

# Chief Attungowruk Sets Whaling Demarcation Line

(Editor's Note: Peter Koonoyak, 93 years young and a patriarch of Point Hope, has recorded a tape narrating the current of events that took place when Chief Attungowruk of that village was murdered in 1889. Peter talks in classic Eskimo and some of the words he uses have been forgotten by this editor due to his long absence away from his native language. Peter uses big Eskimo words and this writer will have to seek the help of another Eskimo to interpret Peter's tape-recorded narration of the murder of Chief Attungowruk before completing the story of the famous man.)

In the meantime the writer has heard a tidbit from Chester Seveck of Kotzebue, while inquiring about the legendary Chief. The following is the account of how the Chief exercised authority as related by Chester Seveck.)

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By HOWARD ROCK  
Times Editor

There is a strangely persistent trend among the people of Point Hope to eulogize the famous, or infamous, Chief Attungowruk of that village who was murdered in hate and revenge in 1889. His deeds, especially in his later years, would hardly qualify the Chief for such eulogy for he has been credited with the murder of four persons, including Kinuwanna, his favorite wife.

In spite of his cruel deeds, his good ones seem to be in the process of superseding his bad ones.

"In spite of everything, Attungowruk was really a fine man."

This remark is frequently heard among the older people at Tikikqaa (Point Hope). Even younger people have come to agree that he was.

The incident about to be told may have been one of several that helped him to be regarded as a fine man because he did it for the benefit of his people.

## Generous Man

Chief Attungowruk was generous, there is no question of that. He was kind, especially to orphans and old people. He also seemed to have been possessed of a natural business acumen

which he utilized to amass a considerable fortune.

"He was a smart business man and he was fair in his dealings," said Eebruk Rock, Attungowruk's great nephew. "He had stocks of firearms as well as ammunition. He would trade these for furs from the people of his village. When ships arrived in spring and summer, he would sell the furs to white people."

## Great Whaler

The Chief was one of the finest whalers in Tikikqaa also. It has been heard more than once that he was a potent ahngatkuq (medicine man) and that his people believed that this was the reason why he was successful as a whaler.

In Attungowruk's day, baleen was in great demand as a necessary product in the manufacture of corsettes since that item was the high fashion of the day for the millady in the Western Civilization. The Chief consistently acquired ample supplies of baleen and since that product brought high prices, the money it brought was considerable.

Along with the acquisition of wealth Attungowruk also acquired intoxicating liquor and consumed it in such amounts that it was to alter his life drastically. What he did under its influence was a great contributing factor in his eventual murder while sleeping off a heavy bout of drunkenness.

## Not Pushed Around

Chief Attungowruk had many good traits which he carried to his death. One of these was that he was not a man to be pushed around. He had authority and he used it to enforce his convictions. In his early years the Chief must have noticed that treatment of the Eskimos was anything but tolerable by the early white whalers who came by the hundreds to hunt the baleen whale, the bowhead. He apparently took action to rectify the situation.

## Jabbertown

This may have been one of the reasons why Chief Attungowruk gained respect from the white whalers. Some oldtime Eskimos have said that his firm stand caused Jabbertown, a small

settlement five miles to the south of Point Hope, to be built where it was. The only evidence of it today are some remains of the foundations of the buildings.

## They Jabbered

The populations of Jabbertown consisted of many nationalities. There were Norwegians, Swedes, Italians, Portuguese, Negroes, Germans, Chinese, Japanese, and Englishmen. The Settlement was appropriately named. As one could imagine, many languages were spoken. An thus they jabbered in Jabbertown.

There were hints that some of these people attempted to settle at Tikikqaa at first but the Chief apparently objected. Thus the settlement was made five miles down and the multi-languaged men established a whaling community there. Some of them married Point Hope women and their descendants are now living in Alaska.

The attempt to settle in the village of Tikikqaa is understandable because the village, is and was, an ideal location for a whaling community. It can be surmised, with reasonable accuracy perhaps, that Chief Attungowruk had felt that the settlers were encroaching on his whaling waters and that some friction developed.

## The Boundary Line

"He told Jabbertown people they must not whale in Point Hope waters," said Chester Seveck of Kotzebue. "He made boundary line on ice and water between Point Hope and Jabbertown. Jabbertown people obeyed Attungowruk."

The establishment of the boundary-demarcation line necessitated the Jabbertown whalers to go farther distance on the shore ice, or anchored ice, to reach open leads of water while at Tikikqaa it was only about a mile to three miles out.

According to Seveck, once in a while a wounded whale struck by the Jabbertown whalers would swim into Point Hope waters, since that was the direction of migrating whales, at which time Point Hopers would assist in killing it. This, of course, meant that the whale belonged to the crew that first struck the animal including the baleen. Point Hope whalers got their us-



**CHIEF'S GRAVE** — Chief Attungowruk of Point Hope commanded great influence during his time and for many, many years after his death in 1889. He also commanded respect of White whalers Attungowruk established a demarcation line to the south of which those whalers were restricted after some incursions into the Eskimos whaling waters. The demarcation line was honored. Standing at right of the grave is the editor of the Tundra Times, the Chief's great-nephew.

ual share of muktuk and meat for their help in the capture.

It was apparent that the Chief made the Jabbertown whalers follow the established whaling customs of the Tikikqamiut (Point Hope people).

## Benefited His People

The boundary-demarcation line was honored and the Chief had made it work. Attungowruk was strongwilled as well as physically strong. He also had temper and no one dared to cross

him. In spite of his unruly moments his sense of fairness never left him.

The line was imposed by Chief Attungowruk for the benefit of his people — to protect the Tikikqamiut from encroachment on their accustomed whaling grounds. This act, to uphold the welfare of those under him, may have been one of the reasons why Attungowruk is regarded "In spite of everything, a really fine man."