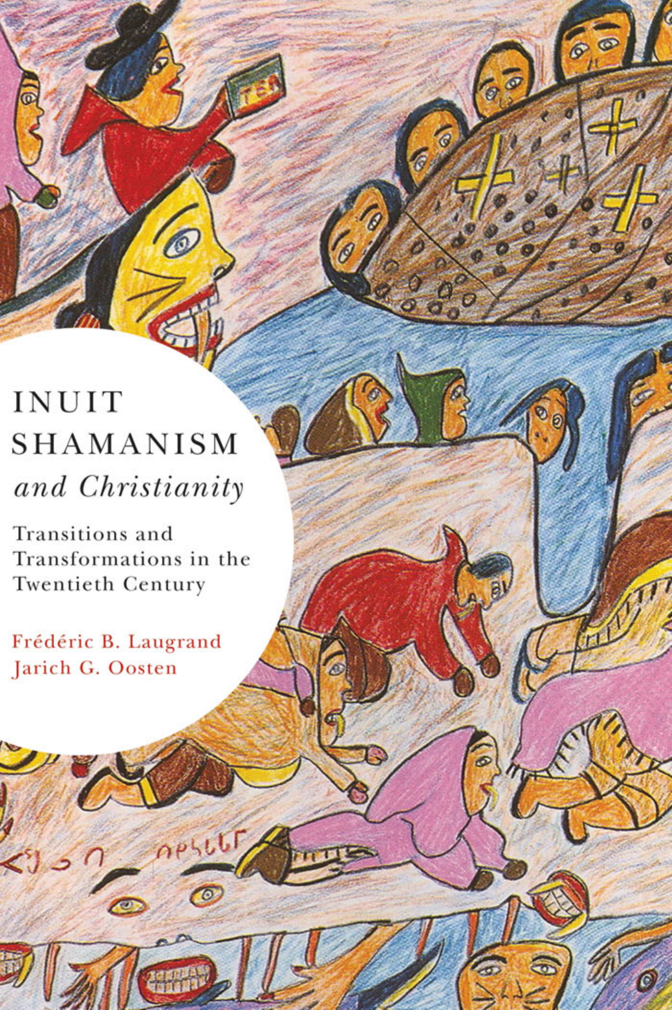


INUIT SHAMANISM *and Christianity*

Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century

Frédéric B. Laugrand
Jarich G. Oosten

Inuit Shamanism and Christianity

McGill-Queen's Native and Northern Series

(In memory of Bruce G. Trigger)

Sarah Carter and Arthur J. Ray, Editors

1 *When the Whalers Were Up North*
Inuit Memories from the Eastern Arctic
Dorothy Harley Eber

2 *The Challenge of Arctic Shipping*
Science, Environmental Assessment,
and Human Values
Edited by David L. VanderZwaag and
Cynthia Lamson

3 *Lost Harvests*
Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and
Government Policy
Sarah Carter

4 *Native Liberty, Crown Sovereignty*
The Existing Aboriginal Right of
Self-Government in Canada
Bruce Clark

5 *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery*
Inuit Testimony
David C. Woodman

6 *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*
The Maritime Fur Trade of the
Northwest Coast, 1785–1841
James R. Gibson

7 *From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare*
The Story of the Western Reserves
Helen Buckley

8 *In Business for Ourselves*
Northern Entrepreneurs
Wanda A. Wuttunee

9 *For an Amerindian Autohistory*
An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic
Georges E. Sioui

10 *Strangers Among Us*
David Woodman

11 *When the North Was Red*
Aboriginal Education in Soviet Siberia
Dennis A. Bartels and Alice L. Bartels

12 *From Talking Chiefs to a Native Corporate Elite*
The Birth of Class and Nationalism among
Canadian Inuit
Marybelle Mitchell

13 *Cold Comfort*
My Love Affair with the Arctic
Graham W. Rowley

14 *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*
Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with
Walter Hildebrandt, Dorothy First Rider, and
Sarah Carter

15 *This Distant and Unsurveyed Country*
A Woman's Winter at Baffin Island, 1857–1858
W. Gillies Ross

16 *Images of Justice*
Dorothy Harley Eber

17 *Capturing Women*
The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in
Canada's Prairie West
Sarah A. Carter

18 *Social and Environmental Impacts of the James*
Bay Hydroelectric Project
Edited by James F. Hornig

19 *Saqiyuq*
Stories from the Lives of Three Inuit Women
Nancy Wachowich in collaboration with Apphia
Agalakti Awa, Rhoda Kaukjak Katsak, and
Sandra Pikujak Katsak

20 *Justice in Paradise*
Bruce Clark

21 *Aboriginal Rights and Self-Government*
The Canadian and Mexican Experience
in North American Perspective
Edited by Curtis Cook and Juan D. Lindau

22 *Harvest of Souls*
The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in
North America, 1632–1650
Carole Blackburn

23 *Bounty and Benevolence*
A History of Saskatchewan Treaties
Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough

24 *The People of Denendeh*
Ethnohistory of the Indians of Canada's
Northwest Territories
June Helm

25 *The Marshall Decision and Native Rights*
Ken Coates

26 *The Flying Tiger*
Women Shamans and Storytellers of the Amur
Kira Van Deusen

27 *Alone in Silence*
European Women in the Canadian North
before 1940
Barbara E. Kelcey

28 *The Arctic Voyages of Martin Frobisher*
An Elizabethan Adventure
Robert McGhee

29 *Northern Experience and the Myths*
of Canadian Culture
Renée Hulan

30 *The White Man's Gonna Getcha*
The Colonial Challenge to the Crees in Quebec
Toby Morantz

31 *The Heavens Are Changing*
Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions
and Tsimshian Christianity
Susan Neylan

32 *Arctic Migrants/Arctic Villagers*
The Transformation of Inuit Settlement
in the Central Arctic
David Damas

33 *Arctic Justice*
On Trial for Murder – Pond Inlet, 1923
Shelagh D. Grant

34 *Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson Bay*
Stuart Houston, Tim Ball, and Mary Houston

35 *The American Empire and the Fourth World*
Anthony J. Hall

36 *Uqalurait*
An Oral History of Nunavut
Compiled and edited by John Bennett
and Susan Rowley

37 *Living Rhythms*
Lessons in Aboriginal Economic Resilience
and Vision
Wanda Wuttunee

38 *The Making of an Explorer*
George Hubert Wilkins and the Canadian
Arctic Expedition, 1913–1916
Stuart E. Jenness

39 *Chee Chee*
A Study of Aboriginal Suicide
Alvin Evans

40 *Strange Things Done*
Murder in Yukon History
Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison

41 *Healing through Art*
Ritualized Space and Cree Identity
Nadia Ferrara

42 *Coyote and Raven Go Canoeing*
Coming Home to the Village
Peter Cole

43 *Something New in the Air*
The Story of First Peoples Television
Broadcasting in Canada
Lorna Roth

44 *Listening to Old Woman Speak*
Natives and Alternatives in Canadian Literature
Laura Smyth Groening

45 *Robert and Francis Flaherty*
A Documentary Life, 1883–1922
Robert J. Christopher

46 *Talking in Context*
Language and Identity in Kwakwaka'wakw
Society
Anne Marie Goodfellow

47 *Tecumseh's Bones*
Guy St-Denis

48 *Constructing Colonial Discourse*
Captain Cook at Nootka Sound
Noel Elizabeth Currie

49 *The Hollow Tree*
Fighting Addiction with Traditional Healing
Herb Nabigon

50 *The Return of Caribou to Ungava*
A.T. Bergerud, Stuart Luttich, and
Lodewijk Camps

51 *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century*
First Nations Women Chiefs
Cora J. Voyageur

52 *Isuma*
Inuit Video Art
Michael Robert Evans

53 *Outside Looking In*
Viewing First Nations Peoples in Canadian
Dramatic Television Series
Mary Jane Miller

54 *Kiviuq*
An Inuit Hero and His Siberian Cousins
Kira Van Deusen

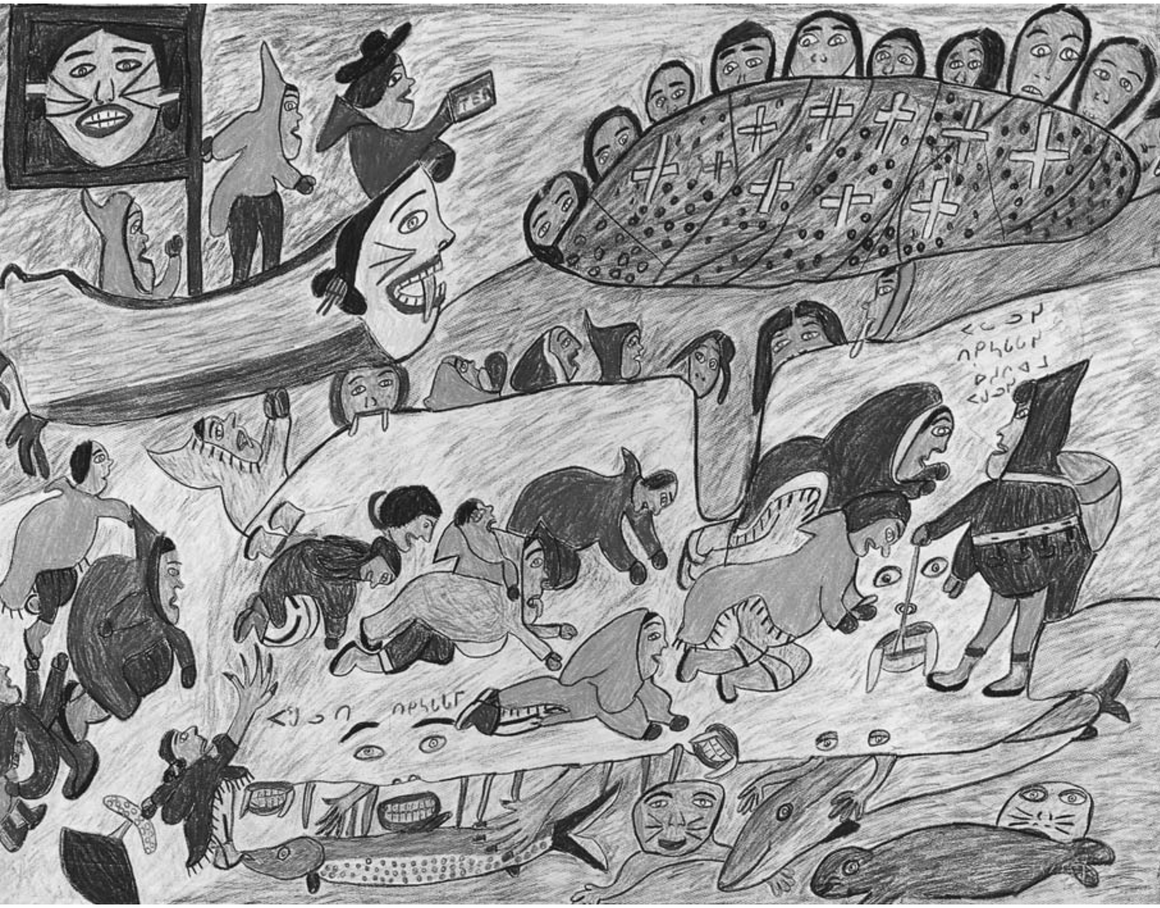
55 *Native Peoples and Water Rights*
Irrigation, Dams, and the Law in
Western Canada
Kenichi Matsui

