

“If Only It Makes Them Pretty”: Tattooing in “Prompted” Inuit Drawings

« Si seulement ça les rendait jolis » : Les tatouages dans les dessins inuit « incités »

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Résumé de l'article

Le tatouage a été, durant des millénaires, une pratique culturelle très répandue chez les femmes inuit avant l'arrivée des premiers Européens dans l'Arctique. Cependant, au XIX^e siècle, des mécanismes coloniaux, impériaux et missionnaires ont provoqué le déclin de nombreux systèmes de croyances et de pratiques inuit antérieures au contact, y compris le tatouage. Bien que ce dernier ait commencé à s'effacer des corps des Inuit à la fin du XIX^e siècle, il n'a pas totalement disparu. À partir du début du XX^e siècle, un certain nombre d'Inuit, aidés en cela par des matériaux occidentaux nouvellement introduits, ont transféré leur connaissance du tatouage de la peau au papier afin de créer des témoignages picturaux des coutumes ayant précédé le contact. Cet article commence par établir un précédent antérieur aux dessins post-contact chez les Inuit en examinant des travaux qui décrivent des tatouages recueillis par le révérend Edmund James Peck et par Diamond Jenness. Il considère ensuite un ensemble de douze dessins collectés par l'explorateur et anthropologue dano-inuk Knud Rasmussen durant la cinquième expédition de Thulé. Ces dessins occupent une place incertaine à côté d'autres types de culture visuelle inuit, car ils ont été à l'origine recueillis en tant qu'artefacts ethnographiques, ce qui leur retire, par conséquent, leur importance esthétique à l'intérieur des valeurs culturelles inuit. Lorsqu'on les reconsidère, ces dessins anciens témoignent de l'aptitude des Inuit à s'appropriier des matériaux occidentaux en tant que forme, à la fois, de longévité culturelle et d'archives. Nous avançons ici que de tels dessins ont permis au tatouage de perdurer, quoique sous forme picturale, malgré le déclin général de cette pratique sous sa forme corporelle.

“If Only It Makes Them Pretty”: Tattooing in “Prompted” Inuit Drawings

Jamie Jelinskiⁱ

ABSTRACT

Tattooing was a widespread cultural practice amongst Inuit women for millennia before the first Europeans arrived in the Arctic. However, by the nineteenth century, colonial, imperial, and missionary mechanisms led to the decline of many pre-contact Inuit belief systems and practices, including tattooing. Although tattooing had begun to disappear from Inuit bodies by the late nineteenth century, it did not vanish altogether. Beginning in the early twentieth century, a number of Inuit, aided by newly introduced Western materials, transferred their knowledge of tattooing from skin to paper to create pictorial records of the pre-contact custom. This article begins by establishing an early precedent for post-contact Inuit drawing through the examination of work depicting tattooing collected by Reverend Edmund James Peck and Diamond Jenness. It then moves on to consider a group of twelve drawings collected by Danish-Inuk explorer and anthropologist Knud Rasmussen during the Fifth Thule Expedition. These drawings occupy a precarious place alongside other types of Inuit visual culture as they were originally collected as ethnographic artifacts, thus denying their aesthetic importance and interior Inuit cultural value. When reconsidered, these early drawings demonstrate the Inuit ability to appropriate Western materials as a form of both cultural endurance and record. Consequently, I argue that such drawings allowed tattooing to persist, albeit pictorially, despite the overall decline of the practice in its bodily form.

KEYWORDS

Tattooing, drawing, continuity, cross-cultural contact, visual culture, Knud Rasmussen, Arnarluᑭuaq

RÉSUMÉ

«Si seulement ça les rendait jolis»: Les tatouages dans les dessins inuit «incités»

Le tatouage a été, durant des millénaires, une pratique culturelle très répandue chez les femmes inuit avant l'arrivée des premiers Européens dans l'Arctique. Cependant, au XIX^e siècle, des mécanismes coloniaux, impériaux et missionnaires ont provoqué le déclin de nombreux systèmes de croyances et de pratiques inuit antérieures au contact, y compris le tatouage. Bien que ce dernier ait commencé à s'effacer des corps des Inuit à la fin du XIX^e siècle, il n'a pas totalement disparu. À partir du début du XX^e siècle, un certain nombre d'Inuit, aidés en cela par des matériaux occidentaux nouvellement introduits, ont transféré leur connaissance du tatouage de la peau au papier afin de créer des témoignages picturaux des coutumes ayant précédé le contact. Cet article commence par établir un précédent antérieur aux dessins post-contact chez les Inuit en examinant

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des travaux qui décrivent des tatouages recueillis par le révérend Edmund James Peck et par Diamond Jenness. Il considère ensuite un ensemble de douze dessins collectés par l'explorateur et anthropologue dano-inuk Knud Rasmussen durant la cinquième expédition de Thulé. Ces dessins occupent une place incertaine à côté d'autres types de culture visuelle inuit, car ils ont été à l'origine recueillis en tant qu'artefacts ethnographiques, ce qui leur retire, par conséquent, leur importance esthétique à l'intérieur des valeurs culturelles inuit. Lorsqu'on les reconsidère, ces dessins anciens témoignent de l'aptitude des Inuit à s'approprier des matériaux occidentaux en tant que forme, à la fois, de longévité culturelle et d'archives. Nous avançons ici que de tels dessins ont permis au tatouage de perdurer, quoique sous forme picturale, malgré le déclin général de cette pratique sous sa forme corporelle.

MOTS-CLÉS

tatouages, dessin, continuité, contact multiculturel, culture visuelle, Knud Rasmussen, Arnarulúnguaq

According to an Inuit oral legend told by Manêlaq, a Netsilik Inuk, and recorded by Danish anthropologist Knud Rasmussen in 1923, there was once a raven and a loon who, in their prior human form, decided to tattoo one another. The raven began tattooing the loon first, creating the checkered patterns now characteristic of its plumage. For unknown reasons the raven quickly became impatient and threw ashes all over the loon—forever colouring its back grey. Angrily, the loon scraped soot from the bottom of a cooking pot, which was often used as pigment for tattoos, and covered the raven with it—turning it completely black. The short story then comes to an abrupt ending, with Manêlaq stating, “Before that time, it is said, all ravens were white” (Rasmussen 1931, 399).

In 1950, working under a contract with the Culture and Linguistics Section at the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Hudson's Bay Company employee Alex Spalding recorded a similar, albeit slightly different, version of this story as told to him by Thomas Kusugaq at Repulse Bay, Nunavut. In Kusugaq's version, the raven finishes tattooing the loon without issue and the two swap roles for the raven to be tattooed. Unlike the loon, the raven was unable to handle the pain caused by the tattoo procedure, repeatedly exclaiming “ouch!” and refusing to sit still. As a result, the loon, in an aggravated rage, took the drip pot from beneath the oil lamp, dumped it on the raven, and quickly fled. But, before the loon could get out of the house, the raven threw the pot back at him, injuring him in the process. According to Kusugaq, “Because of these occurrences, loons can never walk and, because the loon poured the drip pot over the raven, ravens are now black” (Spalding 1979, 78).

While these stories vary slightly, they converge in their primary declaration: that ravens and loons owe their appearances to tattooing. They also allude to the long-term presence of tattooing within Inuit culture as they take place when

ravens and loons, as Manêlaq describes, existed as humans, or, in the Kusugaq version, exhibited human-like qualities. These oral histories continue to act as an allegory for Inuit tattooing in its human form by demonstrating that tattooing was (and still is) intimately embedded within Inuit concepts of personal adornment, pain, patience, and aesthetics. In the context of this essay, Manêlaq and Kusugaq's oral histories are relevant because they are encapsulated in processes of knowledge transfer through cross-cultural contact: Manêlaq's was collected and published by Knud Rasmussen, while Thomas Kusugaq's results from a similar project undertaken by Alex Spalding.¹ From the earliest European documentation of Inuit tattooing (Sturtevant and Quinn 1989; Sturtevant 1980) to the beginning of the twentieth century, when Inuit began to represent tattooing using Western materials, visual representations of Inuit tattoos have often occurred within similar contexts of intercultural interaction. This essay explores comparable instances of cross-cultural contact through representations of tattooing in post-contact Inuit drawings.

By the mid-twentieth century, the number of Inuit women with tattoos had declined considerably and even in newspapers "visitors to Canada's northland were advised by National Museum officials to use their cameras if they see a tattooed Eskimo woman, because it will be their chance to record the remnants of an age-old tradition that died easily when the white man came" (McCook 1941, 10). Yet, beginning in the early twentieth century, while tattooing was seeing a decline in its corporeal form, members of the Inuit community articulated their knowledge of tattooing on paper to create self-representations of the pre-contact custom. Drawing from research conducted as part of a larger project on cross-cultural representations of Inuit tattooing (Jelinski 2017), I contend that although tattooing was diminishing from Inuit bodies, it was kept alive by Inuit who depicted Inuit tattooing in pencil and paper drawings, thus creating a permanent record of the centuries long cultural practice and a vehicle for its continuity. More broadly, this paper considers the visual representations that occur when two markedly dissimilar cultures engage in prolonged contact within the frameworks of imperialism and colonialism, and more specifically, missionization and exploration.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tattooing in Europe was experiencing a growing prevalence amongst those of varying socioeconomic status and across a number of diverse cultural groups. Simultaneously, however, it was being marginalized within the Western scholarly community. Influential figures such as criminologists Cesare Lombroso and Alexandre Lacassagne, and later, architect and cultural critic Adolf Loos, saw tattoos as marks of primitivism, atavism, and degeneration (Canales and Herscher 2005; Herlihy 2012, 400–16).

1. Helen Kalvak (1992) tells a similar tale as part of an oral history project. Moreover, Co Hoedeman's (1973) film *Owl and the Raven: An Eskimo Legend* depicts a comparable story, although with an owl instead of a loon.

