

THE FIFTH THULE EXPEDITION AND THE INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes a critical look into the Fifth Thule Expedition and the lack of general representation and recognition of its Inuit participants. Historically, little attention has been paid to the degree to which Indigenous participants played a role in non-Arctic peoples' (e.g., Europeans, North Americans, and Russians) quest to explore the Arctic. Outsiders have for centuries been attracted to explore and colonize the Arctic regions. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ethnographic subjects and fieldwork expanded as a result of progressing colonial encounters. Among them, the Fifth Thule Expedition (1921–1924) played a significant role in the interpretation and description of the Arctic and the Indigenous peoples who call it home. The Fifth Thule Expedition's Inuit participants from Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), particularly the Inughuit from Avanersuaq (Northwest Greenland), played a crucial role in carrying out vital tasks for the expedition. However, the role and importance of these participants have rarely been a focus of discussion, and only scant recognition has been paid to their contributions. This paper places Inuit participants as central actors in the success of the Fifth Thule Expedition and explores the entangled colonial aspects of scientific expeditions to the Arctic.

INTRODUCTION

Inuit groups (including Inupiat and Inuvialuit) have occupied the North American Arctic since their ancestors arrived from Alaska around AD 1200 as part of the initial Inuit (also known as “Thule”) migration (Friesen 2016). Across time and space, the Arctic has been a place where long-distance trade has taken place among different pre-Inuit and Inuit groups, and later became a locus of interaction with European, Euroamerican, and Russian exploration and colonization (Bravo 2016; Gulløv 2016; Harbsmeier 2016; Hastrup et al. 2018a; Kleist and Walls 2019). Inuit knowledge derives from intimate familiarity with the changing conditions of the Arctic landscape, including seasonal ice and climatic changes (e.g., Aporta 2016). For outsiders, the Arctic environment was unfamiliar and harsh, and they were not accustomed to surviving

in these habitats. As a result, explorers coming from far away needed guidance and help from the Inuit to ensure the success of their expeditions. Inuit provided these expeditions with valuable skills and knowledge of the land, sea, and ice environments.

However, despite their central role, Inuit have rarely been acknowledged in scientific literature or public accounts of the time. This seems largely because the history and practice of Arctic exploration and research has been written mainly by Euroamericans following Western standards; they were products of their time and contextualized the history of exploration and colonization based on the assumption of Western superiority, choosing what was important enough to disseminate. The purpose of this paper is not to diminish the honor and merit of Western

explorers, anthropologists, and others who contributed valuable ideas, resources, and logistical support for polar explorations. Despite the imperialistic and sometimes dubious colonial aspects of many expeditions, the knowledge and data gathered were truly impressive and deserve praise, and praise they have received, in abundance.

My purpose here is to shine light on some forgotten pieces of those stories that have been erased by centering Western ideas. Importantly, successful expeditions could not have been accomplished without the help of Inuit, who had lived in these regions for millennia. The assessments and decisions Inuit made every day enabled the expeditions to survive and succeed, and without their contributions we would not have “our” current scientific and geographic knowledge of the Arctic.

With increasing colonial encounters from the late nineteenth century onward, ethnographic fieldwork in the Arctic began to flourish. The Fifth Thule Expedition (FTE) initiated by the Danish Kalaaleq (Greenlandic) explorer Knud Rasmussen brought a more systematic, scientific approach to Arctic studies (Harbsmeier 2016; Meldgaard and Gulløv 2002). Its scientific objective was to seek the origins of contemporary Inuit culture based on the “ancient Inuit” way of life (Appelt et al. 2018:63; Krupnik 2016:7; Rasmussen 1921b).

The FTE is one of the best-known and most successful scientific expeditions ever made in the North American Arctic, and it collected an immense amount of scientific data (Hastrup 2016:118). The expedition was conceived and led by Knud Rasmussen, and its crew included Danish scientific scholars, writers/journalists, photographers (see Michelsen, *this issue*), and, not least, Kalaallit participants from Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), Inughuit (Polar Inuit) from Avanersuaq, Northwest Greenland (Gilberg 1984:593; Nyeboe 1924), and an Inuk from Kitaa, West Greenland. To acknowledge different histories and the right to self-identify, I use the appropriate regional names throughout this paper.

Knud Rasmussen is often viewed by Danes as basically Danish but with Inuk ancestry through his part-Kalaaleq maternal grandmother. I have no doubt that Rasmussen’s family in Kalaallit Nunaat considers him as a Kalaaleq. Inuit, like most Indigenous peoples (see TallBear 2013), do not categorize a person by blood or biological descent (see also Palmater 2011), leaving people to decide for themselves to determine their belonging, while giving communities the right to accept or reject those self-designations. While the life histories of the

Danish expedition members—Kaj Birket-Smith, Therkel Mathiassen, Peter Freuchen, Helge Bangsted, and, of course, Rasmussen himself—are well-known, we have little information about the roles and deeds of several *other* participants, particularly the Inughuit. The questions remain: How much do we know about the Kalaallit contribution from the expedition literature, and what other information do we have about them?

This paper relies on the existing literature about the FTE and archival documents (such as correspondence, notes, and other materials written by expedition members and FTE committee members) to establish what we know of the Kalaallit participants, particularly the Inughuit. These records reveal how little the Indigenous roles have been acknowledged in the existing narratives of the expedition. I argue for moving beyond the popular understanding of Arctic exploration, which tends to emphasize European and Euroamerican achievements and to center Western voices and findings. The history of Inuit participation can, and should, be more fully presented and contextualized.

SCIENCE AND COLONIAL NATIONALISM

As is commonly recognized today, the history and practice of scientific expeditions is closely entangled with colonialism (Bravo 2016:237; Harbsmeier 2016). During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Western nations competed in the exploration and colonization of the Arctic. As part of these imperialistic, economic, and global colonial efforts, they assumed control over Inuit homelands and histories. These activities were closely associated with the awakening of nationalism, and their achievements were typically used to develop and justify national identity and to represent and promote their power and assumed superiority.