56 *The Rediscovered Self*
Indigenous Identity and Cultural Justice
Ronald Niezen

57 *As affecting the fate of my absent husband*
Selected Letters of Lady Franklin Concerning
the Search for the Lost Franklin Expedition,
1848–1860
Edited by Erika Behrisch Elce

58 *The Language of the Inuit*
Syntax, Semantics, and Society in the Arctic
Louis-Jacques Dorais

59 *Inuit Shamanism and Christianity*
Transitions and Transformations in
the Twentieth Century
Frédéric B. Laugrand and Jarich G. Oosten


ᐸᓇᑐᓯ
ᑎᑭᓴᓴᓯ
ᐅᒍᒋᐊᒪ
ᐸᒍᑐᓯ
ᐸᑦᑐᓗᑎ ᑎᑭᓴᓴᒥ

Inuit Shamanism and Christianity

Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century

FRÉDÉRIC B. LAUGRAND AND JARICH G. OOSTEN

McGill-Queen's University Press
Montreal & Kingston | London | Ithaca

© McGill-Queen's University Press 2010
ISBN 978-0-7735-3589-3 (cloth)
ISBN 978-0-7735-3590-9 (paper)

Legal deposit first quarter 2010
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec

Printed in Canada on acid-free paper that is 100% ancient forest free (100% post-consumer recycled), processed chlorine free

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Aid to Scholarly Publications Programme, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

McGill-Queen's University Press acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts for our publishing program. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) for our publishing activities.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Laugrand, Frédéric
Inuit shamanism and Christianity : transitions and transformations in the twentieth century / Frédéric B. Laugrand and Jarich G. Oosten.
(McGill-Queen's native and northern series ; 59)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-7735-3589-3 (bnd)
ISBN 978-0-7735-3590-9 (pbk)

1. Inuit – Religion. 2. Inuit – Social life and customs. 3. Inuit mythology. 4. Inuit – Missions. 5. Shamanism – Canada, Northern – History – 20th century. 6. Christianity – Canada, Northern – History – 20th century. I. Oosten, Jarich II. Title. III. Series: McGill-Queen's native and northern series 59

E99.E7L3895 2010 299.7'812 C2009-904078-6

Frontispiece: *Marble Island* by Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik. Linocut and stencil on mulberry paper. Winnipeg Art Gallery Collection. Courtesy Inuit Art Foundation.

Set in 10.2/12.5 Minion Pro with Myriad Pro
Book design & typesetting by Garet Markvoort, zijn digital

We dedicate this book to the elders who shared their knowledge with us
in our workshops, especially those elders who passed away before
this project could be completed: Gino Akkaq, Luke Anautalik,
George Kappianaq, Felix Kupak, Luke Nuliajuk, and Felix Pisuk.

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Illustrations xi
Acknowledgments xv
Introduction xvii

Part One | *Angakkuuniq* and Christianity

1 Continuity and Decline 3
2 Missionaries and *Angakkuit* 37
3 Inuit Winter Feasts 69

Part Two | Animals, Owners, and Non-human Beings

4 Hunters and Prey 103
5 The Owners of the Sky, the Land, and the Sea 133
6 *Inuunngittut*, Non-human Beings from the Land and the Sea 168

Part Three | Encounters, Healing, and Power

7 Initiation, Visions, and Dreams 201
8 Healing as a Socio-cosmic Process 242
9 Powerful Objects and Words 272

Part Four | Connecting to Ancestors and Land

10 Connecting to Ancestors: *Qilaniq* and *Qilauti*, Head Lifting and Drum Dancing 307

11 Reconnecting People and Healing the Land: Inuit Pentecostal and Evangelical Movements 342

12 Transitions and Transformations 372

Appendix 1: Glossary of Inuktitut Words 391

Appendix 2: Inuit Elders 400

Notes 405

References 435

Index 459

Illustrations

Marble Island by Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik iv

Map of Nunavut communities 2

Woman elder with tattoos 5

Tattoos on the hands of Niviuvaq 6

"SAVE THE BABY VEAL" 16

Eva Muqyunniq from Arviat 18

Job Muqyunniq from Arviat 18

Jose Angutinngurniq from Kugaaruk 19

Peter Suvaksiuq from Arviat 19

Felix Pisuk from Kangiq&iniq 20

Felix Kupak from Naujaat 20

Luke Anautalik from Arviat 21

Levi Iluittuq from Kugaaruk 21

Reverend Peck conducts a church service on Uumanarjuaq 45

Sanctuary at Chesterfield Inlet 45

Reverend Armand Tagoona's church as seen today in Qamanittuaq 46

Qulliq in new Roman Catholic church in Kugaaruk 46

Statue of the Virgin Mary in front of wall hanging depicting Inuit kneeling before the cross 47

The old church in Kugaaruk, founded by Father Henry 48

Ollie and Lizzie Itinnuaq at their marriage in 1949 90

Ollie Itinnuaq from Kangiq&iniq 90

The late Victor Tungilik from Naujaat and Rachel Ujarasuk from Iglulik 91

Niviuvaq, Kupak, and Amaya at the workshop in Kugaaruk in 2004 92

Ollie Itinnuaq drum dancing in his camp near Kangiq&iniq, 2002 211

Levi Iluittuq and Peter Suvaksiuq in Kangiq&iniq, 2002 211

Luke Anautalik demonstrates how an *angakkuq* would kill an evil spirit 212

Ollie Itinnuaq and Jose Angutinngurniq give a demonstration of fist fighting, 2002 212

Felix Pisuk demonstrates the technique of *qilaniq* 244

Inuk woman wearing a Christian medal 277

Miniature knife traditionally tied to a shamanic belt 278

Carving of the Madonna by Irene Katak Anguititaq 278

Shamanic belt 278

Miniature carvings by Mark Tungilik 279

Postcards on a grave in Kugaaruk 281

Cigarette on a grave in Kugaaruk 281

Flowers and the end of a hockey stick on a grave in Kugaaruk 282

Handbag placed on a grave in Kugaaruk 282

Miniature images of the Virgin Mary and an angel on a grave in Kugaaruk 283

Miniature images deposited on a grave in Arviat 283

Graveyard at Qamanittuaq 284

Qilaut, staff for the divination practice of *qilaniq* 321

Luke Nuliajuk performing *qilaniq* in Kugaaruk, 2004 321

Jose Angutinngurniq performing *qilaniq* in Kugaaruk, 2004 322

Jose Angutinngurniq teaching a young woman how to perform *qilaniq* 322

Elders Ilisapi Enowyak, Helen Konek, Margaret Hannah, and Martha Otokala Okutak, 2006 325

Inuk woman teaches drum dancing to her little boy, 2004 325

Willie Niptayok drum dancing in Kugaaruk in the 1950s 326

Niviuvaq drum dancing in her wheelchair, 2004 327

Jose Angutinngurniq drum dancing in Kugaaruk, 2004 328

Felix Kupak drum dancing in Kugaaruk, 2004 329

David Aglukark and Tagak Curley apply the wine and bread to the land 359

A mixture of oil, salt, and water is blessed before it is applied to the land 359

Creating a healing circle to cleanse the land 361

A prayer is spoken 367

Male descendants repent their sin and the sin of their fathers 367

A woman elder forgives the men and repents on behalf of the women 368

Husbands and wives embrace one another 368

Monument erected in Qikiqtaq 369

The flag of Nunavut 373

Acknowledgments

Many helped us with this book. First of all, we wish to thank the elders who contributed so extensively to this project. We particularly thank Ollie and Lizzie Itinnuaq, Peter Suvaksiuq, Josie Angutinngurniq, and Job and Eva Muqyunniq for organizing and hosting the elders workshops in Kangiq&iniq (2000 and 2002), Arviat (2003), Kugaaruk (2004), and Arviat (2005). We thank all the elders who participated in these workshops and shared their recollections and knowledge with us.

We wish to express our special gratitude to Susan Sammons of Nunavut Arctic College for her continuous support of our work. Many Inuit helped us in organizing the workshops, in translating the recorded material, and in giving support to our project. We thank Henry Kablalik, Noa Tiktak, Atuat, and Alexina Kublu. We also thank John MacDonald for granting us access to the interviews of the Iglulik Oral History Project as well as for his hospitality during our research in Iglulik. We are grateful as well to Bishop Reynald Rouleau and the Oblate Fathers for supporting and facilitating our research. We express our gratitude to the many colleagues, friends, and graduate students whose stimulating ideas enriched classes, conferences, and the writing of many papers.

Finally, we wish to thank the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) in Wassenaar for providing us with their support and facilities during the preparation of this book in 2005. Our research activities in the field were financed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC), the Fonds Gérard-Dion, the Department of Justice of Canada, and the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth of Nunavut.

Frédéric Laugrand
Jarich Oosten

Arviat, June 2009

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

In this book, we will explore the complex transitions and transformations of Inuit religious beliefs and practices in northeastern Canada, in the territory now called Nunavut, in the nineteenth century and twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, Inuit *angakkuuniq* (shamanism) was at the core of Inuit beliefs and practices, but when the Inuit adopted Christianity, it receded into the background. Although many Inuit think of *angakkuuniq* as a feature of the past, it continues to fascinate them and many elders are convinced that it is still very much alive.

Inuit *angakkuuniq* is generally considered to be a form of shamanism. Some scholars think of shamanism as a universal phenomenon, whereas others view it as a characteristic feature of peoples inhabiting northern Eurasia and North America. Many of the distinctive features of shamanism in Eurasia can also be found in Inuit *angakkuuniq*. The *angakkuq* (shaman) is supported by helping spirits acquired in an initiation, possesses special skills and knowledge, and fulfils a wide range of functions in society, such as procuring game, healing the sick, and correcting the weather. He possesses special paraphernalia – a shamanic belt, for example.

Shamanism is embedded in a framework of cosmological beliefs and practices. Not only human beings but also animals are sentient beings that have to be respected. Rules of respect also pertain to places, objects, and their non-human owners. The deceased watch over their descendants and namesakes. A wide range of ritual rules control the interactions among these agencies. For Inuit, shamanism is not a separate tradition, but part of a wider cosmology. They consider the introduction of Christianity as a break with the past. Ritual rules were no longer observed, and the missionaries taught that only human beings had souls. Christianity had no space for the countless non-human beings that were supposed to inhabit the earth, the sky, and the sea. However, people continued to observe some rules of respect, and meetings with non-human beings remained a regular feature of hunting experiences. Even today, Inuit observe shamanic features in some forms of Christianity. Victor Tungilik, an elder from Naujaat who had practised as an *angakkuq* in his younger days, made this observation with respect to the Pentecostal Church: "When I went and listened to them it was very enjoyable, but on the other hand they seemed to be chanting like the *angakkuit* [shamans]." And he added, "I don't know why they say they are truer believers. They too go out hunting on Sunday."[1] The fact that the Pentecostals sound like *angakkuit* is a minor point, but that they do not observe the Sundays is a serious matter. Thus, the difference between Christianity and *angakkuuniq* is subordinated to more general principles associated with observing the cosmological order. According to Felix Kupak, an elder from Naujaat, the *angakkuq* Qimuksiraaq once said that shamanism would disappear, but would come back through Christianity.

