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Inuit Place Names and Sense of Place

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Place Names and Arctic Anthropology

Among early arctic scientists, Franz Boas was the first to pay attention to indigenous place names. He stated that indigenous place names should be recorded on official maps and vigorously denounced explorers and whalers alike who felt free to baptize any place they wanted and ignore Inuit toponyms. Unlike foreign names, he argued, Inuit place names fitted the landscape perfectly (1885: 51, cited in Cole and Müller-Wille 1984: 52).

During his year of fieldwork around Cumberland Sound on Baffin Island (1883–84) Boas carefully recorded and mapped 930 place names, a project discussed in detail by Müller-Wille and Weber Müller-Wille elsewhere in this book. Their comparative study conducted a hundred years later offers important insights into the dynamics of place names and of Inuit geographic knowledge.

Most arctic anthropologists who followed in Boas's footsteps recorded some local toponyms in the field but never conducted systematic surveys. They saw place names as one means, among others, of getting acquainted with the territory of the Inuit they were studying. Place names were part of what traditional anthropology considered the general background data all anthropologists should collect during the first weeks of fieldwork, before moving to the research itself. In the late 1960s anthropologists Saladin d'Anglure and Dorais broke with that practice and conducted a broad place name survey among the Inuit of Nunavik (northern Quebec). Yet their prior interest was neither place names nor geographic knowledge. Their collection was neither published nor analyzed.

Thus it is perhaps not surprising that it took someone with a background in both cultural anthropology and geography to look at place names for their intrinsic value. In the late 1970s Müller-Wille put toponymic surveying at the center of a research agenda that linked together toponyms and knowledge of the land. Contesting the official representation of Inuit land conveyed by official maps (published in Canada by the Department of Natural Resources), he advocated for the recognition of Inuit toponymy, arguing that "in their complexity [place names show] an intimate knowledge of the land that the existing maps do not provide" (Müller-Wille 1987: xii). Müller-Wille's main collection covers the whole of Nunavik. It was published first as a gazetteer in 1987 and then as a set of 1:50,000 maps in the 1990s. The latter are in current use in Nunavik.

Müller-Wille's surveys were conducted with the intention of recording knowledge that was feared to be quickly disappearing as elders passed away. The loss of traditional place names was presumed to be one of the many consequences of the settling down process of the 1950s and 1960s. Both researchers and elders worried about such a situation, and in many communities the elders often requested that toponymic surveys be conducted to ensure that their knowledge would outlive them. "Throughout my work on place names with the Inuit I found that their concern was the same as in Aivilik (Repulse Bay): to transfer the knowledge of their land with its place names into a form that would ensure its continuation with future Inuit generations and project a true image and identity of the land" (Müller-Wille 1987: xii).

Toponymic survey projects in the Canadian Arctic also gained the support of Inuit politicians. From a geopolitical perspective, putting Inuit names on the maps was seen as an efficient way of asserting Inuit rights to land and a strong act of Inuit empowerment. Toponymic surveys are also often presented as a useful tool for preserving the ability of younger Inuit to travel on their land. The assumption was that place names are part of a wider knowledge related to traveling and hunting. It is common to hear Inuit asserting that if you know the place names, you cannot get lost:

> Land marks were also observed in naming places. All land features like hills, lakes, rivers, islands, peninsulas and bays were given names. Young people today do no longer observe these geographical features nor do they use their names. . . . People travelled long distances without maps using place names and stories behind them. (Johnny Epoo, president of Avataq Cultural Institute, cited in Müller-Wille 1987: x)

> It's good that you are writing our place names on the maps. It will be useful to us. There are many names we don't know, and so we don't go hunting and traveling far from the settlement. If you know the names you don't get lost so much; it's easier. (Inuinnait man, twenty-nine years old, author's fieldnotes, 1991)

In the early 1990s anthropologist Mark Nuttall looked at place names from a rather different perspective. His main goal was to study the sense of belonging, locality, and continuity; that is, the system of values that are important for contemporary Inuit identity in northwestern Greenland. He was therefore interested in the way Inuit view their landscape and develop a relationship with their land. The physical environment, he stated, is not only "action space" but also "thought space" (Nuttall 1992). He recorded some thirty toponyms of the Kangersuatsiarmiut territory, in a nonsystematic survey. These place names made him realize "it did not seem enough to just record land use sites, there were additional layers of meaning to understand" (Nuttall 1992: 49).

According to Nuttall, Kangersuatsiarmiut's toponyms fall into three main categories, depending on their meaning: names that refer to physical features, names that reflect analogy, and names that inform about land and sea use (the majority of the names collected). But what really matters, he argues, is that place names are multidimensional: they carry much more meaning than just that of the name itself. They have a "hidden meaning" that expresses itself in Inuit memory and in storytelling.

