



THOMAS F. JOHNSTON

## A HISTORICAL VIEW OF INUPIAT ESKIMO DANCE

*ABSTRACT: The ancient centers of northern Eskimo ceremonialism lay in an arc joining the coastal whaling communities, from Point Barrow southward. It was closely related to the rich sea mammal harvest, which sustained large populations and inspired the spirit-placatory function of communal mimetic dance, celebrating the inua. Regional distribution of dance loss, or its relative cultural persistence in communities, was conditioned by missionary suppression, the demise of the traditional shaman-drummer, increasing language loss, and the rise of wage labor. The latter affected the musical calendar through its seasonal demands. The great musical festivals mutated into inter-village inviting-ins where the religious connotation gave way to emphasis upon secular function: affirmation of ethnicity, community solidarity, dance team as social network, and cathartic release through recreation.*

*Vestiges of ancient dance roles survive; songtext and mime still serve to regulate social deviance, preserve local history, cement whaling crews, and provide humor as social lubricant. As the values of the dominant society move into the arctic, Inupiat traditional dance provides continuity between past and present.*

*KEY WORDS: Inupiat Eskimo — Dance — Cultural change — Point Barrow.*

H.M.S. Blossom's barge arrived at Point Barrow in 1826; in 1837 explorer John Simpson found Barrow Inupiat using tea and tobacco, some of it from Siberia (Simpson 1843). Captain Charles D. Brower took up a fifty-year residence at Barrow, and noted the establishment of European whaling stations 1855–1885, which in 1915 declined with the fortunes of the codfish market.

In the late 1800's the Federal Council of Churches divided Alaska into missionary zones, the Presbyterians at Barrow and Wainwright, the Episcopalians at Point Hope and Point Lay, and the Friends at Noorvik, Selawik, and Kivalina. The latter strongly opposed Inupiat traditional dance but the former two did not. Rev. Stevenson came first, found little interest in Christianity, and fell on his knees with hands together and eyes closed, praying. This had never been

seen before, and was the most amusing event in the community for years. Men walked around him, picking his pockets (Spencer 1959: 380).

In 1898 reindeer herds were introduced. In 1905 Brower encouraged baleen basketry, which was not indigenous, but involved transfer of baleen netting techniques. The Inupiat were successful fur trappers, but the creation of the USSR after World War I saw the importation of Siberian furs, Inupiat prices dropping from \$ 100 to \$ 5 per pelt (Spencer 1959: 361).

Beginning in 1946 Inupiat men were employed at the Barrow Naval Station, and after World War II the arctic Distant Early Warning Line was built. Wage labor and cash economy were fostered by Wien Airlines, Alaska Communication System, Federal Aviation Administration, and the schools, clinics, and post-offices, all of whom employed Inupiat workers.

Commercial employment based upon individual qualifications tended to undermine cooperative subsistence, and in recent decades the international whale quotas have somewhat limited the whale hunt around which much of the Inupiaq lifestyle and even world-view centers. Inupiaq traditional dance has survived largely through the efforts of groups of community elders and through the support of the new Native Corporations, who maintain folklore archives and employ Native and other collectors. The Johnson-O'Malley Act provides for the use of Native Cultural Aides in the schools, where Inupiaq dance is taught, supplementing the role of the community hall dance team in this respect.

#### THE VILLAGES WHERE DANCE SURVIVES

The communal performance of traditional Eskimo dance today is strongest in an arc of coastal whaling villages reaching from the northern Canadian border at Kaktovik, on Barter Island, to Unalakleet, where the Inupiat Eskimo meet the Yupik Eskimo. Barrow, which has several traditional dance teams, marks the northern limit of the area of really intensive whaling, Point Hope the southern.

Several ancient communities combined into the present-day large town of Barrow (population about 3,000). Further south, on a lagoon at the mouth of the Kuk River, lies Wainwright, and south of this is Point Lay and Cape Lisburne. The next major community, located on a sand and gravel bar formed by the Kuk-puk River, is Point Hope, a former center of much ceremonialism surrounding whaling cults.

The coastline now drops away southward, curving in slightly eastward at Kotzebue Sound, where lies the modern transportation center of Kotzebue. Between Point Hope and Kotzebue is Kivalina, at the mouth of the Wulik River. On the south side of Kotzebue Sound are Candle and Buckland. The land then juts sharply eastward toward Siberia, forming the Bering Strait, where are the contemporary Inupiat communities of Shishmaref, Wales, Teller, and Nome, another transportation center.

For the performance of traditional Eskimo dance, many of these communities are paired off into reciprocal hosting dyads in which two groups of distantly related trading partners and hunting partners formally fête and honor each other at seasonal inviting-in dances. Examples of this reciprocity are Barrow and Wainwright, Wainwright and Point Hope, Wales and Shishmaref. Summer travel by boat and winter travel by dogsled has given way, in some cases, to air travel on the small commuter prop planes.

Inupiaq traditional dance possesses a strong underpinning in arctic economy and its unique hunting subsistence. In ancient times, dances propitiated the *inua* spirits of whales, in modern times they unify and integrate the whaling crew. The Inupiat build large skin boats from the tough but flexible hide of the *ugruk* bearded seal, and with these boats hunt whales in the

ice leads. This is of necessity a highly coordinated activity, and the ceremonial whaling lodges were (and at Point Hope still are) a center of the social life of the whaling crews (Frankson 1980).

The Inupiat hunt seal at breathing holes in the ice, hunt caribou in the summer and the fall, fish in fresh-water streams, and operate long-distance traplines. These latter activities are more individualistic than the cooperative whaling activities, and thus do not carry the same ceremonial import. There is also the hunting of polar bears and trapping of wolves, foxes, and wolverines for their pelts. Birds are shot or netted: duck, geese, ptarmigan. The principal fish taken are grayling, the white fishes, and various trout. Spencer gives the subsistence calendar for Barrow (1959: 370).