In this book, we will explore how in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Inuit of northeastern Canada integrated the traditions of Inuit and Qallunaat (white people), especially shamanism and Christianity, into their society. The revival of Inuit culture can be witnessed today in the promotion of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit knowledge that is still useful), and the revival of traditional techniques such as igloo building, drum dancing, and sewing does not constitute an invention of tradition but represents a stage in a complex process of cultural transformation, one that testifies to the resilience of Inuit culture and its capacity to integrate external influences.

In Part 1, "*Angakkuuniq* and Christianity," we will examine various aspects of the transition from shamanism to Christianity. In chapter 1, we will discuss how Inuit and Qallunaat shared conceptions of the decline of Inuit culture. These notions exist in both cultural traditions but are embedded in quite different ideologies. We will explore the ideological and theoretical perspectives that inform the debates on religious change in Nunavut. In chapter 2, we will discuss the complex relationship between missionaries and *angakkuit,* showing that missionaries to some extent replaced *angakkuit* and were well aware of it. Yet a shamanic tradition continued, and *angakkuit* continued to practise. Relations between missionaries and *angakkuit* remained ambiguous and strained. We will examine various attempts that were made to integrate Christianity and shamanism in the first half of the twentieth century. These were opposed by the Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries as well as by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). When it became clear that this option was not feasible, the attempts to reconcile Christianity and shamanism were apparently relinquished. The replacement of the Sedna feast by Christmas celebrations, discussed in chapter 3, was a relatively smooth process, since missionaries were often unaware of the extent to which Christmas celebrations integrated traditional beliefs and practices. Part 1 shows how Christianity and shamanism merged in many respects and were integrated in the wider framework of Inuit culture.

In Part 2, "Animals, Owners, and Non-human Beings," we will focus on beings outside human society. In Inuit culture, religious beliefs and practices were always part and parcel of a hunting existence. The relations to prey constituted the core of this hunting existence. Survival depended on correct relationships with animals, which were considered as sentient and conscious beings. We will examine how the relationship between human beings and non-human beings took shape in a dynamic process of transformation. In chapter 4, we will examine the relations between animals and human beings and the concepts of *tarniq* (miniature image) and *atiq* (name or namesake) that connect and differentiate the relations between Inuit, ancestors, and animals. Relations to animals were organized by rules of respect. With the adoption of Christianity, these rules were gradually replaced by moral principles. In the ethnographic literature, great importance is attached to the owners of the sea, the sky, and the moon. In chapter 5, we will show that although these owners receded to the background and were replaced by God, the weather and the earth have retained their importance and must still be treated with great respect. In chapter 6, we will explore the significance of other non-human beings, showing that they continue to play an important part in the discourse of the elders.

In Part 3, "Encounters, Healing, and Power," we will move to the dynamics of cultural experiences and practises. In chapter 7, we will explain how the experiences of shamanic initiation were preserved and transformed in conversions, visions, and dreams. In chapter 8, we will discuss the significance of helping spirits and explore their significance in healing and exorcism. In chapter 9, we will discuss the importance of words and objects and show how prayer and hymns replaced the old *irinaliutiit* (powerful words).

In Part 4, "Connecting to Ancestors and Land," we will focus on continuity in the relations to ancestors and land. In chapter 10 we will examine the development of *qilaniq*, the divination technique of head lifting, and drum dancing, practices that seem to be related. Particularly drum dancing has become an important marker of the identification with the tradition establishing a connection with the ancestors. In chapter 11, we will show how Pentecostal movements and healing-the-land rituals integrate traditional notions into a modern framework that easily fits within modern political and religious ideologies. In our final chapter (12), we will analyse the processes of transition and transformation and summarize the conclusions of the book.

A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

In our text and glossary, we have followed the rules of the standard Roman orthography in use in Nunavut today. The older sources, such as Boas, Peck, and Rasmussen, use older orthographies, often based on Greenlandic traditions. We have retained those specific orthographies in the quotations.

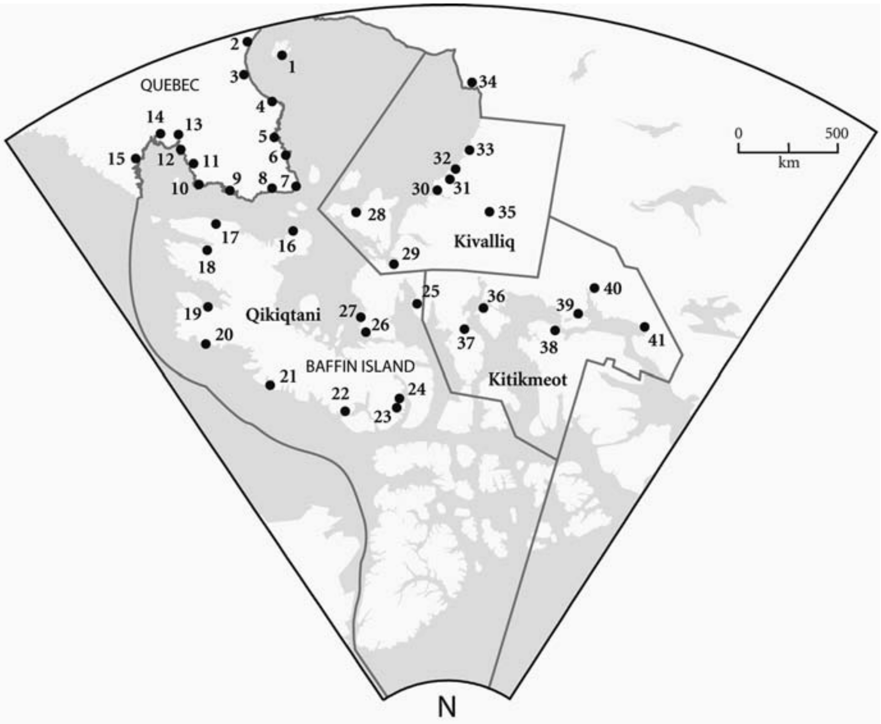
Courses in oral tradition and elders workshops have been important sources of information. The results of the workshops in Arviat (2003, 2006, 2007), Kugaaruk (2004), Baker Lake (2005), and Churchill (2008) have not yet been published. Therefore, we cannot indicate page numbers for these workshops, but instead refer to them by place name and year: Arviat workshop, 2003; Kugaaruk workshop, 2004; and so on. We have also included interviews with elders who participated in the Iglulik Oral History Project preserved in Iglulik; these have been referred to by "IE" (Inuit elders) plus the number of the interview in the project. Unpublished individual interviews are referred to by the year of the interview.

We follow standard orthography in spelling the names of the elders, unless the elders have indicated a preference for another spelling (e.g., Kupak instead of Kupaq or Etanguat instead of Itanguat). A list of elders and their place of residence can be found in Appendix 2.

We usually use Inuktitut place names, and we refer to the inhabitants of a place by the place name with the suffix *-miut* (e.g., Iglulingmiut, people from Iglulik) or the suffix *-miutaq* (e.g., Aivilingmiutaq, inhabitant of Aivilik).

In quotations, the original spelling of the authors is retained. Whenever necessary, punctuation has been inserted or modified to facilitate reading.

Part One | *Angakkuuniq* and Christianity


QUEBEC
Qikiqtani
BAFFIN ISLAND
Kivalliq
Kitikmeot
0
500
km
N
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41

Map of Nunavut communities. Map by F. Laugrand.

1 Sanikiluaq
2 Kuujjuarapik
3 Umiujaq
4 Inukjuak
5 Puvirnituq
6 Akulivik
7 Ivujivik
8 Salluit
9 Kangiqsujuaq
10 Quaqtaq
11 Kangirsuk
12 Aupaluk
13 Tasiujaq
14 Kuujjuaq
15 Kangiqsuyalujjuaq
16 Kinngait/Cape Dorset
17 Kimmirut
18 Iqaluit
19 Panniqtuuq/Pangnirtung
20 Qikiqtarjuaq
21 Kangiqtugaapik/Clyde River
22 Mittimatalik/Pond Inlet
23 Nanisivik
24 Tununirusiq/Arctic Bay/Ikpiarjuk
25 Kugaaruk/Pelly Bay
26 Igloolik
27 Sanirajak/Hall Beach
28 Salliq/Coral Harbour
29 Naujaat/Repulse Bay
30 Igluligaarjuk/Chesterfield Inlet
31 Kangiq&iniq/Rankin Inlet
32 Tikirajuaq/Whale Cove
33 Arviat
34 Churchill
35 Qamanittuaq/Baker Lake
36 Uqsuqtuuq/Gjoa Haven
37 Taloyoak
38 Iqaluktuuttiaq/Cambridge Bay
39 Umingmaktuuq/Bay Chimo
40 Kingauk/Bathurst Inlet
41 Qurluqtuq/Kugluktuk

1

Continuity and Decline

PERCEPTIONS OF DECLINE

Qallunaat Perceptions of Decline

In the sixteenth century, European ships began to visit the Inuit of northeastern Canada. Encounters between Inuit and Qallunaat usually took place in the summer, as Europeans ships were not designed or equipped to survive the harsh arctic winters, but in the early nineteenth century, a British expedition searching for the Northwest Passage spent two winters at Lyon Inlet (1821–22) and Iglulik (1822–23). The British naval officers Parry (1824) and Lyon (1824) provided extensive descriptions of Inuit life. At that time the British Empire was almost at its zenith, and the expansion of Western civilization at the expense of so-called savage and primitive societies was taken for granted. The decline of these societies was considered a natural phenomenon, only to be expected, owing to the unavoidable progress caused by increasing contact with civilized society. The demise of Inuit culture was considered to be only a matter of time.

John Ross, the first European to reach the Inuit of Boothia Peninsula, spent three winters (1829–32) in the area. When he made contact with the Inuit, he provided them with brandy. He would later write:

> [O]ur brandy was as odious as our pudding (n.b., plumpudding); and they have yet, therefore, to acquire the taste which has, in ruining the morals, hastened the extermination of their American neighbours to the southward. If, however, these tribes must finally disappear, as seems their fate, it is at least better, that they should die gradually by the force of rum, than that they should be exterminated in masses by the fire and the sword of Spanish conquest; since there is at least some pleasure, such as it is, in the mean time, while there is also a voluntary, if slow suicide, in exchange for murder and misery. Is it not the fate of the savage and the uncivilized on this earth to give way to the more cunning and the better informed,

> to knowledge and society? It is the order of the world, and the right one: nor will all lamentations of a mawkish philanthropy, with its more absurd or censurable efforts avail one jot against an order of things as wise as it is, assuredly established. All which it is our duty to provide for, is, that this event be not hastened by oppression and wrong, that it may not be attended by the suffering of individuals.[1]

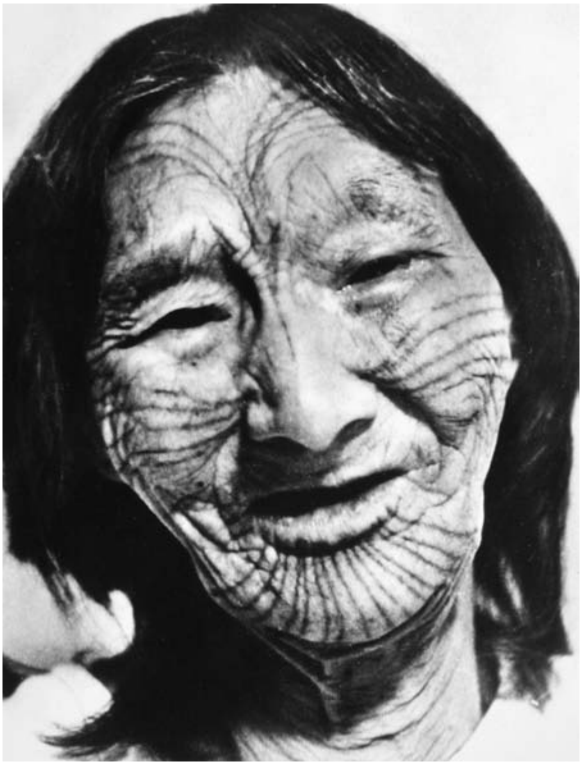
Inuit would either disappear or be absorbed by Western civilization. The disappearance of the Inuit was considered a moral issue, and it was the responsibility of the white man to make it bearable for them.