> Whatever place names say about geography, analogy or subsistence activities, however, many have an additional layer of meaning. It is precisely that which is hidden and invisible in the land which is often neglected. Stories and myths unfold against a geographical backdrop. Events, whether contemporary, historical or mythical, that happen at certain points in the local area tend to become integral elements of those places. They are thought about and remembered with reference to specific events and experiences and it is in this sense I refer to landscape as a memoryscape. Memories take the form of stories about real and remembered things. They cannot be separated from the land even though place names do not immediately reflect such stories. Some place names may be mnemonic devices, triggering a collective memory of an event that has significance for the community. (Nuttall 1992: 54)

Studying Inuit Geographic Knowledge

In 1991 I began a research project on Inuit geographic knowledge, focusing on the Inuinnait (Copper Eskimos) of the western central Canadian Arctic. My particular theoretical interest as a human geographer was in nonscientific geographic knowledge. A century earlier geography had positioned itself in the academic field as a contact discipline between natural sciences and social sciences. The emphasis was on the methods and theories of the natural sciences and, as a result, on places rather than on people. In the 1970s geography took a dramatic turn to become a social science, a unique revolution in the history of modern sciences.

From the beginning of modern geography in the 1880s both human and physical geographers stressed the importance of fieldwork. Robic (1991) has shown how scientific geographic knowledge often relied on local—"popular"—knowledge for basic information, using it also as a kind of field-proof to confirm more theoretical claims. But the knowledge itself, as a global and organized set of information, was either despised or ignored. My research was consequently aimed at demonstrating that a nonscientific knowledge was indeed a real knowledge and not just loose pieces of information. Although this sounds obvious today it was not the case just a decade or so ago, when the word *knowledge* itself was seldom used in the realm of the nonscientific. That was before traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) became a major topic in anthropology. Advocating for full recognition of Inuit geographic knowledge, my work also aimed at developing Inuit empowerment through the recognition of the value of their own knowledge.

In the "Anglo" social sciences such research would certainly have been fostered by postcolonial studies, and one might expect here a discussion emanating from a number of quotes from well-known geographers and anthropologists. French academia, however, does not have such studies, and although I have become familiar with the literature over the years, it was not part of the theoretical background from which my research agenda stemmed.[1] From the beginning, in the 1960s and 1970s, French social sciences have been greatly influenced by the works of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, which rapidly became mainstream references. From the early 1980s Pierre Bourdieu on the one hand and Raymond Boudon on the other became major sources of theoretical constructions. This has not been true of postmodern theory in general, however, which to this day remains quite marginal in France. Although some authors, such as Jacques Derrida,

a poststructuralist rather than a postmodernist, have had a definite impact through the practice of deconstruction, the general bulk of postmodern theory has not pervaded the French academy the way it has in Anglo social sciences. Neither has feminist theory.

My research project demanded that I first find out what kind of information made up Inuinnait geographic knowledge; and then that I understood and showed how the various pieces of information were structured to form an efficient knowledge people can call upon when needed. Place names were obviously part of the information I wanted to identify and analyze. Since they had never been recorded in the western central Arctic region, my fieldwork (September 1991 to June 1992 and November–December 1992) included an extensive place name survey. I carried out the survey in the four communities where the Inuinnait (some three thousand in 1992) settled between the mid-1950s and the late 1960s: Cambridge Bay, Holman, Kugluktuk (Coppermine), and Umingmaktok-Qingaun (Bay Chimo and Bathurst Inlet).[2]

Holman was already familiar to me as I had been part of an archaeological dig thirty miles east of the community in the summer of 1980, along with local Inuit teenagers. I had also lived in the community from June 1986 to January 1987 when preparing my masters in geography. Of the four communities, three are today in Nunavut and one—Holman—is in the Northwest Territories (map 11.1). This odd partition is the result of the coming of Western Inuit—Inuvialuit—to the northwest coast of Victoria Island in the 1920s and 1930s (Condon 1994). Holman is therefore a mixed community of Inuinnait and Inuvialuit. Its population decided to join the Inuvialuit land claim agreement in 1984, which led to their remaining in the Northwest Territories after the 1999 division between the NWT and the new territory of Nunavut. The Inuinnait dialect—*Inuinnaqtun*—is the common language of all Holman Inuit fluent in their native language, although some individuals are also fluent in *Siglitun* or *Ummarmiutun* (see Nagy, this volume).

The place name survey extended from October 1991 to early April 1992. Staying in the area for over ten months gave me time to speak not only to those elders who were identified as knowledgeable about place names but to all the elders, men and women alike, who still had sound minds. I also interviewed most of the active adult hunters (and trappers) as well as the younger adults who were identified by others or by themselves as knowledgeable about place names. In contrast to that of Müller-Wille and Weber Müller-Wille (see their chapter in this volume), my goal was not only the quality of the place name set collected. I also wanted to assess how

11.1. Inuit communities of Canada (NWT, Nunavut, and Nunavik).

toponymic knowledge is shared, or not, by members of a community, and how different individuals develop a personal knowledge out of a common background shared by the community as a whole. Sixty-nine Inuinnait volunteered in the survey, and I hired four local translators. The methodology for the survey followed Müller-Wille's (1985) and is discussed in detail in Collignon (2006). Although I encountered a few English place names given by younger Inuit to previously unnamed places, it is remarkable that most "new names" were Inuinnaqtun ones, expressing the vitality of toponymic knowledge.