Within the Inupiaq village economy there is a limited amount of small business entrepreneurship. Many ivory-carving artists have joined Eskimo-operated cooperatives which provide a livelihood marketing extremely high quality artifacts. Although the Inupiat now obtain much of their food supply from the village store, their nutritional protein needs are still filled to a large extent (perhaps 90 %) by eating the fresh and frozen meat of the sea mammals they hunt by traditional subsistence means. It is around this meat-eating subsistence pattern that much of the surviving ceremonial complex, together with its accompanying traditional dance, centers.



FIGURE 1. Dance-leaders David and Dinah Frankson of Point Hope are a valued Inupiat resource in traditional dance lore.

#### FACTORS INFLUENCING SURVIVAL OF DANCE

The world Eskimo population stands around 43,000 in Greenland, 17,000 in Canada, 1,000 in Siberia, and 34,000 in Alaska. The dividing community between Yupik-speaking southwestern Alaska and Inupiaq-speaking northwestern Alaska is the village of Unalakleet. North of here live 11,000 Inupiat Eskimo, of whom about 6,000 speak the language. It is strongest in the upper Kobuk communities of Amber, Shungnak, and Kobuk, and the North Slope villages of Wainwright and Anaktuvuk Pass. It is weakest in Kotzebue and in the Seward Peninsular region (Krauss 1975).

The Inupiaq language, in contrast to Yupik, is spoken across the circumpolar regions from Siberia to Greenland. In Alaska it is heard in four main dialects: Bering Strait (Wales), Qawiaq (Shaktoolik and Unalakleet), Malimiut (Kobuk, Kotzebue, Noatak, Buckland, Deering, Koyuk), and North Slope (Kivalina to Barter Island, plus inland villages Atkasuk and Anaktuvuk Pass).

Schooling is one reason for language loss. Little Diomed Roger Kunayak writes "The students started to lose the Eskimo way of life. The Bureau of Indian Affairs sent us to the State of Oregon and the State of Oklahoma and other places" (1974: 91). Missionization is another reason for language loss. Many informants describe how missionaries washed children's mouths with soap if they were heard to speak the Eskimo language.



FIGURE 2. Inupiat drummers beat the frame drum from underneath, rather than from above, as is the case with the Yupik of southwest Alaska.

In Alaska, regional distribution of dance style coincides with regional distribution of language families (i. e. Inupiaq, Yupik, Siberian Yupik on St. Lawrence Island), but regional distribution of language loss does not coincide with regional distribution of dance loss. For instance, dance loss is greatest in the Kobuk region where language is strong, because the missionary sect there is (still) strongly prejudiced against dance, claiming that it is "the work of the devil." This attitude is explained mainly by Puritan ethics, with its distrust of body beauty and gaiety. To many religious whites in the last century, dance was lewd ambling which appealed to animal instincts, was the enemy of work, evinced homosexual overtones, and was permitted only to lowly theatrical performers.

Dance survived best where ancient subsistence patterns were retained, and was therefore somewhat immune to the eroding effect of missionization — in the coastal whaling communities. The village of Point Hope (known as Tikigaq, finger) lies on a projecting spit of land from which hunters could readily sight and hunt whale. The region is the subject of Larsen and Rainey's 1948 study "Ipiutak and the arctic whaling culture," in which the writers identify approximately 600 coexisting house sites dating about a thousand years ago, with a probably average of ten persons per house (p. 367).

The rich sea mammal harvest of the Bering Strait permitted this enormous population (the present population is a mere 300). The rise of populous whaling communities suggests the probable origins of the rich ceremonial and musical life of the northern Eskimo:





FIGURE 3. Inupiat dancers either wear or hold dance mittens as a sign of respect for the inua hunting spirits.

the broad demographic base gave rise to a need for the *qalgi* ceremonial house, replete with shamans and their helpers, who organized dances to propitiate the hunting spirits, and designed and manufactured ceremonial dance masks for the festivals. The establishment of large communities made possible the large unison drumming teams and dance teams. This is in contrast to Eskimo dance behavior in much of northern Canada, where sparse hunting restricted the band to the extended family and where the solo drum-dance held sway.

Lantis (1947: 121) identifies the Alaska northeast as the center of distinctive Eskimo ceremonial complex, characterized by ceremonies for particular animal species, hunting festivals featuring drum-accompanied dancing, use of dance masks, first-catch rites, a burial complex featuring lamps burning for the dead, and the men's *qalgi* ceremonial house.

Nelson (1899: 286) points out that the latter was not only the meeting place, but was the dance house, workshop, sweathouse, eating place, and sleeping place for the men. A degree of territoriality was to be observed in the assignment of seating rights. Similar seating preferences persist today: at community dance events held in the village school "high-status Eskimos from old families sit at the top of the bleachers, with the others milling at their feet, and the boarding home students close to the door" (Kleinfeld 1973).

The present-day village community hall now serves many of the functions of the ancient *qalgi*: it is heated, decorated, and packed to capacity at time of the inviting-in. The cultural persistence of traditional dance is furthered by the employment of local knowledgeable elders such as Louis Immingan (at Nome) as Cultural Aides in the school, who teach classes in dance and in costume making. The former function of spirit-placation has given way to the new function of affirming cultural identity and fostering community pride, though there has been little change in dance form and content.

#### THE FEASTS AND FESTIVALS

Nelson (1899: 234) gives a calendar in which he notes that January is named *wi'wik* after a ceremonial spinning-top dance. December is named for "time of the drum." Weyer (1932: 82) constructed a calendar of Alaskan Eskimo subsistence activities for Point Barrow, the Diomed Islands, King Island, and the northwestern inland Eskimos. Although in Inupiaq life these seasonal subsistence activities were marked by important feasts and festivals, such events are not shown on Weyer's calendar. He does refer to them in his chapter "Animism and the food quest," and identifies Point Hope's Great Thanksgiving Festival as the most important, being given for the souls of dead

whales, thus ensuring their return the following season.

