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## Cultural Identity through *Yupiaq* Narrative

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### *AYAGNICUAQ* (LITTLE BEGINNING, INTRODUCTION)

*Yuuk eliskuni, qanruyutni-llu maligtaqukuniki  
nalluyagutevkenaki, tauna yuk  
umyuartuarkauguq.*

If a person learns and follows what he  
is taught and does not forget it, that person  
will be wise.

*Kaligtuq* (Marie Nichols) (Lower Kuskokwim School District 1981) <sup>1</sup>

*Yupiugua* (I am *Yupiaq*<sup>2</sup>). I am the second son<sup>3</sup> of *Ayaginar* (One Who Leisurely Travels), my father, from *Qaluyaaq* (Place of the Dipnet–Nelson Island) and *Nengqeralria* (One Pleasantly Extended), my mother, from *Nunacuar* (Place of the Little Land). My first given name is *Qugcuun* (One Who Gathers) given to me by my maternal grandfather *Makqalria* (One Who Remains Sitting Up) after one of his deceased relatives. My father gave my second name *Akagtaq* (One Who Was Rolled Over) to me after his brother in law, my first cousin *Ayaprun* (Johnny York)'s father. My third name is *Uksuqaq* (Suddenly Little Winter) given to me by my mother's great-aunt, *Passiqaq*, Lucy Jacob. My fourth name is *Kanaqlak* (Muskrat) given to me by my father after my paternal grandfather passed away.

This first person statement is the protocol followed by my family when introducing themselves to others and to elders. Even now, the speaker sometimes elaborates when needed by adding the grandparents' genealogies and places of birth. This introduction protocol and other notions such as a belief in the birth, death and rebirth of both human and non-human sentient beings reflect basic notions inherent in *Yuuyaraq* (the Way of the Human Being) as understood, expressed in the *Yupiaq* language by my family. The remembrances,<sup>4</sup> stories, songs, and artist's impression of my immediate and extended family will provide a synoptic view of the family's life experiences and give a glimpse of the meaning of *Yuuyaraq* (The Way of the Human Being) thereby giving us our identity and by extension our ethnicity. This paper focuses on the world-view of a contemporary *Yupiaq* family and is specific and illustrative rather than exhaustive and extensive. The *Ayaginar* family's worldview will not be compared to the worldview of other families and groups within the greater *Yupiaq/Cupiaq* society. This study is not an attempt to develop universals but to conduct micro-level inquiries in the transmission of cultural knowledge that exists in one family. The paper is an

attempt to explicate indigenous ways of knowing from the Native point of view (Talamantes 1999).

I am an insider whose first language was *Yupiaq*. Later, I became a bilingual speaker with English as a second language. I am sometimes the source of this paper as well as the one analyzing<sup>5</sup> the verbal art of the sources. To put it in another way this exercise is *Yupiaq* exegesis. There are both advantages and disadvantages to being an insider. One obvious advantage is the knowledge of the target language and the obvious language proficiency of the elders. As a bilingual speaker/writer of the target (*Yupiaq*) language<sup>6</sup> as well as being a speaker/writer of the contact (English) language,<sup>7</sup> the analysis would be more accurate. The family remembrances and songs were told or sung in the *Yupiaq* language that required interpretation and translation.<sup>8</sup> I have asked questions of my elders in situ. I first had a list of questions that I would ask my immediate and extended family members. While they answered the questions, I discovered later that the very questions I asked were limiting. A kind of unconscious gate keeping was taking place. My elders were answering my questions but the answers I received were precise but narrow in content. Part of the problem was that they realized I had a list of questions and I believe accommodating me so as to get the questions out of the way. It was several years later that I realized that I received far more detail when my elders were free to follow their mind's journey in whatever direction their remembrances went. When this happened their remembrances were filled with emotions whatever they were and became far more interesting and efforts were made to truly capture the original experiential moment. An obvious disadvantage of being an insider is being too close to the cultural material. However, my training and education in Western based colleges and universities and travel in the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia have given me the insight to be conscious of potential difficulties.<sup>9</sup>

It is also common among the *Yupiaq* to speak with authority on only those elements that one has personally experienced and verified with the phrase, "I can only speak of what I actually know." This idea is also expressed in the *Yupiaq* suffix, *-gguq*, which means "apparently" or "hearsay." The authority or truth is usually relegated to the *Yupiaq* elders in the various verbal arts; one such word is "*qanellriit*" (what they said). These notions point to using only pertinent, reliable, meaningful material. To rely on Western paradigms and theories would create universals out of data that come from different cultures resulting, in my opinion, in erroneous conclusions.<sup>10</sup> Traditionally, Western scholars have done fieldwork in order to study "the other" and they have used bilingual interpreter/translators to analyze the material they have gathered. Then they have looked upon the persons as the object of their research and not as authorities of their own culture. To put it in yet another way, not all concepts translate across cultures accurately and precisely. This points to the use of analogies in the interpretation and translation of concepts from one culture context to another. I posit that the analogies chosen are best selected by a bilingual researcher/writer from the culture under analysis and one who demonstrates competence in both the Western and the particular First Nations or indigenous culture. In other words, an insider who speaks *Yupiaq* in this case would more accurately analyze the indigenous cultural ecology during the study (Woodbury 1984).<sup>11</sup> I am in the process of learning to write the *Yupiaq* language using the orthography developed by the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

