

# Nalunaikutanga: Signs and Symbols in Canadian Inuit Art and Culture

By Nelson H. H. Graburn \*

**Summary:** The concept *nalunaikutak* is applied in many contexts in Eskimo life and is best glossed in English as: sign, symbol, marker, guide, characteristic or, most aptly, distinctive feature. Literally the word means "its important de-confuser" because, in action-oriented Inuit culture, it is the feature which facilitates the initiation of a process of recognition and action, by ending ignorance and confusion *nalugiak* and supplying the key to appropriate action and role behavior. Thus *nalunaikutanga* characterize not only sexes and species but also places and people, enabling the Inuit to go about their everyday lives of relating, cooperating, travelling, hunting and knowing.

More recently, with the growth of individualism in Inuit commercial arts, individual artists' *nalunaikutanga* have been developed as aspects of style, subject matter, detail or even materials used. While modern sculptures are generally able to exhibit the traditional *nalunaikutanga* of the subject matter portrayed — canine teeth for polar bears, beaks for hawks, *amautik* parkas for women, hunting weapons for men, etc. — there is danger that the content of contemporary Inuit ethnic arts will stultify as an exhibition of the whiteman's *nalunaikutanga* of the distinctive but ill-remembered Inuit past.

**Zusammenfassung:** Der Begriff *nalunaikutak* (Sing.) wird im Leben der Eskimo (Inuit) in vielen Zusammenhängen angewandt. Im Deutschen ist er am besten durch Zeichen, Symbol, Markierung, Wegweiser, Leitfaden, kennzeichnendes und zugleich unterscheidendes Merkmal zu umschreiben; wörtlich übersetzt bedeutet der Begriff „wichtiger Entwirrer“. In der auf Handlung ausgerichteten Kultur der Inuit ist es diejenige Eigenschaft, die den Beginn eines Erkennungs- oder Handlungsprozesses erleichtert, indem sie Unkenntnis und Verwirrung (*nalugiak*) beendet und den Schlüssel zu angemessener Handlung und Rollenverhalten liefert. Auf diese Weise kennzeichnen *nalunaikutanga* (Pl.) nicht nur Geschlechter und Arten, sondern auch Orte und Personen, und ermöglichen den Inuit, der täglichen Routine des Miteinanders, Zusammenwirkens, Reisens, Jagens und Erkennens nachzugehen.

In jüngerer Zeit sind mit dem Aufkommen des Individualismus in der kommerziellen Inuit-Kunst die *nalunaikutanga* einzelner Künstler in Fragen des Stils, der Thematik, der Darstellungsweise und sogar der Werkstoffe entwickelt worden. Während moderne Skulpturen im allgemeinen die traditionellen *nalunaikutanga* des vorgegebenen Themas widerzuspiegeln vermögen — Reißzähne für Eisbären, Schnäbel für Falken, *amautik*-Kleidung für Frauen, Jagdwaffen für Männer usw. —, besteht doch die Gefahr, daß der Gehalt der zeitgenössischen Inuit-Kunstwerke herabsinkt zu einer Darstellung der *nalunaikutanga* der Weißen unter Verleugnung der besonderen, wenn auch nur noch verschwommen bekannten eigenen Vergangenheit.

## Introduction<sup>1)</sup>

Contemporary Inuit commercial arts have been with us for more than a quarter of a century and have been subject to extensive promotion, publicity and publication, we know very little about the mental activity or conceptual categories of those thousands of well-known Inuit artists who have produced it. This essay is an attempt to describe one concept, that of *nalunaikutanga*, or "distinctive feature", which runs through the whole of Inuit culture and art<sup>2)</sup>.

The meaning and importance of this concept is best understood not only by dissecting the compound word itself into its component morphemes but also by examining the contexts in which it is used both within and beyond the realm of what we call „the arts“.

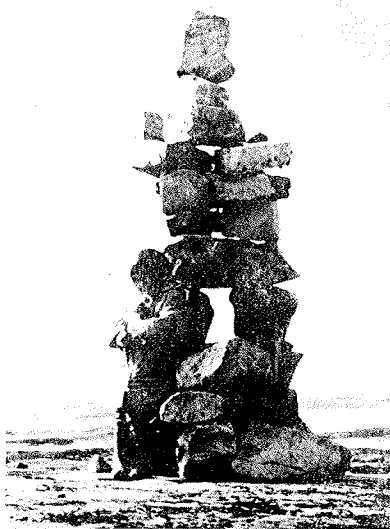
\* Dr. Nelson H. H. Graburn, Dept. of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, Ca. 94720 (USA).

