POLAR BEAR HUNTING AND HUNTERS IN ITTOQQORTOORMIIT/SCORESBYSUND, NE GREENLAND

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Abstract: This paper describes hunting of polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) and outlines its importance today in the isolated hunting community of Ittoqqortoormiit/Scoresbysund, NE Greenland. Since the area was first colonized in 1925, hunting has remained the only real means of living despite the economic, social, and political development that has come about since The Second World War; hunting retains its importance, both in terms of subsistence economy and culture, for the community. The identity of the Inuit is bound up with that of the hunter and here bear hunting plays an important economic and social role. Some hunters have traditionally specialized in bear hunting and they enjoy a high standing in the community despite the fact that they are often unmarried and relatively poor and should therefore, by definition, have a low social status. Besides these traditional hunters, who are often elderly—the second generation of the hunting families who colonized the area—there is a group of young bear hunters who, in contrast to the first group, are as a rule married and generally branch out from the better-off families of those with permanent employment. New technology and amendments to the preservation laws over the last few years have made for a change in hunting patterns, in that bear hunting from boats now accounts for a larger portion of the kill. In spite of this, and in spite of the fact that the winter hunting grounds have been extended considerably—especially to the north—environmental conditions determine the limits as to how many bears can be killed, and that number remains, with marked yearly variations, apparently somewhat constant over a longer period of time.

Introduction

In 1971–72 we spent our first winter in Ittaajimmiit/Kap Hope, 15 km from Ittoqqortoormiit/Scoresbysund (approximately 70°30'N) in eastern Greenland. The young men in this village are renowned as skilled bear hunters. We have closely followed these bear hunters for over 20 years and here we will attempt to draw a picture of them and their background as well as present a general description of the bear hunting in Ittoqqortoormiit.

This paper is based mainly on field material collected during six years of permanent residence following our first wintering in the area and nearly 15 subsequent years of summer visits. Most of the qualitative data was obtained through conversations and interviews with the hunters or through participant observation.

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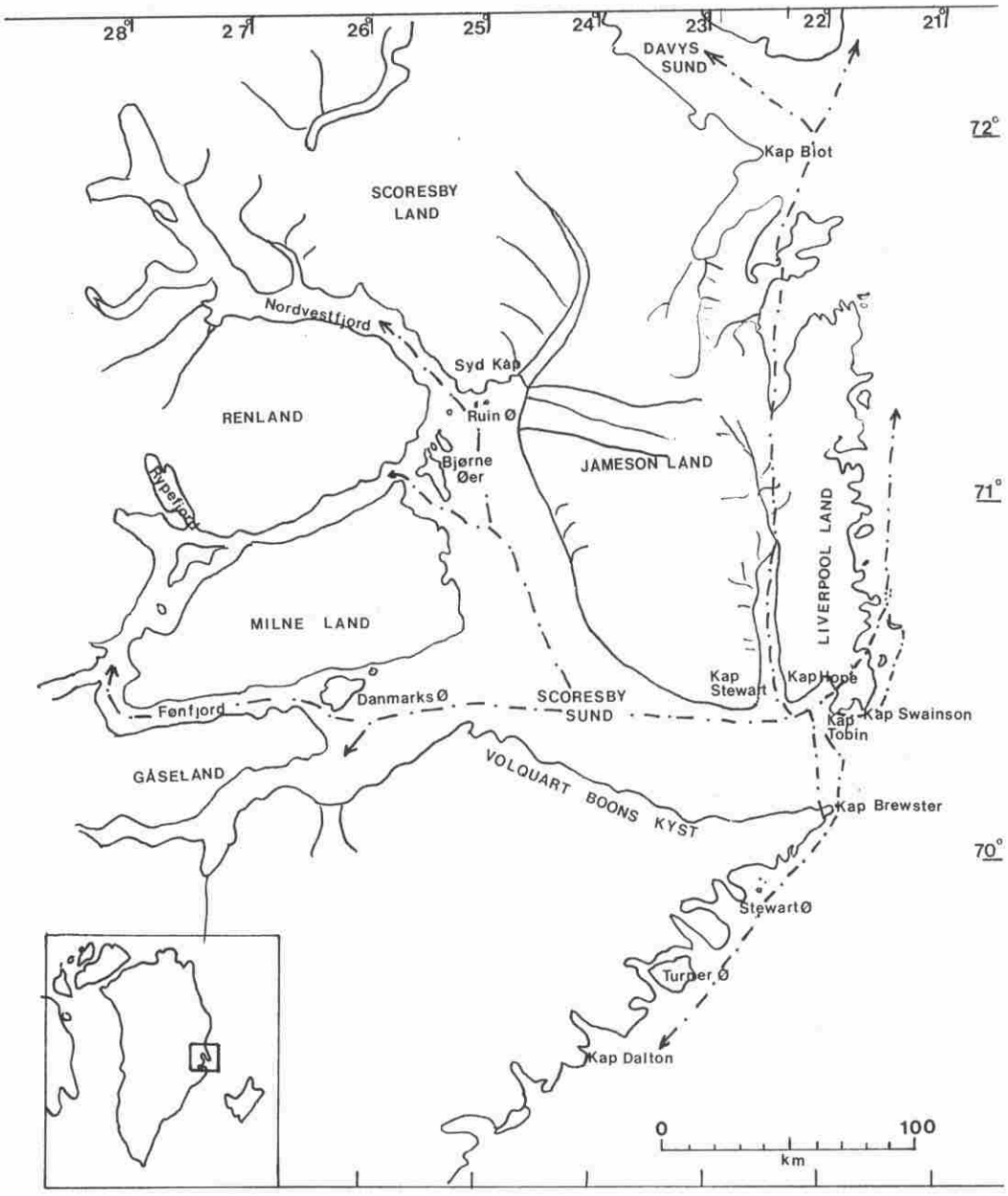

Figure 1. Map of Kangersuttuaq/Scoresby Sund, showing bear hunting routes.

Kangersuttuaq/Scoresby Sund[1] on the east coast of Greenland is the largest fjord system in the world (Fig. 1). The mouth of the fjord between Kangikajik/Kap Brewster and Uunarteq/Kap Tobin is around 30 km wide and opens into a fjord system that stretches about 300 km to the west. Apart from Jameson Land, which is a spacious lowland, the remainder of the terrain touching the fjord is steep and markedly mountainous.

Kangersuttuaq is generally filled with icebergs which shoot out from the numerous glaciers discharging into the various branches of the fjord. The climate is classified as high arctic. The winters are long, with severe cold and frequent storms and the summers are short, with a mean temperature below 5°C. There is midnight sun for about two months in summer and a dark period of similar duration in the winter. In autumn the fjord freezes and the ice edge stretches across the mouth from Uunarteq to Kangikajik. This ice edge moves according to wind and currents and it is along this edge that much of the hunting takes place. At the mouth of Kangersuttuaq there is an area of year round open water, a so-called polynia. Such poly-

nias are important because of the potential food resources that are found in the open water; i.e., for seals, walruses, bears, narwhals (Schledermann 1980:301).

