

***Ilagiit* and *Tuqᐅᐅuraqtuq* Inuit understandings of kinship and social relatedness**

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Anthropological understandings of Inuit kinship have focused on the Inuktitut concept of *ilagiit*, which has generally been understood as equivalent to the English concept of “kindred” (both in extended and more limited forms). This has led researchers to conclude that Inuit kinship pragmatically selects kin out of the range of “kindred” to meet the requirements of flexibility and choice supposedly necessary in a harsh environment. This paper will initially review the use of the term and the conclusions that have appeared in the literature. A critical perspective begins to emerge with the realization that *ilagiit* is based on the root *ila-* which simply means “to be with” or “accompany”.

Research conducted in Arctic Bay, Nunavut, revealed that Inuit more often spoke about *tuqᐅᐅuraqtuq* (the North Baffin form of the word) which can have a range of meanings including “nickname” but more precisely refers to “the term by which one calls another person”. This term does not appear in any of the literature on Inuit kinship, and yet the use of this term points to the importance of naming, and the naming system for Inuit understandings of their own kinship system. This paper proposes that by shifting the analysis to the range of meanings associated with *tuqᐅᐅuraqtuq* an entirely new understanding of Inuit kinship can be generated, which is more in line with Inuit understandings of themselves. As a result, one develops a critical perspective on existing kinship theories within Western discourse.

Interest in the study of Inuit kinship systems has waned in recent years, despite the fact that some remarkable work has begun to break through the older paradigms that were used to characterize Inuit modes of social organization. The problems in Inuit kinship studies have largely derived from the fact that Western models have too quickly regarded Inuit family life as familiar – in the sense that it seems to be recognizable as a form based on interlinking families very much like our own. While there have been some attempts to ask how Inuit themselves may conceive of their

own system of kinship, especially through the concept of *ilagiit*, very little work has broken through the presumed simplicity of Inuit modes of organization to appreciate how relationships may be constructed in Inuit terms. This paper will critically examine the research that focussed around the notion of *ilagiit*, examine the more recent work that suggests other directions in the study of Inuit kinship and finally suggest a new direction that more carefully takes into account the way Inuit themselves might conceive their relationships.

I have argued elsewhere that the problem in the study of Inuit kinship is not so much the strangeness, “otherness”, of the system but, rather, its apparent similarity to our own. Thus in Murdock’s famous classification of cousin terminologies our mode of reckoning was classed with Inuit into the “Eskimo” system of kinship. Dailey and Dailey¹ long ago demonstrated that whatever Murdock’s classification might mean, it had nothing to do with Inuit. Murdock’s recognition of a similarity points to a major problem in Inuit studies: that Inuit are rarely constructed as “primitive others” but rather as “primitive” versions of ourselves. With the transformation of European society through industrialization and the rise of capitalism in the nineteenth century, the nuclear family as a social unit emerged out of much larger family residential units. Europeans, working within an evolutionary framework, looked to other peoples around the world to explain how their society had come to take the form it had, and to justify these new social forms as “natural”. The complex clan systems of the Haudensonee, Australian Aborigines, and peoples of Africa had nothing to do with European modes of organization and could comfortably be

classified as “others”, lower on the evolutionary ladder of development. Inuit, on the other hand, lived in small family groups that looked like, and were presumed to be the same as, the Victorian nuclear family. A people who lived in such a harsh environment, and lived so close to nature, demonstrated that the unfamiliar social form of the nuclear family was “natural”. Not that the Victorians would ever have admitted that Inuit were in the same place on the evolutionary ladder as themselves, far from it, rather “Eskimo family organization” demonstrated that other people in the world lived in similar groups. Comforting as this may have been for Europeans, it created an ideological blind spot for the thorough analysis of Inuit social relations,

The history of anthropological analyses and theoretical understandings of Inuit kinship has been outlined by myself² and Stevenson³ and I do not need to restate that here. Inuit kinship has been conceived either genealogically as representing the biological links between individuals (following Damas⁴) or as representing a ‘locality’ based logic between those who lived, camped and worked together over time (following Graburn⁵ and Guemple⁶. Damas’⁷ paper “Environment, history and Central Eskimo society” is particularly important because he asked if the variable

¹ Robert C. Daily and Lois A. Dailey, “The Eskimo of Rankin Inlet: A Preliminary Report”, (Ottawa: Northern Coordination and Research Centre, Department of Indian Affairs and Natural Resources, 1961), pp. 45-50.