The ceremonial spinning-top dance described by Weyer (1932: 347) is still performed at the Point Hope Christmas week celebrations, where four dancing whalers encircle the spinning-top in order to catch white feathers which fly from it as it spins, thereby determining good fortune in the forthcoming hunt. This ceremony and its associated dance is called *kiapsuq*.

McGhee (1947: 11–12) constructed a calendar of Alaskan Eskimo feasts and festivals, deriving his information from Nelson (1899), Anderson (1935), Hawkes (1913), and others. However, he fails to distinguish between Inupiaq and Yupik. We give it below.

Asking Festival	November	trading festival
Feasts to the Dead	early December	offerings to dead
Bladder Festival	January	placate spirits
Inviting-In	after completion of Asking & Bladder	honor spirits
Great Feast of Dead	every 10 years?	honor deceased
Giving Feast	early spring	wealth redistribution
Doll Festival	uncertain	pairing of namesakes

McGhee's 1947 reconstruction of the Eskimo ceremonial calendar would have benefitted from examination of Lantis' "Alaskan Eskimo ceremonialism" (1947), but possibly he had no access. In 1987 Tony Scott Pearce constructed his "Alaskan Folk and Traditional Art Activities Calendar," which includes events staged by the Alaskan white population, but which is of considerable utility in identifying Inupiaq, Yupik, Athabaskan, and Tlingit dance events. Present-day Inupiaq events include the Whaling Celebration at Point Hope (June), Whaling Feast at Kaktovik (July), and the Inuit Traditional Games at Barrow (December). There are some omissions, including the Point Hope *uinjarung* Masquerade Dance (performed at full moon).

The importance of identifying the Inupiaq ceremonial calendar emerges when planning field work, for during the summer most of the skilled dancers and drummers are away fire-fighting, working in the canneries, or at fish-camp. Comparison of the old and new calendars is also necessary in order to postulate correlations between known ancient festivals and contemporary dance events, which may reveal degrees of cultural loss or cultural persistence.

Certain events time-shifted in order to fit contemporary demands for migratory labor. Others have done so in order to take advantage of new economic opportunities. For instance, the Eskimo Olympics, representing competitive games, athletics, and dances formerly held in winter, are now held in mid-summer because there is a strong tourist demand for the event in Fairbanks and Anchorage. The Fairbanks Native Potlatch, which features much traditional dancing from Barrow, Wainwright, and Point Hope, is held in March in order to coincide with the Native Arts Festival organized annually by Native students at the

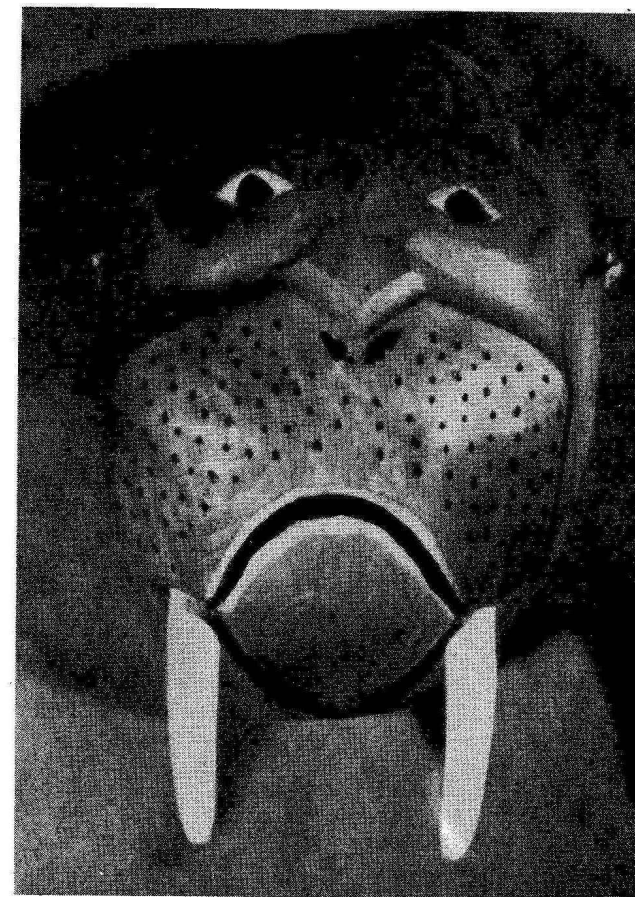


FIGURE 4. This Inupiat ceremonial dance mask depicts the human-like inner spirit of the walrus; if pleased by the dance it will return to be caught again.

University of Alaska. Individual return air fare from those communities is about \$500, thus the amount saved by a twelve-member team committed to both events is considerable.

Dance events traditionally occurring at ancient whaling festivals such as the Point Hope *nahukataun* blanket-toss ceremony, and at important subsistence-related thanksgivings such as the Walrus Carnival at Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island (a Siberian Yupik area), are still held as part of the original subsistence rite. In this is to be perceived the importance of environment and lifestyle in the retention of the dance heritage. It is noteworthy that the back-to-the-land movement following the Alaska Native Land Claims Act of 1971 was paralleled by a resurgence of interest among elders in maintaining the traditional Inupiaq inter-village inviting-in.

