

DISTRIBUTION AND EXCHANGE OF SUBSISTENCE  
RESOURCES IN ALASKA

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## ABSTRACT

This is a two-part report on a literature survey of subsistence exchange systems. Part I, by Steve Langdon, contains an introduction to the theory of anthropological economics and a discussion of subsistence studies relevant to the Alaska situation. This theoretical background gives insight into the difficulties of explaining the multifunctional aspects of subsistence distribution and exchange in the context of economics and reviews relevant concepts. Part II, by Rosita Worl, contains a review of ethnographic literature pertinent to distribution and exchange of subsistence resources in Alaska. It reveals that the varied subsistence systems in Alaska exhibit many different types of distribution patterns. Each Native culture has its own set of related customs and values governing the transfer of goods, and these are discussed in the following categories: ceremonial, sharing, partnership, trade, and commercial exchange. The literature indicates that the values which promote ceremonial feasting and distribution of resource goods have persisted in all Alaska groups, but precise descriptions of surviving ceremonies and accountings of the amount of subsistence resources involved have not been done for the contemporary period.

## Table of Contents

### Preface

Part I. Anthropological Economics	1
Introduction	1
Overview of Theoretical Approaches	2
Relevant Concepts	14
Dimensions of Subsistence Exchange	22
The Relationship between Culture and Economy	29
Relevant Studies of Other Subsistence Distribution and Exchange Systems	32
NOTES FOR PART I	51
Part II. Distribution and Exchange of Subsistence Resources in Alaska	
Introduction	54
Ceremonial Distribution	55
Sharing	67
Partnership	77
Trading	81
Commercial Exchange	90
Summary	93
Bibliography for Part I	97
Bibliography for Part II	107
Bibliography for References Researched but Not Relevant to the Study	114

## PREFACE

This report was based on a review of theoretical approaches in economic anthropology which illuminates the dimensions of Alaska subsistence use of fish and wildlife. The primary research objective was generated through discussions with Tom Lonner, former Chief of the Subsistence Section of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the authors. The objective was to identify patterns of distribution, allocation, sharing, and consumption of subsistence resources through a survey of ethnographic literature. This work represents a collaborative effort by Steve Langdon and Rosita Worl. The material on economic anthropology was authored by Steve Langdon and the ethnographic material on subsistence distribution and exchange was written by Rosita Worl. Pattie McMillan, Lynn Ellis, Lynda Hadley, and Helen Jenkins provided assistance throughout the project.



SUBSISTENCE EXCHANGE SYSTEMS IN

ALASKA LITERATURE SURVEY

PART I. ANTHROPOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

Introduction

Hunting, fishing, and collecting wild animals and plants as the primary source of food is practiced by many residents of rural Alaskan communities, and, in fact, has been the predominant method for obtaining food for 99 percent of human existence (Lee and Devore 1968). It continues to be especially important to rural Alaskan Native villagers who practice modified food quests similar to those carried on by their ancestors for many hundreds and, in some cases, thousands of years before them. This type of production and consumption is commonly termed subsistence in Alaska, to differentiate it from commercial purchase as the primary source of food. Of course there is a great deal more involved in Alaskan Native subsistence practices than merely harvesting and consuming resources. Of particular importance are the social and religious components of the subsistence practices of many Alaskan Native villagers.

This report will review the literature on one important social aspect of subsistence—distribution and exchange of subsistence products between human beings. The review will begin with a survey of the theory of anthropological economics to provide insight into the difficulties and ambiguities in attempting to adequately explain the multifunctional aspects of subsistence distribution and exchange in noncommercialized

economics. A set of relevant concepts as well as definitions and orienting questions close the introductory section. The second section of Part I examines the anthropological literature on the role of subsistence distribution and exchange in hunting and gathering and mixed horticultural/hunting and gathering societies around the world.

#### Overview of Theoretical Approaches

Approaches to the study of the economy or economic phenomena in anthropology are diverse and, to a significant degree, competing for recognition. Since the emergence of this discrete subdiscipline about 40 years ago, there has been controversy about the degree of applicability of conventional economic theory to all societies. Anthropological economics which until recently was known as economic anthropology, has been distinguishable since Bronislaw Malinowski systematically examined the Kula ring activities of Trobriand Islanders of the western Pacific near New Guinea as an economic, as opposed to technological or social (kinship), phenomenon (Malinowski 1922). Malinowski's contribution, however, was to question the applicability of conventional economic theory based on the concept of "economic man" to what he termed "primitive" societies. He held that unlike the economic man of theory, most "primitive" men were not motivated by material self-interest (LeClair and Schneider 1968:4). In taking this position, Malinowski initiated a debate among anthropologists which had already raged among economists for more than a quarter of a century. The comparable theory in economics, known as the institutionalist school, had earlier emerged from the work of Thorstein Veblen to challenge the conventional neoclassical school, associated with the writings of Alfred Marshall.

Malinowski's stature in anthropology guaranteed wide acceptance of his ideas, particularly by descriptive ethnographers, who operated with a limited and, some would claim, biased view of economic theory. In part they saw in normative (as opposed to descriptive) economics the seeds for the potential resurrection of nineteenth century evolutionism and imperialistic interventionism. Frank Cancian (1980:162) commented on this propensity of economics as follows.

Normative economics applied as management science to present decision-making situations yields prescriptions for rational, maximizing behavior. At the same time, it makes possible to identify as irrational those peasants who do not follow its prescriptions, . . . (and subsequently) peasants' understandings of their situations are sacrificed to the pseudoincisiveness of a simple model constructed by outsiders to help them decide what they ought to do.

More importantly, descriptive ethnographers saw that "economic man" in its early formulation was clearly not relevant to the peoples they lived with and whose behavior they described.

Despite Malinowski's stance, his viewpoint did not take hold among the few practitioners of "economic anthropology" during the 1930's and 1940's, notably Firth, Herskovits, Thurnwald, and Goodfellow. These anthropologists began to systematically apply and seek analogues for "economic mechanisms and institutions" in other cultural settings. Firth's work on the New Zealand Maori and Malay fishermen are classic examples of early applications of conventional economic theory to anthropological subject matter (Firth 1929, 1939, 1946). These scholars refined the concept of "economic man" from the greedy, individualist interested only in his material desires to a rational, decision-making individual operating on the principle of maximization of utility. This modified assumption, however, opened questions about what it is that provides utility to individuals (What are their preferences?) and how to measure

utility. More importantly, these economic anthropologists accepted as universally applicable two analytical presuppositions of neoclassical theory--(1) the individual decision-maker is the focus of assumption and explanation and (2) decision-making, also called economizing, is characterized by the allocation of scarce resources among alternative uses. These scholars were willing to accept the universal applicability of these principles. More recently, anthropologists of the formalist school have criticized their thinking as preoccupied with social and cultural factors (LaClair and Schneider 1968:8).

The universal applicability of neoclassical theory was again challenged in economic anthropology in the late 1950's. This challenge was explicitly tied to the competing, if underdeveloped theory of Karl Polanyi, a relatively obscure economic historian whose early published work (1944, 1947) had been little noted. His Trade and Market in the Early Empires (1957), however, was widely read and debated in what proved to be the culmination of an interdisciplinary attempt to develop a broader theory of the economy to encompass all societies. George Dalton's (1961) classic assault on conventional economic theory quickly followed, and out of this emerged the formalist-substantivist debate, vestiges of which are still with us today.<sup>1</sup>

The essential feature of the Polanyi-Dalton school is the contention that the assumption of maximizing individuals, what they term the market principle, is not a characteristic of all societies or even of all aspects of market-dominated societies. They trace this to the dual claims that there is no element of choice in nonmarket societies, and there are no units of account (money) for comparing alternatives in nonmarket economies even if choices could be made. Further, they define the economy (as opposed to the term "economic") as "the instituted

process of material-means provisioning for society" (Halperin 1977:10), clearly departing from the intrapsychic theory of choice characteristic of neoclassical economics. Polanyi proposed that there were other principles (modes of economic integration or transactional modes) around which the economy could be organized. Finally, substantivists do not accept the positivist stance of conventional economic theory, which contends that economic behaviors and institutions can be isolated and analyzed apart from other behaviors in society.<sup>2</sup> This position posits that economic (in the material-provisioning sense of the term) activities are embedded in the social, cultural, and historical relations of a society (Polanyi 1977: 47-56). Marshall Sahlins' Stone Age Economics (1972) is considered one of the more powerful substantivist contributions, even though it is eclectic in the sense that it was also influenced by certain historical materialist and exchange concepts (discussed below). The most recent attempt by the substantivist school to develop theory and provide empirical findings derived from perspectives in Peasant Livelihood (1977), a volume of papers edited by Rhoda Halperin and James Dow.

A more economically sophisticated set of defenders came to the formalist faction of the debate in the 1960's. The formalist camp was most prominently represented in that era by Robins Burling (1962), Edward LeClair (1962), Scott Cook (1966, 1969), Frank Cancian (1965), Raymond Firth (1967), Richard Salisbury (1968), and most importantly Harold Schnieder (1964), who continues to be the most outspoken and extreme defender of unmodified formalism in anthropological economics. By emphasizing decision making or the "choice" aspect of conventional economic theory, the formalists were able to counter the adamant a priori assertions of the substantivists that economic theory was applicable

only to the market-oriented, price-governed economic systems of modern industrial capitalism. They were able to provide examples (Lee 1969; Salisbury 1962; Edel 1967; Orans 1968; Cook 1970) of how conventional economic concepts could be "functionally contextualized" to other cultural systems so that most anthropologists are now willing to concede "that conventional economics is at least potentially relevant and applicable to the study of primitive and peasant economies" (Cook 1973:796). For most anthropologists that concession depends on the formalists' own admission that use of conventional economic concepts and principles in the study of primitive and peasant economies does not assume a priori that the phenomena under study are necessarily explainable by them. Formalist analyses are regarded by most anthropologists as legitimate only under this constraint.

In addition, the delimitation of conventional economic theory to decision-making behaviors about scarce means and alternative ends conceptually eliminates a specific focus on goods and services normally considered as the field of inquiry for economics. So, for most formalist economic anthropologists there is no economy, only economic behavior. What follows intellectually is crucial.

Many anthropologists criticize microeconomic models for not explaining cultural values, since the models take the cultural values as given. A microeconomic analysis of production or of distribution in the U.S., no matter how excellent and valid, thus does not explain why we have a five-day work week with Saturday and Sunday as vacation days, or why consumption peaks around the Christmas holidays. The analysis reveals the economic effects of cultural values without studying the causes of the values (Plattner 1980: 574).

In the 1970's a new field of interest developed out of formalism and cognitive anthropology. This trend was partially the result of the continued inadequacy of formalist theory in accounting for and predicting

the behaviors of actors in other cultural settings and partially because the study of meaning and value gradually became the province of other branches of anthropology. The failure of formalism in the first regard was perceived to be the result of assumptions about the psychological functioning of human decision makers which were faulty, a line of argumentation for which Herbert Simon (1955, 1956, 1976, 1977) received the Nobel Prize in economics. Some practitioners in this new school of "natural decision-making" are especially concerned with decision making in the realm of material goods and services (cf. papers in Barlett (1980) Agricultural Decision Making), but that is not the interest which binds them together. Rather, an interest in the general heuristics and pragmatics of actual human decision making seems to be the theoretical hook which unifies them (Tversky and Kahneman 1977; Quinn 1975; 1978; Slovic, Fishoff, and Lichtenstein 1977; Barlett 1977). Since the findings of this school are only tangentially related to the topic of subsistence exchange, review will not be undertaken here.

Although the formalist-substantivist debate has produced some cross fertilization and recognition of some valid points of the opposition by both camps (Dalton 1969; Cancian 1972; Schneider 1974; Sahlins 1972), no true synthesis has emerged as a new theory that can be applied equally to "primitive" and "modern" societies. One attempt at a synthetic definition, although admittedly postulated from the viewpoint of the formalist camp, was made by (1976:331), who suggested that "economic anthropology is the study of decision-making under constraints." Another less formalist attempt was made by Edel (1969:430), who suggested that economic anthropologists concern themselves with the "economic process of matching resources to targets with reference to the social milieu to

which it is fitted." Still, some (formalists) continue to emphasize decision making most, and others (substantivists) adhere to examination of social and cultural institutions (or "constraints"). There are, however, occasional examples of well-integrated studies (Barlett 1977, Cancian 1980, Smith 1977).

Onto this theoretical battlefield created by seemingly unending philosophical jousting came a new contestant, born and reared in France in the late 1950's and early 1960's. This school is called historical materialist and can be characterized as an expansion and refinement of the positions of Karl Marx through the application of certain structuralist principles elaborated by Claude Levi-Strauss. The major figure in this theoretical synthesis was Louis Althusser (with E. Balibar 1970). He was followed by a group of French anthropologists who adapted, modified, refined, and developed his perspective in their pursuit of a diachronic, universal theory of economy and society. Important figures in the French school include Claude Meillassoux, Pierre-Phillippe Rey, George Dupre, Emmanuel Terray, and Maurice Godalier. Later, such English and American scholars as Maurice Bloch, Jonathan Friedman, Bridget O'Laughlin, and James Faris continued the development of historical materialist thought in anthropology.

The universal theory proposed by the historical materialists was built on the structuralist concept of a social formation (most easily understood as a society by other social scientists unfamiliar with historical materialist thought). A social formation is composed of a number of components—the infrastructure, in turn composed of forces and relations of production; and the superstructure, in turn made up of judicial-political and ideological relations (Friedman 1972:445).<sup>3</sup>

These components could theoretically stand in certain relationships to each other (dominance, determinance, contradiction); however, the application of the theory would require analysis of the empirical circumstances in different contexts to determine the actual characteristics of each structural component of the social formation and the dynamics which resulted from their interaction. Whereas the formalists and substantivists are in general agreement on the applicability of conventional economic theory (that is, any theory tied to individualist principles of maximization) to modern commercial industrial societies, the historical materialists deny its validity for any form of society.<sup>4</sup> The crucial difference that sets historical materialism apart from the other two is that it places analytical preeminence on the processes and relations of production rather than on those of distribution (Clammer 1978:7). To put it as succinctly as possible, conventional economic theory is built on the pricing mechanism which sets the value of goods and services through the forces of supply and demand. It is only in the exchange of one commodity for another that prices and, more importantly, value are established. In this way, conventional economics is wedded to a distributional (through the exchange of values) perspective on the provisioning of society.

As noted earlier, substantivists do not accept the universal validity of the market principle. Polanyi, however, cannot escape the criticism of distributional bias because he proposed two different distributional principles (he terms them "transactional modes")--reciprocity and redistribution--to account for the way nonmarket societies carry out the material-means provisioning task for their members (Polanyi 1977:35-43). Historical materialists, on the other hand, proposed that analysis and explanation should begin with the patterns of ownership of resources and

technologies, with the patterns of productive organization (labor), and with patterns of appropriation of surplus value (profit) from the productive process (O'Laughlin 1975; Godelier 1972; Friedman 1972; Hindess and Hirst 1975). Further, many historical materialists proposed that the value of any item is not a function of what it will bring in exchange but rather the amount of various kinds of labor that went into the production of the item. Following analysis of the production process, the distinct, yet interrelated aspects of distribution (including exchange) and consumption (or utilization) must be brought into historical materialist analysis to complete the picture.