Integration of natives into Western civilization, according to many, was not necessarily a good thing. In 1858, the Moravian missionary Mathias Warmow wrote about the Inuit of South Baffin Island: "I am always sorry to see the Esquimaux … imitating the Europeans in all respects. They were undoubtedly better off in their original state and more likely to be gained for the kingdom of God. But when they begin to copy our mode of life they are neither properly Europeans or Esquimaux and will speedily die out, in consequence of the change."[2] The assessment that Inuit were already too much acculturated and might be on the road to extinction may have played a part in Warmow's recommendation to his society that it not open a mission on Baffin Island.[3]

In the nineteenth century, Inuit were increasingly employed by whalers and greatly contributed to the success of whaling in the area.[4] Western observers considered the impact of whaling as detrimental to the persistence of Inuit culture. The German scientist Kumlien (1879, 13) observes, "It is certain that since the whalers have begun coming among the Cumberland Eskimo, and introduced venereal diseases, they have deteriorated very much. They now almost depend upon ships coming, and as a consequence are becoming less expert hunters, and more careless in the construction of their habitations, which are merely rude temporary shelters made at a few minutes' notice. Great suffering often ensues from living in these miserable huts."

The whalers brought new goods and prosperity to the Inuit, but also new diseases and new customs. In the course of the nineteenth century, the Inuit population was greatly reduced, mainly through the illnesses introduced by the whalers.[5] Sexual intercourse between the whalers and Inuit women was frequent. The first Anglican missionaries in Cumberland Sound tried to protect the Inuit from the influence of the whalers. In a letter to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1897, Peck emphasized "[t]he absolute necessity of counteracting as soon as possible the terrible influences of the crews of whaling ships."[6]

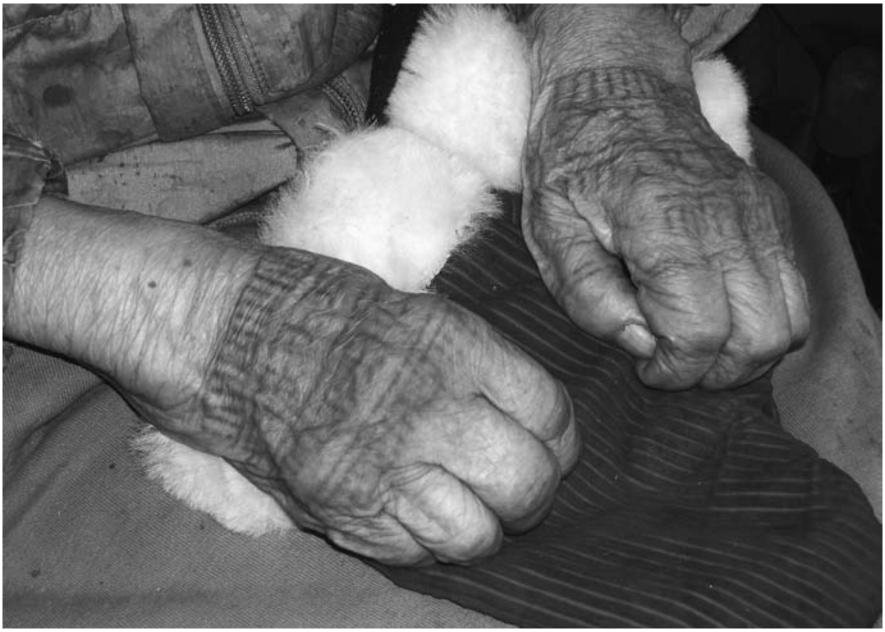
Demographic decline and cultural decline were perceived as closely connected. The adoption of Western technology, clothing, and housing was considered the very proof of the decline of Inuit culture. Western observers did not consider the possibility that Inuit were incorporating and integrating Western technology, even Western religion, into their own cultural traditions.



Woman elder with tattoos. Courtesy of Archives Deschâtelets.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the decline of whaling brought hardship to the Inuit, and the missionaries did their best to relieve their needs.[7] Kumlien (1879, 43) suggests that many religious beliefs and practices were already on the decline because of the arrival of the whalers: "It seems very probable that before the advent of whalemen they practiced a great many rites and ceremonies, many of which are now obsolete, or exist only in tradition. Sometimes one of these old customs will be repeated, but, as a general thing, not in the presence of a white man, if they can help it."

Traditional beliefs and customs were disappearing even before the first missionaries became active in Cumberland Sound at the end of the nineteenth century. The Anglican missionaries Bilby and Peck reported that the Sedna feast was already declining before the first Inuit were converted. Many ethnographic reports refer to the disappearance of traditional customs. Hunting rules changed, as many of the old prohibitions no longer applied to game animals killed by rifles. The tradition of tattooing women was already disappearing at the end of the nineteenth century.[8] Therefore, ethnographers of Inuit culture such as Boas and Rasmussen focused on recording "traditional" Inuit culture before it disappeared, "hoping to save what can yet be saved."[9] Sometimes they deliberately



Tattoos on the hands of Niviuvaq from Talurjuaq. Photograph by C. Remie.

omitted references to innovations in their ethnographies.[10] Like many later ethnographers, they paid little attention to the impact of the whalers.[11] Reflecting upon the future of the Iglulingmiut, the Danish archaeologist Mathiassen (1928, 240), a member of the Fifth Thule expedition (1921–24) led by Knud Rasmussen, states, "What the future of the Iglulik Eskimos will be is difficult to say. Will it be possible for this little tribe, five hundred people, spread over an enormous area of land, to continue being able to hold its own in the struggle for existence, or will it, like so many other primitive peoples, be swallowed up in the fight against European civilisation?"

The members of the Fifth Thule expedition focused on the anthropological and archaeological reconstruction of traditional Inuit culture and paid much less attention to changes occurring in Inuit societies in that period, notably the adoption of Christianity. Mathiassen did not consider it worthwhile to collect detailed information on the Inuit conversion rituals that were spreading at a great speed through many camps on Baffin Island and the Melville Peninsula. In Iglulik he met Umik and his followers,[12] who were promoting Christianity in the area, but he was not impressed: "[I]t will presumably disappear just as quickly as it came when it no longer has the interest of novelty."[13]

After the establishment of the first Anglican mission post in Uumanarjuaq (Blacklead Island) in 1894 and the first Roman Catholic mission post in Igluligaarjuk (Chesterfield Inlet) in 1912, the adoption of Christianity by Inuit increased rapidly. Inuit often requested missionaries to found mission posts in communities that had already adopted the new religion. Thus, Father Henry, an Oblate missionary, founded a Catholic mission post at Kugaaruk (Pelly Bay) in 1935 at the request of the Nattilingmiut. The success of the mission contributed to the conviction that traditional Inuit culture was gone. Missionaries who stayed in the mission posts for many years were aware that traditional practices sometimes continued in secret,[14] but they assumed this would not go on for long. Already in the 1940s, Oblate missionaries were recording myths and stories in order to preserve Inuit traditions. Inuit oral traditions were recorded and collected by G. Mary-Rousselière, F. Van de Velde, A. Thibert, and M. Métayer. As well, missionaries urged the Inuit to record their own traditions in diaries and other written records.[15]

While missionaries were recording Inuit traditions, anthropological attention from the 1950s to the 1970s shifted to law and community studies. The Canadian government began to pursue a policy of settling Inuit in permanent communities, and quite a number of acculturation and community studies of the period focused on the modernization of Inuit culture (Brody 1979; Crowe 1969; Damas 1969; Mathiasson 1967; Van den Steenhoven 1959). This shift in focus was thought to contribute to a process that would see Inuit become full participants in modern Canadian society.

As it came to be assumed that shamanism and other traditional beliefs and practices had disappeared, the recording or preservation of the old traditions was no longer considered a priority, and the emphasis, especially in American and Canadian anthropology, shifted to studies of change and modernization. In Europe, traditional Inuit culture was still considered more important, but it tended to be delegated to the domain of the history of religion, as it was taken for granted that these traditions now belonged to the past (Gabus 1940, 1944; Michéa 1949; Frederiksen 1964).

In the late 1960s, a new anthropological interest in shamanic traditions arose. Anthropologists working in this field often developed their research in close collaboration with missionaries. A. Balikci (1970) conducted research in Kugaaruk in cooperation with Father F. Van de Velde, and R. Savard cooperated with Father M. Métayer, who at the end of the 1950s recorded many drum dances and collected many stories from the elders (see Métayer 1973). But the topic of shamanism was still difficult to discuss. J. Briggs (1970) attempted a study of shamanism among the Utkuhikjalingmiut but failed to get any response from her informants, who clearly preferred not to discuss the matter with an outsider.

It was only when Inuit elders themselves were ready to discuss the traditions of the past with outsiders that anthropologists became aware of the tenacity and resilience of Inuit culture. By the mid-1970s, the traditions of Inuit elders were gradually being recorded. Notably, B. Saladin d'Anglure and his co-researchers from Laval University, such as F. Thérien (1978, on shamanism) and R. Dufour

(1977, on names; 1987, on traditional birth), successfully collected new information on traditional beliefs and practices. The first Inuit authors emphasized the impact of change and transformation.[16] With the emergence of a pan-Inuit ideology (see the creation of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in 1971), as well as various political journals (e.g., *Inuit Today* and *Taqralik*), Inuit began to regain an appreciation for the richness of their traditions. The foundation of the Inuit Cultural Institute in 1975 and especially the organization of various elders conferences made it clear that Inuit traditions needed to be recorded and thus preserved.[17] This need soon became a political issue, but the preservation of Inuit traditions was never seen as incompatible with Inuit adoption of modernity.