Considered in an Inuit context, these traits had to be suppressed for the Inuit to be “modernized,” “Westernized,” “civilized,” and “Christianized,” which was done largely by Euro-Christian missionaries who were beginning to establish permanent and semi-permanent residencies in the Arctic. Given the stigma surrounding tattooing in European intellectual and religious circles, it is possible that missionaries tasked with converting the Inuit forbade tattooing, as had already been done in Polynesia during the 1820s (Kuwahara 2005, 48–58; D’Alleva 2005, 90–108). In the eyes of these Christian-colonial individuals, the Inuit’s adoption of Christianity required abandonment of pre-contact belief systems and cultural practices and amongst the Inuit, women’s facial tattoos—as highly elaborate permanent markings on one’s face—were perhaps the most visible and enduring symbols of pre-Christian Inuit life. While missionaries had occupied the Arctic from the late 1800s onwards, by the first two decades of the twentieth century, conversion of the Inuit had become rapid, widespread, and seemingly all encompassing. Many pre-contact practices were contradictory to the newly introduced Christian belief system and would either need to be rearticulated within the changing cultural climate, or run risk of being eradicated altogether (Ipellie 1992, 45). The Inuit, however, have demonstrated an extraordinary resilience with their ability to preserve their pre-contact culture through oral history, material culture, and art production, exerting what Heather Igloliorte refers to as “cultural resilience” (2011, 45).

Bernadette Driscoll Engelstad has similarly noted the Inuit ability to maintain their cultural practices, arguing that women’s parkas demonstrate that “newly imported trade goods often supplanted traditional materials, transforming cultural practice...[For example], geometric motifs used in women’s tattooing emerged as patterns in beadwork” (Driscoll Engelstad 2011, 35; see also Driscoll 1987, 197–98). Driscoll Engelstad’s claim therefore parallels that of Steven Leuthold, who argues for a “systems approach” to the study of Indigenous cultural production that highlights connections between expression and experience, rather than placing an emphasis solely on objecthood or formal properties (1998, 7). From this perspective, Inuit tattooing and its motifs need not operate solely on the skin, but can function successfully even when transferred to a newly introduced material support: paper. I use the term *transferred* here to refer to both a tangible shift—from skin to paper—as well as a broader cultural one, following Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten’s usage of “transformation” to denote “the subtle dialectics of change that are central to the dynamics of Inuit culture”. From a decolonial perspective, this mutability is a defining characteristic of Inuit cultural production as it, in the words of Jarrett Martineau and Eric Ritskes (2014, iv), “resists colonial confinement and containment (2010, 14).” Considering the Inuit’s use of introduced materials to represent their own cultural practice, the drawings this article explores constitute what Homi Bhabha refers to as “hybrid object[s]” (1994, 114–15), which penetrate dominant discourses via museological and archival collections as well as

published ethnographic texts, consequently subverting their Western authority by inserting an Inuit voice into them.

The Inuit drawings self-representing tattooing that I investigate here occurred during, as a response to, and in dialogue with an extended Western presence in the Arctic. Yet, as Ingo Hessel remarks, drawings made prior to printmaking's introduction to the Canadian Arctic during the late 1950s by James Houston were typically "collected [by Europeans] as records of a fast disappearing way of life," rather than as art objects per se (1998, 144). Moreover, the Inuit had also made cartographic drawings using Western implements over a century earlier, having created maps for explorers such as George Lyon (Fossett 2003). With these considerations in mind, early Inuit drawings served at least one of two purposes to those explorers, missionaries, and anthropologists who collected them: either contributing to salvage ethnography or fulfilling a utilitarian function.

Among the earliest Europeans to collect drawings from Inuit was Anglican missionary Reverend Edmund James Peck, known colloquially to the Inuit as Uqammak or "the Speaker," who settled at Blacklead Island in Cumberland Sound during August 1894 via Little Whale River. Peck was fluent in Inuktitut, which facilitated his primary objective in the Arctic—converting the Inuit to Christianity. This permitted him a greater ability to converse with the Inuit to fulfill his mandate, while simultaneously allowing him to develop an interest in and an understanding of pre-contact Inuit belief systems, rituals, worldviews, and practices (Laugrand, Oosten, and Trudel 2006, 27). Although this interest in Inuit life would be counteracted with his teachings of the Gospel, Peck—unlike other missionaries—often documented these aspects in an ethnographic manner more akin to an anthropologist than a missionary (Laugrand, Oosten, and Trudel 2000, 6). Certainly, there is a pronounced irony to this process in that at the same time Peck was recording pre-contact facets of Inuit culture, he was directly contributing to its deterioration. Nonetheless, this decline would be short-lived. Inuit men and women quickly repurposed the materials given to them by outsiders to reshape and document their cultural practices, in the process communicating—whether intentionally or as a byproduct of creation—these changes to the outside, non-Arctic world where these objects would eventually end up. In his ethnographic approach to missionary work, Peck, perhaps unknowingly, and contradictorily to his missionary mandate, aided in assisting the Inuit in their cultural preservation by collecting over 150 drawings, ranging in subject matter from daily activities such as hunting to more mundane imagery, including clothing in both pre-contact and Western styles (Laugrand and Oosten 2003).

By collecting drawings, Peck, and those who amassed similar work after him, became what Robert Christopher refers to as a "prompter": a non-Inuit individual who solicited drawings by offering Inuit the supplies and material incentive to draw (1987, 3). Prompters, like Peck, therefore operate as cultural

intermediaries that negotiate how goods are engaged with and circulated following production, made possible by their expertise (whether real or perceived) and position within a commodity chain (Matthews and Maguire 2014, 2). When reconsidered within the historical course of Inuit art production, prompted drawings constitute the earliest paper-based Inuit graphic art and demonstrate the Inuit's ability to utilize a Western medium for the purposes of cultural continuance. The Inuit use of introduced drawing materials therefore supports David Winfield Norman's argument that any medium becomes an Inuit one when it is used as "a vessel for Inuit expression and experience" (2014, 49), specifically when we recognize that drawings illustrating tattooing were collected at a time when tattooing as a practice was decreasing. Within the Peck drawing collection, tattooing is a rare motif, which suggests that he may have discouraged its depiction in attempt to promote Christian values while marginalizing Inuit ones, or perhaps that by the time Peck had collected the drawings, tattooing had already lessened amongst Inuit women on Blacklead Island.

Although these events are difficult to confirm, a drawing (Figure 1) by an unnamed Inuk suggests one or both of these possibilities. The drawing, made using pencil, ink, and coloured pencil, shows two Inuit women. One faces the viewer and has extensive tattooing demarcating her face in the form of linear designs across her cheeks, below her lips, and on her forehead. The second woman faces her in profile, but despite the same overall appearance as her counterpart, she lacks tattooing. From this perspective, the dichotomy between the two reflects the rapid cultural shift in which Inuit women were ceasing to practice tattooing as extensively as they had prior to prolonged contact with Westerners like Peck. Nonetheless, writing about the skin and its relationship to the body, Steven Connor states that by inventing with one's body, the body becomes reinvented (2004, 30). I would like to extend this, considering that drawing is a form of inventing, and suggest that such work acts as a reinvention of the tattooed Inuit body, suspending it in paper form while it is in question or transition, as exemplified by tattooing's recent resurgence with Inuit women during the twenty-first century (Krutak 2013, 55–63).

Less than ten years after Peck left Blacklead Island in 1905, ethnologist Diamond Jenness took part in the Canadian Arctic Expedition and focused his ethnographic efforts on the Copper Inuit. Jenness, too, recognized the value of commissioning and collecting Inuit drawings, stating, "I distributed a number of notebooks and pencils and asked both adults and children to fill them with sketches. The new pastime amused them, and they quickly furnished me with about a hundred drawings of men and women in which the faces and hands received far less attention than the details of the tattooing and clothing" (1946, 146). An unnamed Copper Inuit woman created a number of the drawings Jenness collected. One of her illustrations, as published in Jenness (1946, 147), depicts two parkas on the upper part of the page, with one encircling the head of a woman with a V-shaped tattoo on her forehead. In the centre are a bird,



Figure 1. Unknown, *Untitled*, graphite, coloured pencil, and ink on paper, c. 1900, collected by Rev. Edmund James Peck. Item M56-B4-D2, courtesy of Anglican Church of Canada/General Synod Archives, Toronto.

perhaps a raven or loon, and a woman with facial tattooing, while the bottom shows a group of four caribou. It remains unclear, however, if these images are part of a single composition or if they have been assembled together for publication purposes.²

2. After an extensive search, I was unable to locate the original drawing(s) from which this image is derived. This is an area where further research is needed.

Although Jenness recognized tattooing as a pre-contact practice worth documenting and collecting drawings of, he still marginalized its religious significance as well as the personal and cultural agency of tattooed Inuit women. As he notes, “Tattooing on women had no religious significance; it was merely a time-honoured method of adornment to which every member of the sex submitted willingly...There seemed to be no compulsion in the matter beyond public opinion and a woman’s natural desire to follow in the current methods of adornment” (1946, 53–54). While Jenness acknowledges the attention paid to tattoos in the collected drawings, he fails to see, or at least mention, any connection between the depiction of tattooing in them as a form of self-representation and tattooing in its bodily form. Unsurprisingly so, and as Laugrand and Oosten point out, anthropologists such as Jenness and Rasmussen often neglected to discuss innovations—for example, drawings as lifeline between the past and the present—in their published ethnographies, instead preferring to present an account of a culture unaffected by Western contact (2010, 5–6). When this relationship is reassessed, it is apparent that the Copper Inuit who drew for Jenness articulated tattooing onto a new material support, consequently, and even if inadvertently, expressing their own cultural interests, values, and needs in the process (Cole 1991, 49).

On June 17, 1921, Jenness’s contemporary Knud Johan Victor Rasmussen departed Copenhagen, beginning the three-year Fifth Thule Expedition. As the son of a Danish father and Danish-Inuit mother, Rasmussen was sensitive towards and aware of Inuit culture in a manner uncharacteristic of many anthropologists working during the same period. Nonetheless, Laugrand and Oosten claim that Rasmussen, and the Fifth Thule Expedition more broadly, “focused on the anthropological and archaeological reconstruction of traditional Inuit culture and paid much less attention to changes occurring in Inuit societies in that period” (2010, 6). Assumedly, their use of the term “traditional” is intended to refer to the characteristics of Inuit culture prior to the influence and introduction of European materials, technologies, goods, and ideologies. This article has instead favoured the term *pre-contact*, with the exception of quotations, because the term *traditional* does not recognize Inuit culture’s flexibility, which includes its ability to grow, change, and incorporate elements from non-Inuit culture—issues that form the foundation of this essay. Disputing the common and generally unquestioned use of the term, Craig Womack offers an alternate definition. For him, traditionalism refers to anything, such as the drawings I address in this article, that Indigenous groups employ in “retaining their values and worldviews, no matter how much it deviates from what people did one or two hundred years ago” (Womack 1999, 42).

