

PART I



INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Perspectives



While we still have our body functioning so that we are still breathing the breath of life that was given to us by God, while we still have to step on the earth before we part with her, we cannot live a life that is completely different from what we have got. This is known from time immemorial. Therefore you cannot neglect it as long as our body is still alive. These were the reasons why the elders wanted us to know about these things, that is being cruel to animals and in addition, that the game animals that we hunt for food, are the things that come from God. From the time earth came into being and subsequently after that, game animals were placed so that humans can use them for sustenance. That is the reason why they are, right up to this day.

—George Kappianaq, IE 330

In recent years, the study of human-animal relations has developed so much that it has become a field of research in its own right.¹ The emphasis has shifted from symbolic approaches to ethno-zoological, ecological and environmental perspectives.² In this book, we will adopt an anthropological perspective that gives priority to the participants' views (see Oosten 2005). In this approach we do not explore whether Inuit knowledge of animals and their environment is symbolic or experiential, technical or spiritual, modern or traditional.³ These distinctions make little sense to the participants anyway, as the very connections between these various levels are essential to the nature of their knowledge of animals and their world. Rather, we focus on the organization, dynamics and developments of this knowledge itself. It is quite clear that Inuit knowledge transformed considerably in the twentieth century, when Inuit gradually left the hunting camps to settle in small permanent communities, embracing Christianity and modernity. Today, Inuit knowledge is usually referred to as Inuit *qaujimajatuqangit*,⁴ in

the context of Nunavut as a new political entity. Ideas and values that are central to Inuit knowledge play an important role in contemporary conflicts and debates focusing on the hunt of animals such as caribou, belugas, polar bears, whales and so forth. Inuit strongly resent external attempts to manage animals as if they were a limited resource. Now that Inuit have become familiar with Western concepts relating to animals and their environment, and the Nunavut government has taken responsibility with respect to the management of wildlife, Inuit have tried to reconcile the different perspectives.

However, Nadasdy (2003) is quite right when he argues that the idea of co-management of wildlife and other resources and land claims processes are based on Euro-American concepts of 'knowledge' and 'property' more than on local aboriginal perspectives and that incompatibilities between aboriginal views and perspectives with Western ones are still significant (see Nadasdy 2003; Cruikshank 2004). In many respects the implementation of new bureaucracies does not help the hunters faced with new expectations and new rules. As Nadasdy observes, 'In many ways First Nations offices across Canada now resemble miniature versions of federal and provincial/territorial bureaucracies. They are staffed by fish and wildlife officers, lands coordinators, heritage officers, and a host of other First Nations employees who deal regularly with their bureaucratic counterparts' (2003: 2). These transformations had and still have numerous and far-reaching effects for all aboriginal groups, including Inuit. People have to learn new ways of speaking to be understood by wildlife, biology, and bureaucratic resource management officers. They have to put aside many of their beliefs and practices and trust these new relationships with old colonial institutions at a time when the financial and international markets tend to impose their own logics, as in the case of mining activities and the protection of the environment.

Inuit therefore look to *qaujimajatuqangit* for guidance, as this knowledge allowed them to survive for thousands of years. In this book we explore the richness of Inuit traditions, the perceptions, practices and stories relating to animals and the land. We focus on the ethnographic data and leave aside substantial discussions about the relation between traditional/indigenous knowledge and wildlife management. In discussing the academic debates on human-animal relationships, we will confine ourselves to a broad outline of the main currents in the debates and focus especially on topics that are relevant to our understanding of Inuit perceptions and practices.

In the anthropological field of human-animal relationships, four main streams of research can be discerned. They build on the pioneer-

ing work of anthropologists such as Irving Hallowell in North America and André-Georges Haudricourt in the Pacific. They were inspired by a variety of structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Mary Douglas and Edmund Leach, and by historians of nature such as Keith Thomas in Great Britain and Robert Delort in France, and lately by philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

Gift and Reciprocity

The first group of important anthropological studies of human-animal relations was inspired by the famous theories of exchange of Marcel Mauss, influencing Robert Brightman, Ann Fienup-Riordan and Marshall Sahlins⁵ at the University of Chicago. The question of to what extent relations between hunters and prey can be considered reciprocal exchange became an issue of debate among scholars working with hunter-gatherers.

In *Bringing Home Animals* (1979), a detailed study on Mistassini Cree hunters of northern Quebec, Adrian Tanner refers to Mauss and Sahlins. He views Cree religion as an ideology combining shamanism and Christianity. Drawing on information collected during various fieldwork sessions in the late 1960s and 1970s as well as on classic ethnographic sources (especially Speck but also Rogers, Rousseau, etc.), Tanner questions the relation between Cree religious practices and their productive activities, showing that both spring from the same cognitive source. He examines the transformation of the religious ideology of the Mistassini Cree and their rites and beliefs relating to hunting and trapping with the onset of the fur trade. He opposes the 'religion of the bush' to the 'religion of the settlement', reflecting on a contrast between the hunting domain and the cash sectors of the economy. Such a dualism has been reported in many northern communities in the sub-Arctic and Arctic regions, but on closer scrutiny the boundary is not always clear.

Tanner also shows that Cree ritual and religious activities organize complex relationships in which hunters often have to force or trick their prey. Tanner explains how two modes of production gradually emerged, a capitalist one in the settlement and a domestic one based on subsistence hunting and trapping. Tanner (1979: 207) explains that Cree hunters could be divided into two groups, those having a reputation for skill in religious techniques and those skilled in non-religious techniques. He points out that these various techniques are not considered antagonistic. Tanner provides much of the ethnographic informa-

tion on what he calls 'the ecology of hunting' and on the ritualization of space, on rites of hunting divination (such as the shaking tent, the steam tent or scapulimancy, usually performed with porcupine or caribou shoulder blades), ritual relations between hunters and game animals, and respect for the animals killed. Some of his observations are quite relevant with respect to Inuit hunters.

A first point raised by Tanner is an ethnographic problem. As Tanner (1979: 26) states, 'Many of these rites are barely noticeable, and by themselves seem trivial superstitions. However, they can be shown to be parts of a system that has the organized purpose of controlling, predicting and explaining the behaviour of game animals, and the behavior of imaginary beings which are believed to influence the animals, or are identified with particular natural phenomena.' This is also valid for Inuit hunting practices. Many small rites, divinatory signs and rules easily escape ethnographers, as these gestures are part of the hunting routine.

