Scale and Inuit social relations

Ilagiit, parts of each other

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Introduction

For this collection, we were asked to reflect on the nature of social relations among hunter-gatherers, with the aim of exploring how social organization relates to group size, how to identify the scale of groups, and how the organization of small groups impacts patterns of decision-making and mobility. Of particular relevance to these questions are two recently published ethnographic works that have touched on questions of scale among hunter-gatherers. The first, Bird-David (2017), emphasizes the unscaleable nature of social relations in "tiny-scale" forager societies, such as the Nayaka with whom she worked in Tamil Nadu. The second, Bird et al. (2019), argues that foragers "do not live in small-scale societies," based on their work with Martu in the Western Desert of Australia.

In this chapter, I reflect on the scale of social relations among contemporary Kangiqsujuarmiut and historical Tarramiut (Inuit), by drawing on the distinction between local organization (local group composition), and social organization (broader interaction networks). I suggest that the concept of pluripresence (Bird-David 2017), which is based in "being-together" with different others, is helpful for understanding Kangiqsujuarmiut social relations on a "tiny-scale": specifically, at the level of extended families within modern settlements. In practice, although kinship plays an organizing role in social interaction in Kangiqsujuaq today, there is limited emphasis on genetic relatedness, while kin and kin-like ties can potentially be activated over large spatial scales and across generations. I argue that this expansive view of kinship is relevant for understanding historical social organization in the Eastern Arctic, because it blurs the boundaries between local "family bands." For the purpose of engaging with the ideas brought forward by the aforementioned ethnogra-

phers, I will primarily focus on the fine-grained historical and ethnographic record concerning Tarramiut (Inuit) social organization and mobility. At the end I will briefly return to the more sobering realities of the archaeological record and how the ethnographic evidence reviewed here might contribute useful insight to its interpretation. I begin by considering what aspects of scale are most relevant to this discussion.

What do we mean by "small-scale"?

Both of the contributions mentioned above are in one way or another interested in the scale of "social relations." Bird-David (2017) is primarily concerned with the intensity of relationships produced when social interactions occur at a very small scale, where perhaps the most relevant "scaleable" variables are local group size, spatial proximity, and marriage practices. For instance, she argues that "good marriages," such as sibling exchanges, facilitate the deepening of relationships between interconnected groups of people. Bird-David uses the term "pluripresence" to reference "a particular scalar condition that entails the vivid availability of each member of a community to every other member," and suggests that this condition is not scaleable. A key feature of pluripresence is that perceptions of group membership are based on a sense of social proximity, on "being-together" with a set of distinct persons, rather than by ethnic group identity.

Bird et al. (2019) are also interested in the scale of social relations, again as they relate to group size, geographic extent, and kinship. However, they are focused on how individual-level patterns of interactions scale-up to produce macro-level structures, rather than on how scale might impact how people conceptualize their social worlds. They argue that Martu groups are highly fluid: people come together in groups of different sizes, at different times, for different reasons (e.g., foraging, residing, or social and ritual events), and that there is high turnover in the membership of particular groups. Thus each person can have a unique network of relations that overlaps only partially with the networks of others, and these networks may be quite large and geographically distributed. Enduring groups and distinct boundaries demarcating them are consequently absent, producing a large-scale network that is not nested.

One might simply conclude from this that some foraging societies have "large-scale" interaction networks, and others do not: the mobility of Western Desert peoples may be exceptional, while probably few hunter-gatherers in the past were so circumscribed as the Nayaka. This is undoubtedly true,

and we should potentially anticipate at least as wide a range of variation in the archaeological record. But the question of why and how exactly scales of interaction differ, and thus the interest in comparison, remains.

Besides these differences in the research context, these authors are also considering different aspects of scale. I try to clarify this difference by focusing on a distinction highlighted by Bird and colleagues between "local organization (who is with whom at a given time and place)" and "social organization (the expansive and virtual patterns in ties that comprise networks of social interaction)." Bird et al. (2019) are clearly interested in social organization, whereas Bird-David (2017) is focused on local organization (perhaps better referred to as group composition) and, even more specifically, modes of interaction that occur as a result of it.

In what follows I examine local organization and social organization of Tarramiut (Inuit from Hudson's Strait coast of Nunavik) in light of the concepts and ideas brought forward by these authors. I think this is a potentially interesting avenue of thought since, as I will describe below, there are many "shared features" in the groups discussed by the two authors, namely, the centrality of visiting in social life, fluidity in local group composition, each person having a unique network of kin and social relations, and the extension of those networks beyond the local residential group. I consider the possibility that, in the Tarramiut case, "tiny-scale," pluripresent modes of interaction and concepts of identity may actually be compatible with—and potentially even facilitate—fluid social organization on larger temporal and spatial scales.