I have been mainly influenced by the encounter of two cultures; the *Yupiaq* and the Euro-American. By the middle of the nineteenth century, most of the non-native external forces that would begin affecting the *Yupiaq* world of the *Ayaginar* family were well underway. Missionization, assimilation and acculturation policies of the United States government were just a few of these external forces. I was hit on the palm of my hands with a wooden ruler for speaking *Yupiaq* in the second grade. My younger sister, *Uyuruciaq* (Mary Stachelrodt) and I were sent to a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding grade school in Wrangell, Alaska, a town in Tlingit territory of southeastern Alaska for one year. In Wrangell, I was taught table manners, to iron a white shirt, and to tie a double Windsor necktie without looking in the mirror. In a carving class, I was forced to carve Tlingit totem poles, although I wanted to carve something *Yupiaq*. We were lined up according to height and marched to our meals daily. The assimilation and acculturation policies of the United States government were efforts to westernize Alaska Native children and these policies further added to the cultural suppression practiced in the missionization process. There were relocation and termination policies carried out by the federal government that added to the cultural suppression of Native Alaskan as well as other Native Americans.<sup>12</sup> Even today, the residue of colonization persists in what is called the “certificate of degree of Indian blood.” Native Americans who belong to federally recognized tribes within the U.S. carry a card that shows blood quantum in order to get various social services. My family members and I carry such a card.

Despite the cultural suppression and genocide that was practiced by the external forces, the *Yupiaq* culture is still alive through the *Yupiaq* language in the form of family remembrances, stories and songs, dances, rituals, and artistic expression in the *Ayaginar* family. As an insider who comes from the *Yupiaq* culture and with first hand experience in the *Ayaginar* family’s ways of living, I think I can make an important contribution to the growing body of primary information on the *Yupiaq/Cupiaq* society.

*Yupiaq* ontology and epistemology as defined by the worldview of the *Ayaginar* family have their own theories and rhetorical categories and a self-evident philosophy of their own. These theories and rhetorical categories are best defined in their own linguistic and cultural contexts. To do otherwise would be to recreate the *Ayaginar* family in the image of the other.

I will now demonstrate a few examples of verbal arts that exist in the *Ayaginar* family. These examples define who we are and give meaning to our existence. The first is a short children’s game that I remember from my childhood in the village of *Kassigluq* (Kasigluk) that my mother remembered as well.

### ***PATKAYAGTAN QA***

This is a children’s game song as explained and sung by *Nengqeralria*. “Children, a long time ago, played one game this way by singing and pointing to each other. Now I am going to start it.”

**Putkayag tan qa**

Are you touching it?

|                            |              |             |             |              |
|----------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Ssiki</b> <sup>13</sup> | <b>luku</b>  | <b>viki</b> | <b>luku</b> |              |
| <b>Sala</b>                | <b>tan</b>   | <b>kelu</b> |             |              |
| <b>Makul</b>               | <b>va</b>    |             |             |              |
| <b>Aa</b>                  | <b>nipas</b> | <b>pani</b> | <b>nani</b> | <b>pauk.</b> |

*Nengqeralria: Taqererluni-llu* (And then it quickly ends).

The child who was pointed to now sings the same song and the process continues until all have sung. According to my mother the singer sometimes slightly changes the melodic essence but for the most part it is essentially the same.

#### EXAMPLE OF ONE SHORT SONG: CARIBOU-SOURDOCK SONG.

This traditional story song was sung by my mother after she saw an actual family event which occurred in the early 1980's at an upper Kuskokwim River area during a fall moose hunting trip. My first cousin, *Ayaprun* (Johnny York) whose mother was one of my father's sisters, had shot a moose in a river lake some distance away from the main river. On that moose hunting trip were my father, my mother, my mother's younger sister, *Ayaginar* (Eliza Brink) and her husband and my first cousin. The butchered moose was to be ferried from the butchering site to the main river through a beaver-created lake to save time. The dam built with mud and sticks by industrious beavers had to be opened. This was a hard task since beaver built dams were well engineered and extremely hard to dismantle. The beavers had learned to pack the mud so well with interlocking sticks that dismantling them was an arduous task at best. My father with the help of his sister-in-law were busy dismantling the beaver dam. It was apparently a very hot day causing them to perspire profusely and requiring them to stop to catch their breath and relax their hurting muscles. My father's brother-in-law and nephew were rowing to the butchering site in the canoe to load the moose meat into the canoe. Since there were not enough tools for butchering and dismantling the beaver dam, my mother was free, so she gathered sourdock which were in abundance near by on the bank of the main river. She stated how she stuffed her carrying bag with sourdock and filled it to the brim. As my mother gazed upon the sunny and busy scene described above, she remembered an old fable song somewhat similar to the events of that fall day. She sang the following song.

#### Caribou/Sourdock Song as Sung by *Nengqeralria*

|                                       |                     |                             |                   |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Avanir</b> <sup>14</sup>           | <b>avanir</b>       | <b>avakakarani</b>          | <b>yaaa vani.</b> |
| Over there                            | over there          | a little further over there | far away.         |
| <b>Taluyaruaqumta</b>                 |                     | <b>taluyaput</b>            | <b>civvluki.</b>  |
| If we halfheartedly set our fish trap |                     | our fish trap               | setting it.       |
| <b>Aqsagka</b>                        | <b>nangugtagka.</b> |                             |                   |
| My stomach                            | I rub it.           |                             |                   |

**Tartuaka**      **nangugtagka.**  
My kidneys      I rub them.

**Irraluqi<sup>15</sup>**      **raluqi**      **raluqi.**  
(Singing words, not real words)

**Ingrim**      **pamani**      **keluani.**  
Mountain      back there      behind it.

**Quagcit**      **naugaqut**  
Sourdock      they grow.

**Tuntut**      **piyualuteng.<sup>16</sup>**  
Caribou      they are walking.

**Ataka-wa pikani**      **tuntumek**      **pilalaria.**  
Our father up there      a caribou      he is butchering.

**Ar rar<sup>17</sup>**      **panigavluavci**      **nullutuagta.**  
your not so elegant daughter      she has a large bottom.

