

Yupiit Atunem Anguyakutellrat/Yup'ik People Going to War Against One
Another

Introduction: The Origin of Warfare Throughout southwest Alaska, two stories are repeatedly told to account for the origin of warfare. According to one, two boys were playing with bone-tipped darts in the gasgi (men's house) while their fathers sat working beside them. One of the boys aimed poorly and accidentally hit his companion in the eye, blinding him. The father of the offender told the father of the injured boy to go ahead and poke out one of the eyes of his son in retribution. However, the father whose son had been injured was so enraged that he poked out both of the offender's eyes, blinding him completely. The other father reacted by killing the first man's son. And so it went, the violence escalating with each man in the gasgi joining sides until the entire village was fighting. By some accounts, all the village men were killed that day. In others, the weaker faction was forced to leave. In all accounts, however, the bloodshed required retribution by surviving relatives in adjoining villages, and from this incident, the killing spread.

Here the origin of war is associated with blindness, a disability with devastating implications for a hunter. In fact, the opposition between restricted human vision and powerful supernatural sight was a critical element in Yup'ik cosmology, and elaborate rules circumscribed sight in the human world to empower strong supernatural vision (Fienup-Riordan 1996:161-196). Given this emphasis, it is hard to imagine a more appropriate

beginning for the dramatic confrontations that would follow.

Many different accounts of the blinding have been recorded, including versions by Black (1975:1-4), Bunyan (1984), Fienup-Riordan (1984:76-77), Frye (1988:8), Kilbuck (Fienup-Riordan, ed. 1988:43); Napoka (1977:36-7), Nelson (1899:328), Phillip (1988:57-59), Pleasant (1977:39), Romig (Anderson 1940:119), and Worm (1988:15). All agree on the sequence and consequences of the incident, while there is disagreement on the location. Yukon natives place the incident along the Yukon, while coastal narrators locate the event on the coast. Joshua Phillip (1988:57) of Tuluksak located it at Hooper Bay. Dick Bunyan (1984) of Chevak placed the incident close to Englullugpagmiut, Chevak's ancestral village. Nelson (1899:328), who was given his account by a Yukon native, located the event in a "great village" near the Yukon village of Ikogmiut (Russian Mission). In several versions the event is said to have occurred at the village of Kaputellermuit (from kape-, "to poke in or stab"). However, there are a number of old village sites with this name, including one east of Chevak and one north of Scammon Bay. The fact that the story is securely grounded in so many different locations may indicate that it is very old. Many narrators fail to give a specific location to the incident. Where all agree is that "starting from that qasgi warfare stood up on its feet" (Igkurak 1988).

Although accounts of the dart incident leave questions concerning the precise time and place of the beginning of Yup'ik warfare, a second version of the beginning of warfare is more specific in

its placement of the original conflict between Yukon and coastal nations. By all accounts, hostilities originated in the murderous actions of a man from Pastuliq who had married a woman from Naparyarmiut (modern Hooper Bay) (see Amokon 1984; Bunyan 1984; Fienup-Riordan 1984:76; 1986:321-327; Henry 1981; John 1977; Kilbuck (Fienup-Riordan, ed. 1988:47-49)). Being a poor hunter, the duplicitous in-law drowned his hunting partners, one by one, and stole their catch. He was eventually found out, but at first the people of Hooper Bay did nothing. In spring, however, while the murderer was covering his newly made kayak, he asked the younger men of the village to help him stretch the skin. They willingly came forward, but instead of helping they tore the seal-skin covering and broke the frame to pieces. The murderer escaped to his home in Pastuliq, where he told his Yukon relatives that their coastal neighbors were plotting against them. Once the bloodshed had begun, it continued unabated.

The war that reportedly began specifically between the people of Naparyarmiut and Pastuliq eventually grew to encompass the entire coastal and Yukon delta population. The long-standing enmity between these two groups appears to have been the most intense, and certainly the most remarked, conflict in the history of southwest Alaska. Nelson (1899:265) noted the depth of the conflict: "[T]here was almost constant warfare between the people of these two sections before the advent of the Russians."