In the 1980s the land claims issue, which ultimately led to the foundation of Nunavut in 1999, dominated political debate. Inuit leaders who had been trained in residential schools argued that Inuit were perfectly capable of dealing with the modern political and economic order. In social sciences and the humanities, the study of oral traditions became a central topic, leading to the development of new research projects in the 1980s and 1990s. In cooperation with Inuit elders such as Noah Piugaattuk and Rose Iqallijuq and Inuit researchers such as Louis Tapardjuk, George Qulaut, and Leah Otak, J. MacDonald of the Iglulik Research Center and Dutch anthropologist W. Rasing started a project that involved interviewing elders about oral traditions in Iglulik; the project resulted in an impressive collection of recordings of the recollections of elders.[18]

In the mid-1990s, we started a project on oral traditions with Susan Sammons and Alexina Kublu of Nunavut Arctic College, our purpose being to develop new teaching tools and materials.[19] As Inuit began to take pride in their own cultural traditions, their inhibitions over communicating about sensitive issues like shamanism lessened, and in the late 1990s elders such as Victor Tungilik from Naujaat or Felix Pisuk from Kangiq&iniq admitted that they had been trained as shamans or had been involved in shamanic practices. When the Nunavut government was established in April 1999, it supported research on Inuit knowledge and traditions. A special department, the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY), was founded to promote the transfer of knowledge from elders to youths. The department coined the concept of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit knowledge that is still useful). Recent books like MacDonald's excellent work on Inuit astronomy (1998), Bennett and Rowley's impressive study *Uqalurait* (2004), and Mannik's comprehensive *Inland Nunamiut* (1998) present Inuit perspectives of the past and are almost entirely based on Inuit elder testimony. Political leaders such as Peter Irniq support the transfer of knowledge and the preservation of Inuit traditions. In a few Inuit communities, new associations have begun to produce books and movies. Isuma Productions in Iglulik, for example, produces films on Inuit traditions and has earned worldwide renown with *Atanarjuat*. Today, with the rapid disappearance of the generation of elders who were raised before Inuit settled in modern communities, the preservation of traditional knowledge, as well as traditional skills and techniques, has been assigned a high priority.[20]

Inuit Perceptions of Decline

Notions of decline held by ethnographers were reinforced by Inuit traditions relating to the decline of their culture. Rasmussen (1931, 481) reported, "There are ancient traditions that the Utkuhikjalingmiut once were a great nation, so numerous that all the hills looking over Lake Franklin were sometimes enveloped in smoke from the many camp fires round the lake." With respect to the Ukjulingmiut, he related that they were

> once a numerous people, who spent the summer on King William's Land and Adelaide Peninsula, or at Ualiq further west. In winter time they hunted the seal on the ice in Queen Maud's Sea. Once, however, the winter was a very severe one, blizzards blowing incessantly over Queen Maud's Sea; famine broke out and the Ukjulingmiut tried to escape from death by starvation by moving to Simpson Strait to fish for arctic cod. A great many people died, however; some froze to death, others starved, and the bodies of the dead were eaten by the living – in fact many were killed to provide food, for these poor people were driven almost mad by their sufferings that winter.
>
> The Ukjulingmiut never forgot that year of horror. The few survivors determined to go in to the mouth of Back River, where there never was any scarcity of food; there was always game, caribou and musk oxen in the interior, seals in Elliot Bay, and trout abounded in Back River. The Ukjulingmiut mixed with the Utkuhikjalingmiut and now live together with them.[21]

Mathiassen (1928, 21) also relates that the Iglulingmiut assumed they had been much more numerous in the past: "According to their own traditions, they have previously been much more numerous, which indeed seems to be confirmed by the enormous number of ruins of habitations spread over the country." Inuit assumed not only that their numbers had dwindled, but also that the powers of shamanism had greatly diminished. According to Rasmussen (1929, 131), many of the great séances of the past were no longer practised among the people of Iglulik. He writes, "But now all is mediocrity: the practise, the theories of all that one should know may still be remembered, but the great and dizzying flights to heaven and to the bottom of the sea, these are forgotten. And therefore I was never able to witness a spirit séance which was really impressive in its effect." Some Inuit might even view white people as superior *angakkuit*. Rose Iqallijuq, for example, one of the first Inuit converts to Catholicism, recalled a shamanic competition between Rasmussen, known by Inuit as Kunut, and Ingniruniq, Joe Haulli's father.

> At that time Kunut and Joe Haulli's father were both shamans. They were living in a cabin. There were white people and Inuit living in there. As

> both of them were shamans, they wanted to make a competition to know who was the best. So at first, Joe Haulli's father using his ritual said: "I am going out and I will be back inside." As he went outside, a very, very small *qamutik* [dog sledge] was made and very, very small wooden persons were made too. There were also three very nice lemmings for dogs. Those three were tied to the sledge by a hair. As he was doing this, his wife said: "These are his *tuurngait* [helping spirits]." After he finished, Kunut was next. Kunut just said: "I am not going to go out, I am just going to listen what my *tuurngait* will do." So, as Kunut was in there and as he was performing, he closed his eyes, moved his arms around. As he was doing that, the cabin started shaking, the cupboard started opening so it was shaking. As the cupboard opened, we could see these fingernails. As it was still shaking, we didn't see the *tuurngait*, but the *tuurngait* were shaking the cabin, and we saw fingernails. As the cabin was shaking, Inannerunasuaq told Ingniruniq to stop doing this, that they had experienced it so that he could now stop. It was really scary at that time, maybe because the cabin was shaking. That's why Kunut was so powerful a shaman and Ingniruniq was not so powerful. When he was a little boy and when this happened, Joe Haulli, also called Tasiuq, peed into his pants.[22]

Clearly, some Inuit did think of some Qallunaat as *angakkuit* and questioned the superiority of their own shamans.

Rasmussen (1931, 295–6) found the Nattilingmiut even more critical of their shamans:

> The Netsilingmiut themselves are very emphatic in pointing out that they no longer have great shamans among them. The whole art rests upon traditions from olden times, and the respect for shamanizing is really only created by what people know from the old tales a shaman should be able to perform, if only he is sufficiently well up in his art. I took very great pains in order to penetrate the people's own views of their relations with the supernatural. But although great trust was placed in me, it was difficult to obtain satisfactory answers. Naturally, the shamans themselves were interested in respect being preserved for their art, and those who were not shamans were often afraid that, if they were too candid in what they said, they might be punished by an offended shaman.

Dwelling upon the topic of decline, Rasmussen (1931, 296) refers to his informant Ugpik: "He asserted as his opinion that the art of shamanizing was in a state of complete decay. As the shamans were now, he declared, they only satisfied timid and pliant natures who felt a yearning for help from others. The only shaman who in his opinion was of any importance was the "exiled" Iksivalitaq … That man had a remarkable power over others, and in fact had for a time been a teacher to his young son. The latter had quickly become a "visionary," had had many dreams and lived long in a dual world as real shamans must do; as the boy was no longer in company with Iksivalitaq he had lost this faculty."

Ikilinik, an Utkuhikjalingmiutaq Rasmussen had met in the Back River area, expressed these thoughts:

> Here at Utkuhikjalik there are no shamans now. The shamans of our day do not even serve an apprenticeship, and they claim that they get their powers from dreams, visions, or sickness. For myself, I am not a shaman, as I have neither had dreams nor been ill. Now that we have firearms it is almost as if we no longer need shamans, or taboo, for now it is not so difficult to procure food as in the old days. Then we had to laboriously hunt the caribou at the sacred crossing places, and there the only thing that helped was strictly observed taboo in combination with magic words and amulets. Now we can shoot caribou everywhere with our guns, and the result is that we have lived ourselves out of the old customs. We forget our magic words, and we scarcely use any amulets now. The young people don't. See, my chest is bare; I haven't got all the bones and grave-goods that the Netsilingmiut hang about them. We forget what we no longer have use for. Even the ancient spirit songs that the great shamans sing together with all the men and women of the village we forget, all the old invocations for bringing Nuliajuk up to earth so that the beasts can be wrested from her – we remember them no more.[23]

Perceptions of decline were shared by ethnographers as well as by participants, but for different reasons. Iglulingmiut, Nattilingmiut, and Utkuhikjalingmiut all assured Rasmussen that their ancestors were vastly superior to themselves. The *angakkuit* of the old days were said to be able to kill animals by just looking at them. However, whereas for outsiders the decline of shamanism was a natural phenomenon, caused by contact with civilized society, for the Inuit it was part of an ideological framework that emphasized the superiority of ancestors over descendants, of *inummariit* (true Inuit) over modern Inuit.

In 1946 Svend Frederiksen collected much information from the *angakkuq* Qimuksiraaq in Igluligaarjuk, Chesterfield Inlet. At that time Qimuksiraaq was not yet considered an exceptionally important *angakkuq*,[24] and many people thought that his brother Nagjuk was much stronger. But today elders who witnessed Qimuksiraaq's activities in their youth believe he was a very powerful shaman, and they enjoy telling stories about his performances. Even today the *angakkuit* of the past acquire mythical proportions in the perceptions of their descendants. When Iqallijuq died at the age of ninety-five in Iglulik, the distance she had taken from shamanism over her lifetime did not diminish rumours that she probably had been a shaman herself. Many elders are considered to have been *angakkuit* in the past. Today they represent the *inummariit*, the people who lived the true Inuit life. The elders themselves view their own grandparents in this way. Thus, the notion of *inummariit* is a relative one, always referring to preceding generations.

The discourse on decline continues today. It may refer to the future of Inuit culture, changes in the climate, or social problems. Apparently, it is hard not to perceive change in moral terms.

A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Continuity and Transformation

In the social sciences, the notion of transformation has obtained a central place through the work of C. Lévi-Strauss and other structuralist scholars. It was crucial to Lévi-Strauss's conviction that social reality can be formalized and explained in terms of mathematical operations. He applied this approach especially to mythology, arguing that in this domain, where everything seems to be allowed, logical formulas can be demonstrated and the categories of human thinking revealed. His famous canonical formula is an example. But the fact that myths can be organized in mathematical formulas does not explain very much if there is no theory of interpretation that allows us to understand the relevance or significance of these formulas. Later structuralist anthropologists tried to develop such a theory, but they failed to develop one that was either satisfactory or convincing (see Maranda 2001).

Lévi-Strauss's basic intuition that myths are usually transformations of each other in time as well as in space has proved to be influential. New approaches inspired by him have been developed by such scholars as E. Désveaux (2001, 2007), who applied the notion of quadrants as a framework of transformation in the study of Amerindian myths and rituals. B. Saladin d'Anglure (1986) applied a structuralist perspective to Inuit cosmology, showing that the fetus in the womb, a person in an igloo, and Sila in the sky can be seen as transformations of each other. Oosten (1976) also adopted a structuralist perspective to analyse Nattilik and Iglulik religious traditions. Yet the question arises, to what extent can these structuralist interpretations be verified of falsified. How do the complex structures and models developed by scholars in the description and analysis of other cultures relate to the variations in perspectives that can be found in each society? Scholars employ notions such as mental grids (Wachtel 1971; see also Douglas 1970), habitus (Bourdieu 1985), interiorization and externalization (Berger and Luckmann 1966), and structuration (Giddens 1984) to try to bridge the gap between general models and individual variation. The structural tension between the models of scholars and the views of the participants has always been one of the central theoretical issues in the social sciences (see de Josselin de Jong

1956). Today it has become a political and ethical issue, as anthropology is often conceived by aboriginal people as an attempt to subordinate aboriginal society to the cognitive and moral categories of Western society.