Site background

Kangiqsujuaq, an Inuit settlement of roughly 800 people on the Hudson Strait in Nunavik, Canada, appears from the sky as a cluster of 100 or so colorful buildings nestled in a steep valley, all within roughly one to two square kilometres (Figure 1). From the shoreline, the village slopes gently upward, with all of the "old" houses in the settlement (mostly built in the 1980s) facing outwards towards the water, providing a view of the spectacular cliffs across the bay. One road out of the settlement leads to the tiny airport on the hill, and then continues on for roughly 10 km to Akulivik, a camping area and the launch point for many hunting activities. Beyond that, there are no roads: the nearest settlement is Quaqtaq, home to roughly 400 people, 140 km away as the crow flies. Besides hunting and camping trips within a day's travel of the settlement, when people leave the settlement they mostly fly by airplane, to visit

friends and family in other villages, to attend meetings, or to go to doctor's appointments. Meetings and medical appointments often take place in the regional centre, Kuujjuaq, which has a population of roughly 2700. It takes about half a day to reach Kuujjuaq by plane if the weather cooperates. People occasionally travel to the "South"—usually Montreal—for meetings and specialist appointments that cannot take place in Kuujjuaq, or simply to go on holiday. Most imported supplies for the settlement come via one or two sea lifts that arrive during the summer months, while small quantities of perishable goods, like fresh fruits and vegetables, are flown in roughly once a week.

The settlement today seems very "new": since 2013, a huge cooperative store, two administrative buildings, and nearly 100 new housing units have been constructed (increasing from roughly 150 to 250) in order to address crowded housing conditions. The new homes thus represent roughly 40% of all housing units in the village today, meaning that the physical size of the settlement has greatly increased in the past decade, while the composition of households has scaled down considerably, to smaller divisions of extended families.

Despite the recent building boom, the age of the settlement is marked by a few old buildings, like the Catholic mission, which dates back to 1936, and by archaeological remnants of the Révillon Frères trading post established in 1910. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Inuit congregated at these sites seasonally for trade and social events, with some settling more permanently. Sedentarization was accelerated after the Second World War when the Canadian federal government required Inuit families to settle in villages and to send their children to school in order to receive government assistance payments. As suggested above, the settlement today has most modern amenities, but Kangiqsujuarmiut still must travel to larger centres for doctor's appointments and higher education.

Like many other settlements in the Canadian Arctic, the specific location of the modern settlement was guided by decisions made by former traders and missionaries rather than by Inuit choice (Damas 2002), but unlike many other settlements, Kangiqsujuaq is in an excellent location for hunting a wide range of land and sea animals. Inhabitants of the region have long resided in the area: an archaeological site with pre-Inuit subterranean houses is located only a couple of kilometres from the modern settlement. Today, subsistence activities continue to provide food, are a primary focus of recreational activity, form an important basis of cultural identity and pride, and act as a cementer of familial and other social bonds (Ready and Power 2018; Ready 2019).

Figure 1: Kangiqsujuaq as seen from the hill to the southwest of the village, in 2011. Wakeham Bay and the small harbour lie to the left of the picture, the body of water in the background is a small lake, Tasialuk. More recently, houses have been built right out to the edge of the lake.

Photo by the author.

I have been conducting research in Kangiqsujuaq regularly since 2011, when I first travelled there as part of an archaeology team from the Avataq Cultural Institute, to investigate two local sites of interest: the aforementioned sodhouses, and an historical walrus butchery site at Aivurtuuq (literally, the place where there are walruses). The latter is roughly 30 km from today's settlement but still also a location regularly visited for hunting and camping. I returned again in summer 2012 to study Inuktitut, the local language, and eventually spent an entire year in the village in 2013-2014. Since then I have continued to make regular visits, lasting from a couple weeks to a couple months.

Except for the first two summers I spent there, when in Kangiqsujuaq I have had the extraordinary privilege of living with a family. This family in-

cludes not only the members of the specific household that I have lived with, but the broader extended family to which they belong as well—numbering in the dozens, albeit with different intensities of interaction and closeness. Outside of my "working" hours spent conducting interviews or doing other research activities in the community, my social life in Kangiqsujuaq is primarily centered within this family. I cook and eat meals with them, go on weekend hunting and fishing trips, spend evenings sitting around the table doing craftwork or playing cards, watch tv, go to church, and attend community events in their company.