<sup>1)</sup> The research leading up to this paper was conducted in the Eastern Canadian Arctic in 1959, 1960, 1963–64, and most importantly, 1967–68 under a grant, NSF-GS-1762 from the National Science Foundation, Washington, D. C. Further brief discussions took place in the Winter of 1972. Fieldwork in the Central and Western Canadian Arctic in the Spring of 1976, was supported by the Urgent Ethnology Programme of the National Museum of Man, Ottawa, and by the Committee on Research of the University of California, Berkeley. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meetings of the Canadian Ethnology Society in Victoria, B. C. in February 1976. The analysis has been stimulated by discussions with George Swinton, Edmund Carpenter and George Diveky, and the rewriting of the paper has benefitted greatly from the comments of Paul Kay and Burton Benedict and other members of the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>2)</sup> The stimulation for the choice of the central theme of this paper stemmed from some comments made by Margaret Hardin and Laura Greenberg, concerning a paragraph on the concept *nalunaikutanga* in my paper "A preliminary analysis of symbolism in Eskimo art and culture" (1972, 1974). This paper is not the place for a more theoretical analysis of the notions of action, recognition, marker, and marked and unmarked categories in Inuit culture, but such an essay is under way.

## Semantic Structure

The word *nalunaikutanga*<sup>3)</sup> is heard in many spheres of Eskimo life with the gross semantic content which may be glossed in English as: sign, symbol, marker, guide, characteristic, or, perhaps best, distinctive feature. Literally the word means "its important de-confuser" which may be derived from the (in reverse order) *-nga* (= its) *-kuta-* (= great, remarkable, important) *-i-* (= negative, privative) *-na-* (= causes or



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Fig. 1: *Inuksuk* near Povungnituk, P. Q.  
Abb. 1: *Inuksuk* nahe Povungnituk, P. Q.

Fig. 3: Walrus eating seal, by Abraham Niaqu, Povungnituk (All photographs are by the author, unless otherwise stated.)

Abb. 3: „Walroß frißt Robbe“ von Abraham Niaqu, Povungnituk.

Fig. 2: Polar bear, by Pautak, Cape Dorset, N. W. T.

Abb. 2: „Eisbär“ von Pautak, Cape Dorset, N. W. T.

Fig. 4: Print of raven and young, being produced by Utuqi, Cape Dorset.

Abb. 4: Druck „Rabe mit Jungem“ von Utuqi, Cape Dorset. (Sofern nicht anders angegeben, sind sämtliche Aufnahmen vom Verfasser).

<sup>3)</sup> The *inuktitut* words in this paper are from the Takamiut and Sikusuilamiut dialects of the Hudson Strait area; the orthography follows that of Lefebvre (1958). Some usages have been checked with Schneider's masterful dictionaries (1966; 1970) but the interpretation is entirely the author's responsibility.



Fig. 5: Canada goose, by Davidialuk Amittuk, Povungnituk.  
Abb. 5: „Kanada-Gans“ von Davidialuk Amittuk, Povungnituk.



Fig. 6: Tatoeed woman giving birth, by Aisapik Smith, Povungnituk.  
Abb. 6: „Gebärende tätowierte Frau“ von Aisapik Smith, Povungnituk.



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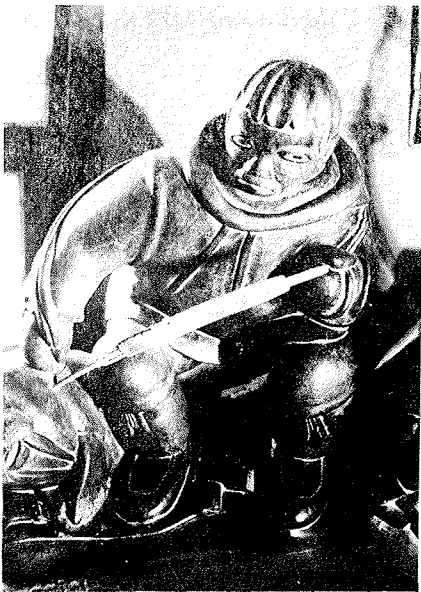