This structural tension between scholars and participants can never be satisfactorily resolved, since the cognitive and moral frameworks of different cultures will always vary. It is essential to the anthropological endeavour that anthropologists acknowledge that they are caught in a cognitive and ideological framework just as their informants are. While there may be much common ground, there will always be points where cultural perspectives are incompatible (Descola 2005). Even though anthropology seeks to explain, it will usually only interpret. It is essentially a hermeneutic discipline, implying translation and interpretation. But how do we translate? Do we present another culture in such a way that it becomes easily accessible to a broad public, or do we wish to show the importance and complexity of cultural differences? Author Peter Freuchen (1939, 1961), a member of the Fifth Thule expedition and well-known author on Inuit, opts for the former approach. He shows in an admirable way that Inuit are human beings just like we are, and he provides anecdotes that are immediately instructive to a general public and that convey the illusion that Inuit are not that difficult to understand. At the other end of the spectrum, we find his friend Knud Rasmussen exposing the richness and complexity of Inuit culture in terms of the perspectives of the participants themselves. In his introduction to his study of the Iglulik Eskimos, he states, "[I]t has always been one of my main objects, in the portrayal of primitive culture, to get the natives' own views of life and its problems, their own ideas expressed in their own fashion. This was often quite as important to me as eliciting new elements in their religious and spiritual life" (1929, 11). In his valorization of the views of the participants, Rasmussen was exceptional, and his approach probably contributed significantly to his success as an ethnographer. In a few months he amassed vast collections of tales, rituals, and rules. He published many of these collections almost verbatim, risking losing his readers at an early stage. But as a result, his ethnographies are a rich treasure trove of ethnographic information. In contrast to most contemporary ethnographers, he carefully specified the names of his informants, preserving local and individual variation in the data.

Whereas anthropologists tend to focus on the differences between their own culture and that of an aboriginal people, Inuit are far more interested in the differences within their own culture. Thus, Inuit valorize local differences that an anthropologist would often consider of minor importance compared to the great differences he or she perceives between different cultures. In this book we try to do justice to the complexity and richness of Inuit culture as it takes shape in the testimony of the elders and in ever-changing rituals and practices, but we also attempt to understand and analyse the processes of change and continuity. We present extensive ethnographic data organized in a framework intended to show the patterns that give structure to these processes. Instead of immediately imposing our categories of interpretation on the participants, we will first explore how Inuit themselves shape the relationship between the individual and society, the past and the present.[25]

Inuit make a sharp distinction between shamans and Christians, Inuit and Qallunaat, although in practice these categories may merge. Anthropologists and historians cannot escape the need to interpret these disjunctions in terms of continuity and transformation. Here, we do not use the word "transformation" to refer to a logical operation in the way Lévi-Strauss did in his study of Amerindian mythology, but to refer to subtle changes and alterations, changes that are often deceptive in that they suggest fundamental changes and obscure the strong resilience of Inuit culture. The notion of transformation emphasizes the subtle dialectics of change and continuity that are central to the dynamics of Inuit culture and especially evident in the dynamism of shamanism and Christianity.

In examining processes of transition and transformation among the Inuit of northeastern Canada over the last two hundred years, we look at Inuit culture in a synchronic as well as a diachronic perspective. As early as 1950, Evans-Pritchard (1962, 152) stated, "The thesis I have put before you, that social anthropology is a kind of historiography, and therefore ultimately of philosophy or art, implies that it studies societies as moral systems and not as natural systems, that it is interested in design, rather than in process, and that it therefore seeks patterns and not scientific laws, and interprets rather than explains."

In his Marrett lecture, Evans-Pritchard challenged Radcliffe Brown's vision of social anthropology as a natural science. The necessity to study societies as moral systems had already been pointed out by the French Année sociologique school at the beginning of the twentieth century, notably by Durkheim and Mauss. They saw society not just as set of social relationships, but also as a set of representations comprising morals, ideas, and values that have to be grasped. Durkheim argues as follows:

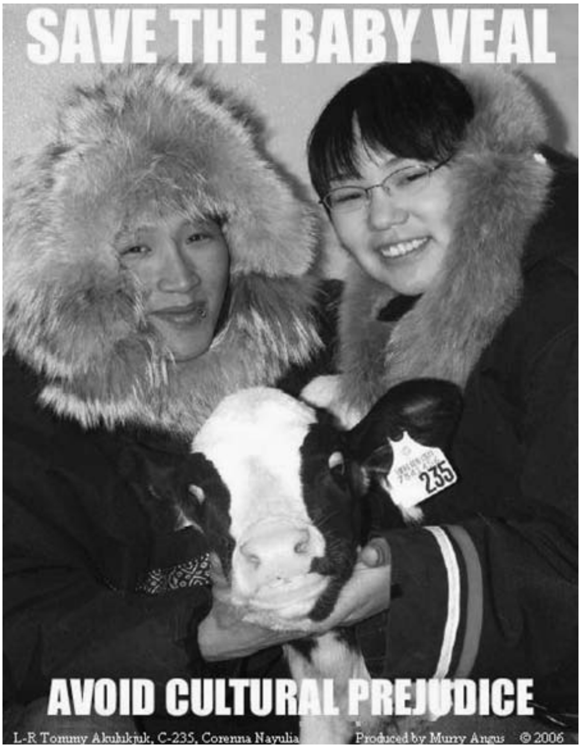
> A society can neither create nor recreate itself without at the same time creating ideal(s). This creation is not a sort of work of supererogation for it, by which it would complete itself, being already formed; it is the act by which it is periodically made and remade. Therefore when some oppose the ideal society to real society, like two antagonists, which would lead us in opposite directions, they materialize and oppose abstractions. The ideal society is not outside of the real society: it is part of it. Although we are divided between them as between two poles which mutually repel each other, we cannot hold to one without holding to the other; for a society is not made up merely of the mass of individuals who compose it, the ground which they occupy, the things which they use, and the movements which they perform but above all is the idea which it forms of itself.[26]

Thus, we are not only confronted with empirical data that can be observed but also with ideas and values. An anthropologist is necessarily involved in the ideas and values of his own society and can never escape the epistemological and ideological debates concerning the categories of interpretation.

Anthropology has a long history of interpreting other societies in terms of pejoratives, such as savages, primitives, non-literate people, underdeveloped countries, traditional cultures, and non-Western peoples. When these terms came into fashion, they were considered to be descriptive categories and not perceived as pejoratives, but gradually scholars became aware of the negative connotations of these terms and replaced them with other terms that unavoidably turned into pejoratives again. These terms derive their significance from an ideological temporal framework with evolutionist connotations that is still attractive. Even though nineteenth-century evolutionism is rejected in anthropology today, many scholars still presume that other cultures gradually give way to modern society. This ideological historical perspective is a modern transformation of the old evolutionist ideology, and it often serves to legitimize strategies designed to enforce the modernization of native peoples.

As societies can be perceived as different moral systems, it is only to be expected that these moral systems will turn out to be incompatible in some respects. One such case is the fur boycott. Trapping used to be a vital feature of economic life in the North; it was an important source of income for the aboriginal people. In the past several decades, the fur market has almost completely collapsed owing to economic as well as ideological reasons. Today Inuit do not accept that the protection of animals should take supremacy over their own well-being, and they experience the fur boycott as an action directed against their cultural identity as hunters. The poster "SAVE THE BABY VEAL: AVOID CULTURAL PREJUDICE" turns the tables on the Americans and Europeans, but fails to change their attitudes. Most Europeans and Americans think that Inuit should not cling to a hunting way of life that belongs to the past. They should adapt to modern society and realize that the preservation of nature is more important than the preservation of a hunting mode of existence. For Inuit, giving up a hunting means giving up their culture; for Europeans and Americans, it is a necessary step in a process leading to full participation in a global civilization.

Today these conflicting views affect every dimension of the complex relationships between federal agencies and aboriginal people. The Canadian government wishes to integrate aboriginal people into a modern Canadian society, where aboriginal people would have the same rights and obligations as other Canadian citizens. Aboriginal people wish to participate in Canadian society without giving up their cultural identity. A new political and cultural consciousness has been growing among aboriginal peoples. They have mastered the political and ideological discourses of modern society and use them to defend themselves in political and legal struggles to maintain their cultural and political autonomy. Aboriginal people feel that they have been studied from an outsiders' perspective, and they wonder to what extent anthropology reflects the morality, ideas, and values of the colonial powers and the oppression they represented. Many people believe that anthropologists are steeped in the morality of Western soci-


SAVE THE BABY VEAL
235
AVOID CULTURAL PREJUDICE
L-R Tommy Akuhukjuk, C-235, Corenna Nayulia
Produced by Murry Angus © 2006

"SAVE THE BABY VEAL." This poster was designed to turn the tables on anti–seal hunt activists. Source: http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/4708/191/1600/babyveal.0.jpg.

ety and are incapable of grasping the morals, ideas, and values of another society. In a guide for researchers titled *Negotiating Research Relationships with Inuit Communities* (Nickels et al. 2006, 2), it is stated, "Inuit often feel that scientists do not make enough effort to consider Inuit knowledge and perspectives when framing research questions and designing studies. Inuit occasionally dismiss as unnecessary and irrelevant studies (especially those on harvested wildlife species) that they believe Inuit already possess. A common perspective is that Inuit have the answers to many of the questions scientists propose to investigate."

Inuit often feel that they are better qualified to do research on their own culture but lack the training and resources to do so. *Uqalurait* (Bennett and Rowley 2006) presents an oral history of Nunavut that gives precedence to the aboriginal perspective in presenting the recollections of Inuit elders. Anthropologists and historians are becoming increasingly aware of the need to give scope to aboriginal perspectives. Today researchers in Nunavut require a research permit granted by the Nunavut Research Institute and approved by the local community where the research is to be conducted. The Nunavut government plays an important part in the development of research agendas, particularly in research on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

The phrase Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit was coined in the 1990s when Inuit decided to replace the modern notion of "Inuit traditional knowledge."[27] It refers to Inuit knowledge that had been handed down from the ancestors and embodied fundamental ideas and values that distinguished Inuit from Qallunaat. The development of the concept demonstrated a new valorization of the Inuit cultural heritage and a rejection of the notion that modernization implied an unconditional acceptance of Qallunaat ideas and values.

From the start, the notion of *qaujimajatuqangit* raised intensive debates among Inuit. Did it refer specifically to the knowledge held by the elders, or did it encompass the knowledge of all Inuit? The question has never been resolved completely. Because Inuit elders are held in high esteem because of their experience and knowledge, they are usually considered to be the ones who should be consulted on questions concerning Inuit knowledge. But people are well aware that the elders have more experience with the life out on the land than with specific problems of modern society. Thus, while their recollections of shamanic beliefs and practices will not be challenged, their views on the modern schooling system or on women's shelters may be subjected to intensive debate in Inuit society.

Elders, as well as youths, acknowledge Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as an important part of the Inuit cultural heritage that should be preserved. Nunavut government also hold this position. It supports the recording of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and hopes that the wisdom of the elders will help solve pressing social problems in modern Inuit communities. The Nunavut Social Development Council (NSDC) (n.d., 12) recommends the following: "Traditional Inuit laws, practices and beliefs, including those pertaining to spirituality and shamanism, need to be researched, recorded and shared." *Towards Justice That Brings Peace* (1998, 12), an NSDC report of a meeting in Kangiq&iniq in 1998, notes, "In the old days when the Elders were not able to help an individual they sent them to a Shaman. The Shaman used 'positive messages' to help individuals. Shamans could counter mystical beings who had bad intentions. Once the Church arrived, it asked Inuit to get rid of such positive inner values, but Inuit still used them as a last resort." Clearly, a political discourse is developing that sketches an idealized image of shamans conforming to modern values. The shaman is depicted as representing true Inuit wisdom, in contrast to Qallunaat traditions, including the church. The loss of a shamanic tradition is perceived as part of the decline of Inuit culture, and researching Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is perceived as a way to recover a cultural heritage that will enable Inuit to create a modern society based on their own traditions and values.