Hunting usually requires preparatory rites, and it would be interesting to compare the steam tent ritual, which was already declining during Tanner's fieldwork among the Mistassini Cree, with the Inuit *nunagiksaqtuq* practice. Both rituals are clearly performed and intended to prepare and secure a good hunting season. The cleansing activities involved indicate that hunters cannot enter the animal domain without adequate precautions and preparations. The settlement also appears as a dirty place in contrast to the bush or the tundra.

Another point to be noted is the importance of dreams for hunters to predict their hunting success (Tanner 1979: 124). According to Tanner, a dream about a female human being often forecasts success in hunting. This is also true for the Inuit. Tanner (1979: 132) rightly concludes that hunting divination involves various levels of communication and its explicit purpose is to communicate with the animals and the agencies that control them.

Regarding human and animal relations, Tanner (1979: 138) distinguishes three major models for interaction based on three types of social relationships: (1) male-female, the victim being represented as the female lover of the hunter (see also Preston [(1975) 2002: 21] regarding bear hunting); (2) dominance-subordination, when 'magic is used to compel an animal to approach the hunter or in some other way allow itself to be caught', or when the shaman makes game animals come to the hunter; or in cases of animals who have masters; and (3) equivalence. In the third case, Tanner uses the notion of 'friendship' to qualify the relation between a hunter, usually a well-experienced hunter, elder or shaman, and the animal. In this case, good hunters are said

to have animals that act as pets, such as a goose. The hunter has to make offerings to his animal friend, and the relationship stops when the hunter dies. Much later, Peter Armitage (1992: 2) observed, 'Among the Innu people of eastern Quebec and Labrador, religious beliefs about animal masters and other spirits also continue to play an important role in shaping human behaviour.' He identified about ten animal masters, such as Papakashtshihk for the caribou, Nisk-napeu for the geese, Mashkuapeu for the bears, and so forth. Whereas the male-female metaphor certainly applies to Inuit hunting, a distinction between dominance-subordination and equivalence is not very helpful in understanding Inuit hunting.

Finally, Tanner provides many details about ritual aspects of killing animals, exploring the cases of the bear and the beaver. He describes the use of charms, clean clothing, decorations, offering of tobacco and so forth, and the various ways to show respect to the prey. He particularly distinguishes three separate occasions when ritual actions are required: (1) when the meat is brought into the dwelling of the hunter, (2) during the eating of the meat and (3) when the inedible remains are disposed of (Tanner 1979: 153). Hunters have to show gratitude and respect towards the animal by treating its body properly; this extends hunters' good fortune to future hunts. Numerous taboos are mentioned, such as food offerings, rules of serving food and so forth. Among these, the *asawaapin* is listed as a key operation, and it leads to Tanner's main thesis, which consists of a greeting ritual performed by children running out and greeting the hunter as he comes in with his prey. With respect to animals, Tanner (1979: 173) concludes that human-animal relations imply a series of prestations and counter-prestations: 'Men make gifts to the animal world, that is, to the bush, and in return are the recipients of gifts of game animals killed by the hunters.' Furthermore, Tanner observes:

During the third phase of the hunting cycle great stress is laid on the boundary separating the human domain (the inside of the dwelling) from the animal domain (the outside, and the bush). The *asawaapin* taboo keeps the domestic group inside as the hunter brings in the animal. ... The doorway ... permits the entry of the gift animal, while the chimney is used to send the offerings of food put in the fire back to the outside. This gives a model of exchange between man and animal. (1979: 173-74)

Regarding the respect hunters and their kin have to show towards the animal, Tanner (1979: 157) emphasizes that the kill has to be placed in a certain way so it can see the path, such that the animal should be 'laid on the floor of the dwelling in the middle of the family area, facing

the door', and Tanner concludes, 'The reason given is that the animal may see out through the door, and see how the hunter went out when he left to go hunting.' Similar rules for positioning the prey can be found among Inuit hunters.

In *Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships* (1993), Robert Brightman, a student of Sahlins, shows how the contrasting principles of reciprocity and domination play an essential part in human-animal relations in Cree cosmology. Using Rock Cree oral traditions extensively, Brightman argues that Cree human-animal relationships are complex and ambivalent. He explains that hunted animals are sometimes conceived of as giving themselves to the hunters in response to the hunter's respectful treatment of them as non-human persons, and sometimes as elusive adversaries.

According to Brightman, animals have their specific forms but reveal themselves as humans in certain contexts, such as death or rituals. Brightman (1993: 176) recalls that animals were initially human beings who lost their humanity: 'In the bush, they assume theriomorphic form and lose cultural attributes. When "killed" their disembodied spirits "come to be like human", and the perishable carcass is the medium through which human hunters seek to exchange with them. Thereafter, they are reborn or regenerate, lose their cultural attributes, and the cycle begins anew.' Brightman (1993: 119) thus connects respect for the animal to its regeneration. Rock Cree say that some animals become very old and can eventually die, and that their souls then move to a post-mortem place. But before that, animals like to renew themselves. A way to respect them is to dispose of their bones in trees in order to protect them from dogs. Brightman adds that Cree even use empty cans to hang the bones in the trees.⁶

Cree, like Inuit and most other aboriginal peoples, are neither ecologists nor conservationists⁷ but hunters. According to Brightman, Cree have always regarded abundance of game as a gift to be fully used with gratitude. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Cree hunters were deeply involved in the fur trade and participated actively in the depletion of game. Yet, Cree stories of animals always emphasize attitudes of respect for the animals and the need to communicate with them through dreams, visions and rituals. Brightman does not explore the issue of the moral discourse of the hunters that was later developed by Fienup-Riordan for the Yup'ik in Alaska.⁸ She argued that the foundation of the relationship between human and animals was neither economic nor social but moral (Fienup-Riordan 2007: 239). After Arthur J. Ray, Brightman (1993: 103) was one of the first anthropologists to describe the exchange between animals and hunters:

[Religious observances] materially affect the efficiency of hunting and trapping in an environment where animals consciously regulate hunters' access to them. If these acts are performed correctly, it is said that slain animals will be reborn and voluntarily offer themselves to hunters by entering traps and allowing themselves to be killed with guns. Cree sometimes say that hunters can only kill animals when this voluntary self-sacrifice occurs. If the practices are omitted or performed incorrectly, it is said that animals will fail to be reborn or will withhold themselves from hunters by frustrating attempts to kill them.