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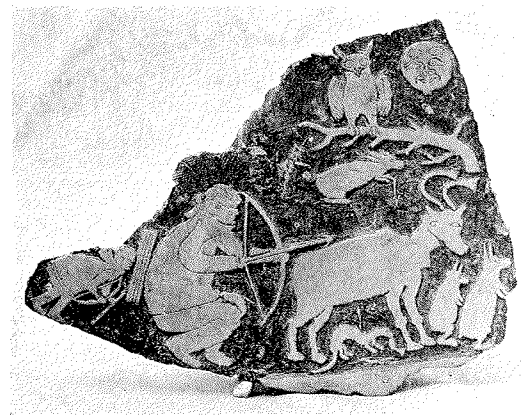
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makes to do or feel) *nalu* (= confused, ignorant). The word is always found in the form ending in *-nga* (third person possessive) for it is always a feature of something or somebody. Putting the word back together less than literally one might translate it to mean "its important thing by which one ceases to be confused about it", or "that which enables one to recognize it".

In the Inuit plan for purposive action, which I have demonstrated elsewhere applies as much to carving sculptures, as to sexual or hunting activity (Graburn 1974; 1976), there comes a point at which generalized or searching activity, *qinirkpuk*, gives way to purposive or directed activity *pinasukpuk*, paralleling the English distinction between hunt for and hunt down. It is the *nalunaikutanga* which enables the actor to recognize the quarry or goal which is in sight or within reach at last. In the plan for purposive action Inuit will start by saying *nalulukpunga*, I am confused or don't know exactly what to do, followed by "Ah", *nalunangituk*, it is no longer confusing, or even, *qaujimavunga*, I know, in the sense that I recognize something quite familiar.

Though the characteristic feature by which something or someone is recognized is often clear, many Inuit are not introspective enough to be able to verbalize it immediately in most cases. Just as when we are asked "How do you know so-and-so when you see him?" we hesitate or we are unable to reply directly, so the Inuit are often unaware of the specific signs or the *gestalt* by which they know something. Thus at present it is not possible to state clearly whether *nalunaikutanga* as a class are conscious or unconscious or whether they are linked to what they represent in an essential or arbitrary way (as we sometimes try to distinguish between sign and symbol).

#### The Context of Recognition

Let us now consider the range of applications of the concept *nalunaikutanga* starting with the widest and most natural and ending with the most human and specific.

In the relatively featureless land of the Inuit places are recognized by specific physical features, e. g. Lake Harbour is called *kimmirut*, "[like a] heel", because of a rock formation that would be recognized by anyone boating or sledding into the inlet from afar. Sometimes places or routes are recognized more by "relationships: relationships between, say, contour, type of snow, wind, salt air, ice crack" (Carpenter, Varley & Flaherty 1959; Carpenter 1973: 21<sup>4</sup>) A consideration of Inuit toponymy (Müller-Wille 1975) reveals some of these noted features. But often they are not marked in nature

<sup>4</sup>) The texts of the two volumes (Carpenter, Varley & Flaherty, 1959, and Carpenter, 1973) are almost identical, except that the latter book has an additional chapter, entitled "Souvenir Art".

Fig. 7: Sallumiut girls, one wearing a woman's parka with a baby in the *amauti*, the other with a child's (man's style) parka.

Abb. 7: Sallumiut-Mädchen: das eine in einem Frauen-Parka mit einem Kleinkind in der *amauti*, das andere in einem Kinder-Parka (Männer-Stil).

Fig. 9: Ruanari (Henry) Naparktuk of Great Whale River, P. Q., with a carving of a bear, showing the signature on the bottom of the paw.

Abb. 9: Ruanari (Henry) Naparktuk, Great Whale River, P. Q., mit einer „Bär“-Skulptur, welche die Signatur unter der Tatze trägt.

Fig. 11: Hunter, by Levi Qumaluk, Povungnituk; note bootlaces.

Abb. 11: „Jäger“ von Levi Qumaluk, Povungnituk. (Man beachte die Schnürsenkel).

Fig. 8: Quju with fancy parka. (Photograph by Peter Pitsiulak, Cape Dorset.)