The hunting community of Scoresbysund was established in 1925 when a number of families, in all 70 people, immigrated from the Ammassalik district 1000 km to the south—at that time the only area in East Greenland occupied by Inuit. The fjord complex of Scoresbysund, which in earlier times supported a relatively large Inuit population, as did most of northeastern Greenland, was, in 1925, bereft of people, while the areas to the north were used by Norwegian and, to a lesser extent, Danish trappers. Partly in order to block further Norwegian expansion southwards, and in this way to maintain Danish supremacy over Greenland as a whole, but also to alleviate the pressure of an overpopulated Ammassalik, these families were granted the right to establish a colony in the Scoresbysund area by the Danish Authorities. The colony was established in the mouth of the fjord and encompassed from the beginning a shop and store, housing for the colony's leading officials, as well as three settlements amongst which the families were divided. Over the years developments have brought many changes: the population has grown and now numbers (as of 1 January 1994) 524 persons (Grønland, Statistisk Årbog 1994:370); the same facilities are available now, by and large, as in the rest of Greenland—schools, a hospital, church, workshops, etc. as well as electricity, telephone, radio, and television. Until the mid-sixties, contact with the outside world was limited to the arrival of a couple of ships in summer. This isolation is now no longer the case, and today, besides supply ships in summer, there are now weekly flights to Iceland throughout the year. Technological development and the many local service functions provide the basis for paid employment and today only a few have their primary income from hunting, yet the hunting culture is still alive. Hunting is still the area's indigenous livelihood, and it is of importance for the whole community as a subsistence economic activity and not least as an identity-forming element. The traditional bear hunt occupies a special position in this connection, and continues, even at this time, as a vital economic and status-giving activity for many of the hunters in Scoresbysund.

Occurrence

The polar bear (*Ursus maritimus, nanu* in East Greenlandic), which has a circumpolar distribution, can be found everywhere along the coast of East Greenland and on the drift ice off the coast. They are frequently found on the edge of the pack ice, where the biological production is high and where there is often a particularly high count of seals (Born and Rosing-Asvid 1989:7; Vibe et al. 1990:411). They are also often to be found in the shear zone between land-fast ice and drift ice. In this so-called *"landvand"* (i.e., "land water") many young ringed seal are to be found (Born and Rosing-Asvid 1989:15; Pedersen 1942). In East Greenland there is an apparent movement of bears southwards in the East Greenland Current and a movement in the opposite direction on land and on the land-fast ice (Born 1983:84). The polar bear can make long and surprisingly fast journeys on the pack ice, up to 40 km daily, both with and against the drifting ice. Bears fitted with satellite linked radio transmitters have shown that the general direction was towards open water, either in the form of polynias or towards the ice edge in the Greenland Sea (Vibe et al. 1990:383).

In the Scoresbysund area, where the Blosseville Coast and the polynia in the mouth of the fjord make up one of East Greenland's most important polar bear habitats (Born 1983:89), bears are to be found throughout the year, both within the fjord and along the coast of Blosseville and Liverpool Land. North from Kangersuttuaq bears are to be found throughout the year in the coastal ice or on land; south from Kangersuttuaq there are bears along the coast and on land both winter and summer.

Although the number of bears in East Greenland is basically unknown, it is thought that the number of breeding bears in northeast Greenland amounts to 200-300 (Vibe et al. 1990:383). Before the colonization of Scoresby Sund in 1925 there was probably a resident stock of bears, some of which lived within the fjord complex throughout the year, while others spent part of the year on the drift ice (Pedersen 1942). The polar bear still have maternity dens in the area and there is thought to be a small stock of bears in Oqqummut Kangersiva/Gåsefjord. Maternity dens are occasionally found here (Isak Danielsen, personal communication, 1980), along the Blosseville Coast, in Viking Bugt as well as at Ittoritseq/Kap Stewart and Aappalaaqisaajik/Gule Fjelde in Rosenvinges Bugt (Jonas Brønlund, personal communication, 1975; Born 1983:88).

Even though one can meet bears throughout the year in Kangersuttuaq there are seasonal variations: from the end of February to the end of June bears move away from the pack ice towards Kangersuttuaq and many of them migrate along the Volquart Boon Coast in towards the inner branches of the fjord (Ole Brønlund, personal communication, 1995). The majority of the migrating bears come from the south. Those bears that do not move into Kangersuttuaq skirt along the ice edge to the north. Bears that have wandered into the

Figure 2. Bear on pack ice off Kangersuttuaq, July 1972.

fjord in search of ringed seal pups can remain there during the summer, ranging throughout the fjord system (Pedersen 1930:386; Jonas Danielsen, personal communication, 1982). With the formation of new ice in the middle of October, the bears again migrate out of the fjord and on to the drift ice. At the same time a migration occurs along the outer coast, from the north to Liverpool Land. While the spring movement is concentrated over a duration of about three weeks, the autumn migration is spread over a longer period (Pedersen 1930:386).

Throughout the open water period one can meet bears on the ice around the mouth of Kangersuttuaq (Fig. 2). In August 1971, we saw 22 bears (including females with cubs) over a period of only ten days (Sandell, field notes, 1971). In the fjord itself we have met a male bear swimming in Kangersaajiva/Hurry Inlet on 14th August 1976 and on 30th August 1977 we saw a two-year old bear in Qinngaajiva/Hvalrosbugten close to the town (Sandell, field notes, 1976 and 1977).

Conservation

In 1974 the greater part of northeast Greenland was declared a National Park, one of the reasons being to protect game reserves (e.g., musk-ox and polar bear), but since the area was a traditional hunting ground for hunters in Ittoqqortoormiit, these hunters were later given permission to hunt in the area. In order to protect the stocks of polar bear in Greenland a number of general national hunting restrictions were, for the first time, imposed in 1975 (Born and Rosing-Asvid 1989:70). According to these rules, beside being a permanent resident of Greenland, one should also be a full or part-time hunter to be allowed to shoot bears. A total ban on hunting was imposed from June to September and for females with cubs up to two years of age, this applies throughout the whole year (Anon 1974).

In 1976 the preservation order was made more lenient, to include females with cubs of up to only one year, and from July to September for all other bears (Anon 1976). At the same time hunters from Ittoqqortoormiit and Avanersuaq were permitted to hunt bear in the National Park (Born and Rosing-Asvid 1989:71).

The conservation act was later amended in 1980 (Anon 1980), in 1988 (Anon 1988) and finally in 1994. According to this latest amendment, only persons with hunting as their main occupation are allowed to shoot bear. (The intention here is to support full-time hunters, but the change is in conflict with the local traditional hunting rules.) Single mature male bears are now to be shot

throughout the year and females are preserved in July and August, but females with less than one year old cubs are preserved throughout the year (Anon 1994a).

Bear hunting must be carried out using traditional means of transportation, i.e., dog sledge. Even though snowmobiles are becoming increasingly widespread in the area, they are not permitted in any way for hunting. Nor may other engine driven vehicles such as planes or helicopters be used. The use of motor boats (under 40 gross register tonnage) is permitted since kayaks are no longer used in summer in the open water period. Bears and other large game should be shot with heavier rifles than .22, and semi or full automatic rifles and shotguns are not permitted (Anon 1994a). In Ittoqqortoormiit the majority of bears are shot with the so-called "Sako" (.222 Rem) even though it is generally agreed that a larger rifle (i.e., 30-06) is more suitable for bear hunting.

Hunting Shares

In cases were game is shot, the kill belongs to a single person—its "owner" (except in the case of Minke whale, *Balaenoptera acutorostrata,* which is hunted collectively.) For smaller game, birds, and seals, where the hunting is done individually, there is no doubt as to whom the kill belongs. Even in cases where a group is engaged in the hunt, as a rule, he who first sights the animal has first right to it and if he shoots it, it belongs to him entirely (Sandell and Sandell 1992:43).