Recently, the primacy of mode of production in historical materialist analysis has been questioned by Berthoud and Sabelli (1979:796), following Bataille (1967) and Baudrillard (1970, 1973), who suggested that "economic phenomena can be fully grasped only through the initial and irreducible complexity that is implied by destruction as an end." They went on to suggest that any mode of production is simultaneously a mode of destruction. Their major intention was to juxtapose the nature of the destruction of wealth in communal societies with the destruction of wealth characteristic of capitalist societies. Their work points up the need for a broader consideration of the nature of consumption (in conjunction with production, distribution, and exchange) and its relationship to other social and cultural practices.<sup>5</sup>

A fourth analytical mode in anthropology (and social science in general), pertinent to the problem at hand, is appropriately labelled exchange theory (Befu 1977; Heath 1976). Exchange theory, however, is no more a single unified perspective than are the previously presented theoretical approaches. Practitioners of exchange theory seem to derive

from three different theoretical strands. The first set of these trace themselves to Marcel Mauss, whose classic study The Gift (1963) established the concept of "total prestation" as the fundamental form of social exchange in many societies. "Total prestations" are group exchanges which have a number of characteristics that distinguish them from the individual exchanges carried out by the "rational man" of economic theory. First, the fact that it is a group exchange, rather than individual exchange, is important. Second, and more importantly, a total prestation has social, religious, moral, legal, magical, and emotional meaning in addition to economic and utilitarian meaning (Heath 1976: 54). Finally, the total prestation includes the obligation of making an equivalent return and establishes a bond between the donor and recipient, in part resulting from the conceptualization that objects are never completely separated from those who exchange them. Mauss' theory has been returned to by a number of scholars for insights including Firth (1959), Gouldner (1960), Levi-Strauss (1963), and Sahlins (1965, 1972).<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most significant contribution of Mauss' is the obligation of return, which has come to be known in anthropology and sociology as the principle or norm of reciprocity. A significant element of Claude Levi-Strauss' structural theory of "primitive" societies, which posits that the fundamental organizing principle in these societies is the type of marriage exchanges which characterize them, clearly derives from Mauss (Levi Strauss 1969).

The most recent and fullest elaboration of exchange as the generating principle of social and cultural order from the structuralist viewpoint has been carried farthest in the reach of material exchanges by Rosman and Rubel (1971, 1977, 1978). It is their view (1978:127) that "in a given society, the structure of production and consumption, as well as

the structure of exchange, relate to a more general underlying structure of ideas." Thus, exchange in the material realm is but one manifestation of structure of dual organization inherent in human cognition.

A second strand of exchange theory, presently glossed as transaction theory, took as its starting point the work of Frederik Barth (1959, 1966, 1967). Ekeh (1974) labelled Barth's approach as individualistic social exchanges to distinguish it from the collectivistic exchange of Mauss; however, such a label severely constricted the scope and relevance of Barth's contribution. Barth's major departure was to suggest that the processes of social life should be theoretically emphasized as opposed to the normative consensus of structural-functionalism, which has long regarded society as a system of moral injunctions unflinchingly followed by perfectly socialized persons (Kapferer 1976:2). Barth, although his critique was hardly the first, further contended that this approach could deal with a problem which had long bedeviled structural-functional anthropology—social change. He proposed to focus on transactional behaviors defined as "sequences of interaction systematically governed by reciprocity" (Kapferer 1976:3).

Subsequent writings have emphasized the requirement of reciprocity less and less. Barth proposed two modes of exchange—a transactional mode in which individual actors seek their own values and the exchange is based on bargained complementarity, and an incorporative mode based on "a relationship of jointness . . . since for certain purposes their interests are identical and inseparable" (Barth 1966: 23-24). Paine (1976:63) commented that the incorporative mode reminded him "how exchange can be independent of the notion of competition or even of contract; how exchange can be conducted between partners who offer not different but

similar, even identical commodities, and how exchange need not posit a debt relationship (or be based on altruism)."

One direction which scholars who have taken their cue from Barth have moved is toward more systematic use of the rationality principle of formal economics (Salisbury 1976; Prattis 1973; Heath 1976a). Another direction has been to expand the application of the transaction and incorporative principles to examine how symbols, metaphors, values, meanings, and other nonmaterial elements are exchanged between actors (Kapferer 1972; Turner 1974; Handelman 1976; Paine 1974, 1976; Cohen and Comaroff 1976). This latter path leads away from positive economics and toward phenomenology.

The third species of exchange theory, known usually as social exchange, is traceable to the work of Blau (1954, 1955, 1964), Homans (1958, 1961), and Thibaut and Kelley (1959). This line of conceptualization has explicitly sought to bring the theory, methodology, and terminology of conventional economic theory to bear on the analysis of social relationships. This is epitomized by the use of price theory to analyze the conditions under which and the rates at which advice will be exchanged for approval or compliance among co-workers in a bureaucracy (Blau 1955). Power (Emerson 1972a, b), approval (Nord 1969), love (Foa 1971), integrity (Schneider 1974), and prestige/status (various authors) are other social valuables which have been suggested as items exchanged between beings. Heath (1976: 90-101) and Schneider (1974: 194-200) presented other examples of the way in which conventional economic analysis can be brought to bear on social exchange situations involving two valuables.

Some social exchange theorists (Blau 1964; Bennett 1968) regarded social exchange governed by morality (norms) as distinctly different

from economic exchange, largely due to the lack of choice characteristic of the former; others such as Heath (1976), Bafu (1977), and Schneider (1974) believed this distinction to be of limited or no value. Schneider (1974: 152-53), for example, argued,

I think the evidence is to the contrary and that in the end we may even find that the distinction between material and social can be replaced by a more general idea, that of the exchange of property . . . This concept would imagine economic man using whatever resources he has, social and material, to accomplish his ends, and it would ask why material means should be distinguished from social means in this process.

The most crucial tool for such a unified theory would be some unit of account which would allow direct comparison of material and social resources. Thus far, this has proved elusive, as Schneider (1974:78, 176) noted, and therefore no unified theory has emerged.

#### Relevant Concepts

The proposals of Scott Cook (1973), a former formalist, Maurice Godelier (1972), an eclectic historical materialist, and Marshall Sahlins (1972), a symbolic substantivist, appear to offer the most useful way out of the bewildering array of approaches examined in the previous section. Cook (1973:810) provided the following definition of the economic field: "The economy is a culturally mediated field of a human population's activity in which its members interact with their physical and social environment in the calculated attempt to acquire, directly or indirectly, a living." Cook (1973:814) went on to a more detailed exposition of the categories of an economy:

Production is the process by which the members of a society appropriate and transform natural resources to satisfy their needs and wants; distribution determines the extent to which the individual participates in the fruits of this production; exchange enables him to acquire the particular products into which he wishes to convert the quantity allocated to him through distribution; and through consumption, products are individually appropriated as objects of use and enjoyment.

Further elaboration on the distinction between distribution (the proportion of total output that the individual receives) and exchange (the process whereby the individual converts his share into specific desired products) is useful due to the central importance of these concepts to our review. Cook (1973:823) wrote:

Distribution implies a reward system in which produce is channeled out among individuals or groups by reason of their control over the factors of production or for the labor they expended in the productive process. Exchange, on the other hand, refers to the various processes by which goods (and services) move between individuals or groups, as, for example, between producer and consumer, buyer and seller, donor and recipient.

Although distribution implies a reward system based on factors Cook mentioned, and many societies have reward as a component of a distribution system, other mechanisms for distribution may be dominant in a society. One type of distribution system is rule-based or normative distribution, which is found in many hunting and gathering societies. Hunters are morally obligated to distribute their catch to members of their group. The actual rules of distribution may be twofold, an initial division among participating hunters and a secondary division based on kinship relations, but in other cases group membership alone is sufficient criteria for receiving some of the production. Examples of this pattern include the King Bushmen (Lee 1979), the Australian Walbiri (Meggitt, 1962), and the Salliumiut (Pryor 1977). There are other rule-based distributions which might be based on need (elderly, widowed, orphaned

persons), on religious obligation, or on other similar rule-based, normative principles operating in specific cultures.

Another aspect of distribution and exchange which is not immediately apparent is the fact that people often have something taken away from them or do not get equivalent value in return. Frederic Pryor (1977: 27) has usefully added this needed clarification through his concept of transfer—"A transfer is a transaction where the goods and services going from a person or group to another are not 'balanced' by a directly observable counterflow."<sup>7</sup>

After the economic field of a society has been analyzed, it must be related to the other activity fields such as kinship, religion, and politics (Cook 1973: 813). These relationships must be conceived of as mutual, i.e., economic activities are influenced by other activity fields, likewise economic activities influence other activity fields. Godelier (1972: 257) suggested that we see the economic as both a domain of activities (production, distribution, consumption) and an aspect of all other activities which do not belong to this domain. This is important to the notion of subsistence exchange because certain items which are a normal part of subsistence production may be so due solely to their utility in a ceremonial activity carried out by a person other than the producer. In this case we readily see the influence of the religious or social field on the economic. On the other hand, the selection of a potential spouse for a young woman in a given society may be primarily dependent on the resources controlled by a young man. In this case, the influence of the economic on the social is readily observable. Delimiting the field of subsistence exchange is useful only if the linkages in the society to the exchange are brought into the analysis as well.

The question of decision making, or "rationality," has not been abandoned in this quest for a useful framework in which to examine subsistence exchange, but it has been relegated to one analytical approach among many that are necessary to fully account for human economic patterns. More specifically, by rational we do not mean that actors are making decisions in accordance with any universally operative maximization principle but simply that they are pursuing objectives, the content and order of priority of which are economically and culturally determined and coherent among themselves, and are employing culturally appropriate means in the pursuit of their objectives (Cook 1973:811; Godelier 1972:21). There are many different rationalities, and the use of rational choice analysis requires determination of preferences, determination of the availability and ownership patterns of resources, and determination of the technical production and exchange possibilities within a given sociocultural context (LeClair and Schneider 1968:457-459).

Equally knotty difficulties are posed by use of the term subsistence. In our view this term refers to an economic system which has the following characteristics.

- a. Production, whether from naturally occurring biological and other resources or from domesticated resources, is primarily for personal or household consumption (production of use values).
- b. Distribution is for the most part carried out through traditional, noncommercial channels.
- c. Consumption of the overwhelming majority of items produced takes place within the household or the community.

- d. Resources used are derived from local and regional areas in the vicinity of the community.
- e. Production and distribution are not organized to obtain the greatest possible return given available labor and technology but are organized for security and continued existence.

It is important to note that though the subsistence economic system may offer a limited standard of living, it by no means approximates human biological minima. There is tremendous variability in subsistence standards of living. The subsistence economic systems of Alaska are some of the richest in the world, due primarily to the importance of marine and anadromous resources in them (Langdon 1980). Also, note that "continued existence" typically includes analysis of a wide variety of "culturally rational" practices and religious beliefs that are tied to the subsistence production and distribution system.

Marshall Sahlins' analysis of societies, predominantly oriented to what he terms the domestic mode of production, reveals certain recurring elements in their organization (Sahlins 1972:41-99). These characteristics include "underexploitation of productive resources," a general underuse of labor determined primarily by household composition, and a substantial (20-30%) number of households failing to provide their own customary livelihood. Sahlins also noted that such "underproduction" by normative economic standards is "not necessarily inconsistent with a pristine 'affluence'" (Sahlins 1972:41). This later term refers to his contention that hunters and gatherers developed "the original affluent society," because their wants are finite, few, and relatively easily attainable with available technology and resources (Sahlins 1972:2).<sup>8</sup>

Two of Sahlins' claims for the affluent domestic production have been hotly debated. The first of these is his claim concerning the underuse of labor. There are two lines of contention to this claim—the normative/empirical and the relativistic. The normative/empirical contention is that conventional economic categories for work/employment/labor severely underrepresent the amount of time spent in productive labor by those engaged in subsistence production. Swetnam (1980) and Brush (1977) are examples of this position in that both authors report situations in nonindustrial economies where labor available and labor utilized show no appreciable amount of underdevelopment. The relativistic contention of Godelier (1972) is that cultural-specific ranking of activities may place greater value on ceremonial, social, artistic, or other endeavors which keep people's time occupied when they are not engaged in economic production. For example, Thompson (1949:26-34) was impressed that in the Murngin society of Australia, no one was idle except for very young children. Their efforts were largely devoted to their "elaborate and exacting ceremonial life," especially the ceremonial exchange cycle which bestowed prestige on craftsmanship and trade.

The second element of Sahlins' formulation which receives criticism is his "limited wants" argument. Smith (1980:2-3) contended that contact between tribal cultures and market economies show time and again that wants can almost overnight expand far beyond previous expectations. Although wants can be modified, they do not necessarily go from finite to infinite, but rather some cultural buffers appear to continue to operate in the new context. Ray and Freeman (1978) found such to be the case in their study of trade relations between Eastern Algonkians and the Hudson's Bay Company. Numerous other scholars, government administrators,

and entrepreneurs have repeatedly reported that in modified subsistence economies when prices rise, production falls and when prices fall, production rises. Sometimes called "target marketing," these occurrences confound conventional formalist predictions. But the behavior is primarily due to the interest of subsistence producers in interacting with the market economy only to obtain a relatively fixed set of use values in keeping with the basic security orientation of most subsistence economies (Sahlins 1972:86).

Before elaborating on subsistence exchange, one question about Sahlins' domestic mode of production should be addressed, and that is, how do the 20 to 30% of households which do not produce enough to sustain themselves survive? The "normal surplus of subsistence" (Allan 1965) produced by the rest of the society reaches them through a variety of mechanisms including exchange. Thus exchange is not only important to the society in terms of social solidarity and integration, it is also clearly implicated in the physical survival of a substantial number of members.

Subsistence exchange is, as noted earlier, a subtype of distributional phenomena. Pryor (1977:188) noted several other types of distribution, including centric and noncentric transfers. (The difference between the latter two is the degree to which the transfers are patterned so as to focus on either an institution or an individual carrying out a society-wide role (centric transfers) or to focus on the relationship between distinct pairs of individuals who are not tied in their transactions to societywide patterns (noncentric transfers) (Pryor 1977:34).<sup>9</sup> An example of noncentric is that of "sharing," which Pryor conceived as different from exchange in that it does not involve an obligation to

return something of equal value. Another example of a transfer is covered by the concept of "mutuality," a circumstance in which two people or groups have rights over and obligations to each other but which does not require balanced exchange. Finally, Polanyi's redistributive institutions in which produced goods flow to a central person or institution for reallocation are examples of centric transfers.

Perhaps the best known and most widely explored formulations on "primitive" exchange are those of Marshall Sahlins (1965, 1972). Sahlins proposed a typology of reciprocities, which he suggested form a continuum. The three primary types he identified are:

1. Generalized reciprocity, in which transactions are "putatively altruistic," when "the expectation of a direct material return is unseemly," where "the material side of the transaction is repressed by the social" (Sahlins 1972: 194). The expectation of return is implicit, but failure to reciprocate does not cause the donor to cease giving.
2. Balanced reciprocity, in which there is "precise balance," and "transactions which stipulate returns of commensurate worth" (Sahlins 1972: 194-195). This is what Pryor had in mind with his concept of reciprocal exchange.
3. Negative reciprocity, which "is the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity, the several forms of appropriation, transactions opened and conducted toward net utilitarian advantage." Sahlins goes on to characterize such transactions as ones in which "participants confront each other as opposed interests, each looking to maximize utility at the other's expense," each seeking to gain "the unearned increment" (Sahlins 1972:195).

Significantly divergent opinions exist on whether market exchange and commercial transactions are examples of balanced reciprocity or negative reciprocity. Sahlins clearly did not relate his distinction to market transactions. Most would agree that both are possible, and the occurrence of one or the other is dependent on the actors, their relationship, and the specific circumstances of their commercial transaction.

Sahlins went on to relate his continuum of reciprocities to several dimensions of society. The most important of these are kinship distance, location, rank, and wealth. He also discussed the nature of exchange relations involving food, which he inductively appraised was a special category of exchange object in primitive societies.

