

Inuit, Whaling, and Sustainability, by Milton M.R. Freeman, Lyudmila Bogolovskaya, Richard A. Caulfield, Ingmar Egede, Igor I. Krupnik, and Marc G. Stevenson. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press (1998) 208 pp.

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Anyone who is familiar with Inuit communities will recognize the complexities being addressed in this book. However, while many of the particulars discussed are unique to the Arctic region, the overall problem is not. Inuit whaling exemplifies a basic socio-political and cultural conflict between the center (industrial society) and the periphery (small scale, geographically isolated communities with mixed cash/subsistence economies). The added tension presented in this book stems from the fact that sustainable whaling is a complicated issue. Few people in the Arctic, or in the western world, are neutral on this question, albeit for very different reasons. Whaling is, as this book illustrates, an emotionally charged issue for people living in urban centers, in particular in the United States and Europe.

Inuit, Whaling, and Sustainability is divided into six chapters and an introduction whose title is formulated as a question: "A Book on Inuit Whaling?" The introduction sets out to answer this question and in the process identifies areas of inquiry that are involved in attempting to reduce the ignorance surrounding Inuit and whaling.

The first chapter addresses the various ways that whaling is important in contemporary Inuit communities. Different sections deal with the social and cultural importance of whaling, whaling as a source of food and a source of health and nutrition, the economic aspects of whaling, and lastly how whaling is connected to the spiritual life of Inuit.

Chapter 2 presents Inuit whaling in a historical framework. The chapter is divided into sections on different whale species, how each country has used these in the past, and how they are utilized today. There is no mention of "tomorrow" despite the chapter title suggesting so. This is an informative chapter on species-specific utilization by country. It also touches upon the development of technology through time. In Chapter 3 the discussion moves into the international arena and onto issues of human rights, the International Whaling Commission, and other international initiatives. This is an important chapter, because it highlights how whaling is discussed, and often misrepresented, in various international fora.

Chapter 4 reviews Inuit whaling management regimes in the US (Alaska), Canada, Russia and Greenland. It also discusses joint management regimes between countries involving both Inuit and non-Inuit. Management of natural renewable resources is a critical topic in the whaling debate: who should manage the resources and on the basis of what type of knowledge, scientific or indigenous, or both? This chapter addresses these types of questions.

Chapter 5 is titled "Challenges to the Sustainable Use of Whales by Inuit." This is a critical chapter for understanding the various obstacles Inuit people face, both those coming from humans and nature itself. It outlines the politics of anti-whaling and that of the International Whaling Commission. The issues confronting the sustainability of Inuit whaling converge in this chapter, making it both interesting and important.

Chapter 6 examines how the future of Inuit whaling can be secured. A significant point is that Inuit are seen as stewards and caretakers of the resources they use. The way Inuit produce food from the sea differs from that of fisheries. Inuit whaling is not harmful to the environment. It does not create by-catch that is wasted, like in many types of fisheries. It does not use harmful substances often found in agriculture. Inuit whaling must be considered within this positive context. Though the number of Inuit-run organizations representing the "grass root" level on the

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question of sustainable whaling is increasing, the authors call for Inuit users to be fully involved with management and regulatory decision making processes.

Each chapter ends with a set of suggested readings pertaining to the subjects covered in that particular section. This allows for a broadening of the relevant topics for those who want to continue a study of the questions addressed. This is very useful because the book in itself, albeit quite comprehensive, does not provide detailed material for each country, or on each issue. Instead, this book is an extensive overview of the issues confronting Inuit and sustainable whaling.

The authors are generous in their use of photographs and quotes from a number of Inuit communities throughout the Arctic region: Russia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland. These oral and visual illustrations combine to create a vivid picture of the sentiments, realities and issues experienced by the Inuit in relation to whaling. Furthermore, the maneuvering between the regional and the local is effective because it allows the reader to move between the general and the particular. The writing style varies somewhat throughout the book, which is probably due to the fact that different authors are responsible for different sections.

Whales (and other large mammals such as elephants) hold a special place in the cultures of urbanites in the western world. One result of this interest has been intense lobbying, on national and international arenas, against whaling. This highly politicized issue is the backdrop for this book. The question of sustainable use of whales becomes blurred against this backdrop, because sustainability in this context is no longer simply concerned with biology and population dynamics, but with differing cultural perceptions about the intrinsic value of whales.

For Inuit, whaling is much more than a philosophy or political stance. It is a way of life. It is therefore quite incomprehensible to Inuit that people who do not understand the socio-cultural connotations of whaling, and the nutritional and spiritual aspects of whaling, have taken it upon themselves to argue for whaling to come to a halt. The book illustrates, through copious usage of quotes by Inuit, the range of ways that whaling is important to them. These quotes are taken from Inuit of all ages • “living throughout the Inuit homelands,” including students, hunters and community leaders.