Brightman (1993: 119) and Fienup-Riordan (1990: 167) argue that, respectively, Rock Cree and Yup'ik Eskimos see their kills as 'infinitely renewable'. Thus, animals are not a finite resource, as they are perceived by Western specialists of game management and biologists. For the natives, as Fienup-Riordan (1990: 167) puts it, 'The perishable flesh of both humans and animals belied the immortality of their souls. All living things participated in a cycle of birth and rebirth, contingent on right thought and action by others as well as self.' Biologists simply cannot accept such a conception and consider it a native belief that can be falsified by scientific evidence. According to Fienup-Riordan (1990: 168), humans as well as animals possess awareness (*ella*), which allow individuals a sense of control over their destiny. Such a conviction is not acceptable to modern science, which attaches little importance to the self-awareness of animals in debates on management and control.⁹

Fienup-Riordan (1994: 51) explains that because of this awareness in the animal, the hunter has to treat his prey properly; otherwise the animal will not give itself to the hunter anymore (see also Bodenhorn 1989, 1990). Thus, when seals are killed, they know the exact manner in which they are handled after they have been caught. If a hunter is not respectful, the seal will not go to him anymore. When human beings respect animals, their awareness will develop further and they will become elders credited with a strong and powerful mind. Sharp (2001: 66, 187), who worked with the Dene, went a step further, arguing that animals, not human beings, are knowledgeable: 'What differentiates animals from humans is the fact that humans do not know; they do not have the power/knowledge to survive unaided.' In that respect, pets are also said to be unable to care for themselves, in contrast to wild animals, which are 'self-sufficient.... No one, no person, no being, no power needs to teach the animals; they know.'

In Inuit society animals are aware of the transgressions of human beings and will retaliate if they are not respected. Human beings are aware of this, as the survival of society depends on it. The fate of animals and human beings is interconnected. We will explore to what

extent reciprocity is a feature of Inuit hunting and how the notion of the gift is embedded in Inuit hunting.¹⁰

Personhood and the Ontology of Engagement

British anthropologists, inspired by the debates on hunter-gatherer societies, proposed a phenomenological perspective to define the relations between hunter-gatherers and their environment. This is the second main stream of anthropological research on human-animal relations. After Irving Hallowell, Tim Ingold (1988, 1996, 2000) argued that many indigenous peoples do not create a division between nature and culture, but that instead in many societies the borders between the human and non-human realms are permeable. Humans and non-humans are subject to metamorphosis. Ingold (2004: 33) states, 'Metamorphosis is not a covering up, but an opening up, of the person to the world', since a person taking many forms can also take many perspectives. Such a perspective inspired Ingold to propose the notion of 'poetics of dwelling'. With Nurit Bird-David (1990, 1991, 2006), he developed 'an ontology of engagement', characterizing animism as a mode of knowledge founded on experience and being in the world. For Ingold and his followers, such an ontology is marked by relationality (and not essence) and has to be treated on equal terms with Western science. It is not simply a system of knowledge, but rather a way of being in the world.¹¹ The conflicting views that result from these ontologies are very different from those of Western societies. There is no escape from this 'mental model', which accommodates 'beings that are really non-human into schemes of representation that construct them as social and therefore human' (Ingold 2004: 34). In many societies, in tropical Asia as well as in Siberia, hunters engage in social relationships with non-human beings, spirits as well as animals, who in exchange for offerings are benevolent and generous with them. Relations between humans and animals are marked by intimacy and reciprocity. The consumption of game by hunters and the sharing of meat are fundamental acts marking the importance of exchange and the existence of a common identity.

Assessing the nature of the relations between hunters and animals is central to the debate. Ingold (2000: 52) argues, 'The animals participate as real-world creatures endowed with powers of feeling and autonomous action, whose characteristic behaviours, temperaments and sensibilities one gets to know in the very course of one's everyday practical dealings with them. In this regard, dealing with non-human ani-

mals is not fundamentally different from dealing with fellow humans.’ Adapting Schütz’s definition of sociality to the relations between hunters and prey, Ingold states, ‘Sociality is constituted by communicative acts in which the I (the hunter) turns to the others (animals), apprehending them as persons who turn to him, and both know of this fact’ (2000: 52; quoted in Nadasdy 2007).¹²

The notion of ontology has become quite popular in anthropology in the last decennia. It is central to some philosophical debates on the nature of being, reality and existence. In our approach we focus on the perspectives of the participants. Our goal is to gain a better understanding of these perspectives and to contribute to a dialogue between Inuit and outsiders.

A dialogue implies an exchange between different value systems, and little purpose is served by assessing the truth, reality or nature of one value system in terms of another. Therefore, we do not use notions such as truth, ontology or reality in the description and analysis of Inuit worldviews. The questions raised by Ingold are very important, and we will especially explore the notion of personhood in Inuit human-animal relationships.

With respect to the relations between humans and animals, Ann Fienup-Riordan (1994) adopted a similar approach for the Alaskan Eskimos, introducing the notions of ‘relational morality’, ‘compassion and restraint’ and ‘ethical views’ (Fienup-Riordan 2007). She argues that animals should be considered non-human persons and emphasizes the notions of respect between human beings and animals. She rightly reminds us of the sensitivity of animals and their ability to see and hear what occurs in the human world (Fienup-Riordan 2007: 249). As her work is closer to our own field, we will explore this perspective in this book and investigate to what extent it is shared by Canadian Inuit.