Although writing on Indigenous literature, Womack’s argument is analogous to that of Deborah Doxtater, who similarly advocates that the analysis of Indigenous cultural production should not place an emphasis “on the point of division or disruption between time periods but on the continuity between

eras" (1992, 27). This continuity is visible in the vast amount of Inuit stories, songs and poetry, material culture, and art that Rasmussen collected during his journey from Greenland to Siberia. Much of this ethnographic information and its coinciding objects came to be included in the Rasmussen volumes of the *Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition* and testifies to the strength and resilience of Inuit culture during a period characterized by increasing Western contact. As a meticulous anthropologist and prompter, Rasmussen amassed over one hundred drawings rendered in pencil on paper, including works by the Cup'ig of Nunivak Island, Alaska, and the Igloodik, Netsilik, and Copper Inuit, all of which are now in the collection of the National Museum of Denmark. From this wealth of material, twelve drawings depict tattooing, which were made by two known Inuit, Arnarulunguaq and Netsit, and at least three others that are currently unknown. While Rasmussen never specifically references the tattoo drawings in his published work, his description regarding a commission of drawings from Anarqâq of the Igloodik region sheds significant insight into how such works may have been created and received: "When I promised him payment...he agreed, on the condition that I...not show them about among his own people.... All Anarqâq's drawings were uncommonly rich expressions of Eskimo imagination, and need no explanation beyond that which he himself gave me with each one....I always wrote down these explanatory notes of his on the spot, and the text here given with the drawings is thus a translation of Anarqâq's own words" (Rasmussen 1929, 44).

Many of the tattoo drawings Rasmussen accumulated demonstrate a similar collaborative process and often include Rasmussen's field notes that show his sustained attention to tattooing's cultural significance and varied meanings. Recognizing that Rasmussen imported a number of foreign concepts into the Arctic, Keavy Martin proposes that when re-examined, his methods can be considered "as an adaption and as an extension to the usual process of transmitting songs and stories" (2012, 86), which here is not unlike the dissemination of prompted Inuit drawings through Western print culture via Rasmussen's books. Prior to this essay, a number of these drawings have also been published elsewhere (Kjellström 2009, 56, 68; Kapel et al. 1992, 102; Driscoll 1987, 197), albeit directly from Rasmussen's texts, and consequently do not properly represent the drawings as their makers created them. In fact, upon reviewing the drawings in their original state it becomes apparent that many of the previously published images were actually two drawings superimposed upon one another. Several drawings also include Rasmussen's field notes that were cropped out upon publication. Overall, the twelve tattoo drawings that Rasmussen collected are formally similar. Most utilize strong contour lines alongside detailed tattoo patterns that emphasize the depicted women's tattooed body parts, while non-tattooed parts, such as breasts and lower legs, are often left out altogether.

After spending an extended period of time with a team of six other Europeans, Rasmussen separated to travel with a group of Inuit, including two

Inuit of Greenlandic origin—a twenty-two-year-old man named Qâvigarssuaq, otherwise known as Miteq, and his twenty-eight-year-old female cousin named Arnarulúnguaq—as well as two Kivalliq Inuit, which included Taparte and the previously mentioned Anarqâq. With reference to Miteq and Arnarulúnguaq, who accompanied him the longest, Rasmussen ([1927] 1969, 158) reflects, “I could not have wished for better companions than these two.” Despite such praise, the full role of these two Greenlandic Inuit is seldom acknowledged. In the secondary texts on the Fifth Thule Expedition, these individuals are generally spoken of as Rasmussen’s assistants, guides, and interpreters.³ Arnarulúnguaq, however, not only contributed to the success of the expedition, but also to the visual culture, history, and endurance of Inuit tattooing by creating six drawings that illustrate the practice, likely between April and November 1923, while Rasmussen and his team were at King William Island. Of the twelve tattoo drawings collected by Rasmussen, hers are arguably the most artistically inclined, with bold, confident, contour lines delineating the body parts most commonly tattooed by Inuit women—the face, arms, hands, and thighs—alongside sustained attention to the details of the tattoos themselves.

An image in Rasmussen’s (1931, 312r) *The Netsilik Eskimos* shows two named Inuit women drawn by Arnarulúnguaq: Nâlungiaq and Manêlaq, the latter having been quoted in this article’s introductory story pertaining to the tattooed raven and loon. Nâlungiaq similarly contributed to the corpus of Inuit oral history by telling Rasmussen the three places Inuit can go after their deaths: (1) a land of pleasure up in the sky, otherwise known as “the village of Eternal Homecoming”; (2) *noqumiut*, or “the Land of the Crestfallen,” just under the earth’s surface where one lives in hunger, idleness, and apathy; and (3) *aglermiut*, the underworld beyond *noqumiut* where one experiences “nothing but joy, prosperity, and abundance” (315–19). As Nâlungiaq recounts, women with beautiful tattoos go to “the village of Eternal homecoming” because “the spirits of the air want women not to be afraid of suffering if only it makes them pretty” (316). On the other hand, “all the women who are not tattooed, all those women who do not care to suffer a little in order that they may be pretty” are destined to an unbearable afterlife in *noqumiut* (316–17). Giving credibility to Nâlungiaq’s knowledge and displaying an awareness of Inuit culture’s subtle and often complex nuances, Rasmussen himself even accedes, agreeing that “all that is described in them [Inuit oral history] did really happen once, when everything in the world was different to what it is now. Thus these tales are both their real history and the source of all their religious ideas” (207).

Arnarulúnguaq’s drawing of Nâlungiaq (Rasmussen 1931, 312r), who served as Rasmussen’s housemate for roughly half a year, was published in

3. Nevertheless, according to Rasmussen, “Surely, however, it is no mere sentimental gesture to point out that they had a bigger share in the outcome of the trip than I have space to show” ([1927] 1969, ix).

adherence with the original (Figure 2) and shows her with extensive tattooing on her thighs, arms, hands, and face.⁴ Nâlungiaq's thighs, separated from her body in two half-oval type shapes, have tattooing in the form of long, horizontal bands, shorter horizontal and vertical striations, as well as upside down Y-like designs. Unlike her legs, the tattooing on her arms is almost entirely symmetrical, except on her elbows—with that on the viewer's right missing some design motifs seen on the left—and hands, which diverge slightly from one another. On Nâlungiaq's face, Arnarulúnguaq has shown tattooing in the areas commonly tattooed, which includes her forehead, cheeks, and chin, while also adding further designs, perhaps more common to the Netsilik, extending horizontally from the corners of Nâlungiaq's eyes and lips. Conversely, the corresponding image of Manêlaq, as published in Rasmussen (1931, 312r), was created using two separate drawings: one (Figure 3) consisting of her tattooed face, torso, and arms, and a second (Figure 4) comprising the nearly symmetrical tattooing on her thighs—both showing tattooing on the same locations seen in the drawing of Nâlungiaq (aside from those at the corners of her mouth and eyes) and with largely the same formal properties.

On the page opposite to Arnarulúnguaq's first set of drawings in Rasmussen's Netsilik Inuit text, there is another image (1931, 313v) showing two more tattooed, although in this instance unnamed, Inuit women drawn by Arnarulúnguaq. Similar to the published drawing of Manêlaq, the first of these images is constructed using two separate drawings. One drawing (Figure 5) shows nearly symmetrical tattooing on a woman's face and arms and includes common design elements such as longer horizontal bands and shorter striations, squares, Y-shapes, and triangles. The complimentary drawing (Figure 6) displays two tattooed thighs that are somewhat smaller and noticeably less tattooed in comparison to the previous works. The second image (313v) is published in accordance with its corresponding original drawing (Figure 7). However, in comparison to Arnarulúnguaq's other drawings, this final work is noticeably less developed. Even though the facial tattooing is clearly visible, the woman's proper right arm is absent while her left has less tattooing than that seen in the related drawings. It is possible that this drawing is unfinished, but considering that Arnarulúnguaq rarely depicted non-tattooed parts, it stands to reason that perhaps this was a relatively young woman who did not yet have tattooing on her right arm. Working under this logic, one could also infer that the tattooing on the woman's arm was incomplete when Arnarulúnguaq drew it, given the negative space between her forearm and shoulder. Rather interestingly, on its reverse, this paper also has a drawing by a Copper Inuit man named Netsit, suggesting that he had at least some contact with Arnarulúnguaq's work and that it, in turn, may have influenced his own decision to draw and communicate the intricacies of tattooing to Rasmussen.