Cultural imperialism is an important challenge to the Inuit way of life. In this context the authors refer to the cultural and ideological domination by those who are against whaling. It becomes a cultural question when those who are against are also far removed from the reality of a hunting culture. Anti-whaling groups argue that whales should be saved because of their superior intelligence and because they are innocent animals. The arguments against whaling (and sealing for that matter) are based on notions that the animals caught suffer at the hands of humans. The authors, on the other hand, argue eloquently that those who campaign for the protection of animals actually harm the people who “care most about marine mammals and who have the greatest stake in these animals’ continuing health and survival” (157). Ironically environmental protection includes protection of whales, and is often presented in the format of individual animals in need of protection. This concern for the individual animal’s welfare “continues to confront and oppose Inuit (and others’) hunting of whales for food, even when the species in question are [not endangered]” (p. 162). It is this continued sentiment that is a major threat to Inuit livelihood, and the essence of this book.

Even though the authors claim that the “issue of competing value systems is indeed the greatest challenge to Inuit use of local resources” (p 147), this book expands on issues beyond the conflict between anti-whaling groups and Inuit. Inuit face other challenges when it comes to the question of sustainable whaling.

One challenge is that of contaminants and pollution. These pollutants are generally from industrialized nations and enter the Arctic region by water and by air. They effect the whole ecosystem, from the microscopic plants, organisms and fish living in the sea to the marine mammals feeding on these. Because of the nature of the ecosystem and the food chain, and because Inuit mainly live from natural resources, they ingest these pollutants and contaminants on a daily basis. Naturally this is of grave concern to all who live from the sea in the northern

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latitudes.

Other concerns address the need for promoting management regimes that involve Inuit technological and environmental knowledge in conjunction with that of science. The value of Inuit knowledge cannot be ignored. This is currently an important topic receiving increasing attention in many areas of knowledge acquisition and dissemination.

Despite the emotionally charged issue that whaling remains, the authors present the material in a surprisingly levelheaded manner. The authors are clearly in favor of Inuit whaling but this is not the gist of the book. They attempt, and succeed, in presenting Inuit whaling with deep understanding but without romanticizing the issue. In this sense the book does not come across as being activist in tone. This must be applauded, in particular because the "opposition" often resorts to dramatic and sensational language in their attempts to stop whaling.

The cast of authors is impressive. They represent some of the best scholars on Inuit and whaling. The situation in each of the countries where Inuit live, Canada, Greenland, Russia, and the USA (Alaska only) is unique in many aspects. There are cultural, socioeconomic, political and social differences. However, some fundamental principles are shared that justify the collective title *Inuit, Whaling, and Sustainability*. The whales may be caught by different methods; different whales may be hunted in different regions, but all Inuit share a strong connection to whales as food, as maintaining cultural and spiritual values, and as being subject to attacks from the anti-whaling movements. On this point this book is very convincing.

This book illuminates how socio-political and cultural aspects of resource use, on the local level, are juxtaposed to external, international influences, as they may appear anywhere in the world. It does this by addressing 1) local-global linkages; 2) that sustainability is a complicated concept beyond the question of how to define the term; 3) how cultural variability and social policy are played out on the international arena; 4) the cultural variability in resource management and knowledge; and 5) how whaling (and other renewable resource uses) are critical in maintaining cultural, socio-economic, and spiritual aspects of Inuit life. Use of resources that are natural, renewable, and of non-endangered species (these terms are critical here) are deeply embedded in the Inuit culture and economy. All of these issues are part of the discussions on the sustainability of Inuit whaling. One of the pivotal points is that whaling cannot be separated from the culture, the social structure and the economy. This fact creates the conflict between Inuit and the various international groups that are opposed to whaling.

By locating Inuit whaling in contemporary society the authors identify problematic issues pertaining to tradition and adaptability. Anti-whaling groups prefer traditions and cultures to be static while anthropologists in general, and also those on this team of authors understand the two as being dynamic. The phrase "Inuit whaling has always been adaptive" (p 26) is a key to this issue and to the reality of all contemporary hunting communities. It is particularly pertinent to whaling (and also sealing) because many of the arguments against it are founded on faulty notions of tradition, and of what constitutes indigenous resource use and activities.

The remark by a student in the eastern Arctic:

Whales are such beautiful animals and intelligent creatures. They appear so carefree as they swim in our waters. They have always been in the lives of the Inuit - as respected animals and traditional food, symbolizes the critical issues discussed in this book. It speaks to the continued relationship between humans and animals in the arctic and to the conflict between the culture of the users of whales versus the cultures of the anti-whaling nations, groups, and individuals. Inuit recognize multiple uses of whales and other marine mammals, of which nutrition and food are but two. Whaling activity, the whales themselves, consumption of whale products, and the social relationships formed through whaling are all elements of Inuit culture. This book is an important contribution in the effort to increase the understanding of these facts.