² Christopher G. Trott, “The Inuk as Object: some problems in the study of Inuit social organization”, *Etudes/Inuit/Studies* 6(2): 43-108.

³ Marc G. Stevenson, *Inuit, Whalers, and Cultural Persistence: Structure in Cumberland Sound and Central Inuit Social Organization* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁴ David Damas, Iglulingmiut Kinship and Local Groupings, *National Museum of Canada Bulletin* 196, Ottawa, 1963.

⁵ Nelson H. H. Graburn, *Taqamiut Eskimo Kinship Terminology*, Northern Coordination and Research Council, Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources, Ottawa, 1964.

⁶ Lee Guemple, “Kinship and Alliance in Belcher Island Eskimo Society” in L. Guemple (ed.), *Alliance in Eskimo Society* (pp. 56-78), Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1972.

⁷ David Damas, “Environment, history and Central Eskimo society” in David Damas (ed.), *Contributions to Anthropology: Ecological Essays* (pp. 116-134), National Museum of Canada

forms of Inuit kinship among the Iglulingmiut, the Netsilingmiut and the Copper Inuit correlated with variations in ecological conditions under which the people lived. He could find no correlation, and thus has freed later analyses from an environmentally deterministic bias. My earlier work criticised these approaches as failing to account for social processes such as naming, adoption, spouse exchange, and various types of partnerships by relegating them to the category of “extra-kinship” relations that “skewed” the real kinship as either construed by genealogical or locality ties.

Guemple’s⁸ edited collection tried to show that these “extra-kinship” phenomena served to create alliances between spatially discrete social groups. While this was helpful in refining our understanding of these features of Inuit social organization, the authors continued to maintain the existence of a core of social relations (either genealogical or locality based) for which these provided modes of wider extension.

Stevenson’s critique argued that these approaches failed to account for the broad range of affective ties that could be expressed through Inuit social relations. In fact, Stevenson’s own conclusions broaden Damas’ original 1963 analysis by refining and more carefully defining *nalaaqtuq* (authority/obedience) relations versus *ungajuq* (affection) relations and demonstrating that the range of terms each include an aspect of both *nalaaqtuq* and *ungajuq*. Stevenson then applies the use of this affective continuum to the formation of the various camp groups over time, demonstrating how the groups are constructed on the basis of combining both of these elements. The focus on affective relations brings us back to the very old anthropological argument over structure and sentiment (which comes first), in some ways a “chicken and egg”

⁸ Lee Guemple (ed.), *Alliance in Eskimo Society*, Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society

argument, it does create problems if one includes those terms that are applied as a function of the naming relationships (see below). While I would agree that *ataata* is a term loaded with *nalaaqtuq* affect, the same does not apply if the term is given to one's own children.

The term *ilagiit* appeared initially in the work of Damas⁹ but was most carefully developed in Balikci's ethnographic work on the Netsilingmiut. *Ilagiit* is based on the root *ila-*, usually translated as "kin, relatives" and the post-base *-giit*, "those who share". Thus one can have the question, *ilagiviuk?* "Do you have _____ as kin?" There needs to be some care here, however, as the term can also refer simply to "those who go along, accompany" with you. In this sense, one can say *ilauniaqpunga?* "may I join with you [on your outing]?" *Ila-* may not then only be kin, but may also be those who are also members of any activity that one undertakes.