**Camikuavitelget**      **uqugitellret<sup>18</sup>**      **tunugutellret.<sup>19</sup>**  
Something that has something      those that have oil      those that have tallow.

(The next two words are spoken without melody and the first section above was repeated).

**Tuar-cal**      **nemenqerluku.<sup>20</sup>**  
And then      wrapped again.<sup>21</sup>

**Avanir**      **avanir**      **avakakarani**      **yaaa vani.**  
Over there      over there      a little further over there      far away.

**Taluyaruaqumta**      **taluyaput**      **civvluki.**  
If we halfheartedly set our fish trap      our fish trap      setting it.

**Aqsagka**      **nangugtagka.**  
My stomach      I rub it.

**Tarturka**      **nangugtagka.**  
My kidneys      I rub them.

**Irraluqi raluqi raluqi.**  
(Singing words, not real words)

**Ingrim pamani keluani.**  
Mountain back there behind it.

**Quagcit naugaqut**  
Sourdock they grow.

**Tuntut piyualutteng.**  
Caribou they are walking.

**Ataka-wa pikani tuntumek pilalria.**  
Our father up there a caribou he is butchering.

**Ar rar panigavluavci nullutuagta.**  
your not so elegant daughter she has a large bottom.

**Camikuavitelget uqugitellret tunugutellret.**  
Something that has something those that have oil those that have tallow.

The above story in itself is a nice example of one family's hunting experience and demonstrates some obvious *Yupiaq* traits. The importance of family and how they help each other is obvious. The story demonstrates the notion of group effort for the good of all. Group effort promotes efficiency of effort and the saving of resources in the acquisition of food. One has to balance the expenditure of resources, time and energy, with what was actually caught and hopefully what was caught gave more return for the time and energy expended to acquire that particular resource. Group effort also increases the chance of a successful hunt by members covering more hunting area. In some cases according to my father, one group may act as the noise makers to drive, in this case, the moose to the other party who may have a better chance to successfully acquire that particular animal. Group hunts are more successful and promote efficiency of effort.

Humor is also embedded in the story but is not so obvious unless one knew the players in the family. While it is known that one was not supposed to injure the feelings of others there is the tendency to break that rule on occasion between relatives. My mother's sister was endowed with a bit more volume in certain parts of her body. To be exact my mother said, "*ilii angenrucuartuq*" (a part of her is a bit larger) referring to a part of her sister's anatomy.

To revert back to the above family story and now tied in with the old song that my mother sang on that hot fall day, my mother's sister's response to the song was not too greatly appreciated. It was also obvious that my mother did not volunteer to relieve her sister who being somewhat larger although younger was exhausted by the hard work of dismantling the beaver dam. "Stop that ridiculous useless singing and come to help us with this hard work," she said in a somewhat angry tone to her older sister. It can be assumed that *Nuliacaq* knew the song as well as its implications of her anatomy. Most of the humor is lost when translating this story into English. Good, bad, or otherwise such kinds of subtle humor are

expressed implicitly in many stories. Humor plays an important part as in many cultures to relieve the tedium of everyday life, especially in harsher living environments.

These previous examples demonstrate the many kinds of stories and songs that teach, sometimes subliminally, some aspect of *Yuuyaraq* (The Way of the Human Being) which can be humorous as in the above example. Some story songs appear to be frivolous as shown in the children's game song. This kind of verbal art teaches in some way how to interact with each other. It demonstrates that even children have their own form of discourse.<sup>22</sup> The *Yupiaq* young and old have been immersed in a never ending dialogue on some aspect of *Yuuyaraq* (The Way of the Human Being) through the many kinds of *Yupiaq* verbal arts. The stories and songs have been retold and resung countless times. I still remember the wonderful melodic humming of the elders when not directly or explicitly singing. It seemed to me that every occasion brought the opportunity for some kind of verbal art to be expressed.

### ***KENKELRIIM (ONE WHO LOVES SOMEONE)YUARUTII (HER SONG)***

This example is what my mother refers to as a love song. The following statement was made by my mother before she sang the song.

#### ***Kenkellriim Yuarutii (One who is Loving Someone's Song)***

My mother often stated that such preview comments were made before songs were sung:

**Arnam nasaurluum yuarutii, uikani uikarkaunrilamiu.**

A woman, a young woman, her song, her choice for a husband, because he was not to be her husband.

|                |              |                  |
|----------------|--------------|------------------|
| <b>Wani-wa</b> | <b>waten</b> | <b>ayuyuq.</b>   |
| Here now       | this way     | it is like this. |

What follows is the song, *Kenkellriim Yuarutii* (One Who is Loving Someone's Song):

|                              |             |                           |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Pela-tug<sup>23</sup></b> | <b>un'a</b> | <b>ca-ciq-canga.</b>      |
| This scarf                   | this one    | what will it mean for me. |

|                 |             |                           |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Pela-tug</b> | <b>un'a</b> | <b>ca-ciq-canga.</b>      |
| This scarf      | this one    | what will it mean for me. |

|                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Su-pi-li-tam<sup>24</sup></b> | <b>atur-yun-ril-kiqa.</b>    |
| Su-pi-li-tam,                    | do they have no use for him? |

|             |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Un'a</b> | <b>yug</b>  | <b>un'a</b> |
| This one    | this person | this one.   |