#### EARLY REPORTS OF INUPIAT DANCE

In 1826, the afore-mentioned Captain F. W. Beechey of H. M. S. Blossom observed an Inupiaq dance performance in Kotzebue Sound. He observed that the whole village assembled in their best clothes, formed a dance arena, and watched five young men



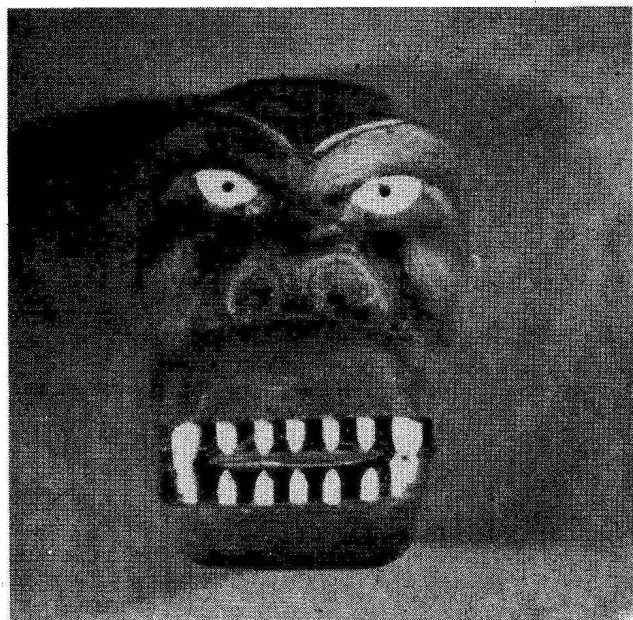


FIGURE 5. Ancient dance masks such as this carry a lot of the hostility which is taboo in Eskimo traditional society.

dance in an aggressive, energetic manner (1831: 395). In one of the dances, a woman mimed the rejecting of several male suitors, waving them away. This appears to be the same as the present-day Point Hope dance called the Haughty Bride, in which a masked woman rejects in turn three male suitors, each bearing a handsome ivory-handled knife as a gift, and finally marries a dog. The subject-matter of this dance may reflect a former women shortage in Inupiaq society, and also confirms what appears to be a consistent emphasis in Inupiaq folklore — the image of the bad wife and the good mother. Following this dance performance in 1826, the dancers presented foreign observers with gifts; gift-giving is customary at present-day Inupiaq dance events.

At Point Hope in 1926 Rasmussen witnessed a "Great Thanksgiving Festival to the souls of dead whales" (1927: 332–333), in which the venue was elaborately equipped with a carved wooden bird with flapping wings, a model of skin whaling boat, a doll which bowed in all directions, and spinning-top which threw out feathers. A simulated ermine ran across the floor, catching up a rattle with a bladder attached to it; four drummers accompanied mimetic dance.

In the present-day Point Hope Christmas week ceremonies, a fur puppet is manipulated in a puppet dance, a fox runs across the floor, and similar mechanical devices and contrivances are operated with shaman-like sleight-of-hand, following which the drummers accompany new, specially composed dances. In addition to the spinning-top dance *kiapsuq*, there is the puppet dance *tchoyaqluuqaun*, and the box-drum dance *kalukhaq*. Certain special Inupiaq dances involve ceremonial transvestitism (Frankson 1980: 34), which has also been reported for southwest Alaska



FIGURE 6. These Inupiat dance mittens are used by Dinah Frankson, of Point Hope. They are made from the traditional fur and skin of the catch.

(Zagoskin 1842–1844, Chanar 1973: 15, Chanar 1979: 104), and in Canada (Boas 1888:198).

The box-drum dance occurred in the Eagle-Wolf Dance of the Kotzebue Messenger Feast, in which the suspended *kalukhaq* box-drum (a 3' painted crate struck on the side with a padded beater) was swung back and forth, "guiding" the dancers, and in which the names of gift recipients were called out. The dancers wore real wolf-head masks, eagle-feather headdresses, and long gauntlet-rattles bearing puffin bills. In unison they appeared and disappeared into "dens" constructed of skin and bone, as part of the dance. The dance was elaborate and spectacular. A series of turn-of-the-century photographs of the event has been published (Johnston: 1974: 22–26). In present times the box-drum is used at Barrow, Wainwright, and Nome. The present writer has seen a film of a 1952 re-enactment of the event, and attended a 1982 re-enactment of the event (described later in this study) at Nome, on the occasion of the Elders' Conference.

Curtis reported details of the Messenger Feast, together with its Eagle-Wolf Dance (1930: 296). It derives its name from the sending of messengers between villages to consolidate arrangements for the holding of the feast, and to intimate to visiting dance teams the nature of the gifts that are desired and expected.

As related by King Island Dancer John Oalanna, the legend of the origin of the box-drum goes like this: An Inupiaq hunter in over-exuberance for his vocation killed an eagle. A second eagle flew down from the heavens to attack him, and the hunter aimed his rifle a second time. "Do not shoot. I have come with a message: follow me to my Mother-Eagle." The

hunter did as he was bid. The Mother-Eagle said to the hunter "My Eagle-Son will guide you back to your village. When you arrive there, strike every object you find in order to match my heartbeat." The hunter tried many objects in the village, but none sounded like the heartbeat of Mother-Eagle. Finally there was a storm, and a large drifting wooden crate was washed up on the beach. It had a mysterious look about it, and the hunter beat upon the side of it. It boomed with a hollow sound, and seemed like an eagle's heartbeat. So just before the hunting festival, he painted an eagle on the side, and put zigzag wings along the top, and a feathered staff on the side, and hung the crate up in the ceremonial house, where it became the box-drum of the Eagle-Wolf Dance. Koranda gives a quite different — but equally traditional — version of the legendary origin of the box-drum, told to her by Paul Green of Kotzebue (Koranda 1972: 18).

The Eagle-Wolf Dance effects the return of a dead eagle's spirit to its mother; wolves are at the feast in order to ensure that the eagle's leavings are scavenged. The legend demonstrates how Inupiaq beliefs concerning the supernatural unify the world of man and that of the animals. The primary Messenger Feast elements are seen to be masked dances, portrayal and symbolism of animal spirits, the placation of supernatural beings, and an exchange of goods.