Having conducted surveys with 75% of households in the community, as well as a longitudinal series of interviews with households from a number of different family groups, I cannot think of any particular reason that the overall set of people I interacted with socially in the community would be unrepresentative (although some persons or households within that larger set might have some atypical characteristics). Over the past several decades, other families in Kangiqsujuaq have also hosted anthropologists, and ethnographers working elsewhere in the Canadian Arctic have similar experiences of becoming embedded within extended families (Briggs 1970 being a classic example). It is important to emphasize how my experience in Kangiqsujuaq has been profoundly shaped by my age, gender, and relationship status: much of my social interaction has involved other women of similar age, many of whom were also single (though most have children; see Ready 2018 on household composition in Kangiqsujuaq). Thus, although I participated in family gatherings and camping trips with both men and women of all ages, and although I have conducted many interviews with men of different ages, I obviously know much less about social relations among men. The arguments I present below draw on my (a non-Inuit anthropologist's) situated experience in the community, as well as my understanding of interviews I conducted (which were not collected with this paper in mind) and of evidence from historical and contemporary Inuit studies.

I now turn to a discussion of different aspects of scale in Inuit social relations, focused on drawing out connections to the ideas brought forth by Bird-David and by Bird and colleagues. I will first focus on the "quality of quantity" in social relations in Kangiqsujuaq today, meaning the characteristics of relationships among persons, rather than on the actual size or composition of groups. Then, I will examine the structure of Inuit social organization on a broader scale, focusing on historical reconstructions and reports of social organization and settlement patterns in the Kangiqsujuaq region. Finally, in the

discussion I attempt to synthesize this evidence, reflecting on the potential implications for archaeology.

The scale of Inuit social relations

Concepts of kin

Inuktitut words for kin reflect the interdependent nature of persons: the base *ila-* "designates any group that is solidary for a short or long period of time" (Graburn 1969: 64), meaning that "both immediate and extended family are primarily understood as composite wholes divided into individual components" (Dorais 2020: 104). Thus, *ilakka*, my relatives, literally means my "co-parts," and *ilagiit*, family, means those who are component parts for each other, in the sense that they are like the different ingredients that constitute a cake, rather than like slices of a cake (Dorais 2020). As implied by Graburn's definition, however, the "group" implicitly referenced by these "component parts" is not necessarily fixed.

The reality of kinship in Kangiqsujuaq is that even siblings may have quite distinct set of relatives from each other. This can be partly attributed to the prevalence of customary adoption and the fact that young people may "test out" partners in their teenage/early adult years before settling on a more permanent relationship (see Collings 2014). For instance, a young woman's first child might be adopted, often by a grandmother or aunt, leading extended family members to be connected as kin in multiple ways (e.g., two girls might be biological cousins but also adopted aunt and niece). People frequently maintain relationships with biological, step-, and adoptive parents, full, half- and adopted siblings, and their families. Though some published definitions for the term (Schneider 1985; Dorais 2020) suggest that *ilagiit* references blood relatives; Saladin d'Anglure (1967) explicitly includes affines, adoptive relations, and step-relatives within its scope for Kangiqsujuarmiut. My impression is that local practice reflects the latter, more expansive, concept—that is, people's ideas of who is kin is not restricted to biological relatives.

Beyond genetic, adoptive, and affinal relations, name-soul, or *sauniq*, relations are an extremely important way in which close ties between persons are affirmed or (re)activated. A *sauniq* is named after another person, usually a deceased relative, and is considered to share their name-soul and therefore some personality traits. Thus a child named after her great-grandmother might be called "mother" by her grandmother. While I cannot treat the subject

in detail here, Jessen Williamson (2011), Flora (2019), Trott (2005) and Dorais (2020) provide longer treatments of the name-soul concept and naming practices. An important consequence of name-soul relations is that they provide a way to perpetuate close ties among people across generations.

Balikci (1964) conceptualizes the Inuit *ilagiit* as an ego-centered network within which people have unique sets of relatives, as well as some leeway to decide which sets of relations (including affines and other "social" kin) they wish to associate with most closely. However, Trott (2005) has critiqued Balikci's model, suggesting that Inuit view the *ilagiit* as concentric, starting with the household as nucleus and expanding outward, with cross-cutting links created by naming practices (Saladin d'Anglure 1967 describes a similar model). However, even with such an emic conceptual structure, persons are still uniquely situated due to their particular set of kin and set of names. Consequently I think the concept of an ego-centric network is a useful heuristic for this fact (at least etically). Each person has a different set of potential relationships that may be activated in different social contexts, and at different times, but these ties do need to be activated and maintained, whether that be through food sharing (Bodenhorn 2000; Trott 2005), or through time spent together (see below).

Modes of "being together"

Kin, broadly defined, tend to be an important focus of social interaction in Kangiqsujuaq today. A great deal of social activity is organized by and centered around strong bonds between women who are relatives. Of course, as discussed earlier, this impression reflects my gendered experience there, but I think that it is important to note the importance of bonds between women, given that much of the historical literature on Inuit focuses on local group organization being centered around male ties (such as father-son or brother-brother partnerships). I am not sure to what extent my observations might represent recent change or, perhaps more likely, that close ties among women were simply less of a focus of attention in the classic literature.

