Arctic Anarchy:

Private Governance Among the Inuit[1]

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Abstract

The Inuit of the Polar North remained stateless well into the 20th century. Even today, some Inuit practice the old ways. How did they remain stateless for so long? How was governance provided without the state? This paper seeks to elaborate on the voluntary leadership structure of the Inuit, discuss the causes of Inuit anarchy, and expound on how they provided law and order in the absence of the state. Numerous mechanisms of Inuit statelessness will be described.

Keywords: *Private Governance, Native American, Anarchy, Private Property*

JEL Codes: N41, N42, N91, N92, P20, P26, Z10, Z13

1. Introduction

The Inuit of the polar north were stateless from the time they arrived in the region well into the 20th century. Despite facing high transaction costs, they found ways to privatize resources and adjudicate disputes. This paper investigates the extent of private governance among the Inuit. First, it describes the constraints they face. Second, it elaborates on the norms and practices that the Inuit used to privatize resources and adjudicate disputes. This paper contributes to the literature on primitive economics, private property, economics of norms.

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"If anywhere there exists that community, built upon the basis of the free accord of free people, of which Kropotkin dreamt, it is to be found among these poor tribes neighboring upon the North Pole," (Birket-Smith 1971, p. 161). Tucked away from modern civilization, the Inuit[3] developed an effective system of private governance prior to the arrival of Europeans. In frigid temperatures and the harsh climate, one might be surprised to find a successful social system, but it is precisely this environment that made anarchic governance necessary.

It is my goal to describe and evaluate the anarchist society of the natives of the polar north with special reference to the Inuit. The sources directly addressing them as anarchic are scattered, but I will unite them here. Drawing from various primary accounts and anthropological studies on the Inuit, I will attempt to provide the best possible picture of their system of governance. Doing so necessitates addressing misinterpretations, the biggest of which being the claim that the Inuit are communist.

Initially, a brief history and description of the Inuit people will be given followed by a survey of their leadership. The natives of the polar region are the subject of this paper, but occasional references to the Aleutians and Siberians will be made due to their similar cultures, environment, and governance structure. From the information provided, I will speculate as to why they did not form a state. I will contest claims that they were communistic then go into how extensive private property was in their society and how law and order was provided. Ultimately, this paper provides a greater understanding of governance in the Northern polar region and Native American society in general.

[3] Whenever I refer to "Inuit" it will broadly be in reference to all polar tribes that share the "Eskimo" culture that many are familiar with.

This paper is a contribution to the fields of private governance and Native American studies/economics, while also strengthening our knowledge of the pre-Columbian world. It further provides successful examples of how people can organize voluntarily outside of the state and how reputational mechanisms play a large role in doing so.

2. The People of the Polar North

During the dispersion of mankind across the world, the far reaches of the world were the last to be colonized. Hoppe (2015, p. 27) posits the three options open to prehistoric man: fight, migrate, or innovate. In an effort to make a living and avoid conflict, the people who would become the Inuit chose to migrate, eventually finding their way to the polar north.

Around 6,000 years ago, the Inuit arrived in North America following the same motivation for migration described above; they were most likely facing pressure to move from their ancestral home in Asia due to migrations of other groups from the south (Freuchen 1961, p. 28). Responding to these pressures, they crossed the Bearing Strait into North America. They came into conflict with Native American tribes when they arrived—forcing them to migrate to the Arctic regions of modern day Canada rather than more temperate regions (Freuchen 1961, p. 29). Additionally, the migration of caribou to the Arctic made life in the region more sustainable. The melting of ice enabled the migration of whales further into the polar region, therefore, allowing the migration of people.

The Inuit population fluctuated around 100,000 (Farb 1968, p. 34), but figures near the end of the anarchic period place the Inuit at around 53,000-73,000 (Freuchen 1961, p. 31, Farb 1968, p. 34) The population is mainly sustained through hunting, whaling, and the harpooning of other large sea mammals. Whales, seals, walruses, polar bears, foxes, hare, caribou, and musk ox provide the main source of food for the Inuit (Freuchen 1961, pp. 17-18). Hunting, broadly defined, is the most important aspect of the Inuit lifestyle.