Hawkes (1914: 26–28) describes the Bladder Festival, in which the bladders of seals were inflated and danced to, in order to please their spirits, which then condescended to return the following season to be caught again. Held in December at full moon, the ceremony included purification of the bladders and the return of the bladders to the ocean. The shaman prescribed the making of elaborate dance masks for the event, after which they were burnt in order to transport them to the spirit-world (1914: 41).

These traditional Inupiaq ceremonies and dance events waned after the arrival of explorers, missionaries and fleets of commercial whaling ships. Knowledgeable dance informant Jimmy Killigivuk of Point Hope related to the present writer in 1974 how a remarkable polyglot whaling community named Jabbertown was established outside Point Hope at the turn of the century, how the foreign whalers taught the Inupiaq how to make whiskey from molasses, how Eskimo women were abducted, and how the traditional culture began to deteriorate.

In Noatak and Kobuk in northwest Alaska the missionaries banned the shamans and all ceremonies, thus speeding the demise of traditional dancing in those regions. Today it is still absent there, although in areas of tolerant missionization such as Episcopal Point Hope it not only survived but was encouraged by missionaries who themselves stimulated the composition of certain dance songs, such as the Alphabet Song and the Do-Re-Mi Song, and the dance known as The Second Coming, in which the dancers look up to see a bright light in the sky.

Between 1900 and 1950 in some northern communities, Inupiaq dance underwent a period of neg-

lect and decline. The social climate of the time is aptly illustrated by the fact that Alaska Native Brotherhood, in the first edition of its constitution, made the speaking of English a prerequisite for membership. The Eskimo dance revival of recent decades parallels the postwar emergence of the Third World, the emergence of Civil Rights and the Congress of Racial Equality, and the growth of American Indianism and nativistic movements.

A significant reversal of the Alaskan policy of assimilation occurred in 1973, when the Tanana Chiefs (representing twenty-three communities) encouraged and supported by the Inupiaq-owned Tundra Times, affiliated with the Alaska Native Brotherhood and the Eskimo Inupiat Organization. The Land Claims Act of 1971 resulted in the emergence of strong local political chiefs whose major function was to get federal monies and to disburse them to their constituencies, thus gaining power and the ability to protect and preserve traditional culture.

At the Senate Subcommittee Hearings on Indian Education in 1969, Margaret Nick (an Eskimo) told Edward Kennedy "If my children are proud, if my children have identity, this is what education means. It is a must we include our history and our culture in our schools, before we lose it all" (U.S.Congress: 1969). On June 2, 1972, the Alaska State Legislature passed a series of momentous bills "to provide for the development and dissemination of Alaskan Native literature," and "to train Alaskan Native language speakers to work as teachers and aides in bilingual classrooms."

The Inupiat Elders' Conference, and the Circumpolar Eskimo Congress likewise have exerted considerable influence on the retention and preservation of Eskimo traditional dance. Perhaps more to the point is that for holistic cultural reasons Inupiaq society has a genuine need to retain its traditional dance. Historically, critical aspects of culture have evinced a tendency to regenerate upon need, as demonstrated by the current widespread use of the once-lost Hebrew language in the state of Israel. William Malm has pointed out, in his "Music as an Aspect of Cultural Identity," that "A specific moment in cultural history may be identified and retained through the oral tradition of music as strongly and sometimes more emotionally than it can through the very different kind of magic of the printed word ... music is one of the more powerful and easily recognizable aspects of cultural identity" (1973: 2). Inupiaq dance is, of course, the prime *raison d'être* for Inupiaq music.

#### THE ROLE OF DANCE IN INUPIAT SOCIETY

Formerly, Inupiaq dance served the shaman-drummer and his helpers in communicating with the capricious animal spirits, for in dance they rode to the moon on their drums, and dived to the ocean floor with the aid of their beaked loonskin headdresses, in order to find the elusive *inua*. In dance they entered the ecstatic trance-like state necessary for heightened



perception of messages emanating from the spirit-world, and with entertaining choreography they ensured that the spirits were of good humour and disposed to return during ensuing hunting seasons.

With the demise of the shaman-drummer, and faced with the exploitative and eroding effect of culture-contact, Inupiaq dance assumed a new role in society, that of symbolizing cultural roots and of reaffirming ethnic identity. Contemporary Eskimo dance teams at dance exhibitions compete light-heartedly one against the other, representing community pride. Some have composed special dances for, and performed at, the presidential inauguration in Washington, D.C. In one such dance, the one-two-three final drumbeats symbolize "a third term for our President" (informant John Apangalook). The Wainwright Dancers performed at the International Festival of Masks, during the Los Angeles Olympics, taking twenty-eight dancers to Pan-Pacific Park. Inupiaq dancing is a regular feature of Alaskan Native political conferences, serving as a rallying banner of "otherness."

The monitoring and control of deviance is a social function of Inupiaq dance which persists to present times, and Robert Spencer, in his "Play, power, and politics in Native North Alaska" (1977: 14) demonstrates how ridicule and satirization within Eskimo play and dance exert subtle pressures on troublesome individuals to conform. If this fails there may be explosive consequences. In a tape narrated by 93-year old Peter Koonooyak, the Point Hope patriarch describes how the unpopular headman Attungowruk was murdered by villagers in 1889, for killing his wife in a drunken stupor (Rock 1974: 9).

Another surviving function is to be seen in the use of dance to reinforce significant alliances between fictitious kin, trading partners, namesakes, and joking cousins. The establishment of a dance partnership with another hunter constitutes a powerful assist in the lifetime building of a personal social network. Such a network provides critical support in the event of catastrophe, dispute, or incapacitation. Joking cousins utilize special "mirror" look-alike masks in the reciprocal gestures and movements of their proprietary partnership dance, and compose dances for each other as a sign of loyalty and respect.