The most elaborate development of the concept of *ilagiit* comes in Balikci's work on "Development of Basic Socio-Economic Units in Two Eskimo Communities"¹⁰. Balikci focuses on an ego-centric network of relations. Balikci begins his discussion by defining the extended *ilagiit*. He defines this by having elderly Inuit define a many of those people that they recognized as their relatives (*ila*). The presence of both consaguineal and affinal kin within this broad range of relatives shifts the Inuit use slightly from some of the classical anthropological definitions of kindred which exclude affines by definition. For Balikci the extended *ilagiit* is ego-centric, not a political unit, not a ceremonial group, and not an economic unit. It is, however, the unit in which one can find personal security in the context of widespread

⁹ Damas, *Iglulingmiut Kinship*

intergroup hostility, and secondly, it is the group within which one finds a marriage partner. The restricted *ilagiit* is a much narrower circle of kin that forms the core of the larger extended *ilagiit*. For Balikci this forms a patrilocal or extended joint family that is largely co-residential, at the level of a local camp and thus also forms an economic unit for cooperation. Thus Balikci's use of the notion of *ilagiit* closely allied the Inuit concept with that of the analytical category of kindred within anthropological theory. The logic of the kindred is to provide as much flexibility in the range of relatives, both on the paternal and maternal sides, allowing each ego to select the range of kin with whom they wish to associate, and as Balikci so neatly shows, in novel or conflictual situations to draw upon a broad range of possible kin as necessary.

In my 1982 paper, I advanced a critique of the notion of "flexibility" in Inuit social relations, arguing that "flexibility" could not be seen as a constituent characteristic of a social system as we had to be prepared to argue that the system was flexible around some norm, and more pertinently "flexibility" was the product of structural features, as yet not articulated, but which must be the focus of the analysis. In more recent years, for example in the work of Morrow¹¹ and Briggs¹², "flexibility" has reappeared as "indeterminacy" in Inuit social relations. I would continue to argue that while concrete behavioural patterns may appear as indeterminate, there remains a generative process that actually creates this indeterminacy. Fienup-Riordan's focus

¹⁰ Asen Balikci, "Development of Basic Socio-Economic Units in Two Eskimo Communities", *National Museum of Man, Bulletin 202*, Ottawa, 1964.

¹¹ Phyllis Morrow, "Symbolic Actions, Indirect Expressions: Limits to Interpretations of Yupik Society", *Etudes/Inuit/Studies*, 14 (1-2): 141-158, 1990.

¹² Jean Briggs, *Inuit Morality Play*, (St. John's: Institute for Social and Economic Research, Memorial

on ritual, Bodenhorn's analysis of co-production relations, and Nuttall's discussion of naming all point us in the direction of specifying those generative structural forms.

More recent studies have shifted the focus in the analysis of Inuit social relations. One of the most significant is Ann Fienup-Riordan's study, The Nelson Island Eskimo¹³. While this work is about a Yup'ik speaking group in Western Alaska, the analysis bears closely on understanding of Inuit relations as well. Fienup-Riordan is concerned to show the relations between ritual/symbolic activity and social relations within Yup'ik society. Her close study of the social relations involved in the spring seal party, where meat from the a man's first seal of the season is distributed by his wife or mother to those women who are understood to be closely related. The actions of cutting up and distributing the meat separates the seal's soul from the body in a way that is analogous to giving birth. Through a series of symbolic inversions this is related to the winter dance house distributions where cross-gendered couples distribute gifts to those who are not closely related. The process of fabrication and the distribution of whole cloth is analagous to gestation and the rebirth of names, The surprising part of Fienup-Riordan's reading is that those who are closely related in the spring are the same people as those who are not closely related in the winter. They largely fall into the Inuit category *illu*, usually translated as cross-cousin.