For larger game where a group of hunters are involved in the hunt, the kill still belongs to a single person, but he has only a limited right to it and a large part of the animal will be divided amongst those taking part, according to accepted sharing rules (Sandell and Sandell 1991:124).

In the case of bears, he who first sights the animal becomes its "owner" and has a potential right to it, whether or not he later takes part in the killing of the bear. In order to claim a part of the slain animal—beside the "owner"—one has to have shot at it or touched it and it is in this order that the animal will be divided. In the spring of 1972 at Ittaajimmiit/Kap Hope a large male bear was sighted by a woman on its way towards the village. She roused the hunters by shouting *nanu* and a number of men ran onto the ice with their rifles. The first hunter who intended to shoot at the bear realized that he had forgotten his cartridges, but nevertheless he kept running after the bear, which crept up onto an ice-hummock. A second hunter shot at the bear and the first hunter ran forward and touched the still living bear with his hand. The bear rose up again, but before it was finally shot it was touched once again by a third hunter. The hunter who fired the first shot got the first part of the kill, the two who touched the bear got the second and third parts, and the fourth hunter who fired the second and last shot got the fourth part. The "owner" was, as stated, the woman who first sighted the bear and she got, apart from the skin, the head, back, and breast as well as the heart and intestines (Sandell, field notes, 1972). The other hunting shares were: 1st part, one of the hindlegs; 2nd part, the other hindleg; 3rd part, one foreleg with shoulder section and half the rib section; 4th part, as for the third part; 5th part, lumbar section. Ribs were divided among those present.

When the bear is butchered or made ready for transport (loaded undivided on a sledge or in a boat) there is no longer an obligation to give further portions away. Previously, however, it was considered good form and a sign of generosity to offer part of the animal to other people (Sandell and Sandell 1991:125).

These rules of dividing the spoils differ from those of the West Coast (Rosing-Asvid and Born 1990:35) and are passed along with the first settlers from Ammassalik in southeast Greenland (Petersen 1972; Robbe 1975). Some of these rules are to be found in a municipal guide, "Fangstpartdeling for Ittoqqortoormiit/Scoresbysund Kommune" (Anon 1968), but in our experience there is very seldom a need for this reference and conflicts in connection with the division of spoils hardly ever arise (Fig. 3).

With the change of the hunting regulations in 1980, which allowed only full-time hunters[2] to hunt polar bears, the law came in conflict with the old common rules, in which a bear belongs to the person who sights it and not necessarily to the one who actually kills it.[3] Apparently this has not given rise to major problems so far, since most bears nowadays are killed on actual bear hunting trips far from populated areas. In 1993/94, 87% of bears killed were shot on hunting expeditions and in the single case where a woman (without a hunter's license) sighted a bear first, the skin was given to her without discussion. In one case a bear was confiscated by the police—it was shot in self-defense by a part-time hunter on vacation from the West Coast, and he reported the incident himself. That there have not, apparently, been conflicts when part-time hunters shoot bears could be attributed to peoples' general attitude towards hunting: every able-bodied male is seen as a potential hunter. If a person had hunted for a living at some period of his life, he will still be seen as a hunter should he change occupation later on; this belief is not altered by the fact of the person being classified as a part-time hunter according to the law. There has been an awareness of this on official levels and the law was amended on 22nd July

Figure 3. Hunters flensing and sharing a bear. Ittaajimmiit, March 1976.

1993, so that pensioners and people without a regular income over more than 125 days the previous year should now be eligible for a full-time hunting license (Anon 1993). In places like Ittoqqortoormiit, where hunting is an integrated part of life, it can be difficult to differentiate between full-time and part-time hunters and registration is, therefore, often arbitrary. In practice this means that only those employed full-time in the various institutions are ineligible for a full-time hunting license. It is our impression that the people have a very clear idea of who may and who may not shoot bear.

Bear Hunters

In the summer of 1994 there were 43 registered full-time and 33 part-time hunters (of the 33 part-timers, 13 were Danes or West Greenlanders). As previously mentioned, this registration is not fully reliable, since some neglect to be registered (especially those from the villages). Thus, there were officially no hunters registered at all in Ittaajimmiit in 1994 (Anon 1994b). Some were registered away from the town while others had forgotten to register.

Of the 43 full-time hunters in 1994, 20 were single and 23 married. Half of the married hunters had no children living at home and in ten of the families the wives had paid work in the town.

If one compares the figures for hunters in 1994 with Roberts' figures from 1967 (Robert 1970: 108), there seem to be proportionally more older hunters now than before (Table 1). This tendency is the result of a number of developments, one of which is longer schooling with boarding stays in Ammassalik or in West Greenland. Many first start their hunting careers in their mid-twenties, when the possibility of further education is no longer available in Greenland.

The 35–45 year old age group have often the greatest burdens as breadwinners (with most children living at home) and are often forced to earn a living through a paid job, since the subsistence economy is no longer sufficient. When the children grow up the need for ready cash lessens and a number of men go back to their hunting livelihood. In the older group there are a number of unmarried men who are dedicated bear hunters.

In the 1993/94 season there were 37 bears killed by 13 hunters in the Ittoqqortoormiit area, of whom three were not registered as full-time hunters (Table 2). Additionally one bear was sighted ("owned") by a woman and one confiscated by the police. In all 39 bears were killed. Of the 39 bears killed in the Ittoqqortoormiit area in 1993/94, 34 (87%) were killed on specific bear hunting trips, while in Ittaajimmiitt in 1971/72 only 13 (54%) of the 24 bears were killed on such trips. (Ittaajimmiit can in this case be considered representative of the whole district.) That year was

Table 1. Age distribution and marital status for full-time hunters in Ittoqqortoormiit.

	1994[a]		Marital Status	1967[b]	
Age	No. of Hunters	(%)	Single/Married	No. of Hunters	(%)
20–24	2	(4.7)	2–0	2	(5.7)
25–29	3	(7.0)	2–1	4	(11.4)
30–34	8	(18.5)	4–4	6	(17.1)
35–39	6	(14.0)	1–5	7	(20.0)
40–44	7	(16.3)	5–2	8	(22.8)
45–49	8	(18.5)	1–7	4	(11.4)
50–54	4	(9.3)	2–2	3	(8.6)
55–59	2	(4.7)	2–0	1	(2.8)
60–64[c]	3	(7.0)	1–2	0	(0.0)
total	43	(100.0)	20–23	35	(100.0)

[a]Anon 1994b
[b]Robert 1970:108
[c]Hunters in this group receive old-age pensions.

Table 2. Bear hunters in Ittoqqortoormiit 1993/94. (Source: Sandell, field notes, 1994.)

Age	Marital Status	No. of Bears	Area
16	single*	2	Sulussugutikajik
30	single	4	near Daneborg
32	married	7	5 at Sulussugutikajik, 1 at Immikkeertaajik, 1 at Aappalaartaajik
33	single*	1	near Daneborg
35	married	1	at ice edge
37	married	5	4 at Immikkeertaajik, 1 at Gule Fjelde
42	married*	1	Uunarteq
42	single	2	Immikkeertaajik
47	married**	8	3 at Uunarteq, 2 at Sulussugutikajik, 3 at Immikkeertaajik
48	married	1	Uunarteq-Napparruutilikajik
49	single	1	Sulussugutikajik
52	single	2	near Kap Brewster
56	single	2	1 near Daneborg, 1 at Sulussugutikajik
total	13 hunters	37 bears	
woman		1	Uunarteq
confiscated		1	Ittoritseq

*Not registered as full-time hunter.
**This hunter's life-time total of bears killed reached 185 in 1994 (Niels Arqe, personal communication, 1994.)

the first time wintering took place on Sulussugutikajik/Steward Ø. No hunters went north that year.