#### Dimensions of Subsistence Exchange

The examination of subsistence exchange requires attention to a number of levels and relationships. These include the basic production strategy of the group, the units involved in subsistence exchange, the items exchanged and their use and role in each group, the frequency of exchanges, the timing of exchanges, and the context of exchanges. The first level of analysis is to determine the basic production strategies of the groups under consideration. Therefore, we were concerned almost exclusively with the literature on subsistence exchange among hunting and gathering groups, although exchange patterns among groups practicing other production strategies have been examined where they appear particularly relevant to current circumstances in Alaska.

The next analytical cut requires identification of the types of units and types of relationship found within a given group and boundaries

of the group. Likely candidates for inclusion are families, households, kinsmen, lineages, clans, moieties, bands, villages, voluntary associations, friendships, partnerships, fictive kin (godfathers), patron-client relations, and other culturally specific situations of exchange.

After determination of the relevant exchange relationship, an analysis of the different aspects of subsistence exchanges characteristic of relationship and units can be undertaken. Since most hunting and gathering societies have a local group level (usually based on land or, in the modern Alaska context, the village), that unit might be used as an initial focus to organize exchange relationships. One important reason for such a strategy is that the band or village group is harvesting resources from similar or contiguous areas, and different unit members' use of the area likely accounts for most natural resource harvests from fish, animal, and plant populations in a given area. A second important reason is that subsistence exchanges in terms of amounts of goods exchanged and frequency of exchanges are likely highest between various individuals and units within this group. Fryor and Graburn (1977:77) in their analysis of Sallumiut Inuit found that intervillage exchange instances were so few that they could be ignored in the context of total quantities of goods and services exchanged within the village. This second factor may well be substantially different for certain groups but can only be determined by empirical observation. The first task would be to determine the units and individuals involved in subsistence distribution and exchange. Below is a sample list.

Distribution and Exchange within a Group

Between household members

Between households of kinsmen as households (degree of kinship distance noted)

Between households of nonkinmen as households

Between individual kinsmen not living in the same household (degree of kinship distance noted)

Between individual nonkinmen who are friends or partners

Between individual nonkinmen with no relationship

Between men

Between women

Between women and men

} This set is a subtype

} of each of the

} above types

After identifying exchanges between units within a group, identification of exchanges of various types between groups can be undertaken.

Distribution and Exchange between Groups

Between households of kinsmen as households (degree of kinship distance noted)

Between households of nonkinmen as households

Between individuals as kinsmen

Between individuals as friends or partners

Between individuals as nonkinmen

Between group or groups

Between men

Between women

Between women and men

} This set is a subtype of

} each of the

} above types

For each of the distributions or exchange cases, the following characteristics should be identified.

Item exchanged, use, and relative importance to each group or individual

Frequency of distribution or exchange of different items

Specific labels for exchange relationship or exchange events  
(Are they linguistically labelled?).

Timing of distribution and exchange

Context of distribution and exchange (religious, social, recreational, etc.)

Reason given for distribution or exchange

Based on analysis of the data collected a comprehensive view of subsistence distribution and exchange for a given group should be possible.

Another important dimension of subsistence economy is the production strategy of exchanging groups. For example, the BaMbuti Pygmies of Zaire have for many years maintained exchange relationships with Bantu agriculturalists who live in sedentary villages on the edge of the forests where the Pygmies hunt and gather (Turnbull 1965; Hart 1978). This is an example of exchange between groups using different production strategies—the Pygmy hunter-gatherers and the Bantu horticulturalists. Comparing exchange along this dimension allows exploration of questions about initial dependence and the development of specialization due to exchange. These topics have recently received considerable attention in the writings of Bates and Lees (1977) and Peterson (1979, 1978). They are not crucial in Alaska Native societies, in which their uniform status as hunters and gatherers presupposes that all interethnic and

intergroup exchange among them prior to contact was necessarily between groups with the same basic productive strategy. This does not preclude comparison of exchange between hunting and gathering groups with substantially different basic resource inventories and hunting and gathering groups with essentially similar basic resource inventories. They may display very different patterns and purposes in these exchange relationships. Of more importance to the contemporary situation of Alaska Natives is the nature of hunter-gatherer subsistence exchange with the market economy. Insights into the dynamics and outcomes of this situation on hunter-gatherer resource conditions and sociocultural organization under present circumstances of sedentism in villages in rural Alaska can be gained by examining impacts of similar circumstances on the sedentary, relatively sparsely settled areas of the world inhabited by swidden horticulturalists practicing mixed production strategies, including hunting and gathering.

#### IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT SUBSISTENCE DISTRIBUTION AND EXCHANGE

Underlying this review of the literature on subsistence exchange is a set of crucial questions about Alaska Native individuals and groups, who have traditionally and continue to practice subsistence production and exchange, and their relationship to the resources they depend on. These questions can be broken down into those concerning traditional subsistence exchange practiced in a noncommercial setting and those concerning the impact of commercial exchange of subsistence products on subsistence exchange as well as on group sociocultural organization and practice.

A. Questions about Traditional Subsistence Distribution and Exchange

1. To what extent is group survival or individual survival maintained by subsistence distribution and exchange?
2. To what extent do group cultural practices involve subsistence distribution and exchange?
3. To what extent is group autonomy and social existence related to subsistence distribution and exchange?
4. To what extent does subsistence distribution and exchange accentuate or minimize material well-being differentials among group members?
5. To what extent do production activities carried out for traditional subsistence distribution and exchange disrupt or endanger fish and animal populations?

B. Questions about the Impact of Commercial Exchange on Subsistence Distribution and Exchange (answers to the following questions partially depend on answers to the preceding)

1. To what extent does individual or group involvement in commercial exchange for subsistence products disrupt traditional subsistence distribution and exchange?

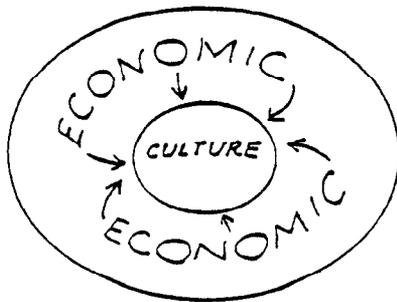
2. To what extent has commercial exchange of subsistence products modified group autonomy, social organization, or cultural practices?
3. To what extent has commercial exchange of subsistence products modified individual or group standards of living?
4. To what extent has commercial exchange of subsistence products accentuated or minimized material well-being differentials among group members?
5. To what extent does individual or group involvement in commercial exchange for subsistence products disrupt or endanger fish and animal populations?

Data in the ethnographic literature on the dimensions of subsistence exchange outlined previously as well as on most of these questions are often anecdotal and partial and only rarely systematically derived as the product of a detailed problem-focused investigation. Although material concerning Alaska Native exchange is primarily of the first variety, in recent years there has been a number of relevant problem-focused studies from other parts of the world on subsistence distribution and exchange and the interaction of subsistence production and commercial exchange which will be addressed later.

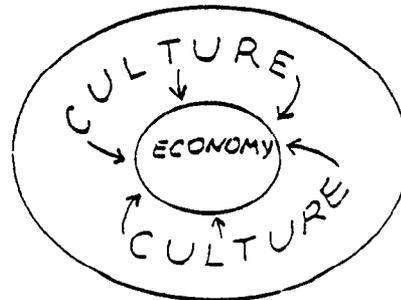
## The Relationship between Culture and Economy

Before turning to the discussion of empirical evidence for the occurrence and nature of subsistence distribution and exchange in Alaska and elsewhere, a brief elaboration on the relationship between culture and economy is in order. One school of thought composed of unyielding formalists, cultural materialists, and "vulgar" historical materialists argues that economy encapsulates, generates, and ultimately explains cultural manifestations. The other view, argued by symbolists, structuralists, and "refined" historical materialists, holds the reverse—that culture defines, orders, and ultimately explains economic manifestations. One might ask about the concept of society-social relations, kinship, etc. For the economists, it is merely an epiphenomena of allocations (see Schneider quotes below), and for culturalists, just another example of symbolic ordering. These two views can be schematicized as follows.

A. Economists



B. Culturalists



Although this dichotomy is hyperbolic and perhaps oversimplifies the complexity of the issues and positions involved, it summarizes the extreme positions accurately. Most representative of these competing paradigms are Harold Schneider (1974) and Marshall Sahlins (1976).

Pertinent examples of their views follow.

Schneider (1974:134, 135, 142)

Thus households persist in any society because their forms are recreated by behavior each day, behavior based on allocations and not simply on positive valuation of the form.

I would like to suggest that cross-cousin marriage systems in these societies are the result not of rules but of maximizing choices, and that the systems in fact may be simply epiphenomenon of the end dealing.

The division of labor in human society (of which the relations of producer and consumer is just one example) is not merely one dimension of society but the whole of it. Recognizing this, we also immediately recognize that all interacting between people who have interdependent needs constitute social transactions. The flow of these transactions throughout an integrated system creates the family structure and other regular social patterns. The study of society becomes, therefore, the study of the flow of transactions, which makes obsolete simplistic technological formulations such as 'the family exists to provide sexual fulfillment, procreation, and socialization.'

Sahlins (1976:164, 167, 206)

The point is that material effectiveness, practicality does not exist in any absolute sense, but only in the measure and form projected by a cultural order. Selecting its material means and ends from among all possible ones, as well as the relatives under which they are combined, it is society which sets the productive intentions and intensities, in a manner and measure appropriate to the entire structural system. There remains, as logic, only the meaningful system of culture.

The structure of the economy appears as the objectivized consequence of practical behavior, rather than a social organization of things, by the institutional means of the market, but according to a cultural design of persons and goods.

. . . no cultural form can ever be read from a set of 'material forces,' as if the cultural were the dependent variable of an inescapable practical logic. . . It is not that the material forces and constraints are left out of account, or they have no real effects on cultural order. It is that the nature of the effects depend on their cultural encompassment. The very form of social existence of material force is determined by its integration in the cultural system.

In the past two years two views of southwestern Alaska (Yupik Eskimo) society have appeared which more or less correspond to each of these approaches. Although Wolfe (1979: 252-261) is clearly cognizant of social and cultural factors involved in Kwikpagmiut food production, he nevertheless analytically explains the behavior he observed with formalist concepts. For example, he (1979:259) wrote:

. . . subsistence foods were harvested if their average capital costs were less than the retail costs of food substitutes . . . Meat, fish, and fowl was harvested from the local environment at about 80.31 per pound dressed weight, substantially lower than the retail price of imported meat, fish, and poultry of about \$2.50 per pound at Kotlik stores. This differential was advanced to explain why Kotlik families bought little of these food items from the store, choosing instead to procure their own at greater monetary saving.

In this passage, Wolfe assumed that store-bought foods are substitutes for subsistence foods, but nowhere does he provide evidence that they are culturally defined substitutes. If they were in fact cultural substitutes and Kotlik families were given the amount of money necessary to purchase store-bought foods sufficient to replace subsistence-produced foods, they would theoretically cease subsistence production. Such a formalist proposition is clearly false and indicates a major weakness in this type of analysis.

Riordan (1980) analyzed the process of production and reproduction among the Qaluyaarmiut of Toksook Bay, Tununak, Cherfornak, Newtok, and Nightmute from a decidedly culturalist perspective. She believed that in the Qaluyaarmiut view "the natural world is a moral order subject to the same rules of hierarchy, power transference, and the cycling of souls as the human social order, and dependent for continuity on right relations within that order" (Riordan 1980:126). Her view on subsistence

has nothing to do with costs, prices, input-output analyses or other formalist tools. Instead, it is her view that

Subsistence production is tied to a fundamental cosmological reproduction, which a preliminary consideration of ritual distribution can make clear. The value hierarchy of objects exchanged and the categorical relations between persons exchanging remains opaque without reference to the larger system at work, which in the case of the Qaluyaarmiut, involves an exegesis on the continual creation and recreation of the conditions of generation, a fundamental cosmological reproduction.

Although her scholarly marshalling and ordering of diverse, seemingly unrelated data are impressive and compelling at one level, they do not provide a view of the individual and familial variability found in these communities, the dynamic factors of day-to-day material life, the essential characteristics of the biological survival of the Qaluyaarmiut, or links to the world economy.

It is impossible to unify these different approaches at this time, yet both are clearly needed to fully comprehend human economic behavior. More rigorous analyses of the culturalist variety should be made by those who seek to examine the functioning of the economic field in all cultural settings.

#### Relevant Studies of Other Subsistence

##### Distribution and Exchange Systems

The previous section lists important questions about subsistence distribution and exchange. The next section individually addresses each question in light of important findings on subsistence in other parts of the world, focusing primarily on hunting and gathering societies but also treating mixed horticultural/foraging/hunting and gathering/adaptations

as well. This review is limited to problem-focused investigations of these patterns that have been undertaken in the past 10 to 20 years.

"TRADITIONAL" SUBSISTENCE DISTRIBUTION AND EXCHANGE

Question 1 To what extent is individual and/or group survival maintained by subsistence distribution and exchange?

Since the important Man, the Hunter (1968) volume, it has been a widely accepted proposition that communal distribution of production throughout the local group is a basic feature of hunting and gathering societies. This feature has been seen not as arbitrary, but rather as crucial to the survival of groups and therefore to individual group members as well due to the uncertainty of resources and individual production. Some scholars (Suttles 1968; Murdock 1968; Moseley 1975) have pointed out that the "trial formulation" concerning the nature of hunting and gathering societies seemed to be most relevant to those in resource scarce, marginal environments and are not necessarily applicable to hunters and gatherers in resource-rich environments. In a recent comparison of resource-rich (northwestern California) and resource-poor (western interior Australia) hunting and gathering societies, Gould (1980) found that in the Australian case, access to key resources was based on widely extended social networks that operated through egalitarian sharing, but in the California society little or no sharing of basic resources above the level of the nuclear family was noted. He proposed that communal sharing (distribution and reciprocal exchange) tended to decline as a risk-minimizing strategy for group and individual survival when key resources were predictably available in adequate supply for the group as a whole.

This proposition finds empirical support in a number of other recent studies. Mooney (1976, 1978), demonstrated that a generalized reciprocity is still the predominant form of transaction among the Coast Salish (Native American) population living in the vicinity of Victoria. In addition, she found that the network of sharing expanded and contracted in response to resource availability in the following fashion:

<u>Resource Availability</u>	<u>Sharing Network</u>
Above normal —————→	Expanded
Normal —————→	Normal
Below normal —————→	Expanded
Drastically below normal —→	Contracted

What this pattern indicates is that only when conditions of extreme shortage threatens survival does hoarding at the individual or familial level become common. Turnbull's (1978) analysis of the Ik of East Africa is perhaps the archetypal case of how extended periods of scarcity can destroy group, extended family, and, ultimately, nuclear family levels of sharing, leaving each individual over the age of four responsible for his own survival.

Based upon research among the Ute and other western Native American groups, Jorgensen (1971, 1972) has suggested that the moral obligations and practice of the Native American collective ethic of widespread cooperation and sharing are primarily a function of poverty in the modern American setting and only secondarily a continuation of traditional cultural practices. It should be pointed out that this analysis does not address ceremonial distribution and exchange nor the role of subsistence

distribution and exchange to the maintenance of ethnic identity in modern American society.