Animism: Beyond the Nature versus Culture Dichotomy

The third stream of anthropological research was developed in the 1980s when Philippe Descola gave new incentive to the study of human-animal relations. Descola took his inspiration from Marx, Lévi-Strauss and Haudricourt. In *La nature domestique* (1986) and especially in *Par-delà nature culture* (2005) he examines the notions of nature and culture. He considers this contrast too evolutionist and ethnocentric to do justice to the complexity of human-animal relationships in other societies and instead proposes a new model on the basis of four great

ontologies or cosmologies: totemism, analogism, animism and naturalism. As Descola (2005: 176; our translation) puts it,

Confronted with someone, human or non-human, I can assume that he has physical and interior features identical to mine, or that his interiority and physicality differ from mine, or that we have similar interiorities and different physicalities, or that our interiorities are different and our physicalities analogous. I will call the first combination totemism, the second one analogism, the third one animism and the last one naturalism.

By distinguishing physicality from interiority and developing a structural scheme based on these categories, Descola reduced the different ontologies of the world into four basic models.¹³

In Descola's approach the notion of animism is especially relevant with respect to the indigenous people of the Americas, including the Arctic cultures. It implies that people attribute social features as well as the status of a person to all animated and/or inanimate beings in their environment. In such a universe the intrinsic qualities of beings remain the same, whereas differences manifest themselves especially in bodily appearances. In this perspective, the animistic ontology inverts the naturalistic perspective of Western societies that, since Descartes, has considered the intrinsic qualities of human beings and animals as different, and at the same time accepts a Darwinist evolutionary view emphasizing continuity on a physical level. Descola's model is stimulating, but one has to keep in mind that features of the four ontologies he discerns are in fact all present in most societies – but, at some period and depending on the context, some may take precedence over others.¹⁴ Descola observes that among the Achuar of Ecuador, animals are treated like humans, even like kin, though they are sometimes killed. Quoting an Achuar, he writes that animals are considered as beings that are not entirely human, as they lack some elements (Descola 2005: 21). Inuit do consider animals as sentient animated beings, yet they are not completely human. We will explore how the notions of *tarniq*, shade, the miniature image of a being, *inua*, the human person or owner of a being, and *atiq*, the name, all organize the relations between human beings and animals.

Perspectivism: When the Point of View Is Located in the Body

The importance of the body was emphasized by Claude Lévi-Strauss in a famous anecdote. He contrasted the European conquistadores trying to figure out if Native Americans from Brazil had souls with the

same Native Americans who were trying to understand what kind of bodies they had by immersing their dead bodies in water. Viveiros de Castro (1998: 469) referred to this anecdote when he built his model of perspectivism, according to which 'the world is inhabited by different sorts of subjects or persons, humans or non-humans, which apprehend the world from distinct points of view'. In this respect, animals see themselves differently than how humans see them. He views the body as the primary locus of perception. Viveiros de Castro initially worked with the Araweté and developed his theoretical model after reading the work of Tania Lima (1999), who had conducted research among another group, the Juruna. His work had a great impact on Brazilian anthropologists such as Aparecida Vilaça (2000, 2005) and Carlos Fausto (2007) (see also Kohn 2007). Carlos Fausto (2007), for instance, developed the idea that Amazonian cosmologies are organized by two models: the model of predation, mainly dominant in Amazonia, and the model of reciprocal exchange, strongly represented in North America. These authors all contributed to the development of a theory of perspectivism that can be summarized in two phrases: 'the body makes the difference' and, paraphrasing Leibniz, 'the point of view is located in the body' (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 478). Viveiros de Castro argues that the Amerindians postulate a metaphysical continuity and a physical discontinuity in beings, the first emanating from animism and the second one from perspectivism. The spirit, not conceived as an immaterial substance but as a reflexive form, integrates, whereas the body (conceived not as material substance, but as active affection) differentiates (Viveiros de Castro 1998). In this view the shaman becomes the key operator in perspective logic. Capable of changing his body, and thus his perspective, he can interact better than anyone else with different beings.

Viveiros de Castro (1998: 482) also discussed the notion of metamorphosis, linking it to what he calls the 'doctrine of animal clothing', showing that masks are instruments:

It is not so much that the body is a clothing but rather that clothing is a body. We are dealing with societies which inscribe efficacious meanings onto the skin, and which use animal masks endowed with power metaphysically to transform the identities of those who wear them, if used in the appropriate ritual context. To put on a mask-clothing is not so much to conceal a human essence beneath the animal appearance, but rather to activate the powers of a different body.

In a recent volume entitled *Métaphysiques cannibales*, Viveiros de Castro (2009) investigates the work of Deleuze and Guattari and fur-

ther develops his theory, claiming the necessity to 'decolonize' the discipline by introducing a new form of relativism in which Latour (2009a: 2) saw 'a bomb with the potential to explode the whole implicit philosophy so dominant in most ethnographers' interpretations of their material'. Viveiros de Castro once again defended the idea of multi-naturalism against an idea of culture that only belongs to the naturalist perspective. He argued that perspectivism is by no means a local variant of animist ontology, as suggested by Descola, but rather a completely different system, 'an intellectual structure that contains its own theory' (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 44) and has its own philosophy: 'What these persons see ... – and therefore what they are as persons – constitutes precisely the philosophical problem posed by and for indigenous thought' (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 21; quoted in Brightman et al. 2012: 3). One may, however, wonder how Amazonian thought comes so close to French philosophy, as most ideas developed by Viveiros de Castro in fact come from Deleuze and Guattari. Moreover, for Viveiros de Castro, perspectivism is a system that, like Ingold's ontology of engagement model, is somehow 'incommensurable'. He concludes that 'we can't think like the Indians but, we can at the most, think with them' (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 169).

Viveiros de Castro's ideas raised considerable criticism by Santos-Granero (2009), Terence Turner (2009) and Laura Rival (2005) in South America and Charles Stépanoff (2009) in Siberia. But his perspective was a great influence on Amazonian specialists (see Césard et al. 2003), as well as on specialists working in Asia (see Pedersen 2001 regarding Mongolia).

More recently, Rane Willerslev used such an approach to study the mimetics of the Yukaghir hunters of Siberia, who are able to adopt not only the perspective of the hunter but also that of the prey, leading Willerslev to postulate a double perspective (2004: 641; 2007).¹⁵ Willerslev (2007: 104) also introduced the notion of 'mimetic empathy' to explain that if the animal gives itself to the hunter, it does so only if the hunter appears to be sexually attractive to his prey, friendly and harmless. This empathy is what suspends the disbelief and hostility of the animal so that it can now give itself as prey to the hunter. With respect to Inuit hunting, such a view sounds rather romantic, especially when Willerslev compares it to what the spectator feels watching a beautiful Hollywood film. Inuit never express such a 'mimetic empathy', as hunting is a serious and dangerous business that may require not only seduction but also violence.