**Iri iya iri iya.**<sup>25</sup>

**Talli-man ukut ca-ciq-canga.**  
These five<sup>26</sup> these what it will mean for me.

**Talli-man ukut ca-ciq-canga.**  
These five these what it will mean for me.

**Su-pi-li-tam atur-yun-ril-ki.**  
Su-pi-li-tam, do they have no use for him?

**Una yug un'a**  
This one this person this one.

**Iri iya iri iya.**

**Pela-tug un'a ca-ciq-canga.**  
This scarf this one what will it mean for me.

**Pela-tug un'a ca-ciq-canga.**  
This scarf this one what will it mean for me.

**Su-pi-li-tam atur-yun-ril-kii.**  
Su-pi-li-tam, do they have no use for him?

**Una yug un'a yug**  
This one this person this one. this person

**Iri iya iri iya.**

**Talli-man ukut ca-ciq-canga.**  
These five these what it will mean for me.

**Talli-man ukut ca-ciq-canga.**  
These five these what it will mean for me.

**Su-pi-li-tam atur-yun-ril-kiqa.**  
Su-pi-li-tam, do they have no use for him?

**Un'a yug un'a**  
This one this person this one.

**Iri iya iri iya.**

This song was composed by *Qanlugun* of *Napaskiaq* (Napaskiak), one of *Nengqeralria*'s relatives.<sup>27</sup> This woman was a close relative of my maternal grandmother who was about the same age, maybe around sixteen or seventeen years old when she composed this song according to *Nengqeralria*. Apparently, *Qanlugun* had fallen in love with a man named *Mikngayaaq* from *Nanvarnarlak*, an old village not now in existence. She did not marry the man she apparently fell in love with but later married another man according to the arrangement made by her parents.<sup>28</sup> It was a *Yupiaq* custom in those days for parents to arrange marriages. Individuals did not choose their mates even if they fell in love with the other person.<sup>29</sup> This was the case in this incident. *Qanlugun* had fallen in love with *Mikngayaaq* who had given her a silk scarf and \$5.00 dollars as a gift, apparently as a token of his affection.

Some of the pre-contact *Yupiaq* customs were still being observed in the early 1900's but were shortly to change as the younger generation made their own choice of partners for marriage. The influence of Christianity was also a factor in cultural changes of the *Yupiaq* in regards to parent arranged marriages. My mother assumed that *Qanlugun* was in a dilemma having fallen in love before marriage to a person not the choice of her parents. *Mikngayaaq* had also strayed from the norm in giving gifts to *Qanlugun*. The acceptance of a gift such as a fancy parka from the future husband's family was the only ritual constituting marriage. The *ukurraq* (bride) then moved in with the husband's family or *cakiq* (in-laws). According to my mother, the *ukurram angayaqai* (bride parents) in the process of acquiring a husband for their daughter can be referred to as *nengaugiluteng*. Further, when the husband's brother gets married, the *ukurraq* (bride) refers to her brother in law as *acuraq*. One other result was that the parent arranged marriage created a bond between the two families. So in this dilemma, *Qanlugun* composed the song, *Kenkellriim Yuaritii* (One Who is Loving Someone's Song). Apparently in the end *Q.* and *M.* followed the established tradition and did not marry each other, an unrequited and unconsummated love between them .

This example demonstrates how important rules of behavior, or rules of living, were instilled in the young of the *Yupiaq/Cupiaq* society. The bride and groom sometimes did not know of each other or had ever seen each other until the day of what constituted marriage between them, especially when the parties were from different villages. The marriage ritual was simple according to my mother. First the parents of the bride and groom made the agreement between themselves with no input of the future marriage partners. The marriage age for the bride was biologically based, usually when the bride had her first menses. The age of the groom was not so much of a factor. Sometimes the groom was much older in years than his bride. The groom's family gave a parka to the family for the bride. If it was accepted it constituted a marriage.

The marriage was also, according to my father, to be consummated in the usual manner of consummation. The consummation usually resulted in the procreation of children. If the marriage was not consummated, the bride or the groom was free to leave the marriage and this constituted a kind of divorce. This is what happened with my mother and father. My father was promised to another woman but he did not consummate the marriage. A year later the intended bride left and he was free of the parent arranged marriage. He was then able to marry my mother. He had obeyed his parents and found a way out of marriage with the honor

of the bride and himself still intact. My mother's father also strayed from the parent arranged marriage in not insisting that my mother get married to a man of his choosing. My mother stated that her father did not insist she follow all the older rules of behavior such as isolation during her first menses. He was more lenient towards the non-observances of the older behavior practices as they related to my mother compared to the other people in the village.

This was a time of cultural change when some older observances were still practiced but later not practiced due to the insistence of the Moravian missionaries. My maternal grandmother stated how physical appearance or age did not matter in the old *Yupiaq* marriages. The bride or groom might be not so attractive, but what was important that she/he was a good, thoughtful, giving and sharing person who showed respect and kindness to her or his spouse and to the *cakit* (in-laws). Attempts were made by the parents of the bride by sometimes arranging marriages to distant cousins, usually third or fourth cousins, in the hope that a known distant relative would insure that he be kind to their daughter.

### The Analysis of The Song

The word *pelatug* (scarf) in this song comes from the base word *pelatuuk* (scarf), a Russian loan word (Jacobson 1984). The *pelatuuk* was a trade item brought over from Russia according to my mother. The approximate date of the composition of the song would have been around 1916. The word *caciqcanga* according to my mother is translated as, **what will it mean for me**, referring to the *pelatuuk* and *talliman* (five dollars) that has a kind of innate consciousness. This follows the belief in the notion of the *yua* (its inner unseen essence, its person) in animate and inanimate objects in the *Yupiaq* mental universe. Hence, the *pelatuuk* and the *talliman* connected with the word *caciqcanga* can in free translation be stated as, what will the *pelatuuk* or *talliman* mean for me. According to my mother, *Qanlugun* had accepted the *pelatuuk* and the *talliman* contrary to the prevailing rules of parent-arranged marriages. Perhaps according to my mother, *Qanlugun* had some second thoughts or at least was questioning her own actions of accepting gifts from a man not intended for her future husband. Perhaps *Qanlugun* was also questioning the true intent of the man she had fallen in love with. Did *Supilitaq* give the gifts because he had no use for them since they both knew they were breaking the prevailing rules of marriage? This thought was implied by the word *aturyunrilkiqa* (**do they have no use for him?**) referring to the two gifts. Were they hoping somehow by mental intent or personal wishes that they could indeed be able to marry or change the circumstances in their favor?