As seen in Table 3, it was unmarried men in the age group 25–29 years that shot most bears in 1971/72. The only married man (36 years old) who went bear hunting had no children.

It was surprising therefore, to discover that it was the same people as in 1972 who continued to go bear hunting ten years later and not, as would have been expected, the younger generation of 25–30 year olds. This can partly be explained by the fact that these hunters were still unmarried and with no family commitments, while all the younger were breadwinners and could not permit them-

Table 3. Bear hunters in Ittaajimmiit 1971/72. (Source: Sandell and Sandell 1991:114.)

Age	Marital Status	No. of Bears	Area
18	single	1	ice edge near entrance to Kangersuttuaq/Scoresby Sund
25	single	2	ice edge near entrance to Kangersuttuaq/Scoresby Sund
26	single	1	ice edge near entrance to Kangersuttuaq/Scoresby Sund
27	single	3	Blosseville Coast
29	single	4	Blosseville Coast
33	single	3	Blosseville Coast
36	married	3	Blosseville Coast
37	widower	1	Ittoqqortoormiit-Ittaajimmiit
40	married	3	Ittoqqortoormiit-Ittaajimmiit
total	9 hunters	21 bears	
	woman	1	Ittaajimmiit
	woman	1	Ittaajimmiit
	woman	1	Ittaajimmiit

selves to go on long hunting expeditions, where the spoils could possibly be large, but where it was also possible to spend weeks on hunts without any kills (Sandell and Sandell 1991:114).

Why these bear hunters remain unmarried is another and considerably more complex question. It is our impression that it has to do with a more or less conscious choice of lifestyle; a life characterized by change, economic insecurity, and some degree of nomadism is chosen over a more stable family life. Since this lifestyle is regarded by potential spouses as "old fashioned" and incapable of securing the material needs and framework for a family, these men remain unmarried and, therefore, can continue to hunt bear.

In the decade from the early 1980s, the number of hunting expeditions setting out for the north increased, both as regards the number of hunters and the duration of hunts. Partly as a result of falling prices for sealskins, making bear hunting more attractive, but also because a growing number of younger hunters began to carry out bear hunting, more and more started to hunt north of Kong Oscar's Fjord and to spread out farther north, as far as Daneborg (Sandell and Sandell 1991:114). Winter expeditions southwards also expanded. Using Sulussugutikajik (Fig. 4), where hunting cabins have been built, as a base, the areas south from ikkeertaajik/Turner Ø are now also exploited. After the passing of new preservation laws in 1988, allowing male bears to be hunted all year round, further expansion in the summer period has now taken place. Now hunters go to Sulussugutikajik by boat to hunt bear in the summertime. (In 1993/94, 10 bears were killed around Immikkeertaajik and nine in the vicinity of Sulussugutikajik; Sandell, field notes, 1994.)

In contrast to the situation 20 years ago in the early seventies, we now in 1994 find that there are a good number of married bear hunters. One explanation for this change in marital status among the bear hunters can be found in the following case of three brothers, who, as quite young hunters had a sound economic safety net with both of their parents in the public service with good incomes and good living conditions. Whenever the sons left on bear hunting trips their wives and children moved in with the parents and were provided for by them. The brothers' parents were newcomers in the area and didn't have hunting backgrounds, but the sons married into one of the most skilled hunting families, including a man who is considered without question the best bear hunter in the district and who taught all three the skills of bear hunting. This man, a bachelor, went on hunting trips, first with the eldest, then the next eldest, and now with the youngest of the three brothers.

Figure 5, example 1 shows the kinship ties among the hunters in this family. In 1993/94 the members of this extended family shot 21 of the 39 bears killed that year—i.e., more than half of the total number. Of the remaining 18 bears, a married hunter of 47 killed eight, but in this case the family in question does not have children at home.

In Figure 5, example 2 we find another related group of bear hunters, composed of brothers and a nephew, all of whom are unmarried, who often go bear hunting together. In the 1993/94 season they had not killed many bears, but in earlier days they had been among the pioneers in the long range hunting trips to the north. In the spring of 1994, the older of the brothers was, together with his nephew, on an expedition to the north around Daneborg for two months and their yield was only a single bear. The two older brothers are the same persons who in 1971/72 were the most successful

Figure 4. Wintering place at Sulussugutikajik, August 1993.

bear hunters in Ittaajimmiit. They are still unmarried and have, over this 20-year period, trained their younger brothers and their nephew on bear hunting trips. This family goes more often than others on bear hunting trips inside the National Park Area and have in several cases been the first to explore new areas.

Mobility and Technology

As can be seen in Table 4, about half of all bears shot in Ittaajimmiit in 1971/72 are listed in the column "ice-edge/fjord," i.e., they were killed close to the village, on trips between Ittaajimmiit and Ittoqqortoormiit or along the ice-edge when sealing. In the spring there is great hunting activity along the ice-edge in the mouth of the fjord and there are often opportunities to sight bears at this time of the year. However, the majority of bears are shot on actual bear hunts, where hunting is carried out on month-long expeditions along the Blosseville Coast, as well as in the areas between Kong Oscar Fjord and Daneborg or, to a lesser extent, in the inner parts of Kangersuttuaq.

The possibility of spending the winter in the hunting areas or even of having a permanent base there is a distinct advantage for bear hunters. After houses were built on Sulussugutikajik in 1971/72, hunting activity in the area increased considerably and today there is on-going bear hunting southwards. In Table 4, it can be seen that 59% of the bears shot in 1993/94 were hunted in the areas south of Kangersuttuaq. Many bears are now killed south of Sulussugutikajik down towards Immikkeertaajik/Turner Ø or even farther south. When a new house was built on the old hunting station at Kangikajik in 1985, hunters began to spend part of the winter there, where the opportunities for bear hunting are known to be good. In 1994/95 two families and the district's oldest bear-hunter wintered at Kangikajik primarily to carry out bear hunting and got a total of 13 bears during a few months stay (Ejner Hammeken, personal communication, 1995).

The amendments to the preservation laws (see above) have, together with the technological developments of more powerful engines on boats, made for changing patterns in bear hunting in the open water period. Earlier, the bears killed in autumn were those that were sighted by chance when hunting at the mouth of the fjord or when hunting for musk-ox or trout fishing in the fjord (Sandell and Sandell 1992:24). Today, with boats equipped with engines of up to 90 hp, a larger area can be covered than before and this has, together with the legalization of summer hunting, made for an increased interest in bear hunting during the open water month. Bear hunts are now carried out