4. For more on Nâlungiaq, see Rasmussen (1931, 206–7).

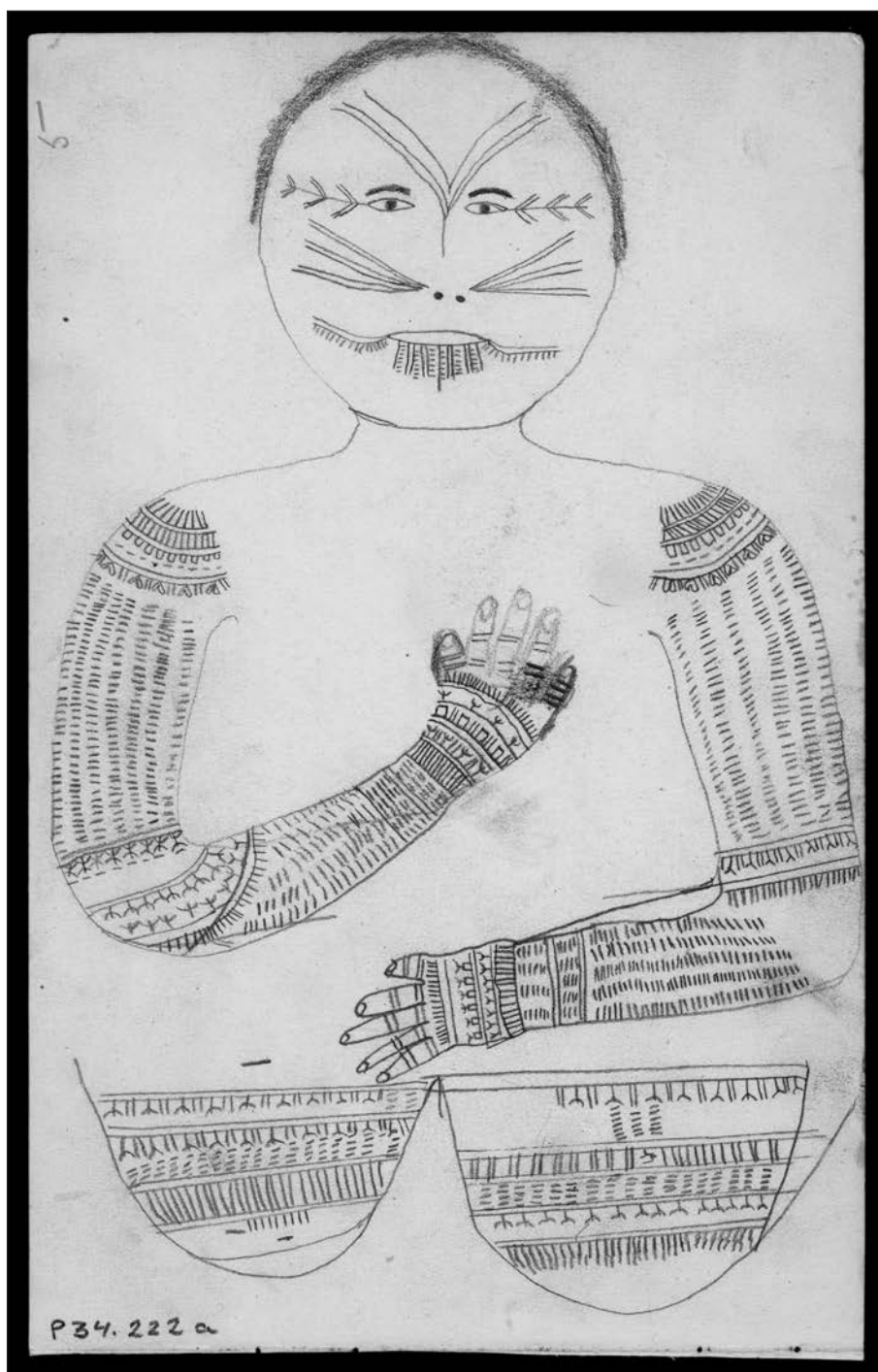


Figure 2. Arnarulúnguaq, *Untitled* (Nálungiaq's tattoos), graphite on paper, c. 1923. P34.222a, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

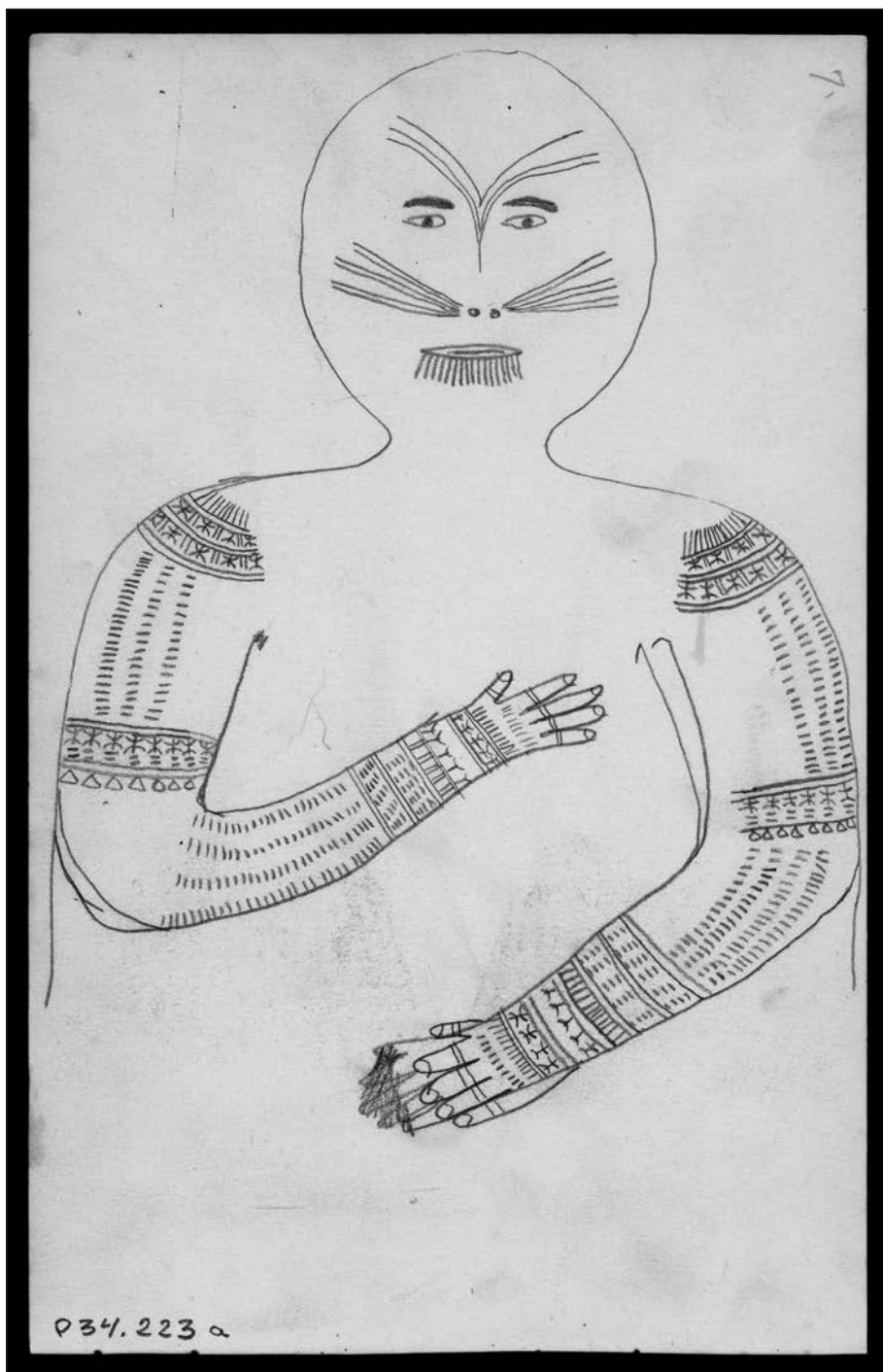


Figure 3. Arnarulúnguaq, *Untitled* (Manêlaq's tattoos, torso), graphite on paper, c. 1923. P34223a, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

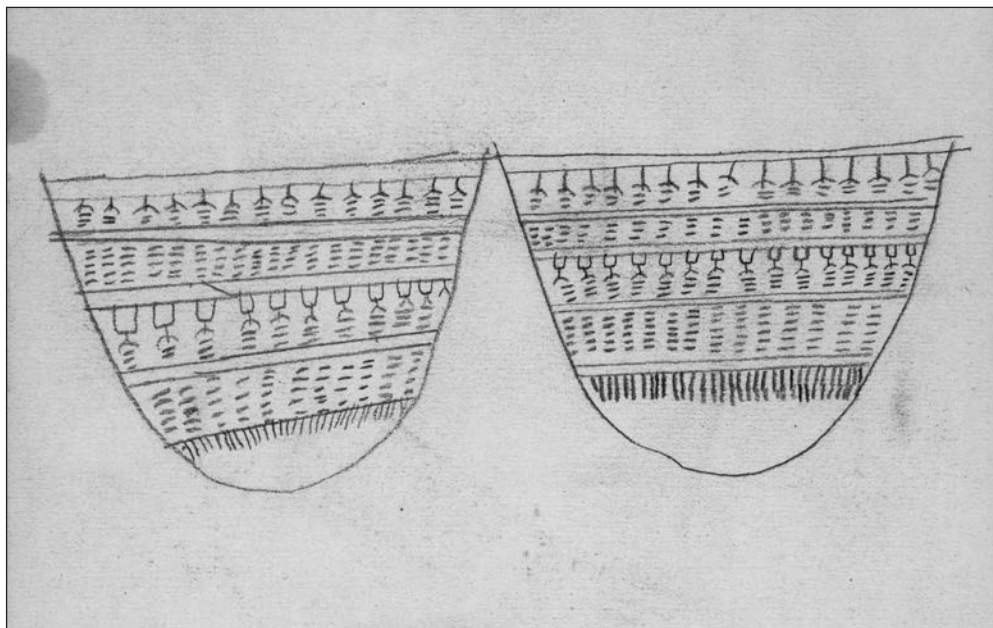


Figure 4. Arnarulúnguaq, *Untitled* (Manêlaq's tattoos, thighs), graphite on paper, c. 1923, collected by Knud Rasmussen. P34.224, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