My mother stated further that breaking some *inerquutet* (rules, what one should not do, rule or rules that one should not break) seemed to have graver consequences. For example, she remembered a story of one *inerquuteq* (singular form) being broken. A young woman had taken an *inuguaq* (a wooden doll) outdoors at an improper time causing a massive unrelenting snowstorm. One by one the young women in that village were taken to the *qasgi* and with the *egaleq* (seal gut window) open they were lifted up by the men toward the window. A loud masculine voice would be heard from above saying, *allauguq* (it is another). That young woman would be considered innocent and be released. Finally when the one who broke that particular *inerquuteq* was raised toward the open window above, the wind apparently came

and lifted her out the window never more to be seen. According to my mother, this *inerquuteq* was to show respect to the *ella* (weather, earth, universe). This last notion of respect falls in the category of *kenciksaraq* (way of showing respecting) and *takaqiyaraq* (another term for showing respect). There are a couple of questions that can be asked related this particular example. Were the consequences of breaking rules more severe for women or men? Was this story created to emphasize the importance of following established behavior traditions?

In my own case, one woman did approach my mother with the intent of a parent arranged marriage for me with her daughter. I remember hearing my mother laughing and then becoming serious as she talked with a woman from *Akiaq* (Akiak). Some of my boyhood friends both male and female were married in this manner and their marriages are for the most part still intact.

The previous example of verbal art express, obviously, deep emotions and conflicts that arise regardless of strict rules of behavior. It demonstrates to me the human frailties that exist and are at least honestly expressed even with frustration. I agree with the universal phrase that regardless of the rules and consequences, "rules are sometimes broken." I have heard other stories of rules of behavior being broken by nonfamilial elders. These elders would tell these kinds of stories without making excuses or judgements for the perpetrators of the breaking of proper social norms of behavior. The stories were told truthfully without any concern about how other people or how other cultural groups would think of these behaviors, or how the listeners would think of the *Yupiaq*. These elders sometimes added that such behavior had some kind of consequence for the individual perpetrator and that sometimes the consequences might affect the other village members. My mother often stated that she had heard others comment on how the present day *Yupiaq* are not as value conscious as those of the past. Yet for her, the stories told in this section show that some *Yupiaq* people in the past behaved just as irresponsibly as those in the present. This attitude of non-value judgement is in keeping with what my maternal grandmother, *Kaligtuq*, often stated, *cuqcaqunaki* (do not measure them or do not judge them). It is always amazing to me that this attitude *cuqcaqunaki* (do not measure them) was also reflected in the naming of children by their parents. One extended family member's name was, *Callerquaq*. *Callerquaq* (A Little Piece of Something, A Little Piece of What Once Was) was a much respected elder and I remember not ever hearing any one making humorous or derogatory statements about that name. This is just one example.

The songs demonstrate the ability of fluent and competent *Yupiaq* speakers who have been immersed in their culture to be able to compose the lyrics and the melody with seemingly little effort. My own father, to reiterate, was a prolific composer of new songs and dances in his later years. My father's uncle, *Angutikiayak* (Frank Amedeus), of Toksook Bay, was known for his abilities as a singer and composer. He, according to my mother, would break into song as he gazed upon the *nuna* (land) and compose a song in near perfect form. He would later add the dance motions to the lyrics and improve upon the melodic elements as well. He had apparently composed many songs but my mother was not able to recall any of them. Future research will be to musically notate my father's musical compositions with my wife, who has training in classical piano and composition.

### **ANGUYAGTEM YUARUTII (A WARRIOR'S SONG)**

This example is a war song my mother remembered from her youth. War, according to my family, had been not practiced *ak'anun* (for a long time). It was so long ago that it had become legend, part and parcel of *Yupiaq* mythology. It was according to them that *Apanuugpak*, a *Yupiaq* legendary mythical figure, convinced villages that war was a futile and wasteful activity.<sup>30</sup> I heard of the *Apanuugpak* story of the elimination of war in almost all of the villages I was able to visit in my youth. There are other *Apanuugpak* stories but I do not remember the details of them from my relatives from *Qaluyaaq* (Nelson Island). Ann Fienup-Riordan, an independent research cultural anthropologist, in her work has made references to this mythical figure.

War was an activity that was practiced not so much between villages as it was between areas, such as *Kuigpak* (Big River—Yukon River) and *Kusquqvak* (Kuskokwim River), according to my father. War was conducted according to my mother at specific times of the year and at specific intervals. My father also remembered wars between areas separated by the *Kusquqvak* (Kuskokwim) River, the east versus the west bank areas. War was not a haphazard affair like guerilla warfare where no rules exist but to do as much damage, harassment and sabotage as possible against the opposing sides. True, some of these warriors, if they happened upon a hunter from the opposing area with a good catch of animals, would kill for the food or furs. But it appears to me that war was an organized affair following specific guidelines of time, areas and training time for young warriors by the elders. I have heard other stories of war but do not remember the exact. I am only detailing the stories I have heard in my family. Fienup-Riordan has written an excellent article on *Yupiaq* warfare and has identified warring areas in her article.

