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Boundaries and Passages: Rule and Ritual in Yup'ik Eskimo Tradition. By Ann Fienup-Riordan.

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gatchue-mo (exact image) of the scientists that surround her as she labors in the field and in the earth. But there is so much more to her spirit than an anthropologist or a poet. In *Yellow Ribbons* (p. 88) she captures the power of the spirit that must not surrender,

At least we fought, the patriarch said
heaving the last of his home on his back.
At least we did not die like victims
sucking poison into our lungs
but like warriors of God.

It is difficult to summarize the power of the thought that emanates from this work. It is a special combination of the study of anthropology guided by the ancient wisdom of two great nations, the Miwok of California and the Hopi of Arizona. But if it is necessary to simmer its contents until only a syrup is left in the bottom of the pail, there will be two words written there by a finger of knowledge: *unique* and *powerful*.

Darryl Babe Wilson
University of Arizona, Tucson

Boundaries and Passages: Rule and Ritual in Yup'ik Eskimo Tradition. By Ann Fienup-Riordan. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. 416 pages. \$47.50 cloth.

In Alaska, Ann Fienup-Riordan is the most respected anthropologist working with the Yup'ik Eskimo people. Her reputation rests on several fine books particularly *The Nelson Island Eskimo* and *Eskimo Essays*. Her early work was solidly in the anthropological tradition of studying events and behavior. Her special contribution, however, was in the incorporation of oral narrative to clarify the symbolic relationships between elements of ritual and behavior. To demonstrate this symbolic framework, she often used statements from Eskimo elders, hunters, mothers, and many others. For example, she was keen to observe the gift-giving and exchange of services that still define Eskimo life in western Alaska in order to build a view of Yup'ik cosmology. The underlying thrust was how oral narratives develop symbols that are useful in explaining behavior, especially the rituals of social behavior in its broadest interpretation.

In her latest book, Fienup-Riordan builds on her dedication to oral narratives to present an integrated view of the complex systems of rules for living that guided the actions of the western Alaska Yup'ik at the turn of the century. This oral archive constituted much of the knowledge a young Yup'ik person was expected to acquire. To illustrate these rules, Fienup-Riordan uses large passages of taped interviews with Yup'ik elders, most of which were recorded during two oral history projects in the 1980s. In keeping with contemporary anthropology's attempt to let the voices of the "other" speak, the author tries to let the elders "tell their story in their own words as much as possible" (p. xv). But she adds that Yup'ik orators expect their listeners to interpret things that are said in their own way, and that only by letting the elders' words speak for themselves can readers find different meanings.

Fienup-Riordan's ambitious task is to develop an anthropological structure adequate to present these rules for living with some of the coherence they possess in the Yup'ik world. *Boundaries and Passages* is an excellent venture into an organized expression of Yup'ik worldview. Starting with metaphors to live by, drawn from oral narratives, Fienup-Riordan explores animal/human relationships, the path to becoming an adult, spatial organization, death and the renewal of life, and other topics. She lets the elders explain the rules for living in each area and then attempts to tie these rules back to a number of unified concepts that reflect Yup'ik worldview.

Perhaps most important of these unifying concepts are the ideas of passages and boundaries between worlds. The rules for living are essentially bound up with maintaining the distinctions and connections between the animal and the human worlds, as well as between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Using work by Hallowell and Wagner, Fienup-Riordan sees Yup'ik worldview resting on "the assumption of an undifferentiated universe, wherein human attention to the rules was an act of participation necessary to create difference and maintain connections" (p. 48). Part of this difference was in the separation of persons into human and nonhuman, which was an essential part of social life. The author likens the relationship between humans and animals to a master code through which humans and animals distinguish themselves from each other by their actions. "Boundaries are dynamic and transitional, and passages between worlds are, for better or worse, always a potentiality" (p. 49). The rules for living reinforce the basic differentiations while affirming the

underlying unity. They create passages and set the boundaries. As animals and humans grew to awareness, they would learn a common code of conduct which bound and defined them.

The Yup'ik rules for living were built on three supporting tenets: "the power of a person's thought; the importance of thoughtful action to avoid injuring another's mind; and, conversely, the danger inherent in following one's own mind" (p. 53). These basic principles were elaborated into a complex series of rules governing every aspect of life. An individual might not learn all of them in one lifetime, yet following one's own mind in matters was considered dangerous. In many traditional narratives from "when the land was thin," the original differentiation between animals and human results from a disregard for the rules and a desire to follow one's own mind. Many obstacles exist between human and nonhuman worlds. Only by careful attention to the rules for living can the appropriate boundaries and passages be maintained.

Fienup-Riordan draws on work done by other anthropologists working in western Alaska, but she also uses concepts from some influential anthropologists who do not work with Eskimo people. The result is a very thorough, careful analysis—one that bristles with the stories of people. Her bibliography is an excellent place to find listed all the major work done on the Yup'ik, and the photographs by James Barker carry much of the feel of life in the Kuskokwim-Yukon delta. With the extensive use of Central Yup'ik words, I found myself wishing the author had included a glossary. Nonetheless, Fienup-Riordan has produced a book of first-rate scholarship woven with the voices of Yup'ik elders. As she maps their cognitive world, we hear them speak to us, and we understand the coherence and integration of their view of life.

James Ruppert

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Conversations with Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris. Edited by Allan Chavkin and Nancy Feyl Chavkin. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994. 253 pages. \$35.00 cloth; \$14.95 paper.

If you like Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris, you will like this book. As Erdrich says of her fictive community, "It's great fun"