

INUIT PENCIL DRAWINGS AND CO-CREATION: REDISCOVERING THE ARTWORK MADE DURING THE FIFTH THULE EXPEDITION

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PROLOGUE

“Only the fool does not know, how much more the half is than the whole.”

—Isak Dinesen [a.k.a. Karen Blixen] in “The Poet,” *Seven Gothic Tales* (1934)

It is striking that after 100 years, there is still a considerable body of material collected during the Fifth Thule Expedition (FTE) that has not been reactivated in our efforts to understand the histories and life worlds of northern communities at that time. It is a joy to realize that the echoes of the past can serve as inspiration for our own time, and for the futures we would like to build. And it is the silent spaces between the echoes that entice us to revisit the published and unpublished material created by Inuit community members in concert with the foreign visitors who joined them during the expedition.

During the more than three years of the FTE, Knud Rasmussen persistently recorded oral narratives and collected material objects for museum study and exhibition. Drawings, as well as photographs and film, were also produced along the way but seemingly not placed in the same category as other ethnographical materials, either by Rasmussen or the other expedition members. The visual media had high priority for Rasmussen, and he was curious to explore the potential of the celluloid film medium (see MacKenzie and Stenport, *this issue*), but images never entered the published reports as starting points for analysis, only as illustrations to the magnificent myths and stories. Yet, when considering the totality of the numerous and detailed drawings, one understands that Rasmussen—and possibly the other Danish scientists on occasion—must have spent a lot of time and effort on this material. Inuit men and women talked and drew for hours by the light of the blubber lamp on topics that Rasmussen requested. Through these conversations, his understanding of the ex-

periential world of each individual widened, and together they contributed to his deeper understanding of the Inuit world. Drawing and chatting evoked memories and stories, allowing Rasmussen to ask for explanations of why and how this and other persons behaved in certain ways. Could this have been the actual objective of the drawing sessions, rather than the production of tangible end results? Obviously, talking and drawing together may sometimes have simply contributed to a congenial atmosphere, as one may read from portraits that the hunter Taparti [Taparte] drew of himself and anthropologist Kaj Birket-Smith (Fig. 1).

It is in the nature of visual media to reveal the individual, even when scholars are working in the most systematic scientific regimes. The expedition's obsession with ethnic categorization and explanatory models notwithstanding, Rasmussen couldn't restrain his curiosity toward individual people and his appreciation for a good narrative. The personal stories therefore shine through in all of his writings. Luckily, they supplement the other scientific approaches and may even be said to eclipse them in our times. Contemporary history writing in the regions touched by the expedition seeks to reconstruct the biographies of individuals and their family connections, and Rasmussen's detailed descriptions are especially valuable because other sources are so few. Visual documentation collected by the FTE, especially when cross-referenced with written sources, can make a valuable contribution to such research.



Figure 1. Drawing by Taparte. Top: Portrait of Kaj Birket-Smith. Below: Self-portrait “as he could see himself in a tin-can” (NMD ES 106140a). National Museum of Denmark.

The National Museum of Denmark (NMD) recently scanned the entire collection of drawings done by, or in collaboration with, Central Arctic Inuit during the FTE. Composed on some 205 individual sheets of paper,¹ the drawings cover a wide range of subjects, including various types of maps, hunting and fishing scenes, people and their tattoos or clothing, tools and technologies, prey animals, spirit beings, architecture, scenes from daily life in the Inuit summer camps and winter snow house villages, and communal activities such as drum dancing, playing, and sports.

Of these drawings, about 155 can be attributed to 40 individuals, five of whom stand out as particularly productive: Saamik, Anarqaaq (variously spelled Anarqâq, Anakao, Anarqaoq), Iqaalliuq (Eqâtliq, Eqatdljôq), Pakak, and Usugtaa (Usugtâq, Usugtaoq). Some of the drawings have previously been published in scientific and popular reports from the expedition (e.g., Rasmussen 1931), but have mostly been used as either ethnographic “documentation” or as illustrations of particular research themes. In addition, a significant number of the drawings

can be considered practical: that is, the expedition members needed maps of the areas they were to visit, as well as local place names in order to communicate with the people they would encounter.

We suggest that the drawings should be understood as stemming from a process of *co-creation* between members of the expedition, primarily Knud Rasmussen, and the people they encountered on the way. Rasmussen is not explicit about the process, yet we speculate that he requested these drawings to establish conversations that would evoke experiences, memories, and explanations of daily practices. In other words, we propose that rather than understanding these drawings as works of art for display or exhibition, we may align better with their genuine purpose if we perceive them as working tools for collaborative learning.

Rasmussen already knew of the utility of “ethnographical” drawings as a relevant source of illustration and documentation from his participation in the Danish Literary Expedition of 1902–1904 (Strandgaard 2004; see Michelsen, *this issue*). Other members of the FTE would also have been aware of the genre, which in various forms

was used in Greenland from the late 1850s (Geersten 1990; Thisted 1999).

It is stated in the expedition's reports that some of the people they encountered had never seen paper or used a pencil before, but on the other hand it is clear that writing and pencil drawing had been introduced to other Inuit communities by that time. Early ethnographers, expedition members, and whalers were asking local people to make drawings already in the 1820s (Carpenter 1997; Jenness 1922). It should further be mentioned that the style of many of the drawings has considerable overlap with the Inuit artistic "etching" tradition most often encountered on various implements made from walrus tusk, dating back at least to the 12th century AD.

In the present essay, we take an initial step to revisit the NMD's unique collection of Inuit drawings from the FTE. A selection of the drawings is highlighted as a prism for discussing the artwork in its own right, contextualizing the drawings in new ways, exemplifying possible analytical approaches, and drawing attention to the contributions of the sometimes "voiceless" Inuit individuals participating in or encountered by the expedition a century ago. Through these approaches we aim to create broader awareness of the collection and its potential and to make it more accessible for future research and collaboration with Inuit source communities.