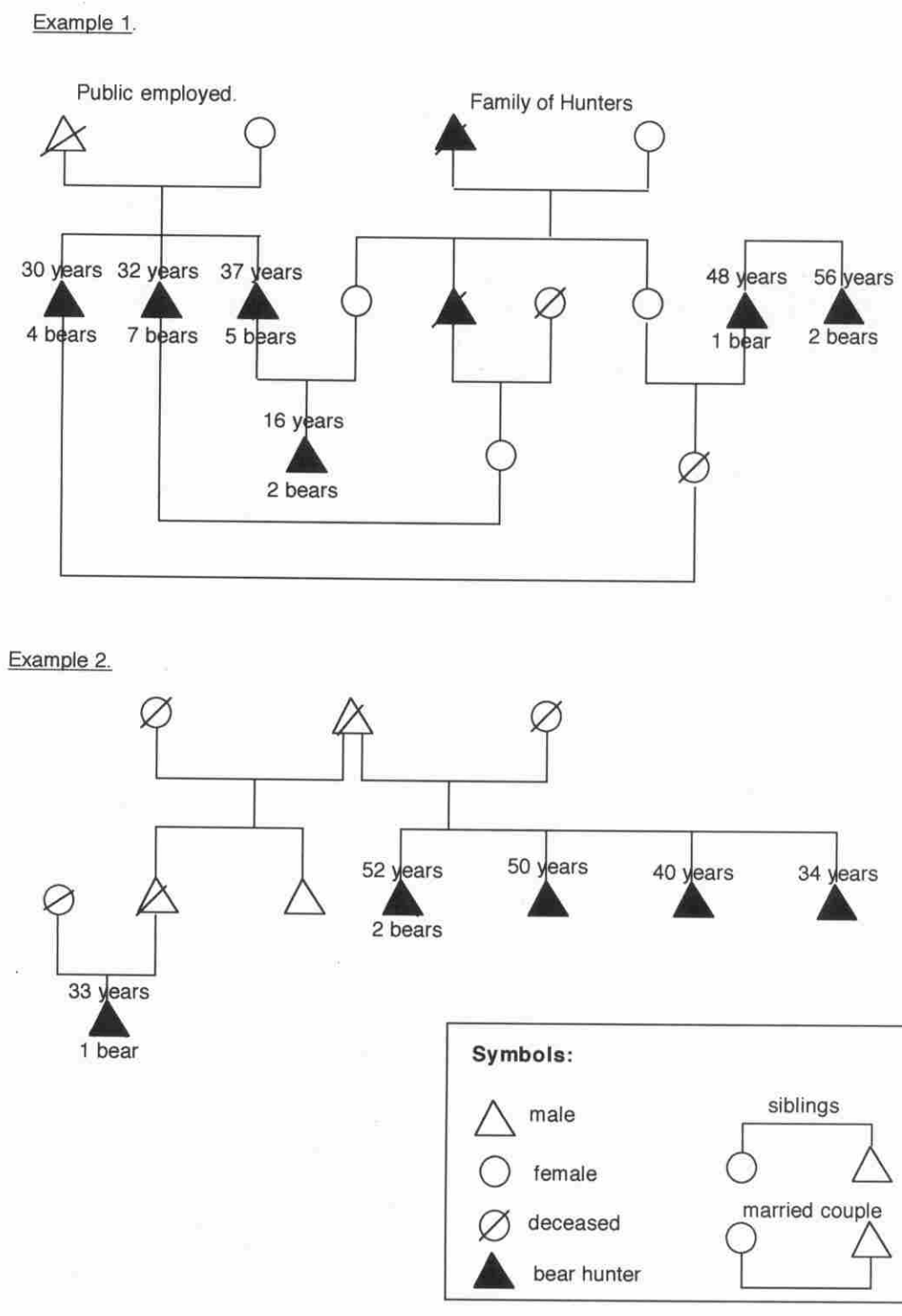

Figure 5. Kinship ties among bear hunters, indicating the hunters' ages and respective yield. 1994.

in boats around Sulussugutikajik and Immikkeertaajik and up along the coast of Liverpool Land. The increased activity in the southern area around Sulussugutikajik reduces individual hunters' chances of shooting a bear. Over the last two years, one hunter has, therefore, spent the autumns at Ukaleqarteq/Kap Høegh and concentrated his efforts in this area in order to avoid the increased activity to the south. In September 1994 he shot a bear at Ukaleqarteq and another hunter got two bears in the same month in the area (Hjalmer Hammeken, personal communication, 1995).

Table 4. Area and month for bears killed in 1971/72 and 1993/94. For 1971/72 data from Ittaajimmit are given, whereas data from 1993/94 are from Ittoqqortoormiit.

	1971/72 ice-edge/fjord	1993/94 ice-edge/fjord	1971/72 north of Scoresby Sund	1993/94 north of Scoresby Sund	1971/72 south of Scoresby Sund	1993/94 south of Scoresby Sund	1971/72 total	1993/94 total
Sept.	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Oct.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nov.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dec.	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Jan.	1	0	0	0	3	0	4	0
Feb.	5	1	0	0	2	7	7	8
March	2	1	0	5	3	13	5	19
April	1	0	0	0	2	1	3	1
May	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
June	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
July	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
Aug.	1	1	0	0	2	0	3	1
total	11	10	0	6	13	23	24	39
%	46	26	0	15	54	59	100	100

The first time in recent years that bears were hunted from boats along the Liverpool Land coast was in September 1979. The boat crew then was made up of two full-time hunters and two men employed at the KGH, *Kongelige Grønlandske Handel,* Royal Greenland Trade Department (three brothers-in-law and a cousin), and the boat was owned and equipped by one of the employees (see Fig. 6). The crew got seven bears (Sandell, field notes, 1979).

In 1984, five hunters took off from Ittoqqortoormiit on 3 September and when arriving at Mestersvig four days later they had killed six bears, three of them shot by a single hunter (Fig. 7). The boat owner got none himself, but of course received part of the kill, according to the accepted rules for hunting shares (Sandell, field notes, 1984).

Since these summer hunting trips do not take nearly as long as winter bear hunts, part-time hunters, employed people, and others who normally cannot allow themselves to spend much time away from home, get an opportunity to go bear hunting (see Fig. 8). Several of the older bear hunters do not themselves own boats, but they are often seen taking part in a boat crew and their greater experience often results in their getting most of the bears (see Fig. 7). Apart from their obligations in dividing the kill, these experienced bear hunters are traditionally known to be very generous.

Another marked change in the pattern of bear hunting within the last decade is that hunting expeditions northwards have increased in number, not only in regard to the numbers of hunters, but also the duration of the hunts and the area covered. Apart from increasing the chances of getting bears, there is also prestige attached to hunting far away from settled areas and in recent years there has been almost open competition as to who could travel farthest north, cover the greatest area, or spend most time on the hunt. These month-long sledge journeys are carried out for the most part without great problems, though sometimes bad weather, poor hunting, or tricky ice conditions can change things dramatically. It is seldom, however, that it turns out as badly as in the spring of 1994 when four sledges were caught in a lengthy snowstorm on the outer coast of Wollaston Forland. Having been trapped by the heavy snowfall for a couple of days, first the dogs were released and later efforts to dig out the tents had to be abandoned. Finally, they had to leave all their equipment and carry on by foot to Daneborg (a permanent manned station, the base of the Sirius sledge patrol in northeast Greenland), from where they were later evacuated (Scoresby Hammeken, personal communication, 1994). Incidentally, one of those taking part borrowed a sledge and a dog team on his return to Ittoqqortoormiit and took off northwards in order to recover his abandoned equipment.

The extremely difficult weather conditions with huge snowfalls resulted in meager returns on northbound expeditions in the spring of 1994.