Altogether I recorded 1,007 place names, on 1:50,000 scale maps where available (the whole mainland, a few parts of Victoria Island, and some inlets) and on 1:250,000 scale maps elsewhere. The coordinates of the 228 toponyms recorded on the latter could not be plotted accurately because the scale was too small. Therefore they do not appear on map 11.2, which shows the location of only 779 Inuinnait toponyms.

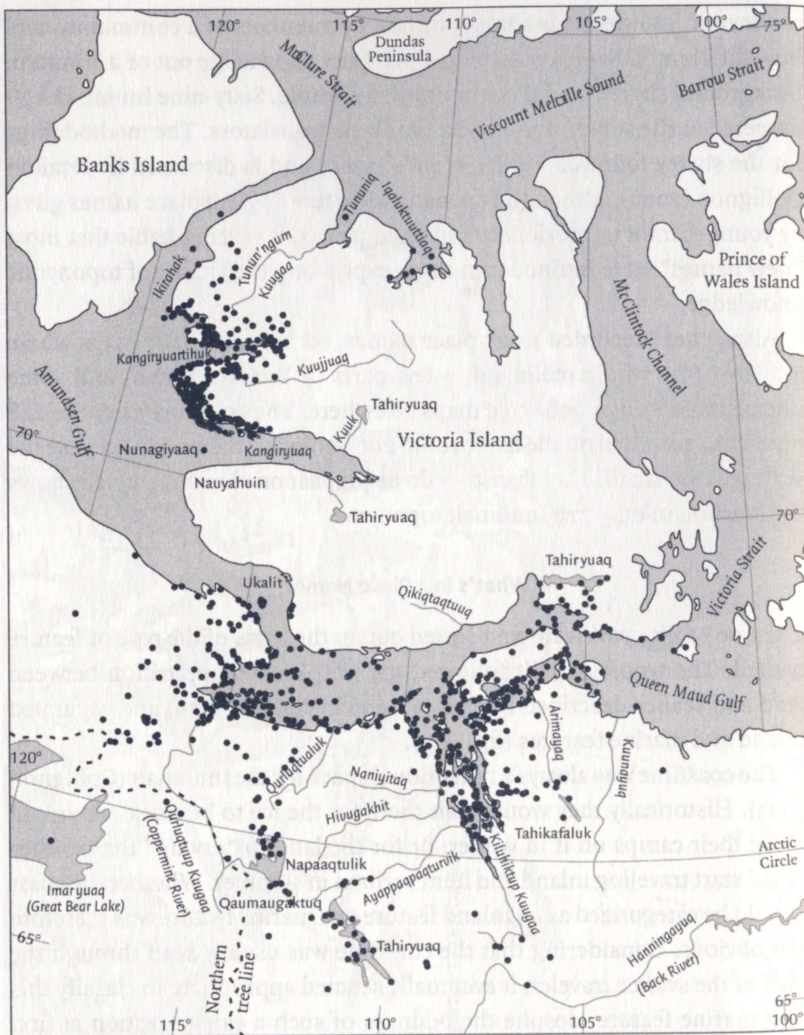
What's in a Place Name?

The 1,007 toponyms were first sorted out on the basis of the type of feature named. The typology built followed the well-known opposition between land and sea/ice described as early as 1906 by Mauss (1979) and separated inland and marine features (fig. 11.3).

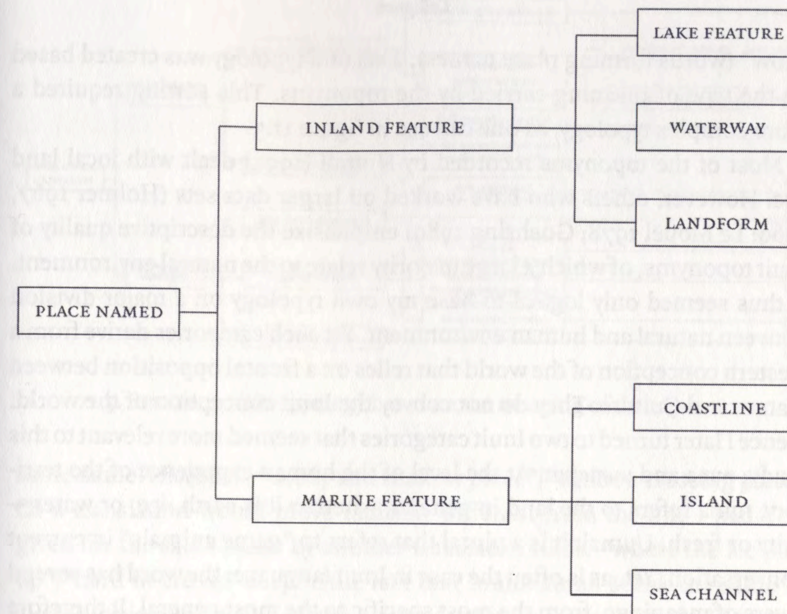
The coastline was always a transitional space for the Inuinnait (Collignon 1993). Historically they would wait there for the ice to be thick enough to move their camps on it in winter; or for the land to "dry up" that so they could start traveling inland and hunt caribou in summer. Whether the coast should be categorized as an inland feature or a marine feature was therefore not obvious. Considering that the coastline was usually seen through the eyes of the sea/ice traveler, it eventually seemed appropriate to classify this as a marine feature, despite the oddness of such a categorization at first sight. Results showed that although inland features were more numerous, marine ones occurred in good proportion (40 percent). Lakes were the feature most named (fig. 11.4).