There are many kinds of social activities in Kangiqsujuaq (from family birthday parties to village feasts and sporting events), but visiting someone in their home, *pulaartuq*, is the most common. *Pulaartuq* does not require advance planning, nor does it necessarily even require conversation or conjoint activity. A visitor can simply drop-by, and hosts are not necessarily expected to stop going about their business, if they have things to do. A visitor may simply

sit on the couch for a while. My understanding is that visiting means that you were thinking of the other person and wanted to see them; it is this action in itself (and not the specifics of the conversation or activity undertaken) that is considered meaningful.

For some of the women I worked with, safety and comfort were often found in the company of others. Elders I interviewed about health and well-being explained that particularly when people are going through a difficult time (such as illness or grieving), that person should not be left alone and their family will ensure that there is someone there to sleep with them in the house, or even in the same room. Closeness, both physical and emotional, among friends and relations is reflected in an extreme attention to detail in people's behaviors, attitudes, and habits; such that one is often expected to anticipate other people's needs (e.g., being hungry, or being cold) without being asked. This anticipation of the needs of others also works in reverse; statements may be intended to prompt the addressee to reflect on the other person's concerns and thereby deduce the existence of a problem, without it ever being verbally acknowledged. For instance, the remark that "the door was open" may be an admonition to pay more attention and close it correctly; and the statement "I don't have any gas" is quite likely a request for help to pay for hunting supplies. A lot of help between people is therefore given or received without it ever being openly requested; indeed, explicitly asking for help without appropriate cues imposes an obligation on the other to help, and may be viewed as an imposition on that person's autonomy. In contrast, indirect requests are more easily ignored, if the other person cannot or does not want to assist (Collings 2014). Others have argued that this orientation towards the feelings and needs of others is an important component of Inuit worldview (Briggs 1970; Nagy 2006; Collings et al. 2017).

The emergence of peer groups as a focus of interaction in Inuit settlements has received considerable attention from ethnographers (e.g., Rasing 2017), but I found that even in social events organized in what might appear to be peer groups (e.g., five or six women in their 20s and 30s gathering to cook and play cards), most of the persons involved were related in one way or another, whether genetically, through adoption, affinally, or through namesakes, and often through more than one of these ways. Part of the reason for this may be statistical (a substantial portion of age-peers may be relatives), but I think that closeness between relatives in older generations (again, perhaps especially between women) channels social interaction, leading their children to become habitual playmates, and often, lifelong friends. This closeness reaffirms that

they are kin. In contrast, when relatives do not regularly interact through sharing or visiting, this weakens ties, and people may express concern about this by saying that people are not behaving “like family” anymore. To put it differently, the meaningful part of being “kin” is in the fulfillment of social relationships—expectations of mutual aid and interaction—more than in the fact of genetic relatedness.

However, fulfilling expectations of mutual aid and interaction can consume substantial time, energy, and resources. Today, it is impossible for everyone to fulfill these kinds of obligations with everyone else in the settlement, or even with all of their relatives. As one interviewee mentioned: “I know we’re getting bigger, more populated, so it’s hard to give away meat all the time when there’s a lot of family on his side and my side.” Groups of relatives in the past surely also grew (via birth, marriage, and other ways of making kin), and the sets of relationships emphasized consequently changed, but the visibility of this process and the scale of population growth have increased in the modern settlement. Although ties that have become distant can potentially be re-activated and mended, family are the people who help, who visit, and who share. People’s spheres of social interaction do not encompass the entirety of the settlement but are concentrated on strong social connections based on biographies of interaction that are often structured by kinship.

Beyond the settlement, and making new family

Though settlements may contain multiple kin-focused communities of social interaction, these social groups are not completely bounded within settlements, nor are they fixed in their composition. Despite the fact that travel between communities today is almost exclusively by air, visiting friends and relatives beyond the local settlement remains extremely important and is facilitated by subsidy programs that have the explicit purpose to “preserve the integrity of the culture and lifestyle” of the region (quote from the Air Inuit website). People, especially young people and the elderly, will go on trips to stay with family in other villages, sometimes for weeks (or months!) at a time. There are many reasons for such travel: an escape from tensions or problems at home; accessing resources not available in a person’s home community (e.g., beluga); a change of scenery or a desire to reconnect with other family members; even prospecting for romantic partnerships in a place where fewer people are close relatives.

Staying with someone is perhaps the easiest route to establish social ties in a community. One must of course first somehow secure an invitation—but my impression is that this is not too difficult, even for an anthropologist with only an indirect, non-kin connection (e.g., a friend's friend in the neighboring village). Inuit also make friends with people in other communities in various other contexts; for example, bible camps, training seminars, or hockey tournaments often organize local hosts for participants. These connections may be reactivated later for other kinds of visits.