From the start, ethnographical, anthropological, and archaeological investigations became wrapped up in Western competition for land claims and exploitation of natural resources (Grønnow 2010). These investigations were situated within the framework of the “Doctrine of Discovery” that advocated for the racial superiority of European Christian nations and the dehumanization and exploitation of Indigenous people as a legal and moral justification for colonial dispossession of land and the repudiation of Indigenous rights (UN General Assembly 2007). In Rasmussen’s time, nationalist colonial endeavors flourished in Kalaallit Nunaat (then “Danish

Greenland”). The absence of full geographical knowledge and precise maps made it difficult for Denmark to claim the entire region of Kalaallit Nunaat as Danish. As a result, geological and topographic investigations were undertaken, and archaeology became an important element in the race for scientific data (Grønnow 2010:123) and colonial expansion. These investigations sometimes took a dramatic turn. For instance, Kalaallit Nunaata Tunuata Avannaarsua (Northeast Greenland) experienced intense competitive scientific activity during the early twentieth century due to a geopolitical dispute between Norway and Denmark (Grønnow 2010:122; Sørensen 2007:53–54; Thuesen 2016:245).

Scientific research became increasingly important when Norwegian hunters began settling in Kalaallit Nunaata Tunuata Avannaarsua in the early 1930s. The conflict was finally resolved by a ruling in the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague in 1933 that gave Denmark sovereignty over the entire island (Grønnow 2010:122; Sørensen 2007:53–54). This case is one among several similar examples of the Western imperial race to colonize the Arctic regions. Like other scientific explorations of the time, the FTE must be seen as a product of its era.

THE FIFTH THULE EXPEDITION AND ITS PARTICIPANTS

Early studies of Inuit cultures were historically dominated by the quest to make first contact with “new” or “untouched” people and cultures (Hastrup 2010, 2016; Thisted 2010, 2016). The idea of being the first to “discover” an unknown or new group of people became a self-conscious personal challenge for Rasmussen long before he undertook the FTE (Rasmussen 1905:4; see Michelsen, *this issue*). Rasmussen repeatedly described the Inughuit of Avanersuaq, whom he called “Polar Eskimos,” as a “newly discovered people” (Gilberg 1971:7; Hastrup 2015, 2016:69; Hastrup et al. 2018b; Rasmussen 1905:12), despite the fact they had been known to Western society since the early nineteenth century from the reports of expeditions led by John Ross in 1818, Elisha Kane in the 1850s, Robert Peary in 1891–1909, and others. Rasmussen’s persistent claim to be the first to make contact with the Inughuit can be understood in the context of Danish colonial nation-building (Bravo and Sörlin 2016). Because the Avanersuaq region was the last inhabited location in Kalaallit Nunaat to be colonized by Denmark

(Gilberg 1971), it was assumed to be the least influenced by European contact (Thisted 2016:328). It is no surprise that contacting isolated Arctic people and investigating their history and connections—an objective that had already become the holy grail of the Danish signature field of “Eskimology”—was also the central focus of Rasmussen’s Fifth Thule quest.

The FTE was born out of the desire to document the connections between all Inuit groups from Kalaallit Nunaat to the Bering Strait (Appelt et al. 2018:63; Hastrup 2016:119, 125–126; Meldgaard and Gulløv 2002; see Michelsen, *this issue*). Before initiating his seven Thule expeditions between 1912 and 1933, Rasmussen participated in the Danish Literary Expedition to Kalaallit Nunaat (1902–1904) led by Danish explorer and folklorist Ludvig Mylius-Erichsen (Gilberg 1984:593; Hastrup 2016:114; see Michelsen, *this issue*). During that expedition, they spent time in Avanersuaq, where Rasmussen first met the Inughuit in 1903 (Gilberg 1971:26). While returning to Kalaallit Nunaata Kitaa (West Greenland), expedition participants traveled with six Inughuit hunters who were on their way to the trading post in Tasiusaq. One of them, Ûssarkak, ended up traveling with the expedition crew all the way back to Denmark and remained there for a couple of years (Gilberg 1971:27). During this trip, Rasmussen learned about the Inughuit way of life and recognized how important their travel skills and environmental knowledge would be for his future Arctic expeditions.

The first detailed draft of the plan for the FTE was formulated by Rasmussen about the same year (1909–1910) that he established the Thule Trading Post, known as Kap York Stationen Thule (Thule Station), near the settlement of Uummannaq (Thule/Dundas) in Avanersuaq (Appelt et al. 2018; Gilberg 1984:590; Mary-Rousselière 2002; Michelsen, *this issue*). The earnings of the post became important for financing the FTE (Appelt et al. 2018; Gilberg 1988; Hastrup 2016; Mathiassen 1945; Rasmussen 1932).

Rasmussen was inspired by several Scandinavian Arctic explorers (cf. Hastrup 2016), but it was Hans Peter Steensby’s theory (Steensby 1905) on the origins of the “early Eskimo” culture that provided the theoretical framework and inspired him to study the connections between all Inuit groups (Appelt et al. 2018:63; Hastrup 2016:11, 125; Rasmussen 1927; see Michelsen, *this issue*, Krupnik, *this issue*). Rasmussen planned the FTE to be a land- and ice-based expedition from Kalaallit Nunaat to Inuit Nunangat (Canadian Arctic), Alaska, and Siberia. His crew included a Danish scientific group responsible

for the academic work (see Michelsen, *this issue*) and a Kalaallit group assisting the scientific crew.