The coastal/Yukon conflict extended north as far as St. Michael. According to Nelson (1899:329): "Near St. Michael...is the site of an ancient village which had been surprised and

destroyed by this last-named people [the coastal warriors] long before the arrival of the Russians." In 1842, Russian explorer Lavrenty Zagoskin described the same conflict between the "Magmyut" (the people living between the Qissunaq and Qip'ngayaq rivers) and the people of the north mouth of the Yukon delta: "[T]here is the winter camp of the Pashtol natives...called Aimgiyagmiut. Nearby, on the same bank can be seen a half-ruined earth fortification overgrown with grass in which the Pashtol people say that their forefathers sheltered themselves from the attacks of the Magmyut" (Michael, ed. 1967:281). Zagoskin also described the less than peaceful relations between these same "Magmyut" and the residents of the Yukon proper. Describing a site near the confluence of the Yukon and Andreaafsky rivers, Zagoskin wrote: "[W]here the first arm of the Yukon, the Kizhunok [Qissunaq], leaves it to flow independently into the Bering sea...can be seen [the] remains of a large hamlet which was destroyed 30 years ago by the Magmyut" (Michael, ed. 1967:278). Sites associated with the period of bow and arrow wars are more numerous in the coastal lowland between the Yukon's south mouth and the Qissunaq River than in any other part of southwest Alaska. Not only are battles associated with specific sites, but numerous sloughs, streams, and geographical features are said to have been named by warriors as they moved over the landscape during raiding expeditions. For example, Alarneq slough (from alar-, "to be in error") derived its name when warriors mistook it for the south mouth of the Yukon River (Chikigak 1987). Smaller creeks were also named. Thomas Chikigak (August 11, 1987)

gave an example: "And another river farther down is called Kitevik [place where one fell in the water]....It is said that one of the warriors had become curious about what was farther inland. So he had gone on land, and while doing so he had accidentally slipped and plunged into the small river. And so it got its name, Kitevik." One of the more memorable accounts describes how warriors traveling up a creek passed a floating piece of snot, from which they could tell that an occupied village was directly upstream. From that time on, the small river became known as Kakegglliaik (from kakeggluk, "nasal mucus, snot") (Brown 1986:1).

Narrator Paul John was born on the Bering Sea coast below Nelson Island in 1929, the much-loved only child of Anna Angayiq and John Kungurkaq of Chefornak. They named him Aquqsak, but after the death of an older brother, Kangrilnguq, his father gave him that name as well. Although he had no formal education, his energy and intelligence earned him the respect of his peers. In 1952 he married Martina Usugan of Nightmute, and they continued to lead a migratory life, moving between seasonal camps such as Umkumiut, Kaviaq, and Qinaruuq until settling in Nightmute so that their children could attend school. In the 1960s Paul was among the first Nelson Islanders to work as a commercial fisherman in Bristol Bay, and he was instrumental in making it possible for others to follow his example.

Describing his youth Paul noted: "I'm still quite young, but the place where I grew up remained in its original form for years

because Western ways weren't introduced to us for a long time. I was seven years old when I saw a priest for the first time...and they started baptizing people and conducting marriages....Before seeing kass'at [white people] our people living their old ways were recognized as makugtalriit [lit., "those working hard and suffering discomfort"]. I had already married and had children when the first school was built in my village. I've been able to talk about our ancestral ways because I observed and experienced it and heard it being talked about by those around me as I was growing up."

Indeed, Paul listened well and today is recognized not only as an expert orator, but as a leader among his people. He is the traditional chief of both the village of Toksook Bay (which he helped to found in 1964 to avoid the annual move between the winter village of Nightmute and spring camp at Umkumiut) and the Association of Village Council Presidents (the nonprofit corporation for the Yup'ik region). He is also a board member of numerous regional organizations, including the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation and the Calista Elders Council, and has testified before commissions both nationally and internationally on behalf of Yup'ik people.

Yupiit Atunem Anguyakutellrat

<Yup'ik People Going to War Against One Another>

Told by Paul John of Toksook Bay, July 2007

Tua-i tamaani ciuqliput, yuut mat'um nunamta yuk'arraallri, camek

avuunateng Yup'igglainaulrulliniameng, tua-i-am una cali
anguyiim ayagnillra maani cenarmiuni man'a maani imarpiim cenii--
man'a cenamek aptuat--avavet tayim' Caninermun tuaten
aperyarangqertuq.

<In the past, our forebearers, the first people who inhabited our
land, since they were all Yup'ik people without people of other
races among them, the way that bow-and-arrow warfare started
among the people of the coast who live along the ocean--they call
this area along the ocean cenag [the coastal area]--that's what
it is called, up to Canineq [the lower Kuskokwim coastal area].>

Anguyayuitellruyaaqut-gguq tamaani. Anguyiim ayagnera
nalluciqngavciu apertuqernaluku umyuaratequa.

