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REVIEWS

Agayuliyararput: Kegginaqut, Kangiit-llu/Our Way of Making Prayer: Yup'ik Masks and the Stories They Tell. By Marie Meade. Edited by Ann Fienup-Riordan. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1996. 236 pages. \$60.00 cloth.

An extraordinary exhibit of Yup'ik Eskimo masks from southwestern Alaska is currently traveling to several venues throughout the United States, having opened first in the Yup'ik community of Toksook Bay on Nelson Island. The curator of this exhibit, anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan, and her close collaborator, Marie Meade, conducted considerable research in connection with the show. Meade, a Yup'ik speaker, recorded more than thirty hours of interviews with elders from around the Yukon-Kuskokwim region of Alaska; her transcriptions and translations of these interviews became the basis for a variety of exhibit-related materials, including the museum catalogue (Ann Fienup-Riordan, *The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks*, 1996) and this book, *Our Way of Making Prayer*. In fact, except for a limited audience of Yup'ik readers and specialists who will know the context well enough to understand the relatively implicit contexts of these interviews, the two books are best read as companion volumes. Buy them both.

Our Way of Making Prayer is a bilingual edition, with texts in Yup'ik and English appearing on facing pages. Portions of interviews with twenty-one women and men born between 1898 and 1929 are loosely arranged by subject, ranging from general comments about masks and their cultural and historical contexts to

mask-making to specific mask-related stories from each of the three areas they represent: the Yukon and Kuskokwim River villages, and communities along the Bering Sea coast.

Information about what stimulated the interviewees' comments is limited. In the introduction, Fienup-Riordan states that elders were shown pictures of masks and asked specific questions. In the text, however, very few of the pictures are reproduced, and the interviewer's questions have been edited out. When one reads, for example, a story and song (for which the lyrics are reproduced) elicited when an elder was "shown a snowy owl mask," it is not clear whether the accompanying photograph of a pair of owl masks is the one that actually elicited the response.

Fienup-Riordan also notes that *Our Way of Making Prayer* provided a venue in which to present quoted material "uncut" (p. xvi), in contrast to the catalogue, which had to be edited for a national audience and rid of the redundancies characteristic of speech. While *Our Way of Making Prayer* does offer stretches of uninterrupted discourse, it has certainly been edited, for only a sampling of Meade's several thousand pages of transcripts are reproduced here, and some of the elders' comments are quite brief. If the book is, as the editor suggests, aimed towards "those interested in not only what the elders have to say, but also how they say it" (loc. cit.), it would have been helpful to know more about what stimulated each response, whether each person was interviewed separately or whether some comments emerged in dialogue with other elders, and what else they said (perhaps in summary form). If the work had been frankly acknowledged and prepared as a companion volume, too, the masks that elicited responses could have been cross-referenced to the catalogue illustrations.

These accommodations to the general reader were not made because the author, Meade, had a commitment to presenting the elders' words respectfully. In Yup'ik cultural terms, this meant providing as little explanation as possible, so as not to detract from the strength of the elders' speech or presume to interpret what they said. This creates a dilemma for the translator and editor, who must keep her intervention to a bare minimum. There are places where the reader unfamiliar with Yup'ik history and society will be left with many questions. The attempt to make this a volume that stands on its own is, as a result, not completely successful.

The translations are faithful to the originals and are often vivid. At times they suffer from an awkward literalness (e.g., "When I first heard people saying the aforementioned adage

...," p. 13), but once one enters the flow of the narratives, this is rarely a serious rub.

The overall strength of this book lies in the detailed and evocative descriptions that the elders provide. At many points, the reader is transported to a place of wonder, where nonhuman persons signaled their presence at a masked dance with a thunderous response from under the ground echoing the stamping of the people in the ceremonial house above them. One can feel the terror of a child, now an elder, who watched bare-chested, wolf-masked dancers fighting with each other viciously, covered with blood, and then miraculously emerging unscathed. One elder witnessed an appendectomy performed with a bird's wing feather; another described how she found a transparent egg that her grandmother and other female relatives inspected in awe, telling her that it was a child of Ella (the sky, universe, awareness) which had dropped from the sky. Others tell of the joyous ceremonial distributions that accompanied a child's first catch or completion of an important task. And throughout are woven traditional stories that illuminate basic Yup'ik understandings of the world, and thoughts about the spiritual and social changes that challenge people today.

In short, particularly in combination with other published sources and especially with *The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks, Our Way of Making Prayer* offers a unique glimpse at the words and worlds of a generation of Yup'ik people who are, with good reason, widely revered.

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American Indians in World War I, at War and at Home. By Thomas A. Britten. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. 253 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

American Indians in World War I, at War and at Home recounts the participation of American Indian soldiers in World War I as uninformed participants in assimilationist policies directed from the federal government toward the "Indian problem." Thomas Britten also emphasizes the federal government's utilization of Indian scouts in military forces and the immense wartime support from Indians at home. Also covered are the after-effects of American Indian participation in the Great War through decisions made by the federal government to benefit and assimilate Indians