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Things That Were Said of Them: Shaman Stories and Oral Histories of the Tikigaq People. Told by Asatchaq.

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Things That Were Said of Them: Shaman Stories and Oral Histories of the Tikiġaq People. Told by Asatchaq. Translated by Tukummiq and Tom Lowenstein, with introduction and commentaries by Tom Lowenstein. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992. 225 pages. $30.00 cloth.

Stories and storytelling are important in all societies and provide a means for understanding cosmologies, metaphysics, and worldviews. Today, when many traditional societies have been "modernized" and otherwise dramatically transformed, stories also provide views of cultural tapestries that no longer exist. The collaboration of Asatchaq and Lowenstein in *Things That Were Said of Them* accomplishes all of the above with insight and respect.

The book is a collection of twenty-four stories and oral histories from the Iñupiat (pl. north Alaskan Inuit, sg. Iñupiaq) community of Tikiġaq (Point Hope, Alaska). As indicated by the title, the book's central theme is shamanism and the Iñupiat relationship with the spirit world. Within that theme, Lowenstein has organized the collection into four parts. Part 1 consists of six Unipkaat (legends) that recount some of the major aspects of Tikiġaq cosmology and themes of proper behavior. The seven stories in part 2 are also Unipkaat but occur in a recognizably Iñupiat setting. Parts 3 and 4 feature eleven Uqaluktuat, or Ancestor Histories. Those in part 3 relate to individuals who can be connected to modern Iñupiat families, but often bridge the gap between legend and oral history with magical themes and content. Part 4 describes individuals and events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the traditional Iñupiat world dissolved in the face of culture contact. The stories are printed nearly verbatim, including Asatchaq's mispeakings and repetitions. That aspect of the presentation, along with the phrasing of the transcription, preserve the feeling of oral recitation. Lowenstein's commentary takes the form of a thematic synopsis preceding each story and a more extensive follow-on discussion that explains aspects of the story as well as symbolic associations. Although Lowenstein gives Asatchaq primacy in authorship, Lowenstein is truly the principal author. His selection of stories provides the thematic definition of the book, and many aspects of the stories, especially their symbolism, are not understandable without his commentaries. In a brief review, one cannot comment on all the stories in a volume such as this; however, two stories of particular interest to this writer are highlighted below.

Historically, Tikiġaq people interacted a great deal with the neighboring people of Noatak and Kobuk River drainages. The chaos of the late nineteenth century involved a multitude of large- and small-scale population movements throughout northwest Alaska. For that reason, it is not surprising to find interconnections between regional legendary themes. Such is the case in the story of Ukuŋniq. Ukuŋniq's saga contains shades of the Odyssey as he travels south from Tikiġaq through a series of mystical adventures. Partway through his journey, Ukuŋniq battles a strange being with copper snowshoes. Later he overpowers an uiḷuaqtuq (woman who will not marry), who conceives a son, Qayaqtaġuŋnaqtuaq. Qayaqtaġuŋnaqtuaq is one of the chief heroic figures of Kuuvaŋmiut (Kobuk River people) legend, who had a series of epic adventures including defeating the evil "Copper Man." Thus, the story of Ukuŋniq connects legendary heroes from two regions. Beyond its mystical and symbolic elements, it is an interesting example of oral one-upmanship, where the Tikiġaq storyteller has coopted the Kuuvaŋmiut's Qayaqtaġuŋnaqtuaq and perhaps one of his main foes.

The final stories in the book are not told by Asatchaq but by Aviq, a Christian healer. They are striking in the way they tell of both the demise and the lingering influence of shamanism and shamanistic powers. Aviq recounts the death of Pisiktaġaaq, a feared and powerful shaman. On his deathbed, Pisiktaġaaq sees only darkness and begs to be baptized. Although Aviq is a Christian, she fears Pisiktaġaaq's power, but she agrees to baptize the old man. The shaman's confession is almost a recitation of his powers as he admits to killing and injuring countless people and, in a last shamanistic act, vomits up the amulet which gave him power. In the end, as the doctor carries away the amulet, it is transformed symbolically from a thing of power to a curio. Lowenstein uses Aviq's stories to highlight both the penetration of the traditional Iñupiat world by Euro-American institutions and the ambiguous preservation of dual belief systems. To this writer, the latter is especially significant. Aviq was a Christian but still feared and felt the power of the old shaman. This dualism has survived even into the recent past and suggests that the order and authority of Christianity were not sufficient to fill all the needs of the capricious Iñupiat cosmos.

Evaluating *Things That Were Said of Them* in a critical light, one can only suggest minor improvements. In terms of format, the book cries out for illustrations. This is not a trivial comment, since,

as Lowenstein acknowledges, Iñupiat storytelling is a visual as well as oral medium. Stories are often accompanied by stylized movements and gestures that convey added impressions about actions and meanings. Illustrations would be one imperfect way of adding this dimension.

Lowenstein's follow-on discussions, especially those regarding symbolism, are well written and very convincing, yet at times he neglects the obvious and mundane. For example, the tale of "Iqiasuaq: The Lazy Man" is portrayed in light of the spirit relationships between man and animals, but it is also a less complex morality tale about the virtues of hard work. This is a minor criticism, since it is the result of the tightly woven fabric of the book; Lowenstein views everything through the lens of shamanistic and spiritual symbolism. It is not his choice to view the stories through other lenses where the stories can also be simple entertainment cast in the image of the Iñupiat world or reflections of its materiality.

A more serious question is whether Lowenstein accomplishes the implied objective of the book. He notes that Asatchaq viewed his efforts in telling the stories as "a kind of government work" intended to save the stories for the non-Iñupiaq-speaking younger generations, yet the presentation is literary and anthropological. One wonders how well it can compete with satellite TV and evening basketball. Perhaps it would have been better to place it in a bilingual format, such as has been done by the National Bilingual Materials Center, where the stories could have been used in the context of existing bilingual programs. The stories are saved, but for many Iñupiat young people, it is more as if they were put into storage.

The above comments in no way diminish the value of this book. In recent years, portrayals of Alaska Natives have been dominated by the material—so much so that one comes to view the people as mechanistic harvesters of plants and animals, or rational foragers. This book is a refreshing complement to "subsistence studies," and readers can learn much about the nonempirical world of the Iñupiat from its pages. One hopes Lowenstein will continue such efforts and, in particular turn his attention to the robust oral traditions of the southwest Alaskan Yup'ik, whose tales are sorely lacking in current literature.

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