3. Anarchy Snowbound

3.1 Natural Authority

Various centers of authority are found in Inuit society. The *headmen*, hunters, whalers, and shaman will be described and their social functions will be explained. The survey of these centers of authority will make it clear that none of these groups are representative of what we know as the state.

The parallels between chieftainship in the Inuit context and other ancient societies is unavoidable. Rothbard (1978) describes the tribal structure of Celtic Europe as the chief "merely a war leader who was only called into his warrior role whenever war with other tribes was under way" (p. 78). He concludes that the Celts, therefore, did not have a "permanent war or military bureaucracy." The Celts had a strong libertarian element despite their temporary war states. The Inuit, as well as other Native American tribes, had no circumstantial statist structure, whether during peace or conflict.

"Stefansson did not describe the social organization or marriage customs of the Copper Eskimo in any coherent way, which may have been because there were no

coherent rules," (Service 1962, p. 103). The Inuit had "no true political organization," (Driver 1969, pp. 288-290). What little leadership they had was in the form of headmen. Rather than a position based on compulsion, headmen were merely those who were naturally followed—acquiring their prestige through hunting and whaling.[4] Hunting and voyaging parties form spontaneously based on reputation (Freuchen 1961, p. 161). Driver (1969) also notes the shaman as a center of authority equivalent to that of the headman, but the shaman's authority only extends into the realm of maintaining the purity of the tribe through rituals. The shaman provided the authority necessary of the maintenance of various taboos.

[4] This is similar to what David Friedman described in the chapter "Comanche, Kiowa and Cheyenne: The Plains Indians" in his book *Legal Systems Very Different from Ours*. He describes the North American plains natives. Regarding the Comanche, Friedman states:

> [T]heir government is the simplest of the three to describe, since they did not have one. A Comanche war chief was simply an entrepreneur, a warrior who announced his intent to go steal horses from the Mexicans, Americans, or some other tribe, and invited anyone interested to come along. Within the war party he had absolute rule but anyone unhappy with the situation was free to leave. A Comanche peace chief was simply an individual whom others were willing to follow. If he chose to go one direction and the rest of the band another, he was no longer a peace chief…The Comanche, in other words, were anarchists. Their social system included institutions for coordination at the level of the individual band but nothing we would recognize as a government over either the band or the entire tribe… Part of the reason, seen from an economist's perspective, is that they made warfare into a private rather than a public good. For most of their history, the incentive to fight was not the welfare of the tribe but of the individual warrior. Successful raids produced valuable loot. Heroic and successful fighting produced status… One way of getting status was to steal horses from outsiders. Another was to face down another Comanche warrior.

Friedman further states that the Kiowa, despite having something that he judges as closer to government than the Comanche, had a society based heavily on status. Certain groups would gain a permanent status as the natural elite, but it all had to be gained voluntarily. Keeley (1996), Earle (1997), Salerno (2006) affirm that most primitive warfare was organized in this manner as well. Though there is a great deal of speculation in the case of the societies mentioned in this note, the Inuit provide no confusion on this issue. Hunting and whaling parties were formed spontaneously and voluntarily. There is no doubt about that.

Mead (1961, p. 61) provides an interesting description of the Inuit political affairs, stating, "Every adult may be thought of as a sovereign state dealing with other such sovereign states and answerable to no one but itself," (p. 61) and furthermore, "There is no organized leadership, but there are recognized leaders. An outstanding hunter, a powerful angakok, a skillful drum singer…" (p. 62). Finally, Mead (1961, p.63) states:

> Leadership, such as it is, is ephemeral. A man's standing as a successful hunter may vary from season to season, depending on his luck as well as his skill, and since prestige depends on how well a person is doing, not on how well a person has done, a man whose best days are past will not be so important as one who is in the full vigor of his prime. It is this ephemeral quality and the stressing of individualism that tend to preclude social stratification.

The natural elite vary randomly across time, making it more difficult for one member of the elite to form a state.