Fienup-Riordan's discussion points to two important issues: first that a person's relationship to ego may change over the course of a season, or a longer period of time, and second that the category of *illu* bears closer examination. Fienup-Riordan was not the first to note that a person's social category could change, as Guemple had

¹³ Ann Fienup-Riordan, The Neslon Island Eskimo: Social Structure and Ritual Distribution,

already noted such movements in the Belcher island kin term, especially as affines became merged into consanguineal relations. Fienup-Riordan was the first to note that such changes could occur in different ceremonial/seasonal contexts. This signals that the analysis of kin terms requires a much more careful enunciation of the social context in which the term is being used and that we must be wary of arriving at too simple definitions of what each term may mean especially in a genealogical context.

The term *illu* proves also to be very problematic. Analysts have failed to find how far terms such as *illu* may be applied within the range of kin. It is also in the relationship of the term *illu* other “cousin” terms that we find the most variability. As it is presently understood, male egos apply the term *naijaq* (“sister”) to women encompassing biological sisters and parallel and cross cousins, while the terms *angutiqati/arnaqati* are used for parallel cousins (distinguishing patrilineal and matrilineal) and *illu* is used for cross-cousins. On the other hand female egos apply the term *ani* (“brother”) to biological brothers and male parallel and cross cousins, and the terms *angutiqati/arnaqati* to patrilineal and matrilineal parallel cousins and *illu* to cross cousins. But this reveals my own bias of having worked in the Iglulingmiut region. In the Pannirtuuq region the terms *angutiqati/arnaqati* are not used (although they are understood) and *illu* is applied across the board. In other words the variations we see in Inuit cousin terminology may not be regional variations at all, but a profound misunderstanding of the term *illu*.

Fienup-Riordan points out that *illu* implies that range of people who are related, but who may also potentially be married, in which case they cannot be related. Upon marriage *illu* can be transformed into affines, and those who one chooses not to marry

can become *illu* consequently. In a revealing footnote, Bernard Saladin d'Anglure also points to the complexities of *illu* when he notes that joking, song and sparring partners, particularly those participated in the winter ceremonies, were also *illu*. The ethnographies are unclear as to whether this is because cross-cousins are chosen to fulfil these roles or whether because the people who fulfil these roles become classified as *illu*. For reasons that will become apparent later, I am inclined towards the second view.

These features are also apparent in Bodenhorn's discussions of Inupiat kinship relations. She particularly focuses on the formation of whaling crews and the distribution of the products of the hunt which she argues are the concrete basis upon which Inupiat social relations are formed. For Bodenhorn, kinship relations provide an open field of potential relations, which only become concretised when they are activated through co-production and commensality. Those people within the field of potential relations gradually disappear from significance if they are not activated, while those people with whom one has active co-production relations actually become included as kin. This argument is very similar to that advanced by Turner and Wertman for the Shamattawa Cree.

Mark Nuttall's careful study of kinship in Arctic Homeland adds another dimension to the analysis. He carefully places social relations within the relations of people to land through his concept of "memoryscape". The names of places reflect a history of people's use of the land, not only in the sense of the pragmatic extraction of resources from particular sites, but also in the sense of people having lived and died over certain spaces. The social relations of people over land thus become embedded in

the day-to-day continuing use of the land. In addition, and like Bodenhorn, Nuttall locates the distribution of meat (and here he is also followed by Kishigami's careful analysis) within social relations in such a way as to raise the question of whether meat distribution follows along the lines of existing social relations or indeed carves the path of those social relations. Much more important is Nuttall's careful study of the use of names in the Greenland community. The recycling of names through people creates another field of relations, out of which Inuit can select those social relations that are actualised in practice. Nuttall backs away from making the naming system the centre of Inuit social relations but continues to see it as an add-on to the genealogical set of relations, providing another avenue for expanding flexibility.

This is indeed the critical test of our understanding of Inuit kinship. As long as the *ilagiit* remains the core analytical term, any other mode of creating relationship becomes marginalized and merely an "extra-kinship" phenomena. The work of both Fienup-Riordan and Nuttall along with the ongoing analyses of Saladin d'Anglure shows that the cycling of names (more properly, the cycling of people through names) fits together with the cycles of the living and the dead, the visible and the invisible, animals and humans, the reproduction of animals and the reproduction of the entire cosmos. Names provide the link between humans, animals, and the universe in a way that integrates Inuit symbolic thought into a whole and makes kinship a part of the wider symbolic world.