THE UNKNOWN DRAWINGS OF SAAMIK [SÂMIK]: ANGAKKUQ, HUNTER, AND ARTIST

Among the Inuit pencil works presented by Rasmussen in his monograph on the Nattilingmiut (Rasmussen 1931) there is a modest drawing of the six helping spirits (sing. *apersaq*) of an *angakkuq* (shaman). Each spirit is briefly named and explained, and the artist's name, Saamik, is mentioned (Rasmussen 1931:294). This was hitherto the only published drawing by this individual. However, Rasmussen added Saamik's name to three other drawings in the NMD collection, and at least three more "unsigned" examples can be ascribed to him through comparative analyses of style and details. Two remarkable drawings with few or no attached metadata are found among these artworks. They are complex and very expressive, but they were never mentioned, let alone published, by Rasmussen.

Rasmussen based his ethnographic work on co-creation, as we would characterize his methodology in modern terms. His written records of oral tradition were

edited on the spot in close collaboration with each informant, a painstaking method described in his ethnographic notes at the Knud Rasmussen Archive in Copenhagen (KRA) (KRA 1921–1924b, 3:54). Rasmussen does not inform us about the process behind the production and collection of drawings, but through analysis of Saamik's graphic works we argue that they were likewise co-created through a dynamic collaboration between the ethnographer and the artist. Moreover, we suggest that a biographical approach to individual artist informants adds new context and insight to interpretations of their work.

By combining over 50 pieces of information dispersed in Rasmussen's unpublished diaries and ethnographic notes in the Knud Rasmussen Archive, as well as in photos and published records, we are able to create a personal profile of Saamik as a hunter, father, storyteller, poet, artist, and *angakkuq*.

The most direct impression of Saamik is provided by the full-page portrait published as the last illustration in Rasmussen's Nattilingmiut monograph (Rasmussen 1931:525). The photo was probably taken by Rasmussen himself during his stay (August 5–12, 1923) in the summer fishing camp at Amittuq (Amitsoq) in the interior of King William Island. However, his first encounter with Saamik and his family took place May 20–25, 1923, at the snow house settlement at Kuggup Paanga (also Kuggup Paa) "on the ice outside the mouth of Murchison River" where seven families resided, in total 28 "souls": seven fathers, eight wives (Qaqurtingniq [Qaqortingneq] had two wives), 10 boys, a young man, and two girls, as well as 30 dogs (KRA 1921–1924a, Diary No. 3:153 f., 170–171; Rasmussen 1931:86–87). We learn that one of the families included "sâmik (the left-handed), his wife tieksaq (?), their sons ulikatak (the one with a cover over him), qaqortingneq (the one who has turned white) and manomatluk (the one who is stuck into something)." Saamik is briefly described as a "shaman and hunter, not a very characteristic type [of Inuit]—his wife Tiagssaq cheerful and smiling, playful" (KRA 1921–1924a, Diary No. 3:163; all diary notes translated by the authors). In later notes we are informed that Saamik is an elderly hunter who has sweet nicknames for his wife and sons (Rasmussen 1931:192), who were among the children who made the greatest impression of happiness and joy on Rasmussen (KRA 1921–1924a, Diary No. 4:78; Rasmussen 1931:62, photo p. 167). Thus, Saamik was a family father and a caring one as well, according to other notes in the diaries (e.g., KRA 1921–1924a, Diary

No. 4:63, 66). This is underlined by a photo of Saamik (Rasmussen 1931:392) as he carefully and smilingly arranges amulets on the *anuraaq* (parka) of one of his boys while resting during a sled journey (Fig. 2).

That Saamik was indeed among the best hunters was documented by Rasmussen at their subsequent meeting at the settlement of Malirualik (Malerualik) between June 14 and late July 1923. Here the Nattilingmiut met for spring caribou hunting, and families gathered before proceeding inland for summer hunting and fishing. What was probably Saamik's first drawing for Rasmussen was done on June 16, when he contributed to a joint illustration by seven men of the seals they had caught during the just-completed breathing hole hunting season (Rasmussen 1931:231). In contrast to the published drawing, the original (KRA 1921–1924b, Ethnographic Notes No. 2:87) includes several informative pencil notes. Among these, an inscription below the lowermost row of 25 ringed and bearded seals says: "Saamik's from January to June." This was the largest catch recorded by the group.

Saamik's profound knowledge of hunting technologies is demonstrated by his unpublished drawing (signed with his name by Rasmussen) of seven different traps for birds and furbearing animals. This sketch is probably also from mid-June at Malirualik (KRA 1921–1924b, Ethnographic Notes No. 3:28). Saamik must have been Rasmussen's main informant on the topic of traps, and his drawing (NMD P 34.219b/ES 106177a) could have nicely supplemented the published written descriptions (Rasmussen 1931:187–189) but was never used. His unpublished, somewhat technical

depiction of fishing for Arctic char with leisters at a weir, "Amitsume saputit" (NMD P 34.221a/ES 106180a), was most likely drawn at Rasmussen's request during August at Amittuq (Amitsoq), King William Island. Stylistically, this scene is among the strongest pieces of evidence for arguing that Saamik was the artist behind the two unrecorded, and hitherto unknown, expressive drawings that we return to below.

Saamik and his wife, Tiagssaq, were among Rasmussen's key informants on Nattilingmiut rules of life, morals, tales, myths, and legends. Important aspects of Saamik's personality appear through analysis of his contributions to Rasmussen's written ethnography, but here we limit ourselves to concluding that Saamik, behind his joyful appearance, had a serious mind. His descriptions of hunger are famous even today and among the most touching parts of the entire Nattilingmiut ethnography (Rasmussen 1931:135–139, 144). Moreover, Saamik's stories and animal fables contain moral guidelines for structuring social life (e.g., on incompetent hunters and warnings to obstinate women) but most have a humorous touch (e.g., Rasmussen 1931:196, 397–399, 416–417). This material shows Saamik as a compelling storyteller, and we can add poet and performer to his personal qualifications, noting the happy song he composed and sang about women, renowned hunting sites, and the genuine joy of hunting fat seals (Rasmussen 1931:334).