A common question used in a first conversation with a new arrival in Kangiqsujuaq is "who do you stay with?" In the past, it was generally considered rude to ask people who they were; it was expected that one could figure this out through pathways of mutual connections (Dorais 2020). Although today some Inuit (especially children) are less shy to ask who you are ("*Kinauvit?*"), the more subtle question "who do you stay with" allows people to figure out "with whom" a person belongs in the community and how they might orient themselves to them socially (for instance, whether it would be appropriate to go *pulaartuq* at their residence). My association with a particular family—in stark distinction to most visiting *qallunaat* (white people) who live alone or stay at the hotel—was critical in helping me establish a social circle in the village.

Not surprisingly, kinship metaphors are often used to denote close relationships with non-kin. I was on occasion jokingly referred to as a *tiguaq* (adopted) child of the family I lived with—a designation which also humourously emphasized my cultural incompetence, since I am about the same age as my host. On several occasions—usually in the context of complaints about the irritating or tactless behaviors of other *qallunaat*—my friends and "family" in Kangiqsujuaq took care to mention that they didn't think of me as a "researcher," but rather as "just Elisapie" (Elspeth is a Scottish form of Elisabeth, and Elisapie the Inuktitut form, which quickly became my nickname). Thus ethnic or other indicators of "out-group" identity can be effaced in order to emphasize closeness to persons with whom they have developed strong social relationships. In this case the emphasis is placed on distinct (positive) attributes of the person, their name (ideally shared with someone), and characteristics of that person's social relationship with others (e.g., like a daughter or a brother). Romantic relationships are of course another way to bring someone into the family.

New, unrelated, persons can therefore be folded into local "tiny-scale communities," if they have dedicated the time and energy into "being-with" oth-

ers. Shared names can facilitate this process. Nevertheless, difficulties related to being an "outsider" (including Inuit from other settlements) can emerge, particularly if there is conflict over resources. In such cases, other kinds of distinctions or criteria for group membership may be mobilized. For example, Inuit who have "married-in" to Kangiqsujuaq have smaller ego-centred family networks in the community (being only associated with their spouse's family), and consequently may have less access to food through sharing. Such individuals will sometimes lament that sharing of country foods (particularly those in limited supply, like beluga) is too focused within *ilagiit* and feel that they should be distributed more widely.

To conclude this section, Inuit settlements today have been shaped by colonial policy, land-claims settlements, and other modern institutions that have restricted residential mobility and drawn distinct boundaries on "groups" at different levels, from settlements (e.g., Kangiqsujuaq), regions under specific land claims (e.g., Nunavik), to all Inuit territories (e.g., Inuit Nunangat). Pan-Inuit identity today is very strong (Morin and d'Anglure 1995; Mitchell 1996), and serves to coordinate cooperative action and mutual aid in a variety of contexts, including online. Although modern settlements in Nunavik today range from roughly 200 to nearly 3000 people, I hope to have demonstrated that, when viewed from the inside, the settlements are already "large-scale," consisting of multiple, smaller close-knit communities (Collings 2011), within which patterns of interaction have some of the "unscaleable" qualities described by Bird-David, most notably, that kin and kin-like ties are activated through close social interaction or economic interdependence (Bodenhorn 2000).

Historical group composition and social organization

Saladin d'Anglure (1967) reconstructs settlement patterns for the Hudson Strait region based on interviews conducted with elders in the 1960s and reports from early explorers of the region. The residents of the south coast of the Hudson Strait from Hopes Advance Bay to Cape Wolstenholme were referred to as *Tarramiut*; other regional groups in what is now Nunavik were the *Qikirtamiut*, on the islands in eastern Hudson's Bay, *Itivimiut* on the eastern coast of Hudson's Bay, and *Siqinirmiut* on Ungava Bay. These groups were distinguished by some dialect differences, which still occur today. Graburn (1969: 35), on the basis of historical sources and his own interviews with informants in the Tarramiut region, noted that "these groupings

have indefinite boundaries and are of little significance in differentiating the major cultural features of the area." Saladin d'Anglure provides a total population estimate of 250 for the Tarramiut around 1900, but suggests their earlier population may have been somewhat larger. There were six territories occupied by Tarramiut, most with 15-50 residents, with the Kangiqsujuaq area being the most populated, with 120-140 people.

Seasonal variation in Inuit settlement in the Tarramiut region occurred, though not to the extreme described in Mauss and Beuchat's (1904) influential treatise. In the late 1800s/early 1900s, summer camps were reported in the range of up to 40 people. Because of the seasonality of early explorers' activities, few early reports on winter camps are available. The elders Saladin d'Anglure worked with could not recall large winter villages, but suggested that winter camps were slightly larger than summer camps. Graburn (1969) suggested winter camps ranging from 15 to 60 people. Winter camps in the Tarramiut and Itivimiut region may have been smaller than in other regions due to the local practice of seal-hunting in open water or at the ice floe edge during winter, which can be done alone (as opposed to breathing-hole hunting, which is more productive with a group of hunters; Balikci 1964; Saladin d'Anglure 1967). Stupart (1886) and Payne (1889) described a winter village in the Kangiqsujuaq region that reached 150 inhabitants, although Saladin d'Anglure suggests this large grouping may have been a result of the presence of a research station in the area.