Willerslev (2007: 95) uses Viveiros de Castro's approach of perspectivism, but tries to bring it 'down to earth', to use an expression he

borrowed from Ingold. His point is that perspectivism should not be approached in terms of representation or as a cosmological abstraction, but rather in terms of action, engagement and practice.

The studies of Ingold, Descola, Viveiros de Castro and others deal with crucial issues such as corporality, the relation between body and clothing, and metamorphosis. These notions refer to a 'highly transformational world', to use an expression of Rivière's (quoted in Viveiros de Castro 1998: 471) to describe Amazonian ontologies. In this book, we explore to what extent these notions are relevant in the Arctic. We will see that in Inuit society an awareness exists that boundaries between human beings, spirits and animals may collapse and transformations between different categories often occur in the context of shamanism and storytelling. The boundaries have to be maintained by ritual rules; otherwise, society itself will collapse. This explains why Inuit are always trying to maintain and preserve the correct relationships between human beings and non-human beings.

The theoretical perspectives referred to above raise important questions, not only with respect to the relations of hunters and prey in other societies, but also with respect to our understanding of these relationships. Categories such as animism, person, rationality and reciprocity have a long and complex history in anthropological debates. Like the categories used by the aboriginal people themselves, they are by no means clear and are used in a variety of ways depending on the context. Therefore, they should be used with some caution. Moreover, although these concepts are important analytic tools in anthropological debates, they often have little meaning for the participants themselves. It is worthwhile to explore what the central issues are in the debates among the hunters themselves. Obviously we do not wish to subordinate the aboriginal perspectives to Western perspectives or shift the debates from a discussion of aboriginal categories to a more familiar discussion of the meaning of Western concepts such as nature, person or subject. In the case of the Inuit we might opt to discuss notions such as soul, spirit and person instead of Inuit categories such as *tarniq*, *inua* or *atiq*, but the participants themselves would resent such a shift of debate. In Inuit society the complex relationships between animals and human beings are not expressed in a philosophical discourse on the nature of animals but in the rules of respect relating to animals, as well as in the stories that deal with the interactions between animals and human beings. In this book we will focus on the perspective of the participants and explore the organizing principles of their perceptions and practices relating to animals. First we will present the ethnographic data in separate chapters. Then we will ex-

amine Inuit perspectives of the animal world in a more comparative and theoretical perspective.

This book primarily offers an ethnographic study, based on our understanding of Inuit views and perspectives after many years of close collaboration with Inuit elders in activities focusing on the transfer of knowledge between elders and youth. Non-Western patterns of thought are not easily accessible and challenge our own commonsense notions. As Julie Cruikshank puts it, 'One contribution anthropology can continue to make is through ethnography that shows how particular local formulations can continue to complicate – and to surprise – universalising common-sense, expectations about what we mean by knowledge' (2004: 32).¹⁶ By providing the verbatim texts from the elders, we offer the reader an opportunity to distinguish the information given by the participants from the interpretation we provide. We are well aware that in the translation, selection and organization of these verbatim texts interpretation is already at work. There is no such thing as description without interpretation (see Brightman 1993: 28; Ingold 2004), but we still try to give an accurate and sensitive description of Inuit perspectives on animals. According to Brightman (1993: 34), 'humans, animals, and categories of interaction between them are organized by sets of propositions that are themselves complex signs' and 'the existence and meaning of each animal-as-sign is based on overlapping dimensions of resemblance and difference with the others'. We may add that human beings constitute the point of reference for these resemblances and differences. Therefore, we will examine each animal in detail and in different domains of thought and action. We will discuss the place of each animal in relation to human beings as well as to other animals living in Inuit territory.

The Field of Anthropological Study Approach

In his famous 1904 work *Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo*, Mauss (1979: 19) notes, 'There exist, not one, but many Eskimo societies whose culture is sufficiently homogeneous that they may be usefully compared, and sufficiently diverse that these comparisons may be fruitful.' He argued, 'The Eskimo offer such a privileged field of study because their morphology is not the same throughout the year.' Inspired by Mauss, the Leiden structuralists developed the notion of the field of anthropological study (FAS) to handle cultural variation in a specific area.

In a field of anthropological study, local variations are examined as cultural variants linked by transformations in time and space. Only

by charting the cultural diversity and richness of local traditions can we do justice to the complexity of a field of anthropological study. In the ethnographic literature on Inuit, many different groupings are distinguished. The names of these groupings are usually derived from the place where they lived. But in practice the borders between these groupings were quite flexible and dynamic as people moved from one area to another. In the nineteenth century, Boas (1888: 425) already recognized that Inuit could not be easily divided into tribes or other distinct groups: 'In my opinion a great difference between these tribes never existed. Undoubtedly they were groups of families confined to a certain district and connected by a common life.' In our comparison of local traditions, we thus do not assume that different groups can be clearly distinguished from each other.

Inuit traditions of knowledge are in important respects locally oriented. Knowledge of the land plays a central part in Inuit life. It is important to know how the animals move, where to hunt at which season, at which dangerous places one should not camp or hunt, or which specific rituals must be carried out before entering a particular area. One has to know where to go for trade or what trade goods are required at a particular place and time. Such knowledge largely determines where people will reside and how they will organize their travels. Obviously, it is historically embedded.

Inuit have always moved over large areas, taking their family traditions with them. Their knowledge depends not only on family traditions but also on local knowledge. Knowledge traditions cannot be identified with a particular local group, since groups as well as traditions are continuously changing. Thus, knowledge is often more strongly associated with a particular place than with a particular group. People have to know how the land and its animals should be respected to survive. They should avoid some places, bring offerings to other places and so on. Therefore, variation between groups as well as places should be taken into account if we wish to examine the variations and patterns, the diversity and richness, of the cultural variation in the whole area under study. Inuit emphasize the importance of the cultural differences between different areas. When Rasmussen (1930: 111) told Kibkarjut (a Padlirmiutaq) that he had heard another version of a story she had related, she explained:

I had heard this story related somewhat differently among the Harvaqtôrmiut where the woman who cuts off part of her face forms an item in the fantastic adventures of Kivioq, and when I asked whether the version here given might not be correctly remembered, the answer, given very energetically, was as follows: 'We tell you only that which we know our-

selves, and that which has been told throughout the ages in our tribe. You, who come from other peoples, and speak the tongue of other villages (dialect), and understand other Inuit besides ourselves, must know that human beings differ. The Harvaqtôrmiut know many things we do not know and we know many things they do not. Therefore you must not compare the Harvaqtôrmiut with us, for their knowledge is not our knowledge as our knowledge is not theirs. Therefore we tell you only what we know from our own villages.'