This typology reveals the kinds of features Inuit are more likely to name. It gives us a first glimpse of their way of looking at the landscape. Yet it is only a superficial glance and it fails to unveil truly enough about Inuit geographic knowledge and relationship to the land. This calls for another look at place names, from a different perspective.

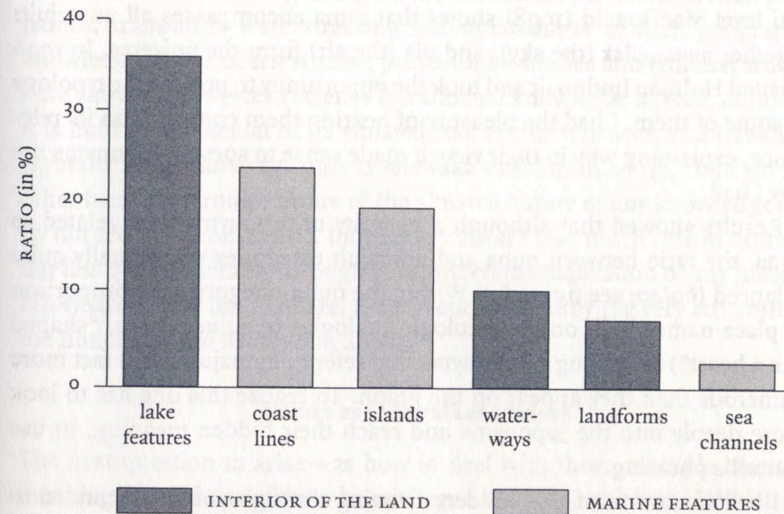
Moving from the question "what" (features named) to the question



11.2. Spatial distribution of 779 Inuinnait toponyms (out of 1,007 collected).



11.3. Structure of the typology based on the type of feature named.



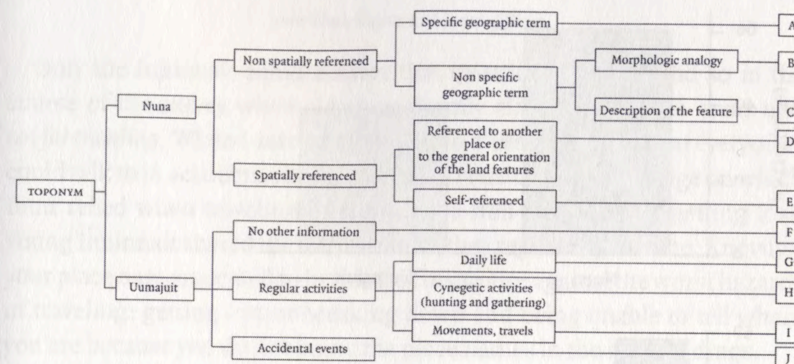
11.4. Distribution of toponyms according to the type of feature named.

"how" (words forming place names), a second typology was created based on the type of meaning carried by the toponyms. This sorting required a more complex typology, as one can see in figure 11.5.

Most of the toponyms recorded by Nuttall (1992) dealt with local land use. However, others who have worked on larger data sets (Holmer 1967, 1969; Le Mouël 1978; Goehring 1989) emphasize the descriptive quality of Inuit toponyms, of which a large majority relate to the natural environment. It thus seemed only logical to base my own typology on a major division between natural and human environment. Yet such categories derive from a western conception of the world that relies on a frontal opposition between Nature and Culture. They do not convey the Inuit conception of the world. Hence I later turned to two Inuit categories that seemed more relevant to this study: *nuna* and *uumajuit*. At the level of the human experience of the territory, nuna refers to the land in general, whether it is earth, ice, or water—salty or fresh. Uumajuit is a plural that refers to "game animals" in current conversation. Yet, as is often the case in Inuit language, the word has several layers of meanings, from the most specific to the most general. It therefore can also refer to all animals and, at its most general and abstract level, to all the living beings that are animated by a vital warmth and roam over nuna: the people, the animals, and all other beings, such as giants, dwarfs, etc. Unlike the westerners' opposed categories of "physical" and "human" environment, nuna and uumajuit are complementary. At an even more general level MacDonald (1998) shows that nuna encompasses all uumajuit: together *nuna*, *qilak* (the sky), and *sila* (the air) form the universe. In 1996 I visited Holman Inuinnait and took the opportunity to present the typology to some of them. I had the pleasure of hearing them comment on its relevance, explaining why in their view it made sense to sort the toponyms the way I had.