Hoppe (2005)'s endogenous theory of state formation holds that hereditary chieftainships pass on their power to their progeny and eventually monopolize their services. However, as has been noted, the two prerequisites of Hoppe's theory, hereditary positions and monopolization, are either impossible or extremely difficult. Hereditary positions do not exist in Inuit society. As has been noted, positions of authority vary seasonally. Monopolization is made difficult by this fact.

On the point of the volatility of social bodies further, preference determines what political bodies a family or individual chooses to be a part of (Mead 1961, p. 53).

> [W]hen hunting is bad and the supply of food and blubber is short…no person or family is obliged to remain within the group. In times of scarcity a man is free to leave whenever he pleases. This freedom makes intelligible the chief role of the "headman," whose authority is limited to acting as a host when strangers arrive and to determining the division and arrangement of the stalls within the house (Mead 1961, p. 58).

Voluntary association determines social bodies, such as villages, but voluntary consent applies after the body is formed or joined as well. Nobody is compelled to remain a part of the group or village. “The individual nuclear households are the basic economic units, and as they move with the seasons to various hunting and fishing grounds they may peacefully join others in any of those places, whether they are related or not,” (Service 1962, p. 99).

Headmen (whose name in Inuit literally translates to “he who knows best”) occupied the only leadership role in the village context, and their position was not imposed or inherited, but obtained through achievement (Farb 1968, pp. 40-41). One might be tempted to say that the “shaman” has some level of coercive authority; however, the position of shaman is not one of power. Shamans are either physically or mentally disadvantaged members of the group (Farb 1968, p.50). Rather than hunt, which they sometimes do, they provide religious services to the Inuit. This alleged center of coercive authority is merely a consequence of comparative advantage. They specialize in providing “intellectual” or “entertainment” services, production processes that more able-bodied men cannot partake in.[5]

The “headman” seemingly has some coercive authority in dividing and arranging stalls in the house, but even this can be considered anarchic as the “headman” is determined by reputation. They are considered the best person to handle such an executive affair, and his role may even shift seasonally.

[5] In most primitive societies, if a mentally or physically disabled person is not killed at birth, they will likely take on some function as a shaman later in life.

Given similar constraints, it should not be surprising that the Inuit have similar governance to the natives of Siberia. "[T]he reindeer-herding peoples had no institutionalized hierarchy and congregated regularly, as small family bands, only for councils and seasonal rituals, or to share the fruits of their hunt," (Bobrick 1992, p.36). The Siberian people were "politically organized" less than other native tribes in the old Russian Empire (Bobrick 1992, p. 112). The Aleuts, close relatives of the Eskimo that inhabit the Aleutian islands in the Bering Sea, also possess "little tribal governance," (Bobrick 1992, p. 212). The Aleuts, like the Inuit, were extremely isolated; however, due to being surrounded by water, it made them susceptible to invasion by sea by the Russians, a threat that the primitive immigrants to the Aleutians could not have foreseen.[6]

3.2 State Formation

The formation of the state and why it was unlikely in Inuit society has been alluded to above, but I will address it more carefully here. A variety of factors made the formation of a state nearly impossible in Inuit society: inconsistent natural elite, opportunity cost of conquest, harsh geography, and ostracism.

As has been noted prior, the natural elite in Inuit society is composed of the best hunters, whalers, and navigators. These skills can vary seasonally. A man who has been a good hunter for years could be displaced by a bad month. The natural elite constantly has people moving in and out of its ranks, making it difficult for one person to remain in the position for long. If the existence of a natural elite leads to the existence of the state,

[6] The Yaghan people of Cape Horn and the surrounding region show a similar pattern of governance. What is interesting is that Cape Horn is on the opposite end of the world, the southern tip of South America. There seems to be a connection between living in inhospitable environments and anarchic governance, as if the state is too costly for primitive peoples to adopt. For more, refer to Bridges (1950) and Murphy (2004).

then societies that have less consistent natural aristocracies will have a lower degree of state formation.[7]