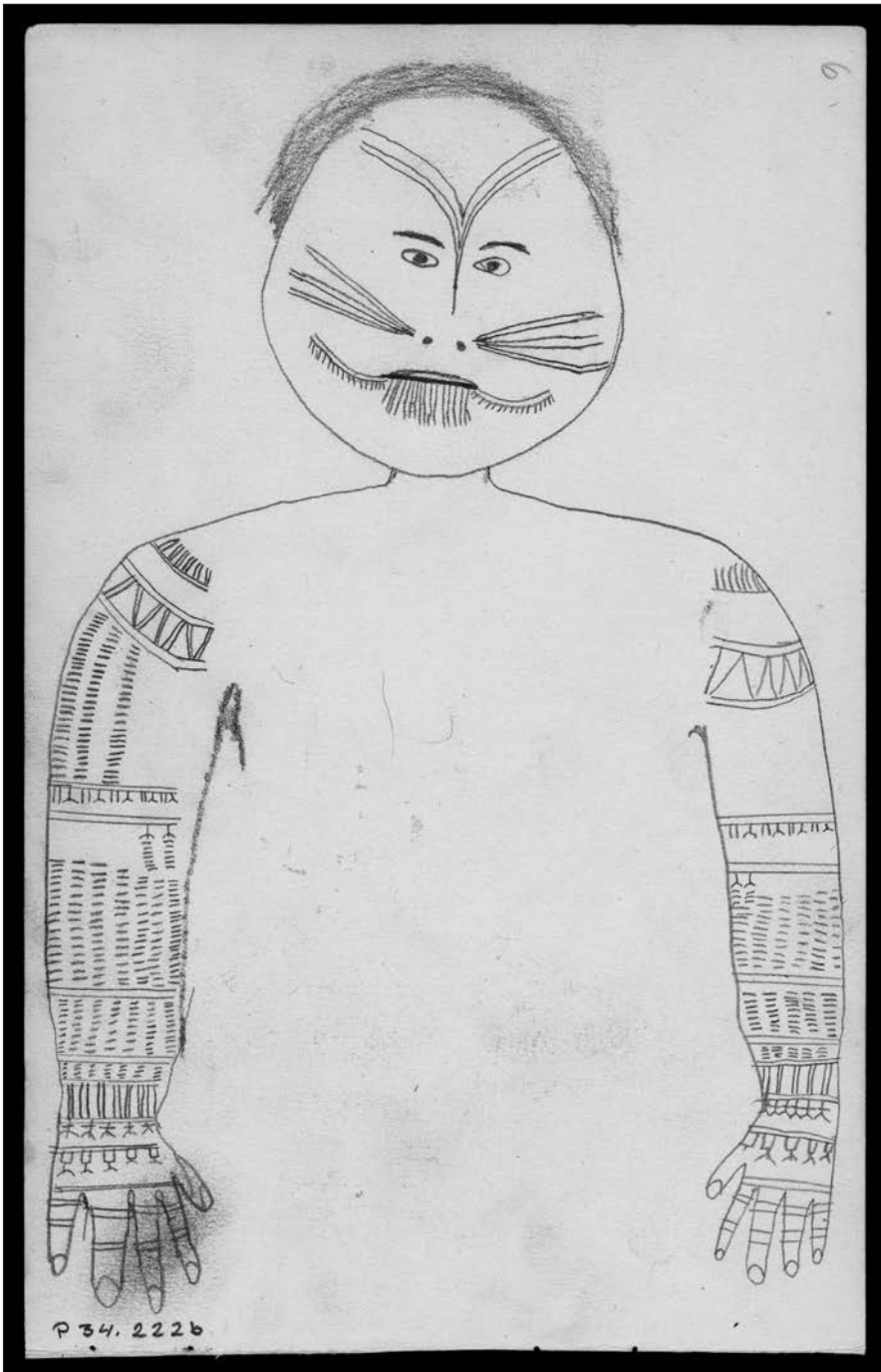


Figure 5. Arnarulúnguaq, *Untitled* (Unknown Netsilik woman's tattoos, torso), graphite on paper, c. 1923, collected by Knud Rasmussen. P34.222b, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

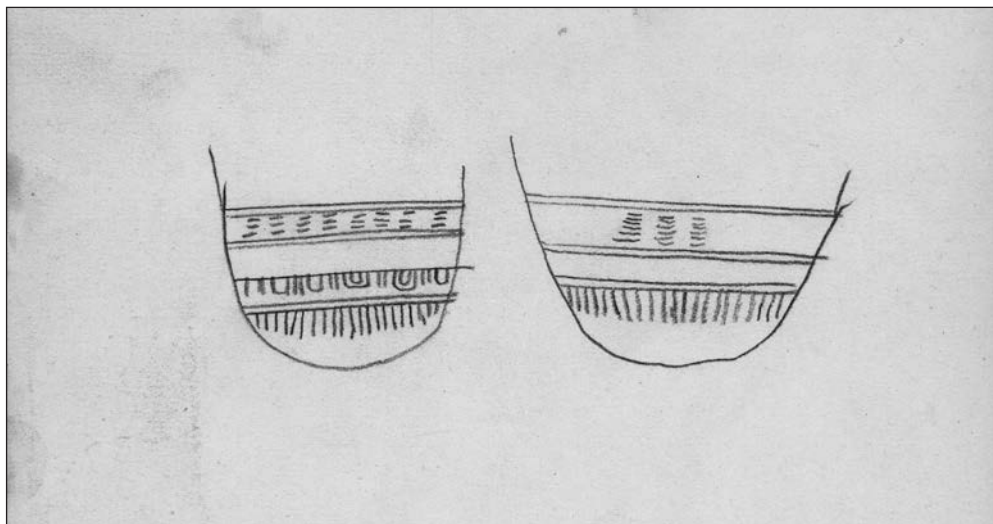


Figure 6. Arnarulúnguaq, *Untitled* (Unknown Netsilik woman's tattoos, thighs), graphite on paper, c. 1923, collected by Knud Rasmussen. P34.223b, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

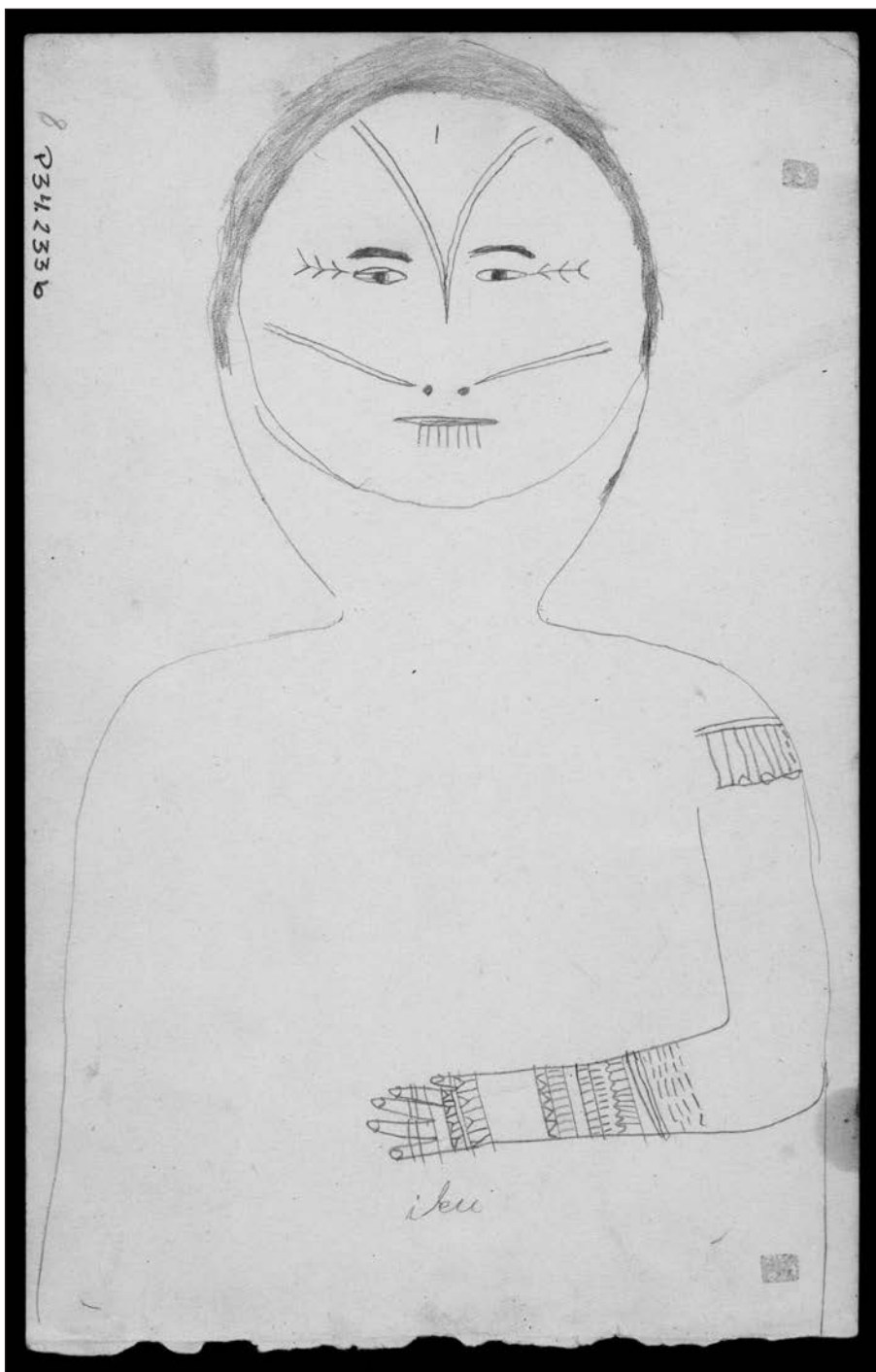


Figure 7. Arnarulúnguaq, *Untitled* (Tattooed Netsilik woman), graphite on paper, c. 1923. P34.233b, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

In the opening paragraph of his text on the Copper Inuit, Rasmussen describes how, after seven months with the Netsilik, on November 1, 1923, he, Arnarulúnguaq, and Qâvigarsuaq departed eastward towards the Copper Inuit. Demonstrating a kinship uncharacteristic of anthropologists during this time, Rasmussen laments how his prolonged and friendly relationships with the Netsilik “helped to form ties that now were not so easy to cut through” (Rasmussen 1932b, 7). Nevertheless, he soon developed equally cordial relationships. Netsit, a young man between twenty and twenty-five, became one of Rasmussen’s primary informants, allowing him to record a significant amount of Inuit poetry and oral history during his time with the Copper Inuit.⁵ As the adopted son of a shaman named Ilatsiaq, Netsit was particularly respected for his knowledge within the community, often sitting in on conversations between Rasmussen and other Inuit.

Like Arnarulúnguaq, Netsit similarly aided in preserving tattooing by drawing an image depicting tattooing sometime between November 1923 and February 15, 1924. In it, he pictured a partially nude, tattooed woman alongside a fully nude, unmarked man (Rasmussen 1932b, 269v). Originally published in Rasmussen’s *Intellectual Culture of the Copper Eskimos*, Netsit’s drawing pays close attention to the linear tattoos that mark this unnamed woman’s face, upper arm, forearm, and hand. Unlike Arnarulúnguaq, Netsit also includes the woman’s braids and partially removed parka. Yet, similar to Arnarulúnguaq’s work, the published version of Netsit’s drawing does not accurately reflect the circumstances surrounding the work’s production. This is evident when viewing Netsit’s drawing in its original version (Figure 8), as it reveals a number of Rasmussen’s handwritten notes that correspond to the text published beneath the drawing in his book (269v). Considering that Rasmussen was able to converse relatively freely with the Inuit he encountered due to his background in Kalaallisut, that he is known to have taken notes to complement his collected drawings, and given Netsit’s position of authority within his community, I suggest that it is probable the information in Rasmussen’s notes came directly from Netsit himself.