Results showed that although a majority of toponyms were related to nuna, the ratio between nuna and uumajuit categories was actually quite balanced (60/40; see fig. 11.6.). Within the nuna categories the proportion of place names built on morphologic analogies (e.g., *umannaq*, "shaped like a heart") is striking.[3] Toponyms that refer to uumajuit are in fact more numerous than they appear on the graph. To realize this one has to look more deeply into the toponyms and reach their hidden meaning, to use Nuttall's phrasing.

I became aware of this hidden meaning through comments added to toponyms during the survey, especially those coming from the translators.[4] For example, a translator would give two totally different translations for the



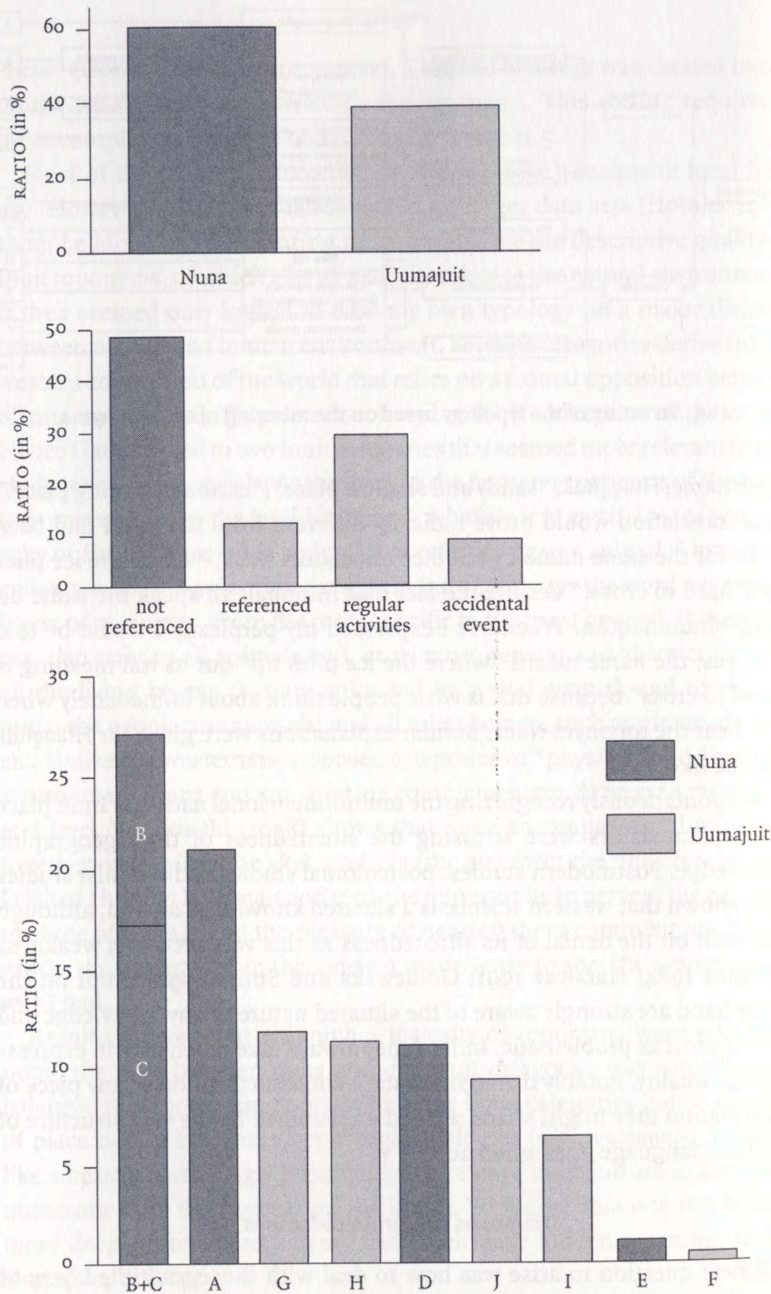
11.5. Structure of the typology based on the meaning of the toponyms.

same name: *Hiuqqitak*, "sandy and shallow place"/"caribou crossing place." Or a translation would prove radically different from the one I had been given for the same name by another translator: *Nilak*, "where the ice piles up"/"hard to cross," despite the fact that Inuinnait all speak the same dialect—Inuinnaqtun. Whenever I expressed my perplexity I would be told that, yes, the name means "where the ice piles up" but its *real* meaning is "hard to cross" because this is what people think about immediately when they hear the toponym *Nilak*. Similar explanations were given for *Hiuqqitak* and the like.