<They say that people didn't initially engage in war during that
time. Since you don't know how war started, I'm thinking of
mentioning how it happened.>

Tauna-am nengaugitaq tekican, tekicami-wa taukunun nuliama
nunainun nuningigcan....Tuaten tua-i nuliameg nunaitnun
nuningigtaqata nengaugitanek aprucirluki pitullrulliniamegteki.

<One day, after the arrival of a nengaugitaq [son-in-law from
another village]....When they moved to their wife's villages,
they apparently called them nengaugitat in the past.>

Cali-llu angun naken aqvalluni nunanek allanek nulirtuqan, tauna
nulingutii nunanek allanek tekilluku aipaqellra pitekluku
ukurritamek arnaq pilalliniluku tamatum nalliini.

<Also, when a man went and obtained a wife from another village, they evidently referred to his wife who had moved from another village as ukurritaq during that time.>

Tauna-am tua-i nengaugitaq-gguq maaten angun tauna murilkaat, anguarutengqelallinilria anguarutmi nuugani yaani tuluq ipgiluku kapulluku anguarutmi nuuganun.

<When they came to observe that nengaugitaq, he evidently had a paddle, and along the end of his paddle, he had sharpened a piece of ivory and inserted it along the tip of his paddle.>

Tuaten tua-i tauna ilagautengaarcen taukunun nengaugilluni, imkut-gguq angutet qamigatulit engelaicaurrluteng. Taum-gguq malii engelaicaurrluteng.

<When that man came to live among those people, moving to his wife's village after obtaining a spouse, they say that the men who usually went seal hunting started to disappear. They say the men who accompanied that [nengaugitaq] started to go missing.>

Taum-gguq tua-i qanemciknaurai qaill' piluk picurlagniluku, tua-i picurlagniluki tekitenritaqata malini piaqluni.

<It is said that [nengaugitaq] would tell the people there that his hunting partners had accidentally died when they didn't arrive.>

Tua-i-am pivakarluni maklagtani qasgimi urugcirraarluk' yuullrani, qasgimi murilkelliniat malruinek cauyarallirluni

taman' maklak.

<One day, after defrosting the bearded seal that he caught and unloading it in the qasgi, the people inside the qasgi observed the bearded seal and saw that it had two sets of kayak-rib marks on its body.>

Tua-i taringelliniat, "Uum tang malini picurlaguarcetlallinikai. Maa-i-am man' maklagtaa malian pitaqsaagellrullinikii. Qayaanek yuuluku qayaminun tuquqaarluku tayim' qaill' pitaqnguallinikii." Tua-i tuaggun taringluku elliinun pilauciit malii.

<They came to understand what he had done, "This person has falsely told us that his hunting partners died accidentally. His hunting partner evidently caught the bearded seal that he brought home. He removed it from his partner's kayak and put it in his own after murdering him in some way, and then he pretended to catch it himself." In that way they came to realize that he had murdered his hunting partners.>

Tua-i-am pivakarluni malingqelliniuq angutet iliitnek. Malia tauna maklagtelliniuq, qakemna-llu-gguq anuqsaarluni pavaken nunam tungiinek.

<One day, one of the men there accompanied [that nengaugitaq] when he went hunting. His hunting partner evidently caught a bearded seal, and there was a light wind blowing from the land.>

Tua-i taglutek malini tauna pitengraan, ellii tauna nengaugitaq pitevkenani.

<They headed back to shore, and although his hunting partner caught [a seal], nengaugitaq himself didn't catch anything.>

Atam tua-i keluqsigiuraqerlutek, mallgiinallinikii mat'um
anguarluni malian taum nengaugisngalriim taukurmiunun.

<When they got close to shore, his hunting partner who had moved to that village after marrying approached him by paddling.>

Mallgiinaani murilkellinia imumek anguarucinqigtellinilria nuuga
ivory-mek ipellriamek kapusngalriamek.

<As he got closer, he observed what [that nengaugitaq] was doing, and he saw that he had replaced his paddle with one that had a sharp ivory piece inserted along the tip.>

Tua-i-llu mallgamiu, tamana tamaa-i anguarutni qayaan acianun
keliulluku pikii qayaa man' imangaallalliniluni.