Additionally, the high opportunity cost of conquest limits it. The resources necessary for engaging in conquest are also the resources necessary for hunting and whaling. One cannot survive long in the Arctic without the necessary provisions, which must be constantly maintained and produced. Engaging in war would jeopardize the survival of oneself and the tribe as a whole not only from conflict, but from starvation and ruin. Lee and DeVore (1968) note that hunting-centric societies have a very low incidence of war (pp. 333-334). They provide a variety of reasons, such as intermarriage[8], but it is likely that the comparative advantage explanation factors in as well.[9]

Harris (1977, p. 41) vividly states:

> Many Eskimo groups maintain high rates of female infanticide even though they have relatively little organized intergroup armed conflict. The explanation for this is that in the Arctic environment the superior muscle power of males plays a role in production that is analogous to the role it plays in warfare in other regions. The Eskimo need every ounce of brawn to track, trap, and kill their animal prey. Unlike hunters in more temperate zones, the Eskimo find it difficult to achieve overkill. Their problem is simply to get enough to eat and to prevent their own population from falling below replacement strength.

[7] Societies that have more hospitable environments would be more conducive to state formation primarily because of access to agriculture, which would yield more consistently than hunting and whaling, enabling the formation of a more consistent natural elite and maybe a hereditary system of leadership. This is seen in ancient Peru. The natural elite were centered around agricultural management, and their positions were passed down to succeeding generations. Louis Baudin (2011) discusses the leadership system (*ayllus*) in ancient Peru further in his book *A Socialist Empire: The Incas of Peru*.

[8] Intermarriage and polygamy are a method of extending one's ability to cooperate with others. My friend and colleague Sam Branthoover is working on a project regarding polygamy and has found this to be the case. Refer to his forthcoming paper regarding the subject.

[9] The writers in Lee and DeVore (1968) are mostly anthropologists. The methods and tools of economics were definitely not foreign to them, but they were not primarily concerned with economics and thus may not have realized certain explanations.

Hunting is definitively shown by Harris to be an alternative to warfare. Hunting, being necessary for the continued survival of the Inuit, will displace warfare as a method of accumulating wealth.

The Arctic and the South American tribes contrast well. The South American tribes engaged more heavily in agriculture, but they also experienced a higher degree of state formation. Combining South America's relatively hospitable climate with the less of a need for production processes based on more gender specific roles, strong men in villages were freed to engage in conquest of other tribes. The war-makers in primitive society are mostly men, making more hunting-centric cultures less war-like. More expansive agricultural methods cause less specialization between men and women regarding their main source of sustenance, leading to men being able to specialize in production that physically superior individuals would excel in, such as war.

It would almost go without saying that the Arctic is not desirable land. The fact that the Arctic is so uncontestable makes it undesirable to external aggressors. Conquest from without was essentially a non-existent threat for most of Arctic history. This is not just a historical accident. Early man migrated across the globe to escape the prospect of violent conflict with their fellow man. It seems as though the Inuit accomplished this goal for the most part. The Arctic and other inhospitable regions are not prohibitively costly to exert control over, not only because of the harsh climate, but because of the low benefit from doing so.

Lastly, ostracism provides a barrier to state formation as well because someone who expresses the necessary qualities of a state leader are driven from society. This places outcasts in an immensely precarious situation. Not only can they not depend on

their fellow man for support, but they lose almost any advocate they could have. This makes them susceptible to aggression by others, and they would have little recourse.

A volatile natural elite, the high opportunity cost of conquest, inhabiting uncontested/undesirable land, and a strong system of ostracism all contribute to the lack of state formation in Inuit society. Now that it has been thoroughly established that the Inuit are anarchic and why they are so, attention must be directed to the place of property in their society.

4. Private Property Rights

4.1 The Extent of Private Property

Freuchen describes the Thule as having everything in common. They "made it a basic rule that theft is permitted if a person badly needs what he takes," (Freuchen 1961, p. 175) but, it is unclear if presuming to be owed something by someone counts as theft. There was a presumption of sharing in Inuit society that pervaded many affairs. This is primarily why anthropologists had labeled the Inuit as communist (Farb 1972). However, upon further examination, this is more indicative of how far private property extends into their society.