By spontaneously recognizing the multidimensional nature of Inuit place names, translators were stressing the situatedness of their geographic knowledge. Postmodern studies, postcolonial studies and feminist studies have shown that western science is a situated knowledge as well, although it is built on the denial of its situatedness as this was seen as a weakness (Lyotard 1984; Haraway 1991; Godlewska and Smith 1994). Inuit on the other hand are strongly aware of the situated nature of any knowledge and do not see it as problematic. Indeed they always take much care in expressing this quality, notably through constant contextualization of any piece of information they might share, a trend encouraged by the very structure of the Inuit language (Collignon 2006).

Names as Cultural Landscapes

The next question to arise was how to deal with those multiple layers of meaning. Should one of them be privileged and if so, which one? Which led to another question: what are place names for, apart from being a useful tool for the researcher?



11.6. Distribution of toponyms according to their meaning. Letters A–J refer to the ten categories of meaning described in figure 11.5.

Only the Inuinnait could answer that question, and they did so in the course of the survey when elders uniformly claimed that *place names were not for traveling*. When I started my research it seemed obvious to everyone I could talk to in academia that place names were useful knowledge on which Inuit relied when traveling to stay on the trail and to avoid getting lost. Young Inuinnait shared the same view, as they repeatedly told me. Knowing your place names seemed to be a sort of insurance against the worst hazards of traveling: getting lost or breaking down and being unable to tell where you are because you do not know the place names in the surroundings.

Yet in the second week of the toponymic survey I met with an elder who knew only the place names for the area in which he had grown up, and none for the area where he had hunted and trapped for most of his adult life. As this seemed very odd to me I asked how he managed to travel without such precious knowledge. His answer was straightforward and did not surprise the translator at all: place names are not needed to travel. Following this interview, I made sure I asked everyone interviewed whether he or she thought of place names as part of the knowledge related to traveling and if they were needed for traveling safely. The same negative reply was given over and over, both by those who knew a lot of place names and by those who hardly knew any. The extreme case was an elder from Cambridge Bay who knew only five place names but was famous as a hunter and traveler. In Kugluktuk the survey took place in the meeting room of the Hunters and Trappers Association, a building open to visitors. Some active hunters made a habit of coming to listen to other interviewees, especially when these were elders, as they were curious to learn the toponymy of areas where they hunted or trapped on a regular basis. Their attitude confirmed both the Inuinnait interest in toponyms and the very loose relation between toponymic knowledge and traveling knowledge. But if place names were not for traveling, what were they for? And why was it so obviously important to all the Inuinnait that they should be recorded and eventually recognized by the Canadian government as the official toponymy of the region?

My research on Inuinnait geographic knowledge made it clear that place names are a narrative about the land. They tell the story of the land and of its people, a story that emphasizes space rather than time, as is also clear from Nagy's analysis in this book. And it is for their quality as narratives, as holders of an essential part of Inuit memory, that place names should be recorded and passed on from one generation to the next. They are a major piece in the construction of a memoryscape (Nuttall 1992) out of the neutral

landscape. This memoryscape could also be called cultural landscape, in a renewed definition of the latter. According to Carl Sauer (1925), who created the expression, cultural landscapes are the material expressions of cultures that have carved out natural landscapes to conform to their specific needs and values.[5] Historically Inuit people left hardly any conspicuous material sign of their presence in the landscape save for inukshuks (*inuksuit*) built here and there and tent rings and other evidence of their camps. Yet they do transform the landscape, if only intellectually, through the way they read it. Our tendency to think of place names as an operative tool for traveling instead of as a narrative through which a tight relationship to the land is built can be interpreted as a legacy of a tradition that emphasized the material culture over the intellectual one.

As narratives, place names are useful not for the action of traveling but for later telling the story of the journey. They enable the traveler to share the experience with kin after returning home. Place names are spoken at camp, in the igloo or the *tupiq* (tent), as often as on the land. They are words and as such they have a special power, much greater than the sometimes simple meaning they seem to carry at first glance: *tahiq*, "a lake," is never just a lake. It is always much more than that, as it is heard and understood within a rich context of land use and experience that its simple evocation triggers in people's thoughts. The chapter about *Tatiik* in Collignon (2006) clearly illustrates that. For the Inuinnait of Holman, the neutral descriptive name tatiik, meaning "the two lakes,"—is indeed a powerful one, which reminds people of the importance of fishing as a subsistence activity but also of the strong emotions linked to the regular occupation of a camp site over several generations. Place names appear as mediators between the land and the people as well as between the people themselves. They are one of the means through which the experiences of interactions with the land can be shared, and thus through which the land can be understood and become a human place where one can live a full life, not just survive.

Thus knowing place names obviously enriches the knowledgeable traveler's journey, since the succession of names along the trail unfolds the story of the long and complex relationship between the land and the people. And this explains why Kugluktuk's active hunters were eager to learn more toponyms from their elders: not to avoid getting lost but to deepen their experience of a land they travel on a regular basis. Yet on practical grounds, place names are not necessary: they are not part of what could be called the "traveler's survival kit."