According to *Nengqeralria* young men would be trained to go to war at an early age by the elders. They were trained to build up their stamina, gain strength, endure physical pain, and to run great distances, sometimes pole vaulting, which apparently resulted in being able to move faster and further with the least expenditure of energy. Some of these warriors would pole vault over depressions in the landscape and over small streams. My mother had also heard that the young potential warriors during training drank very little water with the belief that this somehow increased their stamina in the event of actual war. They were trained to run in such a way as to dodge arrows. There are stories of warriors wearing bone armor. They were taught to extend what food they had by eating sparingly. My father, *Ayaginar*, pointed out that dried fish eggs were such a source of nourishment; a small amount of eggs would be placed under the upper lip and slowly sucked and the juices swallowed. There are references from my parents that sometimes these warriors would tattoo spots on their foreheads for the number of warriors they had killed. One warrior had killed so many that most of his forehead appeared to be black.

The most common war weapon was the bow and arrow, according to my grandfather. My mother also stated in the stories she remembers that the opposing warriors always seemed to like hiding in the cemeteries near the villages or in the isolation first menses huts constructed for young women. Women would also bring their male first born into the *qasgi* (men's community house) and breast feed the baby bare breasted in the hopes that this son would become a warrior.

*Nengqeralria* remembers the following song which was sung in her village of *Nunacuar* and later in *Kassigliuq*. This song had specific dance motions. She thought that the composer of this particular song was from the *Lilgayaq*<sup>31</sup> (Bristol Bay area). This demonstrates the distance some songs and dances are transmitted between villages and regions. Some songs, such as this example according to my mother, are readily shared between villages or regional groups contrary to the family motif women's dances.

According to my mother, a warrior was returning to his village and was being chased by his opponents. The warrior had been running for some time and was getting exhausted, fearing he would be captured. Imminent death was on his mind. He had to hide from one of the men who was wearing an old worn out caribou parka. He successfully avoided being caught or found by his enemies and especially the man wearing the old caribou parka. Later, as he was returning to his village, this man had to swim across a wide river known as *liussiq*. According to the song, this warrior cried as he swam, thinking he would not be able to cross over it successfully. Upon his return to his village, this man composed this song having survived a traumatic and harrowing life experience. My mother still likes to sing this song and my siblings and I have learned it by sheer repetition of her singing. My own grandson, Brandon, just two and a half at the time of the writing of this paper had also learned the first part of this song. At a dance festival held in *Mamterilliq* (Bethel) my mother spoke to a man from the *Lilgayaq* (Bristol Bay) area about this song, asking whether if such a river existed and how big it was. The man replied that indeed that river existed and that its mouth quite wide. My question is whether that man from the *Lilgayaq* (Bristol Bay) area also knows that song.

### The Song: *Anguyagtem Yuarutii* (A Warrior's Song)<sup>32</sup>

The next example is a war song my mother remembered from her youth:

Aa aa anga aa.

Yi ii inga aa.

Agi ii iya aa.

Yi ii inga aa.<sup>33</sup>

Kia un'a atu-u-u-liuu.

Who this one to sing for.

"*Atuqerluku*"<sup>34</sup>

"Singing it quickly"

Nanii-milii uiv-a-lag-cia.

Where I was I do not know where to go.

**Qali-lugalgem**<sup>35</sup>

One who has an old caribou parka

**pia-qa-tan-rani.**<sup>36</sup>

just when he was about to pass him?

**Kia un'a atu-u-u-liuu.**

Who this one to sing for.

*"Nemqerluku"*<sup>37</sup>*"Wrapping it quickly"***Aa aa anga aa.****Yi ii inga aa.****Agi ii iya aa.****Nanii-milii qiar-lur-cia.**

Where I was I crying.

**Iiussikun kuim-qatan-um-ni.**

By Iiussikun when I was swimming over.

**Kia un'a atu-u-u-liuu.**

Who this one to sing for.

*"Cali"**"More"***Aa aa anga aa.****Yi ii inga aa.****Agi ii iya aa.****Yi ii inga aa.****Kia un'a atu-u-u-liuu.**

Who this one to sing for.

In the introduction there is reference to how a war was started in anger. A child accidentally blinded another during play with darts. The father of the blinded child in anger poked the eye out of the child who had blinded his son. This incident resulted in families taking sides in the *qasgi*. This started an irreversible village conflict. Soon the nearby villages also took sides, and later the entire area was at war. My maternal grandparents had also told

this story, emphasizing the effect anger can have not only on one person but on many. I have also heard this same story in several other villages near *Kassigluq* (Kasigluk) and on the *Kusquqvak* (Kuskokwim) River. Fienup-Riordan makes reference to this same story in one of her articles.

In another story told by my father some *Kuigpak* (Yukon River) warriors came over the narrowest portage area between the *Kuigpak* and *Kusquqvak* (Kuskokwim) Rivers to attack one of their opponent's villages. Apparently some boys were upriver from the village hunting when they saw the *Kwipak* (Yukon River) warriors moving in the direction of their village. They ran back as fast as they could, over quite a distance, to the village to warn them of the impending attack. The *Kusquqvak* (Kuskokwim) village warriors quickly headed upriver and set a trap. The strategy was to let the *Kuigpak* (Yukon River) warriors pass in their *qayat* (canoes) between two river points, and as the last *qayaq* (canoe) passed the upriver point the *Kusquqvak* (Kuskokwim), warriors made their attack from both sides of the river. The surprise attack was so complete that most of the *Kuigpak* (Yukon River) warriors were killed. So much blood was shed that part of the river looked red. To this day that part of the river retains a reddish hue.