In 1997 Cornelius Nutaraaluk from Iqaluit commented, 'I think our stories vary from community to community even though they are the same *unikkaaqtuat*' (quoted in Oosten and Laugrand 1999a: 188). This terse proposition nicely states the problem of the FAS approach. Even though variation is the name of the game, that variation can only be adequately understood by assuming that underlying patterns are shared. In this book we will look for these patterns that shape regional diversity.

Our area of interest encompasses the Kivalliq (including the Nattiliq area), the North Baffin area (including Iglulik) and the South Baffin area, from Kinngait (Cape Dorset) to Kangiqtugaapik (Clyde River) (see figure 1.1). The close cultural relationships between the Kivalliq and the North and South Baffin areas are well-known. In concentrating on these three areas, we give less attention to relevant connections

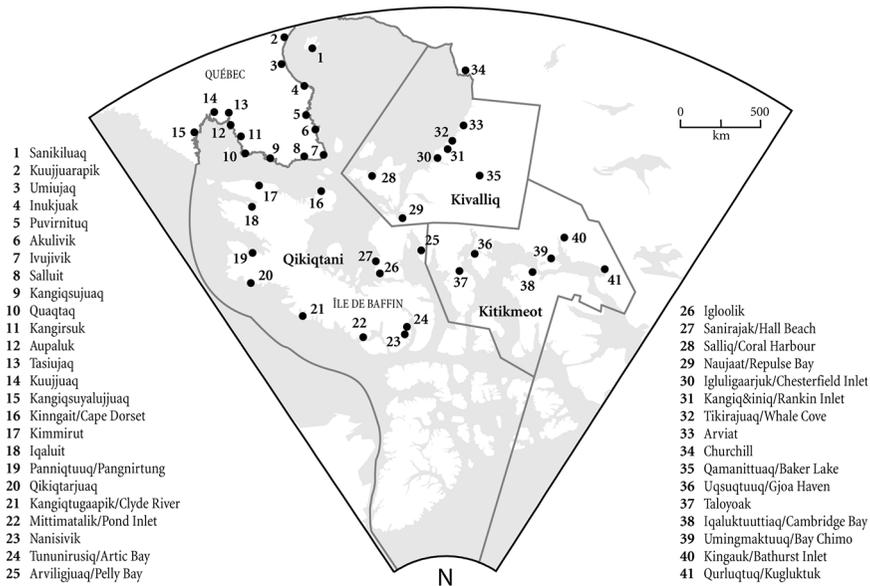


Figure 1.1. Map of Nunavut, Canada.

to related areas (Inuinait [Copper], Nunavik or West Greenland). However, we chose these three areas on the basis of the intensive interaction within the whole region and the availability of a rich corpus of ethnographic data and missionary archives. Moreover, most of the elders participating in our workshops came from these three areas.

Elders are highly respected, but the degree of knowledge they have of the old traditions varies for each of the three areas under scrutiny. In the nineteenth century whalers established whaling stations in South Baffin, and in 1894 an Anglican Mission post was founded. In the early 1900s most people converted to Christianity and most rituals and rules pertaining to animals were abandoned. As a result, elders from this area have hardly any firsthand recollections of the old traditions. For information on these old traditions, we mainly rely on the ethnographer Boas (1888, 1901, 1907) and the missionary Peck (Laugrand et al. 2006).

Christianity reached the North Baffin area in the early 1920s. Elders such as Rose Iqallijuq, Noah Piugaattuq and George Kappianaq from Iglulik, born in the beginning of the twentieth century, still had vivid recollections of the old traditions. Moreover, Knud Rasmussen interviewed many respected elders such as Aava and Ivaluardjuk in the early 1920s. Most of the North Baffin area became Anglican, but in Iglulik there was also a substantial Roman Catholic community.

The Kivalliq is probably the most complex area, where many different small groups used to live. A Roman Catholic mission was founded in Chesterfield Inlet in 1914, but it was not until 1935 that a mission was founded in Kugaaruk. Roman Catholicism was in many respects more tolerant of the old traditions than Anglicanism, and many elders in this area are quite knowledgeable about the old traditions. In the Kivalliq Roman Catholicism is most strongly represented, but there are also many Anglican communities.

Another problem is that each area has not been studied with equal attention, especially with respect to the traditions of the elders. In this respect Iglulik has a special position. In the 1970s Bernard Saladin d'Anglure interviewed many elders in this area, and in the 1980s Willem Rasing (1994) and John McDonald set up an interview project with Inuit elders in the community that eventually contained hundreds of interviews. In the 1990s and 2000s we interviewed several Iglulik elders in our workshops. As a result, we have access to many recorded views of Iglulik elders over a long period. That is not the case in most other communities. Obviously statements by Iglulik elders cannot be generalized for the whole area, but they certainly can have heuristic value for exploring ideas and values elsewhere.

In the past Inuit lived a nomadic life, choosing their campsites close to the places where they could catch game. If there were no game available, people would move to another campsite. People usually would not stay in one location for too long, as their residence depended on the seasons and the movements of the game. This intimate relationship between animals and people changed when people moved to permanent settlements in the 1950s and 1960s. The distinction between life in a settlement and life out on the land acquired new meanings. Life in the settlement was in many respects shaped by the Canadian administration, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. Out on the land, these institutions had little grip on the Inuit. Moreover, in the second half of the twentieth century life in the settlements became associated with all kinds of social problems, whereas life out on the land became associated with the much more healthy life of the *inumhariit*, the true Inuit or ancestors, and Inuit *qaujimajatuqangit*, the knowledge associated with them. The *inumhariit*, the 'real or genuine Inuit', were able to hunt and bring food to their families and camps.¹⁷

Today, people continue to hunt from their communities, but they usually have to cover much greater distances to reach the game than in the past. People try to retain their connection to the land and its animals by moving out on the land in spring and living the life of their ancestors in tents or cabins. Even though modern technology, with its snowmobiles, motorboats, radio and GPS, has obviously changed life on the land, maintenance of the correct relationships with the land and its animals remains a matter of great concern. People enjoy life out on the land and feel it connects them to the animals as well as to their ancestors.