Saladin d'Anglure (1967) describes a nested, multilevel structure for Tarramiut social organization, starting with nuclear families, which were nested within domestic groups that themselves were part of family bands of 20-30 persons. These bands tended to be organized around particular family leaders (referred to as *–kkut*, e.g., *Jaanikkut* meaning "with Jaani/John," a mode of reference still used today). However, he also noted considerable flexibility in the composition of groups at all these levels. Indeed, while this description might provide an accurate "snapshot" of group composition at certain points in the annual cycle, there are several reasons that this description should not be "scaled up" to describe social organization over longer periods of time.

First, frequent remarriage suggests that the reconfiguration of domestic groups ("households") was not rare. "Not too distant" exogamy probably best describes traditional marriage practices in the region: Saladin d'Anglure (1967) suggests that non-relatives were preferred as marriage partners, while Graburn (1969) suggests that marriage "was usually a compromise achieved by marrying distant kinsmen or close nonkin." Both authors agree, however, that

conjugal relationships "were relatively fragile and ruptures frequent" (Saladin d'Anglure 1967: 155), and people often re-married multiple times due to the death of a spouse.

Second, as argued earlier, for Inuit "family" is a dynamic and expansive category, meaning that "family bands" were not necessarily composed of same set of people through time. There may have been latitude for choice in residential location while still remaining with family—including, of course, "family" created through adoption, marriage, spousal-exchange, and name-soul relations. Adoption practices were widespread in the past; meaning that like today, many people within a family band would have been likely to have a distinct set of relations extending outside of the current residential group. Trott (2005) suggests that naming practices may have also facilitated the exchange of people. For instance, a child might "belong" in the place where their name-soul previously resided and consequently be adopted to someone at that location. A related observation (see below) is that Inuit appear to have been eager to gather together in larger groups whenever the conditions provided an opportunity to do so (Damas 2002), providing opportunities for groups to reconfigure. I suspect that visiting practices on a smaller-scale (e.g., a person going to stay with other relatives for some time, as they do today) also occurred in the past.

Finally, people's range of movement, or of intermarriage for that matter, was also far from restricted even to within sub-regional groups. As suggested earlier, sub-regional group names like "Tarramiut" should primarily be considered to be geographic designations rather than indicators of distinct groups in social, cultural, or reproductive senses. For instance, Graburn (1969) suggests that during the 19th century, Tarramiut regularly ventured all the way to Kuujjuaq for trade, and that there were yearly meetings of people from throughout Nunavik during inland summer caribou hunts. He also notes friendly relationships between Tarramiut and South Baffin Islanders, and that travel across the Hudson Strait by *umiaq* (skin boats that could hold 20-30 people) occurred regularly. Many people had relatives on the other side of the Strait (and still do today). The distance as the crow flies from the coast near Kangiqsujuaq to the coast of Baffin Island is roughly 145 kilometres, although there is a large island at around the 120 kilometre mark. Distances travelled could be even more extreme: in the early 20th century, a hunter from Ulukhaktok travelled all the way from Victoria Island in the Inuvialuit region to Baffin Island and back again by dogsled (Collings, personal communication). The point is that people clearly interacted with their neighbours and

even with people from hundreds (sometimes thousands!) of kilometres away, for trade, for marriage, to acquire rare or highly aggregated resources (e.g., timber, caribou herds, walrus), or even just for the adventure.

Actual residential group composition would therefore likely have had considerable turnover across seasons or years, while still fitting the overall scheme outlined by Saladin d'Anglure. I do not know of any sources that could test these propositions about potential turnover in group composition with historical data from Nunavik, but Damas' historical reconstructions provide suggestive evidence for the Central Arctic: "Although there was much fluidity of personnel among the bands within the major regions, it appears that 60 to 70 per cent of the members of one winter's sealing aggregation band assemblage would return the following winter so that a core of members remained from year to year [among Iglulik, Netsilik, and Copper Inuit]" (Damas 1969: 224). In that region, with winter camps averaging about 100 persons according to Damas, that means 30-40 winter co-residents would turn over from year-to-year. Damas (1969: 130) further notes that "non-kinship features, for example [formalized sharing] partnerships, among the Central [Inuit] may be of equal or greater importance than kinship features in the social structure of some hunting bands." Because such relationships may involve unrelated or distantly-related persons, Damas uses the term "non-kinship" to describe them. In practice, however, I would argue that these are a kind of quasi-kin because kinship relations are substantiated through relationships of mutual aid.

