact Nuu-chah-nulth culture. It is argued, in conclusion, that both frameworks can be applied beneficially to the Nuu-chah-nulth case and that an enhanced, multifaceted understanding of this distinctive practice is thereby obtained.

16063 - Prehistoric and Early Historic Whaling

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Savelle, James (McGill University, Montreal, Canada / Kanada)*

Whaling (including dolphin/porpoise hunting) has had a long history, dating back to at least 6,000, or possibly as early as 8,000, years before present. Further, whaling appears to have developed independently in, at least, Indonesia, South Korea, Japan, Bering Strait, California, and Scandinavia/Northeast Russia. This presentation summarizes archaeological and historical evidence for various stages of early whaling (often overlapping) during this period, and serves as a background for papers that follow in the session. Beginning with the earliest whaling, these include: 1) passive whaling (collection of edible and/or non-edible parts from stranded or drift carcasses), 2) small-whale driving, 3) hand-held harpoon whaling, and 4) net-whaling. Characteristics of each type of whaling, including when appropriate social and ideological dimensions, will be discussed.

16034 - Changes in the uses of whale resources over time: an example using the hand-harpoon fishery of Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *endo, aiko (Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, Kyoto, Japan)*

Small-scale coastal whaling activities of Nago has operated since the beginning of the Meiji era (1868-1912), in the area now known as Nago, located within the present day Japanese prefecture of Okinawa. This used to be a drive fishery with collaborative efforts between fishermen and the local population in Nago bay. The target species were short-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), melon-headed whale (*Peponocephala electra*) and bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) (All are termed 'Hetu' in the local dialect), which all previously migrated to Nago bay from during early spring and early summer. Local people were dependent on Hetu for survival since they were too poor to afford other meat such as beef, pork, chicken, and goat which, until the mid-20th century were too expensive for all except the very richest families. The extremely cheap Hetu meat therefore used to make up a large portion of the daily diets of the local population.

However, since the global whaling moratorium, the majority of whale meat of short-finned pilot whale and false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*) caught in the district has become much more valuable and has been used to supplement the supply in the Japanese mainland (where the best price can be obtained). As a consequence of this the supply of whale meat to the Nago region has been significantly reduced, although dolphin meat, which is unprofitable in the mainland, is still distributed and consumed in the area. This alteration in the distribution channels of whale products in recent years has brought many corresponding changes to the relationships between whale resources and local societies. In addition, the increase of whale products due to the expansion of the scientific whaling programs had an enormous influence on small-scale hand harpoon fisheries (such as those in Nago) but they are not well studied, despite their impact on local people and communities. The purpose of this research is therefore to analyse the relationships between whale resources and the local societies that depend on them, using Nago as an example.

With that in mind the study had three main objectives as follows.

1. To identify the structure of the hand harpoon fishery in Nago as well as the associated production and distribution system, including distribution channels and market prices of short-finned pilot whale, false killer whale and bottlenose dolphin,
2. To clarify the regional consumption of whale meat products supplied to local populace in Nago.
3. To examine the multiple uses and functions of whale resources and hand harpoon fisheries in Japanese society.

16031 - Tales of the Whale: Climate Change and the New Inupiaq Identity in the Making

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Sakakibara, Chie (Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH, USA)*

This is a study in human geography that explores how the Inupiaq people (Inupiat) of Arctic Alaska maintain their cultural identity and heritage as the People of the Whales in the face of climate change, changing environment, and new human relationships with the sea and place. Exploring Inupiaq views of sense of place, cultural transformation and environmental change, I compare their efforts with those of the Azores Islanders of Portugal, another group of people who cherish cetaceans. Many Inupiat today claim their ancestry in the Azores Islands via several Azorean whalers who ended up in northwestern Alaska in the late nineteenth century. As the effects of climate change take hold among rural Alaskan and Azorean communities, the role and place of whales in sustaining cultural identities becomes greater, and among the Inupiat provides the cornerstone of cultural resilience that the people embrace to imagine a hopeful future. The peoples of Arctic Alaska and the Azores are both Peoples of the Whales whose identities are inseparable from their relationships with cetaceans, yet this relationship is also intricately entangled with any historical, political and environmental change.