The Kalaallit team would carry out fundamental logistical tasks like navigation, driving sledges, hunting, mending clothes, translating, and assisting in various other ways. For this, Rasmussen selected Jakob Olsen (*Jákúnguak*), an Inuk from Sisimiut in Kalaallit Nunaata Kitaa, to act as translator/interpreter (Petersen 1958:295) for the Danish crew (Rasmussen 1926:25), and nine Inughuit from Avanersuaq. However, while the Inughuit were traveling from Avanersuaq to Nuuk, they became sick with pneumonia. Three passed away before leaving Kalaallit Nunaat, and the rest were hospitalized; they were still convalescing when they reached the expedition's base camp in Nunavut (then the Canadian Northwest Territories) (Rasmussen 1921a).

The original nine Inughuit men and women (whose names are written here in their original spelling from the Church Book, Atuagarsuit Qaanaaq/Thule 1909–1939) included *Navarana*, Peter Freuchen's wife, known to always be in good spirits (Rasmussen 1926:25), who sadly passed away in Upernavik on August 2, 1921, before leaving Kalaallit Nunaat (Arima 1979:67; Industrimuseet Frederiks Værk 1924–1925; Meldgaard 1971; Rasmussen 1932); *Iggiánguak* (*Iggiannnguak*), who passed away (Arima 1979:67; Meldgaard and Gulløv 2002:85; Rasmussen 1926:27) in Nuuk before leaving for Inuit Nunangat, and his wife, *Arnarulúnguak* (*Arnarulunnguak*); *Arkiok* (*Aqqioq*) and his wife, *Arnánguak* (*Arnannguak*); *Nasaitordluarsuk* (*Nasaatsorluarsuk*) and his wife, *Akátak* (*Aqattaq*), the youngest female participant; *Ajako* (*Ajaku*), who was the brother of Arnarulúnguak and who had traveled with Rasmussen during the Second Thule Expedition, was initially set to participate in the FTE but passed away before leaving Avanersuaq (Andreassen 2013:397; Arima 1979:67; Industrimuseet Frederiks Værk 1924–1925; Nyeboe 1924; Ulfsdotter 2008); and *Kaivigarssuak Mitek* (*Qaavigarsuak Miteq*), the youngest male participant.¹ Unfortunately, there is scant written information about the majority of the Inughuit before and after the expedition. It was Jakob Olsen, from Kalaallit Nunaata Kitaa (Petersen 1958), Kaivigarssuak Mitek, and Arnarulúnguak (Olsvig 2018) who received the most attention in expedition literature. Future research is planned to learn more biographical details about these Inughuit participants, including interviews with their family members and descendants.

The Danish members left Copenhagen for Kalaallit Nunaat on May 25, 1921, to prepare for the expedition,

pick up the Kalaallit participants, and collect more than 70 sledge dogs from Avanersuaq (Rasmussen 1921a). The day before leaving Nuuk, when Iggiánguak was to be buried as a Christian, the surviving Inughuit participants decided to get baptized, except for Akátak, who was already baptized (Larsen 1999:66). Their wish was granted since they all had been going to baptismal preparations for the previous three years (Rasmussen 1926:27). Once they set off, the expedition team was divided into groups that would travel to different regions by sled and boat to collect scientific data. During the first part of the expedition, 1921–1923, a base camp was established on an island that Rasmussen named Danskeøen (Danish Island) (Nyeboe 1924; Rasmussen 1926:32), called Ullersuaq by Inuit (Larsen 1999:78), near Nagjagtôq (Vansittart Island) and Lyon Inlet, Nunavut.

From there, the crew carried out explorations to the south, west, and north to make contact with as many Inuit groups as possible. When that part of the expedition ended in the fall of 1923, Mathiassen, Birket-Smith, and Olsen returned to Denmark via New York. Freuchen and most of the Inughuit participants traveled northeast by dogsled during the winter of 1924, arriving in Kalaallit Nunaat by boat from Mittimattalik (Pond Inlet) in spring 1925. For the final part of the expedition, Rasmussen, Kaivigarssuak Mitek, and Arnarulúnguak left Danskeøen on March 11, 1923, to travel west through Inuit Nunangat and Alaska to Siberia. Helge Bangsted accompanied them as far as Kuugaaruk (Pelly Bay) before returning to Denmark. For Rasmussen, his two companions, and Leo Hansen, who joined them at Kiillinnguya (Kent Peninsula), the expedition ended in Nome in fall 1924 (Mathiassen 1945; Michelsen, *this issue*; Schwalbe et al., *this issue*). From there they traveled to Seattle, New York, and Washington, DC, before returning to Copenhagen.

The scholarly, as well as the public and political, impact of the FTE was remarkable and established Denmark as a leading nation in the Arctic research arena. The expedition brought back to Denmark a huge amount of archaeological and ethnographic objects, recorded knowledge, and natural history specimens that were distributed to Danish museums (Mathiassen 1945:110–111; Meldgaard and Gulløv 2002:87). These collections scientifically enriched Danish scholarship and placed Copenhagen on the world map as the capital of pan-Inuit research (Dybbroe et al. 2005:281), enabling it to take ownership and control over Inuit history and how it was presented to the world. It provided many opportunities for the expedition's scien-

tific team, advancing their careers and importance within Danish ethnography (Dybbroe et al. 2005:281). The FTE achievements without doubt generated knowledge, riches, and power and enhanced Danish national identity and the reputation of Danish research institutions. The Kalaallit participants undoubtedly gained praise and admiration among their countrymen in Kalaallit Nunaat upon their return (Larsen 1999; Petersen 1958).