Yields and Prices

It is difficult to say exactly how many bears are killed annually throughout the years in northeast

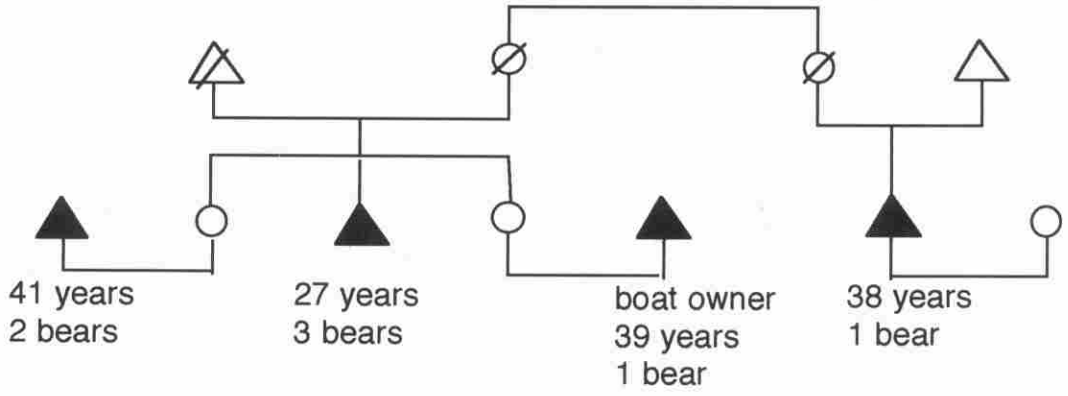

Figure 6. Kinship ties among a bear hunting party, September 1979.

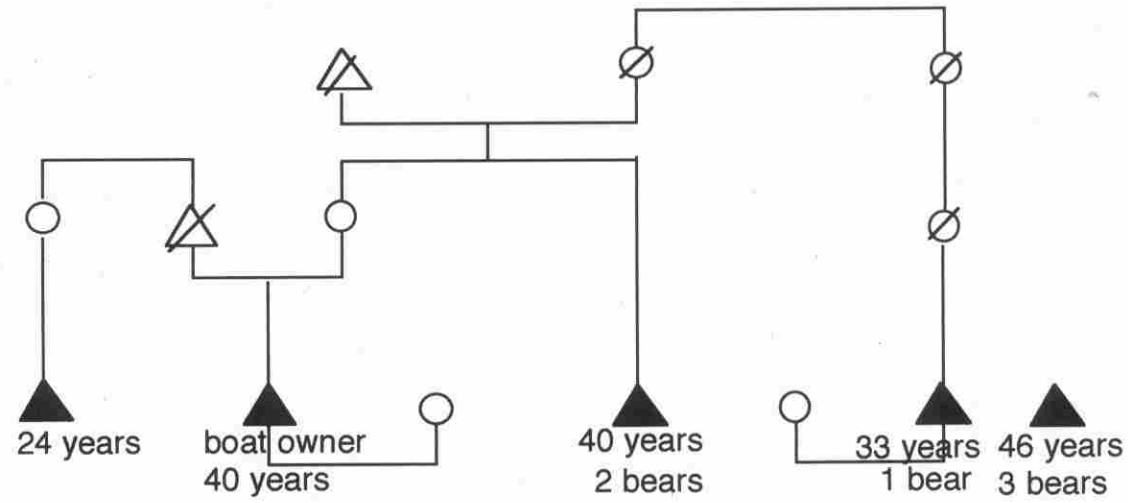

Figure 7. Kinship ties among a bear hunting party, September 1984.

Greenland, since the available statistics are often estimates and in recent times based principally on KNI's (*Kalaallit Niuerfiat,* Greenland Trading Department, earlier KGH's) figures, which solely show the numbers of bear skins sold. Figure 9 shows the numbers of bears killed in Ittoqqortoormiit from 1926 until today. Some of the figures are estimates, due to lack of statistics from hunting and trading lists, and the figures from 1949–1955 are entirely missing. In some periods up to a third of the skins were sold by hunters to Danes working in or passing through the district. This would be unheard of today because of the relatively high official prices for bear skins—according to Danes in Ittoqqortoormiit, too high for private persons to pay. Now almost every bear skin is sold to KNI.

The first year after the establishment of Ittoqqortoormiit, 99 bear skins were traded and, in the period from 1926–1939, 761 skins in all were traded (Mikkelsen and Sveistrup 1944:111). The yearly figures in skins vary greatly; in 1926 there were 99 skins and in 1934 only 12. The colonial manager of the time, Johan Petersen, wrote in his diary of the year 1934: "In the past summer there has been no substantial hunting due to bad ice and weather conditions" (Petersen 1957:151). In December he notes: "Settlements at Kap Tobin and here in the colony itself have begun to complain over a lack of meat" (Petersen 1957:151). At Kangersuttuaq/Sydkap in that year no bears were killed (Petersen 1957:150), while it was noted for 1936 that, "The hunter, Kristian joined his father Fr. Brønlund at Sydkap. They shot 10 bears in eight days" (Grønlands Styrelse for 1936).

As mentioned, snowfalls and bad weather posed problems for those sledge teams who were bear hunting to the north in spring 1994. The yearly variations in weather and ice conditions are generally of great importance to the hunters' ability in carrying out bear hunting and thus they influence the respective years' kill. However, fluctuations in the hunters' yield are probably also a reflection of the variation in occurrence of bears (Born and Rosing-Asvid 1989:65). Born suggests