When Inuit adopted Christianity, different camps and communities connected to the same great tradition, reducing cultural differences. Settlement in permanent communities and the foundation of Nunavut very much strengthened the impact of Canadian society on Inuit communities, subordinating cultural differences to Western ideology.

Because this book covers a period of two hundred years across such a huge area, generalizations cannot be avoided. But according to the FAS approach, we should not overestimate the importance of these generalizations, thus remaining aware of the value of the differences among the peoples studied.

Sources

In this book we focus on the perspective of the participants. In the last decennia elders' views have been extensively recorded. The Oral

Traditions Project at Arctic College in Iqaluit, started by Susan Sammons in 1994, is a very rich source of information for the North Baffin and Melville Peninsula areas. We frequently refer to interviews with elders who participated in the Iglulik Oral Traditions Project, started by McDonald and Rasing in the mid 1980s. They are referred to by 'IE' (Iglulik elder) plus the number of the interview in the project. In many cases the English translation of these interviews is problematic, and wherever necessary we adapted punctuation and spelling.

The Iqaluit Oral Traditions Project covers South Baffin and parts of the Kivalliq. Courses in oral tradition in Iqaluit have been important sources of information. They consist of verbatim accounts of interviews of elders by Inuit students. They were published in Inuktitut as well as in English and cover a wide range of topics such as shamanism and cosmology, the transition to Christianity, and surviving and travelling out on the land.

Elders' workshops in the Kivalliq initiated and facilitated by the authors, also yielded much information. They had a different format. Elders discussed the old traditions pertaining to survival, shamanism, stories and other traditions. The aim of the workshops was to record the richness of the traditions of the past (see figures 1.2 and 1.3).



Figure 1.2. Ollie Itinnaq from Rankin Inlet and George Kappianaq from Iglulik in a workshop organized in Rankin Inlet in 2002. Itinnaq was raised by Anaqqaq, a famous shaman. Kappianaq contributed extensively to the Iglulik Oral Traditions Project. Photo: Frédéric Laugrand, 2002.



Figure 1.3. Job and Eva Murjungniq, two Ahiamuit from Arviat, with Frédéric Laugrand on the left and Jarich Oosten on the right. Photo: Frédéric Laugrand, 2011.

Several workshops were published by Iqaluit Arctic College, such as *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit: Shamanism and Reintegrating Wrongdoers* (Oosten and Laugrand 2002), *Surviving in Different Worlds* and *Hardships of the Past: Recollections of Arviat Elders* (Oosten and Laugrand 2007). The results of the workshops in Arviat (2006, 2007, 2010, 2011), Kugaaruk (2004), Baker Lake (2005) and Churchill (2008) have not yet been published. Therefore, we cannot indicate page numbers for these workshops, but instead refer to them by place name and year (e.g., Kugaaruk workshop, 2004).¹⁸ Unpublished individual interviews are referred to by the year of the interview. In addition, we refer to rich sources on elders' views that have been published in the last fifteen years, such as *Inuit Nunamiut: Inland Inuit* by Mannik (1998) and *Uqalurait: An Oral History of Nunavut* by Bennett and Rowley (2004).

It is often more difficult to infer participant views from older sources. Fortunately, Knud Rasmussen made quite a point of recording the views of the participants themselves and is meticulous in providing the names of his main informants. Thus, he provided rich information on the Iglulik, Nattilik and Kivalliq areas. For the South Baffin area, ethnographic information provided by the Reverend E. J. Peck is extremely valuable (see figure 1.4). Much of his ethnographic informa-

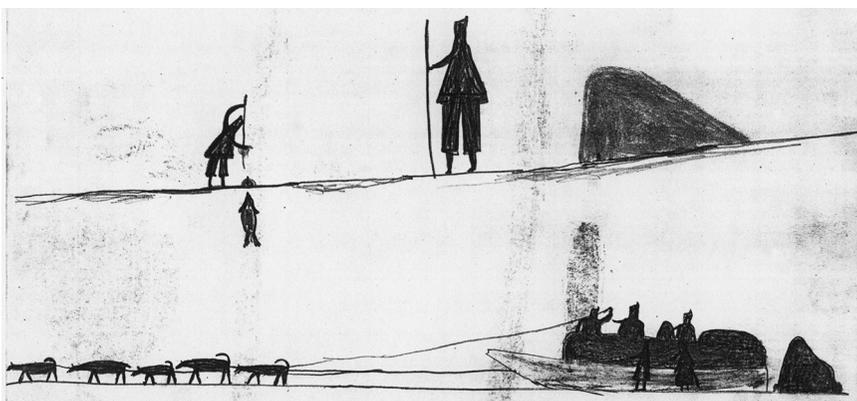


Figure 1.4. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Reverend Peck provided Inuit in South Baffin with paper and pencil so they could make drawings of their life. In this drawing we see two scenes: The upper scene shows hunting at the seal breathing holes. The hunter on the left is ready to kill the seal; the other hunter appears to be watching. The second scene depicts a fully loaded sledge drawn by dogs. *Source:* Anglican Church of Canada/General Synod Archives/Peck Papers, M56-1, series XXXIII, 4-6, 8-13.

tion clearly consists of almost verbatim accounts of participants, but unfortunately he does not always provide the names of his informants in the presentation of these data. Such ethnographic data can be supplemented by those of other ethnographers such as Kumlien and Boas, but in their accounts the views of the ethnographer and those of the participants cannot always be clearly distinguished.

In this book we follow the rules of the standard Roman orthography as it is used in Nunavut today. The older sources, such as Boas, Peck and Rasmussen, use older orthographies, often based on Greenlandic traditions. We have retained those specific orthographies in the quotations. We also follow standard orthography in the spelling of the names of the elders, unless the elders have indicated a preference for another spelling (e.g., Kupak instead of Kupaq or Etanguat instead of Itanguat).