This basic pattern, termed the accordian effect by Laughlin (1974), has been documented recently by Waddell (1975), Dirks (1980), and in a number of case studies by Bishop, Cawte, and Lomnitz in Extinction and Survival in Human Populations (1978). In the introductory essay Laughlin and Brady (1978b:32) noted that "the most common pattern found in the ethnographic literature is one of solidary response to adversity. Initially . . . the range of generalized sharing is extended to include persons and groups who are socially and perhaps genetically distant." This expansion is not likely to continue because "prolonged resource deprivation resulting from either cyclical or progressive alterations of basic resources may trigger a deescalation of the normal patterns of sharing resources" (Laughlin and Brady 1978b:31). They further pointed out that "this degeneration of solidarity can be expected under conditions . . . identified . . . as unremitting deprivation" (Laughlin and Brady 1978b:31).

In summary, a wide variety of studies shows that

1. Communal distribution and exchange is an important survival technique for hunters and gatherers with uncertain resource bases.
2. Expanded networks of sharing are characteristic of groups in conditions of resource shortage.

Question 2 To what extent do group cultural practices involve subsistence distribution and exchange?

Question 3 To what extent is group autonomy and social existence related to subsistence distribution and exchange?

Information on these questions can be found for many different hunting and gathering and horticultural societies, and since they are usually intimately linked, they will be treated as a unit in this discussion. Chagnon (1968) and Gregor (1977) noted that exchange of subsistence products between Yanomama and Meksinsku villages in the Amazonian lowlands was a crucial signifier of whether war or peace prevailed between two villages. When subsistence products were exchanged, even those that were nearly identical, (fish, arrows, cotton thread), then a state of peace reigns. This is not an example of a non-Western idiosyncrasy since DUBY (1974) has noted for northern Europeans that "whenever peace was made between tribes of equal strength, it would be prudent to preserve it carefully with return gifts, the essential tokens of its permanence. What was 'peace' for the author of Beowulf but the prospect of exchanging gifts between people!" Many other examples from all parts of the world can be found which demonstrate the crucial role exchange plays in the establishment and preservation of peaceful intergroup relations.

Subsistence distribution and exchange also play a significant role in the social and ceremonial patterns of hunting and gathering groups. As noted in the theoretical section, structuralist theory as developed by Claude Levi-Strauss is built on the social exchange theory of Marcel Mauss. Exchange is a crucial element in the dynamics of cultural structures,

and subsistence exchange is a component of the larger cultural system of exchanges. The potlatch as practiced by Kwakiutl, Nootka, Tsimshian, Tlingit, and Haida groups on the northwest coast of North America has been analyzed by Roman and Rubel (1971, 1978) from the structuralist viewpoint. It is their contention that "the ceremonial distribution of goods at the potlatch—blankets, canoes, guns, kettles, money, clothing, dishes, foodstuffs, etc.—clearly involving the flow of material goods is part of the larger system of exchanges which also includes the exchange of women and ritual services. The distribution of material goods, as well as the larger system of exchanges, constitutes a manifestation of the underlying structure" (Rosman and Rubel 1978b:110). It is clear from this passage that subsistence distribution and exchange and not purely ceremonial goods are involved in potlatches. Further, they stated, "Potlatches occur at critical junctures and are in effect rites de passage for the society; critical junctures mark the rearrangement of the social structure, when, in the absence of fixed rules relating to structural changes, the outcome of such changes is dependent upon the manipulations of individual actors" (Rosman and Rubel 1978:113).<sup>10</sup> This passage indicates the crucial role which the potlatch plays in the cultural systems of the northwest coast. In the case of these societies we see that subsistence distribution and exchange is central to the institution through which major cultural changes occur.

Another way to evaluate the importance of an institution in a cultural system which involves subsistence distribution and exchange is to examine the cultural impact when the behaviors are outlawed or suppressed by a dominant external group. This was the case with the potlatch, which was outlawed at the insistence of missionaries and government

agents in British Columbia in 1889 (Fisher 1977:207). The ban was met by both vigorous protest and quiet defiance, particularly by the Kwakwaka'wakw who "defied it by ignoring every exhortation by the Indian agent to give up the custom" (Fisher 1977:207). Codere (1961), Spradley (1969), and Ford (1941) noted that potlatching was formally outlawed, but their descriptions of the period from 1890 to 1920 indicate that this was perhaps the height of potlatching among the Kwakwaka'wakw in terms of per capita outlays on the potlatch. The crucial importance of this institution to the cultural identity of these groups is clearly demonstrated in their response to the attempt to suppress it.

Returning to the importance of subsistence distribution and exchange to cultural practices, Rosman and Rubel examined a number of other cultural institutions around the world which involved large-scale ceremonial distributions of subsistence products. Included in their studies was analysis of the Maori of New Zealand, whose cultural structure and ceremonial exchange pattern they liken to that of the Northwest Coast Indians, and the Trobriander Islanders of Melanesia, whose exchange structure is different but equally as important to the cultural system as other ceremonial exchanges. Their most recent work is a meticulous examination of 13 New Guinean societies in which they identified four types of basic exchange principles (Rosman and Rubel 1978a). They described a wide variety of material transactions, the vast majority of which involved subsistence products that accompany marital exchanges in these societies and thus crucial reproduction processes which insure cultural maintenance.

Subsistence distribution and exchange, as cultural institutions in many societies, have been shown to be critically important to:

1. Preservation of peaceful relations between one group and another
  
2. Preservation of internal processes of cultural maintenance and reproduction

Question 4      To what extent does subsistence distribution and exchange accentuate or minimize material well-being differentials?  
  
(This question is related to question 1 but refers to the effects of subsistence distribution and exchange during periods of normal resource availability rather than to periods of resource shortage.)

The vast majority of the literature on hunting and gathering societies indicates that the processes of communal distribution and generalized reciprocity have the net effect of reducing differentials in material well-being, thus reducing stratification. Although this is particularly true for hunters and gatherers of marginal means, some authors claim that those in richer environments reduce material well-being differentials through subsistence distribution and exchange (Piddocke 1965; Suttles 1968). On the other hand, some (Gould 1980; Kobrinsky 1976; and Ruyle 1973) have contended that lavish ceremonial giveaways by the affluent elite of rich hunting and gathering societies mask substantial amounts of direct labor exploitation (slavery) and indirect labor transfers by commoners to their noble kinsmen. This same dispute has also arisen over the nature of so called "Big Man" societies in Melanesia and Polynesia, where lavish distributions of yams and other subsistence products are

made by lineage heads who have prodded and cajoled their kinsmen for additional production, which is then appropriated by the "Big Man" for the feasts (ceremonial distributions) which increase his prestige. Note that these are mixed horticultural and hunting and gathering populations. Despite some countervailing evidence concerning hunters and gatherers in rich environments, the basic findings of the ethnographic literature are that subsistence distribution and exchange leads to a decrease in differentials in material well-being between group members.

Question 5      To what extent do production activities leading to subsistence distribution and exchange disrupt or endanger fish and animal populations?

This topic has received considerable attention in recent anthropological literature. There are two major schools of thought. The first, epitomized by the work of Joseph Birdsell (1953, 1957, 1968) but widely supported, is that hunting and gathering societies maintain equilibrium with their environments. Their cultural practices have the net joint effect of keeping population from rising to a level where economic processes (production, distribution, and exchange) can disrupt and degrade the productivity of the plant and animal resources on which the population depends. A number of cultural practices appear to serve the function of population control, including infanticide, warfare, male dominance, and religious beliefs (Harris 1974). Since this position holds that the overall cultural pattern leads to equilibrium with ecosystemic production, then it follows that subsistence distribution and exchange do not lead to overexploitation and disruption.

Most of the discussion about this model centers around the question of rates of population growth, the size of the population being seen as the crucial determiner of resource use patterns. Thus Ammerman (1976) has suggested that a stochastic model of population fluctuation, rather than a static model of population equilibrium, is a more reasonable assumption for hunting and gathering societies. In his model, stochastic variation in population growth would occasionally lead to pressure on resources, which could have a number of effects—migration, resource degradation, technological development. This view implicitly assumes a Boserupian stance in which population pressure (however defined) is seen as keying technological change and intensification of production. The Malthusian perspective, on the other hand, assumes random technological breakthroughs which allow short periods of increased standards of living to occur followed by the inevitable return to a minimal subsistence (in the sense of bare survival) standard of living due to inexorable population growth.

Despite these minor variations, supporters of the view of essentially equilibrium processes for hunting and gathering societies are persuaded by the evidence for 40,000 years of sustained interaction between hunting and gathering population and their resources without major disruption from 50,000 years ago to 10,000 years ago, when food production began.

It is at this particular juncture, that of the Neolithic revolution 10,000 years ago, which has caused recent alternative views on equilibrium processes in hunting and gathering societies to appear. If hunting and gathering societies are in equilibrium and finely tuned to the levels of resources available to them, what is the mechanism to account for the shift to food production? The Malthusian view, that of random technological

innovation, is seen by most anthropologists as begging the question. A more plausible view, advanced by Binford (1968) and Harris (1977), is that of an interactive effect between climatic change, (which led to modifications in available resources), a rise in sea level, and differential population pressures. Human populations, attempting to maintain their numbers and standard of living in the face of declining resources, were forced into the innovation of food production.

Cohen (1977) made an even stronger statement against equilibrium-system models of hunting and gathering populations. He discounted the importance of climatic and environmental change, and suggested that the archeological record, prior to domestication of plants and animals, show a "continuous (although not necessarily steady or constant) population growth and population pressure" throughout the world. He suggested that selective hunting and gathering diets focusing on animals gradually had to be broadened as increasing numbers of hunters and gatherers were found to eat more and more unpalatable goods.

An even more extreme and generally unaccepted proposition is that of Paul Martin (1973), who suggested that indiscriminate hunting practices of big-game hunting bands in the New World led to the extinction of a number of genera at the end of the Pleistocen (approx. 13,000 to 10,000 years ago). In his view subsistence practices of these hunting and gathering bands were clearly not ecologically equilibrated, but rather were a major cause in producing the shortage which required the adjustment to food production. In fact, there is virtually no direct evidence of serious resource degradation or extinctions made by hunting and gathering societies outside of the context of a broader economic system.

One of the crucial features seen by Sahlins (1976) of hunting and gathering equilibrium is the lack of incentives for material production to satisfy ever expanding wants. His widely known formulation of the "original affluent society" is built on an assumption of limited wants being well satisfied in hunting and gathering societies. There are a few hunting and gathering societies, however, which clearly did have cultural mechanisms to spur production. The most notable example of this are Northwest Coast societies, where motivation for prestige gain through potlatch distributions is thought by some to be an important spur to intensified production (Piddocke 1965, Suttles 1968, Harris 1974). Even in these societies there is no evidence of intensified production leading to resource overexploitation or degradation in the precontact period.

The whole question of population growth and regulation has been addressed in a recent collection (Cohen, Malpass, and Klein 1980), but none of the articles indicates possible implications of differential subsistence distribution and exchange systems for population growth or patterns of resource use. These questions should be investigated.

In sum, the evidence shows few, if any cases of hunting and gathering societies degrading their resources. It can therefore be inferred that subsistence distribution and exchange systems operating in hunting and gathering societies have not led to disruption of plant and animal populations.

## THE IMPACT OF COMMERCIAL EXCHANGE ON SUBSISTENCE DISTRIBUTION AND EXCHANGE

Throughout the world, hunters and gatherers have been brought into contact with various aspects of the world economy as well as being encapsulated in the political system of nation states. This has occurred at various times for different hunting and gathering groups. For example, the Tiwi of the islands off northern Australia, did not receive direct and sustained contact until the 1950's, and the Tasaday of the Phillipine Islands until the 1960's. In nearly every case such contact brings almost immediate major cultural changes after set in motion by introduction of more efficient harvesting technologies. In this section, the impacts of one type of interaction between hunting and gatherers and the world economy, that of the impacts of commercial exchange of subsistence products.

Question 1      To what extent does individual or group involvement in commercial exchange for subsistence products alter "traditional" subsistence distribution and exchange?

It should be understood that the nature of the participation of any group of hunters and gatherers in commercial exchange for their subsistence products is a function of a number of variables. A minimal set of considerations is beginning to address this variability includes the subsistence products socially produced, the size and productivity of wild population from which those products are derived, the size of the local group, the relative dietary importance of the product to the local

group, the availability of cultural substitutes, the relationship of the subsistence product to cultural institutions (required distribution, ritual, prohibitions, etc.), the amount of demand for the product in the world economy, direct or indirect competition for the commercial trade of the item, and direct or indirect completion for harvesting the item. There may be additional influences on the local group in other cultural areas which can lead to differential response to commercial exchange.

Taking these various factors into consideration, most studies indicate a significant alteration in "traditional" subsistence distribution and exchange resulting from commercial exchange for subsistence products. The classic article on this process is that of Murphy and Steward (1956:335-336) who, in comparing the Montagnais Indian hunter-trappers of Quebec with the Mundurven horticulturalist-trappers of Brazil, argued "outside commercial influence led to reduction of the local level of integration from the band or village to the individual family which became integrated as a marginal part of the much larger nation." Of specific relevance to this question, they cited a decline in "intragroup dependency," for labor as well as subsistence distribution and exchange as families became dependent on traders for subsistence, largely due to debt obligations and necessary audit relationships. In their view "the culmination point may be said to have been reached when the amount of activity devoted to production for trade grows to such an extent that it interferes with the aboriginal subsistence cycle and associated social organization and makes their continuance impossible" (Murphy and Steward 1956:336).

There are a number of important assumptions in the Murphy and Steward model which must be spelled out because deviations from these conditions, particularly, can lead to different cultural responses. The

first of these, which the authors regard as primary, is that subsistence resources desired by the world economy were best exploited by individual families controlling these products within delimited territories. A second important condition is that local technology and crafts are given up as replacements from the world economy are incorporated into the local culture through commercial exchange. They also postulate a "steady increase in demand for manufactured goods" (Murphy and Steward 1956:347) which has been recently questioned (see below). A third important condition is that of debt relations between trader and native producer. This is extremely important since it has been shown elsewhere by Ray and Freeman (1978) that fur production for commercial exchange by Alogonkians shows a strong but inverse relationship to exchange rates.

Although not specifically identified by Murphy and Steward, change in productive technology is a major intermediary variable which is given primary causal status in most theoretical treaties in social and cultural change (Mason 1975). The classic account of the near complete cultural reordering which can follow from that introduction of a more efficient production technology is Sharp's (1952) account of the impact of steel axes on the social and cultural practices of the Yir Yoront of Australia. The modifications in subsistence distribution and exchange practices, which Murphy and Steward found resulting from commercial exchange of subsistence production, has been widely, if not universally documented.

One of the most complete explorations of the modification of subsistence distribution and exchange patterns is Mutschman's (1973) study of the Mishito Indians of Nicaragua. This group practices a combination of horticultural, land hunting, and sea hunting for large turtles. Turtles are harvested by skilled pairs of men operating out of canoes, and they

make up the major proportion of the animal protein consumed by the 1,000 villages in the community Nietschmann studied. The turtle population was first devastated in the early twentieth century to supply food for the lumber and banana industries which brought large enclosed populations to the area. Following the decline of the markets for these resources in the 1930's (the outside populations left), they returned to a primarily subsistence food economy and the turtle population rebounded. Mushito subsistence distribution and exchange followed a pattern of reciprocal sharing. Turtlemeat distribution documented in Nietschman in the 1960's showed eight direct distributions by the producer to other villages. In 1969 several freezing vessels began purchasing turtles for export and conversion into turtle soup. In response to a guaranteed market and high prices, the Mishito began to intensify production and increased it by 228% in one year (Nietschmann 1973:199). The increase in turtles sold was 150% at the same time, in the face of this tremendously expanded production, the amount of turtle meat consumed in the village decreased by 14% (Nietschmann 1973:199). Nietschmann (1973:202) concluded:

The more dependent Tasbajsauri nuclear families become on turtles (as well as other marketable resources) for international external exchange, the more independent they are becoming from extended families and the kinship network . . . To the extent that families participate in cash market activities involving not only surplus resources and labor above subsistence, but also labor and resources from subsistence, is the degree to which they have to disengage from horizontal social relationships kept viable through reciprocity.