Finally, the myths that Saamik told, and in particular a dramatic spiritual episode during his autumn stay at Malirualik (KRA 1921–1924a, Diary No. 4:96; Rasmussen

1931:81), reveal that he was an important *angakkuq*, even if he himself claimed that "I am nothing compared with my grandfather Titqatsaq" (cf. "The two great shamans who met in the air" in Rasmussen 1931:299–300). Saamik's role as an *angakkuq* is expressed in the published drawing of his helping spirits, mentioned above (NMD P 34.220a/ES 106178a). Importantly, he made another version of this sketch, somewhat more elaborate and with an additional spirit (NMD P 34.220b/ES 106179a), but this drawing was never published.

Through the information discussed above, we may form an idea of Saamik's character—his complex and



Figure 2. Saamik [Sâmik] sorting out the amulets of his son, Tertaq (NMD 5_thuleb_0835e). Photo by Knud Rasmussen. National Museum of Denmark.

expressive personality, his deep knowledge of his culture, his exceptional abilities as a hunter, and his prominence as a spiritual practitioner. These understandings inform our interpretation of two of the most elaborate and expressive artworks in the FTE collection, which we attribute to his hand. The two unsigned, whole-page drawings are shown here as Figure 3 (NMD P 34.243a/ES 106219a) and Figure 4 (NMD ES 106224a). It is possible to ascribe them both to Saamik through the analysis of several key features:

1. The depiction of the Arctic char harvest at Amittuq on the signed drawing discussed above (NMD ES 106180a) is almost identical to Quadrant 2 of the second unsigned drawing (Fig. 4).
2. The characteristic protruding “hooked arms” and square hoods depicted in Saamik’s two drawings of his helping spirits, discussed above (NMD ES 106178a and NMD ES 106179a), are similar to the profiles of the persons (filled in with dark gray pencil) shown in both unsigned drawings (Figs. 3 and 4);
3. There are similarities between the depictions of the ringed and bearded seals on the signed drawing by Saamik of his hunting bag (KRA 1921–1924b,

Ethnographic Notes No. 2:89) and the seals shown in the two unsigned drawings (Figs. 3 and 4).

To consider these works more fully, the first full-page drawing (Fig. 3), made on blue-lined graph paper, is divided into four quadrants by folds. We believe it was done by Saamik either in June 1923 at Malirualik or in August 1923 at Amittuq. Quadrant 2 is the most obvious result of co-creation, probably a mutual teaching process between Rasmussen and Saamik. We interpret the progress of the session as follows. Rasmussen begins by making Saamik comfortable with the unfamiliar medium by drawing his own characteristic profile, then the face of a woman, also in profile, on one side of the folded paper (Quadrant 2). He then pushes the paper over to Saamik, who is facing him. Rasmussen’s two portrait sketches are upside down in relation to the Inuit artist, who makes a few trial sketches of his own beside Rasmussen’s drawings, right side up from his perspective. Then, probably on request, Saamik illustrates what we interpret as his closest social group—the men, women, and children whom Rasmussen enumerated at the snow house village of Kuggup Paanga. A line of 11 male persons is shown in profile, all walking in the same



Figure 3. Drawing by Saamik [Sâmik] (NMD P 34.243a/ES 106219a). National Museum of Denmark.



Figure 4. Drawing by Saamik [Sâmik] (NMD ES 106224a). National Museum of Denmark.

direction, each with an extended, hooked arm. The largest male figure (the third from the right) could be a leader or prominent person, perhaps Saamik himself. Saamik then proceeds to fill in this quadrant with depictions of what we interpret as his wife and sons and other group members or visitors, probably from one of the Iglulingmiut subgroups, as two of the women wear *kamiks* with stripes and “sack-shaped” extensions (Mathiassen 1928:172f). In total, 20 male and three female persons are depicted in Quadrant 2. A seal, a dog, and a spirit-like being are added, and thus we are introduced to Saamik’s world.

The topic of the interview session now changes. Rasmussen probably asks about bird names and fowling (Rasmussen 1931:187, 329), and Saamik draws the motifs of Quadrant 1: two men in characteristic Nattilik kayaks with long pointed bows and short protruding sterns, and their summer prey, no less than 38 birds, primarily geese with goslings but including loons and ravens with chicks. He adds a dog, a child seen from behind, sketches of a man and a woman, and a skeleton-like motif, perhaps a spirit.

This leads us to Quadrants 3 and 4, where Saamik’s approach completely changes. He draws as if he were possessed, not respecting the folded “borderline” between the quadrants. We suggest, admittedly in a speculative mode, that the *angakkuq* in him takes over at this point. Two or three overlapping sequences of free and probably rapid scribbles, some forming outlines comparable to Saamik’s helping spirits (depicted in drawing NMD P 34.220a/ES 106178a, referenced above) cover a layer of more substantial, filled figures. The most striking of these is a large being with bristling hair, seen en face in Quadrant 3. This figure is surrounded by the outline of a helping spirit, a person (perhaps the *angakkuq*), a large seal, and a goose-like bird. It appears that the *angakkuq* Saamik now narrates through the pencil about his experiences on the strenuous and dangerous journey to the sea spirit, Nuliajuk—the mother of the sea animals (Rasmussen 1931:225–229)—where he combs her lice-infested, felted hair to bring back the game to the world of humans. According to this interpretation, the drawing may represent one of the rare Inuit depictions of this fundamental myth.