THE ROLE AND ASYMMETRIES OF INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION

The Kalaallit participants played a crucial role in the success of the expedition, as they provided expertise in dog sledging, hunting, procurement of animals and materials, and mending and making skin clothes and boots (Rasmussen 1926:72; 1932:6)—skill sets that ensured the survival of the crew. Rasmussen chose to travel with the Inughuit as he knew them as being some of the greatest hunters and excellent travelers compared to other Inuit from Kalaallit Nunaata Kitaa (Rasmussen 1926:23). He also wanted complete independence while traveling in Inuit Nunangat (the Canadian Arctic): that is, to not be dependent on local Indigenous groups. The Inughuit contributions to the expedition's success afforded Rasmussen that independence, but they have been more or less ignored. On a few occasions, Rasmussen, Freuchen, and Mathiassen mentioned their Inughuit companions, though they were never represented as true partners and the sacrifices they made to join the expedition have never been fully acknowledged. The contrast between what we know of Danish and Kalaallit participants is striking. Clearly, expedition skills were valued from Western—that is, scientific—lenses, not from those of survival.

Unlike most of the Inughuit, the literate catechist Jakob (Jacob) Olsen received some notoriety. Rasmussen selected Olsen (1890–1936), who was known as an excellent kayaker and dogsled driver, as interpreter and secretary of the expedition (Meldgaard and Gulløv 2002:84; Petersen 1958). Olsen's father, Samuel Olsen, was a chief catechist (Petersen 1958:295), and he was also the younger brother to Rasmussen's personal friend Gustav Olsen, the first missionary priest appointed to Kap York Station (Thule) in Avanersuaq. Before the expedition left Kalaallit Nunaat for Inuit Nunangat, Olsen was approached to join it (Rasmussen 1926:25). He was given barely a day to make his decision, accepting almost right away (Mathiassen 1936:243).

Olsen received a contract from the expedition committee (*Komitéen for Kap York Stationen*) and a travel insurance during his participation in the expedition (Industrimuseet Frederiks Værk 1923, 1924). In a letter to Freuchen, Olsen wrote that he received his payment on his return from Denmark to Kalaallit Nunaat as agreed (Industrimuseet Frederiks Værk 1923). After his return to Kalaallit Nunaat, he received a letter of contract for another year of work interpreting folklore materials collected during the expedition. For this position, his yearly salary was 1800 Danish kroner (Industrimuseet Frederiks Værk 1923).

Like the rest of the scientific crew, Olsen kept a diary, writing accounts of songs, customs, archaeology, and material culture of the Canadian Inuit. Olsen traveled with Birket-Smith and worked with him during the first period of the expedition, and later traveled with Mathiassen for archaeological investigations at Naujan, Repulse Bay, and Southampton Island (Fig. 1) (Meldgaard and Gulløv 2002:86). Olsen was an excellent hunter and skilled at handling the dogsleds, which was particularly valued (Mathiassen 1936:243). Not surprisingly, he also catechized in Kalaallisut (Greenlandic) when among the locals and when they were in Danskeøen (Petersen 1958:296). Although Olsen gained lots of experience while traveling with the expedition, it did not come without sacrifices, since it meant he was away from his wife Hansine Olsen and their children for over two years (Petersen 1958:302). On several occasions he traveled back and forth between Kalaallit Nunaat and Denmark after the end of the expedition to help Rasmussen organize and interpret the collected folklore material (Petersen 1958:295).

Olsen traveled in Inuit Nunangat for two years and wrote down his observations of the Canadian Inuit (see Nielsen, *this issue*, fig. 4), including transcribing a large number of collected accounts by the other expedition members (Petersen 1979:62–63). He later published a book in Kalaallisut titled *Akilinermiulerssârut* (Olsen 1927). He learned the Aivilik dialect so well he included many words in that dialect in his book, and he was even criticized by Kalaallit readers who found the Inuit dialect difficult to understand (Petersen 1958:295). After returning home to Kalaallit Nunaat, in 1925 Olsen took a position at the South Greenland County Council in Nuuk as an interpreter and secretary (Mathiassen 1936; Petersen 1958). He died from scarlet fever on July 10, 1936, in Nuuk, at the age of 45. In an obituary Mathiassen (1936:243) praised Olsen for his skills and for saving Mathiassen's



Figure 1. Jakob Olsen. Lunch break during the archaeological excavation at Naujan with Therkel Mathiassen. Photographer Therkel Mathiassen. National Museum of Denmark (5_thuleb_0099.tif).

life from a murder plot while they were on Southampton Island. Olsen contributed to the expedition in many ways and represented the Kalaallit Nunaanni Kitaamiut (West Greenlanders) to the Inuit while traveling in Inuit Nunangat (Petersen 1958:301).

As previously mentioned, there are very few documented details about the Inughuit participants, and it was mostly Kaivigarssuak Mitek (Bang 1941; Holtved 1942; Kristiansen 1982; Larsen 1999; Odsbjerg 2001; Olsvig 2018; Sandgreen 1989; Vibe 1938) and Arnarulúnguak (Odsbjerg 2001; Olsvig 2018; Rasmussen 1925a; Vebæk 1990) who received belated attention in scholarly and popular literature. This was largely because they were the only Inughuit to accompany Rasmussen at the end of the expedition (Oreskov 2010:100; Rasmussen 1932:62) from Hudson Bay to Alaska and Siberia,² between 1923 and 1924 (Kristiansen 1982:190; Larsen 1999:125, 173; Oreskov 2012:197). Every now and then, written sources mentioned the rest of the Inughuit, mostly collectively and usually mentioned last, while the scholars, including Olsen, are listed as *primary* participants or expedition members.

The Inughuit participants are all commonly listed as originating from the Uummanaq region (Thule/

Dundas). This is likely due to the fact that well into the first half of the twentieth century, Inughuit would typically not live in the same settlement for more than one or two years (Gilberg 1984:579) before moving to another site. As a result, written sources—such as the Atuagarsuit (Church Book) from Avanersuaq—seldom included where individual Inughuit were born.