When I first began my fieldwork in Arctic Bay in 1979, I followed the terminology given by Graburn in asking the people *kisugiviuk?* "What do you have so-and-so as?" I was corrected very early on in my work and told to ask *kinagiviuk?*

“Who is so-and-so to you?” Naively, I assumed this was a dialect difference between the North Baffin and those areas where Graburn had worked, but I came to realise much later that, in fact, Inuit had shifted the entire focus of my study without me realizing it. I was being told not to ask for the genealogical relationship but rather what the relationship was through the name. I later came to encounter cases where people called each other by terms that were entirely outside of the “kinship” terminology. For example, two men who both were the oldest of groups of 12 siblings called each other by a term recognizing that similarity, other men referred to each other by the term for the upper leg of a caribou because once when they were hungry they had shared that part of the meat, other men had terms referring to incidents in their youth usually having to do with competition over women. (I only refer to men here because of the bias in my own work of having the most conversations with men about these topics, but I am aware that this applies equally to women). I was told that terms such as this were *tuqluraqtuq*, a term I had never seen in the literature, and which I initially translated as “nicknames”. However, I quickly came to realise that the term much more broadly meant “he has addressed him by his relationship name; son, daughter, father, etc. including fictive parental names; always in the dual vocative: ataataak! father” (= vi. & *-mik*, tursupuq). 5 [Source Ref:- Pg 425 Col 2 Entry 10] [Schneider. Ulirnaigutiit]. Inuit therefore had a specific term referring to terms of address used when talking to other people, and for them this was the departure point for understanding their relationship system.

This coheres well with the long-standing argument in anthropological method in kinship studies over whether one should collect the genealogical relations among

people and then map the terms over these sets of relationships. Thus having charted a genealogy and noted where on the genealogical chart the term *illu* occurs, I would conclude that *illu* “means” same sex cross [and parallel, depending on the dialect] cousins. The other approach in anthropology has been to collect what each person actually calls every other person within a given sample, and then to analytically deduce what the term might mean that would cover all the possible uses. Thus, if I call a fifteen year old girl *anaana* because she has my mother’s name (which is in fact true), it is not an “extension” of the term for mother to someone else other than my “real” mother (who in this case is adoptive anyway!), but rather says something crucial about what the word *anaana* means in the first place.

Inuit were therefore pushing me to look away from the genealogical linkages between people, which they all knew in any case, and to look at what people actually called each other and why. As has been found in many studies, terms were applied in a far broader context than genealogies implied and encompassed within a single field naming practices, adoption, meat sharing practices, other kinds of partnerships (and would have included such features as spouse exchange had that still been practiced). Of course, Inuit knew that the actual application of terms arose from a wide variety of social practices, but that was not of as much interest as knowing how people related to each other on a daily basis.

For Inuit names are extremely important. Each child inherits an *atiq*, name/name-soul, from the last person who died in the region. In the past, when there was limited contact between various groups, and the largest aggregations of people occurred in the winter, people would be limited in knowing who had died recently,

except for those within their immediate locality and to whom they would be, in many cases, already related. When a child is born, the child is the person who previously held the name come back again and thus people refer to the child by the kinship term that they used for the previous holder of the name. Depending on who had died when, a child could have a number of names (and usually did), while at the same time a number of people could come to share a name. Those who share names also share a special relationship called *avvara* (“my other half”) in North Baffin, *atikuluga* (“my dear little name”) in South Baffin, and *saunira* (“my bone”) in Nunavik. A child thus arrives with a fully articulated set of social relations given by their name, and many childhood games focus on teaching the child the terms they apply to each person (see Briggs). Within the fairly limited social circles possible in the Arctic, Inuit would be well aware of who held which name from whom. This has implications for the gender of the child, as the child takes the gender of the last person to hold the name, at least until puberty, but I do not want to enter that discussion here.