The narrative in Quadrant 4 is uncertain. It overlaps with Quadrant 3 and seems to show a troll-like figure and spirits inside and below linear and looping lines, along with large, prominent hunters in profile and a woman seen from the front. Perhaps the scene reflects other ventures into the spiritual world. Strangely enough, Rasmussen chose not to describe or publish this folded drawing, and we cannot know his reaction to Saamik's strong expressions of encounters with spiritual forces by "letting the pencil loose" on the paper.

The second drawing (Fig. 4) was done on the same type of paper, also divided into four quadrants by folding, but here Saamik's pencil work respects the divisions. The main themes of Quadrants 1, 2, and 4 in Figure 4 seem to be closely connected with Quadrant 2 of Figure 3; in each there is a line of 10 or 11 persons seen in profile (all rows including one woman) along one of the long sides of the drawing space. The proportion of male and female figures and the total number of persons in each quadrant also show a certain homogeneity: Quadrant 1 has 23 men/boys and two women (25 total), Quadrant 2 has 24 men/boys and two women (26 total), and Quadrant 4 has 21 men/boys and three women (24 total). We see similar numbers of individuals in Quadrant 3, although the arrangement is less linear: 19 men/boys, two women, and one hybrid depiction (22 total). Thus, the number of males varies from 19 to 24 and women from 2 to 3.

This is quite close to the number of human figures in Quadrant 2 of Figure 3, and it is reasonable to suggest that Saamik again depicted his social group from Kuggup Paanga—his fellow hunters, his wife, his children, and a few significant other women—in several different seasonal situations. The birds shown in two quadrants and the scene with char fishing at the weir at Amittuq in Quadrant 2 of Figure 4 suggest that these events took place from early spring into the summer. This determination of season is not contradicted by the large and small seals (probably bearded and ringed seals, respectively) and caribou that appear in each quadrant. The kayak in Quadrant 1 represents a summer activity, whereas the breathing hole sealing (or ice fishing) scene in Quadrant 3, and perhaps the scene with the man and woman with dogs on leashes in Quadrant 4, could fit into spring activities (May and June) on the sea ice.

At first sight, Saamik's preference for depicting persons in profile with their hook-like arms gives an impression of uniformity. However, a closer look reveals that each profile probably represents a specific man, woman,

or child in the social group. The frame of this essay does not provide space for a thorough analysis, but we draw attention to the observation (parallel to that made for the Figure 3 drawing) that several men and women may be affiliated with an external group, the Iglulingmiut, as shown by the design of their outfits. Also of interest is that the human figures, as mentioned above, are not uniformly depicted. In each quadrant there is at least one man and/or woman who is of considerably greater stature than others, and some wear more elaborate garments. This convention may indicate individuals who were of greater importance in Saamik's mind than others.

DRAWINGS OF HELPING SPIRITS AS A WINDOW INTO THE SPIRITUAL WORLD OF THE NATTILINGMIUT

The drawings suggest the potential for a gallery of biographies such as Saamik's, through a "follow the person" method of cross-referencing the drawings with expedition photographs, diaries, notes, and the published reports and books. One may similarly trace a given theme through the drawing collection across various artists, writers, time periods, and geographies, for example, the helping spirits of the *angakkut*. Other than Saamik's drawings, depictions of helping spirits were made by two women, Simigaq (Simigéq) and Arnanggusaq (Arnángussaq), and three men, Niaqunuaq (Pujaraq), Unaleq (Inerneq/Inernerunashuaq), and "the spirit drawer," the outstanding artist Anarqaaq (Anakaok/Anarqaoq). Except for Niaqunuaq, one finds a photograph or two of each in the collections (Figs. 5 and 6), and their drawings of helping spirits are published in the expedition reports.

A comparative look through the collection of drawings makes it clear that as a rule no one drew self-conceived motifs. In his insistent quest to understand the spiritual world of the Inuit, Rasmussen urged each of these angakkut to draw their helping spirits. One by one they evoked and designed visual representations of their personal spirits in these co-productive drawing and talking situations. Along the way Rasmussen numbered each spirit, noted its Inuktitut name on the drawing, and then wrote longer entries about it in Inuktitut and/or Danish in his books of ethnographic notes. In the expedition reports, these names are edited out of the original drawings, the notes translated, and the information condensed into image captions.



Figure 5. Anarqaaq [Anarqâq] (NMD ES no. unknown). National Museum of Denmark.

Digressions from this procedure and genre only happened when Saamik let his pencil loose and drew Nuliajuk, the sea spirit,² and then repeatedly in Anarqaaq's expressive solitary drawings of spirits. When creating these, Anarqaaq would meditate for a long time, and then with a firm and clear line draw a creature, always of immense expressiveness, and only afterward relate its story to Rasmussen, probably receiving a gift in return.³ This was a radical break from the steering that Rasmussen did in drawing sessions with other *angakkuq*. Anarqaaq's drawings have been published in the expedition reports, republished repeatedly, and attracted wide attention (e.g., Laugrand and Oosten 2015). Only two out of the total of 16 have, to the best of our knowledge, been left out of international attention,⁴ and both are published here for the first time, albeit one of them only as a section of the full drawing.

Through the drawing sessions, the *angakkuq* offered Rasmussen glimpses into their visual perceptions of the powers that ruled their world. Neither intelligence nor great skill or physical strength defined the *angakkuq*. Rather, a person would become an *angakkuq* by mastering the agencies of her or his personal helping spirits, who would then act on the shaman's command to bring the world back in order when famine or illness swept through worlds of the living. Taming and appropriating spirits to become one's own was therefore a crucial part of the process of becoming an *angakkuq*. As he or she roamed around in deserted landscapes, a spirit in the shape of an animal or a human, or of a creature at any stage between these two categories, would appear to the prospect. Life and death would be at stake, and on at least two occasions an evil spirit had materialized before Anarqaaq and frightened him to the extent that he forgot to secure it as his helping spirit and simply