Rasmussen first met Kaivigarssuak Mitek (Fig. 2) (ca. 1899–1978) as a young boy during the Literary Expedition in 1904 (Kristiansen 1982; Larsen 1999; Rasmussen 1932). When Rasmussen met him again, Kaivigarssuak was a young adult and had become a great hunter (Rasmussen 1932:62). Unlike most of the Inughuit participants, Kaivigarssuak had learned to read and write before participating in the expedition (Rasmussen 1918). Danes typically referred to him as Edderfuglen (eider), as Mitek means “eider.” Kaivigarssuak Mitek’s parents were Inaluk and the great shaman Angutikavsak (Gilberg 1984:66), who passed away when Kaivigarssuak was just a little boy. After Angutikavsak’s death, Inaluk partnered with Akumalik, who helped raise Kaivigarssuak (Kristiansen 2012). However, it is told that Kaivigarssuak’s biological father was a white man (Odsbjerg 2001:261), a fact known to Rasmussen. He was most likely Captain



Figure 2. Kaivigarssuak Mitek standing by sled with hunted caribou. Photographer Leo Hansen. National Museum of Denmark (5_thuleb_0112a.tif).

Robert Bartlett, who traveled with Robert Peary for the first time in 1898 (see Hanrahan 2018:257; Horwood 1977).

After Kaivigarssuak Mitek returned to Avanersuaq, he married Bebianne Kristiansen on November 29, 1925, in Uummannaq (Atuagarsuit Qaanaaq/Thule 1909–1939), and together they had eight children (Olsvig 2018:64). Living as a hunter, Kaivigarssuak Mitek and his family camped throughout the region, including at Uummannaq, Qeqertarsuaq, Savissivik, moving to Moriusaq in 1964, a year after it was established (Kristiansen 2012:186). Kaivigarssuak Mitek was keen on sharing the ability to read and write with other Inughuit, and he taught these skills to the locals in Avanersuaq (Lidegaard [1993] 2019:431). He wrote an article about Knud Rasmussen and the FTE in Greenlandic for a book of reminiscences on Rasmussen; his article was also translated and published in Danish (K'âvigarssuak 1960). Kaivigarssuak passed away in August 1978 in Qaanaaq but was buried in Uummannaq, as this was the place that he loved the most (Kristiansen 2012:193).

Arnarulúnguak (meaning “little woman”) (Fig. 3), also called “Fokina” by the Danes, was a cousin of Kaivigarssuak Mitek and was born in Uummannaq region around 1896. When she was a young child, her father

passed away, leaving no adult male provider for the family. When these circumstances were coupled with times of famine, it was customary for the youngest child or a female child to be killed (Gilberg 1971, 1984:586). This was nearly her fate (Rasmussen 1925b). However, Arnarulúnguak’s younger brother, Ajako, begged his mother not to kill her, and saved her (Vebæk 1990). She was chosen to join the FTE along with her husband Iggiánguak, a hunter who like Arnarulúnguak was supposed to be killed when he was around eight years old (Gilberg 1971:103) because there was no male provider for the family. Iggiánguak became a good friend of Rasmussen’s after their first meeting in 1903, when they started traveling together (Rasmussen 1926:27). As previously mentioned, Iggiánguak died of pneumonia on September 6, 1921, the day before the expedition left Nuuk (Rasmussen 1926:27). Arnarulúnguak insisted on staying on the expedition, explaining to Rasmussen that she now needed them just like they needed her (Rasmussen 1926; Vebæk 1990). She accompanied Rasmussen until the end of the expedition to Alaska, staying in charge of the cooking and clothing, and received high praise for her work (Rasmussen 1925b). Rasmussen also noted her observational skills, assistance in botanical collecting, care for zoological materials, and help in excavating house ruins at the Malerualik archaeological



Figure 3. Arnarulúnguak carrying gear accompanied by two dogs during a summer journey to Point Lay in 1924. They were forced to travel by foot since bad ice conditions made travel by dogsled impossible. Photographer Leo Hansen. National Museum of Denmark. (5_thuleb_0078.tif).

site on King William Island (Rasmussen 1932). Upon returning to Denmark in late 1924, she was hospitalized in Copenhagen, where she was diagnosed with tuberculosis. She returned to Uummannaq in 1925, and on April 9, 1928, she married Karl (*Kâlipaluk*) Peary, Robert Peary's son by his Inughuaq wife, Aleqasina (Ulloriaq 1984:86). Arnarulúnguak never fully recovered from her illness and died in 1933 in the hospital in Uummannaq (Atuagarsuit Qaanaaq/Thule 1909–1939).

Nasaitsordluarssuk was born around 1897, and his wife Akátak around 1905, both in the Uummannaq region. Rasmussen had known Nasaitsordluarssuk (Fig. 4) since he was a small boy and treated him as his foster child in Uummannaq. Nasaitsordluarssuk also served as a boatswain and went under the nickname *Bådsmanden* (Danish, “boatswain/bosun”); he was a good shooter and an excellent seal hunter (Rasmussen 1926:394). He participated in the Second Thule Expedition (1916–1918) as a guide, hunter, and sledge driver (Odsbjerg 2001). Peter Freuchen admitted in his letter to Mathiassen (Danish Arctic Institute 1924) that Nasaitsordluarssuk was by far the best hunter and more skilled in traveling by dogsled than Arkiok. Even if he was often the last one to get up in the morning, he would make up the lost time working



Figure 4. Nasaitsordluarssuk feeding the dogs at the expedition headquarters at Blæsebælgen. Photographer unknown, Fifth Thule Expedition. National Museum of Denmark (5_thuleb_0084.tif).

late outside in the evenings, even when everyone else had gone to bed.