<And when [the nengaugitaq] got close to him, when he grazed his paddle along the bottom of his kayak, his kayak suddenly filled with water.>

Tuaten-gguq cunaw' tua-i malini piluki picurlaguarcetlaateng,
nengaugitellran kinguani taukurmiut engelaicaurtellinilriit.

<He realized that the son-in-law's hunting partners had started to go missing because he had done that to them and then lied, saying that they died accidentally.>

Waniw' anguyiim maani cenami ayagniqarraarutiinek nalluavciu

qanemciunga, augna qanemcia ilaluku.

<I'm telling you about how war started in the coastal area here because you don't know it, adding to the story [Simeon Agnes] told.>

Tua-i-am tuaten imangallaucaku, nutaan-gguq augna ilangcivkenaku tag'uq tuamun.

<When his kayak suddenly filled with water, that man just left him and headed up to the shore ice.>

Tauna imna, qantaicuitellruameng tamaani qayamegteggun ayagaqameng, qantaminek tua-i cigertautaq-luku mer'a ilangartaq-luku utertelliug unavet cikumun unitellermegnun.

<And so that person, because they always took bowls with them when they traveled with their kayaks in the past, bailing out some of the water with his bowl, headed back down to the ice that they had left from.>

Tua-i cikumun tekicami qayani mayurrluku uquanek maklagtami aug'aucami taktacia allganran cuqeqaarluku, wagg'uq uqurcirluku.

<When he made it to the ice, he lifted his kayak up onto the ice, and when he removed a piece of blubber from the bearded seal he caught, after measuring the length of the gash, he placed a piece of blubber on it, uqurcirluku as they called it.>

Tuaten tua-i pirraarluku nutaan maklagtani taman' ekluku tagngami, tua-i tekitelliniug, tuamun tut'elliniug.

<After doing that, he put the bearded seal that he caught inside his kayak, and when he went up, he arrived, he made it to the shore ice.>

Tua-i-gguq-am maaten tut'elliniuq ak'a tayim' tauna nengaugitaq tayim' tagellrulliniluni.

<When he got there, he saw that the nengaugitaq had already gone up to the village.>

Tekicami picurlagnilliniluku tauna malini, qaill' piluku tayima.

<When [nengaugitaq] arrived, he said that his hunting partner had died accidentally, making up some excuse.>

Tua-i nunanun tagluni tekican alangaakelliniat taukut ilain, "Aling picurlagniaten-ggem maligpet. Qaillun tekicit?"

<When he went up to the village and arrived, the people from that village were surprised and said, "Gee, I thought your hunting partner said that you died accidentally. How did you arrive?">

Tua-i qanemcikliniluku anguarutiinek qayami acia allegluku, imangan unilluni tagellruniluku.

<He told them that [the nengaugitaq] had made a gash along the bottom of his kayak with his paddle and, when it filled with water, had left him behind and gone up to shore.>

Tua-i nutaan taringluku tuaten picurlaguarcecilallinicia.

<They finally understood how he lied to them all along, saying

that his hunting partners had died accidentally.>

Tua-i-am taukut pillagyugnaunaku nunat uitatliniat.

Qanaatellagyugnaunaku-llu, "Cunaw' waten maliten pivkalaqeten."
Piyugnaunaku.

<The people of that village didn't suddenly confront him, and they left him alone. And they didn't suddenly say to him, "So this is what you've done to your hunting partners." They didn't do that at all.>

Kiagulnguami tua-i kiagami uksulliniluni. Uksuan qayiurnarillrat tekican, tauna imna qayilliniuq, qayani-w' aminqigtellinia amiqegtaarneq tua-i.

<After summer, winter came. During winter, when the time came to work on kayaks, [that nengaugitaq] built a kayak, or rather he put new skins on his kayak, some very nice skins.>

Tangvatullemcetun qayat nutarat amiit wagg'uq agqelluki acetetuit.

<Like we observed in the past, new skin coverings were placed on the kayak by working as a group to gradually push the skin covering over the frame, what they call agqelluki.>

Qayami tua-i amia acecimariamiu qanlliniuq, "Kitaki agqessulriit agqelluteng."

<When he had placed the skin on the frame, he said, "Well then, those who want to push the skin covering over the frame should go

ahead and do so.">

Aren tuaten qanran angullugaat makut iliit qanlliniuq, "Kitaki, tan'gurrarkuarini agqici."