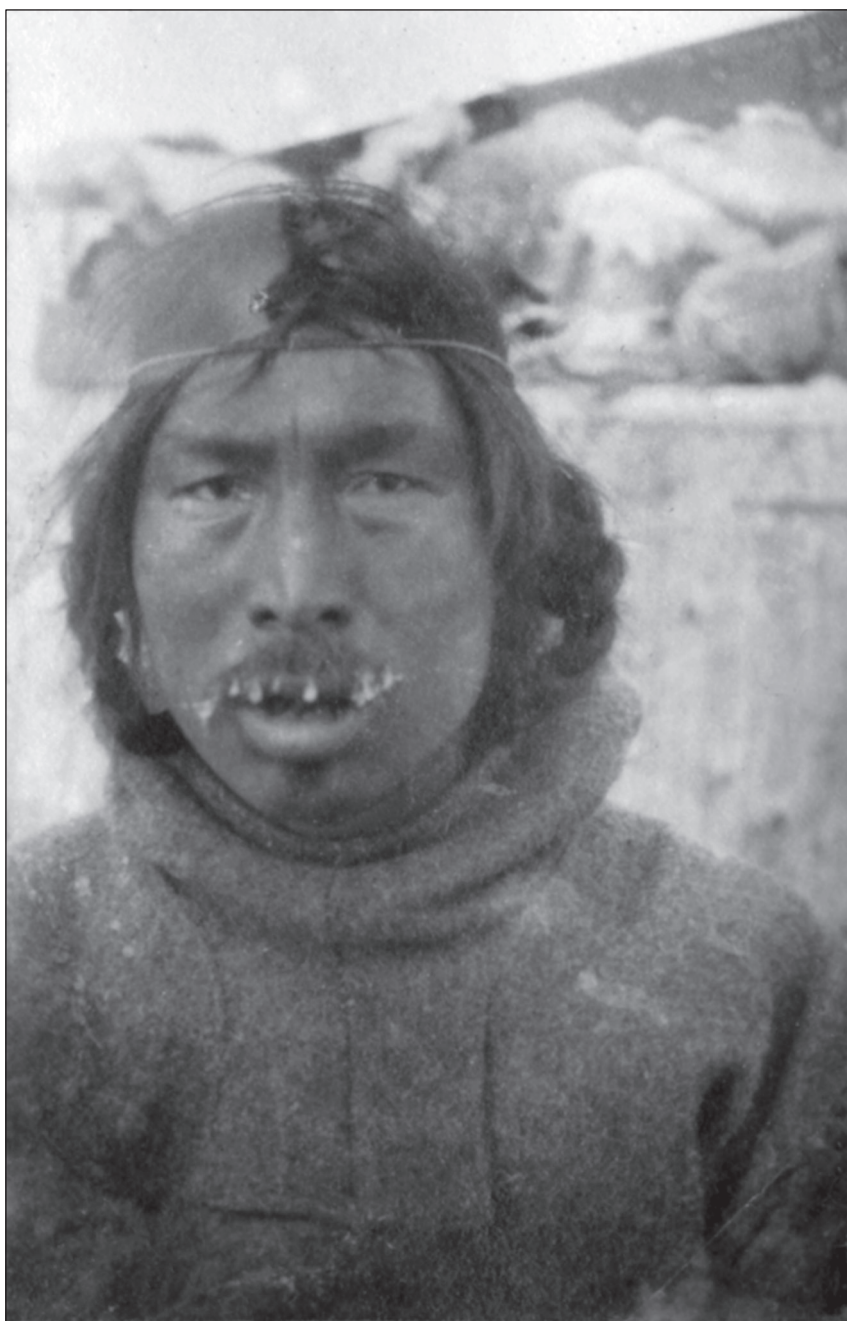


Figure 6. Unaleq [Inerneq/Inernerunashuaq] (NMD 5_thuleb_0814a). Photo by Therkel Mathiassen. National Museum of Denmark.

took flight from it. Two drawings portray these unfortunate encounters (Rasmussen 1929:176, 192). Anarqaaq probably had better luck with taming two helping spirits that he drew enclosed within a circle (Fig. 7), published here for the first time. The circle motif might lead one to reflect on whether these are water creatures, on a par with the encircled sea spirit (Rasmussen 1929:145) deep in the ocean; yet on the basis of another of Anarqaaq's drawing of spirits inside a circle (Rasmussen 1929:177), this is not

so obvious to deduce. The unpublished notes offer no clue as to what creatures are depicted in Figure 7, and this may explain why this little drawing of just about 11 x 11 cm never found its way into the reports.

Anarqaaq falling short of courage to confront the evil-looking spirits underlines the point that becoming an *angakkuq* is determined by such encounters, and not by a person's everyday practices, skills, or strengths. Anarqaaq was part of a group that lived for long periods at Blæsebælgen (the FTE headquarters on Danish Island near Repulse Bay) and hunted, worked for, or traveled with the expedition. Intermittently, the family of a third *angakkuq*, Unaleq, dwelled there too. The Blæsebælgen station diary⁵ records that he and his family were always hungry and poorly clad, and soon became a burden to the expedition. Rasmussen described Unaleq as "the most credulous man" and "one of the poorest and most helpless wastrels in the district" (Rasmussen 1929:42), yet speculated that his very ignorance and incapability in the physical world were the reason that the spirits were drawn to him. And while Unaleq's shamanic performances were poorly and obviously staged using seal blood and improvised languages, Rasmussen could see that his group unanimously trusted him and believed in his spiritual powers. Unaleq's helping spirits included two deceased Chipewyan Indians; a mighty bear with fangs called Nanoq Tuloarialik, who obeyed him totally; and

one woman from the Tuniiit people who inhabited these Arctic areas long before the Inuit arrived. In the ordinary, or even the poorest figure, a great *angakkuq* may dwell.