Upon being requested to stop eating the food of another, there was an unspoken obligation to cease. A hunter, though, may not be inclined to make the request for it would harm his reputation. Freuchen (1961, pp. 175) describes the familiar situation of sharing:

> Anybody was allowed to feast on what he desired to eat. He would just simply climb up on the meat rack and sit there with an axe or a knife and hew off what he wanted. Nobody said a word about it. Maybe it wasn't

> always looked upon with happy eyes, but no hunter would debase himself to protest, because that would expose him as a bad hunter who could not provide all the things he desired.

This perfectly describes the presumption of sharing. Sharing would imply that there is a person choosing to share the food, a rightful owner, and he could definitely choose not to share by requesting that people not eat his food; however, this would endanger himself. Sharing helps establish his reputation as a skilled hunter, enabling him to command greater hunting or whaling parties later on, leading to greater future wealth. Likewise, not sharing diminishes his reputation, endangering his future welfare. Freuchen (1961, pp. 175-176) further describes how this dilemma is solved:

> Sometimes, our wives couldn't help getting excited when we had something particularly delicious lying out there, and other men feasted themselves too much upon what we wanted to reserve for our children. Then a wife might come out and shout to the gourmands who were sitting up there and stuffing themselves: "Listen, show a little modesty! Please let my little children taste their father's catch! Why don't you provide for yourselves what you seem to appreciate so much?"
>
> Then etiquette demanded that the husband come darting out and chase his wife away. "What words are you speaking to men? Shall a mere woman blame men for their desires? Alas, I am ashamed because I haven't taken care to beat good manners into my avaricious and stubborn wife!"
>
> This was an act, of course, put on to maintain the honor of the house, but it often got good results, and the uninvited guests withdrew.

The reputation of the hunter was thus maintained while his wife's reputation suffered. The wife, being primarily a homebody, did not require a good reputation; her survival did not rely on it. This story, one that was familiar to Freuchen, happened often and was a way of cleverly using reputational mechanisms to privatize resources.

What if one were to withstand such hints? Taking this anecdote at face value, the husband is apparently admonishing his wife and informing the guests that they can continue to eat his food. Would it be permissible for someone to continue to eat? Of

course, their reputation might be damaged, but there are real consequences for doing so. In fact, those that persist through these strong hints are considered thieves, strengthening the claim that there is in fact private property in Inuit society. Freuchen (1961, p. 176) tells the story of Kayuk, one such man who took the custom of sharing too far. "[Kayuk] was widely known for pilfering for himself all the good-tasting things. Modesty was unknown to him, and he was even called a thief…Kayuk was considered dishonest." Freuchen (1961, p. 177) goes on to tell of how Kayuk would purposely drop newborn puppies so as to kill them, allowing himself to eat the dead pups. Justice came to him later:

> He had a weakness for frozen liver. He himself went out hunting very little, but when somebody else brought home game and reported his catch, Kayuk immediately went to visit that particular house. And when people had seal liver lying on the meat rack to be frozen and served as a special delicacy when they had guests, he would often make himself comfortable upon the meat rack and devour every bite.
>
> One of the hunters got fed up with that. He had a dog that was getting old and useless, so he killed it and placed its liver on the meat rack. It was dark, and the liver looks like liver. But dog liver is poisonous, unfit for human consumption. Kayuk suspected nothing, he had been out to look at his traps, and the very same evening he was up there eating away lustily. The other villagers invented excuses to go out and watch him and - for once - enjoy his gluttony.
>
> The next morning he was sick and suffered terribly. He became almost paralyzed, his skin peeled off, and his eyes were very weak for months after. But he didn't die in this round. The next year, when Kayuk drowned, it was naturally considered to be punishment from Silarssuaq, the great spirit of justice, who hits all offenders.

The consequences of what the Inuit considered to be thieving were harsh. Of course, sharing is assumed, but the "limit is easily reached," (Freuchen 1961, p. 178). As established, sharing is done more than willingly by the hunter or whaler. It provides them with security and reputation, two things that are necessary to live in such

conditions, but this is different from socialism. There is no compelled sharing. It is done voluntarily for self-interested reasons, and if the recipients are asked to stop, they must stop, and they will be fully aware of the consequences of exceeding consumption of what is typically permissible.