The Organization of the Book

In this book on Inuit perceptions of animals, we focus on animals that take a central place in the Inuits' worldview. We provide a general introduction to the Inuit and the animals that populate their world in the chapters of part I, Introduction. In chapter 1 we discuss some of the main theoretical perspectives on human-animal relations developed

by leading scholars in the field and develop our own approach to the study of human-animal relations. In chapter 2 we introduce the land, the sea and the sky as well as the animals that populate them. We show how the notions of *tarniq* (miniature image, shade), *inua* (person, owner), and *atiq* (name) shape the relations between human beings and animals in Inuit culture. In chapter 3 we focus on the relationship between the hunter and his prey and the importance of learning the correct ways of hunting.

Then, in part II, Life and Death, we begin to focus on specific animals. We first discuss the raven in chapter 4, an animal that holds a central place in many Arctic cultures as a creator and a trickster. In chapter 5 we focus on *qupirruit*, a category consisting of insects and other small life-forms. Like the raven, they have a trickster aspect and are associated with transformations of life to death and vice versa. They are considered inedible, as is the raven, and at the same time they eat what is inedible themselves.

In part III, Fellow Hunters, we examine two animals who are closely connected to Inuit hunters. In chapter 6 we discuss the dog, the animal companion of the hunter, and in chapter 7 the bear, considered to resemble a human being and a fellow hunter. The two animals are related to each other as *illuriik*—song partners, cross-cousins. They can be eaten, but as they are thought to be close to human beings and their meat is thought to taste like human flesh, there are restrictions on eating these animals.

In part IV, Prey, we examine the animals that are considered prey par excellence. In chapter 8 the caribou, the lice of the earth, who provide human beings not only with meat but also with furs that protect them against the cold. In chapter 9 the seals, the offspring of the fingers of the sea woman. And in chapter 10 the whale, the symbol of the whole; we then also discuss the renewal of whale hunting in recent years.

Finally, in the conclusions, we provide a comparative analysis of the ethnographic data presented in the book. We examine various theoretical and moral issues such as to what extent animals are human, the nature of the transformations of human beings into animals and animals into human beings, and the debate on the protection of animals.

Notes

1. In the North American Arctic, research on human-animal relations first focused on the field of symbolic anthropology, mythology and ritual (see Juel 1945; Rainey 1947; Lantis 1947; Irving 1953, 1958; Soby 1970; Larsen

- 1970; Meletinsky 1973; Saladin d'Anglure 1990b; Blaisel 1993). Interest in the topic soon developed in the fields of ethno-linguistics (Rausch 1951), ethno-science (Paillet 1973) and geography, notably in ecology and economy (Roy 1971; Forbes 1986; Wenzel 1983, 1986, 1989; Usher 2000). In the field of arts the focus on animals increased in the 1980s (see Graburn 1980; Driscoll 1982, 1985). Today, all these trends are beginning to merge: see Dorais (1984), Randa (1989, 1994, 2002a, 2002b, 2003) and Feldman and Norton (1995) for ethno-linguistics and ethno-zoology; see Smith (1991), Donaldson (1994), Tyrrell (2005, 2006, 2007) and Dowsley (2007, 2010) for geography. At the end of the 1990s, studies on animals also appeared in a new field known as applied ecology/environmental studies (D. Armitage 2005; Berkes 2008).
2. Tanner (1979) and Willis (1990) offer good examples of symbolic approaches. The ecological or environmental perspectives developed in the 1980s continue to be very popular among geographers (see Wenzel 1986, 1991, 2004; Usher 2000; Berkes 2008; Tyrrell 2007, 2008). A good example of an ethno-zoological approach can be found in Clément (1995, 2012) for the Innu and in Randa (1994) for the Inuit.
 3. For such discussions, see R. Nelson (1983: 15), Scott (1996), Nadasdy (2003) and Willerslev (2007).
 4. On Inuit *qaujimajatuqangit* and the various debates surrounding it, see Arnakak (2002), Wenzel (1999, 2004) and Berkes (2008).
 5. Sahlins's chapter *The Original Affluent Society*, in his book *Stone Age Economics* released in 1972, had a great impact on scholars in this field.
 6. On these practices among the eastern Cree, see Preston ([1975] 2002: 97) and Tanner (1979: 169).
 7. Animals are not supposed to suffer when they are killed, but this issue remains controversial; see Désveaux (1995) and Brightman (1993: 110–11). See also Krech (1999) and Nadasdy (2005) for further discussion of the myth of the 'ecological Indian'.
 8. Fienup-Riordan (1999, 2000) discusses extensively hunting activities among the Yup'ik.
 9. According to Sharp (2001: 68), the Chipewyan and many Dene groups believe that all animals except dogs reincarnate and 'become new again'.
 10. According to R. Nelson (1983: 22), Koyukon people distinguish between animals that are possessed by spirits that can bring harm to anyone who offends them, causing illness, taking away luck or causing death (such as the bear, wolverine, lynx, wolf, and otter), animals that are possessed by spirits but are not vengeful (such as the beaver and marmot) and animals that have less powerful spirits and inflict minor punishments, mostly bad luck in hunting (such as birds, fish and other mammals).
 11. See also Clammer et al. (2004) on the notion of 'figured worlds'.
 12. Ingold's perspective has inspired many scholars (e.g., Clammer et al. 2004).
 13. See Descola (2005: 163–80).
 14. Latour (1993, 2009b) argued that Western societies are still ambiguous. Naturalism can be seen as the dominant scheme of interaction, but at the same time this view can be challenged, as illustrated by the title of one

- of Latour's books, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993). Eco-theology also gives more space to analogy.
15. On hunting and mimesis, see also Koester (2002) and Wisniewski (2007).
 16. R. Nelson (1983: xiv) adopted a similar approach in *Make Prayers to the Raven*, acknowledging the role of a Western mind that often organizes and filters the data.
 17. *Inummariit* are considered very knowledgeable hunters, and others often point to their generosity, patience and co-operative behaviour (see Brody 1979).
 18. For the organization and methodology of these courses and workshops, see Laugrand and Oosten (2012a: 19–33).