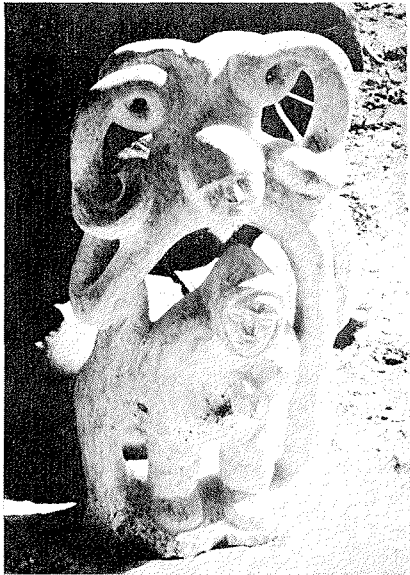
Abb. 8: Quju im Schmuck-Parka. (Aufnahme: Peter Pitsiulak, Cape Dorset.)

Fig. 10: Model head of a woman, by Siirkjuk, Cape Dorset.

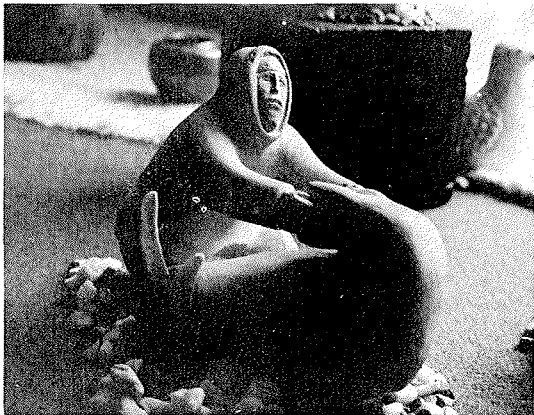
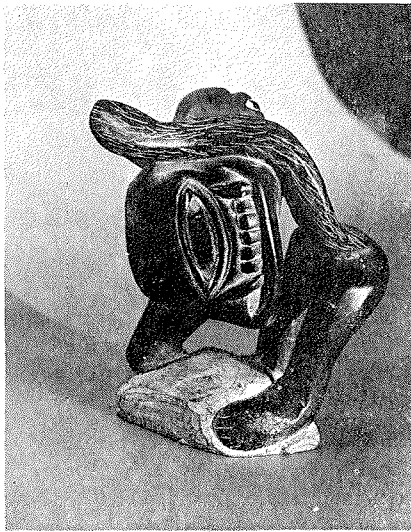
Abb. 10: „Frauenkopf“ von Siirkjuk, Cape Dorset.

Fig. 12: Printblock by Joe Talirunilik, Povungnituk; note owl and hare.

Abb. 12: Druckplatte von Joe Talirunilik, Povungnituk. (Man beachte Eule und Hasen.)



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at all, and the Inuit put up their own markers all over the countryside by building characteristic piles of stones *inuksuk* (= imitation person) in visible places. (Photo. 1).

The species of the natural world are also known and recognized by their distinctive features, *nalunaikutanga*, though understandably, only a minority of the Inuit are able to state firmly what they are for few wear the grammar of their conceptual world "on their sleeve" — however on discussion of particular *nalunaikutanga* Inuit often glow with realization and pleasure at making conscious the guides to many of their actions.

The following list will show that *nalunaikutanga* of species are neither solely their visibly most characteristic feature nor are they necessarily their behaviorally strongest point, but generally they are a synthesis of the two — the visible features which suggest their behavioral propensities. For instance for *nanuk*, the polar bear, *nalunaikutanga* include the incisors *tulluriak* and the claws *kuki*, (Photo. 2.) suggesting the bear's striking power, as well as its tongue *oqak* which is portrayed in some sculptural examples. The polar bear's only serious opponent *aivirk* the walrus is known mainly by its tusks *tugak*, as well as its moustaches *umik* (Photo. 3.) Caribou are known by their antlers, *najjuk* and their hooves *kuki*. These leave very distinctive footprints *tumit* in the snow as do all land animals.

Among the birds (*tingmiak*) the birds of prey arouse interest and admiration far beyond their edibility, stemming from their paralleling male Inuit activities. Perhaps the owls, *ukpik* are the most distinctive, and their *nalunaikutanga* along with those of other birds of prey are the hooked beak *sigguk* and the striking claws *kuki* used for killing.

The owl is also known by its round and forward facing eyes, suggestive of a human expression. Other birds may be known by their colors, e. g. the raven *tulugak* by its black *qirnitak* feathers (Photo. 4), and the seagull *naujak* by their white *qakurktak*. It might be noted that traditional Inuit mythology goes to some length to explain the colors of these birds as well as the other features of the species under discussion.