Communal ownership of a substantial repertoire of composed traditional dances helps to cement ties within the northern Eskimo whaling lodge. At Point Hope there are two of these whaling lodges, *Qag-maqtuuq* and *Unasiksikaaq*, and each possesses its own group of dances for the *nalukataun* blanket-toss ceremony, which occurs at the spring whaling celebration, just prior to when the *qupalluich* birds lay their eggs. The birds arrive at Point Hope when the snow starts to melt in May. The blanket-toss epitomizes the cooperation necessary among the whaling crew, for it is the united sideways movement of the holders who are stretching the large sewn walrus skin that prevents an errant skin-jumper from landing (after a twenty-foot leap) outside the skin's perimeter.

Another dance function which persists today is that of historical repository for Inupiaq oral history. The *sayuun* dances invariably recount some heroic or comic adventure of forefathers on the sea ice, or significant event in community experience, or legend, myth, or folktale featuring humanized animal figures. Inupiaq informants Weir Negovanna, Paul Green, Charlie Jensen, Arctic John, and David Frankson explained their composed dances to the present writer. One dance relates, in four successive phases, how the dancer had seen four strange phenomena: (1) a woman wearing a long skirt, (2) a boy wearing a necktie, (3) a man smoking a pipe, and (4) a woman wearing a strange ring. In the dance, mime actions portray these incidents humorously. Another dance relates how the whalers taught the Inupiaq hunters how to play checkers, which they now play to while away long hours of whale-watching out on the sea ice. Inupiaq dance also functions to preserve cultural concepts which would otherwise be lost — the use of the bone needle and the specialized fish-hook, well-defined relationships between certain kin, and particular emphases in childrearing, such as the importance of naming.

Although special dances like *uinarung* may tend to serve as a compensatory outlet for proscribed behavior, most Inupiaq dance embodies traditional beliefs and values. The movements depict sanctioned activities and preferred posture, with the men asserting dominance via boisterousness — stomping on the floor, flexing the biceps, and clenching the fists. Women utilize gentle, undulating motions, and avoid eye-contact. The women's feet stay together and on the ground, with the knees flexing rhythmically.

Inupiaq dance movements emphasize sex roles and the division of labor. Men's motions portray and reflect those subsistence activities in which hunters normally engage, while those of the women depict home-keeping chores such as meat preparation, winter meat storage, repair of the hunters' clothing, and preparing the skin coverings of boats.

Numerous Inupiaq dances re-enact ancient legends involving mythological figures or culture-heroes, the behavior of whom is presented as a role model. Stories of pitiful orphans emphasize the importance of relatives; stories of greedy boys whose stomachs burst emphasize moderation. The dances also help prepare the young for adult roles in society by teaching discrete gradations of deference toward different kin, and by teaching the variety of directional and spatial terms used on the featureless tundra and flat sea ice, conveying hereness/thereness, inside-ness/outside-ness, upness/downness.

In many non-Western societies, certain categories of folktales, songs, and dances serve as a cathartic release, in which deviance, repressed emotions, or taboo behavior may occur without penalty. These special avenues of expression are a social safety-valve. At the Point Hope *uinarung* masked dance a decade ago, the writer witnessed an astonishing masquerade in which a young woman entered the

community hall, which was filled with respected elders and aged hunters seated on benches around the perimeter. The drums were playing for an *atuutipiaq* free-motions dance, but none had as yet taken the floor to do traditional dancing. While all the other women in the hall were dressed in the customary blue jeans topped with a flared, hooded, knee-length, sheathlike dance smock known as an *atikluk*, with an ornamental design on two large side pockets, the girl taking the floor was dressed in patent leather high-heel boots, tight miniskirt, oversize blond wig, and a mask heavily painted with lipstick and eyebrow pencil. After sauntering in jaunty fashion onto the dance area and performing exaggerated hip movements, she went over to where the grave old men were grouped, and proceeded to sit on their knees and pet them around the head. This behavior was the antithesis of expected Eskimo maidenhood, which is customarily manifested in modest, downcast eyes and quiet demeanor. Needless to say, her mime, embodying both a ritual of rebellion and ridicule of perceived white behavior, caused uproarious mirth and merriment. At the same time it served to emphasize the appropriateness, in that society, of female restraint. In such a dance, a wall of breached taboos provides insulation from the prescribed norm, behind which disorientation and discontinuity may be savoured.

Group performance of Inupiaq dance tends to encourage the establishment of voluntary organizations within the community, which serve recreational, creative, and personal network needs. Within the voluntary organization there is scope for the prestigious hunters as dance-composers, dance-leaders, and drummers. There is scope for the older women as dancers, singers, and as dance-parka makers. There is opportunity for the young men to further their social status by forging a broad range of social allegiances; dance team membership may facilitate whaling crew membership. There is scope for the young women to demonstrate allure and desirability, submissiveness, cooperation, wit, and handcraft skills.

Economic rewards are forthcoming in the form of gift-honorariums, feasting, and subsidized air travel. Prestige may be enhanced by having dances dedicated to one's person, by being commissioned to compose a dance for a special event, or by being chosen to fill a prominent dance role, such as beater of the box-drum at the *kalukhaq* dance. Achieving membership of the community dance team is in itself prestigious, for the best and most experienced hunters are usually the dance-leaders — they have the most notable range of cultural experience, a character forged within the crucible of the dangerous sea ice floes and vulnerable boats, and an invincible social network of support with which to withstand dispute and contention. At Barrow, Wainwright, and Point Hope today, the highest honor villagers can bestow upon a popular (white) schoolteacher, is to "adopt" him into the dance team.

Regarding the possible use of dance as a gateway to marriage, there may be subtle process of

natural selection at work. Past and present Eskimo populations show a shortage of eligible brides — the underlying causes have changed but the imbalance remains. The men most likely to marry are the successful hunters who demonstrate ability to provide, and who at the same time exercise high visibility and sociability at the inter-village inviting-ins.