Nasaitsordluarssuk's wife, Akátak (Fig. 5), was young and seems to have been less experienced with traveling than the other two female participants (Rasmussen 1926). Rasmussen would sometimes let Akátak stay behind in Blæsebælgen, the expedition headquarters in Danskeøen, to keep an eye on the place while they were traveling to other regions to collect data. It was clear that Rasmussen appreciated the female participants' differences and experiences, which guided his decisions (Rasmussen 1926:395). On their return from the expedition, Nasaitsordluarssuk and Akátak lived in Sukat in Avangersuaq (Industrimuseet Frederiks Værk 1926). They had a son, Talilánguak Aorssalik Minigssuak Daorana, born on March 30, 1925 (Atuagarsuit Qaanaaq/Thule 1909–1939). Akátak died



Figure 5. Akátak standing outside by the dogs. Photographer Peter Freuchen. National Museum of Denmark (5_thuleb_0064a.tif).

on August 8, 1932, from tuberculosis in Siorapaluk; in 1935 Nasaitsordluarssuk married Nadúk (Atuagarsuit Qaanaaq/Thule 1909–1939).

Arkiok, born ca. 1891, and his wife Arnánguak, born ca. 1896 (Fig. 6), traveled north with Freuchen and Mathiassen during the first part of the expedition (Meldgaard and Gulløv 2002:86). Rasmussen mentioned that Arnánguak was the oldest female participant and thus the most experienced in domestic chores. She was known to be very cheerful and could lift everyone's spirits even during gray and gloomy days (Rasmussen 1926:395). Arnánguak and Arkiok had a daughter, Navarana, on August 9, 1923, at Danskeøen (Atuagarsuit Qaanaaq/Thule 1909–1939).³ Navarana (Fig. 7) was



Figure 6. Arnánguak and Arkiok, having returned from a journey to Admiralty Bay, May 11, 1922. Photographer unknown, Fifth Thule Expedition. National Museum of Denmark (5_thuleb_00154.tif).



Figure 7. Arnánuak with her daughter Navarana. Photographer Kaj Birket-Smith. Courtesy of Danish Arctic Institute (Photo ID 21855).

baptized once they returned home on March 1, 1925 (Atuagarsuit Qaanaaq/Thule 1909–1939). Their second child, Mikivsuk, was born on May 17, 1927 (Atuagarsuit Qaanaaq/Thule 1909–1939). After the expedition, Arkiok and Arnánuak lived as a hunter and a hunter's wife in Iterdlakssuaq (Industrimuseet Frederiks Værk 1926).

It is unclear whether the Inughuit participants received written contracts detailing the terms of their employment or insurance for participating in the expedition, like Jakob Olsen did, since written documentation has not been identified. On other Euroamerican expeditions, such as Robert E. Peary's expeditions (1891–1909), Inughuit were paid for their services with Western goods such as boats (Ulloriaq 1984:72), rifles, ammunition, wood, knives, stoves, and needles (Gilberg 1984:589), and they also received food and provisions left over from the expedition (Larsen 1999). In Rasmussen's accounts from his Second Thule Expedition, he described that some Inughuit were more than happy to participate in the expedition and had no desire to be paid for participating in his journeys, even

though their labor would be required and it meant being apart from their families for several months (Rasmussen 1919:152–153). Rasmussen mentioned he had made agreements (arrangements) with the Inughuit to participate in the expedition (Rasmussen 1926:23), though the details are unknown, since these were likely verbal agreements, or at least no written documents detailing these agreements have yet been identified. One assumes that Inughuit received some sort of compensation for their employment on the FTE, be it in goods or financial payment. In Peter Freuchen's communication with the expedition committee regarding his own compensation, he requests that his wife Navarana's compensation be in Danish kroner. As a response regarding Navarana's payment, the committee informed Freuchen that the type of compensation is entirely up to the expedition leader, Rasmussen (Andreassen 2013:400–401). In Kaivigarssuaq Mitek's written memories (Larsen 1999), where he shared some of his afterthoughts, he expressed his grievance and disappointment over not being paid for his participation on

the FTE and revealed he only received 200 Danish kroner each Christmas during the first couple of years after his return to Avanersuaq (Larsen 1999:197). Kaivigarssuak was clearly not satisfied and seems to have felt that he was not being paid as he deserved for participating all those years during the FTE.

We cannot know for certain the individual reasons for the Inughuit to join the FTE, and motives most likely varied depending on individual circumstances. Generally, Inughuit were widely known to be mobile and expert travelers in the High Arctic regions. With the onslaught of explorers in the north, Inughuit adapted to the situation. Traveling with and working for the expeditions became a way to make a living, in which many Inughuit families took part. This can be seen in Inughuit participation in Robert Peary's expedition from 1892–1909 (Larsen 1999) and later with Rasmussen. For Rasmussen, having Inughuit with whom he was close join him on his FTE provided the expertise he knew was required to successfully accomplish the expedition (see Larsen 1999:10). For some of the Inughuit, the relationship with Rasmussen was likely a symbiotic relationship with mutual benefits.

However, power dynamics were embedded in the relationship between Rasmussen and Inughuit, and denying Rasmussen's request would have been difficult, since he was highly respected and had a lot of influence. To risk offending a man of his prestige, and one with a familiar connection to the North, would have been a great concern. When Kaivigarssuaq shared his memories of how he came to join the expedition, he explained that Rasmussen took him out sailing one day to test his shooting skills. Proving to be a skilled hunter, Kaivigarssuaq was told that he was suitable to join the FTE. Prior to this Rasmussen had already decided to ask Kaivigarssuak's parents to allow him to travel with FTE if he proved his skills; since he succeeded, his parents gave permission and Kaivigarssuak accepted the invitation. Though his absence would have greatly impacted his family, particularly since a skilled hunter helped ensure a family's food security and survival, denying Rasmussen's invitation would have been socially unacceptable.