Place names hold in themselves many stories of the oral tradition. Those

Table 11.1. Place names in collections of Inuinnait oral tradition.

Source	Number of stories collected	Number of stories mentioning at least one toponym	Total number of toponyms mentioned	Number of toponyms mentioned also collected in 1991–92 survey
D. Jenness 1914–16 (published 1924)	52	13 (25%)	17	13, in 10 stories (76%)
K. Rasmussen 1923–24 (published 1932)	51	6 (11%)	12	7, in 4 stories (58%)
M. Métayer 1958 (published 1973)	109	42 (39%)	50	33, in 32 stories (66%)
Collignon's 1991–92 survey (published 1996)	toponyms: 1,007	toponyms that triggered a story: 45	number of stories: 45	stories triggered also mentioned in at least 1 of the 3 collections: 44 (98%)

are either inscribed in the literal meaning of the name or in its hidden meaning. Some stories are mundane: picking berries, catching lots of fish, losing one's knife, etc. Others remind people of wise and not so wise land uses; for example, recalling starvation episodes as direct consequences of a wrong decision (such as spending the summer on an island instead of on the mainland: since the Inuinnait did not have sea kayaks, they could not leave after ice breakup had occurred). Others are related to a spiritual reading or understanding of the land and tell about magical or strange beings, good or evil.

This link between place names and oral tradition can also be approached via oral tradition. In stories, names of places where something happened are sometimes mentioned, as are names of regular campsites or meeting places. Some stories have a complex metaphysical meaning, such as the origin of death or clouds; others are stories of everyday life or particular episodes, such as starvation, murders, and meeting with other groups (Collignon 2002). So far Inuinnait stories of the oral tradition have been recorded in a systematic way in three historic collections (table 11.1), presented in detail in Collignon 2006.[6] Comparing these collections with the results of the 1991–92 place name survey shows important variation in the proportion of stories mentioning toponyms. It also shows great stability in

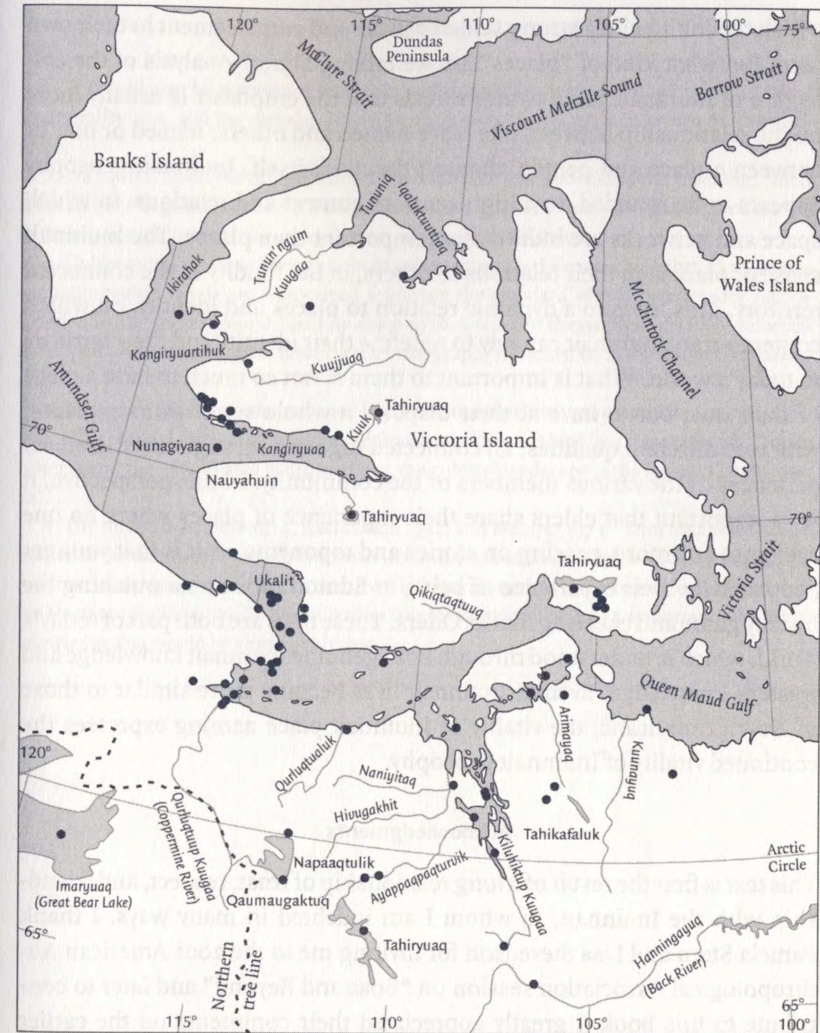
toponymic knowledge through time, as 58 to 76 percent of the place names mentioned in a collection were also collected during my survey. This corroborates Müller-Wille and Weber Müller-Wille's findings discussed elsewhere in the present volume.