Inupiaq dance, through its environmental subject-matter, functions in part to reconcile society to a harsh climate where temperatures can sink to seventy below, where darkness reigns many months of the year, and where misjudgement during a snowstorm may quickly result in death from hypothermia. Dance content stresses the dichotomy between the ocean and the land, and the oneness between the human and animal world. In one Inupiaq traditional dance handed down through generations, a polar bear peels back his fur after being shot, revealing a human-like spirit within. The bear intimates that, with the appropriate rite performed, it will return again another season.

Inupiaq dance functions to affirm positive self-image. In one dance performed by Patrick Attungana and Herbert Kinneaveak, white miners are ridiculed and pitied for dying while lost in bad weather: "They sank with their long beards into the snow." In another, Eskimos laugh at two strangers carrying a two-handed saw. Inupiaq dance functions as a social lubricant, injecting humor into inter-village competitiveness, ameliorating interpersonal hostility, and introducing self-denigrating overtones: "I will not be able to remember this dance — I am such a clumsy dancer." Within the community, care is exercised so as not to disturb the delicate balance between peers, or disrupt one's intimate relationship with a partner. The person who wins at bingo or wins the plane trip may actually be considered unfortunate for standing out, for being "embarrassed."

#### THE INFLUENTIAL SHAMAN-DRUMMER

The dancers of yesteryear were organized and directed by specialists endowed with metaphysical and telepathic skills: *anatkuk* shamans who fell in and out of trance, *anatkugnak* mediums who heard spirit-voices, and *ilisiilak* wizards who possessed the ability to cast spells upon one's social enemies. These helpers were adept at fine, artistic mask-making, among the best anywhere. They possessed wood-working and ivory-carving skills with which to make the dance drums with their ornate sculptured handles, musical abilities to compose dance songs for important ceremonies, and innovative dancing skills with which to entertain the feared *inua*.

Their coterie of wives delicately fashioned *kusunnak* fur dance parkas, and *kamik* fur footwear bearing decorative beadwork. Perhaps the most difficult task of all was preparing the real wolf-head masks necessary for the Eagle-Wolf Dance of the Messenger Feast, for the head had to appear precisely lifelike.



The shamans possessed sleigh-of-hand with which to manipulate mechanical contrivances within the *qalgi*, and ventriloquism skills with which to throw the spirit's voice. In their role as healer they evinced talent in folk psychiatry, and often possessed a genuine knowledge of the medicinal properties of herbs. They demonstrated the organizational ability to mount an elaborate ceremony and to sustain convincingly the aura of the supernatural surrounding that ceremony. They exercised tact in their assignment of ceremonial roles, and possessed the ability to appease disgruntled clients, particularly those promised hunting success but who then experienced failure. Their social role was therefore complex and demanding; there were shamans who became famous for their supernatural achievements, and there were those who were hated and feared.

Influential and strong though he was, the community shaman could not prevail against the government-backed missionaries, who withheld medical treatment, education, and trade from recalcitrant constituents who continued to patronize the shamans. In the decades following the demise of the community shaman, the shaman's dance role was undertaken by others, sometimes in a surprising manner. At Point Hope, for instance, the newly installed Eskimo Episcopalian ministers like Patrick Attungana and Donald Oktolik became the dance-leaders, still wearing their clerical collars (see photo, Johnston 1976: 42). In several instances, the retired whaling captain such as informant David Frankson became the dance-leader, and his retired crew members became his drummers.

With the demise of the influential shaman-drummer, several centuries of Inupiat traditional ceremonialism came to an end. The spirit-placatory function of communal dance gave way to an emphasis upon ethnic affirmation, display of community pride, social networking through team membership, enhancement of status through team leadership, and social recreation.

## REFERENCES

- BALIKCI A., 1969: *At the winter ice camp*, Part IV. Film in the Netsilik Eskimo series. National Film Board of Canada. #12UF904 at University of Alaska.
- BARTENIEFF I., 1974: Use of Effort-Shape elements in a verbal Comparison of Matachine and Deer dancers. In: *Comstock*.
- BEECHY F.W., 1831: *Narrative of a voyage to the Pacific and Bering Strait*. London: Colburn and Bentley.
- BLACKING J., KEALIINOHOMOKU J.W. (Eds.), 1979: *The performing arts: music and dance*. The Hague: Mouton.
- BOAS FRANZISCA, 1944: *The function of dance in human society*. New York: Dance Horizons.
- BOAS FRANZ, 1888: *The Central Eskimo*. 6th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology.
- CHANAR M., 1974: Eskimo annual dancing. *Theata*, 1: 14–16. Fairbanks: University of Alaska.
- CHANAR M., 1979: *Eskimo annual dancing, Part II. Because we are*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska.
- COMSTOCK T. (Ed.), 1974: *New dimensions in dance research: anthropology and dance (The American Indian)*. New York: Committee on Research in Dance.