On the drawing’s top right, Rasmussen lists, first in Danish and then in Inuktitut, the names for tattooing on the specific parts of an Inuit woman’s body. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, I favour the Inuit Circumpolar Council Inuktitut orthography and English translations of these words. *Qaujat*, or “brow lines” refers to the vertical tattooing on one’s forehead; *ii-nitit*, or “those at the eyes,” is the tattooing that extends from one’s eyelids to hairline; *uluagutit* are “those at the cheeks”; *tallurutit*, or “those at the chin,” extend vertically between one’s mouth and chin; *alga-rutit* are “those on the hands”; and finally,

5. Rasmussen ([1927] 1969, 16, 22) gives conflicting accounts of Netsit’s age.



Figure 8. Netsit (drawing) and Knud Rasmussen (text), *Untitled* (Copper Inuit man and woman), graphite on paper, c. 1923. P34.233a, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

akhatqurutit are “those on the upper arm.” Below this, Rasmussen has written an expression that announces, “If one is afraid of being tattooed one will have much worse pains when the child is coming.” The final lines of text on the drawing identify the pair as “husband and wife,” whereas in Rasmussen’s book they are noted as “man and woman” (1932b, 269v). Below this, Rasmussen denotes that the “drawing [is] by Netsit from Umingmaktuuq.”⁶ Rasmussen’s recording of the artist’s name and community directly on the work itself does not reoccur elsewhere in the tattoo drawings and suggests a strong relationship with Netsit and a level of collaboration that was perhaps not as prevalent during the creation and collection of the other drawings.

While it is possible to identify Netsit and Arnarulúnguaq’s drawings, there exist five additional tattoo drawings whose makers are currently unknown. The location(s) where these works were made is similarly undetermined. However, through a comparative formal analysis and a consideration of the papers on which the drawings are rendered, it is likely that these works come from three unnamed Inuit.

6. See also Appendix 1.

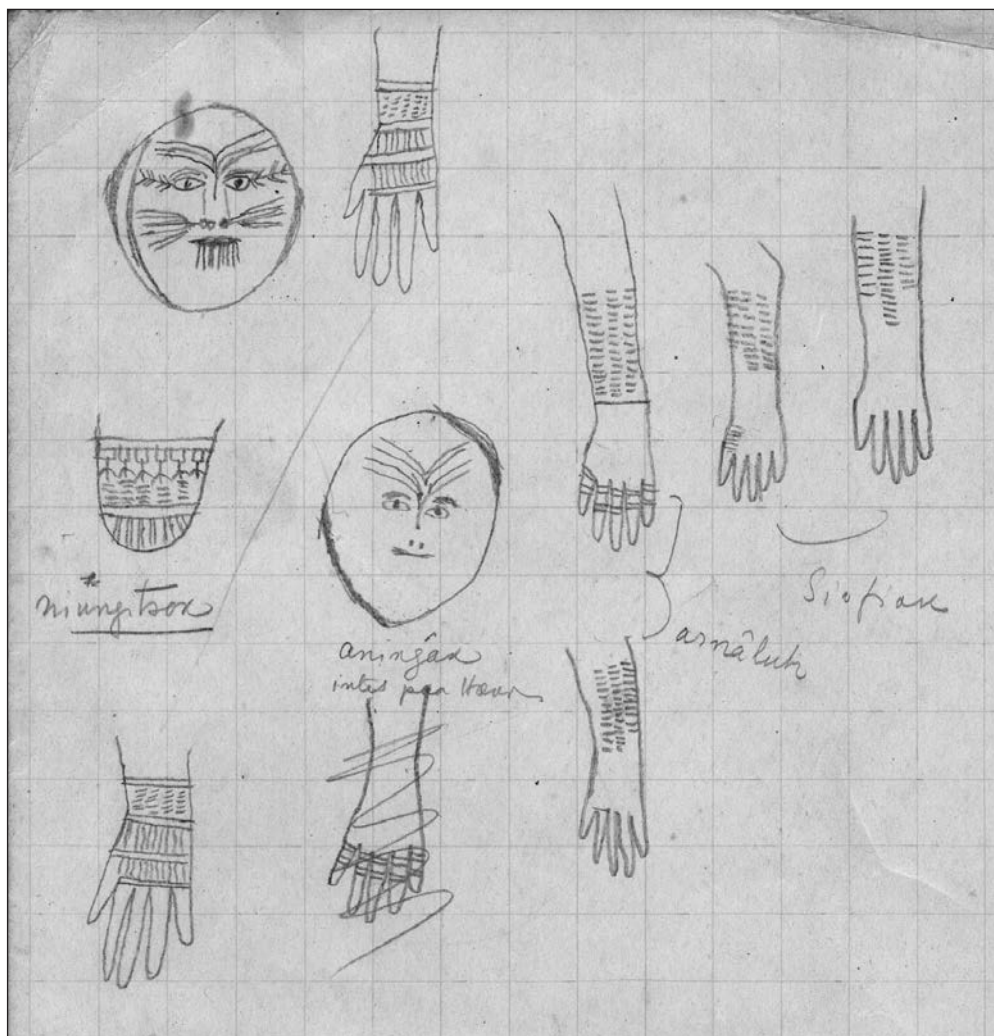


Figure 9. Unknown, *Untitled*, graphite on paper, c. 1921–24. P34.244, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

The first of these unattributed works is a drawing (Figure 9) that shows a combination of tattooed body parts: seven arms, hands, and/or wrists, two faces, and a single thigh. Confined to the top left of the paper, these renditions are comparatively smaller than other tattoo depictions in this collection and from this it can be concluded that this drawing is probably the only tattoo work this individual created. It is also worth accentuating the similarity between this Inuk's method of depicting a thigh in a half-oval format and those drawn by Arnarulunguaq, which indicates that he or she may have had contact with the larger body of work in this collection. Many of the images in this drawing are denoted by Rasmussen's handwriting and are the names of tattooed women.

Moving from left to right, the text below the image of the thigh reads Ninungitsok, or “the one who did not go ashore”; between the central face and crossed-out arm, the name given is Aningâk or “the moon”; directly beside, two arms are denoted as representative of Arnâluk, or “the little woman”; and rightmost the final two arms are said to belong to Sivfiak, or “hip.”⁷ Those without a coinciding name include the face and hand at the top of the page and the lowermost image of a single hand directly below the representation of Ninungitsok’s thigh.

Two more drawings, showing a tattooed hand (Figure 10) and an elongated, tattooed body (Figure 11), are likely to be the work of a second person as both drawings are on either side of a single sheet of paper and have similar line weight and formal qualities. The drawing of the tattooed wrist and hand, extending from the top of the page, has a comparable contour to an unfinished design on the paper’s opposite side showing the tattooed woman. On the side with the hand and wrist, the rendition of tattoos stretching from knuckles to lower forearm exhibit a careful attention to detail, showing the same types of designs seen in the previous works. But, more noteworthy are the designs in the top right and bottom left corners of the paper that are absent from a body altogether. Shown in this manner, the creator demonstrates how the aesthetics of Inuit tattooing can function even when doubly removed from the body: the physical body and the represented body. In this sense, it is important to consider Inuit tattooing’s formal properties beyond the body altogether, as has been articulated with regard to parka design (Driscoll Engelstad 2011, 35; Driscoll 1987, 197–98) and needlecases (Boas 1908). Moreover, the elongated body, with tattoos marking the woman’s face, arms, hands, and legs, displays a stylistic treatment common to this selection of work: negating detail on body parts without tattoos. The text to its right was recorded by Rasmussen and corresponds to the three afterlives told by both Nâlungiaq (Rasmussen 1931, 315–19) and Angnaituarsuk (Rasmussen 1932b, 94), indicating that the drawing’s maker could possibly be one of them.⁸

The final unattributed work similarly excludes non-tattooed parts, with two pages of drawings illustrating tattooing on busts of Inuit women. Each instance has a prominent image in the upper-central portion of the paper, with the first (Figure 12) showing tattooing on a woman’s face and proper left arm, alongside a partial arm that suggests there was supposed to be another figure included in the composition. The second (Figure 13) is stylistically comparable although with a focus on another woman’s more extensively tattooed arm. The common features that suggest the same individual drew both works include (1) the overall form and layout of the represented women, which in both instances, only shows a head, neck, shoulders, and single arm; and (2) the manner in which the creator