In modern Nunavut, elders play an important role in the preservation of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. In the past, they probably played a similar role as authorities on knowledge. The *isumataq* (the one with *isuma*, thought, intelligence), the

(left) Eva Muqyunniq from Arviat, one of the Ahiarmiut elders who survived the relocations to Nueltin Lake and Henik Lake. She is very knowledgeable about Ahiarmiut cultural traditions; (right) her husband, Job Muqyunniq, also an Ahiarmiut elder who survived the relocations to Nueltin Lake and Henik Lake. Joe hosted the workshop on the Ennadai Lake relocations in 2005 and demonstrated the *qilaniq* technique in Arviat. Photographs by F. Laugrand.

leader of the camp, was usually an elder hunter with much experience. In the small hunting camps of the past, elders did not constitute a special category as they do in the present, but they played their part as grandparents in the daily life of the camp and its families. Age was always an important factor in the distribution of knowledge. Knowledge was precious; it was not shared with everyone, but was only passed on to close relatives or sold at a good price. Rasmussen (1929, 165) reported that the Aivilik *angakkuq* Ava bought powerful words from an old woman named Qiqertainaq: "In return for this valuable information, Aua had provided Qiqertainaq with food and clothing for the rest of her life."

In the present, as in the past, knowledge is unevenly distributed. The modern idea that knowledge should be shared and that elders should pass on their knowledge to youth does not always agree with the elders' conviction that they should only pass on important sensitive knowledge to their own relatives.[28] Knowledge is not valued for its own sake, but for its efficacy. It is passed on because it will help people to survive and prosper. In this respect, there is a correlation between knowledge and success. Knowledge results in prosperity, and prosperity allows one to obtain more knowledge. Whereas there is a moral obligation to share food, there is no such obligation with respect to knowledge. On the contrary, sharing

(left) Jose Angutinngurniq from Kugaaruk. Angutinngurniq's father, Niptayok, and his grandfather Allakannuak were important leaders in Kugaaruk. Angutinngurniq himself is very much respected for his knowledge and leadership. He participated in the workshops we facilitated in Kangiq&iniq and Arviat and hosted a workshop in Kugaaruk. When performing *qilaniq* in Pelly Bay, he demonstrated his skills in this old Inuit practice; (right) Peter Suvaksiuq from Arviat. Suvaksiuq is a son of Pinngiqqaajuk, and his grandmother Kikpaq was an *angakkuq*. In Kangiq&iniq, Suvaksiuq demonstrated the immersion in water method of shamanic initiation, a Padlirmiut technique. He shared many recollections with us, including his near-death experiences. He hosted a workshop on shamanism in Arviat in 2003. Photographs by F. Laugrand.

knowledge may imply losing an advantage that may be important in the future. Elders point out that prosperous or wealthy people are often envied and targeted by evil shamans or sorcerers.

Because the elders are the ones thought to be the authorities on the knowledge of the past, we have focused on their perceptions of the past. We are well aware that their views are not representative of those of the majority of Inuit people, but their position as elders invests them with the authority to advise, council, and direct younger generations.

In this study, we will focus on the Inuit traditions involving shamanism and Christianity that have played a central part in the discourse of the Inuit elders who have been our main informants. They still remember life on the land before Inuit began to live in permanent settlements. Many of them witnessed shamanic performances or received some shamanic training. This knowledge is not always

(left) Felix Pisuk from Kangiq&iniq. Pisuk was a son of the *angakkuq* Inuksuk. As a boy, Pisuk was trained as an *angakkuq*, but his father's brother intervened to stop his initiation. Pisuk had an extensive and detailed knowledge of shamanic traditions. In the workshops we often enjoyed his detailed knowledge and his experiences. He died in 2004; (right) Felix Kupak from Naujaat. Kupak had a difficult childhood and endured severe starvation. He survived and founded a large family. He told us that *angakkuit* were never able to perform when he was present. He possessed an extensive knowledge of shamanism as well as Christianity. He shared his near-death experiences with us as well as his recollections of Tirisikuluk. He died in 2005. Photographs by F. Laugrand.

passed on. Modern Inuit society finds it hard to provide a suitable framework for the transfer of knowledge from elders to youths. Elders and youths both complain about the loss of traditional knowledge in modern society.

Traditions of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit vary in different areas, and this variation is acknowledged by the elders. Each elder has his or her own knowledge, and it is absolutely essential that this knowledge be seen as related only to that particular elder. Once the source, more specifically the name of the elder, is lost, the knowledge loses its roots and becomes devoid of much value to most Inuit.

Each elder is prepared to acknowledge the value of the different opinions and experiences related by others. In a course on oral traditions in 1996,[29] Pauloosie Angmalik and Saullu Nakasuk from the South Baffin Island presented their views on passing on their knowledge. Saullu Nakasuk, an elder from Panniqtuuq, said, "I'm only telling you about what I've experienced. I'm not going to

(left) Luke Anautalik from Arviat. Anautalik was an excellent carver and well versed in Ahiarmiut shamanic traditions. Originally from the Churchill area, he moved to Ennadai Lake and went through the relocations initiated by the Canadian government in the 1950s. He showed his great skills in various demonstrations of shamanic techniques. He died in 2006; (right) Levi Iluittuq from Kugaaruk. Iluittuq described in detail how he had been called to become an *angakkuq* (shaman) but had decided not to be one. In Kangiq&iniq he played an important part in setting up the of *qilaniq* (head lifting) demonstration, and in Kugaaruk he shared some Christian visions and dreams with us. Photographs by F. Laugrand.

tell you about anything I haven't experienced … Even if it's something I know about, if I haven't experienced it, I'm not going to tell about it." Saullu Nakasuk and Pauloosie Angmalik stressed the point repeatedly in an exchange with Julia Shamaiyuk, one of the students, in the same course:

> JULIA: One is not to talk about something without having experienced it?
> SAULLU: Yes. One is not to talk about something just from hearsay, because it is too easy to speak a falsehood. It is not desirable to tell untruths.
> JULIA: Yes.
> PAULOOSIE: The lie would come out later, or if the true story were told, the apparent lie.
> SAULLU: Yes. That's the way it was.

> PAULOOSIE: Having heard about it just once, knowing … I have already stated that I can say that I don't know anything about it if I have only heard about it just once. If at a later time someone were to tell about it like it really is, and though I did not intentionally lie, I would be like someone who had lied. Thinking about my own reputation, I have continued this as a practice.

Thus, elders have to be very careful in their public statements. They often prefer not to discuss a subject if they think they might make a mistake or suspect doing so could negatively affect a social relationship. We have heard elders discuss a subject at length and then on another occasion deny any knowledge of it. Clearly, denying knowledge is considered far less serious than making mistakes or providing correct information in the wrong context.

The elders emphasized the value of the traditions. Saullu Nakasuk stated, "It is not possible to forget the words of our elders, when we had our elders as the ones who gave us instructions. Even so, what one heard as a child keeps on coming back even though it is not always on your mind."

Sources

Ethnographies as well as archival sources provide detailed information on Inuit culture and society in the past. Unfortunately, this information is usually organized in categories of Western thought classifying non-human beings as gods and spirits, or aspects of human beings as souls. Early ethnographers such as Boas and Peck were more interested in establishing the true meaning of key concepts such as *inua* and *tuurngaq* than in charting the debates, variations, overlaps, and changes of these concepts over time.[30] In the older sources, traditional Inuit culture was firmly identified with the past. The study of modern Inuit culture, or cultural transformations in Inuit culture, only became a topic much later. The dichotomy between a past identified with traditional culture and a present identified with modern culture obscures the continuity and dynamics of Inuit culture. In this study, we will avoid such an essentialist approach and focus on the continuous reshaping and reconstructing of ideas and values in the past as well as in the present. Whereas archival and ethnographic sources usually provide outsider perspectives of Inuit culture embedded in Western ideas and values, oral traditions provide insider perspectives embedded in Inuit ideas and values. In the interplay of these various perspectives, a better understanding of the dynamics of Inuit culture can be achieved.

Oral Traditions

Between 1996 and 2008, we set up a serious of courses and workshops in close cooperation with the Inuit Studies Program of Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit. The purpose of these courses and workshops was to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from elders to younger generations and to record the knowledge of the elders. As a format for the courses, we opted for a dialogue between elders and youths, and thus the elders were interviewed by young Inuit students. This format ensured that the questions posed to the elders sprang from the context of modern Inuit society. The students usually wanted to hear about Inuit life of the past, but sometimes they asked questions directly relating to their own situation. One student asked Mariano Aupilaarjuk, an elder from Kangiq&iniq, this question:[31] "I was told as a small child that if my ancestors had committed a wrongdoing, that we their descendants would have to pay for their mistakes. I'd like to know if this is true." Aupilaarjuk answered, "This is exactly what happened to my wife and me. Our ancestors did something that was very wrong, and because of that several of our children passed away at a young age. Our great-grandfather was an *angakkuq* who had killed another *angakkuq*. He told us about this. He did not want the consequences to fall upon us because it was he who had broken the *maligaq* [a rule or principle to be observed or followed]. It was a *maligaq* that pertained to him. Even after I am dead, my descendants will still continue to be affected. This is very unfair, but that's the way it works." In his answer, Aupilaarjuk took into account that this form of retaliation is considered unfair today.

In another course, a student asked Tungilik from Naujaat,[32] "Is it true what they say, that people who have sex with animals shorten their lives?" Tungilik answered:

> It is true if they do not want to tell about it. I have heard that this kind of action shortens their life. It's very dangerous. I would be told that it is not dangerous to have sex with a person. If one woman did not accept, there would be other women. One should never have sex with a woman during her menstruation. This too causes illness. All these things have been told to me. If a woman enticed a man to have sex with her while she was menstruating, then she too was cutting short her life. Those are the sorts of things that the *tuurngait* did not like. These are the sorts of things that would make a *tuurngaq* angry. This was back then, not now.

Tungilik was implying that the *tuurngait* (helping spirits) were responsible for shortening one's life, but he immediately added that this was the case in the past, but not today. A temporal perspective is thus always present in the accounts of the elders.

The interviews provided a framework for questions on issues that had fascinated young people since childhood. One student addressed George Kappianaq from Iglulik: "There were a lot of *aqsarniit* [northern lights] in Kinngait for about two years. At that time they were so close that although I was an adult, I fled from them. They were very bright and although I found them beautiful, I was afraid of them." Kappianaq answered, "What the elders say about being cautious so your head isn't decapitated is very true. They say this because it happened in the past. There would be incidents of people who had their heads lopped off when they were whistling at them to get them to come closer. The *aqsarniit* rushed by the person who was standing there and knocked their head off. They say that they play kickball using a walrus head for their *aqsaq*, their kickball."[33]

The elders' answers reflect a deep conviction that people have to answer for their deeds and are sanctioned by agencies outside human society. The elders often emphasized this perspective. In a workshop in Kugaaruk in 2004, Ollie Itinnuaq from Kangiq&iniq related this incident: "I was a taxi driver one time in Kangiq&iniq. This woman, a nun, had a suitcase with a small chip. They went into a plane. We put the suitcase in the plane in the front. It kept opening. The pilot closed it. He looked away. As soon as it took off, the plane crashed because he was mistreating the nun's suitcase. It's clear because the pilot wasn't treating the nun right, the plane crashed. We had a meeting after that and I tried to tell people who were investigating that crash that something had happened just after take-off." The crash is viewed as a result of a lack of respect.