In another story my mother relates how warriors captured one of their enemies. In this instance, the captured warrior was forced to drink copious amounts of rancid seal oil. While the captors were distracted, this warrior was able somehow to loosen the sealskin ropes and make good his escape. The captors upon seeing him running gave chase over the somewhat frozen tundra. The escaping warrior, upon running, began to throw up the rancid seal oil he had been forced to drink. The story tells of how this man threw up over both shoulders as he ran as well as his chest. According to my mother this story is commemorated by sewing areas of white caribou skins in the upper right and left arm sleeves of some fancy fur mink parkas as well as in the upper chest and upper back part of the parka. I asked a woman from *Akiaq* (Akiak) about the white areas of her parka and she told the same story. More research will need to be conducted to see how this particular story plays out in the greater *Yupiaq/Cupiaq* nation. *Arnaq* (Marie Meade), formerly Marie Nick of *Nunapicuaq* (Nunapitchuk) wrote a detailed article on the *Yupiaq* parka. She details the names of the various parts of the parka (Maede 1990). Marie Meade is also an excellent experienced translator and teacher of the *Yupiaq* culture.

The story about the reason the river has a red hue has some interesting implications regarding the validity of some stories. How much truth is there in this particular story? Was the story created to explain why the river appears to have a reddish hue? Again I have heard others ask this same question, but yet the story is told and retold in several villages near *Mamterilleq* (Bethel) in such places as *Kuiggluk* (Kwethluk), *Akiaq* (Akiak), *Akiacuaq* (Akiachuk), and *Tuulkessaaq* (Tuluksak). I have seen this river from the air while flying down from the Kilbuck Mountains not far out of *Mamterilleq* (Bethel).

Commemoration of war in the *Yupiaq* parkas is a statement in itself on how war is still in the psyche of elders such as my mother and other older, more culturally informed, fluent *Yupiaq* tradition bearers. While war is still remembered by the elders such as my mother, the details of their knowledge are being lost rapidly due to their passing.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

I am appreciative of the work of other researchers that have worked in this area and much more needs to be done to preserve what is left of that area of knowledge. The intimate knowledge of metaphor and double meanings inherent in the *Yupiaq* paradigm is paramount in getting the best interpretation of the discourse and narrative of the culturally rich verbal art of the *Yupiaq* elders. To be redundant, *Yupiaq* exegesis by the *Yupiaq* still is and will continue to be the mechanism to gain fuller understanding of *Yupiaq* discourse in its true cultural context. While we may judge that war is a wasteful and destructive human effort, this discourse nevertheless gives us a glimpse of what was in its proper place in the time when its cultural context had some meaning for whatever reason for the *Yupiaq*.

Is it that in our evolution we have to experience this waste of human life and energy before we find its true nature and realize that war is meaningless? In my own case, I am still pondering this dilemma. I am a Vietnam era veteran and am still perplexed with some trauma I carry from that experience. Part of me is still carrying guilt for having survived that conflict when so many had died. A cousin committed suicide having served several U.S. Army tours in Vietnam. A boyhood friend died of stomach cancer that I believe was caused by Agent Orange, the defoliant used by the military there. I had become unfeeling of human suffering as a defense mechanism, having seen so many wounded and suffering South Vietnamese. I remember being able to eat my lunch with other military personnel in the presence of suffering human beings without giving any thought to them. I was in a relatively safe area in a military compound stationed on the Mekong River. Many Veterans I knew were in heavy and more dangerous combat assignments.

I would hope to learn, as *Apanuugpak* had, that war, the killing of human beings, be eliminated from our psyche as a mechanism of honor. Perhaps we can still have a warrior code but with the emphasis to end war as *Apanuugpak* came to believe.

## NOTES

- 1) *Kaligtuaq* is my maternal grandmother.
- 2) *Yupiaq* Eskimo is designated as a Central Alaskan Yup'ik Eskimo by the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Himmelheber 1984).
- 3) There were two other children born before me. George the eldest brother, and a sister Margaret died as children.
- 4) I use the word remembrance here to indicate the personal first person life experience narratives of my immediate and extended family members. The word story or stories will refer to those macrocosmic verbal arts that come from the *Yupiaq* society that my elders and I have heard outside of the immediate and extended family.
- 5) The immediate or extended family member who told the story or sang the song sometimes provided the analysis and or explanation.
- 6) The target language is the *Yupiaq* language of the material/data of the family remembrances and songs. The word Yup'ik is the designation used by the Alaska Native Language Center and refers to the Central Alaskan Yup'ik Language.