7. Einar Lund Jensen, curator at the National Museum of Denmark, provided these translations.

8. See also Appendix 2.

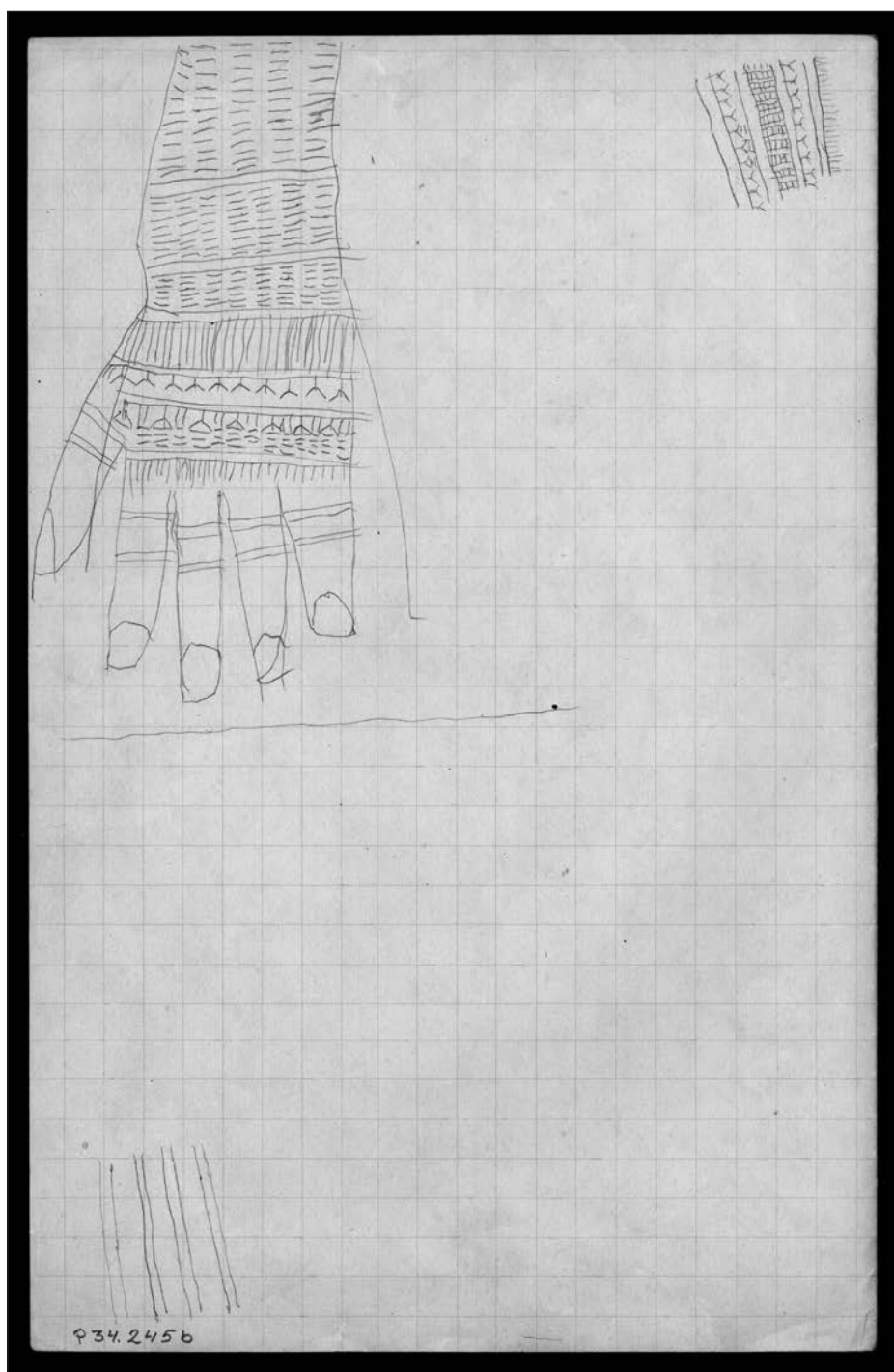


Figure 10. Unknown, *Untitled*, graphite on paper, c. 1921–24, collected by Knud Rasmussen. P34.245b, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

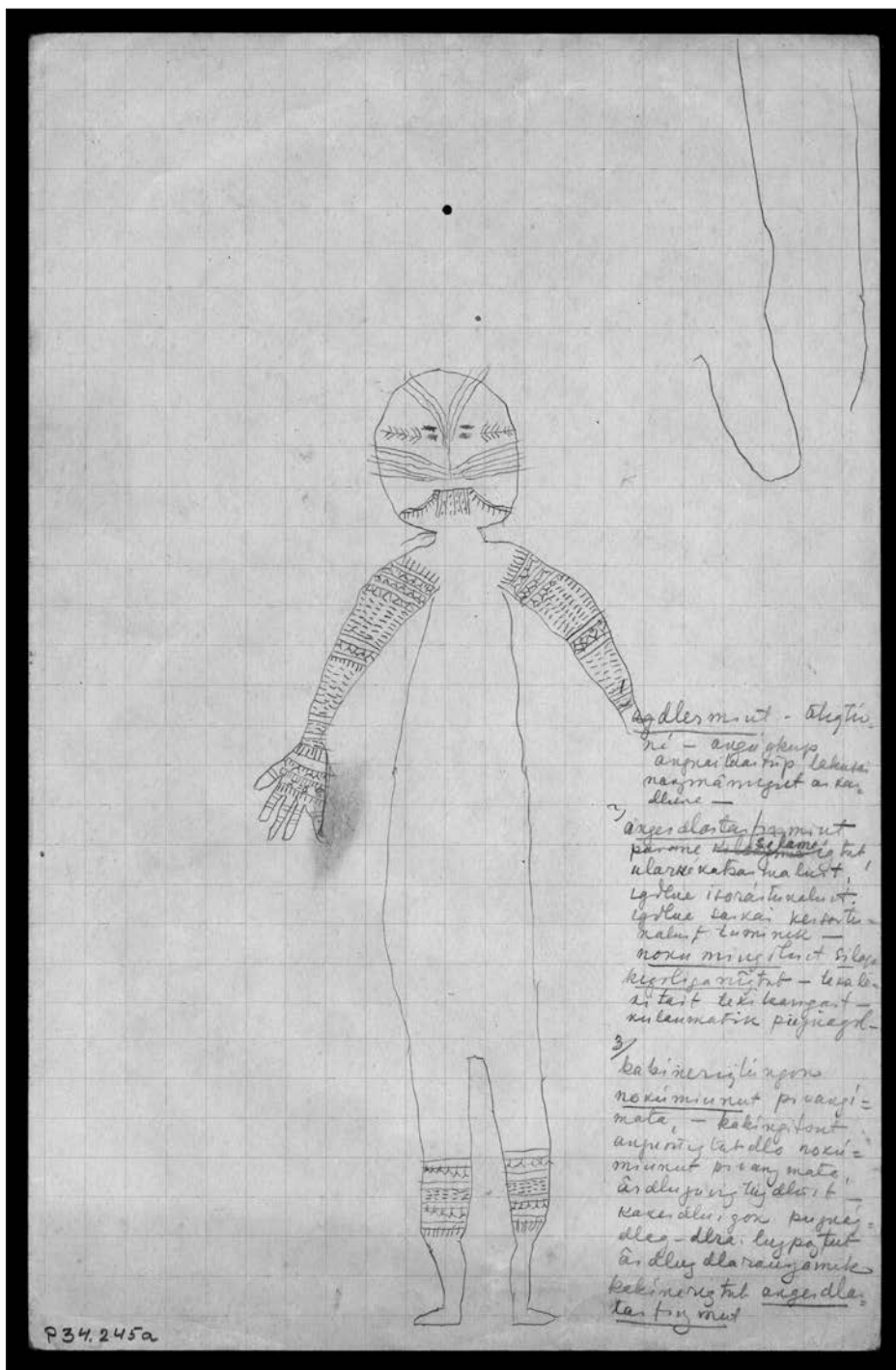


Figure 11. Unknown (drawing) and Knud Rasmussen (text), *Untitled*, graphite on paper, c. 1921-24. P34.245a, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

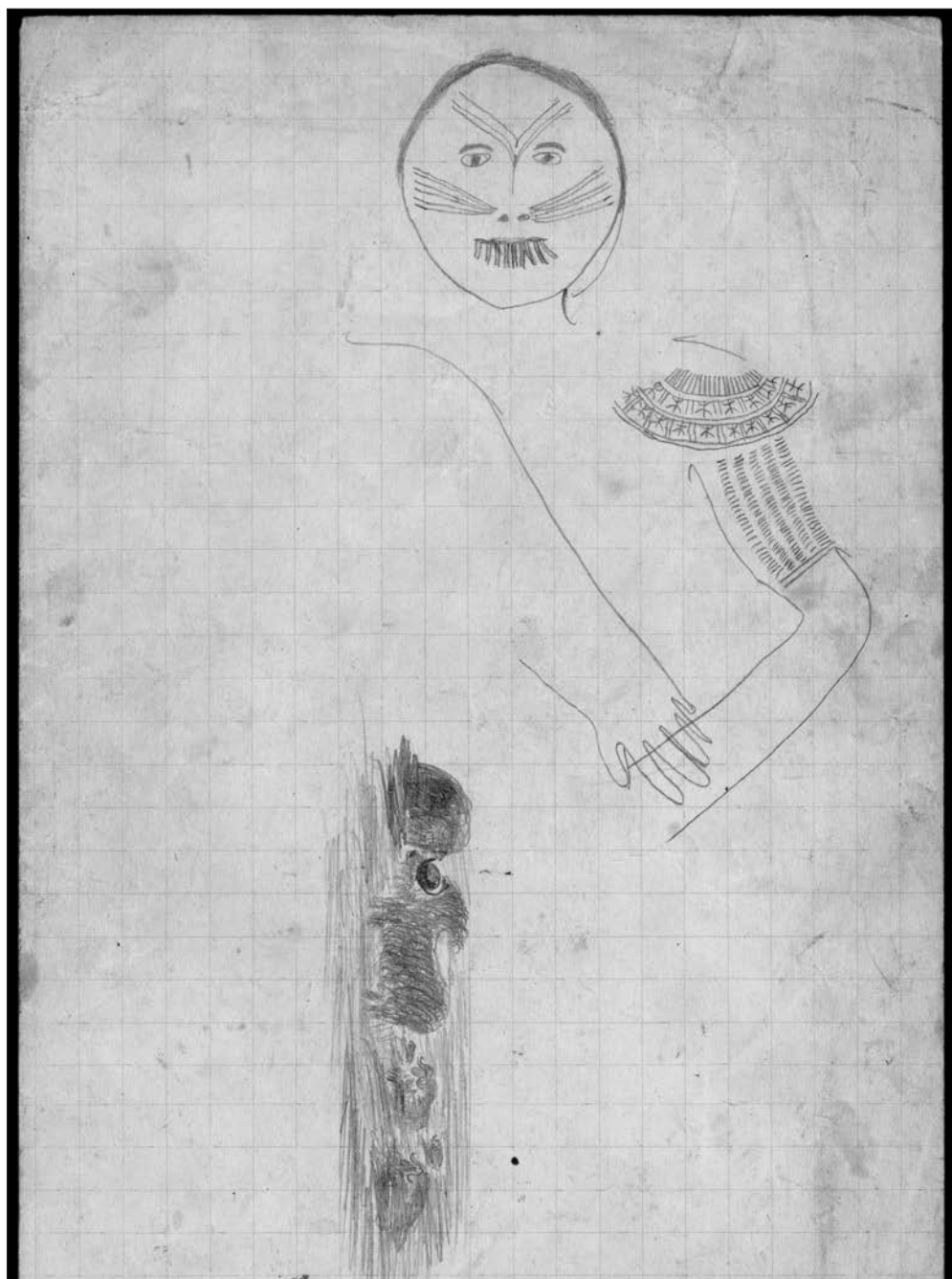


Figure 12. Unknown, *Untitled*, graphite on paper, c. 1921–24. P34.247d, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