Thus, commercial exchange of subsistence products has dramatically contracted the distribution and exchange networks of reciprocity practiced by the Mishito.

It is not only commercial exchange with its important characteristic of unflagging demand but also more localized exchange of subsistence

products between hunters and gatherers and horticulturalists can have similar impacts on internal subsistence distribution and exchange networks. In his analysis of differences between net-hunter and archer groups of Pygmy hunters in the Congo rain forest, Alerenzi (1980:14-20) shows how archer groups are primarily dependent on cultivated foodstuffs which they obtain from Bantu horticulturalists in exchange for meat and predator protection. Net hunters, on the other hand, are overwhelmingly dependent on their own subsistence production for survival. The upshot of these different strategies or internal relationship is as follows (Abruzzi 1980:14):

The economic dependence of the archers, unlike that of the net hunters, is not upon each other, instead their economic ties are primarily with the external agricultural villages, and not as a group, but rather as individual hunters. Consequently, individual archer families have developed strong socioeconomic relationships with the villagers rather than with each other. This is in contrast to the net-hunters who, being dependent upon each other economically, have organized socially to ensure their survival.

Thus, in some cases, external dependence and exchange rather than commercial or market dependence and exchange may also cause the contraction of internal group subsistence distribution and exchange networks.

Despite the predominance of findings supporting the attenuation of subsistence distribution and exchange networks as a result of commercial (or other) exchange of subsistence production, there are a number of examples of group intensifying cultural traditions after becoming involved in commercial trade for subsistence products. The most notable examples of this pattern are Northwest Coast Native American societies, who a number of writers (Drucher 1939; Duff 1964; Fisher 1977) have suggested underwent cultural florescence in terms of artistic production and potlatching during the period of the sea otter trade in late eighteenth

and nineteenth century. Although these studies do not specifically deal with subsistence distribution and exchange, it can be inferred from mention of potlatching behavior having increased that these other patterns would have likely persisted. This is particularly true since Euroamerican sea otter traders did not use subsistence replacement as a mainstay of the trade goods and therefore Northwest Coast groups continued to be dependent on their own subsistence products. In addition, no technological element introduced at that time could lead individual efforts nor did the sea otter population lead itself to delimited territorial patterns of exploitation.

Hart (1978) in a recent study of net hunting Pygmies involved in commercial exchange of the meat they catch with outside traders found no attenuation in subsistence distribution and exchange networks, although he did find reduced levels of meat consumption during certain periods for the group as a whole. He attributed this continuation to the fact that the production technology has not been altered, and the traditional commercial net hunt involving the entire group, including women and children, are still the major production strategy. Hunt (1978:349) observed "From what I saw, Mbuti are unable or unwilling to show money among themselves in the same way that they share material possession, including salt and clothing." He attributed this to the fact that most material goods are perishable or not easily concealed and therefore almost immediately enter the distribution network. Money, on the other hand, can be stored and concealed.

Although this pattern of money being treated differently than other subsistence goods may be occurring among the Pygmy, it is not universal. Many Northwest Coast and Polaris groups have readily incorporated money

into potlatches and "give-aways." Gron et al. (1979:1099) point out that the Kasela of Brazil, who are heavy participators in commercial exchange, use money to meet ceremonial obligations.

Recently in alternative perspective of the individualism-attenuation model discussed above has been offered by Gross et al (1979). Based on study of four Srazilis groups with different environmental conditions and ties to the commercial economy, these authors suggest that market participation is a function primarily of encroachment, circumscription, redentorization, and habitual-degradation forcing people to turn to new techniques, tools, and activities to meet subsistence needs. Further, their findings indicate little support for the view that the irresistible lure of trade goods is what attracts Native peoples to market exchange. Finally, even in the face of significant market interaction by two of the groups, Gross et al (1979:1097) found that "preservation of native culture seems not only to contribute to survival by maintaining group identity but also by ordering social behavior and exchange is a concretely beneficial fashion."

In sum, although many studies indicate that commercial exchange of subsistence products can lead to contraction of subsistence distribution and exchange networks, there are also cases in which this does not occur. It appears that an important variable is whether it does or does not occur is the degree to which decline of resources or environmental degradation accompanies the commercial exchange of subsistence products.

Notes to Part I

1. The terms formalist and substantivist are derived from Polanyi, who traced the division to the work of Austrian economist Karl Merger. Polanyi uses the term "formal" to refer to the "logical character of the means-end relationship" and the term "substantive" to mean "an institutionalized process of interaction which functions to provide material means in society." A formalist, then, supports the universal validity and applicability of conventional economic theory. A substantivist denies its universal applicability, claiming that it is germane only to industrial-commercial societies or commercial sectors of preindustrial societies where, among other things, a price-making mechanism is available to fix the relationship between supply and demand.
  
2. The substantive view is not totally foreign to conventional economists as the following quotation from Boulding (1970:6) indicates:

In some fields the 'less or more' may be less nicely calculated than in the market place, though one sometimes wonders after studying the exotic behavior of banks, corporations, and labor unions whether those phenomena could not be profitably studied with the techniques of the cultural anthropologist. Custom, habit, tradition, and ritual play an important part in the day-to-day activity of the most solemnly economic and ostensibly money-making institutions... Indeed, it may well be that the saint—who knows what spiritual goods he wants and who goes after them regardless of how many norms of conventional behavior he shatters—is closer to the pattern of economic man than is the frock-coated banker whose watch word is respectability...
  
3. There is a great deal of variation among historical materialists in the theoretical usage of these terms.

4. Polanyi accepts the premise that there are societies in which the economy is not embedded in the social structure, namely capitalist societies (Cook 1973:514).
5. A similar cry for attention to consumption has sounded from the symbolic camp in Mary Douglas' and Baron Isherwood's recent work The World of Goods (1979).
6. Polanyi's formulation of the principal of reciprocity in his first opus The Great Transformation (1944:47) appears to be derived solely from the works of Melinowski and Richard Thurnwald, an early British economic anthropologist, and not from Mauss.
7. Pryor's modification is based on "the exclusion of most 'social invisibles' that are often invoked by the participants or by observers to be the counterflows which 'balance' a flow of goods and services," (Pryor 1977:28). The "social invisibles" he clearly implicates are deference, respect, prestige, protection, and recognition. Although it is important to make this distinction to escape from the tautologies of the social exchange theorists such as Heath and Schneider who assume a priori a "balance" in transactions and the post hoc seek elements to balance the exchange. Pryor precipitously destroys the possibility of any social exchange theory. Such a position is excessive.

8. Sahlins has an unusual definition of affluence—"By the common understanding, an affluent society is one in which all the people's material wants are easily satisfied" (Sahlins 1972:1). It is a psychological definition tied to satisfaction rather than an empirical definition tied to the measurement of quantities.
9. Transfers can be benevolently inspired (parents gifts to children) or malevolently inspired (theft, exaction of tribute) (Pryor 1977:34).
10. They also go on to say that potlatches are actually staged by one group and involve another invited group and interpret this as an acknowledgement by the individual being potlatched or staging the potlatch of the claims of the group over his individual claims.

## SUBSISTENCE EXCHANGE SYSTEMS IN

### ALASKA LITERATURE SURVEY

#### PART II. DISTRIBUTION AND EXCHANGE OF SUBSISTENCE

##### RESOURCES IN ALASKA

###### Introduction

Review of Alaskan ethnographic literature reveals that subsistence systems in Alaska are characterized by many different types of distribution patterns. Analysis of the circulation of goods and services or subsistence resources in Alaska reveals the relationship between economic systems and non-economic institutions. In many instances the task of distinguishing between purely economic and cultural functions of distribution is at best imprecise. Customs and values affect the interplay between economic behavior and social relations, and culturally determined rules and regulations govern the transfer of goods from production to consumption or utilization. Alaskan distribution systems involving subsistence resources also include pure economic transactions in which the movement of goods is initiated for the principal value derived from the product itself. The literature also reveals that each society is governed by varying patterns of distribution which regulate internal as well as intertribal exchange. The mechanisms for the circulation of resource products in Alaska are classified under the following general headings:

1. Ceremonial distribution
2. Sharing

3. Partnership
4. Trade
5. Commercial exchange

#### Ceremonial Distribution

One of the most prevalent forms of resource distribution in Alaska, and certainly the form which captures the attention of most ethnographers, occurs under the rubric of ceremonial distribution. The circulation of goods is embedded within social and cultural institutions. Although the economic aspect is significant, ceremonial activities often overshadow the importance of the distribution of goods. Alaskan societies afford striking examples of varying types of ceremonial gift giving. However, the most prevalent elements generally associated with ceremonial distribution are:

1. Feasting
2. Rites of distribution
3. Prestige and status

#### TLINGIT, HAIDA, TSIMSHIAN

Perhaps the most classic ceremonies associated with the circulation of goods are those practiced by the Indians of southeast Alaska. The lavish potlatch ceremonies sponsored by the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian have been reported in the literature dating from early contact until recent times. The economic aspects of the exchange of resource goods and services within the potlatch involve the consumption and distribution of enormous amounts of fish, shellfish, meat, oil, seaweed, plants, and

berries. Niblack (1970) reported that all kinds of personal and household property, including blankets, dishes, pots, knives, spoons, canoes, spears, guns, ammunition, garments, furs, mirrors, and money, are given as gifts during potlatch ceremonies. Formerly, slaves were also given to rich and powerful visitors. Billman (1969) reported that in 1877 approximately 1,500 Tlingit participated in a potlatch which lasted four weeks. The Sitka Tlingit hosted the Kake Tlingit and were responsible for feeding their guests during the entire time they remained in Sitka. In addition to the vast amounts of subsistence food consumed, the guests also received expensive gifts. The following example, which also occurred during this potlatch, illustrates the interrelationship which existed between social relations and business transactions. A clan chief signaled that the time had arrived for debts to be paid by beating on a drum. The previous year a sister had given her brother's wife a very valuable gift and now the brother was to repay his brother-in-law, adding a percentage (Billman 1969). A person's social status increased according to the percent added to the original debt.

Oberg (1973) provided us with an economic analysis of the potlatch. He reported that potlatch goods are derived from the surplus of economic goods through exchange and also through the practice of borrowing. These debts were paid back with approximately 20 percent interest. Although no definite time limit for repayment was established, the borrower would lose prestige if the debts were not repaid in a reasonable period. The early practice was to borrow fish oil, furs, money, and ornaments to purchase slaves, coppers, and blankets--the primary potlatch gifts. In later periods, blankets and money were borrowed and used as the potlatch gifts. Oberg points out the distinction between

the economic transaction of borrowing and lending and ceremonial distribution in the potlatch. When blankets were borrowed and returned with interest, it was a commercial transaction. However, in the potlatch these same blankets have an important social and cultural value.

Codera (1950) pointed out that potlatches are more than a single event. The distribution of property is a recurrent climax in an endless cycle of accumulating property, distributing it in a potlatch, receiving property, and once again accumulating and distributing it. Also associated with the ceremonial exchange of gifts are ceremonial services, such as assisting with invitations to potlatches or in funeral services. The ceremonial exchange of goods and services is a series of reciprocities between clans. Potlatches are sponsored to provide the dead with food and clothing and to honor their memory, to dedicate and name new or renovated tribal houses, to exhibit new clan regalia, and to validate the assumption of a new name or title (de Laguna 1972). Although potlatches are not held to the extent they formerly were, southeastern Alaska Indians do continue to sponsor them.

During August 1980, a Peace Ceremony was held at Haines. This was as a symbolic gesture to reclaim a traditional area owned by the Chilkoot Tlingits, to protest the desecration of significant landmarks (such as Deer Rock and Loon Rock) and burial grounds, and to express concern for the protection of natural resources and habitat. Prior to the Peace Ceremony, several hundred visitors (including Tlingit and non-Tlingit) feasted on dry fish, smoked fish, seal oil, eulachon oil, seaweed, and herring eggs which had been gathered by members of Raven clans.

A potlatch was held at the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall in Haines during which members of Raven clans distributed gifts to members of

Eagle clans (Tlingit & Haida Tribal News, 1980). I participated in this potlatch and received a box containing both Tlingit and store-bought food, blankets, towels, scarfs, and \$227 from seven different individuals. In addition, salmon, seaweed, and berries were served. Daanaawaak (Austin Hammond) distributed \$5,020, of which \$4,000 was his personal money and \$1,020 was given to him by various members of his own clan and other Raven clans. The total amount of money distributed among the Eagles was \$8,512, and each also received a box of goods.

#### ATHABASKAN

Van Stone (1974) suggested that the Alaskan Athabaskans transformed the potlatch ceremony from a community or clan-based rite to an essentially individualistic one. He hypothesized that this might be related to the limited availability of surplus food in the western Athabaskan area. Van Stone noted that the Upper Tanana potlatch was similar to that of the Tahltan, Carrier, Han, Atna, and Tlingit in that on the surface it was a feast of the dead but in reality, a means for achieving prestige. Less formalized potlatches were also given by the Tanana, Koyukon, Ingalik, and Kutchin. Townsend (1970) reported that the Tanaina Athabaskans also held potlatches to honor the dead as well as living persons and to legitimize marriages. According to McKennan (1959), the Upper Tanana potlatch is a gift-giving festival in honor of a dead relative, and unlike the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian potlatch, the gifts bear no interest nor are they returned. He indicated that rivalries between individuals prompted the sponsoring of more elaborate feasts to achieve leadership.

McKennan also noted that the potlatch stimulates reciprocity between different social units. Funeral preparations are conducted by members

of a different phratry than that of the deceased. Members of the deceased phratry are obligated to distribute gifts to those who assist in the burial. He noted that in the modern period, members of the deceased's phratry but a different clan also receive gifts, though not as many as the members of the clan which handled the funeral. According to McKennan, a potlatch during 1929-30 was considered small if \$2,000 worth of property were distributed. The largest potlatch reported among Upper Tanana people involved the distribution of goods worth nearly \$20,000. Property distributed included blankets, rifles, cloth, skins, furs, and food (Van Stone 1974; Graburn 1973). McKennan (1959) did not elaborate on the types of food served and distributed during a potlatch, but he noted that a "potlatch-man" would fill his cache with foodstuffs. McKennan did report that the people of the Upper Tanana serve boiled strips of fat sheep meat, but we can assume from other types of feasts that are conducted among the Athabaskans that moose, bear, caribou, and fish are also important potlatch foods.

Townsend (1970) reported that in the modern period potlatches are no longer held to establish status or validate marriages. The following account (Loyens 1964) reported in detail about a modern potlatch held in Kaltag in 1963. The potlatch was held to honor two deceased men and was an intervillage affair lasting a week. Moose meat, "Native ice cream" (snow, salmon berries, seal oil, and deer tallow), pilot bread, cake, cookies, and cigarettes were served and distributed as gifts to the guests. The individuals who assisted in the burials were also paid in goods for their services during the potlatch ceremony.

In addition to potlatches, the Athabaskan groups also sponsor series of feasts at various times throughout the year. These feasts often involve only local village members, but several are held with the express purpose of inviting neighboring villages. Reciprocity, including ceremonial gift-giving between two or more villages, is traditional. Large accumulations of subsistence foods are necessary since guests are fed for several days. They are also given gifts, including subsistence and commercial goods. Feasts are held for a variety of reasons, ranging from individual life crisis, significant environmental events, or the first catch of an important fish or animal. The social and cultural rites of the feasts tend to diminish their economic value, but their frequency, the number guests (who are fed for several days), and the ceremonial gifts of resource goods indicate that the cumulative economic value of these feasts is significant.