Engaging local experts to create maps was crucial for the numerous separate sled journeys that together made up the totality of the FTE. Furthermore, co-creating maps enabled the progress of scientific and geographical knowledge, and these maps served as models for the final cartography. Figure 8 (NMD P34.137a/ES 106084a)



Figure 7. Two of Arnaaqaq's helping spirits? The note reads "Drawing by Arnarkaok" (NMD ES 106083a). National Museum of Denmark.

shows the upper half of a large map of 43 x 35 cm that exemplifies this practice, from the hand of Anarqaaq. The complete map covers twice the land area shown here, but the region it represents has not been determined.

In the top part of the map, Anarqaaq drew creatures in the shapes of humans, animals, and spirits, and it is possible that we have here the first spirit sketches that he ever made. The style of drawing is much looser than in his other works, and a half-drawn head and some scratching out suggest that this was an early experiment in how to render subjects realistically. We speculate that when Rasmussen sat down with Anarqaaq to draw the map, they talked about the cliffs and slopes, the plains, the paths, and the coastline. At one point they recalled a certain day when sledding⁶ through the landscape that one of them fell off his sled, passed out, and was awakened by a dog licking his face. It seems that Anarqaaq then told Rasmussen about another journey through these lands when he encountered two spirits and tried to turn them into his helpers. The biggest one had long, wild hair and something on his nose, and he lifted his arm as if to throw something. On the drawing we see



Figure 8. A section of a map drawn by Arnaaqaq, with the following original note "Map-sketch of the land by... legssuak" (NMD P34.137a/ES 106084). National Museum of Denmark.

a slightly smaller female figure behind this being, with three legs, her parka hood pulled up, and making the same gesture with her arm as the larger spirit. Anarqaaq has depicted himself facing them, in a manner similar to his self-portrait in another drawing (NMD ES 106068a; Rasmussen 1929:192). Anarqaaq inscribed these two helping spirits into this specific landscape, as any *angakkuq* would always know the exact location of any such encounter. It is, however, the only drawing of its kind in the entire collection, a preparatory work that was never published yet fortunately never thrown away.

ARNARULUNNGUAQ AND THE TATTOO DRAWINGS: NULIAJUK AND THE WAY TO THE WORLDS OF THE DEAD

This is all we know of Nuliajuk, the sea spirit, who gives seals to mankind, it is true, but who would much rather that mankind, from whom she once received no pity when she lived on earth, perished too. (related to Knud Rasmussen by Naalungiaq [Nálungiaq], Rasmussen 1931:225–227)

One of the key participants in the expedition was Arnarulunnguaq (Fig. 9), who like her cousin Qaavigarsuaq Miteq seems to have been a constant powerhouse, taking on not only her very extensive “woman’s duties” but also housebuilding, hunting, and driving the dogsleds.



Figure 9. Arnarulunnguaq and Arnanguaq (NMD 5_thuleb_0156a). National Museum of Denmark.

She was judged even by the standards of the 1920s to be very humble, and by present-day thinking she seems remarkably uninterested in any sort of glory. We only hear of her through the praising voice of Rasmussen; we never hear her own voice. In an interview for the weekly journal *Tidens Kvinder* in 1925, Rasmussen related the following comment from Arnarulunnguaq when she received the royal medal of honor following the expedition: “I was only on this expedition as a woman and have only walked in the tracks of men. The ones that broke the trail, and not those who just followed, should be honored [translation by the authors].”⁷

The almost complete silence of Arnarulunnguaq means that we have very limited information as to the full extent of the multifaceted role she must have played throughout the expedition. One faint echo does reach us, however, through her drawings. Six of the drawings portraying tattooed women can be directly attributed to Arnarulunnguaq, and another three (out of a total of 15 drawings on this theme⁸) were very likely from her hand.

Her incentive and inspiration to do these drawings probably came from seeing sketches of tattoos done by Kaj Birket-Smith, the ethnographer of the expedition. In the early days of the FTE, the two would have been together in Blæsebælgen, and she accompanied him on the first journey inland to the west of Hudson Bay. Two of the “new” drawings we here attribute to Arnarulunnguaq

seem to show her own development in the style of depiction, which includes the “unfolding” of tattoo patterns to let us see their full extent on the shoulders and around the elbow (Figs. 10 and 11).

Tattooing in the eastern Arctic seems to have been an exclusively female domain, done by women on other women. Arnarulunnguaq appears to have had particular access to some of the Inuit women she encountered during the FTE and to have gained their confidence. Her drawings not only include depictions of facial tattoos and those on the arms but—unlike Birket-Smith’s drawings—also show tattoos on the thighs.