As some of those place names are found in several collections, we come to a total of seventy-two place names that either were mentioned in at least one of the three published collections and recorded during the 1991–92 survey; or were recorded during the place name survey and triggered a story that is found in at least one of the three collections. The story, in its recorded form, did not always mention the place name itself. The spatial distribution of those seventy-two place names as it appears on map 11.7 shows that they are located both at the core of the Inuinnait territory and at its margins, as if underlining its limits.

Inuit Geosophy and Sense of Place

As a narrative about the land, place names act like witnesses telling us about the relationship Inuit build with their environment. They express the Inuinnait view of the landscape and their own understanding of their land—that is, their geosophy or geographical wisdom. Geosophy goes beyond a practical and efficient geographical knowledge. It encompasses feelings, dreams, hopes, values, and beliefs. Although built on shared values, pieces of information, and representations, it is highly individual: each person slowly develops a geosophy through a lifetime. I mentioned earlier the important variations of toponymic knowledge among good hunters. As a group, the Inuinnait of one area recognize a set of place names as shared among them and therefore as legitimate. But as individuals some are interested in continuously developing their knowledge of this set, whereas others almost totally ignore the names. On top of that, some individuals develop their own personal toponymy. These were not recorded in my survey and were seldom mentioned—in those cases as family place names—rather than as individuals' place names. We need to acknowledge the diversity among the groups we study and with whom we work. Unlike scientific knowledge, theirs is not normative and allows for important variations, depending not only on gender and age but also, and perhaps more important, on individual personality. So far, social scientists have not been keen on working at such a level. Yet Nuttall's reflection on knowledge gathering (1998a) clearly shows how necessary it is to do so.

As a narrative about the land, place names also act as a major means by



11.7. Spatial distribution of the seventy-two toponyms mentioned in at least one collection.

which the Inuit build a strong sense of place and emplacement in their own land. But what kind of "places" are we talking about? Analysis of the collection of Inuinnait place names reveals that the emphasis is usually more on the relationship between one place named and others, named or not, or between a place and people, than on the place itself. Inuinnait geosophy appears to be founded on a high sense of context and relations, in which space and networks are indeed more important than places. The Inuinnait sense of place is in their relations to others, in the fluidity of the connected territory. This leads to a dynamic relation to places and identity, on which contemporary Inuinnait can rely to redefine their identity and their territory in today's world. What is important to them is not so much to have a place of their own but to have at their disposal a whole set of various places, with very different qualities, all connected together through the shared experiences of the various members of the community. In this perspective, it is as important that elders share their experience of places where no one ever goes any more, passing on stories and toponyms, as it is that younger people share their experience of being in Edmonton's arena watching the hockey game and cheering for the Oilers. These tales are both part of today's world, which is understood through both genuine Inuinnait knowledge and western knowledge. Even as Inuinnait lives become more similar to those of North Americans, the vitality of Inuinnait place naming expresses the continued vitality of Inuinnait geosophy.

Acknowledgments

This text is first the result of a long relationship of trust, respect, and friendship with the Inuinnait, to whom I am indebted in many ways. I thank Pamela Stern and Lisa Stevenson for inviting me to the 2001 American Anthropological Association session on "Boas and Beyond" and later to contribute to this book. I greatly appreciated their comments on the earlier version of this chapter, as well as their editing of my prose. The research presented was sponsored by a doctoral grant from the French Department of Research and Education, 1990–93. The Geographical Names Board of Canada through the Territorial Toponymy Program of the government of the Northwest Territories provided all the maps needed. The Inuinnait freely contributed to the project, giving their time and expertise. Research permits for fieldwork were issued by the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories, permit numbers 11165N, 12067R, and 12257R. All figures are the author's.

Notes

1. It should also be mentioned here that, unlike anthropology, geography did not take a structuralist turn, and the theories of Lévi-Strauss were never a great influence on the discipline.

2. On April 1, 2006, the official name of Holman changed to Ulukhaktok, meaning, "there are plenty of things [rocks] to make women's knives (ulu)." The name change occurred too late in the production process to correct the text and maps in this book.

3. Unlike most Canadian Inuit, Inuinnait write using only the roman alphabet. In this chapter, Inuinnaqtun words are transcribed following the standard roman orthography recommended by the Inuit Cultural Institute since 1976. Inuinnait themselves remained reluctant to adopt it until the late 1990s, favoring the orthography inherited from the Anglican missionaries.

4. Three of my four translators (aged thirty-one to fifty-eight) were women.

5. "The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result" (Sauer 1925: 22).

6. The three are Jenness 1924, Rasmussen 1932, and Métayer 1973. "Oral tradition" is here limited to the stories told as such by storytellers, although anthropologists today agree that oral tradition encompasses much more than that. Life stories such as those recorded and published for Northern Inuinnait by Richard Condon (1996) obviously convey an important toponymic knowledge that would be worth analyzing.