Canada geese *nirlirk* were traditionally known by their neck markings (and calls<sup>5)</sup>) but nowadays they are additionally known by the strange rings that encircle their legs (Photo. 5.).

The edible sea mammals all have their distinctive features, the square flipper seal its beard or *umik*, just as the narwhal *aglanguak* exhibits its tusk *tugak*, the beluga *qilalugak* its white skin *maktak* and the common seal *natsiq* its inquisitive face and the rings on its pelt.

One could go on almost endlessly to mention the colors and actions of fish, the smaller mammals and birds, and all other natural beings, edible, useful or otherwise, which

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<sup>5)</sup> This paper is not the place to expand on the acoustic and other non-visual *nalunaikutanga*. Suffice it to say that these, too, form a well developed system. Perhaps the reader should also be warned that limitations of time and space have lessened the differentiation between male and female points of view in this analysis, and that it leans towards the former.

Fig. 13: Souls in the Aurora Borealis, by Davidialuk, Povungnituk.

Abb. 13: „Seelen im Nordlicht“ von Davidialuk, Povungnituk.

Fig. 15: Man and animal, by Qupak Pallajak, Sugluk, P. Q.

Abb. 15: „Mensch und Tier“ von Qupak Pallajak, Sugluk, P. Q.

Fig. 17: Working woman with *ulu*, by Juanasikutak, Sugluk, 1951.

Abb. 17: „Arbeitende Frau mit *ulu*“ von Juanasikutak, Sugluk, 1951.

Fig. 14: Naked hairy-penis-beast, by Eli Sallualuk, Povungnituk.

Abb. 14: „Nackte haarige Penis-Bestie“ von Eli Sallualuk, Povungnituk.

Fig. 16: Woman and child, by Paulasikutak, Sugluk.

Abb. 16: „Frau mit Kind“ von Paulasikutak, Sugluk.

Fig. 18: Massive stone bird, by Qakak, Cape Dorset.

Abb. 18: „Schwerer Stein-„Vogel““ von Qakak, Cape Dorset.

populate the Inuit world. Even temporal dimensions such as the seasons have their distinctive markers: e. g. spring is heralded by the eruption of the permafrost right through ice and snow covering shallows and mudflats, known as *upingaksaksiutik*.

Most important of all are people, other Inuit, and where nature is lacking (e. g. in facial hair) or well covered up, artificial means are selected for marking age and sex making it easy to embark upon appropriate role behavior. Even from babyhood, boys and girls whose clothes are otherwise identical wear adult style boots whose applique stripes run appropriately up and down for boys and round in a circle for girls. Even after puberty girls without children may continue to wear "mens" clothing, but in traditional days, their prominent face tattooing *tunnit* (Photo. 6) marked them as post menarche and available. Even more striking was the difference between adult men's and women's parkas, the latter with its sweeping front and rear tails *aqu* and large back pouch *amauti* for carrying a child. Full or empty the bowl-like ovoid shape of the opening of the *amauti* is characteristically female (Photo. 17.), and is perhaps the prime *nalunaikutanga* of women in both art and life. The relative shapes of men's and women's parkas are emphasized by the lines paralleling the edges made from contrasting colored caribou skin, also frequently represented in Inuit two and three dimensional arts (Photo. 8). Other features diagnostic of adult men and women include the knives, harpoons and kajaks of the former, and of women, hairstyle, soapstone lamps *qullik*, the *ulu* semi-lunar knife (see Photo. 17). Sometimes individual women made skin parkas and boots for themselves and their families with very characteristic decorative patterns *taksak* in such a way that they became individual *nalunaikutanga* within the social group (Photo. 8) in the same way that individualism later entered commercial Inuit arts.

Regional differences were less important than sex and age differences. However, characteristic parka lengths and contours and particularly, male and female hood peaks, served to distinguish one group from another. These regional neighbour (*nunaqatigit*) *nalunaikutanga* used to be important in the days when strangers were viewed with suspicion and might be subject to attack unless recognized from a distance.

Beyond the demarcation of region, age and sex, particular individuals used to be known (and called) by certain visual or behavioral characteristics that set them apart from the group. Names (*atiit*) are a kind of *nalunaikutanga* if they refer to some observable characteristic — otherwise names are more arbitrary (having been given at birth) and are no help in recognition. Individuals may stand out and be named after unique features, such as Elijah "Scar", or by their unusual stature or girth. These may be marked by suffixes added onto common names, a laugh, a limp, a squint, or whatever.