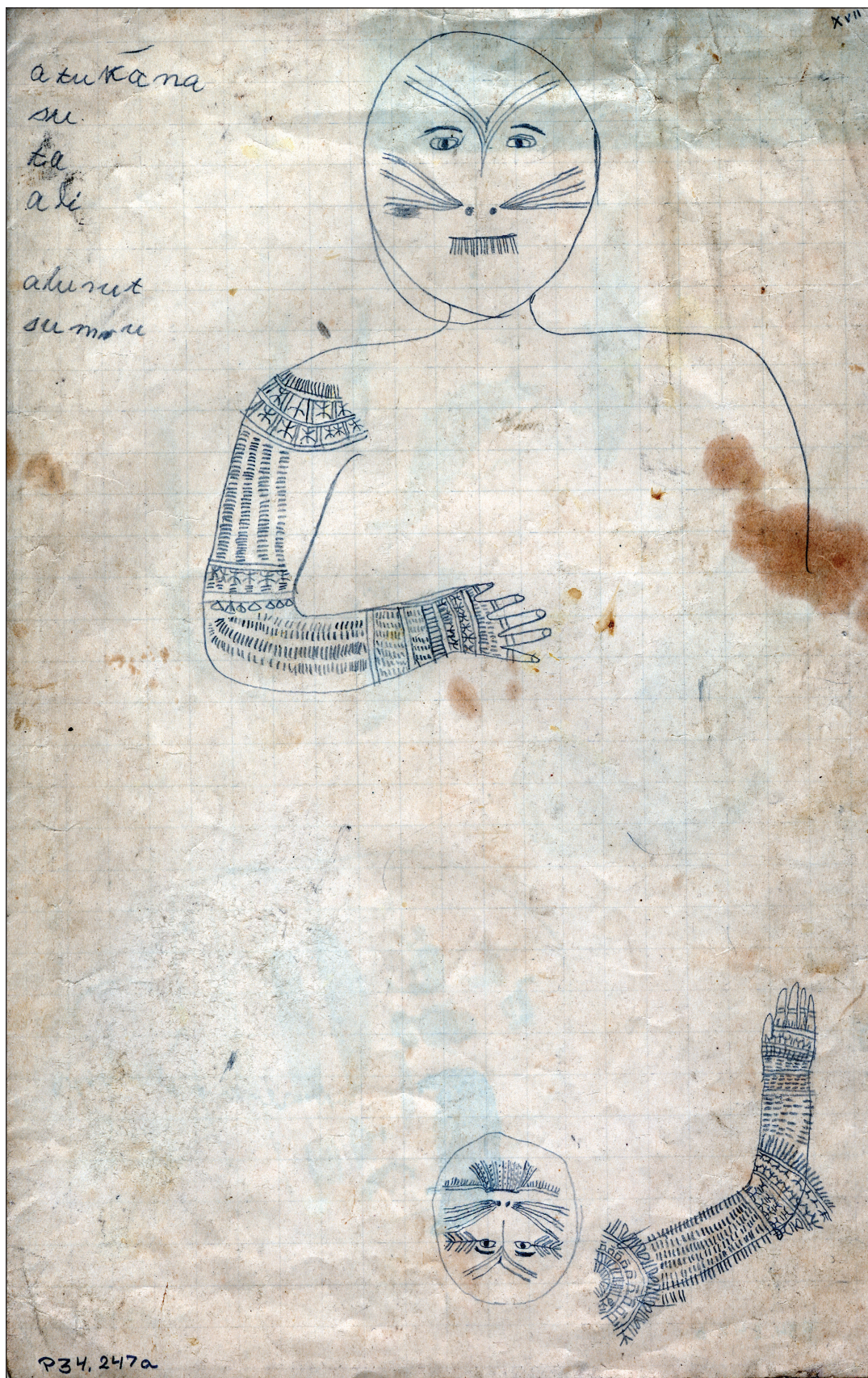


Figure 10. Two unnamed tattooed women. The drawing may have been done by Arnarulunnguaq (NMD P34.247a/ES 106225). National Museum of Denmark.



Figure 11. An unnamed tattooed woman. The drawing may have been done by Arnarunnguaq, while the muskoxen were probably drawn by Kaj Birket-Smith. (NMD P34.247d/ ES 106228a). National Museum of Denmark.

Most, if not all, of Arnarulunnguaq's drawings were probably done between May and November 1923. The notes on the drawings name only two of the women she portrayed, Naalungiaq and Manilaq. We know very little of Manilaq, except that when Rasmussen and Arnarulunnguaq met her at the Malirualik site on King William Island, she was about 60 years old, had given birth to 12 children (of which seven girls had been killed immediately after they were born), and that she related a number of important myths to Rasmussen.

The echo of Naalungiaq (Fig. 12) is somewhat louder. We know that when Rasmussen and Arnarulunnguaq met her and her husband, Inugtuk, in May 1923, they were living with her two young boys from her former husband, whom Inugtuk had killed. According to Rasmussen's story, it was a family in harmony, even though the two boys would one day have to revenge their biological father and kill Inugtuk. We also know that she had an older daughter, Quertilik (Quertilik), who in October and November 1923 was living at the Malirualik site, and whom Naalungiaq and her family met there after traveling with Rasmussen and Arnarulunnguaq for about half a year. The oldest of Naalungiaq's sons, Hallariina (Hadlareena/Hatlaqé/Satlaqé), was interviewed in 1973 in Taloyoak (Spence Bay) and remembered the travels well.⁹

In several places Rasmussen highlights Inugtuk as an excellent traveling companion and one of the finest hunters he had met during the expedition. In contrast, Rasmussen's only mention of Naalungiaq's qualities was when he wrote about an evening near the end of their travels together when she decided to convey her knowledge about the major forces governing the world. Naalungiaq began the story by stressing that she possessed no spiritual abilities of her own but would only relate what she had learned from others. Her knowledge, however, seems to have been both considerable and coherent. Her humility also contrasts with the way Rasmussen portrayed her, namely as eloquent, with words flowing easily and naturally about the great mysteries of life. One of the stories she told was about how the orphan became Nulijuk: the Mother of the Sea and the Ruler of the Prey of the Land.

The sources do not reveal anything about the relationship between Naalungiaq and Arnarulunnguaq. We only know that the two women spent several months together, and that at some point Arnarulunnguaq had the opportunity to draw an image of Naalungiaq's tattoos.



Figure 12. Naalungiaq [Nálungiaq] (NMD 5_thuleb_0789b). Photo by Knud Rasmussen. National Museum of Denmark.

In most of Arnarulunnguaq's drawings, two sets of double lines are shown tattooed horizontally across each of the fingers of both hands. While we have no direct contemporary information about the meaning of the various tattoo designs, it seems likely that the lines symbolize the origin myth of Nulijuk, whose fingers were chopped off and became the various prey animals of the sea, and which she controlled. One drawing by Pakak, probably redrawn by Birket-Smith, was published by Rasmussen with the following caption:

Great significance was attached to tattooing, especially in former days; for the woman who had handsome tattooing always got on well with Nulijuk when, after life on earth, she passed her house on the way to the land of the dead. (Rasmussen 1929:148)

The quote points to a direct connection between Nuliajuk and tattooing. In other captions (e.g., Rasmussen 1931:313) and in the notes on one of the drawings, we learn that beautifully tattooed women after death will live in either the “Land of the Blessed” or the “Land of Eternal Homecoming” (Angerlartarvik [Angerdlartarfik]), and thus avoid ending up in the “Land of the Crestfallen” (Nuqummiut [Noqúmiut]). From the above quote it seems that Nuliajuk played a significant role in deciding a woman’s fate, and that the Mother of the Sea could be appeased by handsome tattoos. In this we discern a possible reason for Arnarulunnguaq’s special interest in tattoos, but we can only wonder what she might have learned from the women whose tattoos she drew about the meanings of their particular designs.