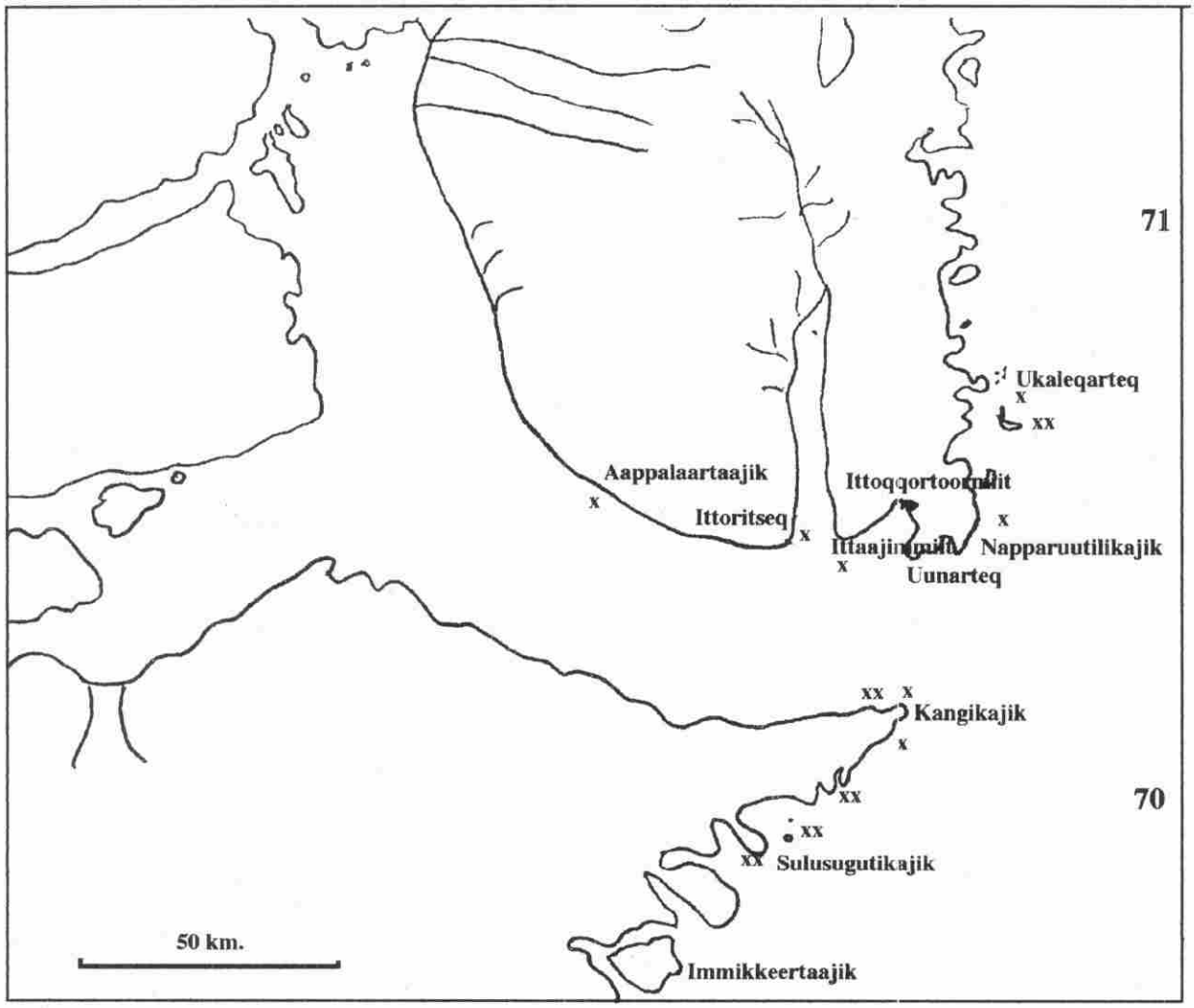

Figure 8. Locations of bear kills in the open water season, 1994.

that the fluctuation in the number of bears killed is due, in part, to climatic conditions, since yearly variations in, for example, local ice conditions will influence the occurrence of bears and, therefore, the number killed (Born 1983:91). Variation in the climate is, however, just one of the factors that influences bear hunting. Other factors, such as the hunters' settlement patterns and mobility, their technology, and economic returns from hunting, will all influence the annual kill.

In the winter of 1955/56 and again in 1957/58 a larger group of hunters wintered at Kangikajik (Bartoline Arqe, personal communication, 1982), which is known to be a good bear locality and it can clearly be seen in Figure 9 that for these years the number of skins traded rose (to 54 and 61, respectively). In the following years, Kangikajik was only used occasionally as a temporary winter base by a couple of families and bear hunters, but in the winter of 1967/68 there were again a good number of families from the settlement of Ittaajimmiit spending the winter there (Josva Barselajsen, personal communication, 1972) and in 1968 there was, yet again, a significant increase in the number of skins traded—62 as against 31 the previous year. (Part of the increase, however, is due to a price increase of 300% in 1967 which stimulated interest in bear hunting generally; Robert 1970:92). Wintering on Sulussugutikajik began in 1971/72 when 69 skins were traded. In the winter of 1975/76 there was a very large group down here, including a number of bear hunters from Ittaajimmiit (Sandell, field notes, 1975), and the number of skins being traded increased yet again to 64. In 1979 only 12 skins were traded, which is probably the result of there not having been anybody wintering on Sulussugutikajik that year and, for unknown reasons, no activity in the northern areas.

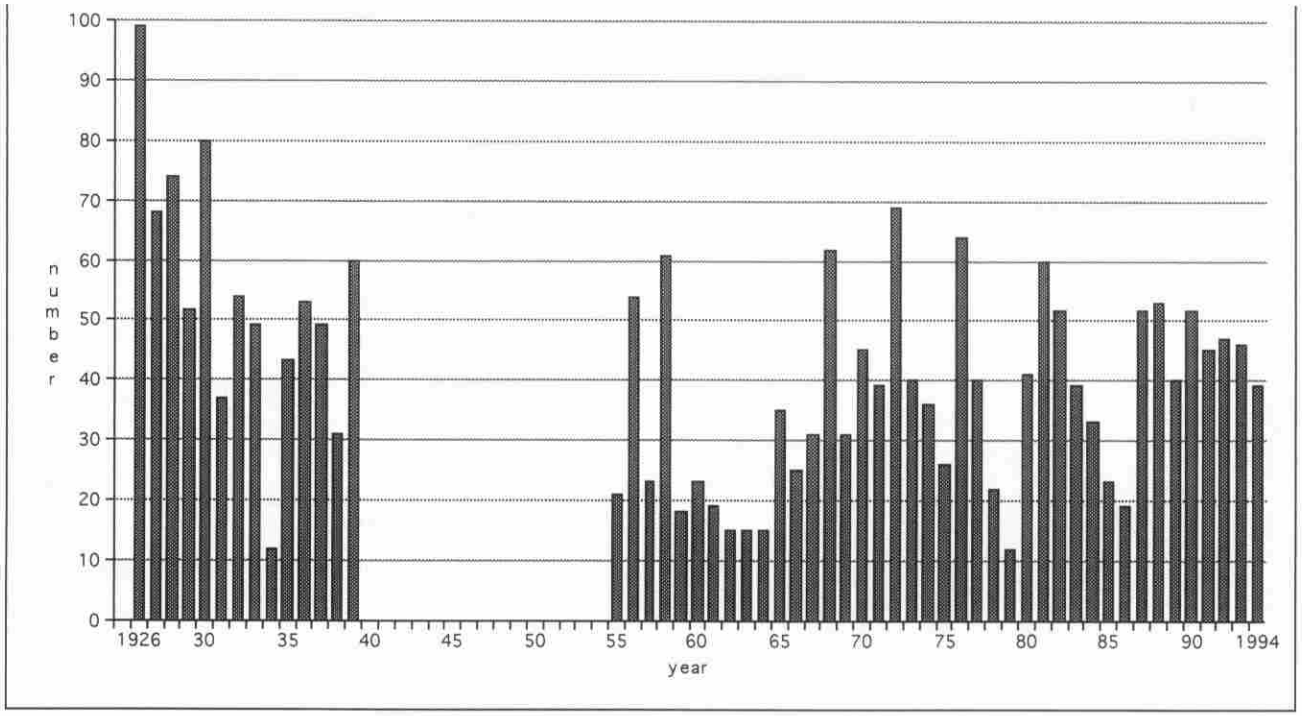

Figure 9. Annual catch of bears in Ittoqqortoormiit, 1926–1994.

The high yield in the first years after the colony was established is without doubt due to the fact that the bears shot belonged to a local group living in the area and, once the stock was reduced, fewer bears were available and thus the yield decreased. In the same way new settlements in a particular area will provide a good yield in the first few years, after which there will be a decrease when the bears of the area have been exploited. The same applies, of course, to some of the other kinds of game, e.g., walrus and foxes.

The growing interest in bear hunting in recent years is due in part to falling prices in the sealskin market as a result of anti-sealing campaigns (see Wenzel 1985). These campaigns were directed at the killing of seal pups by Canadian and Norwegian hunters, but have had, apparently, a permanent effect on the market for Greenland sealskins, despite the fact that seal pups are neither hunted nor traded in Greenland (Sandell and Sandell 1986:292, fig. 11).

In 1994 the trading value of bear skins of first quality was 3500 Dkr per meter—approximately 625 US$ (the prices are given per meter of the skin from tip of nose to root of tail)—while second and third quality skins yielded 2200 (392 US$) and 1100 Dkr (196 US$) per meter respectively (Anon 1994c). This means that a good bear skin of first quality can fetch a price of 8–10,000 Dkr (approximately 1450–1775 US$).