Even the anthropologist is quickly so named — in one settlement I was dubbed *aupaluktaluk* — the big red one — because of a large red down parka that I (alone) wore.

#### *Nalunaikutanga* in Contemporary Inuit Arts

*Nalunaikutanga* enter into the process of Inuit arts in two ways. Most fundamentally the work of art itself should exhibit the overt features of the subject portrayed in a way that is satisfactory to the reference group of the artist: the reference groups of the vast majority of the artists are other Inuit, thus the same kinds of *nalunaikutanga* that we have discussed above for the natural world appear in the majority of the two and three dimensional arts of the Inuit<sup>6)</sup>. That is how I was able to illustrate the

<sup>6)</sup> For an increasing proportion of young, formally educated, Inuit the reference group may cease to be restricted to other Inuit, but may include the *qallunak* world in general and the art world in particular.



first part of this paper from the Inuit's own art works. Not all *nalunaikutanga* are equally amenable to portrayal and those most suitable to the particular medium are those included.

Increasingly since the incipient commercialism of the early 1950s it is not only *what* the sculptor or print maker has portrayed, but *who* did it that has mattered; the rewards of commercial art are given to individuals and the market system encourages individual styles within regional styles (Carpenter 1973; Graburn 1976). The particular ways in which artists choose to express their individuality (consciously or unconsciously) vary immensely, as we shall see.

The most obvious and widespread form of individual artistic *nalunaikutanga* is the signature (Photo. 9), and Inuit have put these on their art works with and without explicit instruction since the late 1950s. (Before this time one had to recognize works of art on the basis of other formal features described below). However it is features other than the actual name which are still ordinarily used by Inuit today in recognizing the works of their neighbours, but not all pay particular attention to this as not all are so competitive or self-confident (See Graburn 1974). The famous Pautak of Cape Dorset has gone one step further than most, it is said, in putting the signature on the *side* of his sculptures where it can be seen rather than on the base where it is usually hidden. There is not the time here to describe all the various ways artists express their individuality, so only some of the better known examples will be illustrated.

Formal elements may characterize the works of particular artists, such as the lobe-like connectedness of Qirnuajuak's prints, the child-like scratchiness of Paa's drawings, or the perfection of faithfulness to naturalistic detail in the prints of Kananginak and the sculptures of Siirkjuk (Photo. 10) and Qupirgualuk, but these are not always considered by the Inuit to be the *nalunaikutanga* of an individual's work. More importantly it is the choice and treatment of subject matter which the Inuit look for: this is expressed in two ways. Some artists tend to include in their scenes and sculptures small details which are absent in the works of others: such "arbitrary" *nalunaikutanga* include the bootlaces *ungirutit* delicately incised on the otherwise massive carvings of Leviraluk (Photo. 11) or Joe Talirunilik's inclusion of horned owls *siutilik* and hares *ugalirk* in his vigorous hunting scenes (Photo. 12). The carvings and prints of his neighbour Leah Qumaluk are always tinged with fear and mystery and her prints often show overt violence.

More than the details it is the central theme of subject matter itself which characterizes the work of certain artists. This is partly because artists become adept at certain scenes or figures and partly because these subjects are frequently on their minds, for reasons which may stem from their personality and life experiences. Leviraluk usually portrays burly successful hunters, with their game and weapons (see Photo. 11 above). Ainalik of Ivujuvik used to like to show a man sitting on a walrus head. The late Niviaksi, it is said, constantly thought about and carved polar bears, until he met his death at the hands (or paws) of one. Davidialuk of Povungnituk most frequently portrays scenes from Inuit mythology (Photo. 13), whereas his step-son Eli Sallualuk Qirnuajuak has increasingly been associated with non-traditional scenes of imaginative man-animal distortions, *takusurngnaituk* (Photo 14.) (Trafford, 1968). Qakjurakjuk of Cape Dorset is known for her owls, as is the better known Qirnuajuak. Aisaki of Sugluk is famous for his man-and-large animal themes (photo 15) but this is a *nalunaikutanga* of not just an individual but of his whole family, including his brother Paulasi, and his cousins Qupak and Kululak. Papi-kutak makes very miniature scenes where his brother-in-law Paulasikutak created boldly conceived naturalistic men and women (Photo. 16). Limitations of subject matter have from time to time characterized the arts of whole settle-

ments and regions, such as the large-animals-fighting which first came from Wakeham Bay, and the classic working-women emerged from Ivujivik and Sugluk (Photo. 17) in the 1950s and 1960s. With the increasing quantities of sculptures produced and their greater economic importance, individualism has more recently been emphasized as against regional styles.