- 7) The contact language is the English language. I grew up bilingually, speaking more *Yupiaq* in my early years and later speaking more English as I grew older going to grade school, high school, and college. I have worked as a translator for the South Central Foundation in Anchorage, Alaska for several years. I have also worked as a *Yupiaq* language consultant for the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB) Linguistics Department from 1995 to 1998.
- 8) In my terminology, interpretation deals with orality and translation deals with written text.
- 9) I am a Vietnam veteran trained as an electronics technician. I worked as a Page in the State of Alaska House of Representatives and as a lobbyist for one year. I owned and operated my own real estate business for several years. I have experience in radio, television, and film. I assisted in the formation of the public broadcasting radio-television station in Bethel, Alaska. I have worked as a social worker, alcoholism counselor, elder nutrition supervisor, and an Indian Child Welfare caseworker for the Cook Inlet Tribal Council in Anchorage, Alaska. I have taught Alaska Native Culture and History in a summer elder hostel program at the Alaska Pacific University, as a Master of Ceremonies and supervisor in an Alaska Native Summer Dance Program for the Alaska Native Heritage Program of the Cook Inlet Region, Incorporated in Anchorage, Alaska. I am a carver, sculptor, and *Yupiaq* graphic artist. I play the woodwinds, clarinet and tenor saxophone, and the guitar. I am a member of the Screen Actors Guild in Los Angeles having been an actor in a movie and doing voice over work in Hollywood. I have narrated films. I am member of the American Academy of Religion and the Society for the Study of Native American Religious Traditions. I have an Associate degree in electronics technology from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in Organizational Administration from the Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage, Alaska. I received a Masters of Arts degree in Religious Studies from the University of California in Santa Barbara (UCSB). I have been a teaching and research assistant as well having experience in multimedia teaching with technology at UCSB. I was a research fellow in Oslo, Norway for one academic year on a dissertation fellowship with "The Language of Religion in Its Northern Contexts: Shaman, Northern Mentality and Northern Identity" conference. I have presented papers related to this dissertation at the American Academy of Religion in New Orleans and in San Francisco, at the Shamanhood Conference in Finland and Norway. I have several articles in press related to this area. I am presently an Assistant Professor in the Alaska Native Studies Department at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.
- 10) This idea refers mainly to an earlier and antiquated type of research and attitude of the "other." During the last decades, one of the main tendencies has been to get away from "universals" and instead study local cultures based on their own pre-conditions. Earlier cultural anthropology research is referred to by some as Victorian Anthropology. Three sources that address this type of research are: Bernard McGrane (1989), Henri Baudet (1988) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999).
- 11) Hanni Woodbury makes reference to the position of the bilingual cultural consultant and makes the case that this position need further research (Woodbury 1984). The analogies used by the bilingual cultural consultant in research need to be clarified with appropriate disclaimers.
- 12) Relocation took the form of various training programs of non-managerial positions such as bookkeeping, automobile repair, and cooking to name a few. The trainees were given one-way tickets to the job site and it was hoped by the Bureau of Indian Affairs that those people would assimilate in the dominant society. The termination policies were implemented by the United States Department of the Interior that determined that a particular "Indian" tribe was no longer

a federally recognized tribe but “terminated” as a tribe and designated as part of the dominant society. These federal policies resulted in loss of culture and identity.

- 13) These words are game words and not actual words used in everyday speech, that follows Central Alaskan *Yupiaq* grammar.
- 14) This word is “*avani*” meaning “over there” in normal speech but is changed to “*avanir*” in singing structure. By normal speech is meant everyday common speech following the normal rules of Central Alaskan Yup’ik grammar.
- 15) This is a made up word for singing and does not exist in normal speech.
- 16) This word comes from the normal speech word “*piyualuteng*” but becomes “*piyualutang*” in singing, with the same meaning.
- 17) This expression has a teasing connotation in this context, according to *Nengqeralria*.
- 18) This word, based on the root “*uquq*” (fat), can mean “rendered (liquid) fat.”
- 19) This word, based on the stem “*tunuq*” (back fat, tallow), from the root “*tunu-*” (back). Its meaning in this context is “unrendered oil.”
- 20) These words are verbal non-singing expressional comments meant to act as additional interpretative comments that add to the story line of the main theme of this particular song. Sometimes these kinds of comments are expressed by a person who acts much like a conductor in an orchestra who keeps time with a baton. This person adds to the drama of the song being sung. Sometimes these comments are serious or funny depending on the type of song being sung and on the particular occasion or ritual being performed.
- 21) This word in this context can also mean, “added to” [the original section].
- 22) My youngest grandson, Brandon Christopher Irlmeier, the son of my third daughter, Heather Duplisea, learned to sing this song and play this game. He was almost three years old at the writing of this paper.
- 23) The Russian root word for scarf is “*platók*,” *Yupiaq* loan word is “*pelatuuk*” (Jacobson, 1984).
- 24) This is the affection name give by *Qanlugun* for *Mikgnayaq*, the man she had apparently fallen in love with but could not marry because of the prevailing *Yupiaq* custom of parent arranged marriages.
- 25) Musical phrasing that exists only in songs.
- 26) This term in this context refers to a \$5.00 U.S. dollar bill that was apparently in circulation during this period of time.
- 27) This woman and the man involved are long deceased.
- 28) This woman’s second husband was also my mother’s father’s cousin.
- 29) This custom was also still being practiced in my youth in the early 1950’s. Many of my own boyhood friends in *Kassigluq* (Kasigluk) and *Nunapicuaq* (Nunapitchuk) were married in this way.
- 30) Robert Redford, the actor, attempted to make a movie about *Apanuugpak*, “The Winter Warrior.” The movie was never completed.
- 31) This song, according to *Nengqeralria*, originated from the Dillingham area at least two hundred miles to the east of her village. This area is the westernmost part of the *Yupiaq* area. The *Akulmiut* had learned this song somehow. *Nengqeralria* asked a man from the Dillingham area about the river mentioned in this song. The river is a real place and quite wide at the mouth. *Akulmiut* refers to the area surrounding the villages of what use to be *Nunacuar*, *Kassigluq* (Kasigluk), *Nunapicuaq* (Nunapitchuk), and the present day village of *Atmaulluq* (Atmauthluk).

- 32) There are specific dance motions with this song. The dance motions will be described in a separate article for publication.
- 33) This phrase and the previous three are musical words structured with a specific musical beat and not based on general everyday *Yupiaq* language and grammar.
- 34) *Nengqeralria* would speak in a non-singing voice, (singing it quickly). This kind of interjection seems to be the rule and serves to add exuberance to the occasion. As in other singing, a person with a baton whose movements would be in synchrony with the beating of the drums would also exclaim similar phrases to spur the singers and the audience. There was an unspoken interchange/exchange between audience and performers.
- 35) The root is *qaliluk*, an old worn caribou parka whose caribou fur has fallen out, used for summer. In this context, the one wearing this old parka was apparently a warrior looking for and or chasing the man who composed this song.
- 36) At this point the warrior had been hiding from his enemy, who was searching to kill him.
- 37) See note number 5.

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