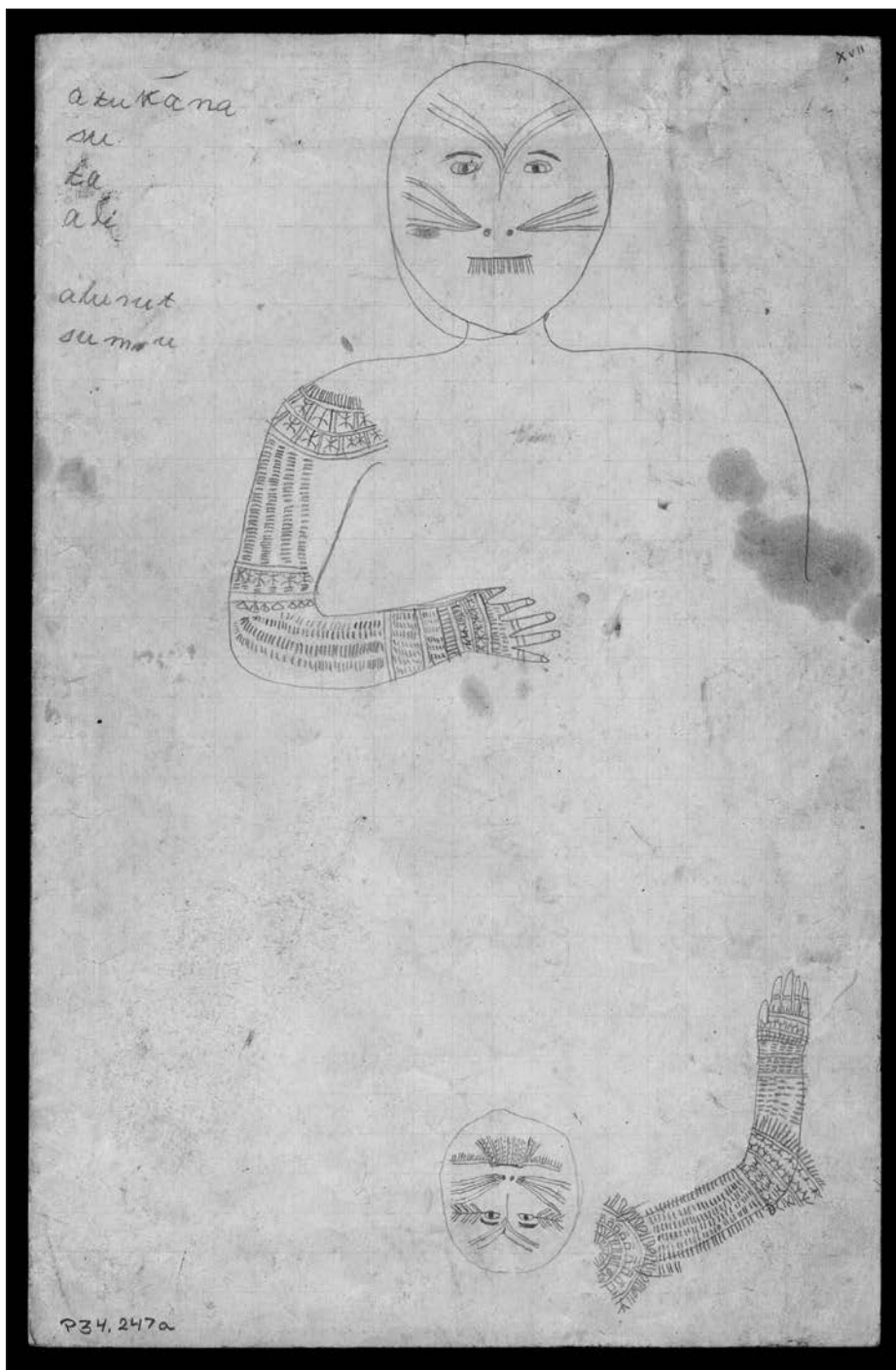


Figure 13. Unknown, *Untitled*, pencil on paper, c. 1921–24. P34.247a, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

extended tattooing beyond the linear confines of the represented arms. In the first work, this extension is visible on the woman's shoulder, and in the second, on both the shoulder and elbow of the detached arm towards the bottom right of the page. By doing so, the maker has inventively illustrated multiple perspectives through a two-dimensional medium and implied a wrapping of tattooing on these joints.

With simple, introduced materials, Inuit men and women used drawing to aid in furthering tattooing and its aesthetics, cultural memory, and meaning despite the rapid Western incursion into Inuit life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The drawings I have examined in this article entered the Western cultural archive after being accumulated in an ethnographic context by explorers, anthropologists, and missionaries, published in texts, and ultimately ending up in the collections of Western institutions. Such work visually declares the ability of Inuit art to act as a medium on which pre-contact Inuit cultural practices, such as tattooing, continues to endure while still confronting the legacy of colonialism. When considered alongside the Inuit tattoo revival movement currently sweeping the Arctic, prompted drawings occupy an important visual resource for those Inuit interested in acquiring tattoos as well as contemporary Inuit artists who represent tattooing in their work. As the Inuit continue to pursue decolonial routes through the recovery of previously marginalized cultural practices, the exploration of early visual representations of tattooing will surely play a pertinent part in the ongoing self-determination process. While tattooing amongst Inuit women may not currently be as pervasive when compared to the pre-European contact period, due to deeply embedded social stigmas that are a result of extended Western cultural encroachment, this article has shown that tattooing has remained a consistent aesthetic and cultural paradigm—on both bodies and paper—that is unlikely to ever subside altogether. More broadly, I have aimed to attract an awareness to a seldom acknowledged and insufficiently researched group of work, particularly with regards to the Rasmussen drawing collection at the National Museum of Denmark, and hope that this essay will lead to further investigation into this important collection of Inuit visual culture.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1. Translations of Text on Netsit's Drawing (Figure 8) from Knud Rasmussen Collection

Netsit's drawing is complimented by a number of Rasmussen's field notes that pertain to tattooing. The translations below, which correspond to the handwritten text on the drawing, are courtesy of Nuka Møller and follow largely in line with that given in Rasmussen (1932b, 269v).

Danish	Rasmussen's notes	Inuit Cultural Institute standard orthography (1976)	English
i Panden	kaujat	(qaujat)	on forehead: qaujat (qauq: forehead. -jat: resembles)
ved øjnene:	î-nitit	(ii-nitit)	by the eyes: ii (iji): eye, -nitit: adorns, placed on/by*
– kinderne:	Uluagutit	(uluagutit)	– cheeks: uluak: cheek, -gutit: adorns, placed on
– Hagen:	Tavdlorutit	(tallurutit)	– chin: tallu: chin, -rutit: adorns, placed on
– Haanden:	alga-rutit	(alga-rutit)	– hand: algak: hand, -rutit: adorns, placed on
– overarm:	Akhákrorutit	(akhatqurutit)	– upper arm: akhatquq: upper arm, -rutit: adorns, placed on
	ulorianailak atorumar- pa kakinekarume – nutarkinialerume**	ulurianailaq aturumaar- paa kakiniqarumi nutaqqinialirumi	less danger will he/she encounter whilst being tattooed when giving childbirth
	= hvis man er bange for at lade sig tatovere vil man opleve større Smerte, naar man skal føde...siger de gamle	= if one is afraid of being tattooed one will encounter more pain, when one gives birth... says the old ones	
	Mand og Kone -	Husband and wife -	
	Tegning af Netsit	Drawing by Netsit (Natsit)	
	Umingmagtôrmio	from Umingmaktuuq	

* In the Inuinnaqtun dialect (used here) the stem *iji* is used for “eye” in dictionary entries, but is mostly indicated as a prolonged vowel *ii* in other variants where the stem occurs.

** Rasmussen has underlined the “m” in both words to confirm that it is the sound he'd actually heard. In most Inuit dialects, in Greenlandic as well, the locative case here would be *-ni*.

Appendix 2. Translations of Text on Figure 11 from Knud Rasmussen Collection

The following translations, provided by Nuka Møller, are explanations of three afterlives and are similar to those conveyed by Nálungiaq (Rasmussen 1931, 315–19). However, Møller points out that they are also comparable to a passage in *Den store slæderejse* (Rasmussen 1932a, 94), as told to Rasmussen by Angnaituarsuk. Regarding the field notes on the drawing, Møller states, “The writing system Rasmussen has used in the notes is the old Greenlandic orthography, whilst the content is written in pidgin form, a hodgepodge of West Greenlandic and the Inuinnaqtun dialect, written down as short notes of information in abbreviations only known to Knud Rasmussen, which make them hard to decipher and translate” (Nuka Møller, pers. comm., 2015).

Knud Rasmussen's notes	Greenlandic standard orthography (1973)	English
1) <u>agdlermiut</u> – akigtiv- ne – angagkup Angnaituarsûp takusai nangmâmigut arkar- dlune -	1) Allermiut – akitsin- ni – angakkup Angnaituarsuup takusai nammaamigut aqqar- luni -	1) Dwellers below – on the other side* – as seen by the shaman Angnaituarsuk, when he descended through his back pack.
2) <u>angerdlartarfingmiut</u> pavane silame utarkerkârtartualuit, igdlue sarkai kersortu- aluit tuminik nokumiugdluit silap kigdlinganitut takale- kitait tekilaangait kulaumatik pujuagdl...	2) <u>Angerlartarfimmiut</u> pavani silami utaqqeqqattartualuit illui saqqai qersortu- aluit (?) tuminik noqumiullit silap killinganiittut taqale- qitaat teqilaangaat qulaammatik pujuall...	2) “ <u>The eternal settlements of the dwellers of the happy homecoming</u> ”** waits in sila above the forefront of their houses are...full of (?) tracks the Noqumiut live on the outskirts of sila, butterflies [notes incomprehensible] fly above them...smoke...
3) kakínerigtúngôk nokumiunut pivangí- mata, - kakíngitsut angu...tâtdlo noqú- miunut pivangmata ârdlujuvigtutdlarît kakerdluigôk pujuag- dlag..dlra.luppagtut ârdlugdlarângamik kakínerigtut <u>angerdlar- tarfingmut</u>	3) kakinnerittunngooq noqumiunut pivanngi m- mata, - kakinnigitsut angu...taallu Noqu- miunut pivammata aarlujuittullaariit qaqerluigooq pujual- lall.. llra.luppattut aarlullaraangamik kakinnerittut <u>angerlar- tarfimmut</u>	3) Those with handsome tattoos never goes to <u>Noqumiut</u> (Land of the Crestfallen) Those without tattoos and the bad hunters come to Noqumiut, they were never able to look up their chins. smoke... [notes incomprehensible] when they looked up those with handsome tattoos to <u>the home coming place</u>

* *Aki*: other side; *Akilineq*: land on the other side (presently a designation of the Canadian side from Greenland). In mythology, usually a world beyond ours with fantastic creatures, etc.

** As Rasmussen translated it into Danish: “Den glade hjemkomsts evige bopladser.”

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