In the period from 1960–1980, many skins were sold to private buyers (locally employed Danes and tourists) rather than to the KGH (now KNI), since the hunters felt that they received too little from the company.[4] At the same time, hunters often later received a substantial bonus after the skin had been sold at auction in Denmark on top of the company trading price, which meant that the combined price from the company often exceeded that of the private market. However, many hunters chose the immediate reward of an initially higher price, due to an acute shortage of cash, rather than selling to the company and waiting up to six months for their bonus. As mentioned previously, bear skin prices rose by 300% in 1967, from 500 Dkr the one year to 1500 Dkr the next. At a bear skin auction in October 1972, bears fetched 6320 Dkr on average and a single skin was sold for 24,700 Dkr (4410 US$!), going to a hunter from East Greenland (source: KGH). The high prices at that time were the result of great interest among wealthy Japanese buyers. In the last decade there have been hardly any sales of skins to local private buyers and practically all skins are sold through the official KNI channels. Since there is no tradition for local use of bear skin, e.g., for trousers, in Ittoqqortoormiit as in Avanersuaq all the bear skins are put up for sale (compare Rosing-Asvid and Born 1990:35).

Stagnating sealskin prices have resulted in a fall in income for hunters, and, as stated earlier, made bear hunting more attractive in Ittoqqor-

toormiit. In order to help the hunting profession since the summer of 1994 it has been possible for hunters in Ittoqqortoormiit to also trade bear meat. The upsurge of tourism in West Greenland has brought with it an increased demand for bear meat from hotels and restaurants, which pay prices high enough to make it viable to fly the meat out from Ittoqqortoormiit and still provide a price of 50 Dkr (9 US$) per kilo to the hunters (only the hind legs and backs are bought—Ewald Brønlund, personal communication, 1994). The major part of the meat from bears killed on long sledge journies is used as dog food, whilst bears killed in close proximity to settlements provide meat for human consumption. Bear meat is highly valued by the local population.

Discussion

Bear hunting has traditionally been very prestigious and the real bear hunters have always been looked up to as an example to follow because of their skill and ability to cope and survive during the hard month-long hunts. It is they who are listened to when tales are told and their accounts from the distant and fascinating hunting grounds bring a fresh breath of life to the daily grind. Good bear stories are always well received and can be told and retold. For example, the episode with Josva—the same Josva who always advised us, as newcomers, of the necessity of carrying a rifle in case of bears appearing—who was surprised by a bear when checking his seal net and had to kill it using the ice chisel as his only weapon. Or the story of Janus, who traveling by sledge between Ittaajimmiit and Ittoqqortoormiit, met an aggressive bear. Since he was only on his way to town he had not brought a rifle. With only his whip and his dogs he had to keep the bear at bay until he was rescued by a passing sledge (Sandell, field notes, 1972).

Under a steadily growing influence of Western European culture, with its norms and consumerism, the traditional hunting life in Ittoqqortoormiit is threatened. As a result of stagnating sealskin prices, it is difficult for hunters to earn enough to support a family and the lifestyle of a hunter, with the values it represents, is not really compatible with the present day norms of a regular income and stable life. The relatively good prospects for wage earners as a result of developments in the local service sector have tempted many to choose the stable livelihood of the wage earner rather than the more economically unstable life as a hunter. This tendency has, on the other hand, brought for others the desire to manifest themselves as Inuit, and to this end bear hunting is a good means because it combines a prestigious activity and supports traditional East Greenland values. We are convinced that an important factor in the growing interest, especially amongst the younger hunters, in longer hunting expeditions in the National Park to the north and southwards along the Blosseville Coast, was and is due to a need to secure an identity and prestige in a society undergoing change. That the hunting expeditions have become longer needs to be seen in this light, rather than taken as an indication of a fall in the bear population. Despite a marked decrease in the yield from the northern expeditions in the last couple of years (amongst other things due to extreme weather conditions), interest in these expeditions has not decreased!

A prerequisite for young hunters taking part in these long expeditions is that they are introduced to the area by an experienced hunter, and that they can permit themselves to be away from home for a longer period. Therefore, one now sees that those who, for the main part, go on these long hunting expeditions either are those with sufficient economic resources within their families to allow them to go (i.e., hunters whose parents or wives have paid employment) or those who are unmarried without economic commitments.

Another marked change in the pattern of bear hunting within the last decade is the increased importance of summer hunting trips by motor boats. According to Born, it is estimated that in Avanersuaq motor boat hunts account for 1.6% of all bears killed and for Ittoqqortoormiit the figure has until now been around 4.9% (Born 1995:83). In 1993/94, only five bears were shot from boats in Ittoqqortoormiit, but it nevertheless accounted for 13% of a total of 39 bears killed that season. In 1994, due, in part, to particularly favorable ice conditions that autumn, 17 bears were shot in the period from September to the end of the open water season in the beginning of November and there is no doubt that motor boats will be increasingly used for bear hunting in the future. A further incentive in this connection is that since autumn 1994 bear meat can be sold to the local KTU, *Kalaallit Tunisassiorfik* or Greenland Production Plant. The relative short duration of summer hunts by fast motorboats means that there is seldom any problem in bringing back meat, as opposed to the longer winter sledge trips where the load would be too heavy to bring back and the meat, therefore, is used as dog food during the trip.

Technological developments, together with the introduction and amendment of hunting laws, have thus brought about a change in the pattern of hunting. New technology has given the hunters greater opportunities for carrying out bear hunting. This new development has its price: the obtaining and running of the rather expensive boats now used demands an economic commitment, which in turn favors those who are economically better off.

Apart from the prestige it confers, the killing

of a bear brings in a tidy cash sum. Unlike the development in sealskin prices, bear skins have, on the whole, kept in step with general price increases and, as previously mentioned, a large skin can bring in up to around 10,000 Dkr (1775 US$) to its owner. On top of this, the meat can fetch around 4000 Dkr (725 US$). (These figures are estimates, based on an average bear weighing 200 kg of which about 160 kg is edible tissue; see Born 1983:55.) Supposing that the hindlegs and back make up half of the weight, the yield is about 80 kg at 50 Dkr/kg in trading. Trading in bear meat began in the autumn of 1994 and through the beginning of 1995 around 2000 kg of meat has been bought (Ewald Brønlund, personal communication, 1995).

It is to be expected that the interest in bear hunting will be maintained and probably intensified in the years to come since now the cash benefits have become more attractive, and thus this traditional cultural element will continue to play a significant social and economic role in Ittoqqortoormiit both now and in the future.

End Notes

1. The Greenlandic name for Scoresby Sund is normally depicted on maps and other official documents as *Kangertiitivaq*. Since, however, the name which is always heard locally is *Kangersuttuaq*, we have chosen to use this version.

2. In order to carry out hunting and fishing in Greenland a hunting license is required, either as a full-time or part-time hunter. The criteria for obtaining a license are, in short, that one has a permanent connection to Greenland and that one has been a resident there the previous two years. In order to qualify for a full-time license, one must furthermore either have made one's living from hunting or fishing the previous year or have had paid work for less than 125 days a year (Anon 1984; 1993). According to the bear legislation of 1994 the hunters have to report the killing of a bear by filling in a form with specific data on the circumstances of the kill, etc. If these forms are not filled in a new license will not be issued for the subsequent hunting season (Anon 1994a).

3. The East Greenlandic phrase *nanninneq* can mean both: (1) to have killed a bear and (2) to have the first right to ("own") one.

4. For two years (1977 and 1978) the hunters of Ittoqqortoormiit totally refused to sell their bear skins to KGH. In 1977 KGH made a change in the trading conditions, so that solely washed bear skin could be traded. As only a few of the households had facilities to do this, the hunters felt it was an unreasonable demand and therefore boycotted the bear skin trading to KGH. The three and four bear skins in the trading lists for these two years (Fig. 9) were actually skins confiscated by the police (Sandell and Sandell 1992:62).

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