Osgood and other ethnographers who conducted field work in Alaska during the 1930's and 1940's provided a representative sample of the various types of feasts involving ceremonial exchange of subsistence goods among the Athabaskan groups. Some of the feasts listed below have been abandoned. For example, the King Salmon Ceremony, which celebrated the first fish caught, has not been practiced since the introduction of fishwheels because it was no longer possible to determine the first salmon caught (Sullivan 1942).

Ingalik (Osgood 1958)

The Feast of the Eclipse

Feast of the First Salmon

Wolverine Feasts

Wolf Ceremony

Eskimo Bear Ceremony

Putting Down For First Game

Putting Down For a Second Name

Putting Down For Labrets

The Partner's Potlatch

The Mask Dance

The Bladder Ceremony

Koyukon (Sullivan 1942)

Duck Hunt Feast

King Salmon Ceremony

Wolverine Feasts

Midwinter Celebration

Big Feast (unnamed, held in spring)

Chandalar Kutchin (McKenna 1965)

Lunar Eclipse Festival

Birth of Child

Boy's First Killing of Game

Marriage

Ditcurai (Successful Hunt)

Story-telling Contests

Vunta Kutchin (Balicki 1963)

Birth of First Child

First Kill

Arrival of First King Salmon

Moose Feast

Tanaina (Osgood 1933)

Rite of First Salmon

Upper Tanana (McKenna 1959)

Winter Festival

Han (McKenna 1959)

Winter Festival

#### ALEUT

The ethnographic literature describing ceremonial exchange among the Aleut is not as extensive as that for other cultural groups, but we know from several sources, that the distribution of gifts within ceremonies was an integral part of early aboriginal Aleut life (Coxe 1966, Lantis 1970, Reubel 1961). Lantis (1947) reported that Aleut ceremonialism resembled Northwest Coast, or the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian of southeast Alaska. She cited a greater prominence of potlatching in contrast to gift exchange.

A translation of early Russian material (circa 1763) noted that interisland feasts were common (Coxe 1966). Veniaminov reported that both formal and informal feasts were sponsored. He did not offer a description of informal feasts except to note that they were private. He described formal festivals as alternating between one settlement and another. The feasts were sponsored by the entire village, and almost

every inhabitant gave their entire food supply away (Spaulding 1955). Reubel (1961), drawing on earlier ethnographic reports, described an "Asking Festival." During the ceremonial rite of exchange, an individual holding a wand would request a specific gift from someone of the opposite sex. Apparently, the individuals exchanging gifts are considered partners or hold a temporary relationship to one another. They would continue to exchange gifts in succeeding years at the same festival. Spaulding (1955) disputed Veniaminov's claim that Aleuts abandoned feasts and festivals at the time they became Christianized. He reported that in 1952 his informants described feasts which were held in Akutan which were similar to those described by Veniaminov.

#### YUPIK-INUPIAT

Four cultural provinces are distinguished among the Yupik and Inupiat (collectively called Eskimos)--the Northwest Interior, Bering Strait, Seward Peninsula to Kuskokwim River, and Pacific Coast. Lantis (1947) explained the particularities of each of these areas on routine contact with surrounding major culture areas and by local development within the above identified culture province.

Lantis' (1947) survey on Inupiat-Yupik ceremonialism provided an exhaustive analysis of the cultural elements (noneconomic) of ceremonialism. She classifies ceremonialism into three categories. The first includes ceremonies at life crises, memorial feasts, secret, and society performances which are involved with individual life crises; the second for building, war, and the celestial phenomena (usually small and disparate); and the third was associated with hunting. Boat launching

ceremonies initiated the hunting seasons. Minor hunting and fishing rites included first fruit rituals and the cults of individual species of game.

The Great Hunting Festivals were held for large numbers of people and were directed toward spirits controlling the animals. The coastal Inupiat and Yupik ceremonies focused on seal, bear, whale, and walrus. In the interior of northwest Alaska, the fox, wolf, and wolverine were also considered important. Lantis (1947) reported that all ceremonies connected with hunting were stressed. The first catch; boat-launching for hunting celebrations after the hunt; returning of the head, bones, or bladder of the slain animal to the sea; and entertaining the spirits that controlled the animals were all highly ceremonialized. The hunting ceremonies were elaborate and characterized by feasting and gift distribution almost to the limit of the groups capacity to provide for them.

In general, gift exchange within ceremonies were of two principal forms. The first was an exchange of presents which individuals had previously requested. The second was contribution of goods to a common pile which was distributed to all present at the feasts but particularly to the elderly. The prearranged gift exchanges occurred between the sexes, between two sides of the ceremonial houses or between two ceremonial houses within a community, and also between communities. Lantis (1947) noted that the prearranged gift exchange was characteristic of all of western Alaska. Although the literature does not present detailed information on economic exchange, other sources give additional information about the economic elements or aspects of ceremonial exchange of resources in Inupiat and Yupik ceremonies.

According to Oswalt (1963) the most elaborate set of rituals performed by the Kuskokwim Yupik were associated with the "Great Ceremony for the Dead." He reported on a feast which was held in 1887 at Napaskiak. Of the 706 participants, 580 were guests from other villages. During the first six days the visitors were fed an estimated 2,880 pounds of frozen fish, an undetermined amount of dry fish, 14 large dishes of "native ice cream," and seal oil during the 6 day feast. Gifts were also distributed to the 580 guests. One elderly woman alone presented the following:

- 27 pairs fish skin boots each with straw socks
- 21 fish skin coats with fish skin bags
- 20 fish skin bags
- 23 grass baskets
- 21 grass fish bags
- 40 tin dippers
- 20 small wooden buckets.

One man gave 20 coils of rounded harpoon rope cut from sea lion skins and ivory attachments. Another man gave 20 bags of seal oil, worth \$2.50 according to prices paid by the traders.

Various mechanisms were also initiated by the Inupiat and Yupik to facilitate resource exchange. Among some Yupik groups, old men exchanged their songs with different dancers for items they needed (Hawkes 1913). In other feasts women could ask for gifts they needed (Oswalt 1963). Birket-Smith (1933) reported "extravagant" eating and distribution of gifts among the Sugpiaq (Chugach Eskimos). Ingstad (1954) noted that

the Nunamiut awarded skin tents to individuals who won races during their Invitation Feast. Other presents distributed were fox, wolverine, and wolf skins. Songs were sung about the presents which the guests would not receive. Gubser (1965) reported that on rare occasions the Nunamiut (inland Inupiat) exchanged feasts with the Koyukon Indians. Ray (1975) noted that products which were not available within the boundaries of one group were acquired from neighboring groups through requests made in the Messenger feasts. Giddings reported on a Feast for the Dead held in Kobuk in 1941. Relatives who worked on a funeral were paid with food and seal oil and clothes, which included beaver pants, marten skin parkas, and rawhide lines. He also reported another feast which lasted several days and included people from Shungnak, Kotzebue, and the lower Yukon. Many of the traditional feasts are held concurrently with American holidays, such as Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas (Chance 1966).

The most notable recent report on ceremonial distribution comes from southwestern Alaska. Riordan (1980) reported on three types of public ceremonial distribution. The first one, the Spring Seal party, involved the distribution of seal meat and other goods from a woman to other women who are not her relatives. At the second, a Fall Feast, seal meat is again distributed. This may be either with or without accompanying gifts and a public meal for older men of the community. A third ceremony, the Winter Exchange Dance, is a two-phase event. During the first phase, women acting as men dance and give gifts to men. In the second phase, men acting as women dance and present gifts to women of the village. Riordan noted that during one month she attended 70 seal parties. Worl (1979, 1980) reported on the distribution of

whale meat, muktuk, caribou, and fish during ceremonies associated with whaling.

### Sharing

A survey of ethnographic literature describing modes of subsistence exchange in Alaska revealed that the concept of "sharing" has been extensively used, particularly in reference to the Yupik and Inupiat and to a lesser degree among the Athabaskan. Price (1975) defined sharing as the allocation of economic goods and services without calculating returns. His analysis, which appears to be particularly relevant to Alaskan societies, found that most sharing takes place within a social group that is small scale and personal in quality. He noted that there is generally face-to-face interaction of the same people over an extended period of time. The patterns of personal interdependency significantly influence the patterns of economic distribution, which are often initiated at an unconscious level. Sharing is also embedded within the social and cultural dimensions of the society and is expressed in ethical and religious systems. Although members of the group are cooperative and interdependent, sharing tends to be unequal.

#### TLINGIT, HAIDA, TSIMSHIAN

According to the basic criteria outlined above for the circulation of goods through sharing, southeast Alaska Indians' distribution systems are not characterized by formal sharing attributes. However, informal sharing occurs through casual visiting patterns. For example, Sackett (1979) reported visiting among families camped along the riverside

during eulachon season. According to Sackett, they were observed sharing food, particularly eulachon and eulachon oil during their visits.

Internal exchange among the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian occurred through other mechanisms, such as the potlatch. Additionally, the house and clan unit, which characterized the southeast Alaska Indians social organization, was also considered the economic unit. In this case, goods procured by the economic unit were owned and shared by members of that group. Stanley (1965) reported that the Tlingit clan houses still exist in Kake, Sitka, Juneau, Hoonah, and Klukwan. He noted that they remain a focus for ceremonial and social life but did not refer to the economic activity associated with the house unit. His reference to social function may refer to the hosting of potlatches. Earlier citations indicated that potlatches still serve as a mechanism for the distribution of goods. In theory, if the clan and house units are no longer functioning as economic units except through the potlatch, sharing would intensify.

#### ATHABASKAN

The sharing of such big game, as caribou, moose, and bears, according to some definite pattern of distribution, is customary among a number of Alaskan Athabaskan groups. Among the Koyukon the successful hunter gets the head and breast, and the remainder is divided in equal shares among members of the band. Even if the hunter takes game without any assistance, he still must share his take. The eldest hunter receives special consideration, such as getting the hide of any bear taken. Each man takes the rabbits he kills during a rabbit drive,

which involves several men; however, he is expected to share his catch with those who are less successful (Sullivan 1942). The Upper Tanana hunter who kills an animal is entitled to the hind quarter, the ribs and hide goes to his partner, and the rest is shared with other members of the camp, particularly with those in need of assistance (McKenna 1959). The Kutchin hunter gives his harvest to a man of a different clan, who in turn provides a feast for the entire group (Graburn 1973; Osgood 1970). Graburn also indicated that individuals who owned caribou surrounds were entitled to share in caribou killed by other hunters who used the surround. However, Balikci (1963) noted that among the Vunta Kutchin the owner of the caribou surround was considered the owner of all caribou taken and that he supervised sharing. Less successful hunting groups assembled near the successful and participated in consumption. Among the Peel River Kutchin, members of the poor class, who assisted wealthy men in the construction of caribou surrounds, could share in the distribution of meat following the successful harvest of caribou (Osgood 1970). The Vunta Kutchin also shared among themselves fish taken in fish traps. The shares were not distributed equally among the participants but depended on the size of the family.

When a youth kills his first game he generally does not keep a portion; instead, he shares it with various members of the community. The people of Tetlin hold that caribou, sheep, rabbit, or any meat of any animal taken by a youth for the first time cannot be eaten by the boy or his family. Instead, the meat must be given to his cross-relatives. If the game is small, it is given together with two or three blankets without other ceremonies. If the parents of the youth who took

his first game or a daughter who picked her first berries are rich, they are expected to host a potlatch (Guedon 1974).

According to several researchers, the tradition of sharing remains strong among the Athabaskan groups. Caulfield (1979) who conducted field research in 1976-1977 in the Upper Yukon, found that moose and other large game are commonly divided among households to insure that everyone gets fresh meat. Hosley (1961) maintains that a basic feature of the social structure in the Upper Kuskokwim is sharing and cooperation. Food, wood, and even gasoline and money are shared. An individual who works alone and does not share his harvest is not considered a good member of the village. Among the Kutchin, the contemporary hunting unit is comprised of two or three nonkin hunters. Most frequently the harvest is still shared equally among members of the hunting unit. According to Balikci (1963), the general rule among the Vunta Kutchin is that if game is abundant and everyone is able to hunt, sharing is restricted. However, if caribou are few, sharing is maximized immediately after the hunt. Later, after the meat is dried, needy families receive food gifts from more fortunate relatives. Balikci's informants maintained that caribou meat had formerly been much more generously shared. Today, caribou is considered individual property, but moose is always shared throughout the settlement.

#### ALEUT

The distribution of fish according to established sharing patterns throughout the entire community, originally reported for the 1750 to 1810 period by Lantis (1970), remains prevalent among Aleut communities (Spauling 1955; Berreman 1954). In the early aboriginal period, an

island chief was entitled to a share of every village hunt (Stein 1977). Two primary subsistence products, salmon and sea lions, are harvested through cooperative efforts and are shared on a villagewide basis. A hunter generally keeps enough to maintain his own household, but he is expected to share with those who were less successful and to reserve shares for those to whom he has an obligation.

Sharing is uniformly reported to be based on need and not an equal distribution throughout the community households. Berreman (1954) reported that although every man was capable of securing his own sea lion, they were always shared throughout the village. Even those households that didn't send a representative were appropriated a share at the time of butchering and division (Spaulding 1955). Berreman (1954) reported that one community which took their salmon through seining, shared the salmon among only those who participated in seining.

Berries and greens gathered by women in small, kin-related groups are shared according to the desires of each woman or may be used to pay off obligations. Egg collecting is a communitywide effort. Eggs are pooled and distributed throughout the village.

#### YUPIK-INUPIAT

Noneconomic values which promote economic distribution through various sharing mechanisms are the most pronounced among the Inupiat and Yupik societies. Cultural values, socialization patterns, social status and prestige, ideological beliefs, and even modern-day Christian church activities promote sharing of resource goods (Worl 1979). Sharing is commonly noted as an integral aspect of hunting in almost all ethnographic literature relating to Yupik and Inupiat subsistence from the

earliest period to contemporary times.

Birket-Smith (1933) reported that the Suqpiak considered meat to be common property to be divided equally among villagers. The Paluguvik even shared the whales they caught with nearby villages where the waters was too shallow for whales to enter. Although no intricate rules for division of whale meat existed, special rules for sharing baleen and skins did apply. Befu (1970) also reported that the Sugpiaq of Kodiak Island distributed the meat of large animals such as seals, sea lions, and bears among village members.

Lantis (1946), who conducted her fieldwork during 1939-1940, noted that Nunivak Yupik interpersonal social obligations were continuously discharged by wealthy men feeding the elderly and orphans. In return, these poor people would assist their benefactor in whatever manner they could. If an individual who was cutting and hanging fish was approached by someone saying he needed fish, he had to comply with the request. On the other hand, one must not ask too often. Lantis maintained that each family or individual was independent, giving and receiving from others on the basis of a variety of personal needs or social considerations.

Oswalt's (1963) work on Napaskiak described various forms of sharing. The men's ceremonial house served as a center where orphans and visitors were fed. Gifts of food always enhanced one's prestige. Individuals were expected to share with their family but not necessarily with the entire village. Oswalt noted that an extended family maintained subsistence obligations with each other, such as the common use of equipment and a common cache.