One can only speculate why Arnarulúnguak insisted on staying on the expedition after she lost her husband before leaving Nuuk, instead of traveling back home to Avanersuaq. One reason may very well be that she had just lost her husband who was her companion in life and supporter in every aspect. Without him, she would

have to travel back from Nuuk to Avanersuaq, where she would be without the support of her husband or her brother, who had died before leaving Avanersuaq for Nuuk. It is quite probable that Arnarulúnguak felt it was less risky to continue the journey. Speculating on all the individual reasons for why Inughuit joined the FTE is beyond the purview of this essay. I provide the examples above, however, to demonstrate that the situation was complex, embedded with power imbalances and cultural and societal expectations.

“THE OMITTED INUGHUIT”

The details above have largely been collected from archival documents and the literature. The lack of details regarding most Inughuit participation is unfortunate, since their skills were crucial to the expedition's success. In addition to the few details found in Rasmussen's accounts, Inughuit were not included in the expedition's team picture taken in 1921. While the Inughuit were hospitalized in Nuuk, the rest of the expedition members had a group picture taken *without* them (Rasmussen 1926:9; see Harper and Krupnik, *this issue*), another action that failed to represent their roles on the expedition. No other group photo was taken of the expedition team when everyone was gathered in Danskeøen for two years. Although other photos featured Inughuit participants during the expedition (see cover image), their absence in written reports contributed to their obscurity (see also Thisted 2016). Even proper descriptions of their contributions are lacking. I would submit that Rasmussen, as project leader and organizer, created his own expedition narrative with himself as its main character (Olsvig 2018:32–35). He was also promoting himself rather than properly acknowledging the Inughuit's critical role in his venture. Such proper acknowledgment would not have diminished Rasmussen's accounts; in fact, quite the opposite would have been the case.

Rasmussen accomplished much during his life; he was a great traveler and a charismatic storyteller. It is not surprising that he was and still is portrayed as a hero in academic and popular writings about the expedition. Rasmussen clearly dominates the scene, and his personal experiences and accomplishments in popular media even overshadow the larger importance of the FTE's other scientific contributions, at least to popular audiences. The missing or “forgotten” narratives of Inuit and Inughuit participants would have provided an opportunity for other

voices that reflected their own experiences and knowledge gained, and ultimately would have reflected their non-Western value systems and perspectives (see also Stewart-Harawira 2013).

Other aspects of “denied recognition” abound in the official FTE accounts (Ulfsdotter 2008). Throughout the journey, Inughuit participants contributed in gathering and discussing field data together with the scientific crew, and Inuit cultural expertise from across the Arctic provided fundamental and essential knowledge. Assisting on archaeological excavations, Inughuit contributed to the recovery of artifacts that led to important cultural understandings (Arima 1979:73, 75). Also overlooked is the fact that the people of Avanersuaq played a key role in financing the expedition through the income derived from the Thule Trading Post (Appelt et al. 2018:64; Mathiassen 1945), paying 80 percent of the expedition costs (Gilberg 1988:48).

On their return to Copenhagen and Avanersuaq, the six Inughuit participants—Nasaitsordluarssuk and his wife Akátak, Arkiok and his wife Arnánguak, Arnarulúnguak,

and Kaivigarssuak Mitek—were awarded the silver merit medal as an acknowledgment of their contributions to the expedition’s success (Hansen 1953). The only known group photo of the Inughuit participants was taken in Uummannaq by Peter Freuchen when he returned for a visit with his second wife, Magdalene, and Rasmussen in 1929 (Fig. 8) (Andreassen 2013:531–533). Although Rasmussen doubtless respected the Inughuit participants and highly valued their skills, he was too much a man of his own time to give them the full credit they deserved. For Rasmussen, it was more important to concentrate on his role in shaping and creating a popular narrative of Inuit history by collecting Inuit knowledge, heritage, and livelihood before their culture was completely altered by modern Western culture.

In Rasmussen’s time, the dominant approach was the colonial-era focus on Western practices and methodologies, and this emphasis on centering Westerners’ achievements, findings, voices, perspectives, and choices of what was important ultimately reflected Western ideologies. In doing so the expedition’s scientific team missed important



Figure 8. Inughuit participants of the Fifth Thule Expedition (left to right): Arkiok, Arnánguak, Arnarulúnguak, Akátak, Nasaitsordluarssuk, and Kaivigarssuak Mitek, all decorated with their silver merit medals. Little Navarana is standing in front of her parents, Arkiok and Arnánguak. The Royal Danish Library (Photo ID DH007208.tif). Photographer Peter Freuchen. Courtesy of Navarana Freuchen.

Indigenous voices that no doubt would have provided perspectives that Rasmussen himself could not. Fortunately, times are changing, and the lack of proper representation and recognition of Inuit contributions in the Arctic context are beginning to be recognized. Both Western and Indigenous scholars are increasingly acknowledging the need to make this invisible aspect of the expedition better known to the public and the history of Arctic science (cf. Appelt et al. 2018).

THE CALL FOR INDIGENOUS ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One might ask why it is so important to acknowledge Indigenous people's achievements from a time of colonial encounters and bygone rules or standards. To some extent, I believe history has been skewed in order to perpetuate colonial patterns and continue treating Inuit agents as objects. One may argue that calls for a changing perspective should become part of a reconciliation process with Denmark, and other past colonial powers, to right some wrongs. Inuit heritage perspectives have long been ignored in popular narratives and removed from their rightful place; the lack of recognition of Inuit achievements not only continues the colonial way of historicizing the Inuit past, it also erases their true contributions and perspectives. However, it is necessary to bring these formerly marginalized voices to the center, to engage Inuit as full partners and acknowledge their contributions, as well as their right to narrate their own pasts and culture. By doing so, it may be possible to produce more holistic narratives of the past (see also Atalay 2006; Caxaj 2015; Hogan and Topkok 2015; Tuck and Yang 2012).

Although in Kalaallit Nunaat there is knowledge about, and recognition of, the Kalaallit participants of the FTE, it is inadequate. This is mainly a result of the fact that the history of Kalaallit Nunaat and its people is primarily written and popularized by Danish (Western) scholars who typically do not recognize or focus on the contributions of the Indigenous participants. Changes are on the horizon, which can be seen in the growing demand for Kalaallit to be the authors of our own history.