<When he said that, one of the elderly men there said, "Well then, you few young men go and push the skin covering over the frame.">

Tamakut-gguq ayagyuangermeng tamaa-i taringumiimegteggu, ukut-gguq-llu ciuqliit agqellriit piyaratun piut, qayaq tauna agqaat piyaratun.

<It is said that although they were young men, because they knew what [nengaugitaq] had done, the first ones pushed the skin covering onto the frame in the usual way.>

Kinguqliita-llu-gguq pikseng, negleraluku, cingquk'aquvkarluk' tuaten cauyarai caaganri-llu cingquk'aquvkarluki piut.

<And when the next group went, they purposely pushed down on [the kayak] and broke its ribs and stringers.>

Ukut-llu-gguq pingayuita kinguqliita pilriameng, qayaq tua-i tamana mamcarrluku navgurluku, allat-llu tutmarluku.

<And when the third group went, they flattened that kayak and broke it to pieces, and others stepped on it.>

Qayiani tamana tuaten piatgu tayim' anlliniuq qasgimek.

<When they did that to the kayak that he had built, he left the

qasgi.>

Anngami-llu iterpek'nani tayima. Cunawa-gguq ava-i nem'inun agluni, itrami ayagcuutegni piluguuk iqertiignek aptukngait tegulukek at'engarcakek nulirran piiyaaqellinia, "Waqaa caliaten iqertiigken taukuk ac'ikek?"

<And when he left, he didn't come back in. Evidently, he headed home, and when he went inside, when he took his skin boots used for traveling they called iqertiik, when he took them and started putting them on, his wife asked him, "Why are you putting on your iqertiik?">

Kiuvkenani-gguq tua-i upluni tayim' anngami itenritliniluni-ll' enem'inun tuavet. Cunawa-gguq ava-i nunapiaminun ayagluni iqluyarturluki taukut nunapiani.

<It is said he didn't reply, and after getting ready and leaving, he never entered his home again. Evidently, he traveled to his hometown to lie to the people of his hometown.>

Tua-llu tua-i nunapiaminun tuavet tekicami, iqlulliniluki nunapiani taukut arenqialata ingkut upcata nalluyurcissiyaagpakaata taukut nunapiani qanrucarturniluki anguyakatarniluk', curukatarluk' upcata, elliin waniwa qanrucarturniluki nalluyurcissiyaagpakaata.

<And when [nengaugitaq] got to his hometown, he lied to the people in his hometown that since the people of the other village were preparing, that he had come to his hometown to inform them

that they were preparing to attack them, and that he had come to tell them.>

Aren imkut taukut-am ukverameng ciulkautengnaqluk' tua-i upluteng curugluki tua-i anguyalliniut.

<Because those people believed what he said, they tried to prepare before them and attacked those people and engaged in war with them.>

Cunawa-gguq imna tamaa-i Yupiit anguyagyaraat, camek pitaileng'ermeng yurtaagutellrita. Taukut imkut yurluki anguyallrit yurtekaita anguyagaqluteng, curugaqluteng.

<Evidently, Yup'ik warfare happened for no reason at all, but because they were defending each other. Warriors would attack to defend those they wanted to seek revenge for.>

Tamaa-i-gguq tua-i Yupiit makut augkut ciuliaput, camek pitaileng'ermeng yurtaagutellrata taugaam anguyaucetlallrulliniluki.

<It is said our Yup'ik forebearers would go to war with one another for no good reason, but because they were defending one another.>

Tamaa-i tuaten maani cenami taumek tua-i nengaugitamek iqluluni qayani tuqucilallra maliminek pitekluk navgullra pitekluk ayagnengqerrniluku maani cenami qanruteklaraat.

<Here in the coastal area, they mention that [warfare] started

from the lie told by that nengaugitaq, whose kayak was broken by the people because he would murder his hunting partners.>

Taugken pavani nunam akuliini, paugkumiuni-wa, aavcaalriignek cali taukugnek ayagnirluku pillruniluku qanemciutuluni, aavcaalriignek taukugnek.

<But in the inland region, among inland people, a story is told that [warfare] started from two people who were playing darts, from those two who were playing darts.>

Augna ava-i anguyalallrata ayagnera maani cenami qanemciullra niiteksailavciu qanrutkeqa'arqa.

<Since you hadn't heard the story about how the bow-and-arrow wars started in the coastal region, I have briefly told you about it.>

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