Mixing and interdependence—both within and between regional groups—fits with evidence that conflict between Inuit groups in the Eastern Arctic was not the norm. Most sources, including oral histories, agree that Eastern Arctic Inuit were wary of strangers; but also recount the methods employed to determine that a stranger was not actually a stranger, protocols for signaling friendly intent, and even welcome celebrations for new arrivals (Bennett and Rowley 2004). The point here is not that all relations were harmonious: conflict occurred, within and between local groups, with Cree or Dene in certain regions, and with European visitors and colonizers. But unlike in the Western Arctic, organized warfare appears to have been absent among Inuit in the Eastern Arctic, which Darwent and Darwent (2014: 183) relate to the absence of higher-level political organization ("nations," Burch 1998), resulting from the need "to adapt to greater distances among reliable and sufficient food resources" in the East. Periods of resource scarcity appear to have been important in local, small-scale conflicts (Saladin d'Anglure

1967; Graburn 1969; Fossett 2001; Darwent and Darwent 2014). Damas (1969) notes that the Kiluhikturmiut (Bathurst Inlet) had low levels of relatedness compared to other bands, which may have reflected an assembly process in a depopulated area as a result of migration and/or subsequent to an epidemic. Conflicts with Europeans may have been linked to the fact that Europeans were short-term visitors with novel resources. Additionally, the accuracy of some of the historical evidence for Inuit/non-Inuit conflict in the Eastern Arctic may be questionable (see for e.g., Csonka 1993, 1999).

Discussion

Patterns of interaction within Inuit settlements today are highly structured by kinship. As among the Nayaka (Bird-David 2017), Inuit social lives are focused on interaction with persons who are kin often in multiple (not only biological) ways, including through naming practices, as well as by being neighbours, classmates, co-workers, and so on. Kangiqsujuarmiut place strong emphasis on the importance of being-together and helping each other in everyday life, and this appears to be an important criteria for belonging at the "tiny-scale."

At the same, the historical Tarramiut case adds support to Bird and colleagues' (2019) warning that we should not conflate descriptions of group composition with the scale of individual mobility and social networks. Focusing on the former may lead us to underestimate the latter, giving the impression that social worlds were smaller than they actually were. For Tarramiut, even if the size of most local groups may have been relatively small at any one point in time, the search for marriage partners, the avoidance of conflict, the pursuit of food, the desire to obtain trade goods, and the pleasure of visiting all drove people to move around—over extremely long distances in some cases—and interact with others. Thus, a social life centered around intense and intimate relationships with kin and quasi-kin does not mean that networks of interaction were small or fragmented.

Where there is considerable turnover in group composition over time, then mechanisms for the incorporation of new persons into local groups, as described by Bird-David (2017), seem essential. Indeed, the historical evidence suggests relatively rare inter-group conflict in the Eastern Arctic, and a variety of mechanisms for successfully dealing with newcomers. In Kangiqsujuaq today, tiny-scale communities without distinct boundaries, where membership is based on "being-together," exist in parallel with a shared ethnic identity, in a settlement that is relatively large.

One aim of this collection is to reflect on how we can "scale" insights from the ethnographic to the archaeological record. Archaeologists need theory adequate to the available material record, but the whittling of rich theories of human behavior down to bare bones (literally, in the case of zooarchaeology) is a process that inevitably makes ethnographers wince. Kelly, in his contribution to this volume, outlines differences in scale and type between ethnographic and archaeological theory and data. Here I leave the difficult problem of aggregating the predictions of fine-grained models of behavior to archaeological scales aside, and focus instead on history and ethnography as a way to interrogate the assumptions of behavioral models that are already in use by archaeologists (e.g., foraging theory, models of settlement and mobility such as the ideal-free distribution). I wish to make two points based on the evidence I have presented here.

The first point is that conceptualizing foraging groups or bands as enduring clusters of (the same) people may hide how inter-group relations enable reproduction and resource acquisition over landscapes and through time. In many (of course, not all) ethnographically-observed cases, forager camps are ephemeral constellations of people that come together at a moment in time for various reasons. These temporary clusters are parts of much larger interaction networks, as many authors have recently noted (Hill et al. 2014; Blurton Jones 2016; Bird et al. 2019; Boyd and Richerson 2020). Persons within local groups have distinct networks of kinship and other social relations, both within and beyond current residential groups. These networks direct their movements through the seasonal cycle and through their lifetimes, as their set of ties changes, as well as in response to changes in resource availability.