4.2 Polar Justice

Eskimos rarely use violence (Freuchen 1961, p. 160). Keeley (1996, p. 29), however, counters this point (emphasis added):

> The Copper Eskimo, who appear as a peaceful society…also experienced a high level of feuding and homicide before the Royal Canadian Mounted Police suppressed it.. Moreover, in one Copper Eskimo camp of fifteen families first contacted early in this century, every adult male had been *involved* in a homicide. Other Eskimo of the high arctic who were organized into small bands also fit this pattern.

Keeley continues describing the allegedly horrible state of affairs of the Inuit. According to Keeley, certain small groups had higher murder rates than the United States. This is meant to shock the reader; however, in an endnote, Keeley states that even if the total number of annual murders were one homicide in some of these groups, the homicide rate would be higher than that of the United States (p. 206). Obviously this is not comparable at all, and it is framed in this way to make the Inuit appear to be exceedingly violent relative to modern man.

Keeley's concealed praise of the civilized Mounted Police is not that impressive when paired with the facts. The Mounted Police lacked an understanding of Inuit culture, which led to some radical misunderstandings and perverse incentives. Freuchen relays the story of a white "trader" named Jane, who "had an odd method of trading: he would force the Eskimo to give up their fox skins at the point of a revolver," (Freuchen

1961, p. 180). Nuralack, "a who had already distinguished himself by killing a couple of people[10]," was called upon by disgruntled Inuit to take care of Jane. Upon killing Jane, he was lauded as a hero among the Inuit for the completely justified killing, but he was arrested by the Mounted Police, put on trial, and sentenced to 10 years in prison in Ottawa (Freuchen 1961, p. 181). His father, Umilik, was immensely proud of his son for the deed because from the perspective of the Inuit, Nuralack was kept in a "big house at one of their huge settlements and supplied him with food and clothes without any effort or payment in return," (Freuchen 1961, p. 181).

The attempt at punishing Nuralack was misperceived as a reward rather than a punishment. The prison was paradise compared to the conditions of the arctic. Unfortunately, Nuralack got tuberculosis in prison and was sent back to his village early where he would die (Freuchen 1961, p. 181). Freuchen (1961, p. 181) labels this as representative of how "fruitless and meaningless imprisonment was in dealing with the Eskimo." Thus, modern methods of justice were ineffective at governing. Such methods undoubtedly encouraged more violence among the Inuit.

As late as 1961, despite the steps toward the statist governance of Denmark, Greenland had no prisons. Freuchen notes that "advertising a felon's shame [was] still pretty effective," (Freuchen 1961, p. 182). In recent news, 2019 ushered in the first fully-closed prison in Greenland (Sillesen 2020). Although, between 1961 and 2019, there were other forms of imprisonment used, it is clear that this late adoption of traditional prisons is a consequence of the traditional reliance on ostracism.

[10] No further elaboration was given.

Additionally, referring to these murders as homicide obscures the purpose behind the killings. Rather than simple crimes of passion, these murders were typically blood killings. Similar to the blood feuds of Medieval Iceland (Friedman 1979, Posner 1992, Long 2002), blood killings were used to punish murder and settle conflict. Discussing blood killings as one would discuss normal crime or worse, war, misrepresents the nature of blood killings. It would be more accurate to refer to it as capital punishment.

The cases of Kayuk and Jane represent just killings, but neither are examples of blood killings. Freuchen (1961, pp. 164-170) relays a case of blood killings being

A man named Uvigsakavsik became known for traveling to New York. Upon this becoming public knowledge, he began spreading lies about the land to the south. It had become so unbearable that he was no longer recognized as “a worthy co-hunter” and therefore ostracized. Upon being excommunicated from society, he planted himself in unsettled land in the Melville Bay area where other ostracized people settled with him. Uvigsakavsik’s village became a refuge for people who were seeking safety from blood avengers.