Sharing of subsistence resources among the St. Lawrence Island Siberian Yupik took several forms. One of the most unique patterns occurred with marriage. Once a couple decided on marriage, the prospective

groom began to work for his future father-in-law. His primary obligation was to serve as a crew member in his future father-in-law's boat. The usual period was from two to three years. The groom work requirement is retained in the present culture but is significantly shorter, lasting from six months to a year (Hughes 1960). (I conducted field work at Gambell in the spring of 1980. I reported in a film entitled "The Elusive Whale," produced by the University of Alaska, Arctic Environmental Information and Data Center in 1981, that a young man who married during the period I was there was obligated to give his share of whale from his father's boat to his father-in-law. He was also serving his year of servitude to his father-in-law). Hughes also reported that this first step in the marriage process began with the distribution of gifts to the girl's father and clansmen. He discussed subgroups in Gambell, which are distinguished as ramka or clans. The primary functions of these groups is to share meat and other food among its members. Although meat is shared freely with anyone who asks for it, clansmen receive preferential distribution. Clanswomen also provide services to boat captains by sewing walrus hide covers onto a boat frame. The captain gives a gift of meat or a useful article from the hunt at a later date.

Bogojavlensky's dissertation research (1969) among the King Islanders and Diomeders from 1966 through 1968 provides us greater detail and current data about sharing patterns governing the distribution of walrus. At Diomede, walrus is sorted in piles separating the tongues, flippers, and meat. The captain gets the first choice and as much as he desires; and the rest is divided among crew members. The captain and the owner of the outboard motor keep one half of all the ivory, and the rest is

divided equally among the crew, including any of the captain's sons over the age of twelve. The captain may also appropriate all the cow hides. He may also allow a faithful crew member to take a hide, but the captain retains the right to take back the hide once the crewman's wife has split the skin.

The wives and mothers of King Island crews, on the other hand, maintain the right to distribute the walruses. Distribution among the crew members is equal. The captain generally receives a larger share since his boat and sons also receive shares. However, his wife will redistribute shares among the wives of the crew members (or provide large wooden trays of cooked meat to members of the crew) during the winter months. King Island captains also retain full rights to cow (female walrus) hides except that they are more inclined to grant one hide to two crew members.

Yupik and Inupiat societies are characterized by formalized rules regulated sharing. Some of the distribution patterns, specifically those relating to bowhead whales, are even codified and reviewed annually (Spencer 1969; Vanstone 1962; Worl 1980). Contemporary sharing patterns among the Inupiat have been described in many sources. Uhl (1979) reported the necessity to share specialized and expensive equipment among friends, and sharing is also extended to include non-Inupiat members of northwestern villages. Saario (1966) observed skilled and successful hunters sharing with needy individuals. He also noted that caribou, which were hunted communally, were shared equally. Milan (1964) revealed that the practice of whaling captains providing their crew members with food survives into the present period. Anderson (1977) noted that inland-coastal patterns of sharing are still main-

tained. He found that individuals in Kiana received supplies of seal oil from their relatives in Kotzebue.

Lantis (1946) reported that patterns of formalized sharing of walrus occurred among the Nunivak Yupik. If two hunters took a walrus, it was divided equally. If three men were involved, the first two divided the walrus hide lengthwise and the third man got the tusks. If a fourth man participated, he received the stomach. Other intricate rules applied and were determined by who scored the first on a serious shot. Age also appeared to be a factor in dividing the walrus. Lantis noted that there were no rules for division of a whale found dead or caught in a net. Oswalt (1963) also noted that Kuskokwim Yupik divided beluga whale and seals according to established patterns. Ray (1966) reported that the hunters at St. Michael divided the whale among the hunters who captured the whale, the larger share going to the hunter who was responsible for the kill. Those who assisted in hauling in the whale were also entitled to a share, and bystanders received a small portion for immediate consumption. The tail was saved for a feast in which it was distributed among the guests.

Formalized patterns of sharing also governed the distribution of whales among the St. Lawrence Island Siberian Yupik (Hughes 1960). The traditional pattern of sharing was based on differential distribution. The amount a crew received was determined by the order in which the boats struck the whale. The order of the first four boats striking the whale was formalized in a series of titles. During the period in which Hughes conducted his field work, the pattern of division changed to provide for equal distribution, and the basic unit of division was the household.

Kivalina hunters, who communally harvested beluga in 1959 through 1961, divided them among all family units according to established customs. The tail flukes of the first beluga taken each season were cut into strips, and each child in the village receives a portion. Saario (1966) also reported that Kivalina whalers travelled to Point Hope and returned with 2,300 pounds of bowhead whale to share amongst themselves.

Milan (1964) reported that among the Wainwright people, whale, walrus, seals, and even coal harvested on organized hunts were shared according to definite rules. Crew members, helpers, the umiaq (boat) captain, and needy and old people were entitled to formal shares. Milan also noted that a minister who was preoccupied with other tasks contributed \$50 to a crew. He, in turn, received a proportionate share of the whale. Milan found that the traditional pattern of sharing walrus had changed. For example, if an umiaq has an outboard motor attached, the captain is entitled to receive both walrus tusks, penis bone, a share of the meat for himself and an additional share for the boat. If the umiaq does not have a motor, the tusks are sold and the proceeds are divided equally among the crew. If a bearded seal is taken by an umiaq with a motor, the captain receives the skin, otherwise the skin is cut up for boat sales or is sold, and the boat sales or money is divided among the hunters.

Worl (1979, 1980) described the formal distribution patterns of the bowhead whale within six communities. She noted that although the possessory law gives title to the captain who fired the first bomb, the

distribution codes in essence establish the captain as the trustee. The distribution codes dictate disposition of the whale and establish the vested interest of the crew. Work also made a distinction between the "initial" and "secondary" distributions. The initial distribution of the whale occurs among the whaling crews that assisted in taking the whale, and the secondary distribution occurs throughout the annual series of ceremonies.

### Partnership

The circulation of subsistence resources through the establishment of a formalized partnership between individuals is an effective method to obtain goods which are not readily available in one region. Although partnerships existed among all cultural groups within Alaska, they appear to have been most prevalent among the Inupiat, Yupik, and Athabaskan. For southeastern Alaska Indians, alliances between clans were more dominant than partnerships between individuals. Individuals did establish trading partnerships, but generally it was between clans which had trading relations.

The major characteristic of partnerships is that they are voluntarily established between two individuals who are not related. Partnerships generally persist throughout an individual's lifetime. An individual may also have more than one partner. Partnerships are generally established with individuals of the same sex. Although social or ritual elements may be involved in partnerships, the primary function is economic. Some partnerships are instituted between individuals who have access to different ecological resources. They are primarily oriented to the exchange of goods and services. Individuals will seek out a

person who can provide particular goods and/or services. Partners are expected to share generously with each other (Burch 1970; Graburn and Strong 1973).

#### ATHABASKAN

The partnership is a common feature of northern Athabaskan social organization, with two types exhibited among several groups. One form of partnership was established primarily for hunting and the other explicitly for trading goods. The Eyak distinguished two types of partnerships based on kinship (Birket-Smith and deLaguna 1938). Temporary or short-term partnerships were also established among the Athabaskans.

The Peel River Kutchin established temporary hunting partnerships. They preferred individuals who were related but did choose partners from other clans. According to Osgood (1970), the kin relationship insured a greater share of the killer's portion of the game. The second type of partnership among the Peel River Kutchin was a special bond between two individuals. Not everyone entered into this type of relationship. The economic obligation between these partners included the right to expect the greatest material assistance possible. The Fort Yukon Kutchin also had two forms, including a hunting partnership and another relationship in which the partners were able to take anything belonging to their partner. These special relationships were also known to be established with Eskimos (Osgood 1970).

The Tanaina also recognized two forms of partnership. One type was established between wealthy men who were of the opposite moiety and was established as a protective alliance. Partners were expected to

protect one another when visiting. These partnerships were formalized with the exchange of valuable gifts (such as a sea otter parka) followed by a potlatch. The second, more common type of partnership was for hunting, in which harvested game shared between the two (Osgood 1933).

The Chandalar Kutchin, Upper Tanana and Koyukon established partnerships based on friendship. The Koyukon recognized one partner as being senior, and he acted as the leader in common enterprises, such as the construction of fish wheels (Sullivan 1942). The Upper Tanana partnership enabled the partners to use each other's hunting camp if hunting was poor in their own area (McKenna 1959). The Chandalar Kutchin established partnerships within the band and another with neighboring groups. Partnerships with neighboring groups were recognized by mutual exchange of presents (McKenna 1965).

#### YUPIK-INUPIAT

Partnerships among the Yupik and Inupiat were quite common and continue to persist in essentially the traditional form. Burch (1970) reported that in northern Alaska individuals have at least one trading partner, and many are involved in several. New partnerships continue to be established.

Lantis (1946) reported that Nunivak partners exchanged gifts during ceremonies that they could never have obtained by their own effort. Ager (1980), who conducted fieldwork in Tununak in 1973, reported that women were responsible for the distribution of meat and most locally manufactured goods. A woman shared the food she collected and exchanged gifts with her partner. Ager noted that partnership exchanges were a

primary mechanism for mobility of resources and goods beyond the family circle. The St. Lawrence Siberian Yupik institutionalized partnerships between men of different clans. Partners were expected to share goods and assist one another (Hughes 1960).

The Inupiat established both hunting and trading partnerships. Hunting partners assisted one another and shared their harvest. Products not available within tribal boundaries were acquired through trading partners. In addition, partners also exchanged gifts (Chance 1966; Giddings 1961; Milan 1964; Ray 1975).

Anderson (1977) provided examples of recent partnership activities. He reported that several Kiana residents went to Point Hope in 1975 to attend the spring whaling feast. They brought with them dried white fish, half-dried fish, dried meat, and frozen berries. They stayed at the homes of their trading partners and received muktuk (whale blubber). Anderson noted that intervillage exchange among the inland villages along the Kobuk River occurred through partnerships. Widowed women with no kin established partnerships with female friends who would share meat from game hunted by her husband. Anderson described the following different types of partnerships.

1. Fishing partnerships between women
2. Partnerships between women who participate in joint activities such as berry picking and plant gathering
3. Transitory partnerships to cooperate in subsistence activities
4. Hunting partners
5. Trading partnerships
6. Partnerships to help with services

## Trading

Trading among Alaska Native societies was an economic mechanism to obtain subsistence resources which were not available locally. The literature reveals that trade flourished among all groups. Contact with Westerners intensified trade and changed the economic value patterns of aboriginal groups. Trade was intervillage and intertribal as well as intercontinental. Trade networks and routes were well recognized, and in some regions definite trading centers were established. While trading might be accompanied by ceremonies, ritual, or other social activities, the primary objective was and is economic--to acquire goods which are not available in one's own group. The exchange of one commodity for another might be according to established ratios or by actual bargaining. Although Alaskan ethnography is replete with accounts of trading transactions, the literature (with the exception of few accounts) does not generally indicate the worth of a commodity in terms of other commodities. Therefore, the degree of interdependence between trading groups is difficult to ascertain.

### TLINGIT, HAIDA, TSIMSHIAN

Trading was an important feature of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian economies. These groups initiated trade within their own tribal group, among themselves, and with neighboring tribes. Early Russian, English, and American traders uniformly reported that they were highly skilled traders and conducted their business transactions according to definite procedures.

Slave trade was particularly important to the Tsimshian and Haida until it was outlawed by the government. Slave trade persisted into the 1860's (Van Den Brink 1974). According to Oberg (1973), to obtain slaves the Haida and Tsimshian either raided the villages of Puget Sound and at the mouth of the Fraser River or obtained them from the Kwakiutl, who also raided this area.

The basic exchange patterns among the southeast Indians involved trade between those groups living on the islands and those living on the mainland. The mainland villages situated along rivers undertook expeditions into the Interior to trade with the Athabaskans. A north and south trade also occurred. The Tlingit travelled several hundred miles to trade with the Haida and Tsimshian. During the fur trading era they undertook voyages of a thousand miles to Victoria and Puget Sound trading posts. Travel north and into the Interior was to such places as Copper and White rivers. Trade into the Interior was monopolized by certain clans and villages who maintained exclusive trading rights with the Athabaskans.

The materials traded were the outcome of regional and ecological differentiation. The islanders produced dried venison, seal oil, dried halibut, dried king salmon, dried herring, dried algae, clams, mussels, sea urchins, herring eggs, and numerous other sea products. They exchanged their surplus goods with mainland villagers who produced rabbit, marmot, moose hides, furs, eulachon oil, dried eulachon, cranberries preserved in oil, sheep horn spoons, Chilkat blankets, and spruce root baskets. The mainland Indians obtained from the Athabaskans prepared moose hides, decorated moccasins, birchwood bows wound with porcupine

gut, and prepared caribou hide. They also obtained placer copper, which was highly prized as a potlatch item. The Athabaskan obtained cedar bark baskets, fish oil, iron, and shell ornaments (Oberg 1973; Olson 1936).

Oberg (1973) noted that it is difficult to measure the degree of interdependence between the groups. Articles such as copper shields, Chilkat blankets, and abalone shell ornaments were of the highest value in potlatches, yet these articles were produced only in special regions. Wearing apparel of moose and caribou hide was universally worn by southeast Indians, yet there were no moose on the islands where the greatest number of Indians were concentrated. Eulachon oil was universally used by all southeast Indians and preferred over seal oil. The Tsimshian specialized in extracting this oil. The large cedar canoes used by the Tlingit were made by the Haida and Tsimshian. Oberg reported that the arrival of white men into the trading scene changed the economic value of furs, with the value decreasing in the following descending order.

Before White Men

sea otter  
 marten  
 beaver  
 otter  
 black fox  
 cross fox  
 mink  
 wolverine  
 wolf  
 bear

Arrival of White Men

sea otter  
 black fox  
 cross fox  
 beaver  
 marten  
 otter  
 mink  
 wolf  
 wolverine  
 bear

Niblack (1970) reported that Port Simpson at the head of Dixon Entrance was the great emporium of trade for the surrounding region. In September of 1841 approximately 14,000 Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimshian met there to trade. The Tsimshian served as the middlemen for the south to north trade. They were considered the great traders in oil and grease prepared from eulachon, seal blubber, deer, and goat flesh. One blanket brought 10 to 15 pounds of eulachon grease or oil in the late 1880's. After the depletion of the sea otter by the Russians, the Haida cultivated potatoes and traded 500 to 800 bushels a season. The Haida also traded with the Tsimshian for tobacco.

#### ATHABASKAN

Athabaskan groups traded among themselves and conducted intertribal trade with their Inupiat, Yupik, and Tlingit neighbors. Aboriginal trade played an important economic role and was well established prior to white contact. Athabaskans had obtained Russian manufactured goods through aboriginal Indian trade routes and through the Eskimos long before Westerners arrived in Alaska (Graburn 1973). The Chandalar Kutchin reported that prior to the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Yukon, they received iron kettles from the Eskimos in exchange for their wolverine skins and woven spruce root baskets. The Eskimos also brought polar bear and white fox furs.

This trade with the Eskimo was both social and economic in nature with large parties of Athabaskans and Eskimos meeting in the territory of either group. Old John Lake, near the present Arctic Village, was a favorite site for these gatherings (McKenna 1963). Unlike the Dihai Kutchin, the Chandalar Kutchin enjoyed relatively peaceful relations

with the northern Eskimo. They also entered into institutionalized partnerships with them. They travelled to the Arctic Coast and to the estuary of the Mackenzie River, trading their wolverine skins for baby seal skins. Osgood (1970) reported that the Kutchin also acquired whale bone from the Eskimos. The Tanaina Athabaskans traded their moose and caribou skins, ground squirrel and wolverine hides, and birchbark and sheep horn manufactured goods with Kodiak and Chugach Eskimos as well as those of the lower Kuskokwim. The Eskimos provided coastal products, such as sea mammal oil, seals, and skins (Behnke 1978; Osgood 1933). Koyukon Athabaskan traded wolverine and wolf skins with coastal Eskimos, who provided whale oil and blubber and seal skins. According to Sullivan (1942), The Koyukuk Indians and the Kobuk Eskimo formed the connecting link between the Indian summer fair at Nuklukheyet (near the mouth of the Tanana on the Yukon) and the summer trade fair at Kotzebue Sound.