- CURTIS E. S., 1930: *The North American Indian*, Vol. 20. Cambridge. Reprinted by Johnson Reprints, New York, 1970.
- EVANS-PRITCHARD E., 1947: The dance. *Africa*, 1: 446–62.
- GLUCKMAN M., 1955: *Custom and conflict in Africa*. Glencoe: The Free Press.
- GOBERT A.-M., 1978: *Sociologie d'une équipe de danse dans le village de Kotzebue*. Thesis. Centre d'Etudes Arctiques, Sorbonne, Paris.
- GOODENOUGH W., 1971: *Culture, language, and society*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- HANNA J. L., 1979: Toward a cross-cultural conceptualization of dance and some correlate considerations. In: *Blacking*.
- HANNA J. L., 1980: *To dance in human*. Austin: University of Texas Press. Paperback edition.
- HANNA J. L., 1982: Is dance music? Resemblances and relationships. *The World of Music*, 24, 1: 57–69.
- HAWKES E. W., 1913: The Inviting-In Feast of the Alaskan Eskimo. *Memoirs of the Canadian Dept. of Mines*, Vol. 45, pp. 1–20.
- HAWKES E. W., 1914: The dance festivals of the Alaskan Eskimo. *University Museum Anthropological Pub.*, Vol. 6, No. 2, University of Pennsylvania.
- HOLT C., BATESON G., 1944: Balinese dance. In: Boas F. (Ed.) *The function of dance in human society*. New York: Dance Horizons.
- JABLONKO A., 1968: *Dance and daily activities among the Moring people of New Guinea*. Dissertation, Columbia University, New York.
- JOHNSTON T. F., 1974: A historical perspective on Alaskan Eskimo music. *The Indian Historian*, 7, 4: 17–26.
- JOHNSTON T. F., 1975: Alaskan Eskimo dance in cultural context. *Dance Research Journal*, 7, 2: 1–11.
- JOHNSTON T. F., 1975: *The Point Hope videotapes*, I–IV. Music Department, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.
- JOHNSTON T. F., 1976: *Eskimo music by region*. Ottawa: National Museum of Man. Mercury Series, No. 32.
- JOHNSTON T. F., 1978: Humor, drama, and play in Alaskan Eskimo mimetic dance. *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, 8, 1: 47–64.
- KAEPPLER A., 1967: Preservation and evolution of form and function in two types of Tongan dance. In: Highland G. (Ed.): *Polynesian culture history*. Bishop Special Pub. 56: 503–36.
- KEALIINOHOMOKU J., 1970: An anthropologist looks at ballet as a form of ethnic dance. In: Juyl von M. (Ed.): *Impulse 1969–70: extensions of dance*, 24–33. San Francisco: Impulse.
- KEALIINOHOMOKU J., 1974: Dance field guide. In: *Comstock*.
- KEALIINOHOMOKU J., 1981: Dance as a rite of transformation. In: Card C. et al. (Eds.): *Discourse in Ethnomusicology II: A Tribute to Alan P. Merriam*. Indiana University: Ethnomus. Pub. Group.
- KILMA E., BELLUGI U., 1973: Teaching apes to communicate. In: G. A. Miller (Ed.) *Communication Language, and Meaning: Psychological Perspectives*. New York: Basic Book.
- KLEINFELD J., 1973: *A long way from home*. Fairbanks: Center for Northern Educational Research.
- KRAUSS M., 1975: Alaska's Native Languages and their present situation. *People Paper*, March, 1975. University of Alaska, Fairbanks.
- KREITLER H., KREITLER S., 1972: Dance. In: *Psychology of the arts*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- KUNAYAK R., 1974: How Little Diomedes lost their language. *Theata*, Vol. 2, Spring. University of Alaska.
- KURATH G., 1952: A choreographic questionnaire. *Midwest Folklore*, 2: 53–55.
- LANTIS M., 1974: *Alaskan Eskimo ceremonialism*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. Reprinted 1971.
- LARSEN H., RAINEY F., 1948: Ipiutak and the arctic whale hunting culture. *Ant. Papers*, No. 42, Amer. Mus. Nat. History.
- LEVI-STRAUSS C., 1962: *The savage mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- LOMAX A., 1968: *Folk song style and culture*. Washington D.C.: Amer. Assoc. for the Advancement of Science, No. 88.

- MALM W. P., 1973: *Music and language learning Newsletter*, East-West Center, University of Hawaii, August.
- McGHEE C., 1947: *The primitive music of the Alaskan Eskimo*. Thesis, Northwestern University, Evanston.
- MERRIAM A. P., 1964: *The anthropology of music*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- MILAN F., 1964: The acculturation of the contemporary Eskimo of Wainwright. *Ant. Papers of the University of Alaska*, 2, 2: 1–95.
- MURDOCH J., 1892: *Ethnological results of the Point Barrow Expedition*. 9th Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology. Washington.
- NEEDHAM R., 1967: Percussion and transition. *Man*, 2: 606–614.
- NEHER A., 1962: A physiological explanation of unusual behavior in ceremonies involving drums. *Human Biology*, 34: 151–160.
- NELSON E. W., 1899: *The Eskimo about Bering Strait*. 18th Annual Report, Bureau of Ethnology. Washington.
- PEARCE T. S., 1985: *Musical characteristics of Tanana Athabaskan dance songs*. Thesis, University of Alaska.
- PEARCE T. S., 1987: *1987 Alaskan folk and traditional art activities calendar*. Fairbanks: Alaskan Folk and Traditional Arts Association.
- RADCLIFFE-BROWN A., 1965: *Structure and function in primitive society*. New York: The Free Press.
- RASSMUSSEN K., 1927: *Across arctic America*. New York.
- ROCK H., 1974: Chief Attungowruk sets whaling demarcation line. *Tundra Times*, Wednesday, October 9, p.4.
- ROYCE A. P., 1977: *The anthropology of dance*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

- SHAY A., 1971: *The functions of dance in human societies*. M.A. thesis, California State University, L.A.
- SPENCER R., 1977: *Play, power, and politics in Native North Alaska*. Paper, American Ethnology Society, San Diego, April 8–9.
- TAYLOR R., 1974: *The Native Art Festival videotapes*, 1974–1986. University of Alaska, Anchorage.
- U.S. CONGRESS 1969: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Indian Education of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare of the U.S. Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, Part 1, 1969.
- WATERMAN R., 1962: The role of dance in human society. In: Wooten B. (Ed.) *Focus on Dance II: an interdisciplinary search for meaning in movement*. Washington D.C.: Amer. Assoc. for Health.
- WEYER E. M., 1932: *The Eskimos: their environment and folkways*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- YOUNGERMAN S., 1975: *Method and theory in dance research: an anthropological approach*. Paper No. 2, International Folk Music Council, Regensburg Conference, August 14–21 (ed. D. Christensen).

Thomas F. Johnston  
University of Alaska  
Dept. of Music  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-1220  
USA