In the oral tradition courses in Iqaluit, a wide range of topics were discussed, ranging from life-stories, traditional law, medicine, cosmology, the environment, dreams to childrearing. The discussions were published verbatim by Nunavut Arctic College.[34] These courses at the college made it clear how much knowledge on shamanism the elders had retained; yet the elders did not consider a school to be a suitable context for the transfer of sensitive knowledge. They prefer to discuss these issues out on the land or in the privacy of their homes and with close relatives.

In the past, Inuit knowledge was passed on in the context of daily life. Young people learned from their elders by observing, listening, and supporting them. The introduction of the modern school system resulted in a dichotomy between modern and traditional knowledge.[35] Children acquired new knowledge that was not shared with their elders, and at the same time they had less opportunity to learn from their elders, as they had to spend their days at school. Many elders expressed their dissatisfaction with this situation. Elisapee Ootoova from Mittimatalik stated:

> In our community, school started in 1963. It seemed to be good then. Not all of my children attended school. The younger of the two older ones was in school. It turns out it was wrong of us to agree to send them to school when the teaching material was irrelevant to the North. We were wrong in some ways and right in other ways. It is good to learn to read and write in English to be able to understand the language. But they were not taught about the lifestyle in the North. All our children in Mittimatalik have been taught as though they were to continue on to Ottawa. They are not taught the way of life in our community. They are not taught what to do when food becomes scarce.[36]

Both elders and youngsters are concerned about the generation gap, and new roads to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from elders to youths are being explored. Recognition of the connection between the land and animals on one side and mental and physical health on the other has led to programs that take young Inuit out on the land. There they can be taught by elders and can recover from the strain of community life.[37]

Elders Workshops on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Shamanism

A different format was developed for the workshops that explored shamanism. A series of workshops with elders was set up in Kangiq&iniq (2000, 2002, 2003), Arviat (2003, 2006, 2007), Kugaaruk (2004), Qamanittuaq (2005), and Churchill (2008) to record the richness of the traditions preserved by elders. The first elders workshop, in Kangiq&iniq in 2000, was organized out on the land in a cabin specially adapted for the purpose by Itinnuaq from Kangiq&iniq. The workshop was financed by the Department of Justice, and it was intended to explore how traditional knowledge could contribute to solving social problems in modern Inuit society. As the subject of shamanism was considered delicate and controversial by the elders, it was decided that no young people should be present and that no outsiders should be present during the meetings. The workshop proved quite successful, as the elders not only shared their views on the past and the present but also gave recommendations on how to deal with some of the acute problems plaguing modern Inuit communities.[38] An agreement was made with the Pulaarvik Friendship Centre in Kangiq&iniq to organize another workshop that would involve more youths in the transfer of knowledge processes. Two further workshops were organized in Kangiq&iniq in 2002 and 2003, these ones involving youngsters as well as elders, and in subsequent workshops in Arviat, Kugaaruk, Qamanittuaq, and Churchill, youngsters were also invited to participate. Although the elders were initially uncomfortable discussing shamanism in the presence of youths, they gradually became accustomed to it and were prepared to give information and direction to the young people.

In the workshops in Kangiq&iniq, the participating elders all stated that they believed in shamanism, but insisted that they were not *angakkuit* themselves. Many had been in close contact with *angakkuit,* and some had been trained for some time to become *angakkuit*. They were convinced that shamanism still exists and that in each community you can find *angakkuit*. In the oral tradition courses taught at Nunavut Arctic College in the 1990s, elders had already emphasized the continuity of shamanism. Lucassie Nutaraaluk from Iqaluit remembered, "Then I was told that every community has *angakkuit* and would always have *angakkuit*. That is what I was told. There are probably a*ngakkuit* here in Iqaluit, too."[39] Kappianaq from Iglulik thought the same: "Yes. For sure. There will always be *angakkuit* until the end of time. I think there are numerous *angakkuit* in parts of the Qitirmiut."[40]

In the Kangiq&iniq workshops in 2000 and 2002, each day began with prayer. The elders emphatically stated that they believed in Christianity as well as in shamanism. They wanted to preserve the good things of shamanism and use them to solve the social problems of modern society. Aupilaarjuk, a member of the choir in the Catholic church in Kangiq&iniq, said, “We don’t want to bring back everything from the past, but we should bring back some things. We need to bring back the things that were good. I’m not trying to eradicate Christianity, but we need to put it together with the good aspects of *angakkuuniq* if we are to really follow the Inuit way of life.”[41]

Itinnuaq from Kangiq&iniq, an adopted son of the *angakkuq* Anarqaq, expressed this view: “Being an *angakkuq* can be helpful, just as prayer can be helpful. Both have their usefulness, both can work. The *angakkuit* and the ministers both pursue good. The missionaries think only of the soul, they do not think about life. An *angakkuq* knows that life is short and therefore he wants people to have good lives. I think that *angakkuit* are useful spiritually because they take away all wrongdoings. If only ministers and priests deal with a person, the person will die with wrongdoings still not confessed. It was not like that with an *angakkuq*.”[42] Itinnuaq recognizes an additional value of shamanism. It involves not only the spirit but also the body, enabling people to die with their transgressions confessed. He apparently reasons that the Catholic confession alone does not take care of this completely. His sister, Qalasiq, a woman elder from Kangiq&iniq, had a similar view: “We have to put shamanism and Christianity together if we are really to follow the Inuit way of life. We believe in both systems.”[43]

Today there is much speculation in the various Inuit communities over who might be *angakkuit*. It is therefore not surprising that the elders participating in the workshops stated emphatically that they were Christians and not *angakkuit*. Only rarely will an Inuk come forward and admit that he or she is a shaman or has been a shaman. An exception in this respect is Victor Tungilik from Naujaat, who admitted during a course in Iqaluit that he had practised as a shaman for several years.[44]

The data collected in the various workshops testify to the richness and vitality of the shamanic tradition in Inuit society. As the elders grew more comfortable with the presence of young people and other members of the community, they became willing to demonstrate traditional techniques, such as *qilaniq*, a technique of divination by head lifting, and instruct young people on the correct performance of these techniques. But the boundaries between play and seriousness are volatile, and during the *qilaniq* demonstrations, serious questions began to be asked. In 2002 in Kangiq&iniq, the elders organized a series of demonstrations of shamanic practices and techniques, allowing the people of the community to attend. Luke Anautalik from Arviat gave such a convincing demonstration of a shamanic trance that many people wondered whether this was the real thing. Because the demonstrations and performances were recorded on video, many small details of the elders’ performances have been preserved that would otherwise have been lost.

The workshop discussions and demonstrations expressed the great respect in which these traditions are still held by elders as well as young people. By connecting the testimony of the elders to ethnographic records and archival sources, we can better understand the nature and dynamics of Inuit traditions and knowledge. However, this is not always easy. The elders were usually reluctant to comment on archival sources. In many cases, the Inuk who had provided the information was not clearly identified, and even when his name was known, the elders often had no knowledge of that person and thus felt unable to assess the value of the information provided.

Regional Variation

The elders who participated in the workshops and courses came from various communities. They were well aware of the importance of regional differences and greatly interested in these variations, acknowledging that each community – and even each family – has its own traditions. Many elders had lived in other communities or knew that their parents originated from other communities. Even though dialectal variation is still an important issue in the North, strict boundaries between different communities are hard to maintain.

In the nineteenth century, Boas (1964 [1888], 425) already recognized that Inuit could not be easily divided into tribes or other distinct groupings: "In my opinion a great difference between these tribes never existed. Undoubtedly they were groups of families confined to a certain district and connected by a common life." Relations between areas varied. Mathiassen (1928, 23) writes, "My old friend Takornaq, who accompanied me on my journey to Ponds Inlet, expressed it in this manner: that if she were to have a new husband, it was all the same to her whether he was an Aivilingmio, an Iglulingmio or a Tununermio; if need be, a Qaernermio or an Akudnermio might to do; but a Netsilingmio; never!" Although the Aivilingmiut feared the Nattilingmiut, this did not prevent the two groups from mixing, and today a community such as Naujaat has a mixed population of Nattilingmiut and Aivilingmiut. Although Nattilingmiut were feared by Iglulingmiut and Aivilingmiut, Nattilingmiut in turn feared Kitlinermiut. Rasmussen reports, "I had not been there very long before they began to talk about their neighbours to the west, the Kitlinermiut, whom they all seemed to fear. They were dangerous people, they told me, and they believed we would never again see Qƒvigarssuaq and his companion; they had been murdered."[45]

Fear of other groups did not imply organized warfare.[46] Boas (1964 [1888], 465) writes:

> Real wars or fights between settlements, I believe, have never happened, but contests have always been confined to single families. The last instance of a feud which has come to my knowledge occurred about seventy years ago. At that time a great number of Eskimo lived at Niutang, in Kingnait Fjord, and many men of this settlement had been murdered by a Qinguamio of Anarnitung. For this reason the men of Niutang united in a sledge journey to Anarnitung to revenge the death of their companions. They hid

> themselves behind the ground ice and killed the returning hunter with their arrows. All hostilities have probably been of a similar character.[47]

Inuit emphasize the importance of the cultural differences between different areas. When Rasmussen (1930, 111) told Kibkarjut (Padlirmiutaq) that he had heard another version of a story she had related, she explained:

> I had heard this story related somewhat differently among the Harvaqtôrmiut where the woman who cuts off part of her face forms an item in the fantastic adventures of Kivioq, and when I asked whether the version here given might not be correctly remembered, the answer, given very energetically, was as follows: "We tell you only that which we know ourselves, and that which has been told throughout the ages in our tribe. You, who come from other peoples, and speak the tongue of other villages (dialect), and understand other Inuit besides ourselves, must know that human beings differ. The Harvaqtôrmiut know many things we do not know and we know many things they do not. Therefore you must not compare the Harvaqtôrmiut with us, for their knowledge is not our knowledge as our knowledge is not theirs. Therefore we tell you only what we know from our own villages."

In 1997 Nutaraaluk from Iqaluit commented, "I think our stories vary from community to community even though they are the same *unikkaaqtuat*."[48] Inuit elders profess great interest in the regional variation of their stories and traditions. In our projects on oral traditions, we attempt to record the richness of these traditions as they have taken shape in different areas, communities, and families. In charting the variation in the elders' testimony, we acknowledge regional differences, family traditions, and personal experiences. Interactions between areas were frequent and intense, as people used to travel far and wide and communities were continuously exposed to new influences from elsewhere. It was in this way that Christianity rapidly spread from one camp to the next in the early stages of its development. In tracing regional differences, we do not focus on identifying specific traditions with particular areas or groups, but instead focus on the dynamics and variations of these traditions as they followed different patterns of development in various areas. We apply the "field of anthropological study" approach as it was developed by Marcel Mauss and the Leiden anthropologists.

The Field of Anthropological Study Approach

In his 1935 inaugural lecture to the chair of ethnology at Leiden University, J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (1977, 166–7) developed the notion of a field of anthropological study. He opened his lecture with a statement of the problem: "All attempts at classifying mankind into smaller or clearly delimited groups according to race or culture have been utterly fruitless." Classifications and typologies of cultures had