The type of rock used in sculptures is sometimes recognized as the *nalunaikutanga* of individuals, for instance the extremely hard field stone that only Qakak attacks is the mark of his works (Photo. 18) whereas the soft imported talc stone that old and weak people use is considered the mark of women, and hence unmanly men.

The type of stone is, however, more commonly the *nalunaikutanga* of a region, for the available local stones vary immensely, and usually there are only two or three kinds found in each area. Thus most Inuit would use the hardness, grain, striations and other qualities of the material to identify sculptures from other regions where they rarely have a knowledge of individual styles of people who live in those places (*nunaqatigingitut*). We have already seen some of the characteristic stones from various areas, such as the light and mid-green serpentine of Cape Dorset, the brownish green of Lake Harbour, the blue-grey of Repulse Bay, the striped slate from Belcher Is. and Great Whale River (Photo. 9), and the very even coloured soft and malleable grey-black stone from Povungnituk and Port Harrison (see Photos. 5, 6, 11, etc.). The types of stone are also markers of some kind of "authenticity" to the art market nowadays and when the Government moves to ship up North replacement of the local stone which has already run out in many areas.

#### Discussion and Conclusions

The Central Canadian Inuit are "interested not in scenery but in action" (Carpenter, 1973: 41). What counts is not their possession or contemplation of people or objects but their relations and actions to them. Thus the *nalunaikutanga* are the key features in a series of actions which either (i) enable the Inuit to know and hence relate, particularly to other people, and/or (ii) to know and account for the relationships that others have with each other, e. g. the beaks and claws of birds of prey and the teeth and tusks of bears and walruses.

Carpenter's assertions (1959, 1973) that Inuit commercial arts are totally removed from traditional (ivory) carving or from the concepts of Inuit life, have so far proven false as we have shown that (i) the *nalunaikutanga* of traditional life and myth are the key to the art works of most contemporary Inuit and (ii) the way the Inuit go about their new arts is built upon the traditional base plan of search/recognition followed by action/result. Even Carpenter's description of near traditional ivory carvings

Art to the Eskimo (Aivilik) is an act, not an object; a ritual, not a possession... Art to them is a transitory act, a relationship. They are more interested in the creative activity than in the product of that activity... Once carved... it may be passed from hand to hand, then dropped indifferently... or simply lost..." (Carpenter 1973: 75, 63, 75; Carpenter, Varley & Flaherty 1959: no pagination).

aptly describes the Inuit involvement with their contemporary arts. What they do is to enjoy the process of creation and look forward to the end result, but they still do not keep or display their carvings or drawings — they give them away, trade them and never see them again. Only those very few more acculturated office employees decorate their everyday environments with Eskimo art. Paa never hung his own art works in his house, but when a Toronto calendar company sent him framed reproductions of his own prints he hung them proudly next to his Centennial Medal as something prestigious, coming from the outside.

When an Eskimo sets out to carve stone or to draw on paper (for an eventual print) he (or she) starts with an air of puzzlement *nalulukpuk*. Rarely does he start with subject or object in mind. He turns the stone over and over, chips away at certain parts with a series of ideas, *ishuma*, flashing through his mind. He is looking for gross form, for ability of the particular rock to carry an image (or of paper to contain one) and suddenly he can attack the rock (or the surface) with the complete plan in mind. He has its essential *nalunaikutanga* in mind, and often starts to sketch or to shape these first, or at least prepare to fit them into the medium. Generalized action turns into purposive action, and this action is what provides pleasure and satisfaction.

Let me conclude by raising the suggestion that there is the possibility that Inuit arts may be moving from a rich expression of life as it is lived to a fossilized portrayal of an idealized past. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Graburn 1975) the content of the arts which portrayed an experienced way of life in the early 1950s has given way to a memory art concerning things that the present day Inuit and Qallunat, white people, think of as admired features of the traditional Inuit way of life. If the art form came to be a standard set of symbols that no longer relate to life and action it would be ironic that the features of the art would consist of those *nalunaikutanga* which the white art market has imposed on the Inuit artists. Thus either the essential purpose of the *nalunaikutanga* would become irrelevant to the Inuit themselves, or they would have learned to look at themselves and their past "through the eyes of" white culture.

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