This led to a reconsideration of Inuit social relationships placing names at the centre of the analysis¹⁴. There is an analytical danger with a focus exclusively on names as we shall see shortly. Inuit thus relate first to people by ascertaining whose name each of them has respectively and then applying the term that the previous holders of their respective names had. The application of terms used in reference to previous name holders shows that this is the kinship system at work. As Fienup-Riordan observed: “The system of names and kinship terminology form a single system. Proper names form a class of positions which live forever, where when one

¹⁴ Christopher G. Trott, *Structure and Pragmatics: Social Relations among the Tununirrusirmiut*.

person passes away another replaces him. The dead exist in the relation which defines a living person with reference to them. The name system can be seen as a reference system that is never heard! The system of names as well as kin terminology designate a single system of classes of relations between positions”¹⁵. The overall effect of this system is to create an ongoing set of names in relationship over the land through which people relate to both one another and to the land. This relationship became evident through a number of factors. In one case, I found a young child who had what appeared to be a unique name. Upon enquiry I found that the name came from an old man who had just died in Qanaaq, Greenland. When I asked why they had named the child after someone in Greenland, I was reminded of the 1860-3 migration of Inuit from North Baffin to Greenland¹⁶. This name had been lost to North Baffin because of the migration, and when the old man was dying he had asked that his name be returned to its proper land. Similarly, in visiting Pond Inlet I had difficulties talking with Inuit about people in Arctic Bay because they could not understand whom I was talking about. I found that people were referred to by different names in different communities, the name being used aligned with the social relations of the particular community, and was one of the alternate names each person carried.

An analysis of the distribution of names amongst the North Baffin communities of Clyde River, Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay, and Igloolik revealed some striking patterns. Each community had a set of names that were unique and distinctive to the community. The situation was complicated by the fact that the communities are made up of a number of internally distinctive groups within the region. Thus Arctic Bay

¹⁵ op.cit, p. 154.

has the Tununirrusirmiut (“the people of the little back side”, i.e. the northern part of Admiralty Inlet) who are more closely related to the Tununirmiut of Pond Inlet and the Ikirasarjungmiut (“the people of the narrows”, .e. the southern part of Admiralty Inlet and Berlinguet Inlet) who are more closely related to the Agumiut, who now reside in Igloolik. Thus portions of the population shared names with Pond Inlet while other portions shared names with Igloolik. There was also a set of names that were common to all the communities. I suggested that the distinctive names located people precisely in relation to particular lands, while the more general names allowed people to move over large areas and still be able to link into the social relations of names within other regions. It appeared from the analysis that in the variety of names held by each person allowed both these specific and more general associations.

Arctic Bay provided a unique analytical opportunity because the entire district (or at least the northern Tununirrusirmiut) had become depopulated in 1893, and a new group moved in to occupy the area in 1908. Interestingly, and most confusing, the people who reoccupied the region had the same names as those who had disappeared. The accounts by the whalers of the time – Mutch, Bernier and Tremblay - are confusing because the names by which the whalers knew these people in Pond Inlet are different from the names of the people who appear in Arctic Bay and the genealogies there. The same names reoccupied the territory, they were just different people.

This creates the appearance of continuity and permanence, as the same names are always present, while actual bodies move through the names. In one case, the

¹⁶ Guy Mary-Rousseliere, Qitdlarssuaq: The Story of a Polar Migration. Winnipeg, Wuerz

name Attagustiaq was held by three different people over the history of Arctic Bay (1908 to 1980), but there was always an Attagutsiaq present – sometimes a woman, sometimes a man. Ultimately, what this allowed Inuit to do was to define very precisely who belonged on what lands – a clear definition of land ownership mediated by the naming system. One should note that land, in Inuit terms, is never named after people¹⁷ but people are usually named after the land, *-miut* “the people of...