16014 - Pre-contact Whaling in North Alaska: A Brief Overview

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Jensen, Anne (UIC Science LLC, Barrow, Alaska, USA)*

Modern Iñupiat whaling is alive and well in North Alaska, although it is highly contested by non-local opposition. Lacking in most discussion is any context or understanding of the history of the activity. This paper attempts to provide an overview of the development of whaling in North Alaska in the pre-contact period. By doing so, it is hoped that a useful factual background for further discussion will be provided.

Indications of use of large baleen whales, whether acquired by opportunistic hunting or scavenging of drift whales prior to 800AD will be reviewed very briefly. The evidence for, and implications of, the transition from this type of whale use to organized hunting of baleen whales, to settlements and a culture organized around that activity will then be presented.

Beginning over a millennium ago, this whaling focused culture (Thule) spread very rapidly across the North American Arctic, establishing settlements in prime whaling locations, with outlying settlements developing to supply items that could not be obtained in sufficient quantity at the whaling sites. It also supported expansions into previously unused areas, such as the Alaskan interior, and appears to have led to increases in both trade and warfare.

In North Alaska, where whaling was not rendered totally unproductive due to Euroamerican commercial whalers' extirpation of the local whale stocks, the Thule people's Iñupiat descendants continue whaling. Although some of the technology used today is "modern" (as of 1880) Yankee technology, the Thule/Iñupiat tradition is a millennium of technological improvement, of which this is simply another example, as opposed to a radical departure from that tradition.

15971 - A Whale of a Problem: Zooarchaeology and Modern Whaling 10 years on.

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Evans, Sally (Cardiff University, Cardiff, Un. Kingdom / Ver Königr.); Mulville, Jacqui (Cardiff University, Cardiff, Un. Kingdom / Ver Königr.)*

Archaeological evidence for whale use extends back thousands of years into prehistory. Problems interpreting evidence for this whale use are well known to archaeologists, and attempts to define the nature of human-cetacean relationships in the past are fraught with difficulties. In particular understanding whether the whale bone found on archaeological sites represents the remains of hunted or stranded animals is problematic. Despite these problems, today, as a decade ago, zooarchaeological evidence is being used in the modern whaling debate, employed by the opponents and proponents of whaling. A key issue in this debate are the varied claims to the antiquity of whaling made by different nations and communities.

The use of zooarchaeological evidence in the whaling debate was first discussed in the paper *A Whale of a Problem? The Use of Zooarchaeological Evidence in Modern Whaling* (Mulville 2005). The current paper considers the situation ten years on, and reflects on the methodological and interpretive advances in archaeological studies of cetacea, and their impact upon the modern whaling debate.

15951 - The revitalization of Korean whale use culture: A case study of Jangsaengpo Ulsan

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *ii, sunae (Miyazaki Municipal University, Miyazaki, Japan)*

Whale meat, internal organs and fat were part of the diet in the Ulsan area in the Korean Peninsula since ancient times. After the 1986 commercial whaling ban, the Jangsaengpo local economy drastically declined, and as a result of an aging population, the village population itself has also drastically declined. In order to regain the vitality of the region, the villagers initiated a whale festival. Then they established a whale museum to record and present their whaling history.

As a result, the local government also joined these initiatives, and the whaling history is currently important as a tourist industry. In this paper I discuss how this rich whaling background is the focal point of the local tourist industry.

15897 - Precontact Inuit Whaling and Identity in the Eastern Arctic

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Whitridge, Peter (Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada / Kanada)*