In contrast to tattoos, which were the domain of women, amulets belonged nearly entirely to men. Women would only wear amulets on behalf of their sons, and they seem to have served as a way to “borrow” powers from various other-than-human beings to protect against malignant spirits. If we accept this interpretation, it could explain why women did not need their own protective amulets: they already had them permanently ingrained in their skin.

There may have been multiple, different, or overlapping meanings attributed to tattoos by the women whom Arnarulunnguaq and Rasmussen met during the course of the FTE. We will, however, continue along our one line of speculation by suggesting that among Central Arctic Inuit groups, the tattoos not only served as spiritual protection in a threatening world (much like men’s amulets) but also played a very significant role in ensuring a strong and positive relationship with the most important being in their universe—Nuliajuk, the mistress of the animals in the sea and on the land.

With increasing frequency, Inuit tattooing practices are being rediscovered, reinterpreted, and reshaped to fit both personal and societal needs. A number of women, mostly nonacademically trained northern scholars, are now unfolding new perspectives on tattoos, based on a combination of the old ethnographical sources, conversations with knowledgeable elders who remember their meanings, and personal experiences. Their work also seems promising for gaining deeper scientific insights into the life-worlds of Inuit communities then and now. Thus, Arnarulunnguaq’s drawings have gained new relevance and meaning for northern communities, bridging northern women across 100 years.

EPILOGUE

This essay hints at the potential for new “readings” of the unique Inuit drawings produced during three years in the early 1920s, at a time when the voices of many Arctic communities were only heard through modulations tuned by outsiders. Obviously, the drawings cannot stand alone as we attempt to paint a fuller picture of the life-worlds of the individuals and the communities visited by the FTE. It is very fortunate, however, that the fieldwork that Rasmussen and other members of the FTE carried out was so productive that it has provided information and inspiration for anthropology throughout a century. The lives and travels of the expedition were dependent on the goodwill its personnel encountered among Inuit communities, and this dependency made it inescapable that they meet people at eye level and, at least to some extent, continuously evaluate and revise preconceived ideas about Inuit cultures across Canada and Alaska. The grandest notion of the FTE—that the Inuit are one people from Greenland to the Bering Strait—was upheld by the archaeological, ethnographical, and linguistic data gathered by the expedition. However, the most impressive quality of the expedition’s scientific and popular writings may be the amazing diversity they reveal. This diversity makes it possible for us, and others, to question and reconfigure how observations made by members of the expedition can be interpreted and categorized.

We have provided a few examples of biographical and thematic readings of the FTE material but have touched only briefly on the amazing possibilities that await others who invest in correlating and connecting the drawings, photographs, diaries, field notes, ethnographical and archaeological artifacts, and vast body of published materials, which together comprise a rich record of travel, interpersonal encounters, and scientific investigation in the Inuit world of a century ago.

For some time, northern administrations, institutions, communities, and individuals have been reaching out to museums and offering their collaboration. A number of these initiatives have very substantially enriched understandings of both northern and southern communities and their connectedness. Some of the most productive initiatives take their starting point in creating what one could call “an overlapping horizon,” which permits integrity of the participating parties and the inclusion of diverse genres of insights. Even if the differences between the FTE and some of the present-day

collaborative efforts are striking, there is nonetheless a strong co-creative element in both. We not only consider the FTE as a joint Danish-Greenlandic expedition but also as a co-creation with the individuals and communities they encountered on the way “from Greenland to the Pacific Ocean.”

NOTES

1. The drawings from the FTE related to the Canadian Arctic are recorded as P34.122–P34.298 in the archives of the Modern History and World Cultures Department of the National Museum of Denmark. The drawings included in the series P34.1–P34.121 include some 130 depictions from Alaska, of which 119 specifically refer to Nunivak Island. Sixty-two of these can be attributed to six named artists from Nunivak Island. Four of the Alaskan drawings portray a “Wolf Dance” performed by Ukiuvangmiut (King Islanders) in Nome, in August 1924. The majority of the Alaskan drawings are published in Sonne (1988; see also *this issue*).
2. Nuliajuk has several names across the Arctic, and in the expedition’s reports she is also referred to as “Takánáluk arnáluk” and “Takánakapsáluk” (Takannaaluk arnaaluk and Takannakapsaaluk, in modern Canadian Inuktitut).
3. According to Vorano (2014:89), Anarqaaq was initially reluctant, yet “soon gave way after they negotiated a payment and terms were deemed equitable to both parties.”
4. Anaarqaaq’s landscape drawing was published in Jørgensen (1993).
5. Knud Rasmussen Archive (KRA) 1105/39–11.
6. The sled type with back supports was unknown in Canada yet typical in the Thule area, and therefore also used by the expedition.
7. *Hvem var Arnarulunnguaq?* (Who Was Arnarulunnguaq?), <http://makko.dk/greenland/hvem-var-arnarulunnguaq/>.
8. The “tattoo-drawings” have the following National Museum of Denmark (NMD) inventory numbers: P34.173a, P34.222a+b, P34.223a+b, P34.224a, P34.226c, P34.233a+b, P34.245a+b, P34.247a+d.
9. The interview was done by graphic designer Louis Mackay and interpreter Theresa Qauqjuaq in Taloyoak (Spence Bay) in January 1973. The interview is on file at Inuit Heritage Trust (Yellowknife) and at the National Museum of Denmark (NMD 21/00818).

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