Focusing on names solved a number of other problems in understanding Inuit social relations. As Burch¹⁸ has so eloquently shown, marriage among Inuit lacks any sense of formality or institutionalisation and this has created problems in understanding systems of kinship and marriage. However, once one realises that a husband and a wife come to a marriage already embedded in a set of relations given by their names which they maintain throughout their lives, then they have continuing social relations to others outside of the marriage. Husbands and wives therefore only incorporate to form a new social group in a limited fashion while maintaining confederative ties outside of the marriage (to use David Turner’s¹⁹ terms). Marriages are thus *a priori* internally divided with obligations and interests outside of the marriage. This would also give some clues as to what positive marriage rules Inuit may have: those people who are cross-gendered by their names always marry people who are similarly cross-gendered, and the transformation of *illu* from potential to actual marriage partners may be limited by the name relationships already held

¹⁷ with the notable and puzzling, to Inuit, exception of Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet) which means the place that has Mittimat, presumably because he is buried there, but nobody knows who Mittimat was.

¹⁸ Ernest S. Burch, Jr., Eskimo Kinsmen: Changing Family Relationships in Northwest Alaska. American Ethnological Society Monograph 59, West Publishing, St. Paul, 1975

between the people (i.e. it would be unnecessary to marry someone with whom one already has a name relationship).

Similarly, some of the puzzles over the extensive adoption practices of Inuit become clearer. It is well established ethnographically that some 22 to 25% of Inuit children are adopted but there have been a number of explorations of why this may be the case from demographic (Dunning) to symbolic (Guemple). However, if one notes that in many cases there is an attempt to return a name to its home, *angiraqlaqquq* (see both Soby and Nuttall), then the practice makes sense. Inuit see that a child bearing a particular name belongs with those people with whom it previously resided, so a child bearing a husband's name should go and live with its wife. If this factor is put to play in the analysis then the direction of many adoptions and the apparent variability of who may adopt a child become much clearer. Inuit attempt to recreate the social groups of the previous generations not only through the presence of names but by actually bringing the people together.

The close relationship between names and land is also expressed individually through an emphasis on the place of birth. All Inuit know precisely where they were born and in my experience become positively rhapsodic when they revisit their birth places. Closely related to this is the fact that when an Inuk visits land they (and their name?) have never been to before, they should stop and crawl on the land like a baby who cannot yet walk. Although it has not been practiced since about 1908, the winter ceremonies for Inuit concluded with the men lining up opposite the women from the oldest to the youngest. Each person had to call out their name and the place they were born. After this, the *angakkut* (shaman) would organize couples to have sexual

intercourse for the night (a kind of generalized spouse exchange). Clearly, lining up at calling out the names and birthplaces every year rearticulates the relations between people and the land as mediated through names, and both Blaisel (1990) and myself are tempted to hypothesize that the coupling organized by angakut was probably systematically based on reuniting partners through their names, or in other words recreating the social organization of the previous generation, for the present generation.

By placing names at the centre of our analysis, the naming system no longer appears to skew the “real” social relations provided by genealogical links, but indeed the other way around. Kinship is thus not a system of consanguinity and affinity linking people together and kinship terms do not describe those links. Rather kinship is now a structured set of relationships between names (and land and animals) into which each person enters at birth and the kinship terms reflect the relationships between those names as recreated each generation. The pragmatics of human reproduction and demographics continually throw the naming system out of line and these have to be readjusted to come into line with the names through practices such as adoption, spouse exchange and meat sharing. This would also mean that those analyses of the history of camp occupations, such as the work of Damas²⁰, Trott²¹ and Stevenson²² are inaccurate because they insist on showing the genealogical relations between camps. If they were redraw to follow the naming relationships between the people in the camps, a much more systematic picture of Inuit site occupations might emerge.

²⁰ Damas, Iglulingmiut Kinship.