For decades, Inuit across the circumpolar Arctic have called on researchers who work in their homelands and study their cultural heritage to fully recognize the contributions of Inuit participants (Greenland Reconciliation Report 2016; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2019; Pikialasorsuaq Commission 2017). This increasing call for recognition to-

day is partly due to growing political development, self-determination, self-reliance, and cultural revitalization among Inuit across the circumpolar Arctic, as well as a younger generation's awareness of their elders not having been recognized as partners in research.

Fortunately, this lack of acknowledgment in partnering with Indigenous people is a praxis that belongs to a disappearing era. As previously mentioned, Rasmussen was influenced by his time, in which ethnographic work by Western scholars typically interpreted Indigenous livelihoods through a Western set of values and perspectives. In these works, Westerners chose what was important and what was recorded, ultimately reflecting Western perspectives. After all, the main objective of the FTE was to seek and document Inuit connections across the circumpolar Arctic to collect proof of their collective similarities (Hastrup 2016). In doing so, Rasmussen sometimes ended up mistakenly and uncritically generalizing across diverse regional identities.

Despite the enormous degree of variability among the many Inuit groups, from Kalaallit Nunaat to Alaska and Arctic Russia, Rasmussen often neglected or under-represented the differences. A Paallirmiut woman named Kibgarjuk, whom Rasmussen met on the expedition, reminded him to be cognizant of the differences among the many Inuit groups he met:

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, and understand other Inuit besides ourselves, must know that human beings differ. The Harvaqtoormiut know many things we do not know, and we know many things that they do not. Therefore, you must not compare the Harvaqtoormiut with us, for their knowledge is not our knowledge, as our knowledge is not theirs. (Rasmussen 1930:111)

This quotation speaks eloquently to those seeking generalizations about Inuit peoples and their past. However, by citing this comment, Rasmussen also showed his awareness of this issue and that he found it important to refer to this kind of bias.

CONCLUSION

Knud Rasmussen was a man of his time, a cultural hero, but also with his own shortcomings. He had a grand vision for and fascination with the Arctic, and with the crucial help of a Kalaallit Nunaata Kitaaniit (West Greenlandic)

Inuk, several Inughuit of Avanersuaq, and a small team of scholarly trained Danes, he achieved great results.

His work, however, has left out a huge part of the picture by centering himself within his narratives and paying little attention to the efforts and sacrifices made by Inuit, particularly the Inughuit participants, in his quest for knowledge. We will never really know for sure why Rasmussen did not make a concerted effort to acknowledge many other Inuit participants across the North American Arctic who contributed immensely with data and knowledge. One can always raise the question whether it was enough of a recognition when Rasmussen always made sure to systematically list the names of people who contributed knowledge that he recorded.

Rasmussen, of course, wrote first and foremost with a Western audience in mind (Hastrup 2016:127). The power of scientific representation rested on Danish/Western terms, and this undoubtedly primarily benefited the Danish quest for national and scientific sovereignty in the Arctic. Unfortunately, popular narratives about the Arctic and Inuit who call it home continue to be filtered through a Western lens, relying upon reproduced knowledge that often ignores Inuit voices. To right this imbalance of perspectives, it is necessary that Inuit knowledge be seen as having the same value as Western science and Inuit voices be brought to their rightful position at the forefront of Arctic narratives. To make a valuable contribution to the understanding of Arctic histories, those voices must be holistic, and Inuit participants in Arctic research, past and present, should be acknowledged as partners, equals, and peers.

NOTES

1. All names of the FTE Inughuit participants are cited in this paper using the *original* spelling from the Atuagarsuit (Church Book) from Avanersuaq (Atuagarsuit Qaanaaq/Thule 1909–1939), with the modern spelling provided in parenthesis, for consistency with other papers in this collection.
2. Though details of Kaivigarssuak (and Arnarulúnguak) accompanying Rasmussen on his short trip to Chukotka were seemingly not reported by non-Indigenous members of the expedition, it has been recorded in Inuit oral history. In Kristiansen (1982) and Larsen (1999), it is recalled how Kaivigarssuak told his son-in-law and Hans Larsen that he (they) traveled with Rasmussen to Siberia. However, in Larsen (1999)

Kaivigarssuak rarely mentions Arnarulúnguak, although she was traveling with them, so it is difficult to tell with certainty whether she also was with Rasmussen and Kaivigarssuak on that trip—but see Kristiansen (1982, 2012) and Oreskov (2012), who both mention that Kaivigarssuak and Arnarulúnguak traveled with Rasmussen to Siberia. Ignoring what has been recounted by Kaivigarssuak would be questioning Inuit oral tradition as a valid form of knowledge.

3. Arima (1979:73) records her birth as occurring on August 8, 1923, misspelling her name to Nararana.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the Alaska Anthropological Association, Arctic Studies Center of the Smithsonian Institution, and Naalakkersuisut–Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial support to participate in the Fifth Thule Expedition centennial session, organized by Igor Krupnik and Aron Crowell, at the 46th Annual Meeting of the Alaska Anthropological Association in Nome 2019. An earlier draft of this paper was presented at that session. I thank Igor Krupnik and Nunatta Katersugaasivia Allagaateqarfialu for inviting me to participate. I am also very grateful to the staff of the Danish Arctic Institute, Industrimuseet Frederiks Værk, and to Martin Appelt and Anne Mette Jørgensen at the National Museum of Denmark for their help and for granting me access to FTE documents and photographs. Many thanks to the anonymous reviewers, including the editorial staff, for their comments, and to William W. Fitzhugh for his much-appreciated editorial support. A very special qujanaq to Lesley Howse for her helpful suggestions and support.

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