Although the aboriginal trade decreased for a period, Clark (1974) noted a resurgence of trade during her field research in the early 1960's. She attributed this to the increase in ease of transportation, especially available by aircraft.

As noted earlier, the Athabaskan engaged in extensive commerce with the Tlingit until the mid-1800's. Copper was highly desired by the Tlingit for their potlatch gifts. The Ahtna obtained their copper from the Copper River; the Athabaskan group at Kluane secured the metal from the gravels of the Kletsan, a tributary of the White River. Although the Upper Tanana had little copper to trade with the Tlingit, they exchanged some with the Yukon tribes. The Upper Tanaina first secured dentalia, tobacco, glass beads, iron implements, blankets from the Kluane and Chilkat ceremonial robes from the Chilkat Tlingit. The Upper

Tanaina met the Chilkat at a site very close to the present international boundary. On their way home they would visit the Copper River to conduct further trade (McKenna 1959).

The Athabaskan groups also traded among themselves. McKenna (1965) reported that the Tanaina traded with inland Kutchin groups. The Athabaskan of the lower Tanana River served as middlemen. Dentalia and copper and later iron adzes and axes and beads were highly prized by the Chandalar Kutchin. Native tradition holds that the Dihai Kutchin originally came from the Tanana River and made their way down the Yukon River as far as Nulato and then up the Koyukuk River, where they settled near its headwaters. According to McKenna, this is the same route by which trade items first reached the Chandalar Kutchin. Osgood (1970) reported that the Yukon Flats Kutchin were distinguished traders, who obtained many of their goods from other Indians. He also provided us with a description of a transaction involving the exchange of beads and dry fish. A bundle of dry fish was set out, and the purchaser put a number of beads on top. If there were not enough beads, the owner of the fish would remove them, indicating that more must be added to complete the transaction. Price is not actually discussed. According to Osgood (1933), the Kenai Indians served as middlemen in trading activity between the Tyonek and Susitna Indians of Lake Clark, Mulchatna, and Stony River. They were also involved in an extensive network system (Behnke 1978). Townsend (1970) reported that the Tanaina were involved in extensive trading with the Copper River, Ingalik, Tanana, and Tlingit Indians as well as with Eskimo groups.

## ALEUT

Aboriginal trade was highly developed among the Aleut. Trade was primarily between contiguous villages and to a lesser degree interisland. Aleut exchange items included masks, bracelets, parkas, and other clothing items, dentalia, amber, sea otter skins, and occasionally slaves. Although trade is common between nearby communities, it is not known how often people from distant settlements meet for trade (Stein 1977; Graburn and Strong 1973). Reports on Aleut trading transactions during the early 1800's indicated that they did not trade in person. They used a reliable agent, selected from among the younger in their ranks. The agent took the goods and placed them up for sale but did not reveal the name of the owner. According to Lantis (1970), a buyer offered an item as the price, and only if the seller was satisfied did he keep it.

## YUPIK-INUPIAT

Oswalt (1967) provided a general overview of Yupik-Inupiat trading activities. Trading relations bound the Yupik-Inupiat societies with each other as well as with Siberian Yupik, Chukchi, Canadian Inupiat, and to a lesser degree with their Athabaskan neighbors. Archaeological evidence indicates that Siberia-Alaska trade is quite ancient, but Western goods began arriving in Alaska from northeastern Siberia after the Anadyrsk Post was established in 1649. The major trading centers were at Wales, Kotzebue, Sheshalik, the mouth of the Utukok River, Negalik at the mouth of the Colville River, and on Barter Island.

The primary export items from Siberia were Russian metal goods and Chukchi reindeer skins which were brought from East Cape to the Diomede

Islands, then to Wales, and later to Sheshalik. From here the Noatak people carried the goods to the Upper Noatak where they were received by inland Inupiat who then travelled to the trading center at Negalik. From here the movement of goods was east to Barter Island, where trade with the Canadian Inupiat was conducted. The number of people congregating at the trading centers was significant. Various reports have indicated that as many as 600 would meet at Negalik. In 1884 an estimated 1,400 persons met at the Kotzebue trading center. Trading and social activities lasted for days or weeks.

As noted earlier, trading was conducted through the partnership system. Generally the circulation of goods was inland products (caribou and other skin for clothing and wolverine) in exchange for coastal products (primarily sea mammal oil or fat, bearded-seal skin, sinew, waterproof boot soles, walrus stains and rawhide rope, whale bone, and walrus ivory). Ecological variations also stimulated regionalized and specialized items, such as whetstones and jade adz blades from the Kobuk River and copper knife blades and soapstone lamps from the Canadian Arctic.

The Yupik were not as active traders as the Inupiat. Oswalt (1967) cited the reason as being that the resources were more evenly distributed in their region. The northern trade in which they engaged was the exchange of sea mammal fat for caribou skins. Other items included hoary marmot and ground squirrel skins for parkas in exchange for walrus ivory from the Sering Strait region. The Yupik also traded beaver and river otter pelts for Siberian reindeer skins.

Ray (1966) reported two large trading centers, Pastolik and Tachek, located between Norton Sound and the Yukon. Trade had been carried on

at these centers since ancient times. Traders from Sledge and King Island and people from Cape Price of Wales and Kotzebue Sound brought domesticated skins from Siberia in exchange for wolverine furs and wooden dishes.

Lantis (1946) reported that Nunivak Island trade with mainland groups intensified between 1880-1920. They traded directly with the inland Yupik but never with the Indians, extending their territory to the Yukon northward and the Kuskokwim southward. Although direct trade toward the Yukon was later discontinued, in 1940 Nunivakers still made regular trips up the Kuskokwim. The farther inland they went, the more profitable the trade. Forty-five squirrel skins, enough to make a man's parka, were worth only one levtak skin of a year-old bearded seal far up the Kuskokwim River. On the coast, however, they were worth two levtaks and on Nunivak even more, so the man who could afford to buy squirrel skins not only for his own family but also for trade on Nunivak could make a good profit. As Lantis conducted her fieldwork on Nunivak Island in 1939-1940, she observed that older bark for dyeing skins was obtained in trade on the mainland.

Lantis (1970) obtained the exchange values of the following items from two old men who had done considerable trading on the mainland.

NUNIVAK ARTICLES

1 large poke of seal oil  
Prepared seal intestine for 1  
parka

COMPARABLE-VALUE MAINLAND ARTICLES

Muskrat skins for 1 parka  
Prepared fishskins for 1 parka.  
(These were obtained from  
inland territory just south of  
the Yukon, where particularly  
desirable fish were caught in  
the lakes.)

## NUNIVAK ARTICLES

Prepared seal or walrus intestine for 1 parka  
 1 or 2 levtak skins (1 if trading with interior mainland, 2 with mainland coast); or 4 or 5 stomachfuls of seal oil (price varied according to quality of squirrel skins in trade); or 1 seal poke of oil  
 20 caribou skins  
 Puffin or murre skins for 1 man's parka  
 1 medium-sized wooden dish  
 1/2 walrus hide  
 1 pair good boot soles prepared for use; 1 seal stomach of seal oil; sealskin lines (any width) from one small skin;  
 2 dried codfish  
 1 kayak  
 1 kayak sled  
 1 umiak

## COMPARABLE-VALUE MAINLAND ARTICLES

2 squirrel skins and strip of wolverine for 1 man's cap  
 Squirrel skin for 1 parka  
 1 wolverine  
 1 mukluk skin (traded on Nunivak)  
 1 foxskin; or 1 levtak skin (principally traded on Nunivak in recent years)  
 1 levtak (on mainland coast, also on Nunivak)  
 Each \$1 (1910-20); since one whole wolverine skin cost a Nunivaker from \$12 to \$15 at that time, one can gauge the value of the other products  
 \$50, paid in beaver, squirrel, and wolverine  
 \$10, paid in beaver, squirrel, and wolverine  
 \$100, paid in beaver, squirrel, and wolverine

### Commercial Exchange

Although Alaska subsistence economies were once autonomous and independent, the literature indicates that these societies became increasingly interrelated with the commercial market after the arrival of the European and American traders. Initial transactions involved the direct exchange of natural resources, primarily furs, for Western wares. The evolution of the interrelationship between Alaska subsistence systems and the capital market has not been analyzed, but the literature indicates that subsistence systems are universally interrelated with the

market economy. The literature does not reveal the varying degree of interdependence between the different subsistence systems and market economies. Literature describing the commercial exchange for subsistence products in Alaska is limited, but we can discern some general contemporary patterns.

Van Stone's research (1960) in Point Hope, Napaskiak, and Eskimo Point revealed that the village stores traded furs and other locally manufactured items for commercial goods. In 1965 Smith (1966) found an entire room in the Point Hope store filled with seal, polar bear, walrus, and other hides and raw ivory, ivory carvings, masks, and baleen baskets which had been taken in trade. Worl (1980), who conducted research in the North Slope in 1975-1977, noted that the village store was often owned by the villagers themselves and served as the "protein bank." Individuals could later purchase the subsistence products they had sold to the store to acquire cash.

Clark (1974) reported that items sold by the Eskimos and Indians in the Allakaket and Alatna regions to Eskimos on the Kobuk and at Anaktuvuk Pass and the Indians on the lower Koyukuk and the Yukon included tanned moose skins, wolf skins for parka ruffs, racing dogs, and snow shoes. Muskrat parkas, caribou, and moose skin mukluks and dolls were manufactured by the Indians and Eskimos and sold to both Indians and Eskimos from the Koyukon who resided in other parts of the United States and also to retail houses in Fairbanks and Tanana. The major Native item purchased by the Indians and Eskimos at Allakaket and Alatna was smoked salmon strips obtained from Koyukon Athabaskans living at Ruby. Clark also reported that until World War II an Eskimo entrepreneur from Alatna made

several trips by dog sled each winter to the Shungnak region on the Kobuk, transporting passengers between the two rivers. They also obtained coastal products, seal oil, and whale blubber from the Kobuk Eskimo to resell to the Koyukuk.

Bogojavlensky (1969) described as follows the commercial exchange pattern of ivory among the King Islanders and Diomeders when he conducted his field research in 1966-1968.

Crew members with shares of ivory will, if possible, save it for the coming winter. It sells for two dollars per pound raw and up to four times that amount after it has been carved. It is therefore advantageous to dispose of ivory through carvings. In fact, it is often first sold to the store in the spring, and then bought back as it is needed for carving. Nowadays, carvers who are out of ivory will buy it from the Native Store. The stores in the Strait are usually out of raw ivory sometime in the winter because the supply ship picks up carvings, ivory and skins immediately after the spring hunt. By March, an ivory shortage for some men may begin. They are then forced to buy it from others, who exact high prices.

The captains' stocks of ivory were obviously far greater than any one man could carve in a winter. A captain is not obliged to keep a supply on hand for his crew, though he usually does, selling it to them at a very low price. In any case, there is no glory or prestige in carving, and captains tend to do less carving than other men, both because they have less need for store goods and because they have less time. Their position as leaders carries burdens of pursuing tasks more appropriate to the ideal of the Eskimo man, such as polar bear hunting, boatbuilding, and the fashioning of perfectly made traditional Eskimo artifacts, of which there are very many.

Consequently, the captains hauled their ivory harvest to the mainland to get better prices than those at the village store. Eskimos on the mainland were usually short of ivory to carve, so the island captains established trading relationships with certain profitable mainlanders. Such Native products as reindeer sinew, tallow, drymeat, berries, dried salmon, herring, and especially such furs as reindeer fawnskins, muskrat, wolf, wolverine, and Parry's ground squirrel are also scarce on the mainland and usually cannot be regularly purchased. Walrus oil, meat, and ivory are exchanged for these. All those products are harder to obtain than cash. Both the mainlanders and the islanders prefer to make such trading transactions rather than to use cash.

Worl (1980) found that commercial goods, subsistence resources, and manufactured products and services are exchanged in the North Slope subsistence economy. She noted that subsistence goods or products sold within the social unit are at a "Native price." This is a social exchange price which does not include labor costs, but it does require a reciprocal obligation on the part of the purchaser to provide or share subsistence resources at a later date. She developed the following table to demonstrate the exchange patterns. As the table indicates with an "X," cash is not generally shared, but an individual may allow a hunter to use his snow-machine or provide gas or ammunition (equipment) in exchange for a share of the resource harvested (natural resources).

#### SUMMARY

Ceremonial distribution of subsistence resources involves both feasting and gift-giving. The literature reveals that ceremonial rites involved the consumption of enormous amounts of subsistence foods during feasting, which would often last for several days or more. Various mechanisms were developed by the different societies to distribute gifts among community members and between different communities. These mechanisms served to increase the prestige of the donor as well as redistributing resources throughout the community. In addition, the ceremonial distribution of gifts also served as a social welfare system by providing a particular segment of the society, notably the elders, with goods they otherwise could not obtain. The ethnographic reports indicated that the types of ceremonies held by different groups were quite varied, but literature describing the modern period generally is not available to

SUBSISTENCE EXCHANGE

	Natural Resources	<sup>1</sup> Productive Services Goods	Use of Hunting Camp Site	<sup>2</sup> Equipment	Cash
Natural Resources	X	X	X	X	X
<sup>1</sup> Productive Services/ Goods	X	X	X	X	X
Use of Hunting Camp Site	X	X	X	X	
<sup>2</sup> Equipment	X	X	X	X	
Cash	X				

1. Goods or services derived from the subsistence resource.

2. Equipment obtained from the capital market system.

identify the types of ceremonies which have survived into the contemporary period and the amount of subsistence resources involved. However, the literature available does indicate that cultural and social values which promote ceremonial feasting and distributing of resource goods has persisted in all Alaskan groups.

The distribution of subsistence resources through sharing patterns appears to have persisted among all groups to the present period. The apparent changes in the economic unit among the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian may have altered the sharing patterns. As previously noted, the tribal house served as the basic economic unit, and goods produced by the economic unit were consumed by house members. While individual membership in a clan and house is still recognized, members of a clan no longer maintain common residence in tribal houses except in a few isolated instances. Thus, the tribal house probably no longer functions as an economic unit. Based on the changes in residential patterns and in the economic productive unit, and the continuing relationship between house and clan members (particularly manifested through potlatching); we may assume that sharing among house and clan members living in nuclear family houses occurs. Another apparent change in sharing patterns has occurred through the movement of individuals to urban centers. The literature suggests that subsistence resources are shared with these individuals. We also distinguish "formalized sharing patterns" dictating the disposition of resources, which is particularly evident in the whaling complex.

According to several sources, the partnership system is still viable, particularly among the Eskimo groups. While the partnership

form of distribution of subsistence goods was once prevalent among Athabaskan groups, the absence of discussion on partnerships in later literature indicates that it did not survive past the 1940's. The literature discusses contemporary Athabaskan exchange of resources through trade but does not mention formalized partnership. The extensive trading networks, routes, and centers which once characterized Alaskan societies into the early historic era have disappeared. However, regionalized trading, particularly through trading partners, persist.

While aboriginal trading patterns have declined, commercial exchange has increased. Within commercial exchange, we also find other distribution mechanisms, such as sharing and trading of commercial and subsistence goods to be prevalent. The interrelationship between subsistence and market economies in Alaska is an area which warrants further research. Recent studies initiated by the National Park Service and doctoral dissertation research by several individuals indicate that many groups still sustain themselves measurably through their own hunting, fishing, and gathering efforts.

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