The bowhead (*Balaena mysticetus*) harvest is an iconic pursuit for contemporary Inupiat whalers, and was plausibly even more important for precontact arctic groups who also whaled intensively. In particular, up until the Inuit abandonment of much of the Canadian Central and High Arctic in the late fifteenth century, with the onset of the Little Ice Age, whaling in some regions was a core economic activity that thoroughly inflected all other aspects of early precontact Inuit (Classic Thule) life. Settlement systems accommodated the aggregation of regional groups at late summer whaling nodes and the persistence through winter, in shared-mound house groups, of the multi-family groupings that likely mustered boat crews. Many structures at such sites were directly connected to whaling (caches, boat rests, men's houses) and dwellings and other features were often erected on whale bone frames. A large-scale spatial zooarchaeology reveals the massive scope and long-term persistence of bowhead harvesting, which provided the staple food and fuel for numerous Central Arctic communities. Figurative representations of whales and whaling, the focal location of men's houses linked to boat crews, and special handling of certain skeletal elements, hint at the ritual priority of whaling as well. Significantly, whale bone, and to a lesser extent baleen, represented one of the dominant raw materials for manufacturing the everyday utensils and larger composite objects that outfitted the precontact Inuit lifeworld. Economically, socially, symbolically, and even phenomenologically, Inuit identity in the Eastern Arctic was bound up with the harvest of bowhead whales.

15877 - Growing Anti-Whaling, Pro-Whale Watching Campaign on the Small Whaling Island of Bequia

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Hamaguchi, Hisashi (Sonoda Women's College, Amagasaki, Japan)*

The Bequians, having acquired whaling skills from American whalers, began whaling in 1875 or 1876, mainly targeting humpback whales. The islanders ate whale meat and blubber and exported whale oil to the U.K. and the U.S. The harvesting of humpback whales by the Bequians was approved as a form of "aboriginal subsistence whaling" at the 39th annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) held in 1987, and a three-year catch quota of three humpback whales per year was agreed upon. The latest catch quota, approved at the 64th annual meeting of the IWC held in 2012, was 24 whales in total for the 2013-2018 whaling seasons. As of 2014, a dozen whalers are engaged in whaling with two whaling boats in operation. The regular use and consumption of whale products such as meat and blubber constitute a key component of Bequian culture; whale products are of economic and nutritional significance to the Bequians.

However, at the 64th annual meeting of the IWC, a chairperson of an NPO requested the withdrawal of the aboriginal subsistence whaling status granted to Bequia on the grounds that this tradition had been learned from American whalers and was carried out by persons of mixed European and African descent. The NPO then launched an anti-whaling campaign targeting the island, with the ultimate aim of halting whaling in favor of whale watching. To this end, the organization recruited a former whaler to persuade active whalers to stop whaling and dispatched a skillful harpooner to Australia to introduce him to whale watching in 2013. Finally, in 2014, the NPO succeeded in purchasing a whaling boat from the harpooner; he retired from whaling. As a result, whaling boats have disappeared from one of the two communities with a whaling tradition. Although two whaling boats still exist on the island of Bequia, whaling is now restricted to one community. The chairperson of the NPO was born in Bequia. She is a lawyer and the daughter of the former prime minister and successfully used her connections and eloquence to gradually build the organization's influence in Bequia. The chairperson believes that the campaign will be successful and that whaling will disappear within 10 to 15 years in Bequia.

In this presentation, I would like to take up the issues that have emerged from the anti-whaling, pro-whale watching campaign and offer a perspective on the future of whaling in Bequia.

15850 - A Comparative Study of Contemporary Indigenous Whale Hunts in North America

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Kishigami, Nobuhiro (National Museum of Ethnology, Suita City, Japan)*

A few indigenous groups in North America such as Inupiat and Yupiit of Alaska, and Inuit of Arctic Canada hunt bowhead whales every year. On the other hand, gray and humpback whale hunts by the Nuucha-nulth and Makha of Northwest Coast of North America are under a temporary suspension. While these whale hunts are closely related to continuation of their ethnic identities, all of them are currently threatened by several common problems such as international anti-whaling activities conducted by many environmental and animal welfare groups, the impacts of climate warming on their hunting environments, the necessity of huge operating cost for the whale hunts, and so on. Also, it is necessary for them to have political support from the federal governments under which they belong to as indigenous peoples to maintain their whaling traditions in the contemporary world. This paper compares and examines the status quo, socio-cultural significance and problems of present and continuing whaling activities among the Inupiat, Nuucha-nulth, and Inuit whalers. The author argues that the contemporary indigenous whalers are carrying out their whale hunts in politically, financially, and environmentally critical conditions in North America.