When kin and kin-like relations are geographically dispersed, neighbouring groups will often comprise kin, affines, or potential marriage partners with whom one's fitness is interdependent. And when groups frequently dissolve and reform in new configurations, last year's neighbour is this year's hunting partner. Characteristics of the resource base and population density will likely be important factors in shaping the benefits of interdependence at different spatial scales. For instance, I have suggested that there may have been a considerable turnover within family bands in the Eastern Arctic, but these groups were undoubtedly more stable than what Bird et al. (2019) have suggested for Martu. Although I have not been able to fully explore the differences here, the variation between and within Eastern, Central, and Western Arctic Inuit are highly informative in this respect (Burch 1998; Damas 1969).

This bring me to my second point, which is that competition (or even benign non-interaction) among small foraging bands may often not be the appropriate framework for thinking about the mobility and resource use strategies of foragers. Recently, Boyd and Richerson (2020) have argued that, "contrary to the conventional wisdom, people in late Pleistocene and Holocene hunter-gatherer societies regularly cooperated in large groups to produce collective goods." They describe abundant evidence for communal foraging activities (e.g., caribou and bison drives, construction of large fish weirs) that would have required multi-band cooperation, as well as evidence that war among hunter-gatherers tended to occur between ethno-linguistic groups (which they estimate as being 500 to a few thousand people), rather than among smaller local groups. They use this evidence as support for the hypothesis that inter-group cooperation is a fundamental component of human adaptation.

My contribution is to suggest that in cases where turnover in group composition is high and where "kin" are dispersed in neighbouring groups, the basis for "in-group" identity is not likely to be found within the local residential group, but rather at a much larger spatial and demographic scale. The alternative possibility to band-level group identity that I have discussed here is that people's perceptions of their social worlds were focused on expansive kinship (and kinship-like) networks. The ethnographic literature is full of examples of social mechanisms, like naming practices, spousal exchange, or gift exchange, that facilitate the maintenance and extension of trusting kinship and kin-like ties over space, and even after death (Wiessner 2002; Bliege Bird et al. 2018). We can potentially imagine extensive cooperation on the scale of hundreds to a few thousand people being facilitated by kinship—and cultural mechanisms for transubstantiating non-kin into kin—even at the same time as hunter-gatherers may be generally living with and marrying people who are not their genetic relatives (Hill et al. 2014; Ringbauer et al. 2021).

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Comment by Brian Codding

Focused on an ethnographic study with Inuit living along Hudson's Strait coast of Nunavik, referred to as Tarramiut, Ready offers a keen fine-grained perspective that highlights something absolutely central to human social or-

ganization, but often obscured in cross-cultural analysis, and invisible to archaeologists: all organization comes down to personal relationships. In doing so, Ready illustrates how the same individual practices which make relationships at the "tiny scale" of local organization, aggregate to form large-scale social organization, resulting in ephemeral constellations of individuals drawn from non-overlapping networks. This helps dispel three common misconceptions: first, that different mechanisms organize social units from one scale to the next; second, that social groups are cohesive units at any one scale; and third, that a society can be ascribed as "small" or "large" scale.

Regarding the first point, Ready discusses how kin concepts among Tarramiut are designed to emphasize that individuals are component parts of each other in family relations, yet these same concepts also function to extend social networks through practices like customary adoption, naming after others ("name-soul"), and staying with others; all of which allow one to extend relations beyond the local community to "make new family". Repeated throughout one's life, and maintained through "being together" in ways as mundane as informal visits to another's home, these practices result in expansive kin networks unique to each individual. Thus, the same practices that build social relations among individuals in a nuclear or extended family are applied to others in the same society, resulting in large-scale organization. These processes do not seem unique to Tarramiut life today, but appear to be part of a long-standing tradition.

On the second point, Ready illustrates that today, and in the past, groups which convene for one reason or another are "ephemeral constellations" of individuals drawn from a subset of each individual's larger network. This is a critical lesson, especially for cross-cultural and archaeological studies, which often mistakenly assume that observed or inferred groups are cohesive units. Instead, they should not be thought of as meaningful units of inquiry, but ephemeral expressions of relations among individuals who convene for a specific set of purposes in a specific place and time.

Taken together, these observations help convey why it might not be meaningful to ascribe labels such as "small-scale" or "large-scale" to human societies. If the mechanisms that build relations can both construct a nuclear household and build expansive interaction networks, and if any observed grouping is merely an ephemeral constellation of individuals connected through these mechanisms, then any society has the capacity to be "small" or "large", and may be both simultaneously.

In a volume on the scale of hunter-gatherer society that includes contributions across ethnographic, cross-cultural, and archaeological scales, Ready reminds us that all social relations come down to simple concepts that help people “be together”. This should remind us that the same mechanisms can build small and large scales of social interaction, that individuals convened at any one time and place are not necessarily a cohesive unit, and that polarizing labels hide important patterning meaningful to the individuals who live in any one society.