Uvigsakavsik became the leader of this village, having possessed skills of a good hunter himself. However, he became a despot, having stolen two wives and began tormenting the husband of his second wife, Sigdlu. Uvigsakavsik would go as far as harassing Sigdlu by randomly shooting at him. It should be no surprise that this village became despotic. The people living there have nowhere else to go and have no recourse against abuses due to their status as outcasts. This kind of social circumscription led to a state of affairs similar to the beginnings of a state; however, this would not last long.

Odark, purely out of selfish motive, came to the village in search of Uvigsakavsik. Odark was looking for a new wife and killing Uvigsakavsik provided an excellent opportunity for doing so. Upon arriving at the village, Odark and Sigdlu contracted to help each other kill Uvigsakavsik and divide his wives evenly amongst them. Sigdlu received his wife, Alakrasina, back, and Odark received Uvigsakavsik's first wife, Meqo. They killed Uvigsakavsik and parted ways.

In the aftermath, Odark assumed that nobody would try to avenge Uvigsakavsik—more than likely due to the latter's horrible reputation. Samik—Uvigsakavsik's brother—surprisingly decided to take revenge. Rather than attempting to kill Odark, he decided to kill Sigdlu's brother given that Sigdlu initiated the killing of Uvigsakavsik. Killing a party not related to the initial wrong is uncommon. Knud Rasmussen and Peter Freuchen decided that this was a perfect time to intervene. They successfully mediated the conflict, preventing any further killings.

It is a rare thing that blood killings devolve into a tit-for-tat war. Unlike other cultures, blood feuds do not simply end upon the killing of the aggressing party. When one man kills another, the son or relative of the killed man is expected to kill the killer. Upon the killer being killed, it is expected of his family to return the favor. One might expect this to devolve into a situation in which everyone kills each other—*an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind*—but the violent potential becomes known, the community takes it into their hands to make sure that no more killings come out of it.

Farb (1968, pp. 44-45) notes that blood feuds were seen as potentially dangerous. Of course, anyone can recognize the logic of tit-for-tat conflict; the Inuit certainly were familiar with it. As Farb states:

> The Eskimo realize that feuds are potentially dangerous to their existence, and families are quick to punish the wrongdoers in their own ranks. Every attempt is made to prevent a quarrel from leading to murder. As soon as a quarrel becomes public knowledge, other people in the group seek out a kinsman common to both parties to adjudicate.

Farb (1968, pp. 44-45) further notes that if someone murders repeatedly, the same process may be appealed to in order to receive community permission to execute the aggressive party. "No revenge can be taken on the executioner" when this process is appealed to (p. 45).

It is important to note that there were a wide variety of customs the Inuit observed. Some may seem tedious, but they were observed for rational reasons. Rasmussen (1908) notes that Polar Inuit would "always keep their dogs fastened up," (p. 12); unaccustomed with this, Rasmussen and his party loosed their dogs, which caused quite the problem. The dogs broke into a house and ate a seal carcass, creating disorder and chaos within the house (p. 13). The custom of fastening dogs was a means of preventing runaway property, thus preventing transgression against another's person and property.

5. Conclusion

This paper offers a compelling case study in private governance. The Inuit remained stateless well into the 20th century. The Inuit possessed a flexible system of governance that was based on voluntary means rather than coercion or force. Their leadership centered on reputation—a quality that could be acquired through personal characteristics but was also susceptible to seasonal disruptions. The ephemeral status of any particular elite in addition to the high opportunity cost of conquest made the creation and sustenance of a state difficult and ultimately impossible in the long run.

They also had a non-government system of property rights enforcement that used ostracism and decentralized violence, such as blood killings.

This paper is a contribution to the literature on anarchic, stateless social orders. It is an additional case study on how a society can function without the existence of the state. Further research should be done considering the specific norms that arose to address conflict. This paper is a broad overview and hopefully serves as a stepping stone in further research on this interesting people group. Valuable insights into the possibility of effective societal organizations outside the bounds of the state can be gleaned from further research into the Inuit.

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