This should also caution researchers on the way we map smaller more local level relationships such as those in families. As Saladin d'Anglure has shown, if we redraw a simple family chart working with the name relationships, the gender shifts that are generated by such name relationships and include adoptions, again following the names, then the structure of the family emerges as quite different. One of Saladin d'Anglure's observations is that Inuit favour male/female couples in their organization appearing in the charts as either brother/sister or husband/wife couples. The atom of kinship for Inuit is neither the nuclear family of Radcliffe-Brown nor the MB-ZS of Levi-Strauss but male/female \emptyset husband/wife::brother/sister. This can be seen in the major myths of Nuliajuq which tried to transform a father/daughter \emptyset husband/wife and the Sun and the moon myth which tried to transform brother/sister \emptyset husband/wife. Between these two stories, virtually every possible combination of male/female relationships is explored, in each case leading to failure. If sociologically, husband/wife relations are the logical inverse of brother/sister relations, the same is not so clear within Inuit socio-logic. The determination by the name of a relationship between a male and female (and even who is male and female is constructed by the name) means that the logical distinction relevant to sociology collapses for Inuit, and can emerge as either brother/sister or husband/wife or both together.

Having reoriented our understanding of Inuit kinship in terms of names, we must still take into account the *ilagiiit* relationships observed by other researchers. Indeed, Inuit can very clearly explicate their own sets of relationships within these terms. In one discussion with Qamaniq of Arctic Bay, he pointed out three levels of

relating among Inuit. He first noted the *igluqatigiit*, “those who shared a common dwelling”. These were marked by cohabitation and commensality, and the general sharing of any tools or items within the house. The second level was the *ilagiimariit*, “real kin”, which is the term Balikci uses to refer to the restricted *ila*. These were the people with whom one had in the past cohabited, but had since moved to form their own units (or ego had moved away from them). These included both the parents and siblings of the spouses and their children. While these people may now live in different dwellings, they were free to borrow or use any of the resources of the household without asking and at any time. Finally, there was the *ila* in general, or that broader group of people with whom oneself, or one’s *ilagiimariit* had relations. This model of an ever widening set of relations is similar to that expounded by Balikci, but note that it was expressed not in terms of genealogical links but in terms of past and present cohabitation and co-production relationships – closer to the models provided by Graburn and Guemple for Inuit social organization and Turner and Wertman for the Cree.

If there is an on-the-ground reality and conscious model of *ilagiit* how then do we relate this to my argument that Inuit social relations are based on naming through *tuqluraqtuq*? If we follow Turner’s²³ argument that the *ilagiit* represents an incorporative logic and the *tuqluraqtuq* relations represent a confederative logic, and the two cannot occur together at the same level of organization²⁴ then the Inuit seem to be working within a logical contradiction. I think this contradiction between these

²³ see “Ideology and Elementary Structures” as well as *Life Before Genesis*, (Leiden: Peter Lang, 1981)

²⁴ although Turner does note that they can occur together at different levels of organization. The Ojibwa, for example are incorporative at the local level of organization but use totems (confederative)

two modes is the core and the dynamic of Inuit social relations – a contradiction that emerges in all sorts of “real” ways in the social, symbolic and productive life of Inuit – and the contradiction that creates the surface “flexibility” or “indeterminacy” of Inuit social life. Visually, it is probably best to imagine a circle with a passage leading out of it (i.e., an *iglu*) criss-crossed with intersecting straight lines, one of which, at least, passes directly through the passage. The *iglu* represents the *ilagiit* cohabitation/co-production model enunciated by Qamaniq, Graburn and Guemple, while the intersecting straight lines represents the links created through names to other people and the land.

Such a model may sound complex, and perhaps it is, but it more adequately accounts for the variety of features on Inuit social organization that continue to bedevil anthropological analyses, and it is a model that is symbolically coherent with other aspects of Inuit thought. Indeed, I would argue that it is an Inuit model of their own social life. As stated, it had nothing to do with any of the models of Inuit social organization generated by Western anthropological theory, and challenges the way that we construct models of kinship systems in the first place.